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**Advocates Ask Governor Cuomo to Reject Constitution Pipeline Now
Denounce Unwarranted Tree Cutting While DEC Considers Denying Required
Water Quality Certificate**

Albany, NY—Advocates gathered at the State Capitol today to denounce the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) disregard for New York State authority by prematurely approving mass tree cutting along the 25 mile Pennsylvania route of the proposed Constitution Pipeline. On January 29, 2016, the day after it denied a rehearing request from multiple advocacy groups, FERC gave the pipeline company permission to cut down trees along the Pennsylvania section of the pipeline route, even though the company does not have all the federal permits it needs to start construction. The project would cut a 100-foot wide swath through five counties in New York and Pennsylvania; disturb more than 1,859 acres of land; cross multiple public drinking water supply sources, three watersheds, and more than 250 water bodies; and affect more than 90 acres of wetlands. In particular, New York State has not granted this project a required water quality certificate under the Clean Water Act. If this certificate is denied, the pipeline could not be built and the gratuitous destruction of trees in Pennsylvania would be for naught.

Legal filings by, Catskill Mountainkeeper, Clean Air Council, Delaware Otsego Audubon Society, Riverkeeper Inc., Sierra Club, Stop the Pipeline and NY Attorney General Eric Schniederman appear to have temporarily prevented tree clearing in New York while the DEC continues to review water quality permits. "FERC stated in its recent Order that the Company "cannot cut vegetation" prior to receiving ALL federal authorizations," said Anne Marie Garti, an attorney associated with Stop the Pipeline and volunteering with the Pace Environmental Litigation Clinic. "Allowing the pipeline company to cut trees along 25 miles of the route before New York State makes a decision is a tragic example of FERC operating outside of the law."

Contract loggers working for the Williams Pipeline Company have already cut 100-foot swaths of trees in over nine miles of forest along the Pennsylvania pipeline Route. Of particular concern is the Holleran family's North Harford Maple Syrup Farm, in New Milford, PA. The tree felling will obliterate the core of their business-- 1,670 linear feet through their sugar bush that is currently outfitted with spiles and collection lines for syrup production. Many supporters of the Holleran family are gathering daily at the site where the cutting is to take place. On February 10, logging crews and representatives of Constitution tried to access the property, calling the Pennsylvania State Police for assistance. After talking with Megan Holleran the police refused to intervene to allow tree felling. But, it is uncertain how long this reprieve can last.

"Our family has owned this property for generations that includes maple trees that we tap for a family maple syrup business, North Harford Maple," said Maryann Zeffer, resident of the property and co-owner." But when the gas companies came in they lied to us about their intentions. Now they are trying to bully us into building their pipeline across our property. All we want is for them not to cut our trees and harm our business. At the very least they should have to wait for full approval for the entire pipeline before they get to cut our trees. They do not have that approval now."

On February 5th, the Sierra Club and Clean Air Council filed a motion for a stay of tree cutting until pending lawsuits against FERC's larger permitting review are settled. It is uncertain if such a stay will be granted.

"Governor Cuomo and DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos can put an end to this broken FERC process by denying the 401 water quality certificate right now," said Roger Downs, Conservation Director, Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter, "The Second Circuit Court of Appeals has held that a State is authorized to deny this certificate even after FERC has approved a project, particularly when there is overwhelming evidence that there will be chronic violations to the Clean Water Act as a result of the project."

The groups ask Governor Cuomo to be a true climate leader by stopping the pipeline project now.

"The New York DEC warned FERC from the start that the construction of the Constitution Pipeline would be problematic to water resources and forested ecosystems – but that concern fell on deaf ears," said Wes Gillingham, Program Director for Catskill Mountainkeeper." Governor Cuomo should push back on the rubberstamped permits and premature tree cutting approvals by denying the 401 water quality certifications now. He can protect our water from this flawed pipeline proposal. It's the right thing to do."

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