

# Local residents gather to 'Block Clean Line'

by Stephen Leavell

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DOVER — More than 40 area residents gathered Tuesday in the Dover Middle School Cafeteria to see and hear the latest information on the proposed Clean Line Energy Partners' proposed high voltage power line across Arkansas.

The session was presented by Block Plains and Eastern Clean Line, a coalition of grassroots opposition groups across Oklahoma and Arkansas.

Allison Millsaps, a spokeswoman for the Block groups, said the purpose of the "Neighbor Hours" meetings, which will be held in various area venues, was to prepare residents in the affected areas, especially those who might not have internet access, for the February hearings to be held on the draft of the federal Department of Energy's Environmental Impact Statement which was recently released.

"We want to make sure everyone has the easiest possible access to these materials and help navigating them," she said.

Displays included printed copies of the voluminous report and both printed and interactive maps demarcating the company's preferred and alternate routes for the project.

David Utley, another Block spokesman, said the power line was for profit.

"We want people to understand that this is a commercial project for a moneymaking partnership," he said. "It sets a dangerous precedent if a private firm is allowed to use federal eminent domain laws to further their interests."

Local resident and affected landowner James Danny Taverner's presentation titled "Potential Issues with Watershed Erosion and Herbicide Management of Right of Ways," was the event's centerpiece.

Taverner pointed out problems which can arise in even the best managed projects, speaking from his background as a consultant on several jobs he worked on at Louisiana State University and the University of Arkansas.

He talked about the potential for erosion damage in any construction area, the dangers of pesticide contamination, even when carefully applied, and the loss of rights and increase of responsibility accrued by landowners under a right-of-way agreement. He stressed the need for "united, collective action" by property owners to protect themselves.

Cynthia Callahan, Arkansas Tech University chemistry instructor, urged landowners in the affected area to be "extremely careful" in what they signed and to use every legal method to protect their rights and those of succeeding generations.

Attendees were encouraged to write to their elected representatives and make their opinions known, as well as to sign a protest petition.