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**‘WE ARE SENECA LAKE’ – Protesters Rally, Blockade and Shut Down Crestwood Gas Storage & Compressor Station in Finger Lakes**

**On Day of Major New Construction, Large Rally and Civil Disobedience Shut Down Facility as Residents Tell Crestwood to GO HOME!**

A larger rally accompanied more civil disobedience today, after a dozen protestors formed a human blockade in front of Texas-based Crestwood Midstream’s gas storage facility on the shore of Seneca Lake on Thursday, shutting down the facility all of yesterday. Today, major new construction on a huge gas storage facility is [authorized](http://elibrary.ferc.gov/idmws/file_list.asp?accession_num=20140812-5017) to begin. This action comes after the community has pursued every avenue possible to stop the misbegotten project and after being thwarted by an unacceptable process and denial of science.

The unified action is called ‘WE ARE SENECA LAKE’ and more information and [pictures](http://www.wearesenecalake.com/press-kit/) from the Thursday protest are available at [www.WeAreSenecaLake.com](file:///C:\Users\John\Downloads\www.WeAreSenecaLake.com)

The protests are taking place at the gates of the Crestwood compressor station site on the shore of Seneca Lake, the largest of New York’s Finger Lakes. The methane gas storage expansion project is advancing in the face of unparalleled public opposition and unresolved questions about geological instabilities, fault lines, and possible salinization of the lake, which serves as a source of drinking water for 100,000 people. Outrageously, a [Capital New York investigation](http://www.capitalnewyork.com/article/albany/2014/10/8553530/cuomo-administration-edited-and-delayed-key-fracking-study) just revealed that Governor Cuomo’s DEC excised references to the risks of underground gas storage from a 2011 federal report on methane contamination of drinking water and has allowed key data to remain hidden.

\*Note that the WE ARE SENECA LAKE protest is to stop the expansion of methane gas storage, a separate project from Crestwood’s proposed Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) storage project, which is on hold pending a Department of Environmental Conservation Issues Conference.

Speakers at the Friday rally included Lou Damiani, owner of Damiani Wine Cellars; Will Ouweleen, co-owner of the O-Neh-Da and Eagle Crest Vineyards; Barbara Schiessher of Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association; Michael Warren Thomas, host of New York radio show ‘The Grapevine;’ former Schuyler County legislator Bob Fitzsimmons; and biologist and author Sandra Steingraber.

**Barbara Schiessher of Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association said,** “The expansion of the Crestwood facility will affect everyone who lives, works or plays on the lake, or consumes agricultural products from the region, including its award winning wines. It will affect the 100,000 residents who get drinking water from the Lake. It increases the likelihood of contamination of our air, soil and water, plus the always present risk of gas leakage, unpredictable explosions and sink holes such as have occurred in a number of salt cavern storage facilities of natural gas and LPG.”

Earlier this week, the [Tompkins County Legislature](http://www.ithacajournal.com/story/news/local/2014/10/19/tompkins-seneca-hydrocarbon-storage/17589943/) approved a resolution that opposes gas storage on the lakeshore, while the [Yates County Legislature](http://www.fltimes.com/news/article_6e6f66dc-553f-11e4-a05b-63dc7447858a.html) passed a similar resolution last week. In so doing, they joined the Board of Supervisors of both Ontario and Seneca counties, which previously passed motions opposing gas storage, along with the Geneva City Council and the Watkins Glen Village Board.

In spite of overwhelming opposition, grave geological and public health concerns, Crestwood has federal approval to move forward with plans to store highly pressurized, explosive gas in abandoned salt caverns on the west side of Seneca Lake. While the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has temporarily halted plans to stockpile propane and butane (LPG) in nearby caverns—out of ongoing concerns for safety, health, and the environment—Crestwood is actively constructing infrastructure for the storage of two billion cubic feet of methane (natural gas), with the blessing of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

**Will Ouweleen, owner of Eagle Crest and O-Neh-Da Vineyards on Hemlock Lake, New York, said,** "Today, Crestwood can officially begin construction for more underground gas storage in abandoned salt caverns on Seneca Lake, in caverns that have questionable stability and integrity. Caverns that previous owners abandoned due to a 400,000 ton rock collapse, which has gone unacknowledged by the present owners, Crestwood."

**Michael Warren Thomas said,** "The significant risks of gas migration in these abandoned salt caverns threaten the world class wine region that Finger Lakes families have created."

**Lyn Gerry of Watkins Glen, who participated in the human blockade on Thursday, said,** “As we literally put our bodies on the line, we once again call on President Obama, Governor Cuomo, Senator Schumer, Senator Gillibrand, and Congressman Reed to do what’s right and step in and stop this terrible project from ruining the heart of the Finger Lakes.”

**Sandra Steingraber, PhD, a renowned biologist and author, who participated in the human blockade on Thursday, said,** “Seneca Lake is a source of drinking water for 100,000 people and a source of economic prosperity for the whole region, not a gas station for fracking operations. It's a place for tourists, wineries, farms and families. Speaking with our bodies in an act of civil disobedience is a measure of last recourse to protect our home, our water, and our local economy - with our bodies and our voices, telling Texas-based Crestwood to go home!”

**Doug Couchon of Elmira, who also participated in the human blockade on Thursday, said,** “Crestwood is threatening our water, our local economy and our families. We’ve tried everything to stop this disastrous project, and now peaceful civil disobedience is our last resort.”

**Background:**

[Local businesses and wineries are part of broad opposition](http://gasfreeseneca.com/?page_id=98) to Texas-based Crestwood-Midstream’s proposal to use old abandoned salt caverns along Seneca Lake to store millions of barrels of liquid petroleum gas (LPG) and billions of cubic feet of natural gas. The [proposal has generated opposition](http://www.stargazette.com/story/news/2014/07/13/lpg-protest-planned-in-watkins-glen-/12603731/) from over 200 businesses, over 60 wineries, 11 municipalities (including neighboring Watkins Glen) and thousands and thousands of residents in the Finger Lakes region who are concerned about the threat it poses to public health and safety, one of the state’s largest supplies of drinking water, the local economy, and the area’s growing wine and tourism industry.

Residents, wineries and other local businesses have issued emergency calls to President Obama, U.S. Senators Schumer and Gillibrand, Congressman Reed and Governor Cuomo to immediately step in and stop this reckless project that threatens the heart of the Finger Lakes, many people’s health and the drinking water source for 100,000 people.

Additionally, an investigative journalist with DC Bureau [recently uncovered other scientific objections](http://www.dcbureau.org/2014100310011/natural-resources-news-service/ferc-approves-ny-methane-storage-project.html#more-10011) to the project, to which FERC did not give due consideration in issuing approval. Independent scientists have warned about the unstable geology of the salt caverns, including the fact that a 400,000 ton chunk of rock - roughly the size of an aircraft carrier - had given way in the very cavern that the company proposed to use for gas storage.

Furthermore, in August, Dr. Rob Mackenzie, a retired CEO of Cayuga Medical Center, a hospital about 20 miles east, [raised objections](file:///C:\Documents%20and%20Settings\Joe\My%20Documents\Downloads\See%20more%20at:%20http:\www.dcbureau.org\2014100310011\natural-resources-news-service\ferc-approves-ny-methane-storage-project.html#more-10011). An experienced risk analyst, Mackenzie prepared a [formal quantitative risk analysis](http://gasfreeseneca.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Schuyler-LPG-Storage-Independent-QRA.pdf) of the Crestwood methane gas proposal. Mackenzie analyzed accident events — major fires, explosions, collapses, catastrophic loss of product, evacuations — at salt cavern storage facilities in the United States dating back to 1972. He concluded that the risk of an “extremely serious” salt cavern event within Schuyler County over the next 25 years is more than 35%.

According to Energy Information Administration data uncovered by Mackenzie - reported by Peter Mantius of DC Bureau - gas storage facilities in salt caverns in the United States have had high rates of problems. Between 1972 and 2012,there have been 18 “serious or extremely serious incidents” at U.S. salt cavern storage facilities, Mackenzie wrote, citing EIA data. That translates to an incident rate in the US of about 60%.

Mackenzie also found that nine of the 18 salt cavern incidents involved large fires and/or explosions; six involved loss of life or serious injury; eight involved evacuations of between 30 and 2,000 residents; and 13 involved extremely serious property losses.

Seneca Lake is economically critical to the region and New York State. A recent [report on the state’s grape and wine industry](http://www.syracuse.com/drinks/index.ssf/2014/03/how_the_new_york_wine_industry.html) showed that it contributes $4.8 billion to the New York State economy every year, supporting the equivalent of 25,000 full-time jobs, paying over $408 million in taxes, and generating over 5.2 million wine-related tourism visits. The Finger Lakes region, in particular, has gained increasing prominence as home to world-class wines, with many wineries earning awards in national and international competitions. [Governor Cuomo highlighted the success of the industry at his 2013 Governor’s Cup Wine Competition](http://fingerlakescentral.com/finger-lakes-central-shines-in-governors-cup-wine-competition/) in Watkins Glen, exactly where the gas storage facility is being proposed for location and this past summer, a [Seneca Lake winery won the 2014 Governor’s Cup](http://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/roc-drink/2014/08/13/new-york-wine-food-classic/14030439/).

The region has become so widely known for its winemaking that [vintners from the international community](http://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/lifestyle/rocflavors/2014/07/10/paul-hobbs-christopher-bates-louis-barruol/12496027/) have begun to invest in the area as well.

The [Finger Lakes is also considered a world-class tourism destination, with Shermans Travel naming it the #1 Lake Vacation in](http://www.shermanstravel.com/top-tens/top-10-lake-vacations) the world last year.

In addition to the over-industrialization such a storage facility would cause, salt cavern storage is historically unsafe. It presents the potential for explosive accidents and water contamination along the Finger Lakes. Salt cavern storage represents only a small percentage of gas storage facilities, but is responsible for the majority of instances of catastrophic failure. [In 2001, gas migrated 7 miles from a salt cavern storage facility in Kansas, came up in abandoned brine wells and exploded](http://articles.kwch.com/2011-01-16/explosion_27032956), killing two people, destroying buildings and evacuating residents. There are many such abandoned brine wells just three miles from the proposed facility in downtown Watkins Glen, NY.

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