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## **PennEast Opponents: No Word from FERC on Scoping Issues** *Groups raise additional concerns with meeting cancellation process*

Two weeks after submitting a letter to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), 18 organizations and community groups opposing the PennEast pipeline have received no response regarding the concerns they raised with a series of scoping meetings that were to have started last week. Today, the groups submitted a second letter, this one calling on FERC to respond to their concerns and address new concerns that arose when the Commission abruptly cancelled the first two scoping meetings.

The first two meetings were cancelled in separate announcements, both citing “unforeseen” circumstances. Later, FERC told the press that they had cancelled the meetings because of weather forecasts. In neither case did the Commission notify the press or publish public notices; they simply announced the cancellations on their website. Only subscribers to the PennEast docket received automated email notifications that the cancellations had been posted.

“FERC failed the public, not once, but twice, by neglecting to publicize its decisions to cancel scoping meetings. They cited weather concerns, but didn’t make any effort to notify the people who, thanks to the remote locations FERC chose for its meetings, had to drive in rush hour traffic to get to the 6 p.m. meetings, in some cases 40 miles or more,” said **Karen Feridun**, Founder of Berks Gas Truth. “We worry that people who made the effort to get to the meetings, only to discover they were cancelled, may not show up next time to let their voices be heard.”

“One of FERC’s ‘Guiding Principles’ is ‘*Due Process and Transparency: Paramount in all of its proceedings is the Commission’s determination to be open and fair to all participants.*’ ([www.ferc.gov](http://www.ferc.gov)) If Chairman LaFleur and the FERC Commissioners are truly managing this Federal agency according to its published principles, it is incumbent upon them to extend the scoping period and schedule additional meetings in affected towns. They have already strayed from this principle by cancelling two scoping meetings without sufficient notification of the public and by scheduling scoping meetings in remote locations,” said **Caroline Katmann**, Executive Director of the Sourland Conservancy.

Today’s letter reiterates the need for the scoping period to be extended to 120 days to ensure that the public is not disenfranchised from the scoping process.

“Pipeline Safety Coalition has been helping communities negotiate the FERC siting process for seven years and had hoped the process would improve with internet accessibility. Though citizens, legislators and local governments appear to have embraced technology, participating with increasingly educated insights, FERC has not kept up the pace,” said **Lynda Farrell**, Executive Director of Pipeline Safety Coalition. “This project is a prime example of why communities feel as disenfranchised by FERC as they do by the pipeline operator. Given the uncertainty of project scope and confusion spawned from poor communication, the community & FERC would be best served by starting a new slate in a new scoping period.”

According to press reports, FERC Chairwoman Cheryl LaFleur received a letter on January 28<sup>th</sup> from Congressman Leonard Lance (NJ 7<sup>th</sup>) requesting that a meeting be added in Hunterdon County. Of the five scoping meetings scheduled, only one was set to be held in New Jersey, in Ewing, Mercer County. According to a FERC spokeswoman, Chairwoman LaFleur was expected to respond to that letter.

“Hunterdon County residents are having to defend our homes, and our rural way of life and our very safety from a proposed project that offers us nothing of lasting value. Forcing us to also battle for a convenient location at which to be heard is like adding insult to injury,” said **Susan Meacham**, Hunterdon County resident.

"The residents of Hopewell Township deserve a fair chance to have their voices heard," said **Vanessa Sandom** of the Hopewell Township Committee. "We have invested years of hard work and millions of taxpayer dollars to preserve open space. Since FERC announced the start of the scoping period, PennEast has proposed a possible new route that would have an undetermined impact on our environment. The evaluation of this route will take months to complete, and itself should trigger the start of a new scoping period. To add to the problem, FERC has cancelled two scoping meetings with little public notice, thereby denying our residents the opportunity to participate in the open democratic process to which all government agencies should strive to achieve. I am urging FERC to work with the elected officials to extend the scoping period. As their democratic representatives, we have a duty to assure our residents that their government is working for them, not for special interest groups."

"The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission claims they are committed to listening to the voices of impacted residents. So far, the PennEast pipeline regulatory process has been a sham, full of inconsistencies and an overall lack of transparency," said **Joseph Otis Minott, Esq.**, Executive Director of the Clean Air Council, a non-profit dedicated to protecting everyone's right to breathe clean air. "The chorus of voices from impacted communities in Pennsylvania and New Jersey is now clear, the PennEast pipeline project is not in the public necessity, and residents will not stop organizing until this project is withdrawn."

“Instead of FERC listening to the public, becoming more transparent, and open, they are doing the opposite. Rather than adding more meetings to allow the public a chance to give their input, FERC has cancelled two meetings without rescheduling. This is an outrageous abuse of power and what FERC is doing is closing the door on what should be an open process. This pipeline will have devastating environmental impacts, cutting a scar through environmentally sensitive land and open spaces. It will promote fracking, add to air pollution, and safety concerns to the

surrounding communities. Instead of working for the public who they are supposed to work for, FERC only seems to be working for the gas and fracking industry they are supposed to be regulating. They should stop FERCCing around and do their job,” said **Jeff Tittel**, Director of the New Jersey Sierra Club.

Direct link to letter: <http://stoppenneast.org/index.php/documents/documents/66-follow-up-letter-to-penneast-re-scoping>

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