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**REGARDING:**

APPLICANT: Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company LLC

PROJECT: Northeast Supply Enhancement (NESE) Project

FILE NUMBERS: NJDEP File No. 0000-01-1001.3 FWW 180001 Individual Permit

NJDEP HEARING DATE: 11/5/18

**FROM:**

Full Name:

Full Address:

The NESE Project will have both direct and indirect impacts to wetlands during construction and over the lifetime of the Project if it is built. Constructing the Madison Loop and Compressor Station 206 could have indirect impacts on the public water supply, propagation of fish & wildlife, recreation, and businesses. The integrity of the aquatic resources and degradation is at risk from potential discharges into the wetlands from construction as well as from potential leaks if NESE becomes operational.

Under the Freshwater Wetlands Protection Act Rules, Williams/Transco was required to first AVOID wetlands, preserve our natural resources, and address the probable individual and cumulative impacts on public health and fish and wildlife. Williams/Transco has not avoided, minimized, or mitigated impacts in the manner required under the Freshwater Wetlands Protection Act and Rules, which seeks to first avoid and then minimize wetland impacts before engaging in mitigation.

Williams/Transco’s NESE Project will impact a significant amount of wetland in New Jersey – over 41 acres, including approximately 20 acres of forested wetland. In addition, the NESE Project will remove 35.3 acres of upland forest and the impacts on forested uplands will be long term or permanent because trees would take up to 50 years or longer to become reestablished and would not be allowed to become reestablished directly over the pipeline.

**DIRECT & INDIRECT IMPACTS ON WETLANDS FROM CONSTRUCTION WERE NOT THOROUGHLY ADDRESSED IN THE APPLICATION, AND WILLIAMS/TRANSCO DID NOT FIRST TRY TO AVOID WETLANDS.**

1. The Madison Loop is planned to cross eighteen (18) wetlands. Of these, six (6) are classified as “exceptional” resources, two (2) are “ordinary”, and ten (10) are “intermediate”.
2. Choosing of the site for the proposed Compressor Station 206 resulted in five final sites for consideration, and all of them contained wetlands.
3. Construction could reduce the capacity of wetlands to buffer flood flow and control erosion. There was no factual determination by Williams/Transco that their Erosion and Sediment Control Plan would ensure that ground or surface water would not be degraded.
4. Recovery of forested wetlands could take 50+ years.
5. Potential sediment disruption from construction in and around Cheesequake Creek could increase the potential for growth of harmful algal blooms (HABS). There were no studies or modeling presented that could justify the assertion of Williams/Transco that they would minimize sediment disruption here.
6. The Madison Loop would cross or be very close to several toxic sites with contaminated groundwater or soil, and the application is missing soil and groundwater analyses in these areas. The sites of concern are: Road Department Garage Area 3-1 near MP 9.5; Global Sanitary Landfill less than 0.1-mile south of MP 10.13 to 10.38 of the Madison Loop which is an NJDEP Classification Exception Area (CEA) which also acts as a Well Restriction Area (WRA); E.I. Dupont Denemours & Co. site with groundwater known to contain VOCs and metals that is currently being remediated in areas of the Madison Loop; and Morgan Ordnance Depot north of MP 11.10 of the Madison Loop that may have contaminated soil and unexploded munitions.
7. The Madison Loop would go through areas with acid-producing clay soil. Earth-moving activities, such as those associated with the NESE Project, can expose these clays to the air. Upon exposure, the sulfide minerals in the clays oxidize and produce sulfuric acid. Disrupting this would make it difficult to stabilize and restore the area, also impacting nearby wetlands and surface waters. Additionally, low pH soils are more corrosive to pipelines.
8. Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD), which has the highest likelihood of drilling fluid releases, would impact the wetlands on the Madison Loop. One HDD entry point at Milepost 11.48 is in an “exceptional resource value wetland” within 30-feet of a tidal stream. Soil compaction from construction vehicles is made worse by dewatering, and dewatering would likely be needed at this site. Additionally, HDD failures are known to happen, as was found with Williams/Transco’s Leidy to Long Island Expansion Project in NJ.
9. Plans for the proposed bioretention basin(s) for the Compressor Station 206 are likely never to pass requirements of the Stormwater Management Rules since this site has a high water table & bedrock is hit at a shallow level. The plans for the bioretention basin(s) proposed at the Compressor Station 206 site still require considerable re-design to be considered acceptable under these rules. Additionally, until this is reviewed and approved, there is no way to tell if there could be significant impacts to water quality during construction or following completion of the project.

The NESE Project does not give anything to New Jersey, and it does not forward State goals to move toward renewable energy. Looking at science, research, prior experiences with pipeline projects, and a need for Williams/Transco to follow the letter of New Jersey’s regulations, the application for a Freshwater Wetlands Individual Permit should be denied by the NJDEP.