

December 2, 2016 Testimony

Bias and Abuse in the Process

My name is Leatra Harper, and we travelled from Ohio to testify here on our own time and own dime after repeated efforts to only realize it makes no difference to write letters and testify to FERC. Five years ago, the small non-profit I started warned of the dangers of fracking and that the spoils from this singularly hazardous and polluting industry was NOT for our clean energy future but for corporate profit. Our worst fears are proven true – fracking is destroying our clean air and water, creating massive amounts of toxic and radioactive waste. Despite all our best efforts, FERC allows the corporations and their supporters, the multi-national investment community, to roll over our human, civil and property rights to build the infrastructure to promote fracking. We continue to go through the proper channels to preserve our local, long term economic future, but the fracking Ponzi scheme proceeds to drill and move gas and oil to higher-priced markets using FERC and the antiquated Natural Gas Act against us. It makes no difference whether thousands of people come forward to plead for their farms, to express their fears, and to present scientific facts to FERC. The entire system is a sham designed to discourage people by giving a semblance of participation while wearing us down and forcing landowners to surrender and sign. For all the massive pipeline projects taking and wrecking thousands of acres of forests and farmland, there is NOTHING – NO APPEAL- through any of the FERC process that would cause FERC to NOT allow the projects to be built. We've hired lawyers and even commissioned a scientific paper to warn FERC about the dangers of building huge high pressure pipelines through karst terrain and near earthquake faults. What would happen if a sinkhole was encountered during drilling under the Maumee River, our drinking water source – or after the pipelines are built so it explodes in one of the numerous highly populated areas they run through? FERC wouldn't care – there's no accountability or consequence, and they know it. Even though it seems futile, people still want to protest, but FERC does not give adequate notice about hearings, so we make phone calls and flyers and do outreach ourselves. Who has time for this? We have lives that have been disrupted and property that has been degraded. Despite the air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, FERC illegally segments projects and doesn't even calculate cumulative effects of air pollution - even within a single project. No one knows the overall effects of the ozone, fine particulate matter, greenhouse gases and toxic chemicals that will be released. FERC even ignores the USEPA's guidance to factor in GHG emissions in their approval process. FERC doesn't even calculate domestic needs and the growing glut of fossil fuels before approving pipeline overbuild. The industry won't admit it, but we know that the plans are for export with all the LNG terminals proposed, without the justification of public convenience and necessity. Yet, FERC will issue the certificates giving corporations eminent domain rights to take private property, using our taxpayer supported police forces against us. Even if we get into court, the pipeline still gets built because FERC issues tolling orders to allow work to proceed. In Ohio, when FERC realized resistance was building, they shut down public testimony, forcing us to testify in private, so we could not publicly applaud the efforts of our neighbors who resist. The Environmental Impact reviews are inadequate yet still approved by FERC, and we can't even obtain public records from FERC to monitor the routes to insure environmental compliance ourselves. How would you feel if you were me working without pay for years to no avail seeing the destruction and pollution, knowing climate change is here, with a granddaughter who likely won't live out her natural life if the ice sheets melt as predicted? The systemic dysfunction perpetuated by FERC would be unbelievable had I not been a witness to it myself. For our legislators who are listening, thank you. There aren't enough of you paying attention to what is happening here, and it will not end well for any of us unless FERC is made to work for the sake of our collective future and not the short-term profit of its corporate benefactors.