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PRESS RELEASE

Media Contacts:

Taylor McFarland, Sierra Club: Taylor.McFarland@sierraclub.org, 732-865-1405

Kari Martin, Clean Ocean Action: KMartin@cleanoceanaction.org, 908-507-2549

Blair Nelsen, Waterspirit, bnelsen@waterspirit.org, 732-923-9788

Ed Potosnak, NJLCV: ed.potosnak@njlcv.org, 732-991-7574

ADVOCATES DECLARE VICTORY! “NESE” METHANE GAS PROJECT DEFEATED!

Keyport, NJ - A large, broad-based coalition of organizations from the Delaware River to the sea declared victory against a Goliath methane gas project. After nearly eight years of permit filings and extensions, Williams Transco’s Northeast Supply Enhancement (NESE) project finally expired. On May 3, 2024, Williams Transco let a key Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) construction application extension expire, which ended a nearly decade-long battle by groups and residents that opposed the project.

It was the culmination of a “zombie-like” cycle in which Williams Transco sought to keep the project alive every two years by requesting extensions from FERC, promising that the companies were working to modify NESE to address (without evidence) the insurmountable strong local and legal opposition as well as permit denials from both environmental agencies of New York and New Jersey. The project would have caused irreparable harm to our environment by increasing climate-changing greenhouse gas emissions, water pollution, and flooding, destroying critical wetlands and habitats, and cutting through sensitive Raritan Bay and New York Bay, disrupting the marine environment.

Since 2016, organizations in both New Jersey and New York, held rallies and events, collected petition signatures, set up countless information and action tables at community events, and reviewed and commented on documents at every opportunity to stop the project. During the

pandemic, the groups kept people engaged in actions to stop NESE by launching a “stay-at-home” action toolkit.

Plans for the NESE Project included piping fracked gas from the Marcellus shale region in Pennsylvania through aged pipelines in New Jersey, construction of a new 32,000-horsepower gas-fired compressor station 206 near Trap Rock Quarry off Route 27 behind the Buddhist Vihara in Franklin Township across from several communities in South Brunswick, and the construction of a 23.4-mile offshore pipeline through the Raritan and Lower New York Bays, which would adversely impact marine life and shoreline communities in NY and NJ.

Both New Jersey and New York Governors did not approve permits for the project. Every Mayor along the entire Bayshore of Monmouth County, New Jersey, at one point, opposed the project, and nearly 20 municipalities passed resolutions opposing NESE. Thousands of citizens and dozens of organizations and community groups participated in efforts to oppose NESE.

The following are statements about the victory over NESE from some of the many organizations that worked to fight, and defeat, NESE:

“At long last, this un-NESE-sary, dirty fossil fuel project finally gave up the ghost and gasped its last gassy breath,” said **Cindy Zipf, Executive Director of Clean Ocean Action**. “Together, we celebrate the many organizations and individuals that worked so hard over many years to stop NESE. COA came to this project in 2019 to represent the marine environment and are thrilled and proud that the voices of Monmouth County, 100% of Bayshore municipalities, groups and communities acted quickly in unified opposition. Collectively, this opposition greatly contributed to the efforts to oppose this massive fossil fuel project. The staff of COA are honored to have coordinated with such an effective coalition of groups,” added **Zipf**. “Today, there is one less fossil fuel facility impacting the land, sea, and air.”

“Williams Transco’s decision not to renew its FERC extension is a monumental victory for the people who have been fighting this disastrous fossil fuel project for the past eight years. NESE would have caused irreparable environmental damage by destroying wetlands, cutting through the Raritan Bay, increasing flooding, and more,” said **Anjuli Ramos-Busot, New Jersey Director of the Sierra Club**. “While we will be celebrating today, we will remain vigilant. We will continue to fight to protect our land, air, and water from any fossil fuel project in New Jersey.”

“I am thrilled Williams Transco saw the light, deciding not to move forward with the unnecessary NESE pipeline project after more than seven years of saying, we don’t need NESE. The dangerous project posed a threat to clean air, clean water, wildlife, and the health and safety of our communities,” said **Ed Potosnak, Executive Director, New Jersey League of Conservation Voters (LCV)**. “We appreciate the diligence and hard work of the township councils and elected officials at all levels, our partners, and community members who rallied against this project from the beginning. The unneeded project goes against all New Jersey’s efforts to move toward a 21st century clean energy future. We must remain vigilant and not let Williams Transco revive the dirty NESE project in any other iteration in order to protect our families from the pollution and poor health from dirty fossil fuels.”

“EELC has worked tirelessly alongside a fierce coalition of grassroots New Jersey and New York activists and our clients Princeton Manor Homeowners Association, Central Jersey Safe

Energy Coalition, NY/NJ Baykeeper, and Food & Water Watch to oppose this unnecessary and polluting new pipeline and compressor station. Most recently, EELC opposed Williams Transco's second request for an extension to build NESE, and FERC cited our letter in cutting the requested extension in half so that the certificate expired on Friday. Due to the persistence of all of the groups involved, we are relieved and elated to say that this looming threat to public health and the environment has finally ended," said **Kaitlin Morrison, Staff Attorney at Eastern Environmental Law Center (EELC)**.

"As a healthcare professional I was shocked to learn of all the adverse health impacts on almost every bodily system related to the toxic emissions from compressor stations and fossil fuels in general," said **Linda Powell, Franklin Township Task Force on NESE Steering Committee Member and Outreach Coordinator for Central Jersey Environmental Defenders**. "Although the opposition to the NESE project began with a handful of concerned residents in Franklin and South Brunswick Townships it grew to include many dozens of established and grassroots environmental and other concerned groups and thousands of concerned residents across NJ. Those of us in NJ partnered with similar groups and people in NY forming an interstate coalition of people all working towards the same goals - preventing more pollution from increased fossil fuel infrastructure, cleaning up the environments in Environmental Justice Communities and transitioning to clean renewable energy and a healthier environment for all. It took all of us working and organizing together to finally defeat this unnecessary dangerous project, proving that working together we can put the environment and people before profits."

"We are grateful that this victory means greater protection for the sacred waters of NJ and NY. Through our coalition's relentless dedication, we have not only thwarted the polluters, but also safeguarded the lifeblood of our communities: water. The people will not give up. We will continue to defend our waters and our communities against environmental injustices in our unwavering dedication to sacred Earth," said **Blair Nelsen, Executive Director of Waterspirit**.

"Transco's defeat is a testament to the communities across Central Jersey who said no to this dirty, dangerous and unnecessary pipeline. If we are serious about confronting the climate crisis, these kinds of massive new fossil fuel projects simply cannot be built. Governor Murphy and the New Jersey legislature must seize this moment to go further by rejecting all proposed fossil fuel projects and advancing legislation that ensures a rapid and equitable transition to clean energy," said **Food & Water Watch New Jersey State Director Matt Smith**.

"Over the last almost eight years, Princeton Manor, a 55+ community of over 700 residents outside of Princeton NJ, with the majority of whom are in their 70's, 80's and 90's, joined with surrounding townships, community groups and other concerned citizens and engaged Eastern Environmental Law Center to assist in fighting the Williams Transco's NESE Project. This project, which included a new Compressor Station only ½ mile from the entrance to our community, would have contaminated with toxins the air we breathe, the water we drink and use and endangered the safety of our residents," said **Ron Waetzman, Former President of Board of Directors, Princeton Manor Homeowners' Association, and South Brunswick Township**. "NESE and Compressor Station 206 are now DEAD thanks to our combined effort and resources. We congratulate all of our fellow involved citizens and groups on this unprecedented success!"

“We celebrate the power of many people and organizations in multiple states who persisted for over seven years to stop NESE due to its environmental and health harms via various actions, respectful collaboration and factual, supportive communication,” said **Dr. Barbara Cuthbert, Franklin Township Task Force on NESE Steering Committee Member.**

“Surfrider’s New Jersey volunteers are today celebrating the demise of a polluting fossil fuel pipeline that would have locked New Jersey into even more harrowing climate change impacts than we are already experiencing. The demise of the NESE Pipeline is a lesson for other NJ communities that we don’t have to accept the future that the oil and gas industry is forcing upon us,” said **Matt Gove, Mid-Atlantic Policy Manager, Surfrider Foundation.**

“Seven years of unwavering and persistent scientific based opposition, and against all odds, rendered the result we all seek. Transco Williams definitely misread the intensity of our objections and thought we would fade into the background and not be so vigilant. Our assembled coalition, from the unrelenting volunteers to our sage professionals, all need to be acknowledged for a job well done!” said **Joe Camarota, Township Council, South Brunswick Township.**

Some of the many groups that worked since 2016 to stop NESE in the New Jersey region included: 350NJ.org, Bayshore Regional Watershed Council, Central Jersey Safe Energy Coalition, Central Jersey Environmental Defenders, CHARGE (Consumers Helping Affect Regulation of Gas & Electric), Clean Ocean Action, Clean Water Action, Eastern Environmental Law Center, Environment New Jersey, Franklin Township Task Force on NESE, Food & Water Watch, Indivisible Bayshore, League of Women Voters of New Jersey, Natural Resources Defense Council, Natural Resources Protective Association, New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance, New Jersey League of Conservation Voters, New Jersey State Federation of Women’s Clubs, NY/NJ Baykeeper, People Over Pipelines, Princeton Manor Homeowners’ Association, Princeton University Outdoor Action, Raritan Riverkeeper, ReThink Energy NJ, Save Coastal Wildlife, Sane Energy Project, Sierra Club New Jersey Chapter, South Brunswick Transco Compressor Station Task Force, Surfrider Foundation, The Watershed Institute, UU Faith Action NJ, United For Action, and Waterspirit.

While declaring victory over NESE, the groups at the press conference also noted that vigilance and action is needed to continue to fight fossil fuel projects proposed in New Jersey and beyond to protect communities and the environment and to combat climate change.

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