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Contacts:

Maya K. van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper, (215) 369-1188 ext. 102 (rings to office and cell)
Jeff Tittel, Director, NJ Sierra Club, (609) 558-9100
Diane Wexler, Representative for NorthJersey Pipeline Walkers, (973) 764-5446
Elliott Ruga, senior policy analyst, New Jersey Highlands Coalition, (973) 588-7190

Tennessee Gas Pipeline Gets Go Ahead to Start Pipeline Despite Outstanding Citizen Petition for Rehearing

Sussex & Passaic Counties, NJ: Despite having failed to respond to a petition for rehearing submitted to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) on June 20, 2012 by Delaware Riverkeeper Network, New Jersey Sierra Club, and the New Jersey Highlands Coalition, FERC took only 5 days to approve a request by the Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company (TGP) to install turtle exclusion fencing that would allow it to carry out land clearing for the Northeast Upgrade Pipeline Project (NEUP) on schedule.

The NEUP is proposed to be built spanning portions of Pennsylvania and northern New Jersey and crossing under the Delaware River just above the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. The October 24, 2012 letter from TGP to FERC seeks permission to “install silt fence at certain stream crossing locations in Sussex and Passaic Counties, New Jersey,” in order to prevent wood turtles from coming into and hibernating in the area prior to tree clearing activities scheduled to begin November 12th with the influx of tree clearing equipment. Neither TGP’s request nor FERC’s response referenced or included any information regarding wood turtles, the timing of their hibernation, or the potential impacts of installing the exclusions.

“It is shameful that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, a regulatory agency that should be serving the best interests of the citizens of the nation, finds the time to quickly turn around requests from the gas pipeline industry while it can’t be bothered to respond to legal requests for rehearing and rescission of FERC approvals submitted on behalf of citizens. It is clear where FERC’s priorities lie – in bed with the drillers and pipeline companies, not the people,” said **Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper.**

“We have said all along that the approval of the Northeast Upgrade project will allow TGP to destroy more critical habitat. This company has a proven track record of causing destruction, and we are giving them another approval. This project is a recipe for disaster,” said **Jeff Tittel, Director, NJ Sierra Club.**

“It is an unfortunate truth that our tax dollars pay the salaries of these FERC officials, and sadly the decisions that are made clearly show their disrespect for not only the tax payers but also the disrespect of indisputable knowledge and facts put forth. These officials should be ashamed of themselves,” said **Diane Wexler, on behalf of the Northjersey Pipeline Walkers.**

“Thousands of concerned citizens and impacted homeowners are represented in our plea to FERC to stop and first evaluate the problems on the wake of TGP’s recently completed 300 Line Project before it gives the final green light for the companion Northeast Upgrade Project,” said **Elliott Ruga, senior policy analyst for the New Jersey Highlands Coalition.** “During construction of the 300 Line Project, TGP was issued numerous violations; the required restoration is questionable, and some properties have been left devastated. Without action by FERC we can expect more of the same with the NEUP.”

Wood turtles used to be plentiful in much of the Upper Delaware River watershed. But today, due to illegal takes of the turtles for the pet trade and destruction of their habitats, the wood turtle is listed as either threatened, endangered, or a species of special concern in all the states within its range. In New Jersey, the wood turtle has been listed as threatened; in Pennsylvania it is considered vulnerable, and in New York they are identified as a species of special concern, meaning they are in danger of becoming either endangered or threatened in the near future.

Today most of New Jersey’s viable wood turtle populations remain in the rural portions of Sussex and Warren counties.

“The wood turtle is already suffering because of irresponsible development. The Tennessee Gas Northeast Upgrade Project is a project intended to transport fracked gas across the region – inducing damage at the fracking/drilling fields while also imposing damage all along its route. FERC owes us our rehearing before even considering approving requests that allow this bad project move forward and further harming the wood turtle populations of New Jersey and the Delaware River watershed,” **adds van Rossum.**

For anyone who would like to tour part of the Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company’s 300 line to see the damage done and the damage to come, tours will be held November 4th & 11th. For more information, [click here.](#)

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