

Pipeline protesters decry Pinelands intrusion at Statehouse rally



By **Keith Brown** | For NJ.com

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TRENTON — Environmental groups, activists and homeowners affected by natural gas pipeline proposals were joined by state lawmakers on the steps of the Statehouse Monday blasting plans to cut through the Pinelands.

About 100 people holding banners that read "No fracking pipelines," and chanting "People over pipelines," protestors gathered at the headquarters of the state Department of Environmental Protection and marched through the streets of Trenton to a rally at the statehouse to draw attention to their fight against two natural gas pipeline proposals affecting the Pinelands region of the state.

The proposals — **the South Jersey Gas pipeline** and **New Jersey Natural Gas' Southern Reliability Link** — would cut through areas of the environmentally sensitive Pinelands.

"The Pinelands is a national and international treasure that must be protected," state Sen. Raymond Lesniak (D-Union) said. "My colleagues in the Legislature must stand together to make sure that the 35 years of protection are not thrown away to cater to private interests or the whims of administrations that don't see the forests through the trees."

Protestors called on the state Legislature to support a moratorium on new pipelines, oppose political interference with the Pinelands Commission and support policies that protect the environment.



Pipeline company sues N.J. county over road policies

The Southern Reliability Link is a 28-mile, 30-inch natural gas pipeline that would begin in Chesterfield and continue through North Hanover, Upper Freehold, Plumsted and Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst before connecting to the company's system in Manchester.

NJNG filed two petitions with the state Board of Public Utilities: one seeking approval to build and operate the pipeline and a second determining that the project is reasonably necessary and waiving the local zoning and land use ordinances and regulations. The first was approved, with conditions. The second has yet to be decided.

"I'll be honest with you, I am scared," Chesterfield resident Andrea Katz said. "This issue is personal to me. I live in Chesterfield — ground zero for the fight against the Southern Reliability Pipeline and Garden State Expansion Project Compressor Station."

The South Jersey Gas pipeline, a 22-mile natural gas pipeline, was approved by the BPU late last year. The pipeline is planned to power the B.L. England power plant at Beasley Point in Upper Township, converting it from coal.



Natural gas pipeline overcomes major hurdle in South Jersey

Assemblyman Ronald Dancer, (R-Ocean), has introduced legislation that would require the BPU to hold a public comment period during its meetings, something not currently required.

"Presently, the people who are impacted the most are the least informed," Dancer said. "People should have their say and questions answered. They should have a role in the conversation, especially when the discussion is about a 722 psi high-pressure natural gas transmission pipeline."

Environmental groups also decried Gov. Chris Christie's replacement of Robert Jackson, the Pinelands Commission member who voted against the South Jersey Gas pipeline.

"The Pinelands Commission and the BPU continue to sell-out the Pinelands by trying to turn it into the Pipelands," said Jeff Tittel, of the NJ Sierra Club. "We will continue to fight against this dangerous and damaging pipeline that has nothing to do with resiliency and everything to do with promoting the use of dirty fuel in New Jersey."

Keith Brown may be reached at kbrown@njadvancemedia.com. Follow him on Twitter [@KBrownTrenton](https://twitter.com/KBrownTrenton). Find [The Times of Trenton on Facebook](#).

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