

Legislative testimony from Nate and Jane Palmer
January 13, 2026

We are Nate and Jane Palmer. We live on a farm in Monkton. In 2013 we were informed our land was to be in the path of the Addison Natural Gas Project. We participated in the 248 process and were able to get the route moved from within 60 feet of our house and affecting much infrastructure on our farm, to going around our property. The pipeline is now within 300 feet of our house but it is not located on our property at all.

In the PUC case about whether to permit the pipeline, the VT Department of Ag made an agreement with VGS that became part of the permit approval in order to protect farmers and ag land. This agreement was that in all agricultural areas, the pipeline must be at least 4 feet deep. As a result, in both the VELCO corridor right of way and in all agricultural lands, the pipeline must be 4 feet deep for safety reasons. All of us who lived along the pipeline route knew that.

In 2016, during construction of the pipeline through another farm further south of us, we became aware that the pipeline was not buried as deep as was specified in the Certificate of Public Good building plans. We informed the Department of Public Service as well as PHIMSA and subsequently, Case #17-3550 a safety investigation of the ANGP was opened by the PUC. It was only AFTER we had brought this shallow depth of cover issue to the attention of the Department of Public Service did VGS report the problem to the PUC. But they NEVER notified any of the land owners on whose land the pipeline was supposed to be buried 4 feet deep but wasn't. They also didn't notify the town of New Haven or the town's fire department that there was a deviation from the original building plans and the possibility of a safety violation.

From the very beginning of this project, we have felt the impact of the construction and operation of this pipeline would not be conducive to our farm or any other agricultural land or farming operation.

We spoke with farmers and landowners all across the country that had to deal with pipelines and the resulting issues that came with the pipelines. This includes soil degradation, lack of compaction, reduced harvest, and temperature induced ripening differences within a field that has a gas pipeline built through it. We had Dr Heather Darby, UVM Soil Agronomist, testify that it could be decades if ever for our clay soil to recover from the assault of a pipeline installation. Unfortunately, the PUC would only determine the impact on OUR farm, not others along the route. When the route was changed, the subject of the degradation of ag land was dropped.

Fast forward, after the PUC heard the complaints of the safety issues that were uncovered during Case #17-3550, the PUC found FIVE substantial changes to the permitted construction plans that VGS made in violation of the CPG. Yet, at DPS' and VGS' request, the PUC ruled that none of the towns and none of the affected land owners had to be notified and asked what their views were before granting approval to VGS for these changes. We appealed to the Supreme Court and the Supreme Court agreed with us and ordered the PUC to start over, this time notifying all the affected towns and land owners. We are now in this case.

During the course of this latest safety investigation, the Town of New Haven requested reports from VGS in discovery concerning the depth of cover over the pipeline in agricultural land. In the reports supplied by VGS, there are many places in agricultural land where the pipeline is LESS THAN the

required depth of 4 feet and even more disturbing, the pipeline is RISING. --and NO ONE has told any of the farmers that the pipeline is no longer 4 feet deep on land that they are tilling and crossing with their farm equipment.

The two depth of cover reports that we read, one from 2020 and the other from 2023 show that in many of the places measured, the pipeline's depth of cover has been reduced by feet in some cases. This issue will cause yet another problem for farmers trying to work their fields. Worse case scenario, the pipeline could be hooked by a sub soiler or deep plow and then serious consequences will follow. Even if the pipeline doesn't get hit, the farmer will have to work around it and be constantly aware of the hazard. And the farmer was not warned of this fact and was not made aware of it or compensated for the trouble and hazard they accepted onto their land. We were actually told by the then CEO of VGS when we were not convinced we wanted to host the pipeline that "after a few years, you will forget the pipeline is even there." Our response was that that is when the pipeline would become deadly. We are hoping things don't have to get to the point where someone is killed doing field work in Vermont before anything is done about this.

When our attorney saw these depth of cover documents and realized this was yet another violation of the CPG, he wrote a letter to VGS' attorney and advised that VGS self report this problem to the PUC and notify landowners and municipalities of this potential danger. VGS' response was that this depth of cover problem was not identified as one of the FIVE substantial changes in case No 17-3550 that were in violation of the CPG so he felt it wasn't necessary to notify anyone. We can provide our attorney's letter and VGS' answer to you if you would like to see them. (this coming from a company that claims they are "laser focused on safety and transparency")

For those of you who are thinking this issue should come under the jurisdiction of the Department of Public Service, please be aware that DPS has taken VGS's side in almost every aspect of these proceedings and has shown no interest in the public's safety at all. It was apparent from the beginning to us that landowners need an advocate in the siting and oversight of utility projects such as this.

We hope the Senate Agriculture Committee will ask VGS and DPS to testify, to explain why neither VGS nor the DPS has informed the PUC and affected ag land owners about this situation.

Thank you.