

ULSTER COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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February 18, 2025

Interim Commissioner Sean Mahar
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233

Subject: Request for Rulemaking to Address Landfill Leachate Contamination

Dear Commissioner Mahar,

I am writing to urge the NYS DEC to initiate rulemaking to establish new regulations for the improved management, treatment, and disposal of landfill leachate. We appreciate the important work the NYS DEC has done in recent years to identify and characterize potential sources of contamination and gather data to inform future rulemaking. However, recent reports highlight the significant volume of leachate entering the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers—potentially affecting drinking water supplies—which underscores the need for prompt action.

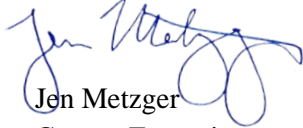
Although Ulster County does not operate water or wastewater treatment facilities, nor are we directly responsible for managing closed landfills, this issue significantly impacts our residents and municipalities. Hundreds of thousands of people rely on the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers for drinking water daily. In Ulster County alone, approximately 10,000 residents across two municipalities depend on the Hudson River for their drinking water. As a supporting member of the Hudson 7 intermunicipal council, Ulster County is deeply committed to safeguarding this critical resource. Additionally, two of our municipalities oversee closed landfills where elevated levels of PFOA and PFOS have been documented in leachate. Addressing this issue at the municipal level is complex, challenging, and potentially costly. While we recognize the DEC's ongoing efforts, a comprehensive statewide regulatory approach is essential to ensuring effective solutions. We urge the DEC to:

- Strengthen standards for landfill leachate treatment and disposal to prevent drinking water contamination.
- Mandate regular testing and public reporting of leachate impacts.
- Provide technical and financial support for municipalities to implement advanced treatment technologies with specific attention to municipalities with known contaminate issues in collected leachate.

Additionally, we encourage the DEC to explore opportunities to shift cost burdens away from municipalities and onto the responsible polluters through legislation or regulation. Our water resources are precious and a resource we must steward not only for today, but for future generations. Comprehensive regulations will safeguard New York's water resources and set a precedent for sustainable waste management. Ulster County stands ready to support and collaborate on these efforts.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jen Metzger", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jen Metzger
County Executive