

FERC reorganizes to address landowner disputes

Jeremy Dillon, E&E News reporter Published: Monday, February 3, 2020

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission is launching a reorganization to better focus on rehearing requests from landowners affected by energy infrastructure permits, the chairman announced late last week.

The reorganization includes a new "rehearings" section within the Office of the General Counsel to focus on requests filed under Section 7 of the Natural Gas Act, which details FERC's responsibilities to permit interstate pipeline projects.

"Our objective today is to reinforce the Commission's commitment to ensure landowners are afforded a judicially appealable rehearing order as quickly as possible," FERC Chairman Neil Chatterjee said in a statement.

"I am confident that this action will help substantially reduce the amount of time we take to issue rehearing orders in these critical cases," he said.

Chatterjee has made landowner rights' a more central focus. In September 2019, he moved to prioritize rehearing requests to avoid extending the rehearing decisionmaking process beyond its 30-day timeline.

In a separate pipeline dispute, FERC issued an order along party lines last week backing PennEast pipeline developers in their Supreme Court appeal to seize state-owned land to construct a natural gas project stretching from Pennsylvania to New Jersey ([*Energywire*](#), Jan. 31).

The number of FERC employees affected by the reorganization is not yet known. The agency says the new section will have two separate groups — a landowner rehearings group and a general rehearings group.

"We are hopeful that these actions will help alleviate the very real landowner concerns about timing and fairness in infrastructure cases implicating landowner rights," Chatterjee said. "I remain committed to doing all we can to improve our FERC processes on this front."