



File Code: 1920; 2720
Date: June 23, 2015

Public Scoping for Atlantic Coast Pipeline Proposed Alternative Route

Dear Interested Parties:

Atlantic Coast Pipeline, LLC has applied for an amendment to their special use permit GBR205003 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.

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 551 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 pre-filed (Docket #PF15-6) 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 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 applicant proposals as the MNF2 route. ACP has submitted an application for a proposed alternative route to perform the same site survey and testing activities. If approved, the proposed alternative route would be added to ACP's existing special use permit as an amendment.

Project Location

The ACP proposed alternative route for site survey and testing area is approximately 2,000 feet wide by a total of 5.13 miles long on National Forest System (NFS) lands, being 1,243+/- acres on the Marlinton-White Sulphur and Greenbrier Ranger Districts in Pocahontas County. This proposed route is referred to by the applicant as the MNF5 route. The proposed route crosses Monongahela National Forest land in the vicinity of Elk River, Slaty Ridge, and Dunmore.



Maps and project information may be viewed on the Atlantic Coast Pipeline web page at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/gwj/home/?cid=stelprd3824603> . (Although this scoping letter is only for the alternative 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 and Jefferson 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 an amendment to their existing special use permit for site survey and testing under the Forest Service's Special Use Authorization regulations (36 CFR § 251, Subpart B). This amendment is for a proposed alternative route, and it covers activities such as field routing and environmental, cultural resource, and civil surveys 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 Natural Resource Group, LLC and GAI Consultants Inc.

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 6.1 – Wildlife Habitat Emphasis

MP 6.2 – Backcountry Recreation

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

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. 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.

Access for the Survey – No vehicles would be used except to access the corridor using public and existing Forest Roads.

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 who will decide whether to issue an amendment to the existing special use permit to allow the identified alternative survey activities to occur within the alternative routed study and survey corridors on National Forest System lands within the Monongahela National Forest.

A decision to authorize or deny the proposed amendment is expected to be completed in July or August, 2015. If authorized, implementation would begin shortly after the decision.

Public Involvement

We welcome comments in regards to this request for an amendment for a proposed alternative route for the existing site survey and testing special use permit. Allowing these survey activities does not mean that 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.

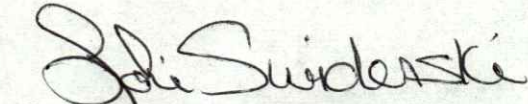
Please provide your comments by July 6, 2015. There are several options for providing comments. Hand-delivered comments must be received within our normal business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. Comments may be faxed to our office at 304-637-0582 with the subject line Atlantic Coast Pipeline Proposed Alternative Route Comments. Comments may be mailed to Monongahela National Forest, Attn: Atlantic Coast Pipeline Proposed Alternative Route, 200 Sycamore Street, Elkins, WV 26241.

Comments may also be mailed electronically to our office at: comments-eastern-monongahela-marlington@fs.fed.us. Please include the project name (Atlantic Coast Pipeline Proposed

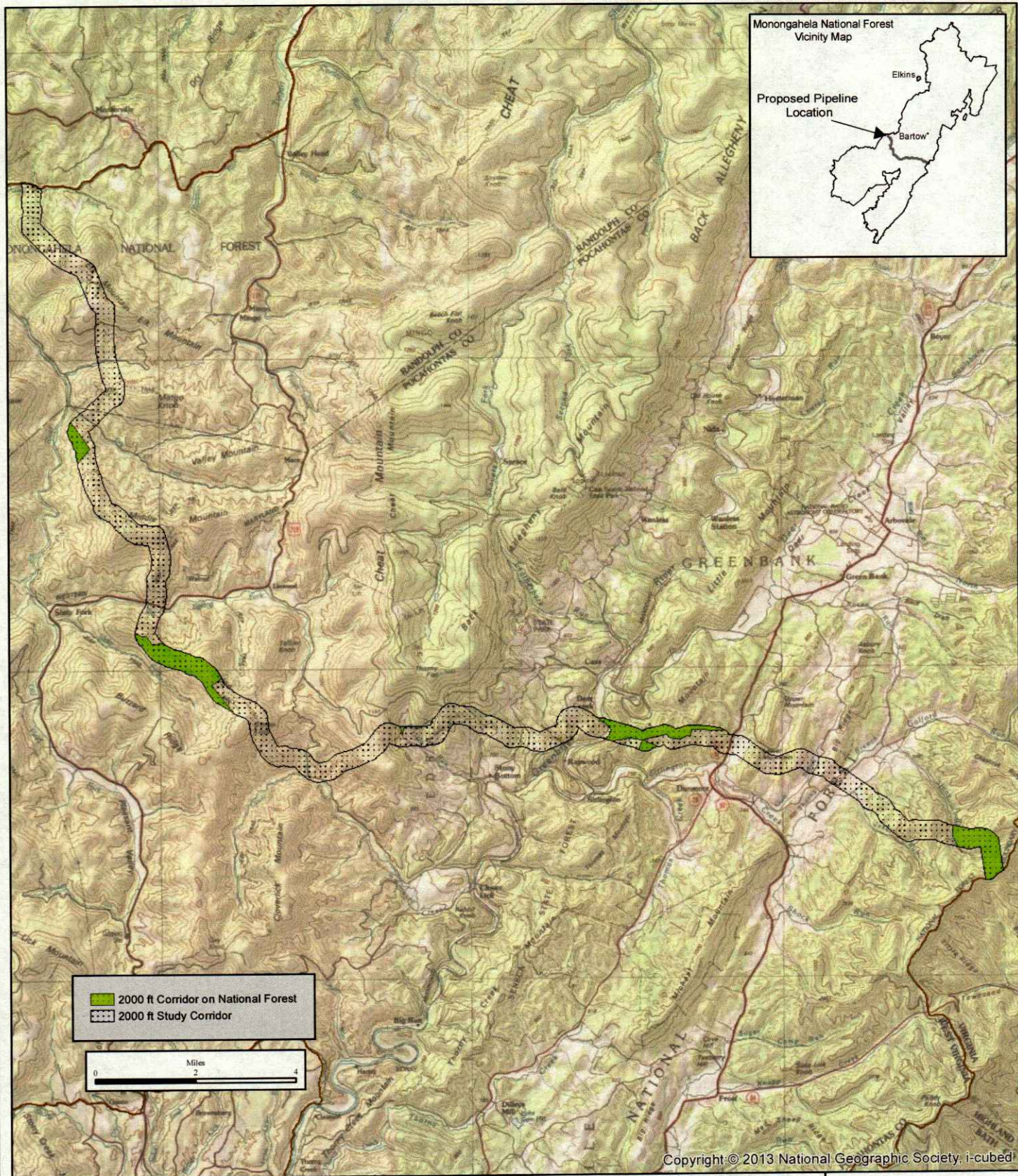
Alternative Route) in the subject line of the e-mail. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), Portable Document Format (pdf), or Word (.doc)-compatible document.

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

Sincerely,


CLYDE THOMPSON
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure: Map



MNF GIS
UTM, Zone 17
NAD 83
TMB
06/11/15

**Site Survey & Testing, Atlantic Coast Pipeline, LLC
GBR205003, Amendment 3, Alternative Route
Pocahontas County
Exhibit A (Vicinity Map)
Monongahela National Forest**

Original data was compiled from multiple source data and may not meet
the U.S. National Mapping Accuracy Standard of the Office of Management and Budget.
This map has no warranties as to its contents or accuracy.



USGS Quads:
Paddy Knob, Clover Lick,
Cass, Edray, Mingo,
Valley Head, Samp