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News Release

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USDA Forest Service Issues Draft Decision to Permit the Atlantic Coast Pipeline Project on National Forests in West Virginia and Virginia

(July 21, 2017) Roanoke, Va – Today the U.S.D.A Forest Service issued a draft record of decision to authorize the use and occupancy of National Forest System lands for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP), and approve project-specific amendments for the Monongahela National Forest (MNF) and George Washington National Forest (GWNF) Forest Plans.

The proposed pipeline route traverses 604 miles to deliver natural gas from the Appalachian Basin to markets in the mid-Atlantic region of Virginia and North Carolina. The draft decision, jointly issued by the Forest Service's Eastern and Southern Regional Foresters, would allow Atlantic Coast Pipeline LLC (Atlantic) to construct and operate 21 miles of the pipeline route that would cross National Forest System lands. "Our proposed decision recognizes Forest Service efforts to provide for multiple uses, minimize impacts to natural resources, and to support federal policies that encourage energy infrastructure, jobs, and economic growth" said Southern Regional Forester, Tony Tooke.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) was the lead federal agency in preparing the environmental impact statement (EIS) for the project. After the draft EIS was released, the Forest Service reviewed public comments, additional information and FERC's analysis which resulted in a number of changes being incorporated into the final EIS. The agency also worked with Atlantic to develop project features and mitigation measures to minimize impacts to natural and cultural resources and other uses.

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FERC issued a final EIS for the proposed ACP on July 21, 2017. FERC's final EIS details the potential impacts of the entire 604-mile route, including the portion that cross 5.1 miles of the MNF in West Virginia, and 15.9 miles of the GWNF in Virginia. The ACP would impact about 430 acres of the National Forests during construction and after restoration, the land requirement would be reduced to about 214 acres for long term operation. The final pipeline corridor would be 50 feet wide.

Individuals who submitted comments to FERC during the public comment periods are eligible to object to this draft decision. Objections may be submitted to the Forest Service for 45 days ending at midnight, September 5, 2017. After objections are resolved, the Forest Service will issue a final decision on the project. For more information on the Forest Service's objection process, please visit www.fs.usda.gov/gwj/.

More information on the Forest Service draft record of decision can be viewed at www.fs.usda.gov/gwj/. The final ACP EIS is located at www.ferc.gov.

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