



NEWS FROM **ULSTER COUNTY** County Executive Jen Metzger

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Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger Calls U.S. EPA's Proposed Repeal of Endangerment Finding 'Reckless' and 'Dangerous' at EPA Public Hearing this Morning

Kingston, NY - County Executive Jen Metzger appeared before a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) panel in a virtual public hearing this morning to oppose EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin's plan to repeal a bedrock scientific finding that gives the agency authority to regulate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and fight climate change. The EPA's 2009 Endangerment Finding is based on a national and international scientific consensus linking GHG emissions from power plants, transportation, and other sources, to destabilizing changes in the earth's climate.

County Executive Metzger's full statement:

"Thank you for this opportunity to comment. It is settled science that greenhouse gas emissions from the burning of fossil fuels is causing dangerous planetary warming and posing unacceptable risks to our health and the environment. The mission of the U.S. EPA is to protect human health and the environment based on the best available scientific information, and repealing the endangerment finding is entirely contrary to your mission.

In Ulster County, we are experiencing more wildfires, more flooding, more extreme heat, and other impacts of climate change that put lives, health, and property at risk, and also harm our economy. These dangers will only worsen in the years ahead if the EPA reneges on its responsibility to regulate climate-damaging emissions from transportation, power plants, and other sources.

Wildfires are a huge concern for our County, with forests covering about a third of the land. With a prolonged drought last fall, hundreds of acres of the forested Catskills burned,

prompting evacuations and requiring a dangerous, large-scale mobilization of firefighters in tough terrain. Two years earlier, another wildfire consumed 270 acres in Minnewaska State Park. This is not the norm for the Hudson Valley.

We have also experienced major declines in air quality for the last several summers because of massive wildfires in Canada and elsewhere, posing health risks to our seniors, children, and other vulnerable residents. This has also harmed our tourism industry, which is largely tied to outdoor recreation. No one wants to ride their bikes or climb a mountain with a mask on.

With our mountainous terrain and river valleys, we're also extremely vulnerable to flooding from more frequent and more severe storms. In fact, we rank second in the state in the number of Presidential Disaster Declarations. These flood events endanger lives, force first responders into harm's way, and can cost our communities millions as homes, bridges, roads, and farmland are washed away. Meanwhile, the federal government is slashing funding to localities for flood mitigation, which is just increasing our vulnerability.

There are so many more impacts from greenhouse gas emissions I could talk about — more dangerous temperatures in summer, more weather-related power outages, more plant diseases and weather variability affecting the productivity of our farms. My basic message is this:

Repealing the endangerment finding would be reckless and dangerous, and the EPA must reconsider this action. Thank you.”

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