

The draft PennEast pipeline project Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is severely data deficient concerning the effects of the proposed pipeline on breeding Louisiana Waterthrush, a species on the USFWS Trust Resource List. As stream foragers, breeding Louisiana Waterthrushes require high quality streams that support abundant invertebrates and small fishes. The numerous C-1 streams crossed by the proposed PennEast pipeline have not been adequately surveyed for breeding Louisiana Waterthrush. The presence of breeding Louisiana Waterthrushes in two Important Bird Areas (IBA's) crossed by the proposed pipeline route strongly suggest that the birds are present in similar habitats along the pipeline route. Breeding Louisiana Waterthrushes have been observed by multiple observers at Baldpate Mountain, utilizing Fiddler's Creek, Moores Creek, and the maze of small streams on the north side of the mountain that feed into Moores Creek. Moores Creek and its tributaries would be directly affected by the proposed pipeline. Louisiana Waterthrushes also breed in the maze of small streams in the D&R Greenway Rock Hopper Trail Preserve in the Sourland Mountain IBA. The pipeline route skirts the edge of the preserve, raising concerns about blasting for the pipeline construction eliminating breeding territories by altering the hydrology of this area. Both Baldpate Mountain and the Sourland Mountain have diabase bedrock close to the surface, requiring significant blasting. The remaining streams affected by the pipeline have not been adequately surveyed for this species of conservation concern but the similarity in stream quality, hydrology, and topography to that of the known breeding territories makes a thorough breeding survey for Louisiana Waterthrush along all affected streams a necessity for a comprehensive EIS. Washington Crossing Audubon Society urges FERC not to accept the final EIS unless this information is included.