

June 5, 2007

Chairman Visclosky, Ranking member Hobson and members of the Committee on Appropriations:

We the undersigned write to you today about our concerns over the Department of Energy's recent issuance of *draft National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor Designations (NIETC designations)* and ask for your support of Representative Hinchey's amendment to postpone, by one year, the final designations until further consultations and data points are collected and studied. This postponement will allow for a more comprehensive and detailed plan to be formulated that includes vital input from all the affected stakeholders.

As you well know, in 2005 Congress passed the Energy Policy Act which amended section 216 of the Federal Power Act, directing the Secretary of Energy to designate certain areas of the country that are found to be electrically congested as a NIETC. We understand the need to assess and design a transmission system to meet the country's energy needs but these designations, as currently designed, fail to accomplish a balanced and comprehensive approach to the current congestion problems for several reasons.

First, the NIETC's outlined in the DOE's draft proposal are vast. They encompass 11 states, over 80 Congressional Districts, over 210 counties, and affect nearly 75 million taxpayers (approximately 25% of US population). It is clear from our outreach that a large majority of the individuals and state and local authorities do not know or understand exactly how they might be affected by being located in one these designated areas. We believe before DOE moves forward with any final designations they should, as requested by over 40 members of Congress, solicit adequate public comment and review including full consultation with state governments.

Second, the proposed designations do not specifically protect National Parks, American Civil War Battlefields, historic sites, and other environmental resources and community resources which are protected as federal, state and local priorities. We believe that DOE should remove such sensitive areas from consideration.

Third, NIETC designations give utilities that apply to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for a permit to construct an interstate line an opportunity to circumvent the state's authority even if the applicant has been denied on time and on the merits. Even more troubling, these NIETC's give utilities access to federal eminent domain for projects which may not be proposed to meet reliability requirements and which may not serve customer's within whose state the line is sited. We believe the condemnation of private property and public resource values should be a last resort.

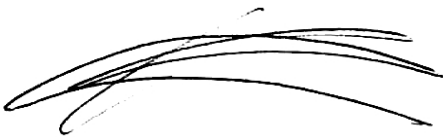
Finally, we believe DOE has not fully considered alternative methods of dealing with reliability and congestion such as energy conservation, energy efficiency, distributed generation and demand-side management programs nor have they addressed the relationship between interstate transmission investments and climate change strategies.

The interstate transmission projects within these initial and future designations must be re-evaluated for their impacts on the wide range of environmental implications including impacts to sensitive natural areas, air quality and related carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuel.

Given these concerns we support the Hinchey amendment. Again, the Hinchey amendment does not permanently restrict the siting of transmission lines or undercut the need to provide a secure and reliable source of power to all Americans. It provides a one-year moratorium so that Congress, as well as local and state governments and their constituencies can study and understand the impact these designations will have on their short and long term energy plans. This amendment will help guarantee a more robust discussion between federal and state officials about the most prudent way to design a comprehensive energy strategy that compliments the federal government's need to provide a secure system for energy delivery. It gives states the power to be innovative and meet the needs of their citizens.

Our hope is that you and members of the Appropriations Committee will see the value in adopting the amendment to be offered by Mr. Hinchey of New York. We strongly believe this amendment will benefit everyone involved in this important process. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Mark Brownstein
Managing Director of Business Partnerships
Climate and Air Program
Environmental Defense Fund



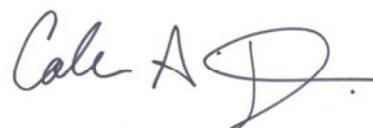
Jim Lyon
Senior Vice President for Conservation
National Wildlife Federation



Noah Matson
Vice President for Land Conservation
Defenders of Wildlife

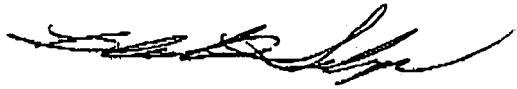


Bill Prindle
Acting Executive Director
American Council for an
Energy-Efficient Economy



Dave Hamilton
Director, Global Warming and
Energy Programs Sierra Club

Cale Jaffe
Staff Attorney
Southern Environmental Law Center



Blake A. Selzer
Legislative Director
National Parks Conservation Association



Linda Lance
Vice President for Public Policy
The Wilderness Society



James Lighthizer
President
Civil War Preservation Trust



Bart Schoradt
California Wilderness Coalition



Troy Bystrom
Director
Upper Delaware Preservation Coalition



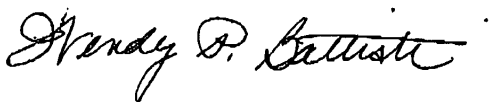
Mary Lou McFarland
The Conservancy of Montgomery County



Stewart Schwartz
Executive Director
Coalition for Smarter Growth



Sherri L. Evans-Stanton
Director, Environmental Management Center
Brandywine Conservancy



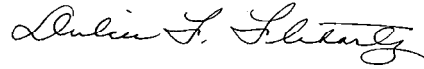
Wendy P. Battisti
President
Bedminster Land Conservancy



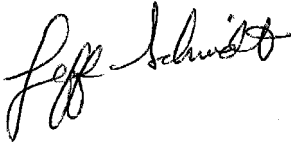
Molly Morrison
President
Natural Lands Trust



Emily Wadhams
Vice President
Public Policy
National Trust for Historic Preservation



Dulcie F. Flaherty
Executive Director
Montgomery County Lands Trust



Jeff Schmidt
Sierra Club – PA Chapter



Christopher G. Miller
President
Piedmont Environmental Council



Andrew M. Loza
Executive Director
Pennsylvania Land Trust Association