

DEP denies PennEast's permit application for natural gas pipeline

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10/10/2019 05:50 PM EDT

The state Department of Environmental Protection has denied PennEast's permit application to build a \$1 billion, 120-mile natural gas pipeline.

Last month, a federal appeals court ruled that PennEast can't condemn state-owned land for construction of the pipeline, which would run from Luzerne County, Pa., to Mercer County, N.J. The ruling effectively blocked PennEast from building the line on land owned by the state of New Jersey. PennEast no longer had legal authority to build on 49 properties along the proposed route.

Based on that ruling, the DEP on Tuesday rejected and closed the applications on the grounds that it could not deem PennEast's application complete.

The decision is a "win for New Jerseyans whose health, water and air would be threatened by this project," Tom Gilbert, campaign director of ReThink Energy NJ and New Jersey Conservation Foundation, said in a statement. "The Murphy Administration has taken strong steps to defend our taxpayer preserved lands and uphold our strong environmental standards against this unnecessary and damaging pipeline."

The permit denial was without prejudice, meaning PennEast can apply again, but the denial, along with the federal court ruling, constitute a major blow to the project. The company must also get approval from the Delaware River Basin Commission and Pennsylvania's environmental agency to move forward with the project.

Pat Kornick, spokesperson for PennEast, said in a statement that the company is "confident the legal actions will be resolved favorably," and that "the PennEast member companies remain fully committed to the PennEast Pipeline Project and the affordable, reliable service it will bring to the region, including nine million Garden State residents."