Protect PT
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January 12, 2026

Sent via Email and Certified Mail

Department of Environmental Protection
Regional Permit Coordination Office
Kevin White, PE, Director
400 Market Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101

Re: Section 401 State Water Quality Certification (SWQC), Chapter 102 Erosion & Sediment Control Permit, and Chapter 105 Water Obstruction and Encroachment Permit for the TL-636 Pipeline

Dear Mr. White,

Protect PT is a nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring residents' safety, security, and quality of life by engaging in education and advocacy to protect the economic, environmental, and legal rights of the people in Westmoreland and Allegheny counties. Protect PT submits this comment in response to the notices published on December 13, 2025 in the Pennsylvania Bulletin for consideration of a SWQC, Chapter 102 Permit, and Chapter 105 Permit for the TL-636 pipeline as part of the Eastern Gas Transmission and Storage's (EGTS) Appalachian Reliability Project (ARP). Protect PT's interest in this project derives from its members who reside less than a mile from ARP infrastructure and some of whom send their children to the Franklin Regional Primary School, less than a mile and a half away from ARP infrastructure. Protect PT asks that the Department deny a SWQC, Chapter 102 Permit, and Chapter 105 Permit for the TL-636 Pipeline.

Impacts from the TL-636 Pipeline

Based on an environmental justice analysis of populations living within one mile of the proposed TL-636 pipeline route, calculated as one mile from any one of a set of nineteen points

laying approximately equidistant along the proposed pipeline route beginning at latitude and longitude approximately (40.42305, -79.59217) and ending at latitude and longitude approximately (40.46247, -79.64040)[1] and using data from the Environmental and Residential Population Analysis Multisite tool ("EJAM"), the approximately 3,500 people living within a mile of the proposed TL-636 pipeline already suffer from more particulate matter exposure, ozone exposure, toxic air releases, proximity to facilities using extremely hazardous materials, and proximity to hazardous waste than the median American.

[1] The Clean Water Act Section 401 Application for the TL-636 pipeline lists the starting coordinates for the pipeline as (40.42305, -79.59217) and the ending coordinates as (40.46247, -79.64040). The .csv file used for the EJAM analysis however uses points proceeding from north to south, rather than south to north as used in the Section 401 Application. This change in directionality has no impact on the outcome of the EJAM analysis.

Summary of Analysis

Residents within 1 mile of any of the 19 specified points
Area in Square Miles: 59.69
Population: 3,448

Environmental and Residential Population Indicators

	VALUE	STATE AVERAGE	PERCENTILE IN STATE	USA AVERAGE	PERCENTILE IN USA	RATIO TO US AVG	RATIO TO STATE AVG
POLLUTION AND SOURCES							
Particulate Matter (PM 2.5 in ug/m3)	8.47	8.13	72	8.45	61	1.0	1.0
Ozone (ppb)	63.3	59.9	80	61.8	64	1.0	1.1
Nitrogen Dioxide (NO2)	4.8	6.8	18	7.8	21	0.6	0.7
Diesel Particulate Matter (ug/m3)	0.133	0.171	34	0.191	41	0.7	0.8
Toxic Releases to Air	1,400	4,000	39	4,600	65	0.3	0.3
Traffic Proximity and Volume (daily traffic count/distance to road)	290,000	1,400,000	28	1,700,000	30	0.2	0.2
Lead Paint Indicator (% pre-1960s housing)	24.14%	0.48	24	0.3	53	0.8	0.5
Superfund Proximity (site count/km distance)	0.00	0.35	0	0.39	0	0.0	0.0
RMP Proximity (facility count/km distance)	0.54	0.55	56	0.57	65	0.9	1.0
Hazardous Waste Proximity (facility count/km distance)	1.6	2.5	46	3.5	55	0.5	0.7
Underground Storage Tanks (UST) indicator	0.6	3.5	26	3.6	45	0.2	0.2
Wastewater Discharge Indicator (toxicity-weighted concentration/distance)	66	6,400	25	700,000	52	0.0	0.0
Drinking Water Non-Compliance	0.0	1.04	0	2.2	0	0.0	0.0
RESIDENTIAL POPULATION INDICATORS							
Demographic Index USA	0.57	1.14	29	1.34	18	0.4	0.5
Supplemental Demographic Index USA	1.16	1.52	17	1.64	25	0.7	0.7
% Low Income	18%	28%	32	30%	34	0.6	0.7
% in limited English-speaking Households	0%	2%	16	5%	56	0.0	0.1
% Unemployed	5%	6%	41	6%	57	0.8	0.8
% with Less Than High School Education	4%	9%	26	11%	31	0.4	0.5
% under Age 5	3%	5%	32	5%	29	0.5	0.5
% over Age 64	25%	19%	68	18%	80	1.4	1.3
% People of Color	9%	25%	43	40%	19	0.2	0.4

A screenshot of the output of an EJAM analysis of populations living within 1 mile of 19 points along the proposed TL-636 pipeline route

In the absence of underground leak detection, potential leaks from the TL-636 pipeline could go undetected for a significant period of time, posing a greater threat to surrounding populations from explosions and releases into the ambient air over time. This is especially

relevant when measurements of average pipeline leakage rates in pipelines surrounding the Pittsburgh, PA area indicate leakage rates far greater than those assumed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). There is no reason to believe that the TL-636 pipeline in particular will deviate from this pattern of greater-than-assumed leakage rates. These leaks will cumulatively impact populations in environmental justice areas less than a half mile from the route of the proposed TL-636 pipeline, including a disproportionately high number of elderly residents who will be less able to evacuate in the event of a catastrophic pipeline failure and whose bodies are more susceptible to respiratory damage from everyday instances of leakage.

These leaks will expose these thousands of local residents to 1,3-Butadiene, acetaldehyde, acrolein, benzene, ethylbenzene, formaldehyde, Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAH), propylene oxide, toluene, and xylenes. According to the EPA, sustained exposure to 1,3-Butadiene can cause heart disease, blood and liver disorders, reproductive health harms to developing fetuses, and leukemia. Sustained exposure to acetaldehyde can cause respiratory damage, reproductive health harms to developing fetuses, and potentially cancer. Sustained exposure to acrolein can cause respiratory congestion and irritation of the skin, eyes, nose, and throat. Sustained exposure to benzene can cause blood and bone marrow disorders, aplastic anemia, leukemia, excessive bleeding, and immune system damage. Sustained exposure to ethylbenzene can potentially cause damage to the blood, liver, and kidneys. Sustained exposure to formaldehyde can cause respiratory damage, eye, nose, and throat irritation, possible reproductive system disorders, and cancers. Sustained exposure to naphthalene can cause cataracts, retinal bleeding, chronic respiratory inflammation, and hemolytic anemia, including in fetuses of exposed mothers. Sustained exposure to PAH can cause kidney and liver damage,

respiratory damage, asthma, COPD, and cancer. Sustained exposure to propylene oxide can potentially cause stunted weight growth, mortality, and inflammatory lesions, though its impacts in humans are understudied. Sustained exposure to toluene can cause respiratory irritation, dizziness, headaches, sleeping disruption, and damage to the liver, kidneys, lungs, and ears. Sustained exposure to xylenes can cause headaches, dizziness, fatigue, loss of coordination, short-term memory loss, concentration difficulties, lung and heart damage, liver damage, and skeletal damage as well as decreased fetal body weight in fetuses of exposed mothers.

The compliance failures of EGTS, described below when discussing EGTS's violations of state and federal environmental law, show the propensity of EGTS to skirt applicable regulations. In the case of an underground pipeline, these failures to comply with regulations will risk even further harm to surrounding residents due to the health effects of exposure to leaked, airborne contaminants.

The TL-636 pipeline will disturb 23 streams, including 18 streams rated as High Quality, as well as 14 wetlands. These High Quality streams have at least the quality necessary to support the propagation of fish, shellfish, and wildlife and recreation, as required by 25 Pa. Code § 93.4b(a). This is only a portion of the 26 wetlands and 31 streams within the Project Area of Interest that risk damage in the event of erosion and leaks from the TL-636 pipeline. Some of the crossings through these wetlands will extend ever further than 200 feet, disturbing not just a small cross-section of wetland resources but a broad swath of wetlands. Considering this level of disturbance, the Department should require an alternative pipeline route to avoid disturbing dozens of wetland resources across thousands of feet combined across less than four miles of pipeline. The project will permanently alter a tributary to Turtle Creek in order to construct an

access road to a pig launcher/receiver site, and will destroy a palustrine forested wetland by converting it to a palustrine emergent wetland. The placement of the pig launcher itself so close to a stream ensures that when the pig launcher is used for pipeline maintenance, it will release PCBs, VOCs, methane, and ethane into the air, where it will contribute to air pollution and pollution of the nearby water in a tributary to Turtle Creek as it interfaces with polluted air.

Looking at the How's My Waterway EPA database of waterway quality within the Haymaker's Run watershed, waterways impacted by the TL-636 pipeline are already impaired for aquatic life due to poor water quality impacted by sediments (in Steel's Run, various unnamed tributaries to Steel's Run), and sediments as well as acidity (in various unnamed tributaries to Turtle Creek). The particular concern over erosion of soils and sediments from the pipeline construction process casts doubt on the temporary nature of these impacts when eroded soils and sediments will be permanently deposited into these waterways. This cumulative impact on impairments for sediment risks the long-term viability of these streams as continued high quality streams able to support aquatic life and recreation, and risks degrading the unnamed tributaries to Turtle Creek from perennial or intermittent flow to an ephemeral flow as sediment deposits from erosion disturb and alter stream flow. **The Department should prevent this artificial degradation of stream quality by denying the required SWQC, Chapter 102, and Chapter 105 Permits for the TL-636 pipeline.**

The US Fish & Wildlife Service ("USFWS") review of the TL-636 project for impacts to threatened or endangered species indicated that the project may impact the Indiana bat, the northern long-eared bat, the tricolored bat, and the monarch butterfly. Although none of the critical habitats for these species are within the project area, tree removal even outside of the

summer occupancy season for the northern long-eared bat and the tricolored bat will still diminish the available habitat for these species, risking overcrowding and gradual habitat destruction regardless of when tree removal takes place. **The Department should deny a Chapter 102 Permit for the TL-636 Pipeline as it will plausibly diminish the available habitat for the northern long-eared bat and the tricolored bat.**

The Department should deny a SWQC, Chapter 102 Permit, and Chapter 105 Permit for the TL-636 Pipeline where foreseeable leaks from the pipeline will exacerbate air pollution in environmental justice communities, cumulatively impact vulnerable populations, damage and permanently alter the quality of local waters, and increase the risk of a catastrophic failure that could disproportionately endanger elderly residents who are less able to evacuate in the event of an emergency.

Section 401 State Water Quality Certification

The Department should deny a SWQC for the TL-636 pipeline under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act. EGTS's application for a SWQC concedes that the TL-636 pipeline will pass through or near Pennsylvania's prime farmland, will create conflicts with threatened or endangered species, and will permanently impact Pennsylvania streams. Rather than preventing the need for new forest clearing by running alongside existing pipeline infrastructure, EGTS admits that clearing forested sections of the Right-of-Way (ROW) for the project could impact storm and floodwater control in the surrounding area, even with E&S BMP controls in place.

The analysis of the biogeochemical impact on pollution-preventing resources impacted by the project is inadequate, containing only a single paragraph which summarizes the distance and area of UNT 4 and Wetland 15A, respectively, impacted by the project. The 41 linear feet of

UNT 4 to be culverted could have significant impacts on the deposit of sediments and other foreign materials into the water of UNT 4, which would disturb its flow and impact its biogeochemical functions downstream of the culverted section. **The Department should require a full analysis of the potential for downstream biogeochemical impacts arising from the disturbance to UNT 4 to Turtle Creek before making a final decision on the issuance of a SWQC for the TL-636 pipeline.**

The analysis of anticipated impact to habitat functions is similarly inadequate, speculating that the restored resources "are anticipated to provide similar or potentially improved habitat functions as compared to pre-construction conditions." This is despite the fact that trees will have to be permanently removed from the area immediately surrounding the pipeline, which provide a dissimilar habitat from the proposed replacement of grass species in the immediate area surrounding the pipeline. **The Department should require a full analysis of the habitat impact on animal and plant species that depend on the forest environment to be replaced by grasses in the area surrounding the pipeline before making a final decision on the issuance of a SWQC.**

Regarding downstream properties, the risks of pipeline leaks in excess of those assumed by the EPA, as discussed above, pose a threat to the water quality of streams that will carry dissolved gases downstream into residential and agricultural areas. **This risk is not considered as part of the assessment of impacts to upstream and downstream properties. The Department should require an assessment of these risks before making a final decision on the issuance of a SWQC.**

Regarding the proposed No Action Alternative, EGTS did not consider how constraints in the supply of shale gas would impact decisions by large power loads seeing growing electricity needs, such as data centers, to seek alternative, renewable sources of energy subsequent to the planned operating date of the TL-636 pipeline in June of 2028. In discussing the No Action Alternative, the Department should require EGTS to forecast the likely secondary effects of the decision to take the No Action Alternative, including similar impacts as assessed in the current discussion of the No Action Alternative such as the impact on likely alternative methods of meeting meeting power demand, impacts on supply reliability, impacts on end-use price, and impacts on employment. The Department should not issue a SWQC until this reasonable analysis of the No Action Alternative is fully completed.

Considering the present application and its inadequate discussion of foreseeable environmental impacts from and alternatives to the TL-636 pipeline, the Department should not grant a SWQC for the TL-636 pipeline.

Chapter 102 Erosion & Sedimentation Permit

The Department should deny an Erosion & Sedimentation permit for the TL-636 pipeline under 25 Pa. Code Chapter 102. EGTS acknowledges that receiving surface waters for the ARP, including those for the TL-636 pipeline, are already impaired for siltation, suspended solids, turbidity, water/flow variability, flow modifications/alterations or nutrients. Further, the natural soil conditions of the area surrounding the ARP and the TL-636 pipeline have the potential to cause pollution in the project area and the surrounding area if disturbed. EGTS states that no permits or authorizations other than those listed on its Notice of Intent form are required, but omits that a Section 401 SWQC is required for the project, as discussed above. **This omission**

makes the application incomplete, and so the Department should deny this application in its current form.

Due to these existing impairments, the Department should require EGTS to implement adequate BMPs and SCMs to prevent further impairment of already-impaired streams in accordance with 25 Pa. Code Chapters 102.4 and 102.11. Because the nondischarge BMPs and SCMs are unlikely to prevent all soil and ground materials from entering the impaired streams that cross the path of the TL-636 pipeline, **the Department should further deny this application absent a demonstration that the limited disturbance area and riparian buffers proposed will be sufficient to prevent further impairment of already-impaired streams in the path of the TL-636 pipeline.**

Regarding environmental due diligence, due diligence procedures were not conducted to determine whether there was any contamination of on-site soils at various ARP locations, including that of the TL-636 pipeline. Instead, EGTS's E&S control plan merely says that "Soil conditions that may have the potential to cause pollution during earth disturbance activities have been investigated to the greatest practical extent." Given that the area around the TL-636 pipeline contains wetlands and other hydric soils, the Department should deny this application absent the use of environmental due diligence procedures to determine the presence of contaminated soils.

The Geological Hazard Report (GHR) submitted for the ARP further identified multiple points where landslide activity is prone to occur, and multiple steep slopes that will be prone to landslides and other failures of the supporting earth structure beneath the pipeline. Such an event could have disastrous consequences while the TL-636 pipeline is in operation, resulting in a pipe

failure and spillage of shale gas into the open environment. **The Department should deny this E&S permit application as long as the proposed pipeline route crosses areas prone to landslides and steep slopes prone to result in failure, especially when impacted by construction activities.** This is especially pressing when shallow groundwater is present nearby, as the GHR indicates.

The GHR indicates that there is an increased risk of subsidence due to abandoned mines that have been used to access coal seams less than 50 feet beneath the earth's surface in the immediate area of the ARP. The Department should similarly deny this application as long as the proposed activities, such as the construction of the TL-636 pipeline, take place immediately above areas with shallow undermining. The construction and operation of the pipeline create similar risks as discussed above of a catastrophic failure of pipeline infrastructure. Taken together, risks of landslides, steep slopes, and acid-producing rock are each considered high by EGTS's own report. Further scrutiny is required by the Department to determine whether the mitigation measures proposed by EGTS's report for these features are adequate to reduce the risk of a catastrophic failure **before** the Department can safely approve an E&S permit for this project.

Chapter 105 Water Obstruction & Encroachment Permit

The Department should deny a Chapter 105 Water Obstruction & Encroachment Permit (WOEP) to EGTS for the construction of the ARP, including the TL-636 Pipeline, under 25 Pa. Code Chapter 105. According to EGTS's July 2025 Joint Permit Application (JPA), this project will discharge sediments into and obstruct high quality wetlands in order to construct an interstate transmission shale gas pipeline. This discharge will impact Haymakers

Run and Steels Run, as well as unnamed tributaries (UNTs) to these streams, as well as UNTs to Turtle Creek. According to the EPA's How's My Waterway Database, portions of Haymaker's Run, as well as all of Steel's Run, are impaired for sediments. This impairment will only be exacerbated by the pipeline construction across these creek bodies, undermining their ability to support aquatic life as High Quality (HQ) waterways.

Given this, the Department should not approve a WOEP for this project in accordance with 25 Pa. Code Chapter 105.16(d) as it is likely to alter and further degrade the natural condition of these HQ watercourses. Given the previous discussion of the presence of the habitat of endangered species, the Department should further not approve a WOEP for this project in accordance with 25 Pa. Code Chapter 105.16(c)(3) as it is located in an area which serves as the habitat of multiple endangered or threatened species and will have an adverse impact on public natural resources in the form of impacts to HQ waterways.

Impacts of EGTS's Violations of State and Federal Environmental Law

The Department should not limit itself to only the most recent violations by EGTS, but should instead consider the entirety of the federal and state law violations history of EGTS, including violations of environmental statutes other than the Clean Water Act, Chapter 102, or Chapter 105. These violations demonstrate the propensity of EGTS to disregard and violate Pennsylvania's environmental laws. In 2024 in nearby Hempfield Township, EGTS attempted to install an unpermitted replacement dehydrator at a compressor station and poured multiple foundations for this project before the violation was discovered by the DEP. The only reasonable interpretation of this action is that it is a deliberate violation of the law, not an accident. Further,

considering an equipment malfunction at the North Summit Station in January of 2025, EGTS was negligent in reporting an equipment malfunction related to a release of fugitive emissions.

Looking at the past five years of operation, in 2022, EGTS's JB Tonkin Compressor Station failed a stack test compliance evaluation that compared its measured formaldehyde emissions with its permitted emissions limitations. This suggests that potential emissions were higher than indicated by the relevant permit. In 2021, the JB Tonkin Compressor Station received a notice of violation during an administrative file review listing the very same type of violation as the one it received only a few months later in 2022. EGTS received the same type of violation **again** at another facility just this year. In 2023, EGTS left a well unplugged so completely that the air within the material around the wellhead was 100% methane, even as EGTS had promised to engage with the government on a solution to this continuously leaking well. This pattern of failures to follow good operating procedures and ensure compliance at the JB Tonkin Compressor Station suggests that, if EGTS is allowed to install yet another piece of high emissions equipment at the Compressor Station, it will again violate the law and exceed emissions limitations that are already approaching major source limits while continuing to claim minor source status. In 2021, EGTS allowed a malfunctioning gas detector at a compressor station to cause an unnecessary emergency shutdown that vented VOCs into the air. In 2022, EGTS allowed debris to build up in a check valve at another, different compressor station that released VOCs and HAPs into the air. **These violations emphasize the need for the Department to deny a SWQC, Chapter 102 Permit, and Chapter 105 Permit for the TL-636 Pipeline when EGTS has demonstrated a pattern of violations of Pennsylvania**

environmental laws meant to protect the safety and right of every Pennsylvanian to clean air and water.

Conclusion and Request for Public Scoping Meeting

After reviewing the environmental damage that will be caused by the TL-636 pipeline, the Department should deny a SWQC, Chapter 102 Permit, and Chapter 105 Permit for the TL-636 pipeline. Based on the contents of the permit applications and information provided by EGTS, granting these permits would endanger local residents and risk irreversible damage to the local environment in Westmoreland County. Given the significant degree of public interest in this project indicated by this comment and by the proximity of the TL-636 pipeline in Westmoreland County to thousands of local residents, including multiple members of Protect PT, Protect PT requests that the Department schedule and notify the public of a public hearing nearby the location of the TL-636 pipeline for the Department to consider in-person comments from local residents.

Sincerely,

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