



## **PEF/encon Position Paper**

### **Re: Pollution & Energy Reduction**

**Presented on June 9, 2004**

*The DEC is the State agency charged with protecting the environment and conserving our natural resources. The April 15 designation of new ozone standards, the recent significant increase in oil prices and the geo-political crisis in the Middle East all challenge us to find new ways to reduce air pollution and our dangerous addiction to imported oil. The DEC should take the lead in proposing new or improved strategies to alleviate this critical situation.*

*New York adopted the California Low Emission Vehicle and Zero Emission Vehicle standards, built an extensive CNG infrastructure for CNG vehicles, and under Executive Order 111 significantly increased the purchase of alternate fuel vehicles for the State fleet. Unlike federal rules, hybrid-electric vehicles may be considered as alternate fuel vehicles. Unfortunately, while the State may be setting a positive example with CNG and hybrid-electric vehicles and vehicle emissions, there is one significant area in which the State and DEC fail to adequately demonstrate a commitment to the reduction of pollution and consumption of energy resources; namely, the reduction of automobile emissions resulting from the daily commutes of its own employees.*

*For example, Environmental Conservation Law, passed in 1993, Section 3-0301 states, "... the commissioner shall have power to:... Develop a plan to maximize the use of telecommuting to conserve energy otherwise used by the personnel of the department in commuting to their assigned workplace. Within one year of the effective date of this paragraph, the department shall submit a report to the governor and the legislature on the impact of such plan to include, but not be limited to, energy conservation, air quality, workforce acceptance, office costs and potential cost savings."*

*DEC has a telecommuting pilot in place at its Central Office in Albany since 1998 with a report and recommendations presented to management in November of 1999 and a compressed pay period pilot that began in Feb., 2002 with a summary report sent to management in January, 2003. Both pilots are highly successful. DEC has made no attempt to expand these programs either to the Central Office or the Regions.*

*The benefits of both of these programs not only to the environment but to the DEC, its employees, all State employees and the public are incontrovertible. Both programs result in fewer trips to and from the office resulting in a reduction in air emissions and oil consumption, decreased wear and tear on vehicles and less congestion. Participating employees have shown increased efficiency and productivity and decreased absenteeism. The compressed pay period enables staff to be available beyond normal business hours thus improving public availability. Both programs boost employee morale. If 1000 employees participated in compressed pay period and telecommuting, we estimate that on a yearly basis pollution would be reduced by approximately 990 tons and gasoline consumption would be reduced by 95,000 gallons.*

*The DEC Bus Subsidy, downtown Albany BID Commuter Ca\$h, Albany County and Cornell University transit subsidy programs have all proven that employer provided transit subsidies, as allowed by federal law, can help to significantly reduce air pollution and energy consumption. Providing transit subsidies for 141 NYSDEC employees, over a period of 32 months, has resulted in 1,186,250 miles not driven by bus riders and a reduction of 539 tons of air pollution and 51,669 gallons of gasoline consumption. Similar reductions have been realized by the other programs.*

*Recently, the DEC issued two press releases related to air quality:*

*1. On May 12, 2004 DEC, along with the NYS Department of Health (DoH) issued a joint press release promoting a new tool for Air Quality Health Advisories related to exposures to ozone and fine particulate matter, supposedly a more comprehensive gage of risks facing communities during warmer months. When exposure levels are high and an advisory is issued the first two things New Yorkers are encouraged to do are: 1) use mass transit or car pool instead of driving, as automobile emissions account for about 60 % of pollution in our cities; and 2) conserve fuel and reduce exhaust emissions by combining necessary motor vehicle trips.*

*2. On May 19, 2004 the Commissioner of DEC distributed a letter to all DEC employees informing them of the initial stakeholder meeting for the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) to improve public health and the environment by reducing carbon dioxide emissions. It stated that this is part of "Governor George Pataki's vision and leadership" in making "New York a national leader in improving air quality.....the development of collaborative approaches and innovative measures aimed at taking pollutants out of our skies".*

*Telecommuting, compressed pay period, car pooling and transit subsidy programs are viable means by which the DEC and the State can improve air quality. These strategies are probably the most expedient and politically popular strategies that could be used to significantly reduce air pollution and oil consumption. PEF/encon urges the DEC to be a positive example by acting on the implementation of these programs at DEC and to be a statewide advocate of these programs for other state agencies, local government and private companies.*

*The federal government offers transit benefits to their employees, the EPA promotes telecommuting, compressed workweek and carpooling to employers nationwide, the State of Arizona has an Executive Order which mandates that all eligible state employees can telecommute and New York City is the home of the most extensive transit system in the country. For all of these reasons, the DEC and the State should expand and implement all of the above referenced energy savings programs as soon as possible.*