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SAVE OUR BAY REACTION TO HOLTEC CEO REMARKS AT US SENATE FIELD HEARING

There have been several articles circulating around the South Shore about Senator Markey's Senate Subcommittee hearing and Pilgrim's plan to discharge contaminated water into Cape Cod Bay. Although in slightly different words, the thrust of the headlines has been "Holtec promises no dumping."

Save Our Bay is grateful that Senator Markey and Congressman Keating held a field hearing in Plymouth on this issue, but it is important to recognize that it produced no results to affect our organization's desired outcome: to eliminate the possibility of dumping. Some have taken Dr. Singh's obfuscating remarks at face value and declared a victory where there is only a status quo antebellum. Therefore, we wish to emphasize that far from being settled, Dr. Singh's remarks at Senator Markey and Congressman Keating's field hearing merely served to clarify the battle lines and indicate the time of day: high noon.

A review of the hearing transcript of Senator Markey's hearing shows how important it is to read and to listen very carefully to what Holtec said and promised and, more important, to what it did not.

For example, Dr. Singh, Holtec's President, said the water Pilgrim will release is not contaminated water because, by his definition, it "is processed water [that] does not meet the threshold of contamination." But Pilgrim's own reports to the Nuclear Regulatory Committee (NRC) show that there will be both radioactive and chemical contaminants in the to-be-released water. A major contaminant will be tritium, never mentioned by Dr. Singh, that is a health threat and cannot be removed by filtering or processing.

As for testing Pilgrim's water to determine if it is safe, what Singh meant by "test" or "safe" is far from clear. Holtec never agreed to independent sampling. Dr. Singh only agreed to give Senator Markey's expert "access to [Holtec's] data at the [Pilgrim] plant to help comfort the community. "He did not agree to give the state access so it could take its own samples.

As for safe, by whose standards? The NRC's allowable releases are based on outdated science and there is very little public trust in them. The public needs to be comfortable that it is safe to eat Duxbury oysters and let children play in the bay.

Dr. Singh did say that Holtec "would not discharge [the water] until we have consent from our major stakeholders." But who are the "major stakeholders?" They are not the people in the communities nor the industries that surround Cape Cod Bay. With respect to them, Dr. Singh said only "We will consult."

The towns of Duxbury, Provincetown, Truro, Eastham, Orleans, Chatham, Harwich, Brewster, Dennis, Yarmouth, Mashpee, Falmouth, Bourne, Sandwich, Tisbury, West Tisbury, Edgartown, Oak Bluffs, Chilmark, Aquinnah, and Scituate, along with Senator Markey, Senator Warren, Congressman Keating, and countless local leaders have made their position clear: not one drop.

Holtec nonetheless still plans to dump, and we must stop them.