October 24, 2012

Director of the Office of Civil Rights
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Mail code 1201A
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Director,

I live in Newburgh, NY and ride the Newburgh – Beacon ferry service every day for the past 2 years. The ferry is subsidized by public funds and is part of the MTA, New York Waterways "private contract", public utility service.

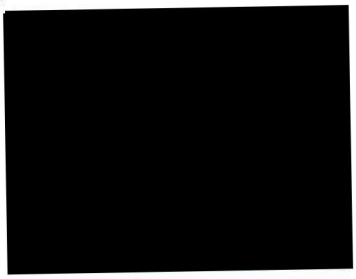
We recently acquired a new captain who along with a deck hand/employee are excessively littering cigarettes, Styrofoam cups, cigarette packs, and other debris into the Hudson River Estuary. I confronted the captain 3 months ago and began taking pictures (July, 2012). Since I have been threatened by the captian "you better watch out when you try to get back on this ferry", harassed each day with even more frivolous displays of dumping in the river, along with rude comments. I have contacted NY Waterways and they won't respond although they say they are.

On October 11, 2012. At 5:45 am the captain and employee entered the ferry and told everyone "we are not moving until (I) leave the ferry (I) am not allowed to be on the ferry". I called the local police and stated that this is illegal etc…and a fellow rider who went outside and spoke to the captain came back in and started screaming at me to exit the ferry, stating he was an NYPD officer. Showed no badge, and quickly flashed what looked like a drivers license. I became scared and stood up, the passenger "shouldered" me out of the ferry where all three surrounded me and I was saying that this is illegal and you can not do this and the passenger "NYPD officer" pushed me very hard off the ferry on to the dock, and they pulled the boat away simultaneously. The local police arrived after the ferry left and refused to do anything. I understand many people called NY Waterways in concern of my treatment. Many others have witnessed all of this behavior over the last 3 months.

I have contacted NY waterways and MTA with no response, except a woman named Bernice with NY Waterways (180053ferry, push option 2, and ask for Bernice Ramos) who has known about all of this since the beginning and says she is taking care of the matter, but never responds. Bernice told my partner who called that I was allowed to ride the ferry the day after this "removal" occurred. They said there is an investigation and that a man would contact me, but no one has. They won't provide a written document that I am allowed to ride the ferry- which I requested.

The local police will not let me press charges?? After talking with the DA's office in Goshen, NY- he advised to go back to the police chief which I have done- I do have an appointment with an officer tonight however at 7:00pm and I am trying press charges of harassment on all 3 people as part of this case.

My rights to "whistle blow" on illegal behavior in regards to a federally regulated waterway along with the blatant discrimination and illegal denial of access to a public utility are of major concerns. Also the neglect of entities like NY Waterways and MTA to address the situation before it escalated into this is of major concern. I walk home everyday and fear that these men will take this further.

Your help in standing up for what is right and ensuring these entities are aware of their bad business practice and ethics is greatly appreciated and needed.

Sincerely,