

To: Hon. Jaclyn A. Britling
Secretary
NYS Public Service Commission
Three Empire State Plaza
Albany, NY 12223

Copy to: Mr. Jeremy Rosenthal
Environmental Analyst
Division of Environmental Permits, DEC
625 Broadway, 4th Floor
Albany, NY 12233-1750

From: K.C. (Chad) Murdock, Ph. D.
15 Birch St., Pearl River, NY 10965
845-735-4214 kcmurdock@gmail.com

April 28, 2009

Subject: UWNY Scoping; Hudson Water Desalination Proposal:

- 1) Potential Rockland County water rate increases to pay for construction and operation of a desalination pilot plant.
- 2) Cost-plus basis for some utility rate increases.
- 3) Possible revision or delay of required addition to Rockland water supply.

Dear Ms. Britling:

I believe you were on the address list of the “Positive Declaration” from Jeremy Rosenthal of the NYS DEC which listed many potential problems regarding a proposal of United Water Co.(Ref. 1). As described there, UW plans to build a large plant to treat Hudson River water for us to drink. This plan is meeting widespread public opposition. A notice for a public forum is enclosed.

A newspaper letter from me is reproduced below, urging that no water rate increases be allowed to pay for a proposed pilot plant. Please work to prevent such increases and perhaps even to disallow them for a full-scale desalination plant, since good water conservation is likely to be a superior option to increase the water supply.

A connected concern of broad financial and environmental importance to the entire nation is what I understand to be a cost-plus protocol for many rate increases for utilities—water, electricity and gas. Capital improvement investments readily justify rate increases based on cost plus a percentage of the cost, but often no increase for many expenses for better practices, higher quality staffing, better maintenance and better stewardship of natural resources. For example, UW and its overseas owner, Suez, have a world-wide history of scrimping on such non-capital expenses, accompanied by severances from Suez by many cities and several nations, as reported in a detailed expose’ of Suez by Public Citizen (Ref. 2). Similarly, instead of a desalination plant the

increased water supply for Rockland required of UW by the PSC could very probably be exceeded with much less capital expense, less ratepayer trauma and less environmental damage, by using better water conservation: i.e. replacing more leaking transmission pipes, recharging our aquifers with treated wastewater and run-off. -And avoiding such things as the “accidental” diversion for 18 months to their New Jersey market of a huge and illegal amount of water (\$10,000 fine: Ref; 3). For the last half of 2007 the amount was estimated at 797 million gallons, enough to satisfy a 3 _-month amount of the required addition to our future supply.

With the economic downturn, minimal new construction, recent international environmental awareness of global warming and the impossibility of perpetual growth, and with consumer education for water conservation it seems possible that the projected requirements for Rockland’s water needs could be lowered or delayed. We were endowed with bounteous and excellent water. We should manage to conserve water, keep it dependably safe, limit its expense, limit use of electric power and live in a sustainable way.

If conservation alone is eventually deemed not enough, construction of a new reservoir at the previously approved site should be considered more worthy of rate increases than a desalination plant.

For utilities there need to be better financial reasons for good behavior and better choices, such as conservation instead of desalination. Courageous legislators and other people in NY and elsewhere may be working to revise “cost-plus” and other justifications for rate increases. I hope you are one of them. Any information or references would be most welcome.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

K.C. Murdock