



SAVING THE LAND THAT MATTERS MOST

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Groups Praise Extension of Public Comment Period for Plans to Upgrade Transmission Lines

Project could affect 24 towns in valley

HUDSON VALLEY—Scenic Hudson and a coalition-in-formation of communities and citizens groups praised the state Public Service Commission (PSC) for extending the comment period on the scoping phase of its proceeding to consider increasing the capacity and reliability of transmission systems that carry electricity from upstate power sources to downstate customers. In response to formal requests by Scenic Hudson, the Town of Milan (Dutchess County) and grassroots groups in Livingston (Columbia County) and Clinton (Dutchess County), the PSC earlier this month extended the comment period by 60 days, to February 21.

During the scoping phase, the public has the opportunity to provide input on the scope of issues that will be subject to study and review by the PSC. It is the first phase of the public process associated with the PSC's examination of four competing proposals to enhance existing transmission lines that span more than 150 miles. The lines pass through 13 counties and 38 towns—including 24 towns in the Hudson Valley—to their ultimate destination in Dutchess County.

The proposed projects—most of which involve expanding existing transmission rights-of-way and constructing new, 100-foot-tall towers to carry the high-voltage lines—could impact the valley's scenic beauty, productive farmland, cultural/historic resources as well as critical wetlands and wildlife. As a result, they pose a significant threat to growing tourism and agricultural economies critical for sustaining the region's prosperity and excellent quality of life. In addition, the proposed transmission lines would cross the Hudson River, potentially imperiling water-quality and aquatic resources.

Scenic Hudson is a formal intervenor in the regulatory proceedings, meaning it can provide testimony on critical details of the project such as the route any transmission lines would follow. Similarly, the Town of Milan and the citizens groups in Livingston and Clinton, as well as Claverack (Columbia County), have formally intervened in the proceeding.

Scenic Hudson President Ned Sullivan said, "I commend the PSC for granting an extension of the comment period for the scoping phase of these proposed transmission lines that will impact communities, property owners and important natural, agricultural and economic assets along the proposed routes. The very first question that we will ask the PSC to address is whether the project is needed at all. Before new transmission lines are considered, all alternatives, including energy conservation, local clean power sources and micro-grids should be fully explored."

Omega Institute for Holistic Studies, which has invested to create a beautiful 200-acre Rhinebeck campus that may be impacted by the proposed project, is engaged on the issue. "New York State has a unique opportunity to be a leader in building an energy future that utilizes emerging technologies and secures the natural beauty of our region," said **Omega Institute CEO Skip Backus**. "As one of the region's largest tourism destinations, with over 20,000 annual visitors, I thank the PSC for granting additional time to consider this complex issue."

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Greg Quinn with Clinton Concerned Citizens (CCC) said, “Most of the proposals from the present bidders threaten serious damage and economic hardship along the proposed corridor, including destroyed viewsheds, reduced property values and the loss of homes and lands through eminent domain, which Clinton Concerned Citizens finds absolutely unacceptable. Like many other towns and citizen groups up and down the Hudson Valley, CCC has come together to ascertain the necessity and fight all destructive aspects of this proposed project.”

“Claverack is just joining this fight, and while there is much individual work to be done by each municipality and citizens group to preserve our historic properties, farms and unique scenic vistas, we welcome a discussion about partnering with other towns and with great groups such as Scenic Hudson to find areas of common interest,” said **Ian Solomon of Farmers and Families for Claverack**. The state has set this up as a uniquely citizen-driven process, and we are all interested in finding ways to maximize our efforts to protect our communities.”

Town of Milan Supervisor Bill Gallagher in September asked **Milan Councilperson Marion Mathison** to become the municipality’s point person for the proposed project. Ms. Mathison indicated that the town has hosted exploratory meetings with project applicants and residents. Ms. Mathison said, “Milan residents are deeply concerned about this project that uses retrograde technology, apparently delivers no benefits to Milan, results in loss of private land, further scars Milan’s landscape, and has serious security issues. The new process being used by the PSC has already damaged residents financially. Owners of potentially affected properties could be left unable to sell or develop their land for five years. We hope the PSC’s administrative law judges will expeditiously continue their good work to clarify and manage this new process.”

Pam Kline of Farmers and Families For Livingston added, “Farmers and Families For Livingston is a broad coalition of concerned citizens and landowners who seek advanced solutions to delivering energy across the state with minimal impacts to private property, farmland and historic and cultural resources. We propose the governor’s Energy Highway Plan be vetted, particularly investigating the so-called Hudson Valley bottleneck. We believe the Hudson Valley is an important asset to our state and should be protected at all cost. The taking of land and homes by eminent domain is unacceptable. We are looking forward to working with Scenic Hudson and other communities to find a viable alternative—if indeed, there is a need for the transmission of increased energy at all.”

About Scenic Hudson—Celebrating Our 50th Anniversary in 2013

Scenic Hudson works to protect and restore the Hudson River and its majestic landscape as an irreplaceable national treasure and a vital resource for residents and visitors. A crusader for the valley since 1963, we are credited with saving fabled Storm King Mountain from a destructive industrial project and launching the modern grass-roots environmental movement. Today with more than 25,000 ardent supporters, we are the largest environmental group focused on the Hudson River Valley. Our team of experts combines land acquisition, support for agriculture, citizen-based advocacy and sophisticated planning tools to create environmentally healthy communities, champion smart economic growth, open up riverfronts to the public and preserve the valley’s inspiring beauty and natural resources. To date Scenic Hudson has created or enhanced more than 60 parks, preserves and historic sites up and down the Hudson River and conserved over 30,000 acres. www.sh50.org and www.scenichudson.org