

To: Army Corps of Engineers
From: Fayal Greene, P.O. Box 759, Claverack, NY 12513 (518) 851-3818
RE: St. Lawrence Cement Greenport Plant Proposal

Dear Army Corps of Engineers:

I plan to attend the hearings at Columbia-Greene Community College on March 18 and 19, but wish also to send you my opinion of this project in writing.

I have been a resident of Columbia County, full- or part-time, since 1967. My husband's family farmed in the Hudson Valley for many generations. I am a member of most of the organizations that make up the Hudson Valley Preservation Coalition - especially Concerned Women of Claverack, of Friends of Hudson, of Olana and of other organizations such as the Boards of Friends of Clermont and the Eastern New York Chapter of The Nature Conservancy. In other words, I devote a large proportion of my time and energy to studying and working on preservation and conservation projects both here in the Hudson Valley and on the larger scale.

In every context, from visual impact to water quality, from economic effects to clean air concerns, the St. Lawrence Cement proposal is inappropriate and would bring nothing but harm to the area in which the company wishes to build it. When I first came to this area, Hudson was a moribund town, dangerous, depressed and gray with grit spewed from the old cement plants. It has taken nearly 30 years just to clean it up and rehabilitate houses and other buildings in the city and surrounding towns like Claverack, where I live. To the surprise of everyone, especially people who grew up here and only knew the town as it had been for a couple of generations before the plant closings in 1976, Hudson is a beautiful small city, full of graceful reminders of the prosperity brought by whaling and other businesses that flourished before the economy fell into the hands of a single disfiguring industry.

It is in the interest of no one except a couple of exploitive foreign companies to build a hulking industrial complex that would loom over the existing town, spewing pollution from its kilns that may be used to burn toxic waste as well as coal - in itself a producer of toxic smoke. It's in only their interest to run a two-mile conveyor through residential areas of the city, making noise and dust 24/7/365. Only they would benefit from a huge docking facility on the river, serving barges larger than a Hudson city block and embellished with heaps of grey/black slag and coal awaiting transferral. The little park the company proposes to make on an acre or two of waterfront property would be completely overshadowed, and the racket of constant loading and unloading would hardly add up to a relaxing riverside experience.

The water quality of the river would be compromised by the very presence of these huge docking facilities as well as by the heavy oil waste thrown off by the

barges' engines. The plant itself would be right next to our backup water supply. Yes, this is a NIMBY issue - my neighbors and I may have to rely on that water for drinking. It belongs to us, not to the Canadians or the Swiss.

As plant opponents have pointed out since we first read SLC's Draft Environmental Statement, the company itself says that "there is no new net spending in the regional economy in the future". No matter how many ads they run in local media contradicting their own legal document, that "no new net spending" is the bottom line. We have heard endlessly about the ONE new job.

The company finally thought to say that, over time, attrition would produce opportunities to replace existing employees. But this would be a 1200-acre facility staffed by about 150 people. It would be automated, and most of those employees would be engineers trained in running automated open-face mines.

This sort of job is recruited nationally, often internationally. There are no throngs of unemployed engineers roaming the streets of Hudson.

In fact, there are no throngs of unemployed people of any kind roaming the streets of Hudson. This county is at nearly full employment, thanks to companies like Kaz and Traditions as well as agriculture, construction and less-skilled opportunities in the service sector. We would all like to see more, better jobs in the area - in clean, productive businesses with potential for growth. The city is attracting investors who are starting textile companies, an alternative energy company and an organic market as well as several new restaurants to serve our rapidly-growing tourist trade. But this investment will cease if the town sinks back into the squalor of the 60s and 70s, and tourists will find somewhere else, that has kept its natural and historic beauty, to spend their recreational dollars.

Filling the air with pollution would be the most devastating and persistent of the ill-effects of allowing a gigantic cement plant to operate in Hudson. This is a highly-populated area where the air quality is already quite compromised, partly thanks to the cement and power plants of the Midwest, whose particulate matter and chemicals are wafted our way by the prevailing winds. SLC regularly claims that they can work magic, making several million pounds of pollution less polluting than the thousands they produce now. The real alternative to this Alice-in-Wonderland math would be to stop showering us with any pollution at all. We are not children, to be fooled by constant repetitions of nonsense.

I wish every person in this area had been able to hear Bonnie Sanders of South Camden, New Jersey, voice her impassioned plea, "Don't let them do to you what they did to us!" South Camden is a city for which the term "environmental racism" was coined - SLC is one of four or five companies that have made that city the tragic place it is today. If they had all heard Mrs. Sanders describe her grandchildren's battles with asthma, or speak about the people in the community whose lives were cut short by exposure to massive pollution levels, these hearings would have come to an end that day, and the St. Lawrence Cement plant would never be permitted in this place.

Sincerely yours, Fayal Greene