

Chosen Route is Best for Susquehanna-Roseland Project, Utilities Say

PPL Electric Utilities and Public Service Electric and Gas Provide Additional Details of Major Land Purchases Offered to National Park Service as Mitigation

ALLENTOWN, Pa., Jan. 31, 2012 /PRNewswire/ -- The utilities' chosen route for the [Susquehanna-Roseland transmission project](#) is the best alternative for the power line needed by millions of electric customers in the region, the companies building the project told the National Park Service in formal comments filed Tuesday (1/31).

Public Service Electric and Gas Co. and [PPL Electric Utilities Corp.](#) also provided more details on their proposal to mitigate for unavoidable impacts of the project by preserving thousands of acres of land to enhance public enjoyment of natural resources in the area.

Below is a summary of key points in the utilities' comments:

Other NPS alternatives would have more impact: Other alternative routes proposed by the National Park Service would require the companies to cut new corridors through forests and communities in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. This would require significantly more forest clearing. The companies' route – already approved by regulators in both states – uses a corridor that already exists.

Utilities' route follows existing power line corridor through NPS areas: There already is a transmission line through the three areas of the National Park Service. The line was there decades before the park units were created. Using the pre-existing, cleared corridor for the Susquehanna-Roseland project makes the most sense to limit overall regional impact.

"No-action" alternative does not prevent impacts: If the National Park Service chooses the "no action" alternative, the utilities still will need to rebuild the 85-year-old transmission line that now crosses the three NPS units. This reconstruction project will have the same construction impacts as the utilities' chosen alternative, and will replace the current lattice-style towers with steel poles between 130 feet and 160 feet high, as required by today's design standards. In addition, "no action" could lead to reliability problems in the Northeast power grid.

Utilities already have property rights through NPS lands: The companies have an existing property easement through the three National Park Service units that provides the legal right to rebuild the existing power line. The line must be rebuilt because it is nearing the end of its useful life.

Susquehanna-Roseland project does not require significant widening of existing right of way: The current utility corridor through the three National Park Service units is four miles long with widths of up to 200 feet. The only additional right of way and clearing needed by the utilities to build the Susquehanna-Roseland line is 50 feet of additional right of way for 0.7 miles where the corridor is now 100 feet wide. The draft environmental impact statement incorrectly states that the existing cleared corridor would have to be much wider.

Additional information on mitigation

The utilities also provided additional detail on their proposal to mitigate for unavoidable impacts of the Susquehanna-Roseland project, if the National Park Service approves the utilities' chosen route.

First, the utilities will avoid and minimize impacts by using best management practices during construction of the power line, including measures identified by the National Park Service in its draft environmental impact statement. The best way to minimize impact is to use the existing corridor rather than cutting new corridors in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, the comments said.

Recognizing that building the Susquehanna-Roseland line would have unavoidable impacts, the utilities have proposed as compensatory mitigation the purchase or preservation of thousands of acres of land – identified as

priorities by conservation groups – to expand public landholdings, to support the mission of the National Park Service and the U.S. Department of the Interior, and to enhance the enjoyment of the public.

Areas and agencies that would benefit directly from these purchases would be:

- Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area.
- Appalachian National Scenic Trail.
- Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge.
- Middle Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River.
- New Jersey and Pennsylvania state land conservation agencies.
- Other natural, conservation and recreational agencies and interests.

The companies already have identified parcels on the market, and have matched this list to the priorities identified as particularly important to the mission of the National Park Service, the U.S. Department of the Interior, and other conservation agencies and groups.

The final value of the mitigation package will depend on the final assessment of impacts determined by the National Park Service. The utilities believe, based on their own estimates at this time, that the cost of land purchases would be \$30 million to \$40 million.

The utilities would establish and endow the Middle Delaware Mitigation Fund, to be administered by a nonprofit organization. Monies from the fund would be used to preserve, restore and enhance the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, the Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge, and the Middle Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River.

The utilities would provide half the money for the fund when construction begins in either the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area or across the Appalachian Trail, and would provide the balance of the funds when construction is complete and the Susquehanna-Roseland power line is placed in service.

"We have made a compelling case that our chosen route is the overall best path to provide for the needs of electric customers while minimizing impacts," said Ralph LaRossa, president and chief operating officer of PSE&G, and David G. DeCampi, president of PPL Electric Utilities, in a joint statement.

"Our mitigation proposal would provide significant benefits for the public, and would more than offset unavoidable impacts of this needed project."

The National Park Service has said it will announce its decision on the route in March.

The new Susquehanna-Roseland power line is being built to maintain the reliability of the electric grid for millions of people in the Northeast region. In addition, it will save consumers more than \$200 million per year by relieving congestion on the power grid, which will reduce electric bills for some customers.

The new power line will run from Berwick, Pa., to Roseland, N.J. The independent regional power grid operator, PJM Interconnection, ordered the new line to prevent violations of national standards for the operation of the nation's electric power grid. PJM recently reconfirmed the need for the line. Construction of the line will create thousands of jobs for the region.

PPL Electric Utilities, a subsidiary of PPL Corporation (NYSE: PPL), provides electric delivery services to about 1.4 million customers in Pennsylvania and has consistently ranked among the best companies for customer service in the United States. More information is available at www.pplelectric.com.

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