



The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224
By e-mail to: Ashley Dougherty ashley.dougherty@exec.ny.gov

Re: **Cargill's Cayuga Salt Mine in Tompkins and Seneca Counties**

24 April 2024

Dear Governor Hochul,

We are writing to urge you not to allow the extension of Cargill's mining permit which expires today, 24 April 2024.

We believe that DEC has administratively extended the old permit pending evaluation of Cargill's responses to a problematic and as-yet unpermitted but on-going flooding of the S3 portion of Cayuga Salt Mine.

As far as we know, Cargill has had Cayuga Salt Mine "on the market" for almost a year and it remains unsold. We believe the mine remains unsold because:

1) It has become uneconomic and non-competitive despite egregious cost-cutting attempts to burnish the bottom line. Cargill's extraction ratio at its current mine faces appears to be $\approx 43\%$ compared to $\approx 60\%$ at American Rock Salt. In other words, if American Rock Salt is able to mine 6 tons of rock salt from a given area, Cargill is only able to mine only 4.3 tons from the equivalent area.

2) It is unsafe and poses great risks to the salt miners, to anyone using Cayuga Lake, to anyone using the parks near the mine, and to anyone living near the under-the-lake portion of the mine.

Previous Cargill-produced studies indicate that there is only 0-80 feet of carbonate beam preventing the lake from collapsing into the mine, i.e., less than existed at the Retsof Mine in Livingston County when it collapsed in 1994, ending the 100+ year run of what at the time was the largest salt mine in North America. More recent seismic studies conducted by Cargill remain secret and have not been released pursuant to FOILs for them. Full disclosure and third-party vetting remains absent. Our consultants advise us that a complete halt to all mining is now the safer option and indeed the only sensible option.

Given the extraction ratio problem, it's no accident that the Hampton Corner's mine is almost twice as productive as Cayuga Salt Mine and it's no accident that Cayuga Salt Mine remains unsold almost a year after Cargill has put it quietly on the market. Given the safety problems, it's time to shut this mine down rather than extend the mine permit. Cargill wants out and the local community wants the mine closed.

CLEAN is engaging scientists to study whether a vortex caused by a mine collapse could “take out” the delta portion Taughannock State Park (and the people there at the time!) just as the vortex caused in 1980 when Lake Peigneur drained into the Diamond Crystal Salt Mine sucked in 65 acres of a nearby botanic garden. Lake Peigneur was only 3’ deep on average and 1,225 acres in size compared to Cayuga Lake’s much greater depth and 42,000 acres in size. Following that accident, Lake Peigneur--formerly a freshwater lake—today remains too saline for its water to be potable. About 100,000 people drink Cayuga Lake water every day.

-Close this mine; don’t let the mine permit be extended in any way, and

-Require Cargill to post a \$10B environmental bond with NYS until all the mine voids have closed, a process that can take >200 years.

With great respect,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JVD', with a stylized flourish at the end.

John V. Dennis, PhD

Co-founder of CLEAN