

Local Activists Confront the Issue of Geoengineering

Long Island Skywatch Brings Its Concerns to Legislators

• story and photos by JERRY CIMISI

Look, up in the sky: Is it a bird, a plane...or a chemtrail?

This paraphrase of the old Superman TV lead-in has more than a little meaning to a group of Long Island activists who are seeking to make our environs a Geoengineering Free Zone. The term "geoengineering" refers to any attempt to direct weather or climate on a large scale; "chemtrails" refer to deliberate seeding of the atmosphere with chemicals ejected from planes—other than normal plane exhaust, which are known as contrails.

Contrails from planes dissipate quickly; chemtrails linger and fan out, often into thin clouds covering a good portion of the sky.

This past December, Suffolk County Legislator Ed Romaine sponsored a bill that grew out of a meeting he had with group called Long Island Skywatch. Romaine's bill would have had parties that intended to put any chemicals in the sky over Long Island to require an Environmental Impact Statement before proceeding.

In fact, the bill itself was precedent setting: it was the first time any municipal body had considered legislation to regulate geoengineering.

The nucleus of Long Island Skywatch is composed of founder Cindy and James Pikoulas of Manorville along with Siobhan Ciresi, who joined soon after the organization was formed. Cindy is a teacher, James an elevator mechanic and Siobhan an interfaith minister and author.

Cindy Pikoulas said, "After moving out here from Wantagh three years ago, having an acre and being outside more, we just started being aware of all these trails in the sky, crisscrossed, grids, that lingered then sort of fanned and stayed in the sky for a long time—not like ordinary plumes from planes. My husband said, 'What's going on?' We began to look into it."

What they found in the controversial arena of chemtrails and geoengineering worried them: plans already carried out or proposed that would, for instance, inject various particles in the sky to deflect sunlight and lessen global warming.

Before the first hearing on the bill in December, in a phone interview Legislator Romaine said of his meeting with Long Island Skywatch: "There seemed to be validity in what they were saying. My attitude was, whether this was happening or not, a law would raise the issue to the level of a public forum. Could this affect the health of the county's residents? If there was a possibility this was so, there should be a law on the books."

Many people believe that alongside "sanctioned" chemtrail experiments, many—if not most—chemtrails are placed into the sky covertly. In other words, these parties are not asking for permission. In regards to that, Romaine said, "Even if that's the case—and I'm not saying it is—at least there would be a law on the books you could apply to those caught doing this."

The Suffolk County Legislature's public hearing on Dec. 6, 2011 consid-



James and Cindy Pikoulas, founders of Long Island Skywatch.

ered a number of items. But when it reached the issue of Romaine's bill, it was apparent that almost all of the approximately 150 people in attendance had come for the geoengineering bill, not merely from the number of speakers who came up from the audience, but from the response from the crowd.

Cindy Pikoulas, citing 2009 experiments by the Navy and NASA, releasing aluminum particles into the atmosphere, said, "Who decides they can do this? Why is there no public consent required?"

Anthony Doroska decried "nano particles falling from the skies," and asked: "Could they be dropping anything else on us?"

Anthony Tolda, running for the Republican nomination for Congress (for the seat currently held by Steve Israel) said, "Who is flying these planes?" adding: "We should not be sprayed like a bunch of bugs."

James Pikoulas said, "The true cause of climate change is happening right over our heads."

John Zito, a father of six, said, "I came all the way here from Hartford. This is the first time I've ever addressed public officials. I beg you just consider the facts—so a precedent can be set."

As for a few of the facts, consider the following:

In the predawn hours of March 27, 2012 NASA launched—from Wallops Island, Virginia—five rockets, 80 seconds apart, each of which released a chemical tracer of aluminum particles in order to create "milky white clouds at the edge of space" (according to NASA's website) in order to trace the jet stream in the upper atmosphere. The clouds were seen from North Carolina to Buffalo.

British scientists, backed by government funds, are effecting the first steps in an experiment that seems like something right out of Jules Verne: a plan to eject sulphur dioxide particles out of holes in a kilometer long hose that will be suspended in the atmosphere by a balloon. The aim of the project is to mimic the effect of a volcano that leaves minute particles in the air, diffusing sunlight and cooling the ground below: a plan to combat global warming. This project is also receiving backing from Bill Gates, who is one of several moneyed individuals lobbying various governments to conduct similar experiments.

The National Oceanic and



Siobhan Ciresi with photos of chemtrails.

Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) says that in the first decade of the 21st century stratospheric aerosols have almost doubled. And NOAA is not sure why, noting that there have been no massive volcanic eruptions which are usually the cause of an increase in such particles.

In October 2011, the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) banned geoengineering projects that may affect biodiversity—unless there is adequate scientific justification for any such project, which many geoengineering critics take as a glaring loophole.

But the U.S. has not ratified the CDB (193 countries did) so will not be affected by the ban.

The Bipartisan Policy Center's Task Force on Climate Remediation Research's report says of solar remediation: "...would stratospheric aerosols accelerate the catalytic destruction of ozone? How would ecosystems be affected by the rain-out of injected substances? Aerosol injection would diffuse light reaching the Earth and alter the visible appearance of the sky. How will this affect plant growth and ecosystem health as well as humans?"

Another speaker at the public meeting, a Mr. Brennan, said, "We've been told if we see something to say something. Well, we're seeing something and we're saying something. Altering our climate without our consent is an act of biowarfare."

Romaine's bill was then referred to the legislature's health committee, which at a December 15 meeting decided that the county did not have the authority to enact such a bill; it was more in the purview of the EPA.

Long Island Skywatch regarded this as still a success in that the bill had been presented at a public hearing. Subsequently the group decided it would not seek legislation, but a Resolution from the county, declaring Suffolk County a Geoengineering Free Zone.

To that end they would meet with legislators pressing this aspect of the issue: with all the proposed geoengineering projects being bruited about, how could they legally be allowed to be effected if in so many environmental areas—such as acid rain—New York State has not reached a level of compliance? Safeguards had to be put in place before any such experiments could be allowed occur.

On March 29, the Pikoulases, Ciresi and an attorney met with Tom Ryan, the Chief of Staff for Suffolk County Legislator Kara Hahn, who is chair of the environmental committee. The organization had tried to speak with Hahn for some time, without success.

Ciresi related that Ryan's main concern seemed to be: which individuals should be held responsible? "Which was not what we were going for. We are trying to raise awareness."

As of presstime, Hahn's office did not return calls in regard to her views on the matter. Long Island Skywatch plans to attend the next meeting of the legislature's environmental committee—"This way we can get to speak with her directly," said Cindy Pikoulas.

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