



Hunterdon Land Trust

Protecting the places you love

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Hunterdon Land Trust Responds to Trespass by PennEast Pipeline Surveyors

KINGWOOD TOWNSHIP -- The Hunterdon Land Trust sent a cease and desist letter to PennEast after discovering contractors trespassing on the Muddy Run Preserve Wednesday (Sept. 30, 2015).

PennEast contractors were attempting to survey the property, which lies in the proposed pipeline route, despite the Land Trust having denied the natural gas company permission to survey it. PennEast acknowledged it did not have permission to survey Muddy Run as recently as August 11th, 2015 when it sent another letter requesting permission to do so and stating "To date, we have not received the requested permission to survey your property."

"PennEast contacted us last year requesting permission to survey Muddy Run, and we refused," said Patricia Ruby, executive director of the Hunterdon Land Trust. "Despite this, they entered our property without permission, and we will respond appropriately."

Ruby said the Land Trust is considering further legal action.

The Land Trust was notified by vigilant neighbors who spotted surveyors with Texas, Virginia and Carolina license plates entering the preserve. Land Trust Steward Tom Thorsen rushed to the preserve



shortly before noon where he found surveyors working and asked them to leave. The Land Trust had called the New Jersey State Police, and a trooper arrived shortly after Thorsen. The surveyors then packed up their equipment and left the preserve.

The Land Trust called PennEast after learning of their surveyors being on the preserve, and a company representative denied having anyone on the land. He even reassured the Land Trust that he would check further and called back to say that PennEast wasn't planning to survey the Muddy Run Preserve.

"It's appalling that PennEast continues to disregard landowners' refusal to give permission to survey and also lies about it," Ruby said.

The Muddy Run Preserve, located off Kingwood-Locktown Road, is 62 acres of farm fields and woodlands. The preserve is a habitat for grasslands and birds, and is named after a tributary of the Lockatong Creek.

"We're particularly concerned about the pipeline's impact on the Muddy Run Preserve because the land borders the Lockatong Creek, which is a Category 1 stream," Ruby said. "This means the state considers it to hold exceptional ecological, recreational or water-supply significance."

PennEast, a consortium of natural gas companies, is attempting to build a 110-mile, 36-inch pipeline stretching from Northeastern Pennsylvania to Hopewell Township. The proposal has drawn the ire of residents throughout the affected area, and every municipality in New Jersey that the pipeline traverses has passed resolutions against it.

The Land Trust filed comments to express its concerns about the pipeline with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), the agency that will decide whether the pipeline gets built. Its comments specifically cited the harm the pipeline would cause at Muddy Run.

"The project will result in significant forest fragmentation which further enables the spread of invasive species and degrades the diversity and dispersion of native flora and fauna," the Land Trust's FERC filing noted. "The route also impacts threatened and endangered species, including state threatened species such as the wood turtle and long-tailed salamander found in the environs of the Muddy Run Preserve."

