Judith Enck Exit Interviews with the Media

January 11 – 18, 2017

New York One Interview; Inside City Hall with Josh Robin; January 11, 2017
http://www.ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/inside-city-hall/2017/01/12/ny1-online--environmental-concerns.html?utm_content=buffer0e585&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer

Editorials & Letter to the Editor

Letter: Kudos to Enck for a job well done
To the editor Published 4:45 pm, Thursday, January 12, 2017
http://www.timesunion.com/tuplus-opinion/article/Letter-Kudos-to-Enck-for-a-job-well-done-10853989.php

I was heartened to see Fred LeBrun's column about Judith Enck's successful tenure at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ("Enck quitting EPA, not battle for nature," Jan. 1). Enck was a dedicated and shrewd public servant in the best sense of the phrase.

A number of years ago, we took air quality samples from in and around the Amtrak train station in Rensselaer. The lab sent the samples back and indicated the levels of carcinogens (mainly from diesel fuel fumes) in the air was high and dangerous to human health. We sent the results and request for help to state agencies and to Enck at EPA Region 2. She was the only official to respond.

Through her leadership, she was able to get Amtrak to meet with the citizens of Rensselaer and discuss the many concerns they had with noise, air pollution and other issues. As a result, we successfully negotiated to have 17 locomotives retrofitted with wiring harnesses to enable them to idle on electricity instead of diesel fuel for a far greater percentage of the time they were in the station for service. It resulted in greatly reduced emissions from burning diesel fuel.

We are indebted to Enck and her willingness to listen and respond to citizens' request for help. Having her continue to battle for nature and our environment is very much a positive for the Capital Region.

Pete Sheehan
Chairman, Sierra Club Hudson Mohawk Group
Albany

LeBrun: Enck quitting EPA, not battle for nature
Fred LeBrun
Updated 5:21 pm, Sunday, January 1, 2017

http://www.timesunion.com/tuplus-local/article/LeBrun-Enck-quitting-EPA-not-battle-for-nature-10828913.php

Photo: Will Waldron

EPA Regional Administrator Judith Enck speaks during a press conference at Indian Ladder Farms where she announced updates to the Worker Protection Standards for farmworkers on Thursday, Aug. 18, 2016, New Scotland, N.Y. The standers were updated in order to better protect the nation s farmworkers from pesticide exposure. Some improvements include a national minimum age requirement for handling pesticides - workers must now be at least 18 - and a requirement that pesticide application information and safety information be provided to all farmworkers. The new rules go into effect January 2017, according to the EPA. (Will Waldron/Times Union)

After a biblical seven years as the Environmental Protection Agency's regional administrator whose domain included New York, Judith Enck is stepping down from her federal job on Inauguration Day, Jan. 20.

She says the departure wasn't influenced by the presidential election. Although, she is quick to admit, the surprise winner has become an unexpected factor on what's next for her. But more about that later.

We were very lucky to have Judith where she was, for as long as she was. Solid environmental clout on our behalf. The Hudson River is much the better for it. So are the residents of the South End of Albany at the Ezra Prentice Homes, struggling with bad air quality at the port; the residents of Hoosick Falls with dangerously contaminated drinking water; and countless others in New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands.

Think for a moment where we would be with Hoosick, with the Hudson, if she had not become personally involved. If she had not stirred direct community support and awareness, her trademark approach borne of long years as a grassroots environmental activist who lit so many fires for specific causes. Judith knows New York, its political landscape and environmental challenges from years of grassroots work with the New York Public Interest Research Group, eight years with the state attorney general's office and three years as deputy secretary for the environment in the governor's office. Born in Brooklyn, raised in the nearby Greene County village of Cairo, she and her husband, attorney Mark Dunlea, will be returning to their home of many years in Rensselaer County.

The Hudson and Hoosick Falls. We were witnesses to these enormous challenges, and accomplishments.

At the top of the list has to be the phenomenal success of dredging the Hudson River, or more properly, getting General Electric to clean up much of its own mess. For Judith, this was virtually a life's work. She was involved at the state level during the long and painful negotiations over the consent order that led to the biggest Superfund dredging project in the country. Then it fell to her at the EPA to make sure it happened. It did, after a few fits and starts.

While the EPA is still technically reviewing whether GE met its legal obligations under the consent order, Enck says she is confident they did. Two thirds of the PCBs in the river are gone. At the moment, the Cuomo administration is jumping up and down in a political dance, demanding more dredging, and claiming it's the EPA's responsibility. Enck agrees there should be more dredging, and that the Champlain canal should be dredged as well, but strongly disagrees it's her agency's job to get it done. Throughout the long dredging negotiation process, the state was well aware of the dredging that would need to be done beyond the consent order and how that has to happen. It's the state's responsibility to hold General Electric accountable.

What makes the Cuomo administration's posturing laughable is that the governor infamously tried to play politics over future dredging when he was courting GE to move its corporate headquarters to Westchester County. It was part of the governor's "a lot of love on the table" gambit that failed. Now that strategy is biting him in the butt and he and his henchfolk are trying to take it out on the EPA.

The governor and Judith Enck are oil and water. Anyone who knows the governor's tactics would not doubt him capable of trying to sully her legacy accomplishment. Ever since she helped block a bald raid by the Cuomo crowd on a revolving EPA municipal

infrastructure fund to pay for a big chunk of the new Tappan Zee bridge, the two have been at odds.

It got even nastier with Hoosick Falls and its PFOA water crisis. When Enck stepped in and declared the water undrinkable, ironically, a far clearer path to a resolution for the residents began to emerge from the misdirected bureaucratic murk in which Cuomo's Health Department was wallowing.

Which is by no means to say residents are well down the path to wellness, or trust in government. No. Events just this week invite dark speculation, with the mayor and village board canceling a public hearing and a vote on an agreement with polluter Saint Gobain for, among other things, $850,000 in reimbursements to the village. Speculation might relate to the "among other things" column, or what might be missing from the agreement altogether. As far as I know, oddly no one in the public has seen the agreement yet.

Enck wants the residents of Hoosick Falls to know that designation of the village as a federal Superfund site, with all that can mean and bring, is set to happen in March. And if it doesn't, it's because monkey business from the new regime has somehow cast a wrench into it. Enck, as an exiting observation, cautions the residents to keep themselves informed, stay skeptical and buckle up. It's going to be a long ride.
So Judith Enck, 58, after 254 public speeches, and running an office with 800 employees with an annual budget of $700 million, is back to being an activist force of one. She is weighing options. Judith has abandoned what she thought she'd be doing because the man stepping in the White House appears bent on dismantling environmental protection. So she has vowed to fight that, in what guise is yet to be revealed.

"I've got to do more than worry. I'm going to be a watchdog. Environmental protection is just in my blood."
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Judith Enck Farewell Speech

January 11, 2017
New York, NY

Apollo 13 was the 7th manned space mission by NASA. It is also a great movie, starring Tom Hanks, Kevin Bacon and Ed Harris.

Iconic scene is when the astronauts realize an oxygen tank exploded, the computers keep going on and off, the power is starting to fail and the space module is banging and shimmying.

Tom Hanks calmly says the famous line “Houston, we have a problem.”

What happens next is all the men at mission control in Houston start to focus on the severity of what is happening.
They talked about how this had never happened before and they have no viable way home for these astronauts.

They had no contingency plan, and at the same time the rocket cabin was filling up with dangerous levels of co2 gas.

They needed to improvise and figure out how to get the astronauts out of danger.

They instinctively started working as a team.

One group was given the assignment of putting a square piece of equipment into a round hole.

And they did it.

Another team had to figure out the power source.

And they did.

They methodically were working toward a solution and then a senior NASA guy shows up says “this could be the worst disaster in the history of NASA.”

Ed Harris responds: “I believe this is going to be our finest hour.”

When I think about the months ahead for the women and men who work at EPA, I believe this is going to be the finest hour for EPA’s career professional staff.

You are going to figure out how to navigate a new administration that for starters, does acknowledge the risks of climate change. Just one small example.

From what we know about the public statements of the incoming administration, this is going to be a challenging time at EPA.

After cake and coffee, I know the wise and cautious thing for me to do today is recite a

long list of our collective accomplishments over the past few years, thank a bunch of people and end with an inspiring quote from Eleanor Roosevelt.

But, I respect all of you too much to do that.

I have given 252 speeches during my tenure at EPA. This is the most important one. I am going to talk about why each and every one of you need to be the firewall. The firewall that prevents over 40 years of environmental protection policies from being compromised.

You are the best positioned to preserve EPA's role, as the career professionals. Each and every one of you.

This is not partisan. It is not intended to be disrespectful to the incoming Administration. When you match up the policy positions of the incoming Administration with the statutory responsibilities of EPA, it is reasonable to be concerned.

I have been thinking about, what would I do if I were an EPA career professional in 2017.

Here are 6 specific ideas:

1. Never be a part of a decision at EPA that will compromise public health or the environment.

   Rarely will it be black and white: these situations are always shades of grey, but if your radar goes up and you are tossing and turning at night about it, take notice.

   Talk to people at EPA whose opinion you trust.

   Be brave. Speak up, even if your voice quivers.

   Become familiar with the federal whistleblower law. Never ever be part of a decision that will compromise public health.

   Don't rely on the familiar line "we will leave it to that states" It is their job but it is <u>also</u> our job to protect health and the environment.

2. Never ever, ever, do anything that is unethical. When I first started, briefing in the White House was by the White House Council.

   Region 2 Ethics Officer is Mitch Cohen.

3. Pay attention to the national news and in particular what may happen with the EPA budget. Not just articles people send you on Facebook, but read major reputable news outlets.

And subscribe to your local newspaper. Journalism is not free. Local newspapers are closing and laying off staff. The Bergen record in New Jersey, broke the Bridgegate story. I am not sure they would have the resources to do that today.

4. Put your members of Congress phone numbers into your phone. While you cannot speak on behalf of EPA to Congress, you can exercise your First Amendment rights and speak as an individual to your elected representatives. Members of Congress don't pay much attention to online petitions or cookie cutter emails, but they sure do pay attention when you their constituents call them.
5. Get involved in EPA's special emphasis programs. I especially encourage you to support the LGBTQ program -- This is not a great time for our gay, lesbian and transgender brothers and sisters. We will soon have a Vice President who promoted a law when he was governor that would allow businesses <u>not</u> to serve gay, lesbian and transgender people. After a storm of public criticism, he backed down, but what in the world was he thinking?

We need our elected officials to embrace diversity and not discriminate against <u>anyone</u>. My gay and lesbian friends are feeling vulnerable right now. Many communities feel vulnerable right now. We have an opportunity every day to offer visible support by making sure Region 2 is a welcoming workplace.

6. I don't think there will be a successful effort to repeal the Clean Air Act or the

Clean Water Act, but there may be an effort to gut the EPA budget, including cutting staff.

What is your best response? Join the union. You cannot make public statements on behalf of the agency, but the union can.

And don't just join the union, become active in the union.

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Remember why you came to work here in the first place. Clean drinking water, clean air, fight climate change, protect wetlands, clean up toxic waste sites, promote sustainability, rely on sound science.

Here in Region 2, over the past 7 years together, we got a lot done.

I know for many of the division directors, each year felt like a dog year or a cat year. They feel like I have been here much longer than 7 years, because we have been working very hard.

I am the longest serving Region 2 Regional Administrator. I know I pushed everyone hard and I did that because the stakes are so high. The environment is so degraded, the threat of climate change is so severe, we at EPA have to make every day count.

Just a few of the accomplishments I want to highlight:

Getting New York City to remove PCB lighting in 854 public schools – the largest energy efficiency upgrade in the country.

Getting PCBs out of the Hudson River, and getting the clean-up plan for the Passaic River approved.

Eight million people live in NYC. We are protecting their drinking water that originates in the Catskills and we have added 3 new federal superfund sites in NYC in the past 7 years (Gowanus, Newtown creek and Wolf Alpert) while prior to that there was only one federal superfund site in NYC in the past 30 years. (Radium Chemical Corporation)

We got a lot done in Puerto Rico: Working closely with the Cano Martin Pena low income community, working to restore Vieques and Culebra and getting recycling and composting launched, also in the USVI. Puerto Rico and USVI have just banned plastic bags.

We made sure precious clean water SRF funding was not diverted for the construction of the Tapanzee Bridge and we stood up for the people of Hoosick Falls who were not informed that they were drinking water contaminated with PFOA. We took the audacious step of telling them the truth.

This is way too wonky, but we established 9 new “no discharge zones” that protects water quality from sewage from boats. From 1976 to 2003, 9 No Discharge Zones were approved by Region 2. We did 9 in the past 7 years. Good metrics.

We reduced air toxics at Tonawanda Coke in western NY by 90 percent.

We also had incredible sadness:

Hurricane Sandy.

The Esmond Family from Delaware who were on vacation in the US Virgin Islands and were poisoned by one illegal pesticide application. The two teenage boys and the father have permanent neurological damage and will never recover from that one pesticide exposure.

Zika. 37,000 confirmed cases in Puerto Rico and 900 in USVI.

Puerto Rico, major major economic problems that will cripple the island. Do everything you can to support the work of CEPD.

Do details, shift resources, spend any extra time you can muster reaching out to your CEPD colleagues and offering help - the pollution problems in Puerto Rico are the very definition of environmental injustice. As Region 2, WE CAN DO MORE, in Puerto Rico. A little bit of work gets real results there.

Going forward

Take care of one another.

Go to the movies. A lot. See La La Land and other happy musicals.

Don't isolate yourself.

Rely on the smart, savvy leadership we have in place here in Region 2 today.

EPA has accomplished so much.

Acid rain levels are down 60 percent over the past 25 years.

For years, leaded gasoline threatened the health of our kids, impacting their ability to learn. While there are still major problems with lead, EPA's policy to phase out lead in gasoline got results. In the late 1970's, 88 of American kids had elevated lead levels in their blood. By the mid-2000, the number dropped to less than 1 percent.
Not long ago, DDT was wiping out our national symbol – the bald eagle. EPA banned the use of DDT in 1972 and since then the bald eagle has bounced back and in 2007 was taken off the Endangered Species list.

All of these things would not have happened without the EPA. I want to thank you for all you have taught me. Thank you for welcoming me as your colleague

Thank you's:

George Pavlou

Catherine McCabe

All the division directors:

Mary Mears

Walter Mugdan

Dore LaPosta

Eric Schaaf

John Filippelli

Rich Manna

Anahita Williamson

Javier Laureano

Carmen Guerrero

also, Pat Evangelista

Everyone who served as a special assistant:

Leena Raut

Becky Ofrane

Kevin Hurley

Annette Poliwka

Rob Alvey

Steve Carrea

Andrew Fessler

Our current special assistant: Tom Mongelli, absolutely amazing.

Claudia Gutierrez: was my first special assistant with Leena Raut and we never let her leave. Caribbean Advisor. Staffed the White House Task Force on Puerto Rico.

Fed Cap: April, Clyde, Cece, Milton, Don

Administrator professionals in the RA's office:

Maureen Hickey – today!

Beth Soltani

Miss Jackie Grayson

Lynn Khoury – today in help

Nancy Beck!

Lisa Plevin, Chief of Staff

My family:

Mark Dunlea, 34 years

Reed Dunlea, journalist

What's next: Mark and I are leaving Brooklyn and moving back to the house we built with our own hands on top of a mountain on a dirt road in Rensselaer county, outside Albany.

Working for President Barack Obama has been my great privilege

Lisa Jackson and Gina McCarthy.

"It has been the honor of my life to serve you. I won't stop; in fact, I will be right there with you, as a citizen, for all my remaining days." President Obama

All I can say to the President's eloquent words is:

Me too!

I have so much respect and admiration for all of you.

Despite the challenges ahead, I echo the words of the Apollo 13 movie: I believe this is going to be your finest hour.

Thank you.

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