



Good Evening.

My name is Sue Ely and I am the climate and clean energy program attorney for the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM) based in Augusta. NRCM is Maine's largest environmental advocacy group with more than 25,000 members and supporters. NRCM strongly opposes Central Maine Power Company's (CMP) proposed transmission corridor, the New England Clean Energy Connect (NECEC), and urges the U.S. Army Corps to deny CMP's permit application.

While the totality of this project imposes significant environmental and social impacts on Maine, we are most concerned about the approximately 54 miles of new, permanently cleared transmission corridor stretching from the Quebec boarder to Caratunk. CMP's proposed project is not in the public interest, is opposed by an overwhelming majority of Maine people, and would significantly impact Maine's environment by:

- Permanently fragmenting the largest contiguous temperate forest in North America, a globally significant resource;
- Damaging hundreds of high-quality brook trout streams and ponds due to removal of trees that provide the shade and inputs of large wood that brook trout need to thrive;
- Severely weakening the ecological webs that connect vernal pools and wetlands to each other through amphibian migration;
- Bisecting the last good deer wintering habitat in the Forks region; and
- Threatening the tourism and guiding industries, which are critical for the Western Maine economy.

Despite CMP's claims to the contrary, this proposed corridor through Maine's North Woods offers no benefits to offset the severe impacts that the project would cause. CMP's claim that this project will reduce greenhouse gas emissions is unsupported by evidence. In contracts submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities (DPU), Hydro-Quebec clearly stated that there would be no new renewable energy generation associated with this project.<sup>1</sup> Testimony from the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office to the DPU on these contracts stated that because Hydro-Quebec admits that there would be no new renewable energy generation associated with this project, Hydro-Quebec would likely have to shift electricity from its existing customers in other areas in order to sell it to Massachusetts through this corridor.<sup>2</sup> Because these

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<sup>1</sup> HRE Section 83D Request for Proposal Application Form. Pp. 4, 56. Accessible at <https://www.nrcm.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/HRERequestforProposal.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Testimony of Dean W. Murphy (Brattle Group), Witness for the Massachusetts Attorney General. Petition for approval by the Department of Public Utilities of a long- term contract for procurement of Clean Energy Generation, pursuant to Section 83D of An Act Relative to Green Communities, St. 2008, c.169, as amended by St. 2016, c. 188, § 12, p. 15 of 27, Dec. 21, 2018. Accessed at <https://fileservice.eea.comacloud.net/FileService.Api/file/FileRoom/10195907>.

other areas, such as New York and New Brunswick, would have to make up for this lost power with fossil fuel generation, the net reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions would be zero. Much of the expert testimony to the Maine Public Utilities Commission reached similar conclusions about “resource shuffling” through NECEC. New Hampshire’s Office of the Public Advocate, in considering a similar project to bring the same power from Hydro-Quebec to Massachusetts through New Hampshire, found that without new generation, a transmission project bringing power from Hydro-Quebec to New England would result in no net greenhouse gas benefits.<sup>3</sup>

In the 2019 legislative session, NRCM supported a bill to require an objective analysis of the climate impacts of NECEC across all Hydro-Quebec jurisdictions. Both houses of the Legislature passed this bill with bipartisan majorities, but CMP and Hydro-Quebec used an army of lobbyists to fight this bill and uphold the governor’s veto. We ask the Army Corps to recognize the obvious: CMP and Hydro-Quebec fought an objective analysis of their claimed climate benefits because they knew it would reveal that these claims are false. And without demonstrable reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, this incredibly destructive project only benefits CMP and Hydro-Quebec.

Simply put, this proposed project **will not** reduce greenhouse gas emissions but **will** significantly harm Maine’s environment and is deeply unpopular in Maine with an ever-growing number of towns and plantations in the region taking the unprecedented step of holding formal town votes to oppose the transmission line or rescinded prior support. So far 25 Maine towns, including Alna, Anson, Caratunk, Chesterville, Dennistown, Durham, Embden, Eustis, Farmington, The Forks, Greenville, Industry, Jackman, Jay, Livermore Falls, Moscow, Moose River, New Sharon, Pownal, Rome, Starks, West Forks, Wilton, Wiscasset, and Woolwich, have voted to oppose or rescind support for this project. Furthermore, as we stand here tonight citizens all over the state are gathering signatures to get a question on next November’s ballot to reject this project once and for all.

NRCM has been disappointed in the Army Corps permitting process. The Corps has not made permitting documents available to the public. As of today, no complete permit application is available on the Corps website and the link for more information in the notice for **this hearing** is a dead link, bringing citizens to an “Error 404” message on the Corps website. Citizens are forced to file formal FOIA requests for this information, a lengthy and difficult process that is burdensome and unnecessary given the high level of interest this permit has generated. The Corps also told us it would only complete an Environmental Assessment (EA), not a full Environmental Impact Statement, and would not provide an opportunity for public comment on a draft EA. Even this public hearing only came about because of Congressman Jared Golden’s strong intervention, for which we are grateful.

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<sup>3</sup> New Hampshire Site Evaluation Committee. 2018. Decision and Order Denying Application for Certificate of Site and Facility. March 30. P. 161. Accessed at [https://www.nhsec.nh.gov/projects/2015-06/orders-notices/2015-06\\_2018-03-30\\_order\\_deny\\_app\\_cert\\_site\\_facility.pdf](https://www.nhsec.nh.gov/projects/2015-06/orders-notices/2015-06_2018-03-30_order_deny_app_cert_site_facility.pdf).

We urge the Army Corps to reconsider its approach going forward.

- First, all permitting documents should be made available on the Corps website and CMP should be required to conduct a real alternatives analysis that includes an analysis of putting the line along existing corridors such as Route 201.
- Second, the Corps should perform an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) with full opportunity for public comment just as the federal government did in New Hampshire and Vermont for similar transmission line proposals.

NECEC clearly meets the key criterion for an EIS under 42 U.S.C. § 4332: it is a major action “significantly affecting the quality of the human environment.” As such, the EIS must “provide full and fair discussion of significant environmental impacts and shall inform decisionmakers and the public of the reasonable alternatives which would avoid or minimize adverse impacts or enhance the quality of the human environment.” 40 C.F.R. § 1502.1. Furthermore, the Corps must “[r]igorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives...” 40 C.F.R § 1502 (14)(a). Given how significantly this project will impact Maine’s North Woods and the tourism industry in this region, it is hard to understand why there isn’t already a draft EIS. After all, the lead NEPA agencies for similar projects in New Hampshire (Northern Pass) and Vermont (TDI) did environment impact statements for those projects. Why would similar projects in different states receive different analysis? Western Maine is not worth less than either of these states, and we deserve the same consideration of the impacts of this project as were done in Vermont and New Hampshire.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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