



News Release

Forest Service

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

(January 14, 2015) Elkins, WV – The Forest Service is seeking comments on whether to allow surveys for the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline on a 17.1 mile segment of the Monongahela National Forest in Pocahontas and Randolph Counties in West Virginia. Proposed environmental surveys include surveying wetlands, water, soil, and habitat suitable for sensitive species, including federally listed threatened and endangered plants and animals. Surveys would also record and document cultural resources and invasive species. The Forest Service will use public comments and an environmental review to decide whether to issue the requested temporary (one year) special use permit to allow these surveys on the Monongahela National Forest. Comments are being accepted through Friday, February 13, 2015.

“This request for comments is specific to the special use application for survey work,” notes Monongahela National Forest Supervisor Clyde Thompson. “Allowing these surveys to take place on the Forest does not mean we are allowing construction of a pipeline. The surveys would provide information which would help inform future decisions on whether or not to allow the construction and operation of the proposed pipeline on the Monongahela National Forest. There will be multiple public opportunities in the coming months to provide comments to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) who will be conducting the analysis for an actual pipeline.”

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Atlantic Coast Pipeline, LLC is currently surveying private and other lands to determine routing feasibility, and to identify environmental and cultural resources along the proposed 551 –mile route. There are two segments proposed on National Forest System lands: 17.1 miles on the Monongahela National Forest in West Virginia and 12.6 miles on the George Washington National Forest in Virginia.

If the results of the private and public land surveys determine that the route is feasible, then the FERC will conduct an in-depth environmental analysis, with opportunities for public comments, prior to deciding on the need for a pipeline.

“If the FERC determines there is a need for the pipeline, the Forest Service would make a separate determination whether to issue a right-of-way permit to construct, operate and maintain a natural gas transmission pipeline on National Forest System lands. The Forest Service would use the FERC’s environmental analysis and public process to inform that decision,” notes Thompson.

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 removed will be less than two inches in diameter.
- Placing biodegradable survey ribbon, flagging, survey stakes, and plastic pin flags within corridor and removing them after all surveys are conducted.
- Removing soil with shovels to test for cultural resources. Soil will be replaced prior to leaving each sample site. No cultural resources will be removed.
- Identification and documentation of cultural resources, sensitive species habitat, and invasive species. No flora or fauna will be removed.

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How to Comment:

Email: comments-eastern-monongahela-greenbrier@fs.fed.us (Note project name in subject name: Atlantic Coast Pipeline Survey Permit Comments)

FAX: 304-637-0582 (Address to project name: Atlantic Coast Pipeline Survey Comments)

Mail or hand-deliver:

USDA Forest Service
Monongahela National Forest
Atlantic Coast Pipeline Survey Comments
200 Sycamore Street
Elkins, WV 26241

Hand-delivered comments must be received during normal office hours of Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

For More Information:

Because the overall pipeline proposal crosses two National Forests, all materials relating to it are being maintained on a single Forest website. The website for the George Washington National Forest at <http://www.fs.usda.gov.gwj/> is the site being used. Specific questions relating to the Monongahela should be directed to 304-636-1800.

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