

Groups Challenge Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's Approval of the Atlantic Sunrise Pipeline

Proposed Pipeline Carrying Fracked Gas Would Cut Through Dozens of Communities

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Washington, DC -- Today, the Sierra Club, Lancaster Against Pipelines, Lebanon Pipeline Awareness, Allegheny Defense Project, Clean Air Council, Concerned Citizens of Lebanon County, and Heartwood filed a petition for review with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia challenging the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) approval of the Atlantic Sunrise pipeline. The pipeline would clear cut its way through ten Pennsylvania counties, impacting hundreds of acres of forested land and crossing dozens of wetlands and water bodies.

The groups, represented by Appalachian Mountain Advocates and Sierra Club, are demanding that FERC conduct a comprehensive environmental review that fully accounts for the short- and long-term impacts, as well as the public need for the project. A recent [report](#) prepared by Key-Log Economics details the ways that FERC has overstated the pipeline's economic benefits while discounting or ignoring its true costs – including the effects of the pipeline on property values; loss of environmental benefits like flood control, clean water, and wildlife habitat; economic damages associated with increases in greenhouse gas emissions; and public health costs due to the release of toxins and smog-forming pollutants.

"It's been clear from the beginning that this fracked gas pipeline does nothing but enrich corporate polluters while threatening our environment and communities," **said Joanne Kilgour, director of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the Sierra Club.** "FERC's failure puts our families in harm's way, both from the pipeline and the increase in fracking operations that will occur as a result of this proposal. This pipeline must be rejected as we further embrace clean, renewable energy that keeps our communities safe while creating good, family-wage paying jobs."

Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company (Transco) proposes to construct nearly 200 miles of large-diameter pipeline to move fracked gas from northern Pennsylvania to an existing system of pipelines that delivers gas to the Southeast and Gulf Coast regions. Some of the gas is likely to be exported, including through liquefied natural gas export facilities along the Gulf Coast and at Cove Point, Maryland.

On March 7th, the New York and North Carolina public utilities commissions urged FERC to reconsider its approval, claiming investor returns are too high and that Transco has failed to prove that project approval is in the public's interest.

The proposed fracked gas pipeline was approved by FERC on February 3rd, on its former chair's final day – just before the commission lost its quorum. On February 10th, the groups filed a request for

rehearing, and FERC staff issued a “tolling order” on March 13th. Transco commenced construction activities on March 16th.

“By approving the pipeline just minutes before losing its quorum, FERC demonstrated that it was more concerned with meeting the needs of Transco than in determining whether there is a public need for this pipeline,” **said Ryan Talbott, staff attorney with Appalachian Mountain Advocates.** “Now, even though FERC lacks a quorum to make a decision on our request for rehearing, agency staff has allowed Transco to begin construction. It is unconscionable for agency staff to allow Transco to begin construction before FERC has an opportunity to address the legitimate concerns of landowners impacted by the pipeline through the rehearing process.”

“FERC’s rushed decision to approve the ASP, despite overwhelming community opposition and a litany of issues still requiring resolution, further demonstrates the contempt this agency has for the natural environment and local communities alike,” **said Malinda Clatterbuck of Lancaster Against Pipelines.** “To condemn the preserved farms and private property of Pennsylvania residents on behalf of billionaires running an Oklahoma-based corporation shipping fracked gas to overseas markets represents an extraordinary scandal.”

In addition to impacting numerous landowners, there will be significant impacts to public lands, including from increased fracking.

“One of the companies signed up to ship gas on the pipeline, Seneca Resources, has stated that it will increase fracking in Loyalsock State Forest upon completion of the pipeline,” **said Bill Belitskus, board president of the Allegheny Defense Project.** “Nevertheless, FERC refused to consider the indirect and cumulative impacts of increased fracking in Loyalsock and other state forests. FERC cannot claim this pipeline is in the public interest when it refused to consider the impacts that fracking will have on Pennsylvania’s public lands.”

"FERC's approval is a sweet deal for Williams, which gets guaranteed high profits and the right to take people's land against their wills, said Alex Bomstein, Senior Litigation Attorney with Clean Air Council. "However the pipeline approval is a travesty for Pennsylvania, which doesn't need another fracked gas export project invading our communities and polluting our land, air, and water."

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