

Public Comment on H.51, H.175, H.214
April 24, 2019

For the record, my name is Ian Hitchcock. I want to thank the committee for holding this public hearing on this important topic.

I want to thank the committee for holding this public hearing on this important topic. I'd also thank to thank the activists and organizers who helped make this hearing happen.

I work on climate and energy issues for the Vermont Natural Resources Council, but the opinions expressed below are my own.

As you are all well aware, Vermont currently has aggressive energy and climate goals that we are falling radically short of meeting. According to the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, greenhouse gas emissions are now 16% above 1990 levels. We need to be doing far more to do our part in the face of climate change. The Vermont that we know and love is under threat by a changing climate.

In the face of a climate crisis caused in large part by the burning of fossil fuels and our own rising greenhouse gas emissions in VT, the last thing we need to be doing at this moment is continuing to invest in and expand fossil fuel infrastructure such as pipelines. We need bold climate action now.

- The bills being discussed today to limit the expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure are an important step, and can and should be part of a broader set of needed climate policies. Given that the majority of Vermont's greenhouse gas emissions come from transportation and heating, those sectors deserve particular attention.
 - I appreciate the Vermont House recently voting to increase funding to the low-income weatherization program.
 - I would ask for your support to increase incentives and programs to expand the number of Electric Vehicles on Vermont roads.
- Infrastructure like fossil fuel pipelines are expensive and shortsighted investments.
- Much of the proposed fossil fuel infrastructure in recent years in Vermont has been for transporting natural gas, which over its lifecycle emits significant methane pollution, a potent greenhouse gas.
- Vermont needs to be building renewable energy infrastructure, not new fossil fuel infrastructure.
- Renewable energy and efficiency solutions are a much better energy source for Vermont than new fossil fuels. Fossil fuels are a strain on Vermonters pocketbooks and a drain on the Vermont economy. Prices for fossil fuels like propane and heating oil are generally volatile, making it hard to predict what prices will be from one season to the next.

- The Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development estimates that, for every dollar spent on fossil fuels on Vermont, 78 cents leaves the Vermont economy.

Many of the pipelines being proposed in Vermont would transport natural gas, some of which is extracted using the process of fracking, where a mixture of water and chemicals are injected into the ground to break up rock deposits and expose buried natural gas.

In 2012, Vermont was the first state in the country to ban fracking within our borders. At the time, then Governor Shumlin said that the bill, “will ensure we do not inject chemicals into groundwater in a desperate pursuit for energy.” Other states are not so fortunate as Vermont to have a ban on this practice which is poisoning water and communities around the country.

This fracked gas is doing real harm to real communities and real people. Even though those communities are outside of Vermont’s borders, we should import natural gas, and export the environmental and personal devastation being wrought in communities where extraction is taking place.

I’ve had the opportunity to visit some of the places where natural gas is being extracted. I met people who had clean drinking water before the fracking boom, and can’t trust what came out of their tap after the fracking wells arrived. I don’t want to play any part in transporting a fuel causing devastating health and environmental impact to others outside of our borders, and I don’t think Vermont does either.

We should not import fossil fuels into Vermont and export the harms caused by their extraction.