

To: The New Hampshire Site Evaluation Committee (SEC)  
Public Utilities Commission, Martin Honigberg, Chairman  
21 South Fruit Street, Suite 10, Concord, NH 03301

From: Rebecca Weeks Sherrill More, Ph.D., Lancaster, New Hampshire

**Re: Weeks State Park & the proposed Northern Pass Transmission LLC project**

Date: presented at the NH SEC Public Information Hearing, September 9, 2015, Whitefield NH.

The proposed above-ground Northern Pass Transmission LLC (NPT) project's Towers will have a negative impact on Weeks State Park and Coös County. The 70' Towers would impact the visitor experience at Weeks State Park and convey the message that the neither the NPT nor the State of New Hampshire value the unique landscape in Northern New Hampshire. Therefore, **on behalf of Weeks State Park and Coös County, the SEC should rule in favor of the Department of Energy's Alternative 4.a, as outlined in the *Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the Northern Pass Transmission Line Project.***<sup>1</sup> Alternative 4.a proposes full burial of the transmission line from Pittsburg to Deerfield. It is in the best interests of the Town of Lancaster, Coös County and the State of New Hampshire. Based on the latest information from NPT, burial would not increase the project's cost. Additionally, the State would realize significant ongoing lease revenue from buried lines.

Among the many locations throughout New Hampshire that will be negatively impacted by the proposed NPT Towers, few are as iconic as **Weeks State Park (WSP)** on Mt. Prospect in Lancaster, four miles to the north and easily visible from the Mountain View Grand. The negative impact that the 70' Towers would have on the visitor's experience at Weeks State Park exemplifies their impact on the environmental, cultural and historic, and economic resources of New Hampshire. The WSP has scenic outlooks along its winding drive to the summit topped by a 1912 stone Fire Tower and the unique to New Hampshire 1913 Arts & Crafts style National Register of Historic Places home of John Wingate Weeks. For the thousands of visitors each year, the Lodge, Fire Tower and Park symbolize Weeks's crucial role in the creation of the White Mountains National Forest (1918) and the painstaking reclamation of lands stripped of trees by the nineteenth century logging industry over the past 104 years.

Weeks State Park commands a 360o view which includes: the entire Presidential Range from Mts. Madison to Moosilauke, both the northern and southern sections of White Mountain National Forest, the Connecticut River valley from the Percy Peaks to Gilman, west to Camel's Hump Mountain near Burlington Vermont and the ranges of the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont as far as Mt. Monadnock near Canaan. It would be a tragic irony to have giant metal Towers march through the proximate view-shed of this icon of outdoor wilderness and national forests. They do not come to see power line Towers, such as mar the Quebec landscape in every direction.

The Weeks State Park lands were entrusted to the State in 1941 by Sinclair Weeks and Katherine Weeks Davidge to honor their father, Lancaster native John Wingate Weeks. US Congressman, Senator and Secretary of War Weeks sponsored the Weeks Act of 1911, which established federal guidelines for conserving our national Forest Reserves and the quality of our national water supply. The White Mountain National Forest as we see it today owes its existence to the Weeks Act. In the 1913 Lodge atop Weeks State Park, visitors learn about the history of sustainable forestry in New Hampshire. They can see for themselves that governmental protection can result in environmental, economic and cultural benefit to an entire region.

Out of concern for the future of Weeks State Park, the descendants of John Wingate Weeks, as the Weeks Lancaster Trust, filed in 2013 to intervene in the matter of the NPT LLC application for a Presidential Permit with the US Department of Energy. In July 2014, we filed a Statement on the Historical and Cultural Impact of the NPT on the township of Lancaster under NHPA (1966) Section 106 as a Consulting Party. We believe that *full burial* of the NPT, from Pittsburg to Deerfield, is in the best interests of the people of New Hampshire and its visitors from around the world.

As acknowledgment of the importance of Weeks State Park, the U.S. Department of Energy selected Weeks State Park as one of its 15 Key Observation Points (KOP #LA-2a) for the assessment of environmental impact.<sup>2</sup> The Report notes that Weeks State Park, under the current NPT proposal, would

be subject to at least thirty-four (34) visible structures, over twice the existing fifteen (15), less visible at 45' in height. However, the State of New Hampshire Division of Parks is presently clearing the top of Mt. Prospect to its 1913 appearance. As a result, the view from WSP will include approximately eighty-six (86) 70' NPT towers from Cape Horn State Park in Northumberland to Whitefield.<sup>3</sup> The Hon. Sinclair Weeks, Secretary of Commerce in the Eisenhower Administration, and his sister Mrs. Davidge did not intend for their gift to the State of New Hampshire to include the visual impact of 86 towers, the project of a private corporation (Northeast Utilities) and a foreign government-owned power company (Hydro-Quebec).

As consistent with RSA chapter 162-H, the negative impact of the NPT Towers on Weeks State Park will undermine the overall economic growth of the state, adversely impact the historic sites along the proposed route, and be contrary to the welfare of the population and environment of the State of New Hampshire. With regard to Coös County, the northern third of the State, the NPT will jeopardize the tourist and recreation industries that are its best hope for future economic growth.

In conclusion, the SEC can encourage the Northern Pass Transmission LLC to demonstrate that a profit-making corporation can model safe, public-spirited, energy transmission *and* preserve the valuable beauty of New Hampshire by burying the power lines.

*Rebecca Weeks Sherrill More, Ph.D, 60 Weeks Rd., Lancaster NH 03584*

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Energy *Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the Northern Pass Transmission Line Project* (July 2015): S.5.4a, p. S-10, and map 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 3 "Affected Environment."

<sup>3</sup> Northern Pass website (<http://www.northernpass.us/towns.htm>) Maps # 52 - 62.