

Letter: Collaborate on a better policy

To the editor

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The Environmental Protection Agency's rejection of the Capital District Regional Planning Commission's plan for municipal sewage management is interesting ("Hudson sewage spill plan faulted," Nov. 16). The EPA said the plan did not adequately address an ecologically sound management practice for storm water discharge into the environment.

In California, academic institutions, businesses and municipalities invest money into the research and development of sewage treatment facilities with renewable distributive generation of energy for sustainable operations. In 2009, Fuel Cell Energy Inc. manufactured and installed stationary fuel cells to produce electricity at the Tulare, Calif., regional wastewater treatment facility.

In fact, sewage treatment facilities are energy rich. Research has developed hydrogen gas fuel cells, methane gas fuel cells and microbial fuel cells capable of producing electricity. In 2011, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority contracted with a Connecticut institution to conduct a research project at the Gloversville-Johnstown wastewater treatment plant.

Now, the National Science Foundation's Division of Chemical, Bioengineering, Environmental and Transport Systems is offering grants for research and development of nanofilters and fuel cells with a September 2013 deadline.

Taxpayers may consider advocating to their government officials to collaborate with academic institutions and technical businesses to prepare an application to the Capital Region Economic Development Council for necessary resources to implement a cleaner, greener wastewater treatment policy such as that advocated by Gov. Andrew Cuomo. The council has noted water, sanitary sewer and storm sewer facilities are a vital foundation for economic growth. Stormwater management using a 25-year storm frequency to construct strategically located and interconnected treatment facilities may enhance an ecologically sound management practice.

Installation of stationary hydrogen, methane and microbial fuel cells to process the energy rich fluids to produce electricity and cleaner wastewater discharge will generate municipal revenues and a cleaner environment. Money invested to construct these strategically located and interconnected treatment facilities will create jobs, too.

If we do this, the export of the knowledge and products to other states and nations will help other people progress in dealing with human waste.

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