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## **Groups Call on FERC to Revise Atlantic Sunrise Pipeline Analysis** *Federal agency stifling public participation by withholding information*

A coalition of 17 conservation groups is calling on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to revise or supplement its draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) for the proposed Atlantic Sunrise Pipeline. The groups note that FERC has continued a pattern of failing to disclose key information to the public about proposed pipelines and their considerable impacts.

To build the Atlantic Sunrise, the Transcontinental Pipe Line Company (Transco) proposes to construct nearly 200 miles of large diameter pipeline through ten Pennsylvania counties. The pipeline would move fracked gas from northern Pennsylvania to an existing pipeline in Lancaster County. The gas would then be shipped to the southeast and Gulf Coast regions.

“It is clear that FERC published the draft environmental impact statement before it had even received the information it needs to conduct a thorough review of this massive pipeline project,” said Barbara Arrindell, Director of Damascus Citizens for Sustainability. “FERC readily admits it still needs information about impacts on hundreds of proposed waterbody and wetlands crossings. This crucial information should have been included in the DEIS so the public has the opportunity to review and provide feedback during the public comment period. You certainly cannot comprehend the cumulative impact of a project without this type of information.”

Two federal agencies also criticized FERC for the lack of information in the Atlantic Sunrise DEIS. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) said FERC ignored impacts on important resources including public water supplies, endangered species, and historic resources, and the Department of the Interior criticized FERC’s failure to disclose impacts to the Appalachian Trail and Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail. Both agencies called on FERC to revise or supplement the DEIS.

The groups point to EPA’s recent comments concerning several other pipelines as evidence of a pattern of FERC inhibiting meaningful public participation. The groups show that FERC regularly permits pipeline companies to withhold critical information about their projects until after the public comment period has ended. EPA has raised similar concerns about the proposed PennEast Pipeline and the Southeast Market Pipeline Project.

“EPA’s comments reveal that FERC is more concerned with expediting its rubber stamp on pipeline projects than in informing the public about those projects’ substantial impacts,” said Malinda Clatterbuck, Co-founder of Lancaster Against Pipelines. “In one project after another, FERC releases an analysis that fails to include significant information only to have that

information supplied by the company later in the process, or not at all. This stands the federally required public review process on its head and deprives affected landowners and concerned citizens of the opportunity to provide feedback during the public comment period.”

The groups also say that FERC failed to consider the impacts of induced gas drilling on state forest lands in Pennsylvania that will result if the Atlantic Sunrise Pipeline is built. One gas producer, Seneca Resources, recently said it is planning to drill 13 shale gas wells on a lease in Loyalsock State Forest in preparation for the pipeline.

“Even though FERC knows that the pipeline will lead to more fracking on Pennsylvania’s state forests, it completely ignored these impacts in the DEIS,” said Bill Belitskus, Board President of the Allegheny Defense Project. “The public has a right to know how their state forest lands will be affected before FERC approves any more pipelines in this region.”

Both federal agencies and the conservation groups faulted FERC for failing to determine if there is even any actual public need for the project. In comments to FERC, EPA noted that FERC’s failure to determine the need for the project compromised the environmental analysis’s purpose of “informed decision making, using relevant information and public engagement in the process.” EPA noted that it appeared likely that other alternatives with lesser environmental impacts could make the Atlantic Sunrise unnecessary and faulted FERC for failing to explore those alternatives in detail.

“It is simply unconscionable that FERC is pushing projects that would damage our land and water, take private property, and destroy out public recreational lands without even determining if they are truly necessary,” said Tom Au, Conservation Chair for the Pennsylvania Chapter of the Sierra Club. This is a clear case of valuing corporate profits over the public welfare.”

The letter was signed by Allegheny Defense Project, Appalachian Mountain Advocates, Citizens for Pennsylvania’s Future, Clean Air Council, Concerned Citizens of Lebanon County, Damascus Citizens for Sustainability, Eastern PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation, Friends of Nelson, Heartwood, Lancaster Against Pipelines, Lebanon Pipeline Awareness, Lower Susquehanna Riverkeeper, Middle Susquehanna Riverkeeper, Shalefield Organizing Committee, Sierra Club, Waterkeepers Chesapeake, and Wild Virginia.

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