

The ABCs of PennEast Pipeline Impacts: Arsenic, Biodiversity and Commerce

On behalf of the Sourland Conservancy, I would like to express concerns about the devastating impacts that the proposed PennEast pipeline will have on the Sourland Mountain region, as well as on the other areas through which it will traverse, if approved. Here are the top three:

Arsenic

Blasting through the Sourland Mountain will release arsenic. The pipeline's proposed route through Hunterdon County cuts through the Passaic and Lockatong Formations, which consist of Triassic shales that are the sources of arsenic in the groundwater in Hunterdon and Mercer Counties. Professor Tullis Onstott, Dept. of Geosciences, Princeton University says, "This belt of rocks forms an arsenic hot spot." In the Sourlands, farms and homes rely upon well water for drinking. The rocky Sourlands do not filter water like other areas with more topsoil. The arsenic that would be released by pipeline construction would run into streams and impact drinking water downstream, as well. If the PennEast pipeline is permitted to cut through the arsenic hot spot, drinking water for humans and livestock will become toxic. After the pipe is buried, methane leaks from the pipeline would also contribute to the problem. Dr Onstott: "In summary the construction phase will generate arsenic and the operational phase will mobilize arsenic. **By running the pipeline through the arsenic hotspot of New Jersey, PennEast will create an arsenic pipeline that emanates into the drinking water supply along its route...**" (Dr. Onstott's quotes are from his January 18, 2015 comments to FERC).

Biodiversity

An important part of the Sourland Conservancy's mission is to protect the ecological integrity of the Sourland Mountain region.

The proposed PennEast pipeline would cut a 125' swath (roughly, a 6-lane highway) through the forest. Trees and perennials cannot be replanted in the pipeline right-of-way. This means that the pipeline would fragment the Sourland forest permanently. Fragmenting the forest creates more forest edge, which means loss of habitat for birds that migrate and breed in the Sourlands. The American Bald Eagle, the Wood Turtle, the Long-Tailed Salamander, the Indiana Bat, the American Kestrel, and many other animals protected by federal and state law, as well as sixteen plant species classified as endangered or of special concern in New Jersey, share the Sourlands. In fact, over 90 percent of the Sourland Region is habitat for threatened and endangered species.

More forest edge means more deer. There are already 12 times more deer here than the forest can support. They eat crops, destroy native habitat, harbor deer ticks, and cause car accidents. Deer cost New Jersey residents tens of millions of dollars each year in landscape and crop damage, in addition to Lyme disease and motor vehicle accidents (Deer are now the second-largest cause of automobile accidents in New Jersey, trailing only drunk driving).

Hikers, bikers, artists, birders and others come from miles around to find refuge and inspiration here. The Sourland Mountain is Central New Jersey's last and only "contiguous" forest; large areas of deep forest environment that is beneficial to humans and critical for the survival of our native plants and animals.

Commerce

PennEast is a private company. Its investors are not shelling out a billion dollars in an effort to reduce our fuel bills. They expect to make money, as investors in any project should. In order to do that, the six companies that comprise PennEast (AGL Resources, NJR Pipeline Company, Public Service Enterprise Group, South Jersey Industries, Spectra Energy Partners, and UGI Energy Services) want to make the biggest return possible.

The U.S. already has more gas than we are burning. If PennEast adds more gas to the market, they will have to export it to pay back their investors and make the most profit. Overseas, their gas could fetch as much as four times the price it could here. With a brand new liquification facility on the Chesapeake, accessible by hooking up with an existing Transco pipeline here in Hopewell Valley, it will be very convenient to supply customers in Europe, India, Japan or China. UGI's website has a map showing a direct pipeline route to the gas export facility in Maryland.

Instead of saving money, NJ and PA residents will lose money as a result of the proposed PennEast pipeline. All land, homes and businesses on and around the pipeline will see their property values drop if the proposed pipeline goes through. This will impact the owners of those properties and our overall tax revenue. So, folks that were hoping for their fuel bills to go down will actually see their taxes rise instead.

PennEast claims that building the pipeline will create jobs. In reality, the PennEast pipeline would create temporary jobs for transient workers from out of state. To provide real jobs for local workers, energy companies should invest \$1 billion in safe, clean energy and jobs here.

In summary, the proposed PennEast pipeline would be built by a private company to transport natural gas from Pennsylvania to somewhere else. This is not a project to serve the greater good. It will not help the environment. It will not replace rusty oil furnaces. It will decrease property value, raise taxes, threaten our safety, damage our food and water supply, and permanently destroy the delicate ecology of the Sourland Mountain region and every other region in its path.

Please do what is right for the environment, for human health and safety and for the economy - do not approve the proposed PennEast pipeline.

Caroline Katmann
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Sourland Conservancy
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