



File Code: 1920; 2720
Date: March 1, 2016

Public Scoping for Atlantic Coast Pipeline
Site Survey and Testing GWNF6-MNF Portion Route

Dear Interested Party:

Atlantic Coast Pipeline, LLC has applied for a special use permit to conduct site survey and testing of a proposed alternative route on the Monongahela National Forest. This letter is to inform you of the proposal and to invite you to participate by providing any comments or information that you have concerning the application. Under 36 CFR § 214, only the applicant has appeal or objection rights for this project. The current application only applies to routing surveys and environmental surveys. A separate authorization would be needed for construction and operation of a pipeline (see below).

Background

Atlantic Coast Pipeline, LLC is a joint venture comprised of subsidiaries of Dominion Resources, Duke Energy, Piedmont Natural Gas, and AGL Resources that is proposing to construct and operate approximately 594 miles of a natural gas transmission pipeline referred to as the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP). If the project is approved, Dominion Transmission, Inc. (Dominion) is the contractor who would build and operate ACP on behalf of the joint venture. The proposed pipeline is intended to deliver natural gas from supply areas in West Virginia to Virginia and North Carolina.

Atlantic Coast Pipeline, LLC has filed an application for construction and operation of the pipeline with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) under Section 7(c) of the Natural Gas Act. FERC will be the lead agency and will conduct an in-depth environmental analysis, with opportunity for public comment, prior to deciding on the need for the pipeline. If FERC would determine the pipeline is needed, the Forest Service would make a separate determination whether to issue a right-of-way permit to construct, operate, and maintain a natural gas pipeline on the Monongahela National Forest.

The Forest authorized a special use permit (GBR205003) to ACP on April 30, 2015 to conduct site survey and testing operations on National Forest System lands. That permit identified a 2,000 foot wide survey corridor centered on a proposed route over the Cheat Mountain area. That route is referred to in ACP's application as the MNF2 route. On August 7, 2015, the Forest issued an amendment to GBR205003 to allow ACP to conduct similar surveys along an alternative route known as MNF5 that traversed the Elk River, Slaty Ridge, and Dunmore areas. After the Forest Service determined on January 19, 2016 that a pipeline could not be permitted along the MNF2 route and the original proposed route across the neighboring George Washington National Forest (GWNF), ACP optimized the MNF5 route and combined it with an alternative route across the GWNF. This combined new route across both Forests is known as the GWNF6-MNF route and is the subject of the current site survey and testing permit application. Permitting for site survey and testing is handled separately by each Forest, and the



scoping initiated by this letter applies only to the portion on the Monongahela National Forest. A similar site survey and testing permit application is being considered by the George Washington National Forest for the segment of the proposed route that would cross that Forest.

Project Location

The proposed GWNF6-MNF route for site survey and testing area is approximately 2,000 feet wide by a total of 5.4 miles long on National Forest System (NFS) lands, being 1,357+/- acres on the Marlinton-White Sulphur Ranger District in Pocahontas County. The proposed route crosses Monongahela National Forest land in the vicinity of Gibson Knob, Cloverlick Mountain, and Shock Run. Maps and project information may be viewed on the Atlantic Coast Pipeline web page at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/gwj/landmanagement/projects/?cid=stelprd3855217>. (Although this scoping letter is only for the GWNF6-MNF route on the Monongahela portion of site survey and testing work proposed by ACP, the project overall traverses both the Monongahela and the George Washington National Forests. In order to keep all relevant information for the entire pipeline proposal available in one place, a single website is being used.)

Proposed Action

Atlantic Coast Pipeline, LLC is seeking a special use permit for site survey and testing under the 36 CFR § 251, Subpart B regulations. This permit would cover activities such as field routing survey, environmental survey, cultural resource survey, civil surveys, and possible core boring in sites not yet identified. The activities would occur along a 300-foot-wide survey corridor within a 2,000-foot-wide study corridor where the proposed pipeline route crosses the Monongahela National Forest (see enclosed general location). The surveys would be conducted by Dominion and its consultants.

The Project area consists of lands within three management prescriptions (MP) identified in the Forest Plan (2006, as updated in 2011).

MP 3.0 – Vegetation Diversity

MP 4.1 – Spruce and Spruce-Hardwood Ecosystem Management

MP 6.1 – Wildlife Habitat Emphasis

The Forest Plan allows the survey activities identified below within these MP areas. All would be pedestrian surveys except for the core boring.

Routing Survey – This would be a reconnaissance survey to address pipeline engineering requirements; provide a proposed alternative route upon which the company believes a pipeline can be safely constructed; and/or identify sensitive resources within the 2,000-foot-wide study corridor. Minor amounts of brush could be removed with hand tools in order to navigate the route. GPS readings, biodegradable survey ribbon, and survey stakes (to be removed after all of the surveys are completed) would be used to identify the proposed centerline for the other survey crews.

Environmental Survey – This would include a wetland and water body delineation survey using visual observations of vegetation composition, hydrology, and soil samples at selected locations

within 300 feet of the proposed alternative routed centerline. GPS readings and biodegradable survey ribbon would mark wetland perimeters and high water marks of water bodies. Identification of potential suitable habitat for sensitive species, including federally listed threatened and endangered species, would be recorded with GPS readings. Invasive plant species would also be documented. Surveys likely would also include soils, geology, recreation/scenery, and any other surveys deemed necessary for evaluation of the pipeline proposal. No flora or fauna would be collected.

Cultural Resources Survey – This would be a reconnaissance and shovel testing survey within 300 feet of the proposed alternative routed centerline using field methodology, data recording, and documentation in compliance with all state and federal guidelines for Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Civil Survey – This would be a recording of GPS readings of the proposed alternative centerline and other features along the alternative route within 300 feet of the centerline. Minor amounts of brush could be removed using hand tools to provide line of sight and travel path for survey equipment. Brush cutting would be limited to saplings or limbs less than 2 inches in diameter. PK nails, biodegradable flagging, and plastic pin flags would be used as needed, then removed.

Core Boring – Core boring is proposed to characterize subsurface conditions for slope stabilization and potential horizontal directional drill (HDD) operations. The location and number of sites for core boring have not yet been determined, although the applicant states that, to the extent possible, the core boring equipment would operate adjacent to existing roads in previously disturbed locations requiring little to no vegetation clearing to operate. Cultural resources and environmental surveys would precede any core boring equipment operations. The core boring equipment would be a track or wheel-mounted rotary auger drill rig, about the size of a one-ton pickup truck. The equipment would use hydraulic fluid and diesel fuel to operate, be equipped with absorbent pads, and contain standard spill clean-up material in case of any hydraulic or fuel leaks. No hazardous material would be used in the hole during boring operations. Boring operations would last approximately three days at each location. Bore holes would be approximately four inches in diameter and to a depth pre-determined by the geotechnical and professional engineers. Material removed from the borings would be secured and sent to a geotechnical lab for testing and classification. Once boring operations are complete, the bore holes would be filled with concrete slurry to a point approximately five feet below the surface. The remaining approximately five feet of the bore hole would be backfilled with native material removed during boring operations.

Access for the Survey – Vehicular access for most activities would be limited to public and existing Forest Roads. Should off-road vehicular access be needed for core boring, such access would be coordinated with the Forest Service prior to access.

Need for Proposed Action

These surveys are collectively necessary to determine the feasibility of the proposed alternative route and to collect environmental and cultural resources data to aid the Forest Service in making future decisions on whether or not to allow the construction and operation of the proposed natural gas transmission pipeline on the Monongahela National Forest. If construction is ultimately allowed, the survey information will also inform the Forest Service of specific

locations to avoid or where impacts to sensitive resources must be reduced.

Decision to be Made

The Forest Supervisor is the responsible official deciding whether a special use permit will be issued, allowing or denying the occurrence of the identified survey activities within the survey corridor on National Forest System lands within the Monongahela National Forest.

A decision to authorize or deny the proposal is expected to be completed in early April 2016. If authorized, implementation would begin shortly after the decision.

Public Involvement

We welcome comments in regards to this request for a site survey and testing special use permit. Allowing these survey activities does not mean we are allowing the construction of a pipeline across the Monongahela National Forest. FERC is the lead agency who will prepare the environmental analysis for possible construction of the proposed ACP pipeline and who will provide additional opportunities to comment in the coming months. The Forest Service is preparing a categorical exclusion (CE) document for the environmental analysis for the site survey and testing of the proposed alternative route, in accordance with 36 CFR § 220.6 (e)(8), subject to public involvement and the determination that no extraordinary circumstances exist for these survey activities.

Please provide your comments by March 21, 2016. There are several options for providing comments. Hand-delivered comments must be received within our normal business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. Comments may be faxed to our office at 304-637-0582 with the subject line Atlantic Coast Pipeline Proposed Alternative Route Comments. Comments may be mailed to Monongahela National Forest , Attn: Atlantic Coast Pipeline Proposed Alterative Route, 200 Sycamore Street, Elkins, WV 26241.

Comments may also be mailed electronically to our office at: comments-eastern-monongahela-marlinton@fs.fed.us. Please include the project name (Atlantic Coast Pipeline Proposed Alternative Route) in the subject line of the e-mail. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), Portable Document Format (pdf), or Word (.doc)-compatible document.

I look forward to your participation in the management of the Monongahela National Forest.

Sincerely,



CLYDE THOMPSON
Forest Supervisor