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May 22, 2009

SUBJECT: RE: "UWNY Scoping"
PROPOSED DESALINATION PLANT, TOWN OF HAVERSTRAW,
ROCKLAND COUNTY NY

Dear Sir,

I am writing to oppose approval of the proposed desalination plant at the Town of Haverstraw, Rockland County, NY, because the need for costly new supplies has not been documented.

Who Am I?

I am a member both the New York Committee of the Highland Coalition (HC), and its Steering Committee. Part of HC's mission is to select critical properties that protect water resources in the states of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York and Connecticut. Under Federal legislation, \$100 million dollars will be made available to us for that purpose. About half of Rockland County is situated in the "NY Highlands region."

I am a practicing family physician and former public health official who has written municipal sanitary codes, and overseen their implementation. These codes focused on surface- and groundwater protection. Experience shows that when the protection of surface- and groundwater becomes a shared responsibility, citizens begin to view with pride that water protection is an entire community's privilege.

I am a follower of the Rockland Coalition for Sustainable Water.

Specific Concerns

Out-of-watershed sources of drinking water in a region that has traditionally depended on

its own supplies, diminishes the community's willingness to embrace strict and universally applied surface- and groundwater protections and conservation. The exception would be when there is in fact a drinking water shortfall that is of critical dimension. That 'critical dimension' has not been established in Rockland County. Further, conservation measures have not been discussed or implemented.

As I have followed the community reaction to the proposed desalination plant, it is clear that the Rockland County public does not believe a drinking water shortfall exists. Further, I and many others believe that desalinating Hudson River drinking water would not be for Rockland County's 'better good.' In fact, if I can coin a term, higher water rates and profits to a private water supplier for a source of drinking water that has not been proven to be necessary would constitute 'the better bad'!!.

Studies Not Adequate.

Rockland County water studies are insufficient to make informed determinations about water resources in the entire County. One report states that "all" of Rockland County water originates from within the County. False. As you know, the Ramapo River watershed, a federally-designated Sole Source Aquifer, extends to New Jersey and Orange County NY. It is also a NYS Health Department-designated Primary Aquifer.

The same study also excludes the Ramapo River watershed in its estimation of The Ramapo River Watershed is a USEPA Sole Source Aquifer. This study lacks credibility and is not suitable to use as a planning tool.

Suggestions

It is not possible to evaluate the desalination proposal until a proper water study is performed.

I must also say that it is important to question those who made the statements listed above to find out why they made them.

Thank You,

Sincerely,

Peter O. Rostenberg, MD
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