

April 11, 2008

Congressional Subcommittee Meeting on Water Resources and the Environment

Testimony by Town Supervisor, John Hickman

Good morning, my name is John Hickman and I am the Supervisor of the Town of East Fishkill. I would like to thank the Congressional Subcommittee on Water Resources and the Environment for meeting here in the Town of East Fishkill.

The Town of East Fishkill has two Superfund sites – one created by a contractor and another created by a business – who disposed of cleaning solvents carelessly, possibly criminally, seriously contaminating our groundwater. These activities continued unnoticed for decades resulting in widespread contamination by TCE, a silent, slow-acting, poison that affects unsuspecting people through groundwater contamination and vapor intrusion.

To those living in the affected areas, I can only say that people should not have to live such a nightmare. Indeed, the stories that I have heard first - hand of the health and developmental problems of families living in the Ryan Drive Superfund site are truly, truly heartbreaking and my heart goes out to those so affected.

I would like to commend the EPA on their response. In my capacity, dealing with Lorenzo Thantu and Damien Dudah of the EPA on the respective sites, I have found that both treat our citizens with sensitivity and understanding. I would state that the most frustrating part of the process is the time that it takes in analyzing the contamination, providing temporary services, and designing and implementing a remediation plan. It is indeed a long and drawn-out process.

I feel that we need stronger regulation and oversight, legislation and enforcement at a higher level, of individuals and businesses that use such chemicals so that we may prevent more Superfund sites from happening. Prevention of such situations is paramount, saving people the horrors of living in contaminated sites. In our case, sadly, when the damage has been done; we need help in protecting the health of our people and in the remediation of the contamination. The Town of East Fishkill does not have the resources to address such issues.

I would like to thank the members of the local group “Citizens for Clean Water” for their efforts in bringing the Ryan Drive situation to our attention. I would like to thank the members of this subcommittee for being here today. I would like to thank Congressmen John Hall and Maurice Hinchey for introducing legislation directing the EPA to set stricter regulations on TCE. We need your help in addressing an issue, not simply of contamination, but of families suffering tragically from daily exposure to TCE.