

# TOWN OF BLENHEIM

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August 8, 2014

TO:

Secretary Kimberly D. Bose  
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission  
888 First Street, N.E.  
Washington, DC 20426  
FERC Docket No. P-2685

CC:

Andrew Berrick  
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission  
Office of Energy Products  
888 First Street, N.E.  
Washington, DC 20426

Dear Secretary Bose:

The Town of Blenheim hereby offers this letter to supplement its prior comments and suggestions regarding FERC's review of the New York State Power Authority's Blenheim-Gilboa Pump Storage Power Plant (hereinafter referred to as "B-G Plant").

The Town of Blenheim has reviewed the scoping document in this matter and was shocked to discover that it states no party has suggested that it would be appropriate to decommission the project at Blenheim-Gilboa. This assertion is erroneous. First, based upon the comments provided to FERC at the public hearing held at Gilboa Central School, multiple Town Supervisors and Schoharie County officials (including myself) spoke of the terrible effects the plant has had on the entire Schoharie Valley and thereafter suggested that the entire community would be better served if the project was removed. I will not recite the details of those comments as I am sure that FERC has them all recorded as part of the official record in this matter. However, I will briefly note one particular submission by Robert Mann, JR. who served on the County Board of Supervisors and as the Supervisor for the Town of Blenheim for 20 years. Mr. Mann meticulously explained how NYPA's operation of its facility rendered it impossible for the Town of Blenheim and the adjoining Towns throughout the Schoharie valley

to exist in a safe environment. Mr. Mann went on to state that the safety of thousands of people should be taken into consideration before allowing NYPA to continue to operate its Blenheim-Gilboa Plant. Mr. Mann ultimately concluded by stating that the only way to provide for the safety and well-being of the residents of Schoharie County was to decommission the Blenheim-Gilboa facility.

I currently serve as the Town Supervisor of Blenheim and am writing to inform FERC that the Town of Blenheim continues to hold the same position as expressed at the public scoping sessions. While our Town suffers in numerous ways from NYPA's control and operation of the Blenheim-Gilboa facility, nothing is more important than the safety of our residents. History has shown us that NYPA considers the safety of Schoharie County residents irrelevant. Despite repeated requests from local officials (including myself), NYPA has refused to inform local emergency responders of their operating situation. This rendered Blenheim and Schoharie County virtually helpless during events such as Hurricanes Irene and Lee. During these catastrophes our local first responders were forced to operate without having the benefit of the information possessed by NYPA regarding reservoir levels and NYPA equipment malfunction at the Blenheim-Gilboa facility. Similarly, our investigations into NYPA's operation during recent flooding events has revealed that NYPA's operation of the Blenheim-Gilboa plant resulted in substantially more damage to communities along the Schoharie creek than would have otherwise been the case if the facility was not there. In short, NYPA's operation of the Blenheim-Gilboa plant creates a dangerous environment to all of the people that live downstream of it.

The Scoping Document in this matters concludes that the decommissioning of the Blenheim-Gilboa project does not need to be considered because it would give rise to significant costs involved with decommissioning the project and/or removing the facilities. First, I must note that while this assertion regarding costs may be true, the costs cannot be considered in a vacuum. The Plant at Blenheim-Gilboa has already cost local communities, the State of New York, and even the federal government significant amounts of money due to the fact that it has operated in a way which proved to be destructive to public and private property downstream of the facility. This destructive operation is evidenced by the numerous law suits filed against NYPA, by municipalities and private landowners, in the aftermath of recent hurricanes. In general, these lawsuits all raise similar questions regarding the damage caused by the Plant's negligent operation. So it is extremely unfair and misleading to conclude the plant should not be decommissioned simply because there would be some costs incurred, without comparing those costs with the annual costs expended to compensate for the damage caused by the Plant's operation. Therefore, the only equitable way to determine whether it would be cost effective to require NYPA to remove the Blenheim-Gilboa plant would be to undertake a study to determine what costs would actually be required in decommissioning the plant and then compare that cost figure with the costs currently paid by local communities to repair the damage caused by NYPA's operation.

While the Town of Blenheim and the County of Schoharie remain hopeful that NYPA will begin to adhere to the pleas of local communities and begin to operate their plant in a way that is safer or at least less destructive, the unfortunate reality is that there is little to no chance that such changes will ever take place. This is especially true because NYPA's application for a new 50 year license repeatedly states that they are proposing "no change" in plant operations.

As a result of the forgoing, the Town of Blenheim formally requests that FERC revise its scoping document in this matter to include a “No Project Alternative” as it is clear that the public interest would be greatly benefitted by such a review.

Very Truly Yours,

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
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Shawn J. Smith

Blenheim Town Supervisor

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