Public Notice

U.S. Army Corps
Of Engineers
New England District
696 Virginia Road
Concord, MA 01742-2751

Date: November 20, 2012

Comment Period Closes: December 20, 2012
Evaluation Branch, Engineering/Planning Division

30-DAY PUBLIC NOTICE
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT / FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT AND RECORD OF NON-APPLICABILITY TRANSMISSION LINE EASEMENT EXPANSION MANSFIELD HOLLOW AREA TOWNS OF MANSFIELD AND CHAPLIN, CONNECTICUT

Interested parties are hereby notified that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District (Corps) plans to grant to The Connecticut Light and Power Company (CL&P) an expanded utility easement, totaling approximately 5 acres, adjacent to CL&P's existing 150-foot-wide utility easement, across approximately 1.4 miles of federal lands in the Mansfield Hollow Flood Control Facility in the towns of Mansfield (Tolland County) and Chaplin (Windham County), Connecticut. The expanded easement, which will increase CL&P's transmission line right-of-way (ROW) width by 25 feet for 0.9 mile across federal lands in Mansfield and by 35 feet for 0.5 mile across federal lands in Chaplin, will allow CL&P to construct, operate, and maintain a proposed new 345-kilovolt (kV) transmission line, adjacent to the existing 345-kV transmission line that presently occupies the existing easement.

The Corps has conducted an analysis of the proposed easement expansion (referred to as the 5-Acre Minimal ROW Expansion or the proposed action) and has prepared a draft Environmental Assessment / Finding of No Significant Impact / Record of Non-Applicability (EA / FONSI / RONA) regarding the action. The draft EA/FONSI/RONA is available for review on the Corps' web site http://www.nae.usace.army.mil/projects/EPindex.htm; in addition, copies are available for review at the Mansfield Public Library at 54 Warrenville Road in Mansfield and also at the Chaplin Public Library at 130 Chaplin Street in Chaplin.

The following summarizes the 5-Acre Minimal ROW Expansion project and the public comment process. Attachment 1 provides a location map illustrating the existing 150-foot CL&P ROW and proposed new 25- and 35-foot-wide easement areas in relation to the federal properties in Mansfield and Chaplin. Attachment 2 includes a list of pertinent laws, regulations, and directives considered in the analysis of the easement expansion.

Project Description: The proposed federal real estate action involves the 5-acre grant of easement to CL&P, which will allow CL&P to construct, operate, and maintain the new 345-kV transmission line across the federal lands. The new 345-kV transmission line is part of the Interstate Reliability Project consisting of proposed improvements to the bulk power electric transmission system in Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts. CL&P's Connecticut portion of the Interstate Reliability Project

includes 36.8 miles of new 345-kV transmission lines and related improvements to existing substations and switching stations.

Except across the federally-owned lands in Mansfield and Chaplin, CL&P's existing ROWs are wide enough (typically 300 feet) to accommodate the new Interstate Reliability Project 345-kV transmission lines without additional easement acquisition. The existing ROW across the approximately 1.4 miles of federal land in Mansfield and Chaplin (referred to collectively as the "Mansfield Hollow area") is only 150 feet wide and the existing 345-kV transmission line is centered within this ROW, leaving insufficient width to install and properly separate the new 345-kV line adjacent to the existing line.

The Mansfield Hollow area property owned by the Corps totals approximately 2,472 acres. These lands were acquired by the federal government approximately 60 years ago for the creation of Mansfield Hollow Dam and Lake, which is designed to control flooding in the Thames River basin in conjunction with other federal projects in the area. The Corps presently leases 2,300 acres of this property to the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP), which manages it as Mansfield Hollow State Park and the Mansfield Hollow Wildlife Management Area (WMA).

The construction, operation, and maintenance of the new 345-kV transmission line across the federal properties will be performed in accordance with CL&P's best management practices and the conditions of all federal and state permits and certificates relevant to the Interstate Reliability Project. The Corps has evaluated alternatives to the 5-Acre Minimal ROW Expansion,, as well as the environmental impacts and CL&P's proposed mitigation measures, and has determined that the conveyance of 5 additional acres of easement to CL&P will not result in significant adverse environmental effects This incremental expansion of the existing utility easement across the Mansfield Hollow properties will provide a cost-effective approach for achieving the objective of providing the best solution for improving the critically needed reliability of the regional electric transmission system.

Additional Information: Additional information concerning the 5-Acre Minimal ROW Expansion and the draft EA/FONSI/RONA may be obtained upon request from the Environmental Resources Section (Ms. Judith Johnson) at the Corps' address shown on this Public Notice. Ms. Johnson may also be reached by phone at 978-318-8138 or e-mail at judith.l.johnson@usace.army.mil. Collect calls will be accepted weekdays between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Coordination and Consultation: During the preparation of the draft EA/FONSI/RONA for the 5-Acre Minimal ROW Expansion, the following principal agencies and groups were consulted or involved:

Federal:
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

State:
CT DEEP
Connecticut Siting Council
Connecticut State Historic Preservation Officer
Connecticut State Archaeologist

Local:
Town of Mansfield
Town of Chaplin
Friends of Mansfield Hollow

Environmental Impacts: The draft EA/FONSI describes the existing environmental conditions within the existing CL&P ROW and proposed easement expansion area and identifies the potential environmental impacts of the proposed action, along with the measures that have been or will be applied to mitigate impacts. A preliminary determination has been made that an Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed action is not required under the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. This determination will be reviewed in light of facts submitted in response to this notice and other coordination efforts.

Alternatives: A range of alternatives were evaluated to determine the most practicable and cost-effective route and design for the new 345-kV transmission line across the federal properties. In addition to the proposed action (the 5-Acre Minimal ROW Expansion), these options included the No Action Alternative, a No ROW Expansion Option, and an 11-Acre Easement Expansion Option, as well as various other transmission line configuration and routing options. These alternatives are detailed in the draft EA/FONSI.

Water Resources: The 5-Acre Minimal ROW Expansion area encompasses four waterbodies (including Mansfield Hollow Lake and the Natchaug River) and six wetlands. No water resources will be affected along the ROW in Mansfield. The new transmission line will be installed above Mansfield Hollow Lake and the Natchaug River. Along the Chaplin portion of the ROW, approximately 1 acre of wetlands will be temporarily affected by construction activities. In addition, two new transmission line structures cannot practicably be located in upland areas, resulting in the unavoidable fill of 156 square feet of wetlands. Compensation for direct impacts to wetlands in the Mansfield Hollow area will be incorporated into the compensatory mitigation program that will be required as part of the Clean Water Act Section 404 Individual Permit for the Connecticut portion of the Interstate Reliability Project. To mitigate for temporary impacts from construction activities, site-specific wetland enhancement activities, such as wetland invasive species control, will be undertaken along the ROW within the Mansfield Hollow area. These enhancement measures also will be included as a Special Condition to the Section 404 Individual Permit for the Interstate Reliability Project.

Historic and Archaeological Resources: The 5-Acre Minimal ROW Expansion will have no adverse impact to properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. However, because of the potential for prehistoric and historic archaeological sites in the project area, CL&P has performed archaeological surveys of the easement expansion and existing ROW and will commission additional, focused archaeological surveys of select locations. Such surveys will be coordinated in consultation with the Corps' cultural resource specialists, as well as with the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the Connecticut State Archaeologist, and representatives of Native American Tribes with ancestral ties to the area. Work will be performed in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and implementing regulations 36 CFR 800. CL&P will coordinate with the Corps, SHPO, State Archaeologist, and the Native American Tribes to define measures to avoid or mitigate impacts to significant cultural resource sites that may be found in the 5-acre easement expansion area.

Endangered Species: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the CT DEEP have not identified any listed, threatened, or endangered species in the project area. Therefore, the proposed action will not have any effect on threatened or endangered species.

Federal Permit Requirements: As part of the Interstate Reliability Project, CL&P will obtain a Water Quality certification from the CT DEEP pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act and an Individual Section 404 permit from the Corps. The construction, operation, and maintenance of the new 345-kV transmission line across the Mansfield Hollow are federal properties will be performed in accordance with the conditions of these regulatory requirements.

Comments: Any person who has an interest that may be affected by the proposed project may request a public hearing. The request must be submitted to the Corps within 30 days of the date of this Public Notice and must clearly set forth the interest that may be affected and the manner in which the interest may be affected by this activity.

Please bring this Public Notice to the attention of anyone you know to be interested in this project. Comments are invited from all interested parties and should be directed to me at, U.S. Army Corps of the Engineers, New England District, 696 Virginia Road, Concord, Massachusetts, 01742-2751, Attn: Engineering/Planning Division, within 30 days of this notice.

15 Nov 2012
Date

William C. Scully, P.E.
Acting District Engineer

Attachments

Attachment 1 – Location Map

Attachment 2 – Pertinent Laws, Regulations and Directives

Federal Statutes
Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.
Preservation of Historic and Archaeological Data Act of 1974, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 469 et seq.
American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978, 42 U.S.C., 1996
Clean Air Act, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 7401 et seq.
Clean Water Act of 1977 (Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972), 33 U.S.C. 1251 et. seq.
Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended 16 U.S.C. 1451 et. seq.
Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.
Estuarine Areas Act, 16 U.S.C. 1221 et. seq.
Farmland Protection Policy Act, 7 U.S.C. 4201-4209
Federal Water Project Recreation Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 4601-12 et seq.
Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.
Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 4601-4 et seq.
Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act of 1971, as amended, 33 U.S.C., 1401 et seq.
National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.
Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, 25 U.S.C. 3000-3013, 18 U.S.C. 1170
National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 3421 et. seq
Rivers and Harbor Act of 1899, as amended, 33 U.S.C. 401 et. seq
Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1001 et. seq.
Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1271, et seq.
Magnuson-Stevens Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.
Coastal Barrier Resources Act of 1982, 16 U.S.C. 3501 et. seq.
Executive Orders
11593, Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment (May 13, 1971)
11988, Floodplain Management (May 24, 1977), as amended by 12148 (July 20, 1979)
11990, Protection of Wetlands (May 24, 1977)
12114, Environmental Effects Abroad of Major Federal Actions (January 4, 1979)
12989, Environmental Justice (February 11, 1994)
13007, Accommodation of Sacred Sites (May 24, 1977)
13045, Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks (April 21, 1997)
13175, Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments (November 6, 2000)
Executive Memorandum
Analysis of Impacts on Prime or Unique Agricultural Lands in Implementing NEPA (August 11, 1980)
White House Memorandum, Government-to-Government Relations with Indian Tribes (April 29, 1994)