

**For Immediate Release: July 20, 2026**



## **CLEAN OCEAN ACTION SUES NEW JERSEY OVER APPROVAL OF NEW YORK FOSSIL FUEL PIPELINE**

***Group Seeks to Stop “Messy NESE” to Protect the Bay and Ocean***

**Contact:**

Evan Leong, Communications & Marketing Director  
[Communications@CleanOceanAction.org](mailto:Communications@CleanOceanAction.org) | 732-872-0111

**Attachments:**

[Notice of Appeal](#)

[Civil Case Information Sheet](#)

[NESE Factsheet](#)



*Left to right: Andrew J. Provence, Esq., of Litwin & Provence, former NJ Governor Phil Murphy, Clean Ocean Action Executive Director Cindy Zipf after the signing of the 2018 NJ Stop Offshore Oil and Gas Act*

**Long Branch, N.J., July 20, 2026** — Today, Clean Ocean Action (COA), a leading ocean defense organization, filed a lawsuit appealing the approval of a Tidelands Utility License for Williams/Transco’s Northeast Supply Enhancement (NESE) project. The license would allow the construction of a natural gas pipeline, which would travel through six miles of New Jersey’s Raritan Bay, through New York waters, and terminating on Long Island. There, it will service

New York customers exclusively. The New Jersey Tidelands Resource Council (TRC) and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) both approved the license.

“We’re not messing around — the decision to approve a Tidelands license for NESE is all harm and no gain for New Jersey,” said **Cindy Zipf, Executive Director of Clean Ocean Action**.

“Why is *New Jersey* letting *New York* contaminate and damage our bay with toxins that will violate NJ’s public health, marine ecosystem, and economy, in exchange for cheap natural gas it doesn’t need? This is outrageous and defies logic and the law.”

Representing COA in the appeal is its longtime ocean protection counsel, **Andrew J. Provence, Esq., of Litwin & Provence in Basking Ridge, N.J.**

“This appeal involves the Tidelands Resource Council’s abdication of its duties to New Jersey residents and a violation of its authority,” **Provence said**. “There can be no compromise that excuses this conduct and allows State-owned tidelands to be used and damaged without any public benefit contrary to the statutes designed to prevent this outcome.”

Under New Jersey’s Tidelands Act, the TRC is legally responsible for ensuring that the use of the state’s underwater lands serves the public interest. These tidelands are public trust resources owned by the people of New Jersey and play a critical role in supporting wildlife and sustaining the local economy. Raritan Bay is a crucial estuary that supports a mix of freshwater and marine species (including striped bass, flounder and endangered whales and sturgeons) as well as recreational boating and fishing and commercial shipping. COA asserts that the TRC failed to meet its legal obligation to protect New Jersey’s public interests and instead put New York’s interests ahead of New Jerseyans’ health, precious natural resources, marine life, and economy.

The appeal comes after *nearly a decade* of strong public opposition to the NESE project from coastal communities, environmental organizations, elected officials, and residents who have consistently argued that the project serves private interests rather than the public good.

“Over the past 40+ years, New Jersey has loathed offshore fossil fuel development because we love the Jersey Shore,” **Zipf added**. “In 2018, the NJ Stop Offshore Oil and Gas Act passed with 99% bipartisan support by the state legislature, banning fossil fuel infrastructure development in state waters. NESE is not just awful, it’s unlawful.”

Of note, in collaboration with COA, Andrew Provence also drafted the language of the NJ Stop Offshore Oil and Gas Act which was shared as a proposal to the New Jersey legislature. COA later shared the New Jersey law with other coastal states, and eight states passed similar laws to prevent harm from fossil fuel infrastructure development.

“NESE will have irreversible impacts on our Bay, marine life, and public health,” **said Madison Wurst, Ocean Policy Advocate at Clean Ocean Action**. “From the resuspension of toxic

sediments and harmful dredging to impacts on marine ecosystems and endangered species, the project is not in the public interest. Years of opposition from municipalities, environmental organizations, and residents demonstrate that NESE is opposed not only in New Jersey but also in New York. Many of the groups fighting the project are based in New York, where the pipeline's purported benefits would occur, and multiple studies have concluded that New York does not need the additional natural gas supply. NESE is a bad investment for everyone and must be stopped."

"This project was dead in the water, and for good reason," **Zipf said**. "We hope this appeal will finally end this unlawful project once and for all – before it causes irreversible damage to our bay and ocean."

### **Background:**

Williams/Transco's NESE project would transport extracted fracked gas from Pennsylvania which would then be piped through New Jersey to New York. The project requires a new polluting compressor station in Franklin Township, as well as a 23.4-mile pipeline through Raritan Bay and the ocean to New York — damaging more than 93,000 square feet of critical habitat, and resuspending over 1 million tons of toxic sediments into the waterways.

The NJ portion of the pipeline required the approval of a utility license by the Tidelands Resource Council under the NJ Tidelands Act, which protects underwater lands for NJ's public interest. The TRC is a 12-member, Governor-appointed council that has the authority to sell, lease, or license the tidelands if they decide the projects are in the public interest of New Jersey. At the May 6, 2026, TRC meeting, the council approved a 7-year license, despite over 95% of public testimony opposing the license identifying many harms and no benefits to NJ.

COA has been fighting Williams/Transco's NESE project since its application in 2017, along with many NJ and NY regional, state and local groups and community members, including elected officials. COA has also led anti-NESE campaigns for years.

In 2024, Transco officially rescinded the application after repeated denials from primarily New York and New Jersey, successfully stopping the project. But when President Trump was elected and called for more fossil fuel development, Transco revived and expedited the project. In May 2025, President Trump and Governor Hochul reportedly cut a deal to trade fossil fuels for offshore wind. Once opposed to the NESE project, Governor Hochul approved its key permits, and President Trump removed a stop-work order on Empire Wind project off New Jersey.

Repeated independent studies prove New York does not need the NESE methane gas pipeline. According to COA, there is also speculation that the NESE pipeline is a "bootstrap" for a future offshore liquefied natural gas (LNG) export project to ship US gas to more lucrative markets overseas.

###



*Clean Ocean Action is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a mission to improve the degraded water quality of the marine waters off the New Jersey/New York coast.*