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# Sabal Trail pipeline's adverse impacts will be mitigated, agency says

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December 18, 2015 | Filed in: Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Florida Power & Light, FPL, Greenlaw, Gulf Restoration Network, natural gas, NextEra Energy Inc., Sabal Trail, Sierra Club, Spectra Energy, Uncategorized.



The Withlacoochee River, which originates in Central Florida's Green Swamp, is among those the pipeline could affect.

A \$3.2 billion natural gas pipeline slated to supply Florida Power & Light's South Florida plants would have some adverse environmental impacts, but those impacts would be reduced to less-than-significant levels with proposed mitigation measures, federal regulators said Friday.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's staff released the final environmental impact statement for the Southeast Market Pipelines Project. If approved, the 685-mile pipeline will originate in Alabama and include the separate but connected Hillabee

Expansion, Sabal Trail and Florida Southeast Connection projects. It will include six new compressor stations as well.

The project has been widely opposed by environmental groups and residents of the communities on the route. They have raised concerns that the pipeline will harm the Floridan Aquifer which supplies water to millions of people in Florida and Georgia, could damage wetlands, scenic rivers and wildlife habitat and poses a safety hazard to residents.

"The Sunshine State should not be relying on dangerous for structure. No mitigation plan can truly account for the damage to a community if incidents that had been reported, and man that our water, wetlands, and communities Coastal Campaign Organizer at Gulf Rest

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Steven Caley, an Atlanta-based GreenLay said of FERC, "They've never seen a pipe

Caley questioned how the FERC staff can seen the mitigation plans.

"They've had thousands of comments and the time and expense of giving them analysis on the effect the pipeline could have. They basically have ignored

As of 2014 there were over 700 pipeline documented. When will our agencies learn st bidder?" said Johanna de Graffenreid, is.

a Club and several River Keepers groups,

onmentally sound when it has not even

eight in from the parties who have gone to



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everything. They have not given any credence to anything anyone has said," Caley said.

"But instead they have relied completely on everything Sabal Trail has given them. FERC has shown it is nothing but a lapdog. They get all their funding from the natural gas industry, so what do you expect?" Caley said.

Juno Beach-based FPL and parent company NextEra Energy officials have said they expect the pipeline to be in service by mid-2017. It will bring gas from a Central Florida hub to FPL's Martin County plant, then to its plants in Rivera Beach and at Port Everglades.

A 480-mile portion of the pipeline, the Sabal Trail Transmission Project, is a joint venture of a subsidiary of Juno Beach-based FPL's parent company, NextEra Energy Inc., and Houston-based Spectra Energy.

The southern 126-mile leg is proposed by Florida Southeast Connection, another NextEra subsidiary.

The conclusions and recommendations in the EIS are those of FERC staff, with input from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Army Corps will also present its own recommendations and conclusions.

FERC said the main reasons for its conclusions are:

- each Applicant would minimize impacts on the natural and human environments during construction and operation of its facilities by implementing the numerous measures described in their respective construction and restoration plans;
  - the majority of the proposed facilities would be collocated within or adjacent to existing rights-of-way;
  - all of the proposed facilities would be constructed and operated in compliance with federal standards, requirements, and thresholds including U.S. Department of Transportation materials requirements and Environmental Protection Agency air emissions standards;
  - a high level of public participation was achieved during the pre-filing and post application review processes and helped inform our analysis;
  - environmental justice populations would not be disproportionately affected by the SMP Project;
  - the horizontal directional drilling crossing method would be utilized for most major and sensitive waterbodies, the majority of other waterbodies would be crossed using dry crossing methods, and the Applicants would be required to obtain applicable permits and provide mitigation for unavoidable impacts on waterbodies and wetlands through coordination with the USACE and state regulatory agencies;
  - we would complete Endangered Species Act consultations with the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service prior to allowing any construction to begin;
  - we would complete the process of complying with section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and implementing the regulations at 36 CFR 800 prior to allowing any construction to begin; and
- environmental inspection and monitoring programs would ensure compliance with all construction and mitigation measures that become conditions of the FERC authorizations.

The FERC Commissioners will take into consideration staff's recommendations when they make a decision on the Projects.

Here are links to the EIS documents:

- » [Cover Letter Volume I](#)
- » [Table of Contents Volume I](#)
- » [Executive Summary Volume I](#)
- » [Section 1](#)
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