

February 12, 2025

## **Environmental Health Project Statement on New York State’s Approval of the Iroquois Enhancement by Compression Project (“ExC Project”)**

*Expanding the Iroquois Pipeline represents a step backward in New York State’s progress toward a sustainable and just future. Public health must be prioritized in any decision that impacts fenceline communities, as this one does.*

### **Background**

The Iroquois Gas Transmission System (“Iroquois Pipeline”) transports fracked gas across New York State and Connecticut. This 414-mile pipeline is owned by TC Energy and Affiliates of Berkshire Hathaway Energy, which both have a history of [safety](#) and [environmental](#) regulation violations, including an [historic](#) penalty for violating the Clean Water Act in 1991. In January 2020, the pipeline owner petitioned the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to expand its four compressor stations—two in New York State and two in Connecticut—calling the project the Iroquois Enhancement by Compression Project (“ExC Project”). Compressor stations are mid-stream facilities in the shale gas development lifecycle that keep fracked gas flowing through pipelines with adequate pressure.

The New York State Department of Public Service and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation were tasked with evaluating the environmental and public health impacts of expanding this fossil fuel infrastructure, as well as the pipeline owner’s [claims](#) of a gas shortage without it. Significant statewide [opposition](#) grew among fenceline communities and [elected officials](#), and that opposition was bolstered by the [2019 Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act \(Climate Act\)](#) and [2023 state ban on fossil fuel equipment in new buildings](#). However, on February 7, 2025, the state [approved](#) the ExC Project and issued permits for the expansion of the Iroquois Pipeline compressor stations located in New York’s Dover and Athens communities. These expansions are expected to double current operations in these environmental justice communities, which already carry the burden of toxic exposures from fossil fuel facilities and associated negative health outcomes.

### **Environmental Health Project Statement**

**Alison L. Steele, Executive Director**

New York State Governor Hochul’s approval of the ExC Project ignores the well-established body of research and lived experiences demonstrating the public health risks of shale gas operations; it also defies the spirit of New York State’s last decade of leadership on climate action and a just transition away from fossil fuels.

Gas compressor stations emit a mixture of toxic chemicals known to impact human health. Pollutants such as particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, and volatile organic compounds—including benzene, toluene, hexane, xylene, and formaldehyde—can be released continuously through leaks and sporadically during intentional, large, [short-term events](#) called “blowdowns.” These toxic emissions disperse across communities, sometimes traveling far distances, depending on the weather conditions and terrain, impacting the health of those nearby. More than 30 peer-reviewed epidemiological studies observe a range of short- and long-term [health impacts](#) in proximity to shale gas facilities, such as compressor stations. These impacts include:

- A variety of respiratory problems, such as asthma, chronic bronchitis, and reduced lung function
- Headaches, dizziness, and nausea
- Hospitalization from heart-related complications
- Cancer, particularly in those who are exposed over a long period of time
- Adverse birth outcomes, including preterm birth, low birth weight, and birth defects
- Mental health issues from noise, vibration, light pollution, and associated stress of nearby shale gas industry activity
- Premature mortality in the elderly.

The residents of Dover Plains, Wingdale (a community downwind from the Dover Compressor Station), and Athens already face notable health risks based on the locations of these facilities: there are five schools within a five-mile radius of the Athens compressor station and three schools within a five-mile radius of the Dover compressor station. Additionally, these residents are more likely to face barriers to accessing adequate healthcare related to exposure, as [demographic data](#) indicate lower rates of health insurance enrollment and fewer urgent care facilities within driving distance, compared to other parts of New York State.

Vulnerable populations such as children, pregnant people, and older adults who live near the Dover and Athens compressor stations are [already experiencing](#) the negative impacts commonly associated with exposure to compressor pollution. For example, infants born in Dover Plains and Wingdale are more likely to have low birth weights than other New York communities, and residents in Athens go to the hospital for COPD symptoms and heart attacks more frequently. A community air monitoring study conducted by the Environmental Health Project and Dover residents from 2022 to 2024 found that the hourly average of PM<sub>2.5</sub> levels were above the existing [EPA standard](#) of 9.0 µg/m<sup>3</sup> for 3.8 hours each day. While this level of exposure does not amount to a violation of the EPA standard, the level has nevertheless been [associated with adverse health effects](#). Doubling the scale of these facilities through the ExC Project will put these residents at greater risk of health harms.

Expanding the Iroquois Pipeline represents a step backward in New York State's progress toward a sustainable and just future. It ignores established science that articulates the health harms regularly experienced by communities forced to host shale gas facilities, and it offsets critical progress needed to address the climate crisis. The nation is looking to New York State to lead the way on energy solutions, such as electrification and renewable energy production, not regress with a long-term commitment to fracked gas.

Fortunately, Governor Hochul still has the opportunity to be the climate leader New Yorkers need her to be. The NYDEC's approval of the compressor air permits must be accompanied by an approval of the [National Grid's Long-Term Gas Plan Proceeding](#) by the New York State Department of Public Service in order for the ExC Project to move forward. EHP implores Governor Hochul to recommit her administration to the goals of the groundbreaking Climate Act and prioritize public health in future decisions regarding the Iroquois Pipeline expansion project and any further shale gas development in New York.

### **About EHP**

The [Environmental Health Project](#) (EHP) is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization that defends public health in the face of shale gas development. EHP provides frontline communities with timely monitoring, interpretation, and guidance while engaging diverse stakeholders: health professionals, researchers, community organizers, public servants, and others.