

New York State  
Department of Environmental  
Conservation  
2011 rdSGEIS comments

To Whom it May Concern:

In November 1947, brothers Sherman and Albert Kortright were working a nightshift, laying concrete for the dam that would create the Neversink Reservoir, the first completed in the city's Delaware Water Supply System. Albert Kortright, 22, had just been released from the Navy after serving in World War II, and like many local boys, he had come home to work on the massive water projects transforming his community. Three hundred and forty two people would lose their homes to the reservoir; the entire village of Neversink would disappear, as did dozens, from the map.

Sherman and Albert were standing atop a skeleton of steel, pouring concrete bucket by bucket into the form, when the unthinkable happened: the platform they stood on collapsed. Sherman grabbed a concrete bucket and swung back and forth in the air, watching in horror as Albert fell 50 feet to his death. Beneath Sherman's dangling feet, two more victims, Werner Giles and Lee Bridges, were buried alive by tons of loosed concrete. Lee Bridges left behind a wife and five children. The three fatalities were numbers 75, 76 and 77 on the Delaware project.

Today the Delaware Water System provides half of New York City's water. Add in the Catskills System and you have the source of 90 percent of the water that supports the life and labor of nine million New Yorkers. The metropolitan region cannot survive without it.

Undoubtedly, the DEC will receive many letters testifying to the irreplaceable nature of the watershed, and to the incalculable financial value of the infrastructure that delivers its bounty. New York City's water supply system is a marvel of engineering, a triumph of foresight and a model of public/private cooperation. It represents millions of man-hours of labor and billions of public dollars, as well as immeasurable sacrifice on the parts of thousands of residents who lost their homes in the service of the greater good. For my part, I would simply like to add to the record that it also represents hundreds of lost lives, Albert Kortright's being one. No protection asked for by the city can be too much for such a resource.

A seven-mile buffer around vital infrastructure seems trivial in comparison with hundreds of lives.

In protecting both the watershed and its infrastructure, the DEC should seek to err on the side of caution. To squander this precious and hard-won achievement would be to render the sacrifice of all these lives and livelihoods vain.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

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