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United States Senate

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Wendi Weber
Regional Director
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Northeast Region
300 Westgate Center Dr.
Hadley, MA 01035

Dear Ms. Weber:

I am writing to urge you to reject Kinder Morgan's request for an exemption to the March 31 deadline for tree-clearing for the Connecticut Expansion Project.

As you know, Kinder Morgan's subsidiary, the Tennessee Gas Pipeline Co., has requested an extension to the March 31 tree-clearing deadline – a deadline requested by the Fish and Wildlife Service and initially agreed to by the company – so it can begin construction on its Connecticut Expansion Project. The request comes before Kinder Morgan has secured the rights to the entire pipeline route. In particular, Kinder Morgan has not been granted the authority to seize conservation land protected by Article 97 of the Massachusetts Constitution.

The limitation of tree-clearing to the period between October 1 and March 31 is an important restriction to protect the habitat of several critical species that roost in the area. In particular, a number of federally protected migratory birds and the northern long-eared bat – listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act – rely on trees in the region for habitat during warmer months. Massachusetts has experienced a warm spring, and allowing tree-clearing outside of the specified timeframe would likely disturb protected species that have already roosted in the area.

I am troubled by Kinder Morgan's attempts to circumvent federal and state requirements and demand hasty approval of tree-clearing and other potentially damaging activities. The Connecticut Expansion Project has substantial implications for conservation efforts in Massachusetts, and it should not be rushed forward without full consideration of those impacts.

I urge you to reject the company's request to extend the March 31 deadline for tree-clearing and to ensure that Kinder Morgan's efforts do not come at the expense of critical environmental protections.

Sincerely,



Senator Elizabeth Warren