

# Is Greenidge Using DEC Boat Launch as Staging Area for Major New Construction Project Despite Air Permit Denial?

Peter Mantius / July 2, 2022 / Uncategorized



SEVERNE POINT, July 2, 2022 — A day after the state Department of Environmental Conservation denied Greenidge Generation an air permit for its power plant in Dresden, contractors for the company appear to be using a DEC boat launch as a staging area for a new construction project at the facility.



**Components of a giant barge are being held for assembly at the DEC's boat launch and fishing site at Severne Point, seven miles south of Dresden on Seneca Lake's western shore.**

Dozens of rust-colored sections of a barge are stacked at Severne Point, awaiting to be assembled by Buffalo-based Bidco Marine Group.

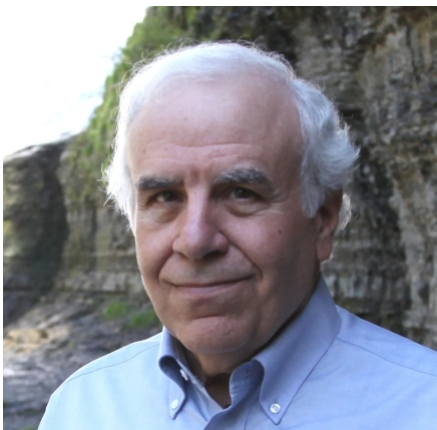
One worker in a Bidco shirt said Friday that the barge would be used to haul heavy industrial equipment seven miles north to the Greenidge plant's water intake system. He did not provide his name.

Posted notices at the boat launch warn "This site is for boat launching and shore fishing only."

Greenidge's plant manager Dale Irwin did not respond to emailed questions about the Severne Point staging site. The agency declined to confirm or deny any link between the industrial activity and Greenidge.

"DEC is investigating the placement of the materials at DEC's Severne Boat Launch," the agency said in a July 1 [statement to WaterFront](https://waterfrontonline.files.wordpress.com/2022/07/decstatementjuly1.pdf) (<https://waterfrontonline.files.wordpress.com/2022/07/decstatementjuly1.pdf>).

"They shouldn't be allowed to do that," said Anthony Ingraffea, a former Cornell University professor and outspoken critic of Greenidge's Bitcoin mining operation at the Dresden plant. "I'm appalled that the state of New York would allow a private corporation to use a state-owned boat launch facility to aid and abet barging equipment to their private site."



**Anthony Ingraffea**

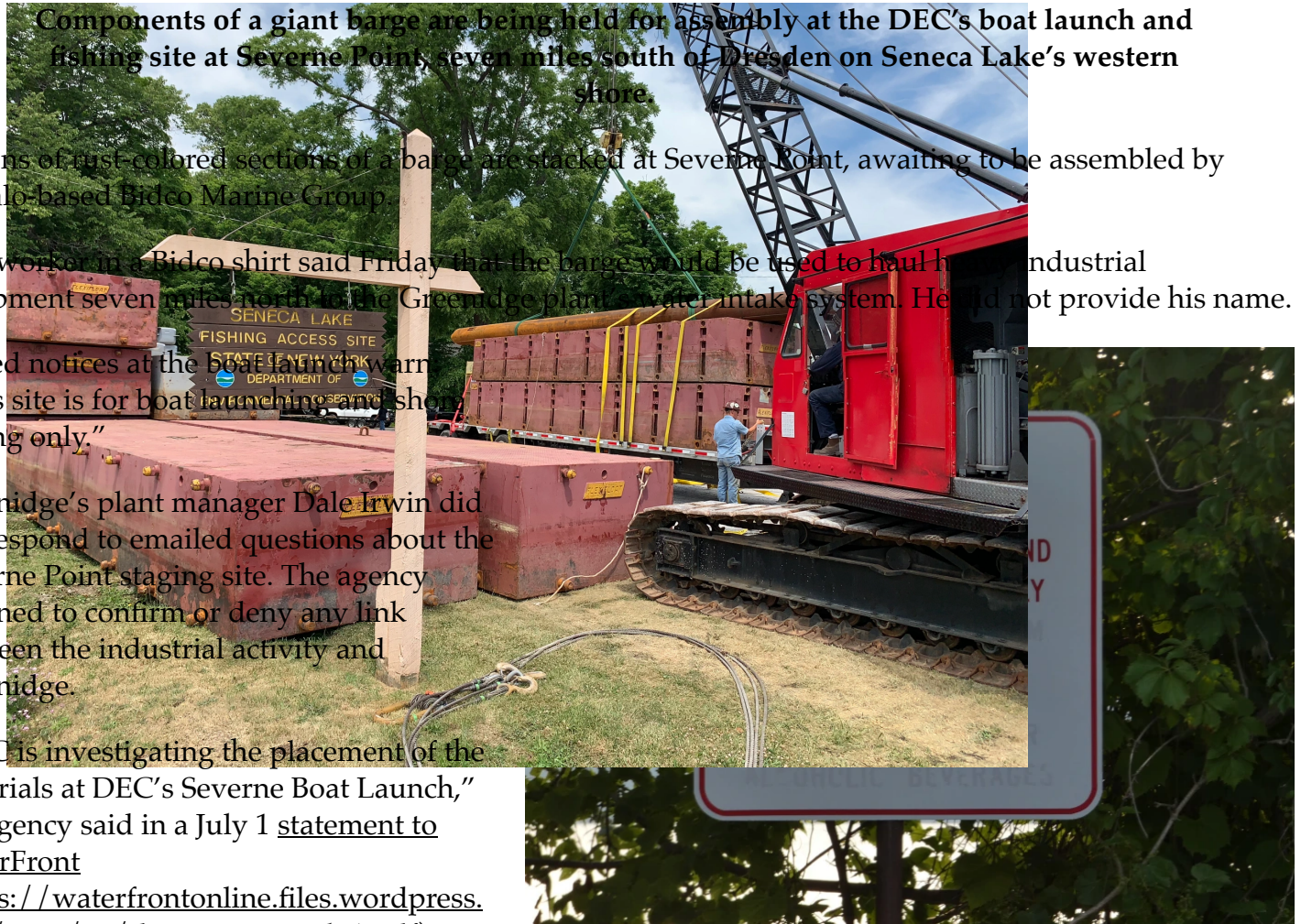
"Do they have a special-use permit to use the boat launch?"

The DEC declined to answer that specific question.

But in the statement issued to WaterFront, the agency acknowledged that Greenidge is required to install wedge wire screens on its water intake pipe into Seneca Lake to prevent massive fish kills.

Although the intake screens are required under federal law, the DEC allowed the plant to restart without them in early 2017. Later that year it issued a permit that granted the company a five-year grace period to complete the installation.

However, before it can install the screens, the DEC statement said, Greenidge must obtain an "Article 15 permit to ensure the protection of water quality while the work takes place." The company doesn't yet have that permit, and the DEC



**DEC declined to say whether it had issued a special use permit for the construction staging activities that this notice would appear to prohibit.**



hasn't yet ruled on the completeness of its application for it.

Opponents of the Dresden plant's Bitcoin mining operation have celebrated the DEC's June 30 [air permit denial](https://waterfrontonline.files.wordpress.com/2022/06/declettergreenidgeirwinjune30.pdf) (<https://waterfrontonline.files.wordpress.com/2022/06/declettergreenidgeirwinjune30.pdf>) as a major environmental win, and they've praised Gov. Kathy Hochul and DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos for their roles. The victory laps by advocates rest on the presumption that the plant will be forced promptly to shut down.



**Greenidge has an Oct. 1 deadline to install wedge wire screens at the end of this water intake pipe in Seneca Lake.**

That now seems unlikely, given the company's reaction to the air permit decision, its appeals options and the magnitude of the industrial staging activity at DEC boat launch.

On June 30, Greenidge declared the DEC's air permit decision "[arbitrary and capricious](https://waterfrontonline.files.wordpress.com/2022/06/greenidgestatement-1.pdf)" (<https://waterfrontonline.files.wordpress.com/2022/06/greenidgestatement-1.pdf>)" and it vowed to continue its Bitcoin operations indefinitely, adding:

"While the many good people that work at Greenidge, including the dedicated IBEW members onsite, deserved far better from their state today, we are confident that an unbiased court system will reverse this regulatory misjudgment. Until that happens, we are permitted to operate each day, in full compliance with our existing Title V Air Permit."

Greenidge's "existing" air permit actually expired last September, but it has been administratively extended. The air permit will remain in force until the company's appeal options are exhausted.

The company has 30 days to request an adjudicatory hearing before a DEC administrative law judge, an option exercised by [Danskammer Energy](https://waterfrontonline.files.wordpress.com/2022/07/danskammerletteroct272021.pdf) (<https://waterfrontonline.files.wordpress.com/2022/07/danskammerletteroct272021.pdf>) and [Astoria](#)

[Gas Turbine Power \(https://waterfrontonline.files.wordpress.com/2022/07/astorialetter.pdf\)](https://waterfrontonline.files.wordpress.com/2022/07/astorialetter.pdf) after their air permit applications were denied last Fall.



**Mandy DeRoche of  
Earthjustice**

Greenidge also could file an Article 78 petition in the state courts, according to Mandy DeRoche, an attorney for Earthjustice, which represents Seneca Lake Guardian in challenging the Dresden plant's operations. It would have to be filed within four months.

"There are very limited legal options to have plant (operations) stopped," DeRoche said on a ZOOM call Friday. "It can continue operating and expanding until litigation ends."

If so, that means Gov. Hochul's June 30 tweet saying the air permit denial would "stop increases in greenhouse gas emissions at Seneca Lake" was not accurate. The permit denial doesn't prevent Greenidge from adding new Bitcoin mining machines, as planned. More machines would require increased power generation, causing higher ghg emissions.

DeRoche said Earthjustice had been litigating the Danskammer and Astoria denials and noted that those hearings have been moving "relatively quickly."

However, the adjudicatory hearing process can drag on for years, as it did in the case involving Crestwood's unsuccessful plan to store liquid propane and butane in salt caverns near Watkins Glen.

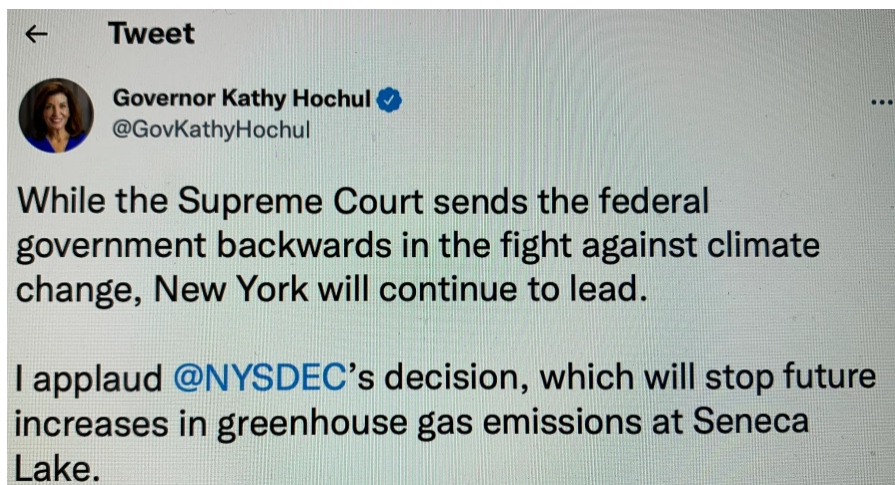
Three years elapsed between the first notice of an adjudicatory hearing and the DEC judge's ruling. Even more time passed before the DEC finally denied Crestwood its storage permit in 2018.

DeRoche also noted that even after Greenidge litigation ends — and assuming the DEC prevails — the plant would still need to go through a reliability review process with the New York Independent State Operator. "That could take anywhere from six months to a couple of years," she said.

The DEC said in its statement to WaterFront that Greenidge will need to remain in compliance with all its permit requirements — including wedge wire screens — as the air permit denial case appeal remains alive in court.

Greenidge faces an October 1 deadline to completely install the screens.

The Dresden plant cools its generating equipment — though not its Bitcoin mining machines — with water drawn from Seneca Lake. Lake water enters the plant through a a seven-foot diameter [intake pipe \(https://waterfrontonline.blog/2018/11/01/somethings-fishy-state-granted-greenidge-fast-track-startup-and-the-ok-to-mangle-fish-for-five-more-years/\)](https://waterfrontonline.blog/2018/11/01/somethings-fishy-state-granted-greenidge-fast-track-startup-and-the-ok-to-mangle-fish-for-five-more-years/) that extends 650 offshore next to the plant.







“The pipe withdraws water from a 27-ft x 27-ft steel intake structure composed of 3/16-inch bars on 6-inch centers,” a Greenidge contractor said in a [2019 report](https://waterfrontonline.files.wordpress.com/2020/11/greenidgeentrainmentstudy.pdf) (<https://waterfrontonline.files.wordpress.com/2020/11/greenidgeentrainmentstudy.pdf>). “There are no traveling screens...”

**A cargo barge made of sections similar to those now stored at Severne Point was used to install wedge wire screens on a water intake pipe on Cayuga Lake.**

Several years ago, a former coal plant on

Cayuga Lake spent millions of dollars to install wedge wire screens on its water intake pipe.

Some fishermen have asserted that the lack of screens on the Greenidge intake pipe has contributed to declines in [Seneca Lake fish catches](https://waterfrontonline.files.wordpress.com/2022/07/fisharentbitingwaterfront.pdf) (<https://waterfrontonline.files.wordpress.com/2022/07/fisharentbitingwaterfront.pdf>), although others have dismissed the claim.

## Published by Peter Mantius

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