

# Letter: Land is not protected to provide for pipelines

*The Berkshire Eagle*

POSTED: 03/24/2016 03:48:48 PM EDT

UPDATED: 03/24/2016 03:55:48 PM EDT

## Land is not protected to provide for pipelines

To the editor:

The big battles over natural resources and energy have often felt far from home, which is likely why our public conversation on new natural gas pipelines has been more about whether we need them at all, the importance of greenhouse gas emission reductions, energy costs, and threats to public safety. Keystone XL, or fracking in Pennsylvania, feels far away.

But we all need to know that our state parks and forests, and rivers and wetlands, are squarely in the cross-hairs. As The Eagle reported, the nation's largest energy infrastructure company, Kinder Morgan, is suing the commonwealth for access to a part of the Otis State Forest in Sandisfield to route a new natural gas pipeline for Connecticut. Massachusetts purchased this land in 2007. It was one of the top conservation priorities of the state and one of our largest public land projects in recent history.

Our legislature, the commonwealth's ultimate arbiter on publicly protected land, has not allowed this project to move forward. And now, Kinder Morgan has gone to Berkshire Superior Court to take the land — protected by public tax dollars — by eminent domain. It wants to build a new pipeline through the 900 acres, which has a 400-year-old eastern hemlock old growth forest, wildlife and fishing, historic sites, forests and meadows, and the entire 62-acre Lower Spectacle Pond.

This is Kinder Morgan's opening legal salvo and its next pipeline project, Northeast Energy Direct, crosses much more protected land. Public parkland wasn't set aside as the cheapest route for private infrastructure projects. It's outrageous. Pipelines can be moved, old growth forests and pristine ponds cannot.

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