

Title: Trees, not towers: why the Forest Society opposes Northern Pass and why you should too
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When the Northern Pass project was presented, we at the Forest Society for the Protection of [New Hampshire](#) Forests listened to its proponents and carefully considered their arguments. We thoughtfully analyzed the **pros** and **cons** of the project as it is proposed. As an organization that has modeled the use of **renewable energy** systems at our headquarters in Concord, and advocated **energy** conservation and sustainable **energy** policies, we are aware of the benefits of the use of **renewable** hydropower. We have supported policies to promote the use of New Hampshire's own **renewable energy sources**, especially those that use sustainable forestry to generate **energy** from biomass.

But we are not naive enough to think that just because a power **source** or project is based in **renewable energy sources** that it doesn't have drawbacks or downsides. Every proposal must be evaluated on its merits and the impacts taken seriously.

In the case of the current Northern Pass proposal, we find that the downsides far outweigh any potential positives. Our conclusions are these:

- * This proposal for the largest-ever power line in New Hampshire would cross and have detrimental impacts on thousands of acres of protected conservation lands. Some of these are lands owned by the Forest Society, and many are private lands on which the Forest Society holds permanent conservation easements. We have both an ethical and legal obligation to defend these lands, held in public trust, from unnecessary commercial development and degradation.

- * The permanent protection of "places with special scenic beauty" has been part of our mission since 1901. Our work is partly responsible for the scenic landscapes that attract millions of tourists to our state every year and make tourism our second-largest industry, providing tens of thousands of jobs. The route chosen for the Northern Pass will degrade this foundation resource and compromise the quality of life we leave to future generations.

- * The power line corridor and 90-to- 135-foottall towers will permanently alter the lands they cross, fragmenting forests, disrupting wildlife habitat, disfiguring communities and lowering property values.

- * We must promote a healthy forest products industry, and one important element of a healthy industry is a market for the low-grade wood that comes from forest improvement harvests. Biomass **energy** has provided that market as the paper industry has declined. Importing huge amounts of power from Quebec will jeopardize local **renewable** wood **energy** markets, reducing the incentives for us to develop homegrown **renewable energy** projects and threaten valuable jobs in the forest products industry.

[ILLUSTRATION OMITTED]

- * There is no clear long-term public benefit to New Hampshire from the Northern Pass project. As of today, the power will be exported to southern New England. No existing fossil fuel plant is slated for elimination as the result of Northern Pass, so our air quality will not significantly improve. We will host a 185-mile scar on the landscape and reap few real benefits.

We understand that there are those who believe that for the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions we must pursue every opportunity to produce power from **renewable** resources. Some would suggest that advancing that goal is enough to turn a deaf ear to the legitimate questions surrounding the environmental impacts of electricity generated by Hydro-Quebec.

We disagree. New Hampshire's landowners and tourism industry should not be forced to accept the permanent negative impacts of the power line simply because the electrons in it come from a **renewable energy source**.

The U.S. Department of **Energy**, tasked with preparing an objective environmental impact statement that looks at all these issues, also should answer more questions: Does importing this power really benefit New Hampshire or New England? Should the power line be built entirely along existing transmission corridors? Can it be scaled back? Is the power even needed? Should the power line be built at all?

Landowners and other citizens must speak out. The Forest Society will tell the DOE it has reached the conclusion that clearing the forest and erecting towers taller than the trees across 40 miles of scenic Connecticut River valley landscape, through the most popular national forest in the East, and over rural communities all the way to Deerfield is not the right way to deliver electricity to our region.

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