

June 23, 2021

Department of Environmental Protection
Southeast Region
Waterways and Wetlands Program
2 Main Street
Norristown, Pennsylvania 19401

RE: Chapter 102 Permit No. ESG0100015001
Chapter 105 Permit No. E15-862

To Whom it may concern:

In April, Sunoco Pipeline LP submitted permitting requests for “major modifications” related to the construction method and routing of one of the remaining uncompleted sections of the Mariner East 2 Pipeline. I am writing in support of the Department of Environmental Protection’s favorable consideration of the requests.

Last September construction of the pipeline was halted following occurrences of inadvertent returns, in which bentonite drilling mud escaped to surface levels. Sunoco Pipeline LP (SPLP) now seeks approval to complete construction at this location through open trench installation, rather than horizontal directional drilling (HDD). The proposed adjustment offers a sensible solution to safely finish the pipeline and protect surrounding communities and the environment.

Oil and natural gas production in the Marcellus Shale Reserve provides a critical energy supply to the Northeast Corridor. Natural gas is an important fuel source for heating and power generation in the Northeast. As we continue to transition our electrical grid to renewable energy, access to this reliable and affordable supply of natural gas will also be critical. It provides a crucial backstop to wind and solar energy, providing an environmentally friendly way to quickly bring critical baseload energy online to the electrical grid when the sun doesn’t shine and the wind doesn’t blow.

The Appalachian Basin, which accounts for over 40 percent of U.S. natural gas production, is a major driver of our country’s domestic energy growth. Due to significant output increases over the past two decades, the United States became a net-energy exporter in 2019, a position that was maintained last year. Yet despite this success, certain areas, like New England continue to have to rely on foreign imports of natural gas to meet energy needs. Energy infrastructure projects such as the Mariner East 2 pipeline will go a long way towards ensuring all parts of the country can benefit from the domestic energy revolution.

Continued growth depends on continued investment into the region’s energy infrastructure. Production has quickly outstripped pipeline deployment. Many top-producing parts of the country have experienced backlogs from insufficient pipeline capacity. These occurrences create gluts, disrupt prices and have even forced drillers to flare excess supply. In the Southwest region of the Marcellus Reserve, pipelines averaged 101 percent of capacity this spring.

Expanding the Northeast region’s energy infrastructure capacity not only benefits consumers and the economy, it is good for the environment, too. Pipelines are the safest form of energy transportation. A recent study found rail shipments, for example, are more than four times more likely to experience failure. Pipelines’ success rate is over 99.9 percent. For comparison, federal first-class mail has a success rate of

only 96.8 percent. By alleviating dependence on rail and truck shipments, pipeline infrastructure, like the Mariner East project, protect communities and ensure reliable access to affordable, domestically produced fuels.

With the proposed permit amendments, the Mariner East 2 will likely be completed within five to ten weeks. As an expert on energy issues with years of experience working with policy organizations such as the Energy Council of Rhode Island, I encourage the Department of Environmental Protection to approve this request without delay and move this critical piece of infrastructure forward.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact me if I can provide any further information.

Sincerely,

Doug Gablinske
Former Executive Director, The Energy Council of Rhode Island
Former Member, Rhode Island House of Representatives (2007-2011)
Former Aide in the Rhode Island Governor's Energy Office