Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233-1011

 January 25, 2017

Dear Commissioner Seggos,

A couple of events happened this month which, under different circumstances, might have reassured an electorate increasingly responsive to environmental concerns and, more importantly, given hope for our imperiled planet. As part of the governor’s State of the State communication, Andrew Cuomo announced, "the State must double down by investing in the fight against dirty fossil fuels and fracked gas from neighboring states to achieve the goals outlined in the Governor’s Clean Energy Standard." And the DEC announced its implementation of the NYS Lean Initiative which it claims will improve public responsiveness and performance while maintaining high standards of environmental and natural resource protection.

Sadly, typically, government messaging runs precisely counter to its actions. The first week of January, DEC made official the permits for Dominion’s massive New Market upgrade it had inadvertently posted to its website a month earlier. In fact, over the last year, citizens have written the DEC thousands of letters, and penned scores of OpEds and letters-to-editor, too. Citizens have questioned FERC’s review which requires only that a pipeline company expects profits in order to receive approval. New Yorkers have asked what Governor Cuomo means when he claims he will protect our environment from Donald Trump, when for the last decade we have struggled to protect the environment from the DEC. We have examined DEC’s commitment to reviewing project greenhouse gas emissions and wondered how that process aligns with regular DEC rubber-stamps of FERC-approved infrastructure. Using the PSC’s carbon pricing of $36/ton and the EPA’s recent methane pricing of $580/ton letters to papers and agencies have reported that New Market will cost the state a billion dollars annually in health and climate impacts.

Now, it appears DEC has lost or misplaced hundreds of citizen comments on New Market. DEC has failed seriously to address substantive criticism of this project. DEC’s performance here is frankly unacceptable. How could an agency unable to manage a website be charged with regulatory oversight of a 200-mile, 50-year-old pipeline soon to have 33,000 additional horsepower? When this pipeline blows up, neither DTI nor DEC will pay, but communities will, because DTI will claim Force Majeure, that is, “an Act of God.” We citizens know it isn’t God sticking it to us, is it? It is our own agencies and governor.

I ask that Dominion’s New Market permits be rescinded and the DEC reopen public commenting and provide due diligence in respecting and responding to the concerns of New Yorkers.

Cordially,

Address: