

Water Front- Peter Mantius

Environmental politics in New York's Finger Lakes

Abruptly Reversing Long-Held New York Stances, Hochul OKs NYC Gas Pipeline and Cuts Private Deal With Greenidge

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ALBANY, Nov. 11 — A pair of blockbuster environmental reversals by Gov. Kathy Hochul have enraged the green community, and they may cost her the voting bloc's enthusiastic support in her bid for re-election next year.



Gov. Kathy Hochul on MSNBC.

On Friday, Hochul announced her approval of a 23-mile underwater natural gas pipeline near New York City and an agreement that allows Greenidge Generation to continue using fracked gas to power its Bitcoin mining operation on Seneca Lake for the next five years.

“That’s a double gut punch for New York and a setback for everyone fighting for a livable future,” Lt. Gov. Antonio Delgado tweeted Monday.

Delgado announced in June plans to run against Hochul for the Democratic nomination for governor. He picked up endorsements for that cause Monday from several environmental groups, including Food & Water Action, which called the pipeline ruling a “betrayal of New Yorkers.”

Hochul, in defending the ruling, stressed her commitment to keeping the lights and heat on and to keeping energy prices from

skyrocketing. “We need to govern in reality,” she said.

While the two projects she greenlighted on Friday are unrelated, both are 180-degree turns for New York. And both decisions could portend future regulatory approvals of other new gas pipelines and other Greenidge-style conversions of now-mothballed power plants.

Under former Gov. Andrew Cuomo in 2020, the state denied the

Oklahoma-based Williams Companies a permit to bury its Northeast Supply Enhancement pipeline (NESE) beneath the ocean floor next to Staten Island. Williams revived the project this year after President Trump touted the need for more natural gas supplies in New England.

Meanwhile, Greenidge has been duking it out in court with the state Department of Environmental Conservation since 2022, after the DEC denied the company's application to renew its air emissions permit.

The agency has repeatedly defended that denial on the grounds that Greenidge failed to meet greenhouse gas reduction goals spelled out in the state's 2019 climate law, known as CLCPA.

Evidentiary hearings had been scheduled for next week.

But on Friday, the state announced that the DEC and Greenidge agreed to quit their legal wrangling. As part of that deal, the agency and the company settled privately on terms for a new five-year Title V air permit.

"We were thinking the Greenidge case was just rolling along with a court case coming up, and then she (Hochul) just pulled the rug out," said Yvonne Taylor, co-founder of Seneca Lake Guardian. "We're floored. It's just devastating news."

The DEC said it will soon issue a new draft air permit for public comment — one that conforms to emissions limits agree on behind closed doors by the agency and the company.

The deal was announced after the stock market closed Friday. On Monday, the next trading day, Greenidge shares shot up 39 percent.



The planned NESE pipeline is shown in red. Map: Williams Companies

Throughout the protracted legal fight, the natural-gas burning Greenidge plant has continued to generate power that it uses both to supply to power to the electric grid when called upon, but mostly to run its Bitcoin mining machines. It operates under a under a five-year air permit issued in 2016.

That 2016 permit — the last one the DEC approved — allowed the plant to emit 641,878 tons of CO₂-equivalent gases per year.

The new permit will cut the CO₂e limit to 475,683 tons in years one and two of the permit and reduce it to 358,071 tons by permit-year five. But DEC agreed not to count any emissions associated with most power that the plant sends to the grid.



The Greenidge Generation plant in Dresden overlooks Seneca Lake. *Photo: Gothamist*

“This new permit,” Greenidge President Dale Irwin said, “includes historic emissions reductions that go far beyond anything required by the CLCPA or ever implemented in New York and validates our national model cryptocurrency operation, which does not pull power from the grid, but rather sends power to it daily.”

However, none of the voluminous documents the Hochul Administration released Friday — including an early [draft air permit \(https://waterfrontonline.blog/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/nov7greenidgeairpermit.pdf\)](https://waterfrontonline.blog/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/nov7greenidgeairpermit.pdf) — mentioned Greenidge’s so-called “upstream” emissions, a key provision in CLCPA.

By law, DEC is required to consider both emissions from the plant itself and emissions caused by the gas fracking operations that supplied its fuel (upstream emissions) when weighing whether a project conforms to greenhouse gas limits in the state climate law. DEC’s legal obligation to count

both on-site and upstream emissions is underscored in a [December 2022 policy memo](https://waterfrontonline.blog/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/2022decmemoupstream.pdf) (<https://waterfrontonline.blog/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/2022decmemoupstream.pdf>).

But the DEC declined Monday to say whether or not it had counted upstream emissions in reaching its conclusion that the new permit deal would comply with CLCPA. Instead, the agency issued the following statement: “Per the terms of the settlement agreement, DEC will prepare and issue a draft permit for public comment that will address DEC’s consideration of upstreams emissions.”

DEC had cited upstream emissions in its denial of the air permit renewal application in 2022, noting Greenidge’s own projections for total CO₂e emissions. A [Greenidge consultant](https://waterfrontonline.blog/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/murtha2021letteronemissionsapr212022waterfront.pdf) (<https://waterfrontonline.blog/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/murtha2021letteronemissionsapr212022waterfront.pdf>) estimated that its combined on-site and upstream emissions for 2025 would total 1,050,636 tons — 63 percent more than its 2016 permit emissions limit of 641,878 tons.

In 2021, the consultant had projected that the company’s upstream emissions would be 476,921 tons for each year between 2022 and 2026. If accurate, that would cause Greenidge’s 2025 upstream emissions *alone* to exceed Greenidge’s proposed new total emissions limit of 475,683.

“The (CO₂e) emissions footprint of natural gas is high, because in addition to the CO₂ emitted when it burns, there are substantial upstream emissions of methane as well as indirect emissions of CO₂,” said Robert Howarth, a Cornell professor who sits on the state’s Climate Action Council. (The CLC was charged with implementing the CLCPA, or the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.)

That’s why the CLC called for major reductions in the state’s use of natural gas in order to achieve CLCPA’s required 40 percent reduction in statewide greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, he said.

“Approving the NESE pipeline and reversing course to approve ongoing operations at Greenidge both run counter to the CLCPA,” Howarth said.

But another member of the state’s Climate Action Committee sees things completely differently.

“I applaud the DEC for approving Greenidge’s Title V Permit, reversing their initial denial, and showing that reliability truly is paramount,” Gavin Donohue, president and CEO of the Independent Power Producers of New York, said in a statement Friday. “This agreement is important for other facilities seeking Title V Permits and shows that the DEC is taking a more reasonable approach to a reliable and affordable energy.”



Robert Howarth

That's a horrifying prospect to the environmental law group Earthjustice. In 2021 it warned the DEC that "the Greenidge power plant is one of nearly 30 power plants in upstate New York with the potential to be converted (<https://waterfrontonline.blog/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/30utilitiescouldfollowgreenidge.pdf>) to full-time operation for Bitcoin mining and other high-energy data tasks." Most are powered by fossil fuels.

But the DEC's closed-door deal with Greenidge has been completely overshadowed in the media by the governor's decision to approve the NESE pipeline near Manhattan.

She announced it four days after President Trump gigged her with a post on Truth Social about the pipeline and one day after Republican U.S. Rep. Elise Stefanik announced plans to run against her for governor next year.

Hochul had won a surprisingly close race for governor in 2022 to Lee Zeldin, whom Trump this year appointed to head the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Stefanik, another Trump loyalist, had been appointed chair of the House Republican Conference in 2021 after Liz Cheney was tossed due to her opposition to then-former president Trump.



Hochul announced her two big environmental reversals one day after Republican Elise Stefanik announced plans to run against her for governor next year.

But before she faces Stefanik, or another Republican, in the November election, she'll have to get past Delgado in the Democratic primary. And he's angling for the environmental vote.

Trump, a big supporter of fossil fuels and skeptic of renewable energy, claims a major role in forcing Hochul's hand on the NESE gas pipeline.

In April, the Trump Administration ordered a stop work order on a major offshore wind project in New York, apparently as leverage to prod Hochul to approve two pipeline projects that former Gov. Andrew Cuomo had killed.

On Monday, May 19 — after three weekend phone conversations with Hochul — Trump abruptly lifted the stop work order on the wind project.

In a statement to E&E/Politico three days later, the White House said Hochul had “caved” to Trump on the pipelines, adding that she’d agreed to allow “two natural gas pipelines to advance” through New York “because she knew it was the only way to save her flailing offshore wind project.”

She promptly denied that she’d committed to greenlighting the NESE or the Constitution pipeline upstate, saying both projects faced rigorous regulatory analysis.

In fact, the Williams Companies recently withdrew its permit application for the Constitution pipeline after the DEC had said it was incomplete. The company has said it would continue to pursue a New York permit.

Hochul now faces energy supply and energy price challenges in the midst of political pressure

**Lt. Gov. Antonio Delgado challenges
Hochul for the 2026 Democratic nomination
for governor.**

from the environmental community.

Trump’s coolness toward renewable energy in general and toward wind projects in particular stress New York’s energy supply. That’s one reason she’s doubled down on her “all-of-the-above” policy for energy sources, including natural gas and nuclear.

While natural gas prices fell in much of the U.S. last year, they rose 14 percent in New York, according to E&E. That report said electricity prices had increased 17 percent in the New York City area.

Meanwhile, Zohran Mamdani, who Hochul endorsed, was elected mayor of New York last week. He was swept in to office on a platform of “affordability.”

After appearing with Hochul at a reception in San Juan, Puerto Rico Friday, Mamdani was asked what he thought about the governor’s approval of the local pipeline. He responded:

“My position on pipelines has always been consistent, which is opposition to new fossil fuel construction.”

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Published by Peter Mantius

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[gaynicholson](#) says:[November 11, 2025 at 6:21 pm](#)

Glad to have news again from Waterfront! I think this will be one of many of Hochul's two-faced act on climate – caving to the fossil fuel industry and Trump in hopes of countering Stefanik's election bid, while pretending to have defended all New Yorkers and our environment in hopes of staving off Delgado's primary opposition. We do not need anymore untrustworthy politicians!

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