

## PA. limits gas pipe project

**Transco must drill under creek rather than divert surface waters, official says**

By ANNE PICKERING, Staff Writer

EAST CALN — The state Department of Environmental Protection has granted natural gas company Transco the permits it needs to begin work on the controversial Downingtown pipeline replacement project — with one important exception.

Transco does not have permission to start construction in a 2,600-foot segment that spans the East Branch of Brandywine Creek in East Brandywine and East Caln.

Because the creek is only about 100 feet across, the balance of the 2,600 feet is wetlands adjacent to the creek and portions of Ludwig's Run, a tributary of the East Branch that flows close to Norwood Road.

That's good news to state and county officials as well as environmentalists who have repeatedly raised questions about how Transco would cross the creek.

The most environmentally sensitive way to cross the creek would be by horizontal directional drilling, which involves digging under the creek, proponents of this method said. But Transco resisted this approach, saying it would be too expensive.

Instead, the company proposed a cross-cut method, which diverts surface waters. But this approach would release a lot of sediment into the creek, which is a

source of drinking water in Chester County, and so state legislators appealed to state DEP Acting Secretary John Hanger to carefully review Transco's permit applications.

The company needs a stormwater permit, a requirement of any construction job, and a Chapter 105 water obstruction and encroachment permit. The Chapter 105 permit is required when a project will cross a body of water or encroach on wetlands.

The DEP issued a statement Thursday saying that while the agency has granted the permits that Transco needs to start construction, the company must submit an amendment advising the state how it proposes to proceed in the 2,600-foot section around the creek.

State Rep. Curt Schroder, R-155th, of Downingtown, said he called Hanger because he had questions after reading the statement released by the agency.

"The state is requiring Transco to drill under the Brandywine and Ludwig's Run," Schroder said Friday. "Hanger was unequivocal about it. We believe DEP made the right decision."

State Sen. Andrew Dinniman, D-19th, of West Whiteland, said he was glad to hear that Hanger stipulated that Transco must employ horizontal directional drilling.

Hanger "has assured me on a number of occasions that the Brandywine will be protected," Dinniman said.

The agency imposed two other conditions on Transco.

One condition is that Transco allow the DEP personnel to train Transco construction inspectors.

The other condition is that the company provide the DEP with annual reports on the status of re-vegetation of the construction zone.

About 177 county residents are affected by the project.

Transco, an affiliate of Williams, a large natural gas company, has three pipelines in a 75-foot right of way through the county. The company wants to expand its facilities by replacing a 30-inch pipe in its existing right of way with a 42-inch pipe. The project affects a seven-mile section of the pipeline.

To do that, Transco needs additional right of way, But many residents do not want to give up additional right of way and argued that Transco can do the work in the existing right of way.

For example, Louis Ottaviano of South Woodmont Drive has complained that nearly half of his property is a right of way and that the edge of this right of way is only a few feet from his house. More right of way can mean losing more trees or removing important buffers, he has said.

Many residents have balked at signing new right of way agreements. Transco has taken some of them to court under the power of eminent domain. The courts have not ruled yet on those cases.