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Protecting land and encouraging land stewardship in North Central Massachusetts

Honorable Deval L. Patrick, Governor  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
State House  
Boston MA 01233

March 11, 2014

Re: Shale Gas Pipeline Route Proposed by Kinder Morgan, Inc.

Dear Governor Patrick,

Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust is a regional land trust operating in the greater North Quabbin region since 1986 that has helped permanently conserve more than 27,000 acres of significant natural resources, often in partnership with the Commonwealth. Our service area covers twenty-three cities and towns across Franklin and Worcester counties. More than 1,000 households from over 200 cities and towns in Massachusetts are active members and supporters of the land conservation work of Mount Grace.

In recent weeks, owners of land permanently protected with conservation restrictions, under MGL Chapter 184, s. 31-33, have contacted Mount Grace with questions and concerns about representations made to them by agents of the so-called Northeast Expansion of the Tennessee Gas Pipeline Co, LLC. Approached for written permission to survey and inspect their private land, these landowners were specifically told that conservation protections on their land are not an obstacle to the feasibility of placing the pipeline through their land using provisions of eminent domain.

Land protected for long-term public health and conservation purposes must not be sacrificed for short-term private financial gain. Mount Grace adamantly opposes compromising public or private conservation land with an unnecessary, rashly proposed, and environmentally detrimental scheme that includes exporting our nation's natural resources in a manner that sacrifices our own economic and energy interests. Past investments in land conserved to supply clean air and water, wildlife habitat and biodiversity, working farms and forests, public recreation, and quintessentially scenic New England landscapes must be allowed to continue to provide returns to our quality of life and economic vitality, as intended.

Governor Patrick, please take every step possible to uphold and honor the Massachusetts Constitution, including Article 97, which states in part, **"The people shall have the right to clean air and water, freedom from excessive and unnecessary noise, and the natural, scenic, historic, and esthetic qualities of their environment... Lands and easements taken or acquired for such purposes shall not be used for other purposes..."**.

Your extraordinary accomplishments in land conservation and clean energy are a legacy worth defending.

Very truly,

  
Leigh Youngblood  
Executive Director

cc: Secretary Richard Sullivan, EOEEA; Robert O'Connor, MA Director of Land and Forest Policy; MA Delegation: Neal, McGovern, Tsongas, Brewer, Rosenberg, Flanagan, Andrews, Gobi, Kulik, Ferguson, Mark, Zlotnik; MLTC, MACC, MMA, Land Trust Alliance, newspapers

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