



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

## WITH DEADLINE LOOMING COMMENT PERIOD FOR PROPOSED REGIONAL STORM BARRIERS EXTENDED

SUSAN SERINO August 29, 2018

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Albany, NY - With the shot clock ticking down to near zero the comment period for the United States Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) proposed offshore barriers, land-based floodwalls and the potential of a levee system to protect the metropolitan region has been extended to September 20th. Environmental activists and residents cheered the decision which gives more time for public comment and information gathering.

Last month a trio of State Senators sent a letter to Lieutenant General Todd Semonite of the USACE and Commissioner Basil Seggos of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation urging the 40-day period be extended. Today, they applauded the extension and urged residents to make their voices heard.

State Senator Terrence Murphy said, "Hudson Valley residents need to be a part of this conversation and so far they have been left out. This extension gives us more time to get a seat at the table, ask more questions to the federal government and fully understand the scope of this proposal. We already stopped oil barges from posing a hazard on the Hudson River and we're ready to defend it again unless we are part of the discussion."

One plan under consideration calls for a surge barrier at the mouth of the harbor from Sandy Hook, New Jersey to Breezy Point in Queens. Alternative plans include multiple shorter barriers from Staten Island to Brooklyn and at various other locations blocking tributaries. The cost for the project has been estimated at \$25 billion and could take decades to complete. Concerns have been raised that it could cause worse flooding in certain areas and harm nearby beaches. Environmentalists have raised concerns for many species that call the Atlantic Ocean home, including some that are on the endangered list.

To date, there are no additional meetings scheduled for the the Lower Hudson Valley, despite the fact it has the largest population outside of New York City and is home to the heart of the Hudson River Estuary. Senator Murphy has already called for the United States Army Corps of Engineers to hold a meeting in Sleepy Hollow.

Jessica Roff, Director of Advocacy and Engagement for Riverkeeper said, "We are glad that the Army Corps of Engineers responded to requests from elected officials, Riverkeeper supporters, and others to extend the comment period. However, this process is still too rushed, not sufficiently transparent, and does not involve enough community engagement

and outreach. We are still calling for more public meetings, more time to comment, and more transparency and information from the Corps, including information on the studies they are using in their evaluation process."

Senator Sue Serino said, "When it comes to issues that could impact not only quality of life in our local area, but the overall health of a resource that plays a critical role here in the Hudson Valley, our communities absolutely deserve the chance to be heard. With extreme weather becoming the new normal, we have a duty to ensure that our communities are properly prepared and our natural resources are fully protected. Hudson Valley residents and researchers bring an incredibly unique perspective to the table that could prove invaluable to ensuring this process is ultimately effective in the face of severe weather. We are encouraged that the Army Corp of Engineers and the DEC headed our call to extend the public comment period and I urge local residents to participate in this important process."

Nava Tabak, Director of Climate, Science and Stewardship for Scenic Hudson added, "We appreciate the Army Corps extending the public comment period in response to public concern. It is critical that residents of the Hudson Valley, who would be affected by the impacts to it resulting from the constructed storm protection alternatives, make use of this opportunity to make their voices heard."

State Senator Elaine Phillips applauded today's decision saying, "Long Islanders now have the opportunity to be heard and have our needs addressed. Many of our communities are still recovering from Superstorm Sandy and there are many questions regarding this latest proposal. This extension will ensure the process is not rushed under the public's nose and we have time to understand how it will impact our communities."

In comparison, the United States Coast Guard gather comments and feedback for six months pertaining to their proposal to establish 10 new long-term anchorage sites for oil

barges along the Hudson River. In large part due to the advocacy of Senators Murphy, Serino, Riverkeeper and Scenic Hudson that proposal was ultimately tabled.