



South Coast Neighbors United

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My name is Wendy Graça and I live in East Freetown, Massachusetts. My husband and I built our home there 11 years ago to be near his parents, who still live in the house in which my husband grew up. We have 3 daughters, ages 21, 18 and 11. Our two oldest girls are in college, and our youngest, Adriana, is in 5th grade. She is interested in a lot of things most girls her age are...make-up, electronics, dance class... and LNG. She shouldn't know what that is, or have to worry that the reckless, rogue government agency known as FERC (the only 4 letter F word in HER vocabulary), will knowingly endanger our family's home, health and safety, as well as her present and future environment and planet, all for corporate profits.

It was about a year ago that I first heard of Spectra Energy's Access Northeast project, FERC docket # PF16-1. It is a proposal to expand the Algonquin Gas Transmission line by installing a new 24" high pressured pipeline through my neighborhood (and under my driveway), to transport fracked gas from the Marcellus Shale in Pennsylvania to 2 new massive LNG storage tanks less than 2 miles away in Acushnet, among homes, schools, and health care facilities. Soon after that revelation, our citizen opposition group South Coast Neighbors United was founded.

To learn more about the project and the decision making process, we attended an Open House in January 2016, hosted by Spectra and attended by FERC representatives. I approached and asked a nice FERC agent how long she had worked for FERC, and she told me 15 years. I asked her in the 15 years she had been working there, how many applications had she seen denied, and she told me 2 – one of which was the Keystone Pipeline, which, as we all know, was rejected by President Obama, NOT FERC. When I asked her what the agency's role would be in determining whether or not this project got approved, and she said that in addition to the siting of infrastructure, it was their responsibility to decide if there was a public need. I then asked what independent research they'd conduct to help them make that determination, and she said "none." She told me that their decisions are based upon information submitted by the applicants, and the public. I asked if she knew about the MA Attorney General's report¹, which found that the Commonwealth didn't need additional gas and she said no, but encouraged me to submit that to FERC.

Spectra claims there is a shortage of gas and infrastructure in New England due to constraints on the pipeline system, during the coldest days of the winter, which they also claim is the cause of our high electricity prices. In an email sent to The Spectator this August by Spectra's director of stakeholder outreach, Arthur Diestel wrote, "During the first four months of this year, Boston-area consumers paid 50 percent more than the U.S. average price for electricity. Why? Because we don't have the natural gas supply to meet the growing demand for gas-fired electric generation."²

¹ <http://www.mass.gov/ago/docs/energy-utilities/reros-study-final.pdf>

² <http://www.southcoasttoday.com/article/20160803/SPECIAL/160809954/101129>



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If you recall, the winter of 2015-2016 was one of the mildest we've had in years, yet we STILL paid high electric rates. The only thing this proves is that one thing has nothing to do with the other, and therefore that statement was not only completely unfounded, but contradictory as well. Interestingly, ISO New England has projected our electricity use to grow at a rate of less than 1% annually³. Why then, the "need" to increase the region's gas supply by 34%? This obviously isn't for OUR use or benefit. Classic overbuild aside, there is substantial evidence denoting their true intention to export this fracked gas through Canada. The Algonquin pipeline ties into the Maritimes & Northeast Pipeline, which until recently only flowed south FROM Canada...but last year was approved to reverse the flow. We now know that the industry's plan to export through Canada has been in the pipeline for years⁴.

This project isn't about meeting the public's need or saving money for New Englanders; it's about making money for greedy corporations, whose application fees provide funding to FERC. Their intentions are disingenuous and segmented, just like their projects. These companies are in a rush to export their product overseas, where the cost of that same product is significantly higher. Common sense dictates that competing with an international market for our own domestic product will actually RAISE our prices, but FERC turns a blind eye to that in order to continue padding their own pockets. As Senator Elizabeth Warren stated in an op-ed published in yesterday's Standard Times, "The Natural Gas Act wisely encourages the remote siting of LNG facilities as a bare minimum safety standard, but both energy companies and federal regulators have ignored this critical component of the law... it's clear that the top priority is profit – not safety."⁵

It should be of no surprise to anyone, however, that FERC exhibits no regard or respect for laws or the public. That behavioral pattern of entitlement dates back to at least 1978, when they ignored a provision of the 1978 Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act, requiring them to provide public funding for interventions before the agency.⁶ The act appropriated \$2.4 million for compensating intervenors in fiscal year 1981, before FERC switched to its current funding mechanism, based on fees on industry participants. The Office of Public Participation was never created and seemingly (and conveniently) just fell off their radar. FERC is finally being put under the microscope now, and it's because the public has reached its tipping point. FERC's practices are riddled with countless conflicts of interest; the fact that their funding comes from the very industry they are supposed to regulate is the biggest conflict of all⁷.

³ <https://www.iso-ne.com/about/key-stats/electricity-use>

⁴ <http://www.naturalgasintel.com/articles/96362-canadian-lng-terminal-proposes-exporting-us-gas>

⁵ <http://www.southcoasttoday.com/opinion/20161130/your-view-elizabeth-warren---no-support-for-pipeline-expansions-until-existing-infrastructure-is-repaired-need-is-proven>

⁶ <https://www.rtoinsider.com/citizens-groups-public-funding-ferc-22859/>

⁷ <http://m.timesunion.com/tuplus-opinion/article/Gas-firms-pay-FERC-get-results-7964795.php?cmpid=fb-desktop>