

Power line opponents to rally Saturday in Portland
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Environmental activists, citizens groups and other New Jersey and Pennsylvania residents will rally at 11 a.m. Saturday against the proposed Susquehanna-Roseland power line at the Portland-Columbia, N.J., walking bridge that connects the two states.

PPL Electric Utilities and a New Jersey utility — PSE&G — are seeking permission to cross the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area as part of its proposed 101-mile, 500,000-kilovolt power line.

The utilities say the line is needed to meet future peak power demand. Opponents say electrical demand has declined so the line isn't needed and that the project poses an environmental threat.

The National Park Service has jurisdiction within the recreation area and nearby Delaware River and Appalachian Trail. It is reviewing several possible locations, including the utilities' preferred crossing near Fernwood Resort in Middle Smithfield Township and a "no build" alternative.

Opponents will gather at the Portland-Columbia Walking Bridge, off Route 611 in Portland on the Pennsylvania side. Ten people are scheduled to speak, five on each side of the bridge.

They include Martha Carbone, president of the Shawnee Preservation Society; Fred Stine, citizen action coordinator of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network in Bristol; Nancy Shukaitis of Smithfield Township, founder of the Delaware Valley Conservation Association that helped create the recreation area; and Don Miles, chairman of the Lehigh Valley Group Sierra Club.

Other speakers are Elliott Ruga of the New Jersey Highlands Coalition, National Sierra Club field organizer Christine Guhl, Sister Miriam Therese MacGillis, O.P., founder of Genesis Farm in Blirstown, N.J.; Laura Dempsey, founder of Save the Park in Blirstown, N.J.; author Anna Maria Caldara of Bangor, a Save the Park member; and Dave Slaperud, co-founder of Stop the Lines, Fredon, N.J.