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## Groups File Suit to Block Fracked Gas Line through Florida



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Opponents of a proposed pipeline across Florida, Georgia and Alabama are hoping to halt its construction with a lawsuit. (ReubenGBrewer/Wikimedia Commons)

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – A controversial plan to build a \$3 billion gas pipeline through the heart of Florida has hit a snag, as three groups have filed [a petition in court](#) to block its construction.

The Southeast Market Pipelines Project would transport fracked natural gas across close to 700 lakes, rivers and streams, and potentially impact nearly 2,000 wetland systems in three states.

Raleigh Hoke, campaign manager for the Gulf Restoration Network - one of the groups filing the lawsuit in federal court - explained people along the proposed route have been speaking out against it for years.

"The public has continually been left out of the decision-making process for this project, and that's just not acceptable," Hoke insisted. "Our water and our communities are too important to risk for the benefit of this out-of-state, fracked-gas company."

If built, the pipeline would extend through Florida and southern Georgia, over an area that provides drinking water for about 10 million people.

The groups Flint Riverkeeper and the Sierra Club also are parties to the lawsuit, which alleges the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers failed to properly notify the public or allow for input, and that the plans don't do enough to mitigate environmental impacts.

Hoke maintained it isn't only the communities the pipeline would pass through that would be affected. The plan allows for the companies building the pipeline to discharge dredged and fill material into water bodies, such as wetlands, during construction.

"You're also talking about this pipeline going through some of the most beautiful and pristine springs - not just in Florida, but in the world," he said. "And it's incredibly important that we're protecting this resource that is part of the natural heritage of Florida residents, but also this big driver of the economy when it comes to tourism."

Last week, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission gave final approval for construction to begin on the southernmost portion of the pipeline, stretching 126 miles from Central Florida to Martin County. The northern portion, known as the Sabal Trail, hasn't yet been green-lighted.

Mona Shand, Public News Service - FL

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