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PennEast Opponents: Scoping Postponement Raises New Concerns

For opponents of the proposed PennEast pipeline, the postponement of the first scoping meeting scheduled by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) raises new concerns. FERC announced late Friday afternoon that it was postponing the first scoping meeting originally scheduled for January 27th in Ewing, New Jersey. The announcement was posted on the FERC website and was delivered via email to those who have registered for an “e-subscription” to the PennEast docket. How the general public will be notified of the postponement remains unclear.

Earlier in the week, 18 organizations and community groups [submitted a letter](#) to FERC outlining concerns regarding how the meetings had been planned and announced. They called on the Commission to extend the scoping period to 120 days to ensure that the public would not be disenfranchised from the scoping process. A phone and social media campaign the same day the letter was submitted resulted in the announcement by FERC of a two-week extension of the scoping period and critical details of meeting locations missing from the original announcement.

Today’s announcement is similarly lacking in detail.

“We’re pleased that FERC seems to be responding, first with the two-week extension and now with the postponement,” said **Karen Feridun**, Founder, Berks Gas Truth, “but we’re very concerned that the Commission is once again failing to communicate this announcement in a way that will reach the people planning to attend and comment.”

The January 27th meeting was to be the only scoping meeting in New Jersey.

“FERC’s electronic announcement did not communicate plans to publish notice of the Ewing postponement in area papers nor to post notices on the facility door where the meeting was to be held,” said **Lynda Farrell**, Pipeline Safety Coalition. “For many, attending this meeting meant a 40 mile drive during rush hour. We don’t want people discouraged from participating in the process by traveling to a meeting only to find out it was cancelled. Will those people show up next time?”

FERC has not announced whether any of the other four meetings have been postponed. The next scheduled meeting is on January 28th in Newtown, Bucks County.

“While giving more time for the New Jersey communities is helpful, there are many communities along the 108 mile project that are impacted by this project including any and all changes — the new routes on one half plus the new gas spur have impacts down the entire line of the project and so everyone should be given the due consideration and respect of an appropriate level of time. We need more hearings, more time, and better locations for those most directly affected. This one modification feels more like divide and conquer tactics than due respect and regard for the public process,” said **Maya van Rossum**, the Delaware Riverkeeper.

"I am disappointed by PennEast's initial short notice, this last minute cancellation, and their overall lack of communication with residents of Hopewell Valley. This is a very bad start to such a serious matter, one that threatens our environment and could negatively affect the lives of our residents. I hope this isn't indicative of things to come. Again, I am calling on FERC to extend the scoping period to 120 days, starting after the meeting is rescheduled," said **Vanessa Sandom**, Hopewell Township Committee

Although the groups continue to have concerns about FERC's handling of the scoping process, they consider these recent changes to the scoping meeting schedule to be a victory.

"FERC had to cancel this meeting. We made them do it: regular people working together to protect their Constitutional right to a safe, clean environment. Look out PennEast: Here comes democracy," said **Laura Mirsky**, Concerned Citizens Against the Pipeline, Holland Township, NJ

Link to FERC's announcement:

http://elibrary.ferc.gov/idmws/file_list.asp?accession_num=20150123-3058

Direct link to letter: <http://stoppeneast.org/index.php/documents/documents/54-penneast-scoping-letter-final/file>

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