

A-2012-2340872

April 22, 2013

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CHAIRMAN'S OFFICE

Mr. Robert Powelson, Chairman
Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission
P.O. Box 3265,
Harrisburg, PA 17105-3265

Dear Sir

I write to express my objection to the PPL Electric Utilities Corporation's proposal to build a 230 Kv high power transmission line connecting its nuclear power plant near Berwick traversing east and north through sparsely populated areas including Thornhurst and Clifton Townships and connecting to another Berwick -originating high power line in the Paupack-Hawley area. PPL claims in its proposal and printed materials that this line's purpose is to improve service reliability in the largely rural section of the Poconos. However, it is clear from reading the full PPL proposal to the PUC that the line is intended primarily as an alternative/back up route to the already approved Susquehanna-Roseland power line delivering electric power to New Jersey.

I fully understand and agree with the need to update our nation's power grid. I object to the route proposed by PPL through Thornhurst and Clifton Townships, especially when a superior alternative route has been presented.

The route proposed by PPL crosses 10 Exceptional Value streams between the West Pocono substation and Gouldsboro. All ten flow into the Lehigh River, also an Exceptional Value stream. The clear-cut 150-foot wide swath under the 145-foot towers would be maintained with the use of herbicides, potentially destroying water quality in the streams. In fact, the line would negatively impact the only Exceptional Value streams in all of Lackawanna County. It will also devastate one of the most visited sections of the Lackawanna State Forest.

While there are many reasons to deplore PPL's proposed route, it is the path through the LSF about which I am particularly concerned.

Looking back over the 74 years of my life, some of my warmest memories are of walks with my father on the red shale trails built by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Depression in what is now the Lackawanna State Forest. When I was very young---about 10 years old---my father introduced me to what has become my favorite walk, one I have taken several times a year ever since.

The walk begins on the Tannery Road then follows Phelps Road to my destination at Choke Creek Falls. It takes me through a beautiful forest, crosses crystal clear Sand Spring Run and ends at a remarkable, ageless creation: the falls. Except for the trails themselves, the woods, the streams and the falls exist as they always have, natural and undisturbed. Local residents and hikers on the Pinchot Trail system know this area well. I have introduced this wonderful place to many friends and family who return frequently to enjoy its natural wonders.

Very recently, the Nature Conservancy, Wildlands Conservancy and other private donors, recognizing its environmental value, assisted the PA DCNR in purchasing and adding 2,650 acres directly adjacent to Choke Creek Falls to the LSF. Now, the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources is in the process of acquiring an additional 376 acres for the LSF in a land swap citing this rationale: "This parcel is adjacent to existing State Forest land, improves public access, and further conserves land in an exceptional quality watershed." PPL's proposed line with it's 150-foot swath goes directly through the DCNR's new parcel!!!

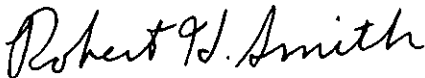
The proposed line will clear the woods from the side of Phelps Road and will run directly above Sand Spring Run for several hundred yards. No stream can maintain its Exceptional Value status under those circumstances. The line continues over Choke Creek, one of the great Pennsylvania wild trout streams. I cannot imagine the Public Utility Commission allowing this destruction to take place especially when an alternative route that is viable and less damaging to the environment exists.

Local residents and others who love the Lackawanna State Forest have proposed a route that accomplishes PPL's objective while avoiding almost all residences and private property and bypasses all but a remote, infrequently visited corner of the LSF. Known as the Citizens Route, this alternative runs north and west of PPL's proposal and traverses mainly state game lands. It crosses fewer streams. Some of the streams that it passes flow into the Susquehanna River taking pressure off the Exceptional Value Lehigh. It completely bypasses the most popular and precious section of the LSF.

PPL opposes it because the Citizens Route is a few miles longer and runs through less accessible land and is, therefore, a bit more expensive to build. However, please understand that PPL's route scars the most accessible and often-visited part of the LSF and will forever be an example of humanity's destruction of our magnificent natural environment.

I respectfully implore you to heed the wishes of local residents and frequent visitors whose lives and happiness will be negatively affected by PPL's proposal. Please support the Citizens Route and reject PPL's proposed route.

Sincerely yours,



Robert H. Smith

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