Forest Service
Monongahela National Forest
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News Release

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Forest Service Seeks Comments on Authorizing Surveys for the Proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline in the Monongahela National Forest

(March 2, 2016) Elkins, WV-- The Forest Service is seeking comments on whether to allow surveys on a 5.4-mile segment of the Monongahela National Forest for the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline in Pocahontas County, WV. Proposed environmental surveys include surveying wetlands, water, soil, and suitable habitat for sensitive species, including federally listed threatened and endangered plants and animals. Surveys will also record and document cultural resources and invasive species. Surveys would likely also include soils, geology, recreation/scenery, and any other surveys deemed necessary for evaluation of the pipeline proposal. The Forest Service will use public comments and an environmental review to decide whether to issue a temporary (12 month) special use permit for the environmental and cultural resource surveys in the Monongahela National Forest. Comments are being accepted through Monday, March 21, 2016.

"The information gathered from these surveys are necessary to make future decisions on whether or not to allow the construction and operation of the proposed pipeline on the Monongahela National Forest," said Forest Supervisor, Clyde Thompson. "If allowed, the survey information will inform us where to avoid or reduce the impacts to sensitive resources."

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Activities associated with the proposed surveys include:

- Survey crews walking the corridor. No vehicles will be used except to access the corridor using public and existing Forest Roads.
- Using hand tools to remove minor amounts of brush to navigate the route; saplings or limbs removed will be less than two inches in diameter.
- Placing biodegradable survey ribbon, flagging, survey stakes, and plastic pin flags within the corridor and removed after all surveys are conducted.
- Removing soil with shovels to test for cultural resources. Soil will be replaced prior to leaving each sample site.
- Identification and documentation of cultural resources, sensitive species habitat, and invasive species. No flora, fauna, or cultural resources will be removed.

More information, including maps and specifics of survey activities can be found on the George Washington National Forest website at Atlantic Coast Pipeline - George Washington & Monongahela National Forests. ALL Forest Service project information for this two State project resides on this common location, whether it applies to the George Washington National Forest, the Monongahela National Forest or to both Forests.

Atlantic Coast Pipeline, LLC is currently surveying private and public land to determine routing feasibility, and identify environmental and cultural resources along the proposed 594-mile route. If the results of the private and public land surveys determine that the proposed route is feasible, then the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) will conduct an in-depth environmental analysis, with multiple opportunities for public comments, prior to deciding on the need for the pipeline.

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"If the FERC determines the pipeline is needed, the Forest Service will make a separate determination whether to issue a right-of-way permit to construct, operate, and maintain a natural gas pipeline on National Forest System lands. The Forest Service will use the FERC's environmental analysis and public process to inform our decision," explains Thompson.

Comments may be submitted by:

Email: 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 e-mail message, plain text (txt.), rich text format (.rtf), Portable Document Format (pdf.), or Word (.doc) compatible document.

FAX: (304) 637-0582

Mail or Hand Deliver:
USDA Forest Service
Atlantic Coast Pipeline Survey Comments
200 Sycamore Street
Elkins, WV 26241

Hand-delivered comments must be received during our normal business hours of Tuesday through Thursday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

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