

# TRICOUNTY NEWS

## A Section of the *Mountain Eagle*

Volume 6, No. 37

mountaineaglenews@gmail.com

FRIDAY, September 10, 2021

\$1.00

THE CATSKILLS GEOLOGISTS BY ROBERT AND JOHANNA TITUS

## Ripple Marks

Our recent columns have been taking us on two very different explorations. First, we have been hiking up the Blue Trail at North Lake. But we have been doing something quite different at the very same time. We have also been working our ways across several Devonian age river channels. What a strange thing to say. Those stream disappeared from history about 385 million years ago. How can we make such a claim?

Hiking the trail is easy. It's swimming across ancient streams that is the hard part. Well, it can be done – if you are a geol-

ogist. Four weeks ago, we "jumped into" the deepest, fastest flowing part of one of those streams and saw that the flow had shaped its sandy sediments into what are called trough cross beds. three weeks ago, we "swam out" into the stream and saw planar cross beds. Last week we got past the middle and almost to the other side of one stream and saw flat lying sandstone strata.

We, in fact, were looking at stratified sedimentary rocks and, as geologists, interpreting their origins. Their sandy sediments had accumulated



in stream channels and the dynamics of the river flows had shaped their strata. Our job was relatively simple; we just had to recognize what was there. We already knew about those structures and how they had formed. This week let's finish

our "swim." We started out on the deep side of the river. We swam across it and now we are walking ashore on the shallow side of one of these rivers. This is the quiet side and what we see are waves lapping onto the sands of this shore. Such waves

shape the sand into what we call ripple marks. Look at our photo. We look down upon these and place ourselves along the quiet shore of an ancient river. We feel 385-million-year-old waves washing past our bare feet. What an experience!

You are, we hope, learning how we geologists think when we are out there doing our science. But the best way for you to complete your understanding is to go to North Lake and hike the Blue Trail yourself. Follow in our footsteps. If you have hiked the Catskills before, it is likely that you simply walked past all those

sandstone ledges. But now we are asking you to stop and look. Can you see into these sandstones and determine their origins? Can you travel into the past and see these sands as they formed and the river environments that they formed? Can you visit other trails throughout the Catskills and do the same? If so – then you are learning. It's fun, isn't it?

And that is why we write these columns.

Contact the authors at randjtitus@prodigy.net. Join their facebook page "The Catskill Geologist." Read their blogs at "thecatskillgeologist.Com."

## Letters to the Editor Continued from A4

forward with the noble goal of evacuating everyone. Countless lives were saved thanks to the unwavering courage and honor of first responders.

In the years following September 11th, many more first responders would perish as a result of disease and sickness associated with toxins exposed at the attack sites. These valiant and heroic rescue efforts resulted in a very painful price.

Every one of the victims who died was the most important person on earth to somebody. We must never forget that.

The country became united that day. The unity of our nation on that day is still a vivid memory for me.

In closing, I ask you to take some time and educate our youth on the events of that day. Tell them about the sacrifices. Tell them about the innocent lives lost. Tell them about the togetherness we all experienced in the days, weeks and months that followed. Tell them we can unite as a Country for the good of all Americans. To me, that is the most important reflection of September 11th.

May God Bless the victims, the first responders and every American as we remember this solemn day.

Very respectfully,  
Sheriff Craig S.  
DuMond

### Regarding Hughes Energy

Regarding your article, "Foes Trash Garbage Processing Plant Proposal" (September 3, 2021), I would like to offer several considerations:

01. To my knowledge, no one and no local Town Board invited Hughes Energy to build its plant in Grand Gorge at the juncture

of Delaware and Greene counties; moreover, other New York State Counties on whose doors Hughes has come knocking have yet to bid it welcome;

02. That is one reason among many that residents of Prattsville and Roxbury, and of other locales who number almost a thousand, object (as your article notes) to turn the proposed site "not only [into] a dumping ground for municipal solid waste from a fifty mile radius, but also a guinea pig for a green energy project not yet thoroughly established...";

03. Why risk this last corner of the Catskills' natural beauty, resources, resurgence of local businesses, agriculture and tourism when a variance was recently "granted to the Delaware County Solid Waste Management Facility ... by the New York state Department of Environmental Conservation [that] will add another 40 to 60 years' capacity to the landfill,"

04. Similar plants in Ireland and England were reported to have been shut down; the pollution of air, noise, water and particulates that those and the seven-story plant Hughes proposes are well known emissions that are not easily contained over our surrounding towns, fields, waterways, woodlands and wildlife;

05. Such a plant close to the New York Watershed rivers and reservoirs poses both a local problem as well as another much larger for the pristine drinking water sent downstate;

06. The immediate task for concerned citizens is to urge the Department of Environmental Conservation "to make a 'Positive Declaration' for a full Environmental Impact Statement

for the project, which is of major, not minor import, as Hughes contends, to the entire state".

07. Write to:  
Alanah Keddell-Tuckey  
Acting Director at:  
(ej@dec.ny.gov)  
518-402-8556  
toll free  
866-229-0497

And to the still vacant office of the:

Northern District Office  
- Covers Regions 4 at: central.dispatch@dec.ny.gov  
(518) 357-2256  
(518) 357-2291

Ralph Della Cava  
Forty year resident of Grand Gorge

### Hughes Energy Proposal

The September 3, 2021 article on pages E 1 & 4 by Julia Marks was informative, insightful, and thoroughly descriptive of local responses to the proposed Hughes Energy project, but there were mistakes. You must have already noticed the mistake in the headline--Garage instead of Garbage. Okay, just a typo. However, in the article she repeatedly referred to the site of the proposed trash treatment facility as Prattsville. Clearly it would be located in Grand Gorge, Town of Roxbury, Delaware County, although it would affect Prattsville as much, and the company would be applying to use Prattsville's sewer system. Roxbury Supervisor Allen Hinkley made reference to tax benefits, and that is one of the questionable points for Prattsville taxpayers, as it would not be located in that town and they would not get land taxes.

Now here are my questions and objections. Immediately when the Hughes project was first mentioned in The Mountain Eagle a

year or more ago, I called Mr. Hinkley and warned that the truck traffic through Roxbury and Grand Gorge and other Delaware County towns would greatly increase. Greene and Schoharie County villages and main streets would also be affected. I also mentioned to him a Town of Roxbury law that was passed when my late husband and I spearheaded opposition from neighbors to a proposed C and D Transfer station on land that used to be part of my parent's farm, within sight and hearing distance of our home and very much closer to several other residences. (That site was also just off of Route 23, with poor line-of-sight and pull-off conditions.) First we got a moratorium on building the transfer station and then regulations for such facilities were passed on April 14, 2008. The Greene-Del business was established after that. Recently I learned that Greene-Del was not used for just C & D waste but also household trash, along with a rat problem that developed. I sincerely hope that the Roxbury Town Board will not ignore the requirements of that local law, if this proposal should come to approval by NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, NYC Department of Environmental Protection, and NYS Department Of Transportation, though I can hardly imagine that it would. The same traffic problems applied then as now, as well as noise, air, and water pollution concerns.

Mr. McSpedon of Hughes Energy kept quoting the traffic total to Greene-Del as "45 vehicles a day". While that may be technically true, notice that he did not say "45 tractor-trailers". That is all that keeps

the statement from being a lie. If that was true of the Green-Del transfer station when it was operating, what I understand and others have said, is that the vehicles were mostly pickup trucks, some big trash trucks, plus some cars or SUVs. Were those included in the 45? The 54 trucks-a-day projected by Hughes would be tractor-trailers. Does anyone want to clarify, verify, or correct me on this?

On first hearing, an "organic waste high-speed composting facility" sounds wonderful, aside from questions of location. But other reflections keep popping up in my mind. I scoffed at someone's idea that "raw sewage" would be trucked in, but then I thought about diapers, both baby and adult sizes. Does this machine actually separate the plastic outer layer from the fluffy wet inner layers and from the "poo"? What about the plastic bags that dog owners use when they walk their dogs, or cat litter? What part is "organic" and available to go into the end-products of this Wilson System, the loose fiber and the fuel pellets? I know that all incoming trash gets sterilized, but the thought of certain inputs to my paper-mache cup cozy is a little unsettling.

The system also separates recyclables, shown in the Hughes Company slide presentation as various beverage containers, but "plastic" means not just bottles. It also includes the tons of bags our trash is in, as well as those disposable diapers, meat and vegetable trays and wraps, other packaging, plus household aluminum foil and trays, metal notebook spirals, staples, and rusty nails, batteries (not everyone separates), dirty old clothes, street trash

clean-up, medicines, print ink, other chemical and paint residues, and you-name-it. This is really some magical system that can purify all that, but what happens to these elements that have to be removed? Isn't that tons of waste that still has to be trucked out to be buried or burned somewhere? Further, I have heard, but I don't have the energy to research it, that currently our separated recyclables do not have a market and are possibly being dumped anyway.

Regarding location, it would seem sensible to build in a place where there is already space for trash, like Seneca Meadows. The local people are used to it though they may not like it, but presumably it is not favored by tourists as the Catskills are. Trucks already go there, from NYC and other downstate areas, I think. Some of the old buried stuff could be excavated, reducing methane. Perhaps a heavy building on top of a dump would be unstable, but probably no more so than over a site known traditionally as Clay Hill. I hope the Hughes engineers are taking that potentially slippery underlayer into account for the access road and processing facility. (The proposed location, as shown on their terrain map, is not actually over the higher Greene-Del site. That brings up the question of whether that older site will be cleaned up as part of the project, if it gets approved.) Before I get further into speculation, I'll quit writing, but those are my thoughts, and I hope not just your readers but also our tax-paid officials at DEC, etc., are paying attention to these questions.

Joyce C. DeVivo  
Grand Gorge



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