



**Forest Service**

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# News Release

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## ***Forest Service Issues Surveying Permits for Proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline***

*(April 14, 2016) Elkins, WV*—Forest Supervisors of both the George Washington National Forest in Virginia and the Monongahela National Forest in West Virginia have issued new temporary special use permits for surveys on forest lands along a new proposed alignment of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline. The one year permits allow for site surveys and testing activities in a 300 foot width along 5.4 miles of the Monongahela National Forest and 14.3 miles of the George Washington National Forest. Environmental work to be conducted will 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 will also include soils, geology, recreation/scenery, and any other surveys deemed necessary for evaluation of the overall pipeline proposal where it crosses the National Forests.

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

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***Activities associated with the 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.
- Geotechnical borings in representative areas along the route in order to characterize subsurface conditions for slope stabilization and potential horizontal directional drill (HDD) operations. Material removed from borings will be sent to a geotechnical lab for testing and classification. The approximately four inch wide test bore holes will be backfilled with concrete to approximately five feet below the surface. The remaining approximately five feet will be backfilled with native material removed during the boring operations. Prior to any actual boring activity at an identified core boring location, environmental and cultural resource surveys will be conducted.
- 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 <http://www.fs.fed.us.gov/gwj/> 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.

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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

“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.

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