

**Delaware Riverkeeper Network, NJ Sierra Club,
NJ Conservation Foundation, NJ Highlands Coalition**

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PRESS RELEASE

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Environmental groups urge change of date for National Park Service hearings on PPL/PSE&G power line.

Trenton, NJ – Leaders from 13 regional and national environmental organizations and a Native American organization – together representing hundreds of thousands of members – announced today that they are urging that the hearing dates for the Susquehanna-Roseland power line project, currently scheduled for August 17, 18 and 19, 2010, be delayed 60 days or at least until after the Labor Day weekend. The hearings are part of the Environmental Impact Study process to evaluate the permit requested by Pennsylvania Power and Light Electric Utilities (PPL) and Public Service Electric and Gas Company (PSE&G) for the expansion of the electric transmission line that crosses three units of the National Park system: the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area; the Middle Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River and National Recreation Water Trail; and the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.

The proposed power line expansion would more than double the height of the towers to nearly 200 feet, and would involve clearing forests for construction of access roads for heavy equipment and widening the right-of-way in the park.

The groups' letter to the National Park Service, dated July 16, 2010, states "...many people are away on family vacations and not available to attend the hearings or even have access to their local newspapers" during the scheduled hearing dates. The letter also cites the "impressive response" to last year's Internal Scoping Report – over 6,500 individuals from across the country and around the world submitted comment – as an indicator of the broad concern for the impacts of this project on public conservation and recreation lands.

"The Preliminary Alternative hearings are a significant element of the Environmental Impact Study" said Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper "the public deserves a real opportunity to be heard and not to be cut out of the process because of inappropriate timing. These hearings will focus on what alternatives the National Park Service and their consultants are considering versus the power companies' proposal to construct a major new high voltage power line project through the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and across the Wild and

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Scenic Delaware River” said van Rossum. “Whether the power lines go under the River, take a different route around the Park, or overhead makes a tremendous difference to the resource and the people concerned about this project, and the public has a right to be heard on these issues” asserted van Rossum.

The organizations were first made aware of the proposed hearing dates on July 12, 2010. “We certainly understand the need to address this permit application in a timely manner,” said Julia Somers, Executive Director of the New Jersey Highlands Coalition. “We are asking the National Park Service to reconsider the short notice and the scheduling of the hearings—at a time when many people are vacationing and hundreds of impacted tourism-related businesses are at the peak of their season. These hearings take place in exactly four weeks, and they have yet to be publicly noticed” Somers stated.

“We are not faulting the National Park Service for proposing these dates,” said Christine Guhl, NJ Sierra Club Field Organizer. “We’ve seen how these utility companies have pressured other agencies for quick decisions in the past. We continue to be very supportive of the National Park Service and their efforts – as stewards of the public trust – to carefully consider this application. We encourage them to take the necessary time to reach a proper conclusion, without pressure for a quick decision” stated Guhl.

“Even though we are told there will be a 30 day public comment period that will end after vacation season is over,” concluded Fred Stine, Citizen Action Coordinator, Delaware Riverkeeper Network “the majority of the general public will miss the opportunity to attend these critically important hearings where many people will learn, in detail, what progress has been made...in this case, what alternatives the Park Service and its consultants have developed.

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