OCCA seeks property-owner input in review of power line proposal

The Otsego County Conservation Association is seeking input from landowners whose property would be crossed by and/or adjacent to the proposed Edic to Fraser transmission line. If built, Edic to Fraser would parallel the existing Marcy South corridor for nearly its entire length here in Otsego County.

The Edic to Fraser proposal is one of a number of plans being considered by the New York State Public Service Commission as it seeks to address reported ongoing electric transmission congestion problems by delivering an additional 1,000 MW of electricity from upstate power sources to downstate consumers.

Proposals from four different developers were submitted to the PSC independently in September of 2014, each of which reflected a possible solution to congestion problems and a method to deliver the desired 1,000 MW of electricity downstate. At the request of the state, these companies were then given an opportunity to present new or modified proposals that would make greater use of existing transmission corridors and rights of way.

The PSC will choose from these alternatives, and can decide to use parts of different proposals provided that together they will move the required 1,000 MW of additional electricity. Among the selection criteria to be weighed by the PSC in its review of the alternating current (AC) transmission upgrade proposals are: 1) impact on environment and community; 2) cost to ratepayers; and, 3) potential for implementation without excessive delay.

One of the projects currently under consideration – Edic to Fraser, from North America Transmission – would traverse four counties and 16 municipal-
**Edic to Fraser: Frequently Asked Questions**

**PROCEEDING-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS**

**Q: What exactly is this project about?**

A: The Edic to Fraser transmission line route was proposed by North America Transmission (NAT) in response to a request for proposals (RFP) put forth by the New York State Public Service Commission. These AC Transmission Upgrades Proceedings were designed to relieve congestion in two identified corridors. As part of Governor Cuomo’s Energy Highway Initiative, these proceedings are intended to provide an additional 1,000 mega-watts (MW) of electrical transmission capacity from upstate New York to downstate users to relieve historic energy congestion along these two corridors in what is known as the “Central-East Constraint.”

**Q: How does this whole proceeding work?**

A: When this proceeding was conceived in 2012, it was designed to be comparative in nature. This essentially means that a request for proposals goes out and developers submit their proposals to meet all or part of the 1,000 MW of desired transmission capacity upgrades. Then the PSC reviews the proposals it receives. Eventually the PSC will pick the project or combination of projects that best meets their pre-established criteria to move forward.

**Q: What exactly are the criteria that PSC will be using to evaluate these proposals?**

A: (1) the amount of increased transfer capability (electricity moving through the system) that each proposal offers; (2) the cost of the proposal(s) to ratepayers; (3) electric system impacts, emissions reductions, and production cost impacts, measured in terms of overall changes to the generation dispatch; (4) the extent of any additional rights-of-way (ROW); (5) the application of innovative technologies to enhance transfer capability or reduce the physical footprint of the project; and (6) an initial assessment of environmental compatibility, including visual impacts.

**Q: What is the timeline for the whole review process to take place?**

A: Due to the magnitude of the AC Transmission Upgrades Proceedings, the timeline for review is tentative. However, as of December 30, 2014, it is as follows: Comments on the Part A proposals from developers are due to the PSC on March 30, 2015. PSC staff will render a motion selecting one or more projects to move forward on June 10, 2015. A joint technical conference will be held to re-examine the need for this project from June 17 to June 18, 2015. PSC commissioners will make a final decision as to how to move forward in September, 2015.

**Q: How will this line be situated in relation to the Marcy South power line?**

A: As proposed, the Edic to Fraser AC transmission line is slated to be built adjacent to the existing Marcy South ROW for more than 90 percent of its length (including 40 miles in Otsego County). It is important to note that the proposed Edic to Fraser ROW will be 80 feet wide—down from 150 feet in NAT’s October, 2013 submittal. The route will travel through the following towns: Richfield, Exeter, Burlington, New Lisbon, Laurens, Otego and Oneonta.

**Q: Is it certain that the Edic to Fraser project will even be chosen?**

A: No, this proceeding is still in the very early stages. NAT just submitted a modified proposal and is awaiting a full PSC review. Another way of thinking about the Edic to Fraser project proposal is that NAT is expressing to the PSC: “we are interested in providing this energy, here’s how we meet what you’re looking for and, if we were to be selected, here’s what we would do.” Ultimately, NAT’s proposal will be assessed in relation to the other proposals the PSC receives and the PSC’s final decision will be based on what project or combination of projects PSC deems best.

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT QUESTIONS**

**Q: What are the potential environmental impacts of this project?**

A: Given the very initial nature of this proceeding, it is impossible to know the nature or extent of the potential environmental impacts associated with this project. NAT’s initial proposal contained their best estimates of potential environmental impacts based on desktop research and preliminary data, discussed their initial assessments of possible construction, operation, and maintenance related impacts, and presented some proposed mitigation measures.

**Q: When will the possible environmental impacts of this project be studied more closely?**

A: Sometime after September, 2015. If selected to move forward, NAT has stated that they will then conduct a full environmental review, discuss potential impacts of the project, and provide substantive mitigation measures.

**Q: What is OCCA’s role in evaluating the potential environmental impacts of this project?**

A: OCCA has applied for and successfully received intervenor funding to review possible environmental impacts of the proposed Edic to Fraser project as current-

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**Edic to Fraser FAQs**

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OCCA has commissioned an environmental consulting firm, C&S Companies, and enlisted the services of attorney Douglas Zamelis, in addition to convening committees of countywide community organizations and municipal officials to review the project. OCCA will do everything in its power to ensure that it contributes to the record in an objective, unbiased, and rigorous manner in order to aid the PSC in its review.

**Q: Who should call/e-mail OCCA? Should I call OCCA even if my property is not directly affected by the project?**

**A:** OCCA strongly encourages property owners directly affected by the proposed route to contact OCCA Environmental Planner Danny Lapin at (607) 547-4488 or at planner@occainfo.org to voice concerns, ask questions, and learn more about the project. Also, property owners, concerned citizens, and other members of the public are encouraged to call/e-mail OCCA with questions, comments, or concerns pertaining to the proposed project.

**Q: What kind of information is OCCA looking for?**

**A:** OCCA is interested in gathering as much information as possible pertaining to potential environmental impacts that the proposed transmission line may have in order to inform a clear, accurate, and rigorous record. To a slightly lesser extent, OCCA is interested in gathering information relating to health-related impacts associated with EMF fields, noise, and other concerns. It is important to note that property tax related impacts would be best mentioned to the Otsego County Planning and Solid Waste Department, (607) 547-4225, as they are more closely reviewing such impacts. OCCA also has a questionnaire that you can fill out and either e-mail or send to OCCA via regular mail.

**Q: How tall will these new power lines be under the current proposal?**

**A:** It varies between 100-200 feet tall. Depending on the terrain, most transmission structures will be 100-140 feet tall. It is estimated by NAT that the transmission structures will be approximately the same height as the existing Marcy South transmission line.

**Q: As currently proposed, how big will the new right of way be?**

**A:** As presented by NAT, the proposed route of the Edic to Fraser transmission line will be built adjacent to the existing Marcy South ROW. Initial design drawings indicate that the new ROW will be 80 feet wide.

**HOW DO I COMMENT ON THE PROJECT?**

**Q: Can the public comment on this project?**

**A:** Yes, simply navigate to http://documents.dps.ny.gov/public/MatterManagement/CaseMaster.aspx?Mattercaseno=13-E-0488 and click on the “post comments” button located in the top-right section of your screen. If you have poor Internet service, you may mail comments to Kathleen Burgess, Secretary, NYS Public Service Commission, 3 Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223-1350.

**Q: How can I receive updates on the project?**

**A:** All documents related to the project can be viewed at the website mentioned above and at http://documents.dps.ny.gov/public/MatterManagement/CaseMaster.aspx?Mattercaseno=13-E-0454. If you have poor Internet service, we encourage you to periodically contact OCCA’s Environmental Planner Danny Lapin at (607) 547-4488 or planner@occainfo.org. If you do call, please provide your name, address, and contact information for the record.

**Q: How will the public be involved in this project?**

**A:** OCCA strongly encourages stakeholders to contact us directly at (607) 547-4488 with questions, comments, or concerns relating to the project. Both the PSC and NAT are currently in the process of developing a public engagement strategy. NAT has indicated its willingness to engage the public – details are uncertain until the public engagement strategy is released.

**WHAT HAPPENS NOW?**

**Q: When will we know more about the project and how things are progressing?**

**A:** NAT and the PSC should be providing OCCA and the Otsego County Planning and Solid Waste Department with a public engagement plan within the coming weeks. We encourage you to provide your contact information so that project updates can be sent to you by OCCA Environmental Planner Danny Lapin.

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**DATES TO REMEMBER**

April 11: Earth Festival, Milford Central School, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

April 25 and 26: OCCA “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle” Garage Sale, Cooperstown Farmers’ Market building, 101 Main Street (Pioneer Alley)

July 11: Lake Appreciation Day, Glimmerglass State Park
Questionnaire for Concerned Parties re: Edic to Fraser

Name: ____________________________________________________________

Physical Address: ________________________________________________

Mailing Address (if different from above): ___________________________

Phone: _______________ E-mail Address: ____________________________

Basic Questions:

1. How did you hear about the proposed project? ____________________________
   ______________________________________________________________

2. Do you represent an organization such as a community organization, school, business, or homeowners association? _________
   ______________________________________________________________

3. If so, name, contact information, and location? ________________
   ______________________________________________________________

4. Is your property directly affected by the proposed Edic to Fraser AC Transmission Line Project? ______________________
   ______________________________________________________________

5. If so, please describe the nature in which you feel your property will be impacted.
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________

Specific Questions:

1. Are there wetlands on your property? __________________________

2. Is your property in an Ag District? __________________________

3. Is the proposed ROW directly crossing your property? If so, did you have any plans to build there? __________________________

4. Are there any sensitive forest resources (e.g., housing sensitive ecosystems, stabilizing a steep slope, containing old-growth trees, etc.)? __________________________
5. What are the water resources on your property (ponds, streams, etc.)? Do you have any drainage issues? 

6. Are you located in an historic district? 

7. Are any visual or aesthetic resources visible from your property? 

8. Do you have any structures that are on either the state or national register of historic places? 

9. Do you know of any sensitive vegetation or wildlife habitat or populations on your property? 

10. Are there, or do you expect there are, any state- or federally-listed endangered plant or animal species on your property? 

**Information Gathering Questions:**

1. Have you had a chance to review any material presented by the PSC, North America Transmission, or OCCA regarding the proposed project? 

2. Would you be interested in receiving information on the proposed project? 

3. If so, can you please describe the type of information that you would be interested in receiving? 

4. What is the best way in which to distribute information to you? 

5. Do you know any other concerned property owners who might be affected by this project? 

Please feel free to provide our contact information so that they may reach out to us.

**Otsego County Conservation Association**
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Farmers have opportunity to recycle plastics

A combination of county government, private business, and non-profit organizations are combining to hold two pilot agricultural plastics collections for Otsego County farmers this spring. Collections will take place on Thursday, March 19 and Saturday, April 18 at the Southern Transfer Station in Oneonta. Participation is free, though pre-registration is required.

Sponsors of the trial collection program are the Otsego County Department of Solid Waste and Recycling, Otsego County Conservation Association, Otsego County Soil & Water Conservation District, Casella Resource Solutions, and New York State Recycling Agricultural Plastics Project, a program of Cornell University. OCCA and SWCD have worked with RAPP for the last two years to help recycle more than 180,000 pounds of agricultural plastics.

Farmers wishing to drop off their plastics need to call OCCA to pre-register. Jeff O’Handley, OCCA’s program director and local outreach coordinator for RAPP, said pre-registration is necessary to help organize the events and to give special instructions to farmers.

“Once the plastic comes off the bale or bunker, it needs to be kept relatively clean and dry,” O’Handley said, stressing that “clean” is a relative term. “Stains and smears from feed and soil are fine; caked-on mud, gravel and grit are not. It takes a couple extra steps to prepare the plastic for recycling. We’ll cover that during the registration process.”

Plastics used on farms—bale wrap, silage bags, and bunker silo cover, to name a few—have long been ignored by traditional recycling markets because they are dirty and difficult to handle. Over the last several years, however, markets have developed that accept these items, using them as the raw material to create a variety of products including plastic lumber, plywood and sidewalk pavers.

“Many farmers have expressed a desire to recycle their plastic, but the options have been very limited,” O’Handley said. “We hope these trial collections will allow us to reach more people countywide.”

Plastic brought to the transfer station will be loaded into a mobile baler operated by SWCD where it will be compacted into a cube roughly 40” on a side and weighing around 1,000 pounds. Bales will be loaded into a tractor trailer provided by Casella Resource Solutions and shipped to the recycler.

Lonnie O’Bryan, general manager for Casella, said the company is happy to be a partner in the collections.

Power line review

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ities and would travel approximately 40 miles through Otsego County parallel to the existing Marcy South power line right of way. This proposed route includes parts of the towns of Richfield, Exeter, Burlington, New Lisbon, Laurens, Otego and Oneonta.

Funded in part by a $65,000 award from the PSC, OCCA has contracted with C&S Companies and Springfield attorney Douglas H. Zamelis to conduct an environmental review of NAT’s Edic to Fraser power line proposal. OCCA will also work with partner organizations, municipal officials, and the public to develop additional data and information pertaining to local environmental, agricultural, historic, and other resources in order to determine any potential impacts and effects this project may have.

“We invite property owners to contribute to OCCA’s review by sharing with us your personal knowledge of the important local resources along this proposed route,” said OCCA President Vicky M. Lentz. “Your input will help identify high-value areas, sensitive natural habitats, critical forest areas, and other concerns. Please contact us if you would like to learn more about this project, or if you have insight that would be useful in our review.”

The siting, construction, and operation of high-voltage electric power transmission lines and associated facilities such as substations and converter stations present the potential for numerous adverse environmental impacts—land-use changes; forest impacts; wetland and riparian impacts; hydrologic changes; soil erosion; impacts to biodiversity, wildlife, and avian populations; land, water and air pollution; changes in electromagnetic fields, increased noise, and more. If the Edic to Fraser project is selected by the PSC, NAT would then have to acquire the necessary right of way whether by voluntary agreement or eminent domain.

“We are working internally and with the public in order to contribute meaningfully to the complete record of the PSC’s formal review of both the Edic to Fraser transmission line proposal in particular and to the AC transmission upgrade proceeding in general,” explained OCCA Executive Director Darla M. Youngs. “Ultimately, our review will assist the PSC in determining the most appropriate route(s) and, if Edic to Fraser were to be chosen, could be instrumental in assessing, avoiding, reducing, and mitigating adverse impacts to resources and property owners.”

To share information about the proposed Edic to Fraser route, or to learn more about the project, call OCCA Environmental Planner Danny Lapin at (607) 547-4488 or e-mail planner@occainfo.org. The deadline for public comments to the PSC on all AC transmission upgrade proceeding proposals (Case 13-E-0488) is March 30.
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Plastics recycling
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“Ag plastic takes up a lot of room in our containers and trucks,” she said. “The sheets of plastic can get tangled in our equipment and cause breakdowns. And customers can save money by recycling.”

Both collections will take place at the Southern Transfer Station on Silas Lane in Oneonta. Karen Sullivan, director of the Solid Waste Department, acknowledged that it’s a long distance for some to travel, but said she hopes to see participation from across the county.

“Southern was the best site because it gives us room to work and access to infrastructure and equipment,” Sullivan said. “If this is a success and there is sufficient demand, we could look into similar collection days at other locations in the county.”

OCCA and SWCD have been the local RAPP partners since 2012. RAPP was established by Cornell University in 2009 to develop sustainable means for New York State farmers to recycle their used agricultural plastics. Statewide, RAPP has collected more than 2 million pounds of plastic. In 2014, Otsego County recycled just over 127,000 pounds.

Materials being accepted on March 19 and April 18 include bale wrap, bunker silo cover, silage bags, greenhouse plastic and wood pellet bags. Not included are net wrap and twine, nursery pots or trays, and salt, mulch, or potting soil bags. For more information or to register, call O’Handley at OCCA at (607) 282-4087.