

SEC COMMENTS COLLECTION

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COMMENTERWORDS

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I attended the March 10th Concord hearing. I have followed, albeit not closely, the Northern Pass proposal for several years but have not commented before now. I support the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF) and their efforts against the project. Additionally, I am a member of the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC).

Prior to the March 10th hearing, my opposition to the project had been simply based on the negative visual and environmental impacts. I was, however, interested to learn more of Eversource's rationale for the project and listened carefully to Mr. Quinlan's presentation. While he spoke well for the project, I was taken aback at two points that he made clear about the project:

- 1.) that the project is to benefit the New England power grid rather than a direct benefit the residents/customers in New Hampshire via notably reduced costs and/or more reliable power within the State; and
- 2.) that while the project benefit was elucidated as a replacement for the New England powerplants expected to be retired, Mr. Quinlan was careful to point out that the project "is not a reliability project".

Both of these revelations left me wondering why on earth the State of New Hampshire should permit a private utility to scar the public landscape with new utility corridors and visual expansion of the existing utility corridors for essentially little benefit, and the potential detriment, to the State and its residents. The attributes that make us love our small State and draw others here as visitors include the "sense of place" and visually appealing landscapes. True, windfarms and cellphone towers pop up within the vistas, but their visual scarring and impact are at such a diminished scale (and often seen as a personal or environmental benefit) as to not be objectionable. The scale of the Northern Pass project, however, vastly eclipses such small-scale towers and will be a significant cost to the appeal and ambiance that makes New Hampshire such an attractive place.

Mr. Quinlan noted that the current plan is to place 52 miles of the Northern Pass transmission lines underground rather than on large overhead towers. As I recall from Mr. Quinlan's slide presentation, the bulk of the proposed buried section is located in the White Mountain National Forest (WMNF). I find it peculiar that the interests and demands of the Federally-owned and managed WMNF were sufficient to persuade Eversource to change its planned overhead transmission lines in and near the WMNF to buried lines, yet the State of New Hampshire has not brought its own interests and demands (and those of its citizens) to bear for the same result on the remaining portion of the transmission line route.

I do not deny that a reliable source of power is desirable for the State of New Hampshire. And while Eversource does not claim the Northern Pass proposal is a "reliability" project, it clearly will be a part of the solution to the loss of old powerplants in New England and the vagaries of natural gas supplies. AMC's Susan Arnold points out that distributive power supply is also part of the solution to such future supply demand, yet such efforts are hampered by the current power industry paradigm.

I support the import of HydroQuebec power to the New England power grid through New Hampshire for supporting future power demands with a renewable power source, but only if the Northern Pass transmission lines are placed underground. Underground transmission lines are technologically feasible and have been used in other Northeast power delivery projects. New Hampshire must insist on such a condition, as has the Federally-controlled WMNF, for approval of the Northern Pass application.

Echoing SPNHF President/Forester Jane Difley's March 10th comments, I believe the State of New Hampshire must exercise its stewardship responsibility to preserve the State's natural and scenic resources, particularly in light of the fact that Northern Pass fails to promise significant power reliability improvements or significant energy cost savings to the citizens of New Hampshire. The State of New Hampshire's stewardship responsibility must not be subordinated by the profit motives of a privately-held utility.