

SEC HEARINGS COVER TOURISM, PROPERTY TAXES

Four days of hearings on Northern Pass were scheduled in July before the New Hampshire Site Evaluation Committee (SEC), covering Northern Pass property tax revenue and what effect transmission lines have on tourism.

WHY PEOPLE VISIT NH

Mitch Nichols, of the Nichols Tourism Group, spoke about the research he conducted on the New Hampshire tourism industry and whether the presence of transmission lines is considered by tourists or those in the tourism industry as an influential factor.

In his study, Nichols used data collected by Plymouth State University's Institute for New Hampshire Studies and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data, as well as interviews with representatives from the state's tourism industry and a prospective visitor's survey. This research showed there are a number of issues that influence a visitor's decision on where they will travel, including how easy it is to access the destination, the range of activities available, new or improved attractions, marketing, weather, and overall value for the money.

There is a lack of evidence to show that transmission lines influence tourism, and no known studies of transmission line development show a quantifiable impact on the tourism industry. The Nichols Tourism Group added in its report that during the group's own work on more than 250 assignments studying a wide range of tourist destinations, they found no indication transmission lines have an impact on tourism.

"Never in the prior 20 years of planning work has any concern been raised regarding the presence of power lines and their possible negative influence on visitor demand," the report said.

PROPERTY TAX REVENUE FOR COMMUNITIES ON THE ROUTE

Lisa Shapiro, Chief Economist at Gallagher, Callahan & Gartrell in Concord, provided testimony on her work estimating the Northern Pass property tax payments to New Hampshire communities.

One of the most direct and immediate benefits the communities along the proposed Northern Pass route will receive is increased property tax revenue. In its first full year of operation, the project will pay an estimated \$35 million to \$40 million in property taxes. That includes approximately:

- \$21 million to \$26 million for municipal and local education property taxes
- \$4 million for county taxes
- \$10 million for state utility education property taxes redistributed to local communities for education

Recently, Northern Pass reached out to all of the incorporated communities along the route to notify them of the expected tax revenue the project will bring over the next 20 years. In Stewartstown, for example, the estimated Northern Pass investment (which is an increase to the town's tax base) in the first year after construction will be \$69.9 million. Once built, Northern Pass will represent 45 percent of the town's overall property value and yield an estimated first-year payment for municipal and local school taxes of \$858,361. That would bring an estimated first-year homeowner tax benefit of up to \$830 per \$100,000 in home value.

For more information about the Northern Pass property tax revenue in communities along the route, go to www.northernpass.us/towns.htm.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR NORTHERN PASS

- **Final hearings before the SEC will continue throughout the summer**, including discussions on property values, aesthetics, and historical and archeological resources.
- **The U.S. Department of Energy expects to release its final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on Northern Pass in August.**
- **The SEC announced an additional 15 final hearing dates** in August and September.
- **Northern Pass will continue to reach out** to landowner owners and businesses along the route to gather feedback on how the project can address any potential impacts during construction.



ENVIRONMENTAL MITIGATION AND ENHANCING NH'S CONSERVATION EFFORTS

During its design phase, Northern Pass sought to avoid and minimize impacts to wetlands along the proposed route whenever possible. However, environmental studies revealed that some wetlands will be impacted from construction and operation of the project. Working with various agencies, and in accordance with state and federal law, Northern Pass has dedicated 1,627 acres of approved land for wetland mitigation — exceeding the state and federal requirements for wetlands mitigation the project must meet.

Environmental mitigation is a term used primarily by government agencies and environmental organizations to describe projects or programs intended to offset known impacts to an existing resource, such as a stream, wetland, endangered species, or historic structure.

Enhancing Conservation

Northern Pass has worked with the New Hampshire's Fish and Game Department, Department of Environmental Services (DES), and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to identify land that could be part of the Northern Pass mitigation plan and would also provide additional benefits to other conservation and restoration efforts around the state. The mitigation package includes eight conservation sites that are valued for having numerous wetlands, floodplains, streams, vernal pools, or are connected to other conservation lands.

Highest Ranked Habitats

Much of the land Northern Pass has dedicated to the mitigation package specifically addresses local and regional conservation goals.

They include corridors for lynx, marten and other wildlife, habitats for moose and Northern long-eared bat, deer wintering areas, large forest blocks for forest breeding birds, and a mix of land types from wetlands and early successional forests to mature forests and high-elevation habitat. Six sites, totaling 1,533 acres, are located in the North Country and are adjacent to or near other undeveloped land that offer opportunities for hiking, hunting and fishing.

The sites in the mitigation plan stand out for the significant conservation opportunities they present the state. Approximately 700 acres are considered Highest Ranked Habitat, a determination made by New Hampshire Fish and Game. This designation indicates land that contains wildlife habitat in the best relative condition in the state or region, considering the location of key species, the landscape setting, and the impact humans have had on the area.

Supporting NH's Aquatic Resource Mitigation Fund

As part of its wetlands permitting package, Northern Pass will also make a \$3 million payment to NH's Aquatic Resource Mitigation Fund (ARM) to cover impacts in the towns and watersheds outside of the communities where the Northern Pass conservation lands will be located.

The ARM Fund is managed by DES, which allocates grants to support projects that restore, enhance and preserve aquatic resources and upland buffers. Since 2007, the ARM Fund has been used to restore a variety of wetland habitats, conserve more than 12,000 acres of land, restore 100 acres of wetland, and improve more than 45 miles of streams.

PRESERVATION LOCATIONS

The following parcels will be preserved as part of the Northern Pass Wetland Mitigation Package:

Parcel	Location	Size	Characteristics
Hall Stream Road Site	Pittsburg	46.5 acres	Highest Ranked Habitat, with forest and farmland
Connecticut River Site	Pittsburg	550 acres	Highest Ranked Habitat with high-quality wetlands
Haynes Road Site	Clarksville	153 acres	Highest Ranked Habitat, deer wintering area
Wiswell Road Site	Clarksville	211 acres	Highest Ranked Habitat, offers protection for key species
Roaring Brook Headwaters Site	Dixville/Columbia	444 acres	High elevation, adjacent to large contiguous parcels, including Nash Stream Forest
Cedar Brook Site	Stewartstown	129 acres	Highest Ranked Habitat, high-quality wetland
Brush Road Forest Site	Pembroke	87 acres	Highest Ranked Habitat, vernal pools, preserves open space near urban area
*Pine Barrens	Concord	7 acres	Pine Barrens is a Highest Ranked Habitat in the region

*This Concord conservation land is in addition to the Wetland Mitigation package and is included in the overall mitigation plan.

ABOUT NORTHERN PASS

Northern Pass is a 192-mile electric transmission line project that will provide New Hampshire and New England up to 1,090 megawatts of clean hydropower. This reliable and competitively-priced power will also bring a range of benefits to New Hampshire, including hundreds of millions of dollars in energy cost savings, additional tax revenue, and thousands of jobs during construction and beyond. To learn more about Northern Pass, go to www.northernpass.us. You can also email questions to info@northernpass.us or call **1-800-286-7305**.