

## Groups Rally Against Fast-Tracked Power Line

**Dozens protest Susquehanna-Roseland power line at Lurker Park in East Hanover on Thursday.**

By [Jake Remaly](#)  
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About 50 residents, municipal officials and members of state environmental groups gathered at Lurker Park in East Hanover on Thursday afternoon for a rally opposing the federal government's [fast-tracking of the Susquehanna-Roseland power line](#), saying the Obama administration's support for the project compromises the environmental review process that already is underway by the National Park Service.

The Obama administration [announced in early October its decision to make the project a priority](#) as part of a program to create jobs and upgrade the power grid.

By supporting the project before the review is complete, "That violates the whole spirit of the environmental review process," said Kate Millsaps of the NJ Sierra Club.

Opponents of PSE&G's plan say it would industrialize suburban landscapes by roughly doubling the height and capacity of the line, transmit additional coal power and would harm forests and water quality. They said any jobs created by the project would be temporary.

PSE&G officials say the project is needed to provide reliable electricity for millions of people in the region and that the company agrees a thorough assessment of the plan is important. Both Pennsylvania regulators and the NJ Board of Public Utilities approved the project.

Abigail Dillen, an attorney with Earthjustice, is arguing in court the state BPU must revisit the application in light of new information about when the project needs to be completed. The power company originally said the project was needed by 2012, but later revised the year to 2015, she said. Addressing attendees at the rally, she said it's not clear if the project is still needed and what other alternatives might exist.

Ralph LaRossa, president of PSE&G, has said the company is working closely with government agencies to have the plan reviewed and approved.

"It's clear the administration recognizes the importance of this transmission system upgrade that will maintain electric reliability for millions of people in our region," LaRossa said in a statement. "Since this project was announced, we have been working closely with state and federal agencies such as the National Park Service to ensure a timely review and approval of

permits that are needed before work can begin. We fully understand and support a thorough assessment. At the same time, utilities need the ability to make these critical system upgrades in a timely manner.”

East Hanover residents and officials have opposed the power line every step of the way.

"I promised that if they ever try to come in here, I'm going to tie myself to one of those poles and they'll take me away to jail," East Hanover Mayor Joseph Pannullo said at the rally. "I promise you, I still will do that."

The project has been discussed for nearly four years. Public Service Electric and Gas Company and PPL Electric Utilities are seeking to upgrade an aging transmission corridor that starts at the Susquehanna station in Pennsylvania and travels 45 miles through New Jersey. It stretches through Andover, Boonton Township, Byram, East Hanover, Fredon, Hardwick, Hopatcong Borough, Jefferson, Kinnelon, Montville, Newton, Parsippany, Rockaway, Roseland, Sparta and Stillwater before ending in Roseland.

Because the upgrade would run through the Delaware Water Gap National Park, [the National Park Service needs to evaluate it.](#)

The park service has held numerous hearings and studied the line's impact on everything from vistas and natural and historic sites to birds and sound. It also is considering alternate routes. In a recent newsletter, the park service said its draft environmental impact statement would be ready for public comment this winter.

In addition to Pannullo, Dillen and Millsaps, addressing rally attendees on Thursday were Elliott Ruga of the New Jersey Highlands Coalition, East Hanover Council President Carolyn Jandoli, Eric Benson of the New Jersey Environmental Federation, Fred Stine of Delaware Riverkeeper Network and Byram Township Councilman Scott Olson.

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