

The Wave

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A Sane Plan

Pipeline protestors punctuate press conference with a whale watching tour

The Wave on October 03, 2019

By Ray Vann



State Senator Joe Addabbo met with activists on Sept. 27 to assure them that he was doing all he could to provide an eco-friendly future for the next generation. Photo by Ray Vann

Determined to keep the planned Williams Pipeline from “wreaking environmental havoc on the eco-systems around New York Harbor,” activist group Sane Energy Project held a press conference at Riis Landing on Friday, Sept. 27, to make its voices heard.

“This pipeline is not needed, and it’s a detriment to our environment and our planet,” Sane Energy director Kim Fraczek told those assembled. Fraczek also took aim at local gas companies, lambasting National Grid and their decision to deny new gas hookups to customers across the city.

“They want to build political pressure in order to push this pipeline through,” Fraczek said, explaining that not only could National Grid connect with other already existing pipelines to bring more gas into the city, but that we should also begin moving away from fossil fuels in general and start exploring more renewable options.

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newly opened Batesy’s BBQ are both utilizing gasfree kitchens and instead have chosen all electric utilities, a move which Meyer says is the first step towards solar power.

Meyer also discussed the Beach Green Dunes complex in Edgemere, a 100-unit residential building with a variety of innovative eco-friendly features that he says is the vanguard of a coming green revolution in design.

“Rockaway is on the front lines of climate change here in New York, and that project [Beach Green Dunes] is globally significant,” Meyer said.

“Beach Green Dunes is net-zero, which means that all of their energy comes from the site,” Meyer went on to tell The Wave post-conference. This ability to produce all of their energy needs on-site comes from a multi-layered approach which includes using high-efficiency appliances, solar power, and the utilization of local resources for heating and cooling purposes.

“The groundwater below Rockaway is 50° year-round, summer or winter,” Meyer said. “If



we use geothermal wells, you can cool your house with that cool air from the water. It’s almost free, and it’s always there, you just have to dig down and get it.” The sun, Meyer went on to say, would be used not only for energy generation but for heating as well.

NYS Senator Joe Addabbo also made an appearance at the conference, telling those assembled that “we’re driving this clean energy bus right down the road to the future.” Addabbo went on to discuss the many positive environmental measures already undertaken across New York State before inviting National Grid and the other gas companies to “hop on the bus with us, and if not, then we’ll see you on the side of the road.”



The Wave was invited aboard the American Princess to see firsthand the whales and other creatures that would be in danger if pipeline construction commences.



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Walter Meyer, the founder of the Local Office of Landscape & Urban Design and a professor at Parson's explained the need to switch from gas to electric and highlighted many steps already taken by people on the peninsula to ensure a gas-free tomorrow.

"In the '40s, '50s, '60's, and '70s, there were no whales here," Palladino said. "Now we are seeing dolphins and whales on over 95% of our whale watching trips... the waters are incredibly cleaner than they've ever been, and it has to remain that way."

In order to drive his point home, Palladino invited The Wave and other participants of the press conference out on the American Princess to get a first-hand look at the sea life that would otherwise be threatened by the proposed undersea pipeline construction. Over the course of the afternoon, The Wave was able to see ten different

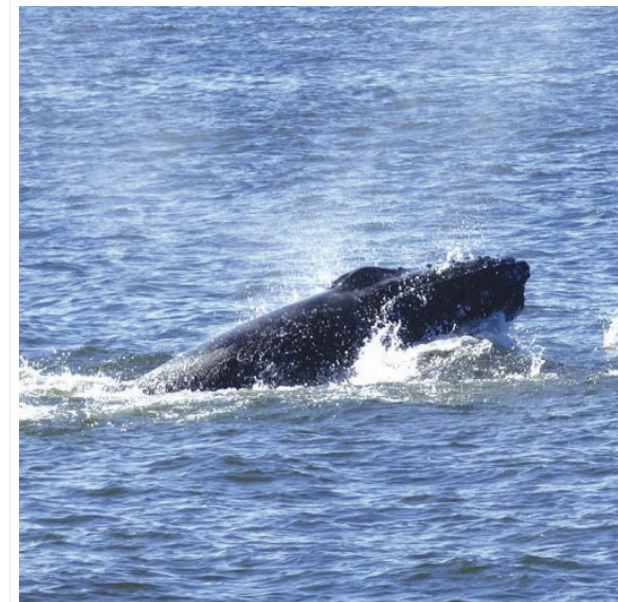
humpback whales (identified by Gotham Whale experts via defining marks on their tails and dorsals) as well as a Minke whale.

"This just proves how much vibrant life is happening off our coast, and how much we have to protect," Fraczek said. "To build their pipeline, Williams would have to dig a trench for 23-miles right across where we saw these whales eating their lunch. And that's going to bring up all those toxins that have been settling and remediating there since the 1970's."

Those toxins, Sane Energy's JK Canepa explained, had long been buried thanks in large part to regulations placed against oceanic dumping during the '70s.

"When the Clean Water Act was passed the dumping stopped, and over the years the ocean pushed the toxins down under the seabed where they were safely locked away," Canepa says. "Digging this pipeline would bring all of this back up again and would require [Williams] to dig down into the arsenic, lead, copper, mercury, and all the other industrial and medical waste that had been dumped into the water during the 20th century."

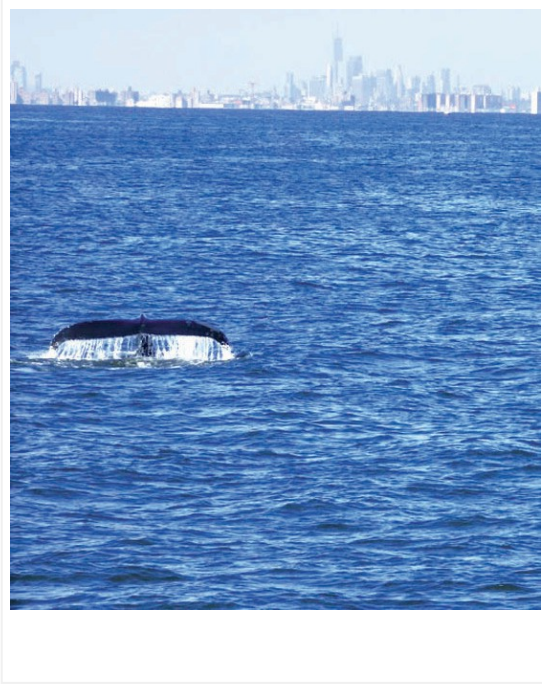
"The menhaden that these whales live off of would be choked, and the plankton that the menhaden live off of would die off," Canepa



Ten different humpback whales and one minke whale was identified during the course of the trip, highlighting just how vibrant the underwater ecosystem is in our area.

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The Department of Environmental Conservation has until May 2020 to make a final decision regarding the approval of the pipeline, but many expect a choice to be made sometime later this year. If completed, the latest pipeline would run from Lancaster, PA., through New Jersey, and then into Raritan Bay and along the seafloor to the Rockaway Peninsula.



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