

Re: New Hampshire Site Evaluation Committee (“SEC”) Docket No. 2015-06 Northern Pass Petition to Intervene

Dear Ms. Monroe:

We respectfully request to intervene in the SEC’s proceedings under Docket No. 2015-06 relating to the proposed Northern Pass transmission line. Per the SEC’s regulations, we are sending this request to you, with copies to the SEC’s distribution list for this proceeding as noted in the “cc” below.

Our particular rights, duties, privileges, immunities or other substantial interests that may be affected by the SEC’s Northern Pass proceedings include the following:

*The Ashland Conservation Commission is responsible for protecting, promoting, and developing the natural resources contained within the physical boundaries of the town. By review of the project documents provided to us by representatives of Northern Pass, we hold the position that the proposed project will have an unreasonably adverse effect on the natural resources and the environmental quality within the town of Ashland. The following statement outlines the temporary and permanent impacts on the natural resources occurring within the proposed path of the Northern Pass on its course through the community of Ashland.*

*Construction activities related to the project will impact wildlife habitat, given the highest rank in quality by New Hampshire Fish and Game’s latest “Wildlife Action Plan”. Additionally, construction activities will impact the diversity of land cover types within the project limits, all of which are mutually dependent on each other for a healthy, sustainable ecological system. Construction activities will take place within the limits of a designated corridor of a protected river, identified by RSA 483:15 VI (b).*

*Specifically, work associated with constructing the towers will impact an aquifer of highest yield – an aquifer that also serves as the town’s sole source of drinking water. Project documents indicate significant areas of natural vegetation will need to be removed in its entirety to permit construction access, exposing the bare soil to the erosive effects of wind and rain. The project documents do not identify any other natural resources impacted by construction activity, nor do they address how the impacts will be mitigated during construction or how the impacted resources will be restored following the completion of construction.*

*The permanent presence of the powerline infrastructure (lines, towers, access roads, and buildings) will have irreversible impacts to the wildlife habitat, the land cover, the river corridor and the viewscape. The project documents neither identify nor do they address the potential permanent impacts, means to minimize those impacts, and measures to properly and effectively mitigate those impacts which are unavoidable.*

*Specifically, the constructed project will be within the boundaries of the designated buffer to the Pemigewasset River; a protected rural river. The project documents do not identify the infringement upon this vital corridor, established by law, for the preservation and protection of an important natural resource. Management of vegetation will impact the re-establishment of*

*natural plants, trees, and shrubs following the completion of construction. The successful re-establishment of vegetation is vital to supporting a healthy habitat, stabilizes the soil, and provides a windscreen. The project documents do not identify measures for re-establishment of native vegetation or a plan for sustainable management of native vegetation and prevention of invasive vegetation establishment. The presence of the towers and lines will impair, if not obstruct, the views of the local foothills and western White Mountains, namely Plymouth Mountain and Mount Moosilauke, visible from numerous locations within the immediate village area. An important natural resource asset to the town of Ashland is the recently preserved 450 acre tract of conservation land known as Whitten Woods. The manager of the property, Squam Lakes Conservation Society, was awarded a \$50,000 NH LCHIP grant in December 2015. This conservation acquisition provides public access to pristine views of the Pemigewasset River and Squam Lakes and offers a diverse array of recreational activities. The powerline will irreparably mar the pristine views of the Pemigewasset River valley and the local foothills; views that are considered among the best in the entire Lakes Region. The project documents do not identify the rich resource we have in our view of our beloved mountains, nor do they attempt to preserve our rugged skyline.*

*We, in good conscience, cannot support a project of such scale and magnitude and with such potential for disruption to our natural environment without full and complete documentation of impacts to our natural resources. Furthermore, as stewards of our town's natural resources, we cannot endorse a project that is for the profit of distant shareholders at the great expense of our precious natural resources. As discerning consumers of electricity in Northern New England, we, the members of the Conservation Commission hold the position that electricity produced from hydro generation is not a sustainable practice and should not be labeled as "green", "clean" or "sustainable", which is directly contrary to Northern Pass' advertisements.*

*The commission would like to remind the those reviewing the application that this project is not for the benefit of the residents of the State of New Hampshire; any economic benefit associated by construction will be limited and short-term in nature and energy added to the regional grid has never been intended for distribution within the political boundaries of this state. We the members of the Ashland Conservation Commission urge those who have been charged with the responsibility for reviewing and, ultimately, ruling on this application to consider at what expense will allowing this project to advance will truly have on the people, the places, the resources, the treasure we collectively call New Hampshire. Lastly, we the members of the Ashland Conservation Commission urge a complete and outright refusal of this application on the grounds that the costs to the region's natural resources greatly outweigh any benefit.*

No other entities could articulate our specific interests and concerns in the proceedings for this docket as well as we could.

For these reasons, we respectfully ask that the SEC grant the Ashland Conservation Commission full intervention status, as requested.

Thank you for your consideration of this petition.

Sincerely,

**Ashland Conservation Commission**

Renee Liebert, Chair  
Harold Lamos, Secretary  
Kathleen DeWolfe  
Walter Durack

cc: SEC distribution list (as of the date of this email) for Docket No. 2015-06. Copies sent by email.