

An update on the proposed PennEast pipeline through Kingwood Township

From the Kingwood Township Environmental Commission Members

The Kingwood Township Environmental Commission (KTEC) members have been very busy evaluating the potential environmental impacts the proposed PennEast pipeline will have in our community. PennEast's proposed 36-inch pipeline would enter Kingwood Township in the northwest corner of the township near Frenchtown and run roughly 7 miles south-southeast, close to many homes and crossing 10 streams and 19 wetlands in the Township. The KTEC believes both the construction and the long term functioning and maintenance of the pipeline, if built, would create violations of the Clean Water Act, Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, Endangered Species Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and DRBC regulations which no amount of mitigation could avoid. Data suggests that natural gas can be transported in existing and already approved pipelines, while public benefit sufficient to outweigh the environmental and economic damage of a new pipeline has not been demonstrated. The KTEC members found PennEast's environmental resource reports to be vague and did not address the required environmental issues.

For your information, our concerns are outlined below. The KTEC's letters to FERC can be viewed on the Kingwood Township's web page (www.kingwoodtownship.com/pipeline) along with additional information regarding the proposed pipeline. As of this writing, the KTEC has not received any response to their comments submitted to the Federal Energy regulatory Commission (FERC) as part of the EPA mandated environmental impact study. Meanwhile, PennEast has changed the route numerous times, making it even more difficult for us to evaluate impacts and communicate with landowners. There are many studies and permits that PennEast would need before this pipeline could be built. It is not a done deal. **Even the NJ Department of Environmental Protection's response to PennEast's resource reports is they do not have enough information to evaluate the permits needed to build the pipeline because only about a third of the property owners that are in the path of the proposed pipeline have allowed PennEast to perform surveys.**¹

- **Know your landowner rights** Residents can deny PennEast access to their property (see landowner information and links at www.kingwoodtownship.com/pipeline and consult your attorney for legal advice). PennEast does not have the power of eminent domain at this time.
- **Ground Water** Blasting and construction could increase the arsenic², radon, bacteria and other contaminants in our ground water. The pipeline may alter ground water flow and destroy the wetlands that recharge our ground water. Everyone in Kingwood has a well and relies on ground water, and yet PennEast's Resource Report 2 reported that, "No public or private water supply wells or springs have been observed in NJ during field investigations."³
- **Surface Water** The Clean Water Act protects water quality and requires impaired waters to be restored. Several of our streams are Category 1, which receive more stringent protection. Several of our streams are already impaired and actions are being taken to improve water quality. Pipeline construction activities, removal of riparian vegetation, damage to wetlands and compaction of soils will result in increased runoff, sediment and water temperature, which would violate the Clean Water Act.
- **Downstream Water Quality** Potential impacts to water quality in the D&R Canal and Delaware River could lead to increased costs of water treatment for 700,000 people in central NJ and millions in south Jersey.

¹ NJDEP. 7/2/2015. <http://elibrary.ferc.gov/idmws/common/opennat.asp?fileID=13930657>.

² Prof. Tullis C. Onstott, Princeton University. 2/24/2015. <http://elibrary.ferc.gov/idmws/common/opennat.asp?fileID=13783933>

³ PennEast Pipeline Project Resource Report 2: Water Use and Quality, Pre-Filing Draft April 2015, page 2-10.

- **Wetlands** are important for recharge, filtration, flood prevention, wildlife and more. NJDEP has often issued Letters of Interpretation (LOI) to landowners in our community stating that wetlands “cannot support development of any kind,” prohibiting landowners from using them. The pipeline would impact 19 wetlands in Kingwood, which would violate section 404 of the Clean Water Act.
- **Forests** Construction of the pipeline would result in the loss of about 123 acres of forest in Kingwood alone. Loss of forests results in increased runoff (and flooding), sediment polluting the water, increased stream temperatures, and decreased wildlife and special plants that rely on intact forests. PennEast’s idea of restoration is, “Upon completion of the Project, these areas will be allowed to revert to prior land uses through natural successional processes...”⁴ but unfortunately, invasive species and deer will prevent this from occurring.
- **Economic Impacts** PennEast claims to be a job creator, but almost all of the jobs would be temporary and mostly given to out-of-state workers as seen already by the companies conducting various surveys. Meanwhile, the pipeline may result in loss of local jobs related to farming, forestry and tourism; farm productivity; decreased property values; infrastructure damage (roads, structures, wells (including the potential for installation of arsenic removal and other water purification systems), septic systems), and impacts to our aquifer, which cannot be replaced.
- **Rare Wildlife and Plants** Loss of rare, threatened and endangered wildlife and plants.
- **Deer** The increase in edge habitats will continue and expand deer impacts to farming, landscaping and deer/vehicle collisions.
- **Roads and Bridges** Construction and blasting for the pipeline may damage our rural roads and bridges.
- **Open space impacts** Public funds have been used to preserve open space and farmland for protection of forests, wetlands, streams, water quality, ground water recharge and wildlife, values which would be reduced by a pipeline. Approximately 24% of the route through Kingwood is located on preserved land.
- **Mitigation** Destroying trees that are hundreds of years old cannot be mitigated. Planting of trees on the pipeline is not allowed. These trees will be gone forever and the wetlands are never the same after the impact of significant disturbance.
- **“Co-location”** - the placing of the pipeline next to an existing Right-of-Way (ROW). Where the route is proposed near a power line ROW, the width of the ROW will simply be widened with very little overlap, so the gap in the trees gets bigger.
- **Do we need another pipeline?** “Data from The American Climate Prospectus indicates that NJ and PA will experience a zero percent increase in electricity demand relative to 2012, through 2040.”⁵
- **Safe?** The federal Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) admits to the very dangerous nature of gas pipelines, *hoping* to lower the number of pipeline incidents involving death or major injury to between 26-37 per year and environmentally damaging incidents to between 44-64 per year.⁶ Based on population density and statements made by PennEast, we expect Kingwood to be classified as “Class 1” which receives the lowest safety and construction requirements. In addition, the recommended evacuation distance from a 36" natural gas pipeline at 2200 PSI is 3,850 feet, yet **the PennEast Pipeline can come within 25 feet of a home.**⁷

If you have any questions or issues regarding the proposed PennEast pipeline, feel free to contact the KTEC by phone (908-996-4276), email (dkratzer@kingwoodtownship.com), attend an Environmental Commission meeting held on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:30pm at the Kingwood Twp. Municipal building or stop by the Environmental Commission table at Community Day on September 19, 2015.

⁴ PennEast Pipeline Project Resource Report 8: Land Use, Recreation, and Aesthetics, Pre-Filing Draft April 2015, page 8-16.

⁵ <http://stoppenneast.org/>, accessed 7/28/2015

⁶ <http://www.phmsa.dot.gov/about/mission>, accessed 7/9/2015

⁷ The formula used to calculate distance was taken from the Gas Research Institute Report GRI-00/0189, A Model for Sizing High Consequence Areas Associated with Natural Gas Pipelines, 2001, prepared by C-FER Technologies.