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## **NEW YORKERS OBJECT TO FERC RUBBER STAMP OF DOMINION’S NEW MARKET PIPELINE**

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Albany, NY — A coalition of environmental and citizens organizations from across New York strongly object to the release of a woefully inadequate Environmental Assessment (EA) by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) on October 20<sup>th</sup> which supports expansion of a gas pipeline owned by Dominion Transmission Inc. The coalition also demands that the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) prepare a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

If built, Dominion’s proposed “New Market Project” would expand the capacity of its 200-mile long pipeline through New York to carry higher quantities of fracked gas from Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia. The project would impact multiple locations across the state, including the construction of two new large compressor stations in Madison and Chemung counties, and a massive expansion of a third compressor station in Montgomery County, collectively pumping more than 200,000 tons of additional greenhouse gases and hazardous pollutants into the atmosphere each year. By moving more fracked gas through Dominion’s 50-year old aging network, the project would also expose communities along the entire corridor to greater risks associated with pipeline leakage and rupture.

“The manner in which this proposal has been rubber-stamped confirms a pattern of gross negligence by FERC,” said Roger Downs, conservation director of the Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter. “A short-form EA that glosses over critical issues is not the responsible way of reviewing a project of this magnitude. Worse still, this project runs counter to New York State energy goals and will only increase our dependency on fossil fuels that exacerbate climate change.”

Since the project was announced last year, FERC has ignored numerous letters and resolutions adopted by towns and elected officials calling for a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), accessible hearings within affected communities, and specific action to reduce impacts.

“The disregard for elected officials entrusted to protect the communities we represent is shocking,” said Bob Perry, trustee for the Village of Fort Plain, which is located directly downwind of the compressor station in Montgomery County. “There is no evidence that the federal government gave our concerns or recommendations any serious consideration.”

“Both FERC and Dominion have snubbed their nose at the public from day one,” said John Valentine, spokesperson for Mohawk Valley Keeper. “Our community is dominated by organic farmers and Amish families whose entire lives are inextricably tied to the air, water, and land immediately around them. Yet, the proposed four-smokestack compressor station that Dominion wants to build in our backyard would be the most polluting of the entire project.”

“FERC and Dominion have completely ignored the unique topography and meteorology of our region,” said MaryAnn Nellis, a former school teacher who lives in Canajoharie. “Located next to Otsquago Creek, these

compressors will produce emissions that threaten surrounding neighbors and drift downstream and downwind to schools and residents of the Mohawk Valley—impacting our children’s health and the future of communities for decades to come.”

In Madison County, the local Department of Health submitted a report to FERC detailing concerns about how compressor stations, including the one proposed there by Dominion, would adversely impact human health. Yet those comments have fallen on deaf ears too.

“A growing body of evidence shows that people living near these facilities are exposed to dangerous levels of volatile organic compounds, formaldehyde, nitrogen oxides, and other chemicals that can cause cancer, neurological problems, and birth defect,” said Ruthanne Stone for Madison County Preservation. “Families living next to this project will have no escape.”

“We’re talking about diseases that could be prevented and lives that could be saved,” said Keith Schue, an engineer and technical advisor for Otsego 2000.”

Even when presented with practical ways in which impacts could be reduced—including better equipment and emission controls—FERC has refused to require any changes whatsoever to Dominion’s project. Some of those possible improvements include cost-effective vapor recovery, electric powered compressors where high voltage transmission lines are available, the consolidation of turbines, and retrofit of an existing turbine with catalytic emission controls that are standard industry practice today.

“It is unconscionable for FERC to support this project when alternatives exist to reduce the public’s exposure to harm,” said Schue. “Many of these reasonable suggestions by the public were not even addressed in FERC’s assessment.”

Ironically, most of the gas associated with Dominion’s “New Market Project” is ultimately not even destined for consumers in New York or the United States. A major component of Dominion’s proposal is the installation of reciprocating compressors to move gas onto the Iroquois Pipeline (majority owned by Dominion) which presently carries gas downstate. However, with its announced “South-to-North” (SoNo) project, the Iroquois line would be reversed. When that happens, three quarters of Dominion’s “New Market” gas will be exported to Canada—a fact completely ignored in FERC’s review.

“This is all about helping the gas industry profit by depleting America’s reserves as fast as possible while we suffer the consequences” said Jim Haskins, who plans to move his family if the project is approved. “The cumulative impacts relating to how Dominion’s project interacts with other gas infrastructure proposed in the Northeast are being completely swept under the rug.”

The public has 30 days to submit comments on FERC’s Environmental Assessment. However opponents of Dominion’s proposal are now also turning attention to the New York State DEC. Citing Section 617.15 of the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act, intervenors assert that a state-level Environmental Impact Statement must be prepared because FERC has not done it job.

“State law in this matter is clear”, said Nicole Dillingham, attorney and President of Otsego 2000. “This project cannot move forward without a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement to thoroughly consider all impacts--direct, indirect, and cumulative--as well as alternatives. If FERC refuses to do so, then the state must. We call on Governor Cuomo and the DEC to take action where FERC has failed.”

The coalition intends to make its case in writing to the Governor and DEC.

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