



**NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF
ULSTER COUNTY EXECUTIVE MIKE HEIN**



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**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION STOPPED
TURBID RELEASES INTO LOWER ESOPUS TODAY**

County Executive Mike Hein announces a major victory for the people of Ulster County.

Kingston, N.Y. - - County Executive Mike Hein convened a meeting today with Commissioner Cas Holloway of New York City's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to press for the immediate end of turbid water being released by DEP into the Lower Esopus. Following the meeting County Executive Mike Hein announced that as of today the DEP has stopped releasing polluted water and now clear water is flowing into the Lower Esopus.

Joining County Executive Hein and Commissioner Holloway at the Ulster County Office Building were New York State Senator John Bonacic, a representative from the Office of Congressman Maurice Hinchey, representatives from the Office of New York State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, a representative from the Office of Kevin Cahill, representatives from the United States Environmental Protection Agency, representatives from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, representatives from the New York State Department of Health and the Hudson Valley River Keeper Paul Gally.

Additionally, following the meeting County Executive Hein announced the DEC will be filing an action against the DEP.

"Today is a huge victory for the people of Ulster County," said County Executive Mike Hein. The County Executive continued, "It is my great hope that this commitment is the beginning of a Ulster County's dialogue with the DEP. They have a long way to go to make things right but this is a first step in that process. I will continue to work with all affected local government leaders and the environmental stakeholders so that Ulster County's concerns are heard in loud and clear."

At today's meeting DEP committed to:

- Immediately end turbid water releases from the West Basin of the Ashokan Reservoir;
- Initiate 1.5 billion gallons of clear water releases from the East Basin;

- Assess and address any impacts;
- Take the steps necessary to minimize the need for polluted releases in the future;
- Ensure that Ulster County has real representation on all matters that affect the Lower Esopus;

County Executive Hein is hopeful about the agreement. He said “I want to thank New York State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Designate Joseph Martens, Environmental Protection Agency Regional Administrator Judith Enck and the people of Ulster County for their hard work and dedication toward addressing this issue. Today’s commitment demonstrates a good faith effort by the DEP to begin repairing the damage caused to the Lower Esopus. Today is not an end but the beginning.”

"Today the DEP recognized that the people of this community are not going to allow the Esopus to be used as a dumping ground," said Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY). "We still have a lot to do, but this is a huge step in the right direction and I commend County Executive Mike Hein for taking a strong leadership role on this issue. I'm also glad that the DEC is stepping up and doing the right thing."

“I am pleased the DEP has stopped the turbid releases, but they never should have happened in the first place. Now, the issue is quantifying the damages and giving justice to the people of Ulster County,” said New York State Senator John Bonacic.

“The City of New York has the responsibility of being a good neighbor”, said Assemblyman Pete Lopez, who represents the Saugerties community as well as numerous towns and villages throughout the many counties that comprise the NYC Watershed. “While we recognize DEP’s desire to provide quality drinking water to its over 8 million inhabitants, it’s efforts cannot come at our expense.”

Ulster County Legislator Walter Frey said, “I am proud to represent the people of this county. Through our combined effort and unity we demonstrated that we are powerful enough to put a stop to the violation of our natural resources. But this process does not stop until we have a commitment to address the damages caused by their actions. We will not stop fighting for the people of Ulster County.”

“I applaud the results of today’s meeting,” said Town of Saugerties Supervisor Greg Helsmoortel. “That fact that the DEP will conduct clear water releases is very important to the people of Saugerties. I want to thank County Executive Hein for his leadership on this issue”

“This was a good start at changing the dynamic that left the Lower Esopus and absolute mess said Executive Director and Hudson River Keeper Paul Gallay. “Kudos to all who participated especially County Executive Hein.”

In the coming days County Executive Mike Hein will hold a meeting with the affected Town Supervisors and the Mayor of Kingston in order to keep them fully briefed on the progress to date.