Statement for TC Legislature,  November 8, 2023

Hi all,

I am here tonight for the salt mine resolution. I have been working with the CLEAN group for about six months, and the thing that has really shocked me about this mineis the extreme secrecy and lack of public information, especially for a mine that is under a publicly owned lake.

First, I want to respond to something Mike Sigler said recently, that numerous studies of this mine have been done, and that “I believe the Expanded Environmental Review is far superior to the Environmental Impact Statement.” Does that sound correct, Mike? (Mr. Sigler answers yes.)

I don’t doubt that Cargill has done many valuable studies, but unfortunately the major Environmental document completed by Cargill in 2000, along with later studies, have all been heavily redacted by Cargill or not released at all.

Over the years, Cargill has claimed that their engineering info, production data, and geologic analysis are all proprietary and protected as trade secrets. Nobody from New York State has ever pushed back enough to get public access to that information.

Cargill has also rejected the authority of the NYS DEC to regulate their underground mining operations.  After a while, you have to wonder:

What is Cargill hiding? If the mine is safe, why don’t they prove it to us? And why are they selling it?

What I and many others are asking for is simple - a full Environmental Impact Statement. A public document with a public review process. Pretty standard stuff.

Many groups from Tompkins County and all around Cayuga Lake have been asking questions about the geology of the salt mine and the safety of our water quality.

They are also asking why the American Rock Salt mine is much more heavily regulated by the DEC, including producing a full EIS and many other documents.  And of course, given that the Cargill mine is on public land and UNDER a lake, there are many questions about the mining operations, future plans, possible sale, and eventual closure.

These questions and others have been asked for decades, especially after the catastrophic Retsof Salt Mine collapse in the 1990s, just 65 miles to the west of this mine.

**A vote for this resolution is a vote for transparency in regard to protecting Cayuga Lake.**

Peter Penniman

Member of CLEAN and Former County Legislator