

## **Pipeline will power U.S. energy**

*By Dick Downey, Commentary*

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The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is now considering issuance of wetlands permits for the federally-approved Constitution Pipeline which will bring natural gas from Pennsylvania to markets in New York and New England. Given the clear need, repeatedly demonstrated by state and federal energy planners, for increased gas pipeline capacity, such permits would normally be issued routinely, but after a strict review of construction plans to protect the environment.

But, that is not how anti-fossil fuel advocates see it. They mean to stop all conventional energy projects and they're growing increasingly desperate given the advent of hydraulic fracturing and the much cheaper domestically produced energy that these new techniques have brought forth. Hence, the determined and misleading campaign against the Constitution project despite its promise of cheaper, regionally produced energy.

When operational, the Constitution Pipeline will enable inexpensive, domestically produced natural gas from Pennsylvania to heat homes, cook food, and generate electricity for the people in New England and New York. The pipeline is part of the necessary infrastructure for supplying the energy needs of the nation. After all, the US is now the world's leading producer of natural gas and domestic energy which is responsible for greatly reducing our dependence on foreign sources of energy and increasing manufacturing jobs here at home.

Most of the natural gas now used in our region is produced over 1000 miles away in places like Canada, Texas and Louisiana. Since it is close-by, Pennsylvania gas cuts those costs in half. After recent tough winters, New England and New York deserves a break.

New York City is meeting Clean Air Act standards by switching from fuel oil to natural gas. Conversion to natural gas is greatly improving public health. Since 2008, conversion to natural gas in New York City has meant a 50% reduction in asthma causing fine particulate matter and a 69% drop in sulfur dioxide. Health authorities in New York City have stated that cleaner air has annually resulted in 800 fewer deaths and 2000 fewer emergency room visits and hospitalizations from lung and cardiovascular diseases. Somehow, the anti-gas crowd ignores these facts. Moreover, according to last year's Energy Information Agency report, the switch from coal to gas in electric generation is the primary reason CO2 emissions in the United States are the lowest in 20 years.

The same benefits accrue to the small upstate towns and villages along the anticipated distribution lines that feed off the Constitution Pipeline. Natural gas is 30%- 40% cheaper than propane or heating oil and a typical upstate homeowner converting to gas would save approximately \$1000 per year. Schools, hospitals, and factories save more. My school district will save \$80,000, or the equivalent of a teacher and an aide we don't have to lay off in the next round of state budget cuts.

Cheap, cleaner gas energy is good news to regular folks. It's a catastrophe for those emotionally and/or economically invested in renewables. Without massive, market distorting subsidies, mandates, tax breaks, renewables have a hard time competing. The reason for the opposition to gas pipelines is very simple. Gas beats renewables in the marketplace. However, gas must get to market. Pipelines bring gas to market. Stop the pipelines and gas is choked. Therefore, stop the pipelines.

DEC needs to recognize the regional need – as has the federal government – for more reliable pipeline infrastructure to deliver natural gas to New York and New England. New York State's 2014 Energy Plan has clearly identified pipeline infrastructure as being inadequate to meet our state's needs. Constitution

has developed multiple mitigation strategies to lessen or eliminate any adverse environmental impact due to construction activities. More natural gas means lower costs for business and homeowners and cleaner air for all of us. The DEC should approve these permits without further delay.

*Richard Downey is a former New York City schoolteacher who resides in Otego, where he is a member of the Unatego Board of Education.*