

Pipeline concerns Sussex residents

Environmentalists believe permits can and should be revoked

By Thomas Bias

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NEWTON — Environmental activists from around the region convened in Newton on Tuesday to warn concerned residents about the problems and perils that may result should the Tennessee Gas Pipeline company complete the “Northeast Upgrade,” a pipeline project intended to transport millions of cubic feet of gas to major U.S. ports.

The pipeline system is dedicated to shipping natural gas from the gas fields in northeast Pennsylvania through New Jersey to terminals in Pennsylvania, New York, Maryland, and on the Gulf Coast, much of it for export rather than for domestic energy consumption.

Representatives of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network, the New Jersey Sierra Club, the New Jersey Highlands Coalition, and the North Jersey Pipeline Walkers met at the Unitarian Universalist church to discuss the impact of the proposed pipeline upgrade on the waterways, forests, and farmland of Sussex, Passaic, and Bergen Counties.

“This pipeline project will have devastating impacts on the region, and we need to work together to stop this new line from being built. This line goes through some of our most environmentally sensitive areas to deliver gas to a region where demand for gas is dropping. This forum is an opportunity for neighbors to learn more and offers ways they can get involved in opposing and defeating the project in its entirety, because we do not need to expand this infrastructure to carry more gas produced through the dangerous technique of fracking [hydraulic fracturing],” said Kate Millsaps, Conservation Program Coordinator of the New Jersey Sierra Club

Delaware Riverkeeper Network Attorney Aaron Stemplewicz of Bristol, Penn., explained the process of transporting natural gas from the well pads in both southwestern and northeastern Pennsylvania through gathering lines to the transcontinental transmission lines, and from the transmission lines to the distribution lines which deliver natural gas to consumers.

He explained the different methods by which pipelines are constructed and the threats that they pose to the environment.

He said wet ditch construction method is preferred by pipeline construction companies, such as Tennessee Gas Pipeline. Wet ditch construction is cheaper and faster than dry ditch methods, but

it also causes more environmental devastation, and Stemplewicz showed photographs to illustrate the damage.

Stemplewicz said if citizens are concerned, it is not difficult to bring their concerns to the attention of the commissions which issue permits to build pipelines.

Erica Van Auken, representing the New Jersey Highlands Coalition, spoke about the plans for the Northeast Upgrade to the Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company's 300-Line Project.

Construction of the Northeast Upgrade, which would extend from Ringwood in Passaic County to Mahwah in Bergen County, is scheduled to begin in November 2012. She said the pipeline will go under the Monksville Reservoir, and there are still unresolved violations from the previous construction in Wantage and Vernon Townships and West Milford Township in Passaic County.

Diane Wexler and Terri Stemfill of the North Jersey Pipeline Walkers showed photographs of the pipeline's environmental impact, especially on Wawayanda State Park in Vernon Township. They also spoke on the problem of toxic chemicals used in pipeline construction remaining in the soil and leaching up to the surface in warm weather.

None of the speakers spent a lot of time addressing the issue of fracking in the drilling process.

Fracking was discussed during the question period, and the speakers explained that at the present time there is not significant gas drilling being done in New Jersey.

In northeast Pennsylvania gas wells are tapping into natural gas generated in the Marcellus shale bed, which is closer to the surface and more accessible than other shale beds.

The Utica shale bed, which extends into New Jersey, is considerably deeper and less accessible.

However, fracking is being used extensively in Pennsylvania. It is a process by which water is pumped into fissures in the shale to widen them and release the natural gas which is trapped in the shale bed so that it can be extracted.

What water is returned to the surface after the fracking it contains chemicals, some of which are radioactive.

Some New Jersey companies, including DuPont, have signed contracts to treat the waste water from the Pennsylvania fracking operations.

The New Jersey legislature passed a bill to ban the transport of the contaminated water through the state, but it was blocked by Governor Christie's veto.

Tennessee Gas Pipeline has not yet been given all the permits it needs to proceed.

The organizers of Tuesday night's meeting hope that the work they have done so far will delay

the beginning of construction of the Northeast Upgrade and that a re-hearing by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, as requested by Senator Robert Menendez, may reverse the decision to grant the permits that have been already issued.

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http://www.nj.com/morris/index.ssf/2012/10/lake_hopatcong_commission_prep.html

Lake Hopatcong Commission preparing for shutdown, commissioner says

*By Justin Zaremba/NJ.com
on October 19, 2012 at 7:30 AM*

MOUNT ARLINGTON — The Lake Hopatcong Commission is exploring measures to shut down operations by the end of the year, Commissioner Richard Zoschak said.

"Without money from the state, it looks like our doors will be shut in December," Zoschak said.

At the Oct. 15 meeting in Mount Arlington, Zoschak said commissioners discussed liquidating the commission's remaining assets such as office materials and a copy machine. The commission owns six weed harvesters, which will continue to be used by Hopatcong State Park employees for lake maintenance, he said.

Zoschak, a Roxbury councilman, has served on the commission since its creation in 2000, but said he was "not optimistic" about its future.

Tasked with the maintenance and management of the state's largest freshwater resource, the Lake Hopatcong Commission received \$2 million at its inception to conduct water quality tests and programs, weed harvesting, and lake management and preservation. However, state budget cuts have progressively chiseled away funding for the commission effectively limiting it to weed harvesting operations.

Since the commission is a quasi-state agency, Zoschak said the implementation of user fees for the lake proved a non-starter, because any revenue collected would go back to the state's general fund — and not the commission.

[As previously reported by The Star-Ledger](#), a bill which would have provided \$150,000 every year to the Lake Hopatcong Commission by redirecting money from pleasure boat registration was put on hold by its sponsor — state Sen. Anthony Bucco (R-Morris) — after he learned it did

not have support from Democrats in the legislature.

State officials told the newspaper that Democrats on the state Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee would not approve the bill because Gov. Chris Christie said he had no intention of signing off on additional spending this year.

"We're nothing more than a political football in Trenton," Zoschak said.

Unless additional funding is received soon, Zoschak said the commission's fate would formally be decided at the Dec. 17 meeting — the same week the only remaining employee, Administrator Donna Macalle-Holly, is scheduled to leave. Macalle-Holly was provided with administrative notice already because the commission can only pay her through the end of December, he said.

Russ Felter, chairman of the Lake Hopatcong Commission, could not be reached for comment.