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Pinelands Commission Approves Another Unnecessary Gas Pipeline through Pinelands in Violation of Comprehensive Management Plan

Today, the fifteen-member Pinelands Commission voted to approve the New Jersey Natural Gas (NJNG) Southern Reliability Link (SRL) gas pipeline, in violation of federal and state statutes and regulations designed to protect the Pinelands National Reserve. The approval went forward despite new evidence indicating that this pipeline is neither necessary nor effective for its stated purpose.

The Pinelands Preservation Alliance will appeal this decision in court.

SRL is an approximately 28-mile, 30" diameter high pressure natural gas pipeline slated to run from Chesterfield Township in Burlington County to Manchester Township in Ocean County, through Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst (JB MDL). The pipeline is associated with a 30,500hp compressor station currently under construction in a residential neighborhood in Chesterfield Township.

In 2015, the Pinelands Commission issued a Certificate of Filing for the pipeline. In 2016, the Executive Director, without consent from the full Commission, made a determination to the Board of Public Utilities that the pipeline complied with the Comprehensive Management Plan. In fall of 2016, ruling on the South Jersey Gas pipeline, the Appellate Division of the Superior Court of New Jersey determined that for applications like this one, the full Commission must decide. This resulted in a remand of both pipeline applications to the Commission.

“The Pinelands Commission has consistently undermined or ignored protections set out in the Comprehensive Management Plan during their review of this pipeline.” said Carleton Montgomery, Executive Director of the Pinelands Preservation Alliance. “SRL is demonstrably unnecessary and thus not genuinely associated with the Joint Base, it runs through the Preservation Area of the Pinelands, and the project fails to adequately protect the people and the aquifer of the Pinelands.”

Over the summer, [a report by industry expert firm Skipping Stone](#) revealed that SRL is neither a necessary nor effective solution to increase reliability to the NJNG system. At no point

has NJNG, the Board of Public Utilities (BPU), or the Pinelands Commission conducted a reliability analysis to see if SRL is truly needed.

PPA currently has appeals pending on Pinelands Commission resolutions PC4-16-43 and PC4-17-10, which establish the rushed, unlawful process by which the Pinelands Commission reviewed the New Jersey Natural Gas application. These appeals are before the Appellate Division of the New Jersey Superior Court.

During their review, the Commission managed to violate even the hasty process it set out for itself. The vote on the pipeline was originally scheduled for September 8th, just ten days after the Executive Director's recommendation for approval was posted online. The resolution requires the Commission to allow 15 days following such a posting to allow parties to request an adjudicatory hearing. In response to a letter from PPA's attorney which pointed out the inconsistency that date posed, the Commission rescheduled the meeting to September 14th.

PPA, alongside Bordentown Township and Chesterfield Township, has appealed the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection permits and the Board of Public Utilities approvals.

The pipeline still requires approval from Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst. The United States Air Force published a Draft Environmental Assessment for the project this spring.

The Pinelands Preservation Alliance (PPA) was established as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization in 1989 by environmental leaders and Pinelands residents, with the goal of preserving and protecting the more than 1 million acres of the New Jersey Pinelands. PPA remains the only private organization dedicated solely to environmental protection throughout the Pinelands.

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