

February 2016
Freehold Director Garganio
Board of Chosen Freeholders
49 Rancocas Road
Mount Holly, NJ 08060

Re: the Southern Reliability Link Pipeline & Pinelands Protections

Dear Director Garganio,

The undersigned organizations write to you today to oppose the **entire** Southern Reliability Link Pipeline and Transco Williams Compressor station 203, a contiguous project proposed by New Jersey Natural Gas and Williams Pipeline Company to begin at the New Jersey Turnpike and will run along route 528 and Province Line Road into Ocean County. Opposition to this project must include rejecting any and all road opening permits requested by New Jersey Natural Gas. The pipeline, if built, will carry gas produced through hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, from Pennsylvania's Marcellus shale formation directly through scores of communities in New Jersey. Natural gas pipelines are at a constant risk of accidents, spills and explosions. Several large pipeline failures in the past few years, leading to massive damage and even loss of life, have highlighted this risk and pipeline systems in the United States are chronically under-regulated; safety cannot be guaranteed. We urge you to join us in opposing this ill-conceived project that will risk public health and safety, jeopardize environmental resources, and halt progress on the region's clean energy future. Additionally we urge you to support the Pinelands protections and its rules.

The Southern Reliability Link Pipeline would link into the Transcontinental (Transco) pipeline through a compressor station located at the intersection of the New Jersey Turnpike and Bordentown Chesterfield Road, allowing The Williams Company to transmit natural gas to parts of Monmouth and Ocean County. The pipeline would cement our regional reliance on a dirty and dangerous fossil fuel and gas infrastructure susceptible to corrosion and leakage problems. According to the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) the agency only has 139 inspectors to oversee 2.6 million miles of pipeline and their records show that only a fifth of that pipeline system has been inspected by PHMSA or its state partners since 2006. PHMSA announced in April, 2014, that it would be cutting staff through employee buyouts and saw approximately a 9% workforce reduction.

Given these workforce reductions and the chronic corrosion, leakage, and explosion problems associated with gas pipelines, the risks of spills are very real. In September 2010 a natural gas pipeline explosion rocked neighborhoods of San Bruno, California, killing eight people. The cause of the explosion was determined to be "troubling revelations ... about a company that exploited weaknesses in a lax system of oversight and government agencies that placed a blind trust in operators to the detriment of public safety." Pipeline explosions have only increased in recent years. Most recently, in April a pipeline exploded in Fresno, CA injuring 13 people. Bringing the Southern Reliability Link Pipeline into New Jersey will threaten the environment and public health of the communities the pipeline passes through only to create more profits for the fossil fuel industry.

Bringing this fuel into our state endangers our families, property, and environment. Furthermore, the disastrous cumulative impacts of this pipeline project cannot be ignored, specifically, the impacts associated with extracting this gas in Pennsylvania by fracking. Shale oil & gas fracking has serious

harmful impacts including: water depletion, creation of toxic air emissions and wastewater, and contributing to the climate change crisis through the unregulated, unfettered, and overwhelming release of methane.

The Southern Reliability Link Pipeline is proposed to run within less than 100 feet from over 140 homes, business, schools, churches, places of worship, historically preserved sites, and official government buildings, including police and emergency services. While 100 feet is the regulated pipeline distance from occupied structures, the blast radius of the proposed pipeline is over 1,000 feet and will impact a far greater number of residents than the regulation standard. Additionally, it is proposed to run through areas of preserved farmland and open space, and the Pinelands National Reserve.

Additionally, the pipeline is proposed to run through the Pinelands National Reserve. This region is recognized by Congress and the US Forest Service and protected by the State of New Jersey for its ecological importance. The Pinelands is critical to New Jersey and to the world for its ecological and economic benefits. It is home to many rare plant and animals species as recognized by the United Nations as a UNESCO biosphere reserve with some species found in New Jersey and nowhere else in the world. The Pinelands is also an attraction to many tourists for its recreation opportunities bringing in millions of dollars every year. The New Jersey Pine Barrens is also the location of Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer, which is a primary source of drinking water for the region. This environmentally sensitive region must be protected from polluting fossil fuel infrastructure.

The pipeline construction would have deleterious effects on both the open spaces and communities through which it would pass. In the Pinelands and other sensitive areas, we would see wetlands destroyed, critical habitats threatened, endangered species leveled to the ground, and impacts to waterways from more erosion due to construction. To our communities, the pipeline and the harmful emissions as well as potential for leakage would affect our health and safety.

The proposed Transco Williams Compressor station 203 will connect the SRL pipeline to the Transco Pipeline, a 30,500 HP noisy infrastructure that will run 24/7 and have regular venting or “blow-downs” and emits toxic gases that include known carcinogens. Health problems associated with exposure to these chemicals include respiratory, neurologic, and dermal responses as well as vascular bleeding, abdominal pain, nausea, and vomiting. Permitting this infrastructure to come into our community will put our health, safety, and community at risk.

Hurricane Sandy made it clear that New Jersey must *oppose* fuel sources that contribute to climate change, and highlights the inaptness of the name of proposed pipeline. True energy reliability — marked by energy security, independence, resilience and affordability — will derive from efficiently meeting energy needs with clean, renewable power.

We understand that natural gas burns cleaner than coal, and that some view the pipeline as a step forward. We maintain it is also two steps back. Natural gas offers next to no climate benefit, compared to coal, owing to emissions of methane — the primary component of natural gas and a potent greenhouse gas. And natural gas from the pipeline through the Pinelands won't just be displacing coal. It will be out-competing clean and renewable energy solutions.

We urge you to come down against this pipeline and compressor station, and not facilitate any new sunk costs in infrastructure for more fossil fuels. And we are determined to help you advance

alternatives, such as NJ-made solar or wind power, mixed with energy efficiency technologies and smart conservation policies. That path does not put our communities — particularly the poor and most vulnerable among us — at risk from more environmental pollution.

This gas infrastructure is wrong for New Jersey’s clean energy future and we urge you to protect the residents of Chesterfield, support the Pinelands, protect our region, and oppose the entire Southern Reliability Link Pipeline and Transco Williams Compressor Station 203. Opposing this infrastructure must include rejecting any and all road opening permits requested by New Jersey Natural Gas.

If you have any questions, or need more information, please contact Lena Smith, Food & Water Watch at (732) 839-0878 or lsmith@fwwatch.org.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Organization _____

Signatory Name: _____ Signatory Title: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____