

# Press



# Release

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Cornell Oversees Briefing On Pilgrim Pipeline Environmental Experts Invited To Speak 6:15 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 27**

**New City, NY (Jan. 21, 2016)** – Rockland County Legislator Harriet D. Cornell will oversee a briefing on the potential environmental impacts of the proposed Pilgrim Pipeline during the Wednesday meeting of the Legislature’s Environmental Committee.

Cornell (D-West Nyack), who chairs the committee, has invited two environmental experts – Kate Hudson, an attorney who is the Director of Cross-Watershed Initiatives for Riverkeeper, and Geoffrey Welch, who is the Ramapo River Watershed Keeper. She has also asked Paul Nathanson of Pilgrim Pipeline Holdings LLC to attend.

The Rockland County Legislature voted 14-0 on Dec. 15 to back a resolution urging the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to serve as lead agency and to reject the state Thruway Authority’s request to serve as the lead agency for the project’s environmental review. Subsequently, both state agencies proposed that they serve as co-lead agencies for the review.

On Jan. 19, the Legislature voted 15-0 to request that only the DEC be designated as the lead agency.

“A project of this magnitude with so many potential environmental impacts must receive the oversight of the agency best suited for the job, and that agency is the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation,” Cornell said. “Only the DEC, with input from citizens, can ensure that proper due diligence is exercised. This meeting is designed to enlighten legislators and the public about the scope of the project and its potential impacts.”

Pilgrim Pipeline Holdings LLC proposes to build two, 178-mile long parallel pipelines between Albany and Linden, N.J., including a stretch through Rockland.

The pipelines would carry refined oil products such as gasoline, diesel, kerosene and home heating oil north and crude oil from the Bakken Shale region of North Dakota south.

Bakken crude oil is extracted through a process of hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking,” which has been found to contaminate clean water resources, create toxic air emissions and radioactive waste, and release large quantities of methane gas into the atmosphere.

The pipeline would carry a large volume of Bakken oil for miles along the Ramapo River and through residential areas in Rockland, placing residents in harm’s way should an explosion or spill occur.

The pipeline presents myriad environmental concerns, including extraordinary cleanup efforts should a rupture occur, contamination of groundwater and aquifers used by Rockland residents for drinking water, and the pollution of surface waters, including the Ramapo River, the source of one-third of Rockland’s drinking water.

In addition, the environmental impacts have statewide concern and a full environmental review, as required by the State Environmental Quality Review Act and the national Environmental Protection Act, as well as a complete and comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement, should be undertaken.

The construction of the first crude oil pipeline in New York, and its impacts, should also be evaluated within the context of the New York State Energy Plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The policy of the DEC Commissioner mandates that the DEC must consider climate change in all of its actions, including the permitting of projects.

The DEC is also tasked with leading the review of the hazards associated with crude oil transport and is responsible for responding to spills when they occur.

The Thruway Authority’s very narrow expertise in highway use and policy and regulation does not provide an adequate basis to justify having it serve as co-lead agency in an environmental review.

The Thruway Authority also continues to have an apparent conflict of interest in overseeing the environmental review of a project that, if approved, would result in revenues from the Pilgrim Pipeline project via fees charged by the Thruway Authority for use of the right-of-way.

The DEC itself discourages co-lead agency status because of the potential for disagreement.

Chairwoman Cornell stated, “For all of these reasons, it is clear that the DEC has the experience, expertise and broadest powers to conduct a proper and thorough environmental review and is best suited to serve as lead agency in the review process. I invite the public to attend this meeting.”

## **ABOUT THE EXPERTS**

Kate Hudson has extensive experience concerning environmental issues, including nearly 25 years working for the DEC and as a New York State Assistant Attorney General. Notably, as a

member of the AG's Environmental Protection Bureau, she was responsible for preparing the state and federal trustees' natural resource damage claim against General Electric for the company's contamination of the Hudson River with PCBs. She is a graduate of the University of Chicago and the New York University School of Law.

Geoffrey Welch has spent decades fighting for the environment. He has organized the annual Ramapo River Watershed Conference since 1996, and has researched and authored studies of the river and its environs. Welch has also emphasized the interconnectedness of the Ramapo River region, including the relationships between the communities through which the river flows, as well as its artistic, cultural, visual and recreational aspects.

## **BRIEFING DETAILS**

The Rockland County Legislature's Environmental Committee meets at 6:15 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 27 in the Allison-Parris County Office Building, 11 New Hempstead Road in New City.

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