

Dear Representative Ritter, Senator Gerrantana, Representative Tercyak, and Committee Clerk Morgan,

I am writing to strongly encourage you to do what you can to stop three current threats to our drinking water. In the wake of the disaster in Flint, Michigan, I believe that we need to do everything we can to protect this vital resource, and can hardly believe that the three proposals are being considered. Clerk Morgan, I would greatly appreciate it if you can forward my comments to the other members of the Public Health Committee.

Two of these proposals have to do with commercial development in reservoir watersheds, which as I understand is currently rightly prohibited by state legislation. The first is the ill-conceived plan to put a gas pipeline through MDC reservoirs in West Hartford. Writing as a biologist, it seems that the displacement of soil and vegetation that would result from digging the pipeline would inevitably lead to destabilization and runoff into the reservoirs, and disrupt the continuity of the forested land that the pipeline traverses. New “edge” habitat along the pipeline would provide access to predators of forest birds’ eggs and nestlings, and for birds that need uninterrupted woodland, would make the habitat unusable. Birds eat many insects that can damage and even kill trees, so keeping healthy bird populations will help to keep the whole forest healthy and playing its current role in stabilizing land and preventing erosion around the reservoirs. It is not even clear that a pipeline is needed, as we move increasingly toward renewable energy sources. Additionally, the precedent that would be set by this project would lead to an increasing onslaught of requests that would further threaten our drinking water supply.

The second is Tilcon’s request for a 40-year lease to mine gravel in the Shuttle Meadow reservoir watershed. Again, runoff into the drinking water reservoir is a major threat; as a CCSU professor, that is the water that my students and I, as well as the rest of the town, are drinking. Forest habitat disruption there would be huge (the lease would cover 130 acres), with the same attendant problems as on the West Hartford reservoir property, and the same dangerous precedent setting.

The third threat is the MDC’s proposal to sell huge quantities of water (at a discount, no less!) to a Niagara bottling plant to be constructed in Bloomfield. Considering how low the reservoirs and rivers have gotten in recent drought years, this seems like an incredibly bad idea. I don’t understand why the MDC is looking for new, high-volume customers when out of the other side of their mouth they are encouraging citizens to conserve water. As a non-profit chartered organization, they should not be looking to make more money by threatening the water supply of the citizens who depend on them.

Thank you very much for your attention to these problems, and please keep me informed on your planned course of action on them.

Sincerely,

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