

Randolph Reporter

PSE&G project is ‘potentially devastating’ for Randolph, other towns

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EDITOR:

The stated need for the Susquehanna-Roseland transmission line expansion project— to prevent blackouts — could not be further from reality. This project is not about ensuring that the lights turn on when you flip the switch; it is to move dirty, polluting coal-fired energy from the mid-West into the high-priced eastern markets.

Neil Paley’s recent article “National Park Service hinders powers lines...” described how the National Park Service (NPS) is currently conducting an environmental review of the project, as required under federal law, and that this necessary and protective process has resulted in a “string of delays” of the project and could result in blackouts. The article neglects to note that PSE&G agreed to this delay, and demonstrated that it could easily accommodate the modified timeline without disruption of service to customers. So much for the claim of looming blackouts by 2012.

New Jersey’s clean energy future is at stake if this project is built. PSE&G wants to pursue an archaic infrastructure project, entirely funded by ratepayers, instead of investing in the true solution: energy conservation through demand response (DR) programs and renewable energy projects. Randolph Mayor Trina Ruane Mitsch supports the proposed project because she is concerned that peak energy demand in summer months could result in blackouts. But why invest \$1.3 billion of ratepayer money to address six hours of summer peak demand when demand response can achieve these results at a fraction of the cost?

A report released earlier this year by none other than PSE&G, among other utility companies, found that demand response programs would reduce the peak electricity use this summer in the region by 8,525 MW, the equivalent output of ten large power plants.

The North American Electric Reliability Corporation’s 2009 Long-Term Reliability Assessment: 2009-2018 found “significant reductions in projected long-term energy use in North America” due to the economic recession and the implementation of demand response programs and predicts demand will increase at a slower pace and from a lower starting point in the future.

Thank goodness the people and the environment of New Jersey are protected by the federal requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to ensure large-scale projects receive a proper review of all potential impacts to the environmental, social, and economic resources.

The National Park Service, in fulfilling those NEPA requirements, has had to propose a number

of alternatives to the project including a “No Build” alternative. The public process required under NEPA has allowed citizens to voice their very real concerns to the NPS.

Those comments must be considered in the decision-making.

A majority of the public is opposed to the project because of a variety of legitimate concerns including the potential effects of electromagnetic fields—which studies have been linked to leukemia and brain tumors, lost property values, the loss of treasured scenic landscapes, impacts to threatened and endangered species and bird migration patterns.

There are also safety concerns as this project proposes the first ever 195 foot towers through residential areas.

The proposed project would destroy three National Park units; the Delaware Water Gap, the Middle Delaware National Scenic River and the Appalachian Trail.

The position of NPS is not, as the article described, a “we don’t want this in the park attitude”. Rather, the Park Service is examining if it is justifiable to locate this project on lands held in the public trust for the protection of significant natural and cultural resources.

Congress made it clear in establishing these parks that the public’s recreation, use and enjoyment is paramount and these values should not be easily sacrificed for a project of dubious value to the public.

Also, this project will not result in jobs for New Jersey residents. PSE&G has not built a transmission line in over 80 years.

Imported crews, who have the necessary experience and who travel the country constructing such projects, will be the beneficiaries of any employment opportunities stemming from this project.

I thank the NPS for performing a deservedly thorough review of this enormously expensive, unnecessary and potentially devastating project. I am thankful that at least one agency, the Park Service, is insisting on asking the right questions.

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