

Community View

Don't turn N.Y. into transit route for fracked natural gas

By Marian H. Rose

The Algonquin Incremental Market project is a plan by Spectra Energy to convey an additional 300 million cubic feet of natural gas per day through Rockland, Westchester and Putnam counties to "various Algonquin ... delivery points in Connecticut and Massachusetts."

New York will serve as a corridor to convey this gas to New England states that need it for heating and electrical purposes. The additional capacity will be supplied by fracked natural gas from Texas and Pennsylvania's radon-laden Marcellus Shale.

ICF International projects that the demand for natural gas in New England will increase by 13.5 percent by 2020. However, the AIM project would expand its existing facilities connected to New England facilities by, at least, three times that amount. New York would bear the brunt.

In addition to three existing natural gas pipelines — two 24 inches and one 30 inches in diameter — beneath the Hudson River, each connecting the Stony Point area to the Westchester side of the Hudson, the project calls for an additional 42-inch pipeline in the same area, put in place by underground drilling.

Near Indian Point

Like the three pipelines already in place, this 42-inch pipeline will surface close to the Indian Point Nuclear Plant spent fuel pool. A recently published document by New York State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman and his counterparts in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Vermont, is sharply critical of the government's Nuclear Regulatory Commission's study of the safety of Indian Point's long-term storage of spent nu-

clear fuel. And, regardless of the proximity to the gas lines, West Point Partners has proposed to run a 1,000 megawatt high-voltage direct current line from Athens, N.Y., to Indian Point.

Adding to concerns, Indian Point is less than 1 mile from the Ramapo faultline, in addition to the more recently discovered Stamford-Peekskill active fault. The proximity of these faultlines to the spent nuclear fuel storage facility, in addition to the three existing gas lines, should preclude adding yet another major gas line in that vicinity.

More supply than demand

The planned expansion appears to be at least three times what is needed for present heating and electrical needs in New England. According to Spectra Energy, the 1,120-mile Algonquin New England Transmission Line has a capacity of 2.44 billion cubic feet per day. The expansion, according to documents, would move an additional 300 million cubic feet of natural gas per day of Marcellus production from the Stony Point compressor station to the Algonquin City Gate outside Boston. This represents a 12 percent increase.

The proposal to increase the sections of existing pipeline diameter from 26 inches to 42 inches represents a 38 percent increase in pipeline carrying capacity. This is reflected in the increased horsepower of the compressor stations. For example, Spectra Energy Resource Report 2 describes the proposed modifications at the Southeast Compressor Station in Putnam County, which calls for installing a 13,220 horsepower natural gas-fired compressor unit in addition to the existing 40,010 hp unit — a 33 percent increase.

Given that the projected demand for

MORE

» Stop the Algonquin Pipeline Expansion is a grassroots organization with a mission to educate our fellow citizens and elected officials about the negative impacts associated with Spectra Energy Corp.'s Algonquin Incremental Market Project. For further information, and to write comments opposing the AIM project, see the SAPE website at sape2016.org.

» The Community Watersheds Clean Water Coalition, Inc., or CWCWC, is the new name for the Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition. Learn more at newyorkwater.org.

natural gas in New England will increase by 12 percent by 2020, one must ask why the upgrades in pipeline and compressor station capacities are close to three times higher. Is there a plan to convert the liquid natural gas Northeast Gateway Facility in Massachusetts Bay from an import to an export facility?

New York should not become the corridor for transporting the natural gas needed to fulfill this plan. The increased burden would be extremely detrimental, not only to our natural resources, but also to the health, and particularly the safety, of our residents.

Ozone, wetlands impacted

For example, the capacity of compressor stations will be increased. Compressor stations are emitters of high levels of nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds which, activated by heat and sunlight, combine to produce ground-level ozone — dangerous for those with lung or cardiovascular problems. Ac-

ording to research conducted by MacArthur Genius Award recipient Dr. Wilma Subra "... we strongly suggest that for individuals with a history of other health concerns (e.g. asthma or heart conditions)... the presence of gas facilities and related pollution could have a strong 'trigger effect' that can make existing problems worse and put individuals at higher risk of developing new ones."

According to Dr. Subra, air pollution from compressor stations have harmful effects up to three miles from its source, and even beyond.

Our natural resources will also be at risk. Wetlands will be impacted by 12,270 feet, or over 2 miles of pipeline crossings. Over 20 acres of wetlands will also be affected. Wetlands are essential to preserving high water quality. Additionally, there will be 200 feet of stream crossings. Part of the Croton Watershed that supplies New York City with up to 30 percent of its drinking water in times of drought could also be impacted.

Several hundred New York homeowners will be negatively affected by the widening of the pipeline next to or on their property. This will result in restricted use of that part of their land over the pipeline right-of-way, but no reduction in taxes.

New Yorkers should oppose this blatant misuse of their land as a corridor to promote the sale of natural gas in other states and, possibly, in other countries, and should demand that their elected officials take the lead in protecting their health, safety and property values.

The writer, a Bedford resident, is president emeritus and Board Director of Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition, now the Community Watersheds Clean Water Coalition Inc., or CWCWC.