

December 1, 2016
Testimony of Tom Michelenko

My name is Tom Michelenko. I am an intervener in the PennEast Pipeline am now an abutter after the pipeline route moved to my neighbor. I am 68 years old, have lived in Delaware Township all my life and been farming since childhood and farm with my son and brother. I farm over 2,000 acres of hay in Kingwood and Delaware Township. The PennEast Pipeline is currently going through 9 farms that I farm. Under the best circumstances, it takes 3 years to yield a crop on good land. That is land without a pipeline.

I am presenting maps from Robert Fulper who lives on block 7.01, lot 8.02 in West Amwell Township, NJ. He has a yield monitor on the CASE IH Combine he uses to gather crops. This monitor has shown the crop yields over the Texas Eastern 20" pipeline that was put in in 1941. The fields have NEVER recovered. If they can't recover over 75 years, they never will. Think of the economic loss to the farmer and the community. This proves beyond doubt that PennEast's claim that crops will not only recover, but get better are not only false, but extremely insulting to the farm community which built this country. All the hay I farm is documented at the Farm Service Agency. My losses will be easy to document, but how do I get compensated for all the time and money I have invested in these farms?

There are other issues that I feel are completely unaddressed by FERC. In order to plant a crop the land would need ground preparation would have to include no stones on the top of the field, leveling, lime application, fertilizer and the right seed rating. Drainage and top soil loss is of paramount concern, as well. I don't see how you can possibly put back top soil and restore the ground without soil compaction that would reduce the crop yield. Most of the farms are cut down the middle by the route. There is no way I will be able to cross the easement to get to half of many of my crops. My large tractors weighing up to 7 tons will not be able to get to some of the farms where there will be detours, resulting in further loss of income. How can they come into an agricultural community and not address these issues?

PennEast has been intimidating farm owners to sign agreements by saying, "If you don't sign now, if it goes to eminent domain we are going to give you less money!" They say, "A lot of people have signed up!" when we know this isn't true. This is bullying and punishing our farm community. By rubber stamping projects, FERC is encouraging this intimidation which is undermining the farm community, my personal income, the security of my family and the viability of remaining a farm community.