May 7, 2018

A.9833 (Skoufis)/S.7804 (Kaminsky)

Title: An act to amend the environmental conservation law, in relation to posting information regarding the issuance of permits for a public water supply on the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's website.

Purpose: This bill will make it easier for citizens to access information relating to permits issued by the DEC for municipally-owned wells, including the maximum pumping capacity allowed under the permit and the results of well monitoring, without having to submit a request for that information under the Freedom of Information Act. Such monitoring reports are already required by statute in New York State Environmental Conservation law; this bill would merely allow the public to access these reports on the DEC website.

Statement of Support: Sustainable management of aquifers is an important way to protect the quantity and quality of drinking water for today's citizens and generations to come. When a permit is granted by the DEC for a municipally-owned well, nearby residents who draw water from the same aquifer may be understandably concerned that increased pumping may concentrate contaminants or reduce recharge rate of the aquifer, both of which could adversely affect their own wells. It is in the public interest to make information collected by the DEC about public water supply projects transparent to enable citizens to be informed and involved in sustainable water planning for their region.

This bill would simply allow the public to access information from the DEC website about municipally-owned wells which is already being collected. Considering that the DEC has been underfunded in recent years yet is constantly expected to take on more work, making this information readily available will allow the public to help the DEC in identifying possibly troublesome trends in water quality and quantity early enough to make necessary changes to withdrawal permits before permanent damage is done. Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter, with over 54,000 members in New York State, strongly supports this bill.

Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter Urges Your Support Of A.9833/S.7804