



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Griffo calls for new notification system regarding low water levels at Hinckley Reservoir

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UTICA -- Recently I have received numerous calls from constituents concerned about water levels at the Hinckley Reservoir. This prompted me to contact the Mohawk Valley Water Authority, which confirmed that water levels had indeed been dropping due to a faster-than-normal rate of outflow. I further determined that water was being released from the reservoir at about two to three times the normal rate, which led me to contact the New York State Canal Corporation to explain this significant increase in outflow.

Officials at the Canal Corp revealed that the increase was the result of events that had occurred earlier this year. In the Spring, water outflow from the reservoir had been withheld at the request of Oneida County officials due to other water issues that concerned residents countywide. But as part of a contractual obligation with a power-generating facility downstream, the Canal Corp is required to supply a specific amount of water over a 14-month period. So due to the withholding of water in the Spring, coupled with a higher water level at the reservoir, Canal Corp decided that now is an appropriate time to provide the facility with the water it was owed from earlier this year.

I have been assured by the Canal Corp that the water will return to normal levels, and that they do not have any plans to release any water above their normal rates for the rest of the season.

Following events that occurred in 2007, which caused the reservoir to be significantly drained to a level of concern, an agreement was reached between the state, Oneida County and residents to ensure that the reservoir would not fall below a level deemed to be detrimental by all parties involved.

The Hinckley Reservoir has been an area of concern for a number of years, and I believe that residents should be more promptly made aware of any fluctuations in the water level. I am determined to ensure that the reservoir's water levels do not drop below the limit the Canal Corp has been allowed, and that they publicly account for any and all water outflows from the reservoir that concern residents.

This latest issue has led me to suggest the prospect of creating a more advanced notification system for residents surrounding the Hinckley Reservoir that goes beyond just allowing them to access water levels through the Canal Corp website. In addition, I would encourage a more timely notification system that may or may not be limited to email or text message alerts.

The Canal Corp has expressed the desire to work with me to develop a better system to notify residents of fluctuating reservoir levels in the future, and I look forward to those constructive conversations.