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Stirring Up Debate On Natural Gas

Activists refute National Grid's need for more fossil fuels

Ralph Mancini on July 16, 2019



National Grid's recent refusal to supply customers with new gas service has come under intense scrutiny by The Stop the Williams Pipeline Coalition that cites a "lack of hard evidence" for their claims.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) decision to deny an application for a controversial fracked-gas pipeline back in May has reportedly spurred National Grid— identified as the sole buyer of the pipeline's gas— to take drastic measures to convince state officials and ratepayers that the proposed methane-carrying infrastructure is sorely needed.

The applicant— Tulsa-based energy firm, The Williams Companies— is presently making its third attempt to attain state clearance from both New York and New Jersey state authorities for an all-important water permit that will allow them to achieve their mission.

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The lack of pipeline infrastructure in the northeast has resulted in some of the highest electricity rates in the nation for families and business—and it will only get worse, according to The Williams Companies based on a report by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s Institute for 21st Century Energy. Activist groups from The Stop the Williams Pipeline Coalition, however, beg to differ by stating that recent shutoffs by National Grid “have little to do with the pipeline, and [is] further evidence that National grid is using its ratepayers as pawns.” Photo: Facebook

“Natural gas is a critical component of the mix of energy sources,” said Stockton in response to a media inquiry by The Wave. He went on to mention how additional gas service would create affordability for utility customers and ensure reliability while renewables would scale in cost.”

He added: “Given that the existing natural gas pipeline infrastructure is operating at maximum capacity, the Northeast Supply Enhancement Project (NESE) is vital to meet increased natural gas demand across New York City and Long Island driven largely by heating oil to gas conversions. The project is supported by numerous New York natural gas users, including local business organizations, developers, labor and economic development groups representing tens of thousands of members. Without the project, hundreds of billions of dollars in development projects will be in jeopardy and there will undoubtedly be an increased reliance on dirty heating oil.”

Karen Young from National Grid’s Media Relations Department weighed in as well by affirming: “National Grid does not have enough natural gas supply to keep up with the current growth rate from new construction and oil to gas conversions in New York City and Long Island. To support



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“Without NESE, National Grid will not be able to supply natural gas to new commercial, industrial and residential customers to heat their homes, run their businesses and continue converting from oil to natural gas, putting the region’s economic growth at risk, as well as impeding state and city carbon emission goals.”

A total of 25 environmental action group— including Sane Energy Project, Alliance for a Green Economy, 350 Brooklyn, New York Communities for Change and Food & Water Watch, among others— aren’t buying the corporate rhetoric.



In fact, the organizations have collectively issued a formal request for the Public Service Commission (PSC) to issue a cease and desist or reprimand to National Grid for blatantly cutting off gas on the sole basis of making its case for the pipeline.

“Despite attempted coercion by the fossil fuel industry to force this pipeline on our city, the people of New York, especially those in our coastal communities, rose up once again to say no to the dangerous, unnecessary and expensive Williams NESE. An astounding 25,000 comments against it poured into the DEC from the Rockaways and elsewhere in less than two months, citing worsening climate change effects and the contamination of our sparkling abundant waters,” stated Sane Energy Project Core Member JK Canepa.

Meanwhile, the PSC is carefully evaluating National Grid’s claims while also make sure to fulfill Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s commitment to support a mandate to get to 100 percent “clean, carbon-free” electricity by 2040 by expanding subsidies for renewables.

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climate goals, we will continue to dramatically improve energy efficiency, scale demand response programs and expedite an orderly transition to clean energy,” maintained DPS spokesperson James Denn in an email statement to The Wave.

The war of words between the opposing looks to be far from over, as neither side is willing to relent or compromise on any of their proposals for a brighter and cleaner future when it comes to implementing either increased natural gas infrastructure or renewable energy sources and their distribution.

Sane Energy points out that over 60 elected officials— including NYC City Council Speaker Corey Johnson, NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer and NY State Senator Julia Salazar— signed a letter in March, calling on Cuomo to stop the pipeline. A month later, the City Council passed a near-unanimous resolution denouncing the NESE initiative.

“The opposition based on facts and science to this pipeline is overwhelming. People know that fossil fuels are not the way to keep our families safe, nor do they build an economy that serves all. We look forward to seeing a renewable Rockaway with wind, geothermal, solar and jobs training. We know transitions are not easy, but we also know another Superstorm Sandy is not a choice anyone should bear,” offered Sane Energy Project’s Director Kim Fraczek.

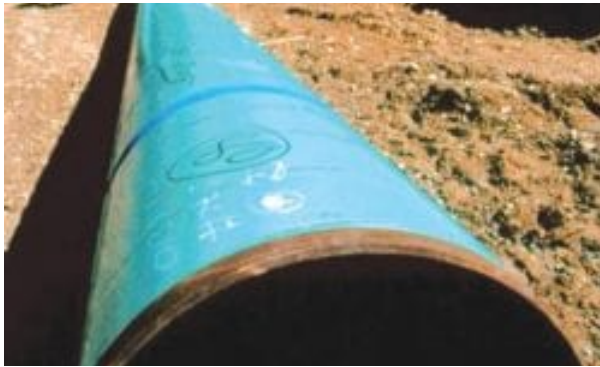


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