

THE “SCOPING” PROCESS FOR THE NORTHERN PASS PROJECT

The United States Department of Energy (DOE) is now in the early stages of preparing an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the proposed Northern Pass electric transmission project. The EIS will be a detailed report evaluating the environmental, cultural, social, and economic impacts of the proposed project, as well as any reasonable alternatives to the project. DOE will use the EIS to decide whether it is in the public interest to grant a Presidential Permit.

Federal regulations require that DOE begin its preparation of the EIS by engaging in a “scoping” process. Scoping shapes the EIS by:

- Defining the environmental issues to be considered, and
- Identifying alternatives to the project that will be evaluated.

Scoping must be an open, public process, and DOE must invite other federal, state, and local agencies and “other interested persons” to participate. DOE has announced a series of public scoping meetings in mid-March 2011 (see sidebar, Upcoming Public Meetings) and will accept written public comments as part of the scoping process through April 12, 2011. (Comments may be emailed to Brian.Mills@hq.doe.gov.) DOE will release a written report summarizing all public comments, and then proceed with preparing a draft EIS.

What Issues Should You Address in Your Comments?

Any reasonable concern or question about the proposed Northern Pass project and alternatives is relevant to the scoping process and will help inform DOE’s decision-making. As a starting point, it may be helpful to review the maps of the preferred and alternative transmission routes identified by Northern Pass Transmission, LLC in its permit application and addendum (available at <http://www.northernpasseis.us>, under “Document Library”). Consider submitting comments on the potential impacts of the project on scenic landscapes, communities, wildlife, forest resources, wetlands, recreation areas, the energy sector, and the local economy. Both construction-related impacts and permanent, post-construction impacts are relevant. Requests for DOE to evaluate project alternatives and project impacts not identified by Northern Pass in its application will help ensure that DOE adopts an appropriate scope of review. Note that the alternative routes proposed by Northern Pass are not the only potential alternatives – DOE must conduct a rigorous review of all reasonable alternatives, including not building the project, and alternative routes and project designs that may have fewer impacts.

Upcoming Public Meetings

DOE has announced seven public “scoping meetings” in different communities in New Hampshire as part of the scoping process for the Northern Pass EIS:

Monday, March 14, 6-9 pm
Pembroke, Pembroke Academy cafeteria,
209 Academy Road

Tuesday, March 15, 6-9 pm
Franklin, Franklin Opera House, 316 Central
Street

Wednesday, March 16, 6-9 pm
Lincoln, The Mountain Club on Loon,
Hancock Room, 90 Loon Mountain Road

Thursday, March 17, 6-9 pm
Whitefield, Mountain View Grand Hotel and
Resort, Presidential Room, 101 Mountain
View Road

Friday, March 18, 6-9 pm
Plymouth, Plymouth State University, Silver
Center, 114 Maine St.

Saturday, March 19, 1-4 pm
Colebrook, Colebrook Elementary School, 27
Dumont Street

Sunday, March 20, 1-4 pm
North Haverhill, Haverhill Cooperative
Middle School, 175 Morrill Drive

Check DOE’s official website for the EIS process, <http://www.northernpasseis.us>, for any changes to this schedule.

Each meeting will include both an “informal workshop” and a more formal public hearing for the public to present information regarding the potential environmental impacts of the project. The hearing portion of the meeting will be transcribed by a stenographer, and all public testimony will be included in the official administrative record of DOE’s review of the project.

Members of the public who intend to speak at one of the public scoping meetings should contact Brian Mills at DOE (Brian.Mills@hq.doe.gov) by March 11, 2011, with a request to speak. Members of the public who submit such requests will be given priority in the speaking order.

For more information, visit CLF’s Northern Pass Information Center at <http://clf.org/northernpass> or contact Christophe Courchesne at ccourchesne@clf.org.

