

Ruth Ann Burke
Maine Department of Environmental Protection
Board of Environmental Protection
Commissioner's Office

RE: Suspension of the CMP/NECEC DEP permit testimony

I am writing to express my support of the Department's responsibility to suspend the CMP/NECEC permit due to the lack of TRI on the public lands portion of the project. While this issue may take time to resolve, construction on the project is ongoing on many parts of the CMP corridor. My focus is on the adverse impacts of this project in Section 5, the addition of a new, third 345Kv line along the existing corridor extending from Windsor to Wiscasset.

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Mary Morgan and I live on the west shore of the Sheepscot River in Whitefield. I am a retired DEP employee who served in the Land and Land & Water Bureaus for 19 years, as a compliance and enforcement staffer in Land, and in L&W licensing wastewater discharges in the Augusta Regional office. The existing CMP corridor that extends from Windsor to Wiscasset passes through 10.9 miles of my town. I am writing to bring your attention to the adverse impacts that the NECEC expansion will bring to Whitefield, the Sheepscot River, and Lincoln County. Although I am not an abutter, my use of my property will be impacted negatively by Segment 5 of the NECEC project as it is expanded through Whitefield.

Section 5 of the CMP project involves constructing a new power line along the existing corridor from Windsor, through Whitefield, Alna and Wiscasset. CMP says that the new line is associated with but not connected to the larger project extending from the Upper Kennebec Region to Lewiston. I have seen no explanation as to why the Lincoln County expansion is necessary, except a reference to ISO. Planning for the 1st transmission line for this corridor was started in 1941, when no State or local environmental laws were in place, and the 2nd line (circa 1969) was either exempt or unregulated. Now, although the expansion is in an existing corridor, is the first time the entire development is subject to review and suspension under current environmental laws. According to the DEP permit for the project, "Segment 5 crosses 157 freshwater wetlands, 104 rivers, streams or brooks, including the West Branch of the Sheepscot, which is an Outstanding River Segment, and all of which contain coldwater fisheries habitat; two IWWHs; and four SVPs." IWWHs are State-recognized Inland Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitats and SVPs are Significant Vernal Pools.

Since the Windsor to Wiscasset section of the project is not connected, it should have been a separate project, not part of the larger Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) application. As a separate development, the Windsor to Wiscasset Line would likely have had a more substantial DEP review. CMP maintains that the project needed minimal environmental review since it is in an existing corridor.

I am most familiar with the section of the project proposed for Whitefield, where I have lived for 36 years. After a cursory review, the Whitefield Planning board approved the project on June 30, 2021. I spoke up against the project before the Planning Board, and then appealed the

approval. The Whitefield Board of Appeals upheld the Planning Board permit at the appeal review on October 7, 2021.

The issues that I raised in Whitefield include the impacts of disturbance in and adjacent to streams, ponds and wetlands during construction, the spraying of herbicides, including RODEO (with 25 times higher concentration of glyphosate than ROUNDUP) near these water bodies, and the impacts of blasting bedrock on homes, wells and other structures of abutters to the power line.

Whitefield has 6 Wild Eastern Brook Trout streams that cross the CMP power line to join the Class AA Sheepscot River. The 6 Trout streams flow into sections of the Sheepscot River that are mapped habitat for Atlantic Salmon spawning and rearing. These Atlantic Salmon are a federally-protected and endangered species. At the October 7 meeting, a local biologist cited a 2017 study of the ecotoxicity of glyphosate in guppies (*Poecilia reticulata*). Pathological changes were observed in the gills and liver of the test subjects. Guppies are a freshwater fish, but not a cold-water species, so research will tell if our cold water fisheries are likewise impacted by glyphosate. The CMP corridor also crosses 22 wetlands in Whitefield, one of them a significant waterfowl and wading bird habitat pond located near a blue heron rookery.

Two of these Brook Trout streams (Weaver Brook and an unnamed stream) join the Sheepscot River just upstream and downstream of my property. I swim where Weaver Brook flows into the River, and harvest fiddleheads for sale just downstream from the point where the unnamed stream joins the River. It will no longer be safe for me to swim or harvest fiddleheads if these 2 streams are contaminated by CMP's herbicides.

When CMP bought up property in Lincoln County for the 1st line in 1941, most abutters having property on both sides of the line retained a deeded 20 foot wide easement across the corridor. Some abutters also have deeded agricultural rights to the entire CMP corridor dividing their lots. These landowners will be limited in agricultural use of their easement land after CMP sprays it with herbicides. There are 140 properties that abut the CMP corridor in Whitefield. Three of my friends live on properties w/ these agricultural easements, they did not know of their agricultural rights, nor that CMP was spraying herbicides including RODEO on their easements.

CMP will install 95 new utility poles throughout 10.9 miles of Whitefield, and each pole will involve 120 square feet of permanent disturbance. The wooden utility poles to be installed will be treated with pentachlorophenol (Penta). Wood preservatives used to chemically treat wood utility poles contain dangerous chemicals, including dioxins, which harm human health and the environment. The last legal remaining use of pentachlorophenol (penta) in the USA is as a wood preservative in utility poles. Penta and its contaminants, dioxin, furans, and hexochlorobenzene are considered by the United Nations Environmental Program to be persistent organic pollutants (POPs).

The DEP permit for the overall CMP/NECEC project requires CMP to avoid spraying herbicides on part of the corridor in the Upper Kennebec, to protect Atlantic Salmon habitat. Our Lincoln

County Atlantic Salmon habitat along the Sheepscot River should likewise be protected. The Sheepscot River is classified as class AA and is an outstanding river segment from the Head Tide Dam in Alna upstream to Halldale Road in Montville. These outstanding river segments require special protection under the Natural Resources Protection Act (NRPA).

I have more than 30 years of work experience measuring, monitoring, mapping and protecting the surface and ground waters of Maine. My field experience at the Maine DEP showed me that what happens on the job site during construction often does not comply with what the developer wrote in his application, and what the DEP wrote in the permit. At a recent Whitefield appeal meeting, CMP reps assured me that there would be ample compliance inspections for work in Section 5, by “DEP third-party inspectors”. I asked how many of these inspectors are assigned to Segment 5. Their answer: one. I am not sure what a “DEP third-party inspector” is, but my DEP compliance inspector experience tells me that an inspector will need superpowers to monitor the 26.5 miles of construction with approximately 233 individual disturbances for pole installation. Does the Department have staff equipped up with drones, helicopters and ATVs to patrol construction on the Corridor?

The potential for significant violations on this project can result in serious environmental harm. A large, invasive project such as the CMP expansion in our sensitive Lincoln County environments should not have been allowed, and the Department should use this TRI issue to suspend the entire project to avoid further damage to the sensitive environments I have described.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony,
Mary A. Morgan morgamary@gmail.com