

Public Hearing – Monday, March 18, 2019
Environment Committee

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Katie S. Dykes

Senate Bill No. 585 Raised – AN ACT CONCERNING AIR QUALITY MONITORING IN TOWNS NEAR THE CRICKET VALLEY ENERGY CENTER

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding Senate Bill 585 Raised – An Act Concerning Air Quality Monitoring in Towns near the Cricket Valley Energy Center. The purpose of this bill is to require DEEP to provide technical assistance and support to any municipality that purchases air monitoring equipment with the intent of obtaining air quality baseline data.

The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) is concerned that this proposal will be difficult to implement because ambient air quality monitoring as outlined in this bill cannot determine the impact from a single source within the entire air shed yet would require the expenditure of considerable state and local resources.

DEEP understands that the intent is to monitor air quality to determine the effect, if any, of the Cricket Valley Energy Center (CVEC) on Connecticut communities in the Housatonic River Valley. Technical support from DEEP would include the best practices for establishing a baseline and guidance on the siting, maintenance, data retrieval schedules and analysis of any data produced from such monitors.

DEEP appreciates the concern of the towns potentially affected by the new CVEC facility. DEEP has been responsive to inquiries from officials in the Housatonic Valley and has worked with the communities to address their concerns and provide assistance within the constraints of our resources. DEEP has worked to advance citizen science through co-locating low cost monitors at ambient air quality monitoring sites. It is also important to note that vendors for this equipment include technical support services such as information on siting, maintenance, and data retrieval for such monitors as specified in the bill.

DEEP cautions that any air quality monitoring set up with the intent to determine the precise impacts of CVEC operations would be of limited utility given the type and size of plant. Even highest actual emissions coincident with worst case weather conditions intended to create a maximum impact at a specific air quality monitor would be well within air quality standards designed to protect public health, as demonstrated by the permit modeling reviewed by the New York Department of Environmental Conservation (NYDEC). DEEP reviewed the NYDEC permitting documents and the air quality impacts of CVEC at a Connecticut monitor. Those documents indicate a finding that the air quality is expected to be far below the National Ambient Air Quality standards, which establish health based limits for potentially harmful air pollutants.

DEEP regrets that the limited notice provided by the CVEC project to Connecticut residents caused concern and has amended its standard operating procedure so that federally mandated public notices DEEP receives from NYDEC are now posted through the DEEP notice webpage. DEEP hopes that this increased transparency will help Connecticut residents remain aware of potential projects that may impact them and provide greater opportunity for more meaningful participation going forward.

DEEP appreciates the opportunity to comment on this bill. If you should require any additional information, please contact Mandi Careathers, our legislative liaison, at (860) 424-3109 or Mandi.Careathers@ct.gov.