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Protecting the environment for wildlife in support of the natural world that sustains us all.

How to Submit Effective Public Comments

Public comments are one of the few ways that community members can formally participate in government decision-making. Agencies such as FERC and the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) Office are required to review and respond to relevant comments submitted during a public comment period. The most effective comments are specific, factual, and connected to the agency's legal responsibilities. You do not need to be an expert to submit a meaningful comment; personal experience, local knowledge, and clear concerns can all strengthen the public record.

Why Comments Matter

Agency staff and decision-makers will read your comment. The strongest comments are respectful, clear, specific, supported by facts or personal experience, and connected to the issues that matter most to you and your community.

Public comments can:

- Create an official record
- Highlight local concerns and environmental impacts
- Influence project design and mitigation measures
- Help agencies make better decisions

The examples and methods below illustrate how to write comments that are more likely to influence an agency's review and decision-making process.

1. Identify the project and docket

- Include the project name and docket number.
- State whether you support the proposal, oppose it, or have specific concerns.
- Focus your comments on the proposal under review.

Example: *I am writing regarding FERC Docket No. RM25-12-001. I am concerned that the proposed changes to the blanket certificate program could reduce opportunities for environmental review and public participation.*

2. Explain your concerns using facts

Effective comments explain why a project raises concerns and support those concerns with facts, local knowledge, or information from the project documents.

Example: *As mentioned in the Resource Report, three proposed ware yard locations fall within large sections of Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) Priority Habitats. Because heavy equipment poses inherent risks to nesting wood and*

eastern box turtles, alternative locations for construction infrastructure should be considered.

A less effective choice would be: *The pipeline will ruin the area*

3. Connect your concerns to the law

Agencies can only act within the authority granted to them by law. Comments are often stronger when they explain how a concern relates to statutes, regulations, or the agency's responsibilities.

Example: *Section 7(e) of the Natural Gas Act requires the Commission to determine whether a certificate is required by the public convenience and necessity. The Commission should evaluate whether non-pipeline alternatives could meet the same need with fewer environmental impacts.*

A less effective choice would be: *We do not need more gas.*

4. Ask the agency to take a specific action

The most effective comments identify a problem and explain what action the agency should take. Depending on the issue, the comment could ask the agency to:

- Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.
- Evaluate additional alternatives.
- Require stronger mitigation measures.
- Conduct additional environmental review.
- Deny the permit until missing information is provided.

Example: Because the project would affect wetlands, the environmental review should evaluate alternatives and include site-specific mitigation plans.

A less effective choice would be: *MEPA should stop this project.*