



Questions Surround Proposal for NY to Buy NJ Water

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Link to Video: <http://www.njtvonline.org/news/video/questions-surround-proposal-ny-buy-nj-water/>

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“Most people haven’t any idea that we’re in this condition,” said Elliott Ruga.

Activist Ruga says reservoirs in the Highlands — the ones that supply water to the vast majority of New Jersey residents — are at near historic lows. Our neighbors in New York are hardly faring better.

“New York and New Jersey share a border, but we also share a water supply that moves from New York to New Jersey. So each side of our borders are critical to the way we use water. With respect to how much we’re going to have,” said [Riverkeeper Inc.](#) Legal Director John Parker.

One of the major water companies is seeing a lot of attention heaped on one element of a June proposal submitted to [New York’s Public Service Commission](#). The idea: to buy up to 5 million gallons of water a day from New Jersey’s largest reservoir and send it to New York. The water company, [Suez](#), says it’s one of many ways to address long-term water supply issues just over the border in Rockland County.

“Now with the drought, the water has become a larger issue of course in Rockland and Bergen. Any transfer of water over state lines is a highly complex regulatory endeavor. Would take years to do. In fact, there has been no meetings, there has been no discussions, nothing since our report was submitted in June,” said Suez Director of External Affairs Bill Madden.

It would be an unusual move — unprecedented in recent history, in this region — though transfers of water across state lines have occurred in other parts of the country.

“So, they’re a part of this large multinational corporation that interestingly has water interests on both sides of the border. So, they provide water for New York residents from New York’s reservoirs like Rockland County and they also provide it to the users in New Jersey. The

question is, is the Public Service Commission in New York is curious about how water needs in the future are going to be met,” said Parker.

While there are concerns over our current drought conditions, Ruga of the [New Jersey Highlands Coalition](#) says New Jersey can't estimate its future water needs. The state's Water Master Plan is supposed to be updated every five years. It hasn't been updated since 1995, more than two decades ago.

“This is something we've been asking this administration for a couple of years already and we keep being told, ‘Yes, yes it's coming, it's coming.’ But now, we really need it and we still don't see it,” Ruga said.

Suez told NJTV News there have been no meetings on the issue. Director of External Affairs Madden said to think anything would happen in the next year would be ambitious.