

**Byram CARES • Environment New Jersey • Delaware Riverkeeper Network
New Jersey Environmental Federation • New Jersey Sierra Club
New Jersey Highlands Coalition • Stop The Lines**

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**LOCAL AND STATE GROUPS OPPOSE PSE&G'S
MEGA POWER LINE EXPANSION**

Montville, NJ – A coalition of state and local environmental groups today called on the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU) to reject a request for approval by PSE&G that would massively expand its North Jersey Susquehanna–Roseland transmission line – a proposal which would more than triple the line's current size and capacity.

“This power line is the Line in the Sand for us. We will fight to stop this line because it is bad for the environment, climate change, pollution, open spaces and consumers – it is just bad,” **stated Jeff Tittel, Director of the Sierra Club's NJ Chapter.**

PSE&G plans to charge its New Jersey ratepayers \$650 million to pay for the line expansion, but the groups gathered want the NJBPU to instead require that PSE&G invest the same amount on a region-wide energy efficiency and renewable energy program to shore up reliability.

“No one disputes that North Jersey's electricity highways are congested and need relief to avoid price spikes and blackouts in the future. But New Jersey's energy future should not be tied to dirty coal plants in Ohio and Pennsylvania, when home grown renewable energy and energy efficiency can provide the solution,” said **Dena Mottola Jaborska, Executive Director, Environment New Jersey.**

An analysis by Environment New Jersey finds that the proposed line expansion has the potential to move *at least* 3,000 MW of energy from coal states into *or through* New Jersey. That is enough electricity to power 800,000 or more homes. Growth in the state's electric demand does not warrant such a large increase in transmission capacity. Even conservative projections from the grid operator, PJM, show peak demand in PSE&G's entire service area will rise by only 2000 MW by 2020.

Environment New Jersey estimates that a \$650 million investment by PSE&G could buy *at least* 2000 MW of energy savings through energy efficiency measures, reducing all of the expected growth in PSE&G customers' peak demand. Beyond this step to address reliability in North Jersey through energy efficiency, Governor Corzine has set a strategy to cut energy usage statewide and to build more clean energy generation capacity.

Last Thursday, Governor Corzine announced plans to build a substantial amount of renewable energy generation – more than 6,000 MW – from wind, solar, biomass and emerging renewable technologies by 2020, and to reduce the state's overall energy use by 20% by 2020, ensuring no increase in energy demand between now and 2020.

“PSE&G’s proposed line expansion is in direct conflict with the state of New Jersey’s plan to put New Jersey on the path to a more sustainable energy future,” **stated David Pringle, Campaign Director of the New Jersey Environmental Federation.** “The BPU and Governor Corzine have made major commitments to clean energy solutions, and their decision on PSE&G’s request to expand this line will be a test of those commitments.”

Faced with local opposition this past summer, PSE&G bypassed local approvals and on October 14, initiated discussions with the NJBPU seeking State approval for the line expansion. Under state law, if the NJBPU approves the line, PSE&G would not need approvals from local authorities, although most of the municipalities through which the lines run would like to play a role in the decision.

“We cannot support or oppose this project without answers to our concerns,” **stated Byram Township councilman Scott Olson, speaking on behalf of six municipalities who have formed a coalition to address this proposal.** “We do not feel that PSE&G has shown a proven need for this expansion, or that all other options have been exhausted and this is the only viable alternative to address their needs. And they have yet to prove the potential for health effects are lessened or that the economic impact to our municipalities and our residents will be addressed.”

Specifically, PSE&G’s proposal is to add a 500-kilovolt line to the existing 230-kilovolt line on its portion of the Susquehanna–Roseland corridor. A Pennsylvania utility, PP&L, is seeking a similar expansion in that state, sending electricity from the Delaware Water Gap, across three New Jersey counties to Roseland in Essex County, New Jersey. From there, electricity would be converted to several 230 kilovolt lines and delivered to New York and other parts of New Jersey.

As part of the NJBPU review process, the groups say the agency must consider all the costs of line expansion, including loss of hundreds of acres of public parkland and other publicly preserved lands, damage to forests and wildlife habitat and devaluation of homes adjacent to the proposed expansion.

"The high-voltage power line proposed by PSE&G will have an enormous impact on the Highlands Region. 200-foot high towers will destroy its beauty and character, and cause considerable environmental degradation during the construction process," **said Julia M. Somers, Executive Director of the Highlands Coalition.** "PSE&G has tried to exempt this project from the Highlands Act, which is almost as inappropriate as their claim that this expansion is needed. It's not, given the State's repeated commitment to renewable energy and conservation."

The expansion would require a minimum of 80 diversions of publicly preserved Green Acres land in the Highlands region. It would cross at least 15 wetlands, seven areas with known state and federally protected animal or plant species, 10 Natural Heritage Priority Areas, several known pre-historic (National Register listed or eligible) resources and four heavily used visitor areas in the Delaware National Recreation Area alone, including campsites, a picnic area and river launch.

“As local residents, we are concerned the line expansion will harm our health, devalue our property, and despoil the environment. PSE&G’s plan to deal with an estimated 1.5% increase in peak demand with a more than 300% increase in transmission capacity is unnecessary, irresponsible, and profit motivated. Peak energy demand is only 50 hours out of the year, and should be addressed through conservation and other available alternatives,” **said David Slaperud of Stop The Lines,** a grassroots group formed to address concerns in towns throughout North Jersey.

Concerns Raised by the Proposed Expansion of the New Jersey portion of the Susquehanna – Roseland Transmission Line:

Open Space, Park and Recreation Lands Concerns:

- *May Divert Green Acres Land Preserved By Taxpayers:* The proposed expansion of the Susquehanna-Roseland line (S-R line) would run through parkland and open space preserved with grants from New Jersey's Green Acres program. In many cases, county and municipal taxes also contributed to local land acquisitions. These critical open space and recreation lands were paid for in part by New Jersey taxpayers with the expectation that these lands would be permanently protected. If the deed of easement on these lands does not allow the addition of taller electric poles and more wires, the lands will be subject to the Green Acres diversion rules.
- *Impacts to Local Parklands:* Construction of the S-R line expansion would take place on some Morris County parkland, including Pyramid Mountain Natural Historic Area in Montville and Kinnelon, as well as the southern edge of the Mahlon Dickerson Reservation in Jefferson.
- *Federal Parkland Also Threatened:* In testimony at the July 31, 2008 hearing in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee regarding energy transmission, Craig Obey, Vice President for Government Affairs at the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) voiced the Association's concerns about the impact the S-R line could have on the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. Mr. Obey stated the path taken by this line would cross: at least 15 wetlands; 7 areas with known state and federally-listed protected animal and plant species; 10 Natural Heritage Priority Areas; several known pre-historic and historic (National Register-listed or eligible) resources; 4 heavily used visitor use areas including campsites, a picnic area, and river launch
- *Scenic Value Diminished:* There would be a significantly negative impact on scenic resources in the area if the proposed expansion were allowed to go forward. The more than doubling of the height of existing towers and additional wires would alter the landscape forever. Many recreational lands would lose scenic value, and this could threaten New Jersey's eco-tourism economy.

Natural Resources Concerns

- *Damage to Forests and Habitat:* Roads cut for construction would cause forest and habitat fragmentation, and the loss of vegetation would have a negative impact on water supply. Disturbance to steep slopes, wetlands and migratory birds would also occur.

Health issues Related to Electromagnetic Fields (EMF's) concerns:

- *Possible Carcinogen:* While PSE&G continues to state that results of studies are "inconclusive" and that "there is no causal relation between EMF's and childhood leukemia or cancer," both the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) and World Health Organization (WHO) classify EMF's as a possible human carcinogen. Recent studies seem to indicate *some* relationship between living near transmission lines and health problems, especially cancer. Currently, we are aware of at least one "cancer-cluster" that exists along the lines in question.

PSE&G claims they will use “reverse phasing” to minimize magnetic fields. This is a complex and unproven technology, far less effective when the lines are carrying different loads, as is the case here. At best, it is an admission to the fact that they are attempting to “minimize” EMF’s – for which there is no state or federal standard – despite their claim that they pose no health hazard.

Property rights concerns:

- There are numerous potential property rights issues with existing easements. Some easements exist with a width of less than the 150’ that is being proposed for the project by PSE&G, and specify tower heights and/or line voltage. Many of them were written in the late 1920’s, and may need renegotiation or could force the use of eminent domain for acquisition of additional property. Are 150-foot easements appropriate through residential neighborhoods, considering the over 190-foot height of the towers being proposed? Who will be watching out for the interest of these property owners during this process?
- Economics are an important concern as well. The increased line voltage, visual impact of more than doubled tower height, and greater vegetative clearing will negatively affect property values of homes currently adjoining the lines. The increased tower height will also raise the lines and towers into view above the mature forest canopy in many densely developed residential areas. This new visual impact will decrease the value of many homes currently not impacted by these lines. Every 100 homes with a decreased assessment of just \$10,000 each will create a \$1-million ratable deficit for your municipality.

Highlands Regional Concerns:

- The proposed Susquehanna-Roseland line would require significant environmental impacts, both in siting pole locations and during the construction process. The current right of way crosses through the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, the Appalachian Trail, Kittatinny Valley State Park, Rockaway River Wildlife Management Areas, Wildcat Ridge Natural Area, the New Jersey Highlands Preservation and Planning Areas, as well as numerous state, county and local open space lands. The scenic integrity of ridgelines and the integrity of wetlands, riparian areas, core forests, critical habitat and Special Environment Zones, designated as no build areas by the Highlands Council, will be significantly impacted. The proposed line is inconsistent with the drinking water protection standards, scenic resource standards and critical wildlife standards set forth by the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council in the Highlands Regional Master Plan.