

February 17, 2010

National Park Service  
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To Whom It May Concern:

The New York - New Jersey Trail Conference is a 90 year old volunteer organization dedicated to the development and maintenance of trails in the northern N. J. and southern N. Y. region. We are the designated local managing club for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (AT) in these two states and have also taken on the responsibility to maintain many other trails within the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and adjoining New Jersey State Forests and Parks.

The NYNJTC welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposed Susquehanna to Roseland Transmission Line and its impact on public park facilities in this region.

The Appalachian National Scenic Trail is most likely the single most popular hiking trail in the United States and in the State of New Jersey. It is hiked by many thousands of people each year. The Appalachian and other popular trails in the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and New Jersey DEP's Worthington S. F. and High Point S. P. along the Kittatinny Ridge bear the largest number of hikers of any trails in NJ. The Ridge from the Delaware Water Gap to the High Point Monument retains some of the most magnificent views in the State and provides an extraordinary opportunity to experience nature in a relatively undisturbed condition for many miles. We at the NYNJTC are well aware that people travel from many states to hike this section of the AT and other nearby trails. With this in mind we ask that careful consideration be given to the impacts that this proposed power line would have on the trails along the Ridge. We ask that all alternative routes for this power line be considered carefully with special attention to the impact on the "viewshed" as well as that of the access roads along the Ridge.

Some specifics:

- Alternative A; The route following an existing gas pipeline in High Point State Park. This line is currently crossed by the AT and the Iris Trail about a mile north of Deckertown Turnpike and the pipeline clearing offers clear unobstructed views for the hiker going through the area. A row of utility poles, the widening of the corridor and the needed access roads would create an unacceptable impact on these trails in this area significantly damaging their attractiveness to the hiker and biker.
- Alternative B; This route using the existing power line crossing the DWGNRA from roughly northwest to southeast crosses the AT at a point just north of Blacks Pond and the Millbrook Road.

The AT throughout most of this area, is within woods except where it crosses the line cut. There would be a need be a significant and costly realignment of the Trail in this area to avoid a section which is currently co-aligned with the cut. The biggest impact in this crossing will be with the access road disturbance. Also, the increase height of the towers will result in them being visible from the AT going south from Millbrook Road where it ascends toward the Catfish Tower.

- Yards Creek Alternative for route B: Following existing lines south from Shoemakers in PA to cross the Delaware River, cross Worthington State Forest then continue north parallel to Gaisler Road along the bottom of the eastern Ridge would result in 200 ft towers becoming very visible for many miles of the Appalachian, Kaiser, Garvey Spring and Rock Cores trails. At this time only 80 foot towers are barely noticeable. The Ridge top along this portion of Worthington S. F is an open grassy area with spectacular views to both the east and west. The new larger towers would greatly detract from these views. Access roads and corridor widening through the section in Worthington would result in considerable damage and visual impact as well. Also, the AT running along the edge of the Ridge going north from Camp Road to the Millbrook Road offers unobstructed views east over northern NJ. 200 ft towers at the bottom would become a significant distraction from this view.

We've chosen to avoid supporting any one of the above alternatives at this time because we believe that all alternatives have not been presented.

We believe that burying the line beneath the Kittatinny Ridge must be considered as a viable alternative. It has been suggested that the costs of burying sections of the line are prohibitive, but, have those costs been compared to the long term costs to the ecology and tourism? This alternative was taken into consideration when the New York Regional Interconnect line was under consideration just north in NY. Although that project was stopped in 2009, in the final stages of review, burying sections of the line became chosen alternatives for some sections.

The long term impact of this power line on the regional economy as well as the ecological and historic sites of the Kittatinny Ridge and Delaware River Valley should be considered with care. Tourism is not a small part of the economy for the region.

We hope that you will give these suggestions and concerns due consideration.