

AECOM 10 Orms Street, Suite 405 Providence, Rhode Island 02904 [Phone] 401.274.5685 [Fax] 401.521.2730

September 10, 2013

Central Permit Processing Unit
Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
79 Elm Street
Hartford, CT 06106

Subject: Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company Proposed Connecticut Expansion Project

Dear Regulatory Reviewer:

The Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company (Tennessee), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Kinder Morgan and a major supplier of natural gas to utilities and power generators in the Northeast, is seeking a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) pursuant to Section 7(c) of the Natural Gas Act authorizing the construction and operation of the Connecticut Expansion Project. The proposed project, as currently configured, would involve the construction of approximately 13.3-miles of pipeline looping (i.e., the installation of additional pipe adjacent to the existing pipeline) in New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. The proposed Connecticut Expansion Project facilities are as follows:

- 1.4-miles of 36-inch pipeline loop in Albany County, New York;
- 3.8-miles of 36-inch pipeline loop in Berkshire County, Massachusetts;
- 8.1-miles of 24-inch pipeline loop in Hampden County, Massachusetts and Hartford County, Connecticut;
- Minor tie-in piping; and
- Moving and relocating certain pigging facilities.

To assist you in your review, we have provided detailed U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) maps showing the locations of the proposed Connecticut Expansion Project facilities described above.

Tennessee's intent is to file a formal application for review and approval from the FERC and other applicable regulatory agencies, including the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. The FERC application is currently targeted to be filed in the first quarter of 2014. All other agency applications are planned to be filed in a similar time-frame. Tennessee anticipates that the Project will be fully operational by November 2016.

Yours sincerely,

Julia Stearns
Wetland Scientist
Julia.stearns@aecom.com

Attachments: Form DEP-APP-007

USGS Project Site Location Aerial Project Mapping



Request for Natural Diversity Data Base (NDDB) State Listed Species Review

Please complete this form in accordance with the instructions (DEP-INST-007) to ensure proper handling of your request.

There are no fees associated with NDDB Reviews.

CPPU USE ONLY			
App #:			
Doc #:			
Check #: No fee required			
Program: Natural Diversity Database Endangered Species			
Hardcopy Electronic			

Part I: Preliminary Screening

Before submitting this request, you must review the Natural Diversity Data Base "State and Federal Listed Species and Significant Natural Communities Maps" found on the DEEP website. Follow the instructions on the map or in this form's instruction document. These maps are updated twice a year, usually in June and December.

Does your site, including all affected areas, meet the screening criteria according to the instructions:

Yes No

Enter the date of the map reviewed for pre-screening: June 2013

Part II: Requester Information

*If the requester is a corporation, limited liability company, limited partnership, limited liability partnership, or a statutory trust, it must be registered with the Secretary of State. If applicable, the company name shall be stated **exactly** as it is registered with the Secretary of State. This information can be accessed at CONCORD.

If the requester is an individual, provide the legal name (include suffix) in the following format: First Name; Middle Initial; Last Name; Suffix (Jr, Sr., II, III, etc.).

1.	Requester Company Name: AECOM En	Name*: nvironment		
	Address: 10 Orms	s Street Suite 405		
	City/Town: Provio	dence	State: RI	Zip Code : 02901
	Business Phone: 40	1-274-5685	ext.1102820	Fax: 401-521-2730
	E-mail: julia.st	cearns@aecom.com		
	at this electronic addr sure you can receive address changes.	ill address you are agreeing to receive of the concerning this request. Please re emails from "ct.gov" addresses. Also, p	member to chec	k your security settings to be
	Requester can best b			nan an Diadhidan
		_ , _ , _	ovt. 🔲 State a	gency Individual
	☐ Tribe	Other (specify):		
	Acting as (Affiliation),	pick one:		
	☐ Property owner	☐ Consultant ☐ Engineer ☐	☐ Facility owner	☐ Applicant
	⊠ Biologist	☐ Pesticide Applicator ☐ Other re	epresentative:	

Part II. Requester Information (continued)

2.	List Primary Contact to receive Natural Diversity Data Base correspondence and inquiries, if different from requester.			
	Company:			
	Contact Person:	Title:		
	Mailing Address:			
	City/Town:	State:	Zip Code:	
	Business Phone:	ext.	Fax:	
	E-mail:			
	By providing this email address you are agreeing to receive official correspondence from the department, at this electronic address, concerning this request. Please remember to check your security settings to be sure you can receive emails from "ct.gov" addresses. Also, please notify the department if your e-mail address changes.			

Part III: Site Information

This request can only be completed for one site. A	This request can only be completed for one site. A separate request must be filed for each additional site.			
1. SITE NAME AND LOCATION				
Site Name or Project Name: CT Expan	nsion Project			
Town(s): Suffield, Granby				
Street Address or Location Description: Project will be located along existing pipeline corridor starting at East Granby following the corridor north to the CT/MA state border in Suffield, CT (See attached Figures) Size in acres, or site dimensions: approx. 8 miles long x 200' wide				
Latitude and longitude of the center of the si	te in decimal degrees (e.g., 41	.23430 -7 1.06374).		
Latitude: Start: 41.932997 End: 42.031317	1 ()()()()()()()()	2.706232 2.635078		
Method of coordinate determination (check	one):			
☐ GPS ☒ Photo interpolation using	CTECO map viewer	er (specify):		
2a. Describe the current land use and land cover of the site. The proposed pipeline will occur				
within an existing pipeline of				
land use: open space, foreste		_		
agricultural lands, Farm and	Ranchland Protecti	on Prgram lands,		
Suffield City owned land, residential and commercial lands.				
b. Check all that apply and enter the size in acres or % of area in the space after each checked category.				
Industrial/Commercial <5%	X Residential 5 % — — —	☐ Forest 15%		
\boxtimes Wetland $\underline{<25\%}$	\boxtimes Field/grassland $\underline{10\%}$	ঐ Agricultural <u>50%</u>		
☑ Water <5%	∐ Utility Right-of-way <u>100</u> %			
$$ Transportation Right-of-way $\boxed{<5\%}$	Other (specify):			

Part IV: Project Information

1.	PROJECT TYPE:
	Choose Project Type: Choose Type From Dropdown List, If other describe: Pipeline Expansion
2.	Is the subject activity limited to the maintenance, repair, or improvement of an existing structure within the existing footprint? Yes No If yes, explain.
3.	Give a detailed description of the activity which is the subject of this request and describe the methods and
	equipment that will be used.
	See attached letter.
4.	Provide a contact for questions about the project details if different from Part II primary contact.
	Name: Julia Stearns or Tim O'Sullivan
	Phone: Julia: 508-404-5512 Tim: 978-621-6756
	E-mail: julia.stearns@aecom.com

Part V: Request Type and Associated Application Type

Check one box from either Group 1 or Group 2, indicating the appropriate category for this request.

Group 1 . If you check one of these boxes, fill out Parts I – VII of this form and submit the required attachments A and B.				
☐ Preliminary screening was negative but an NDDB review is still requested				
Request regards a municipally regulated or unregulated activity (no state permit/certificate needed)				
Request regards a preliminary site assessment or project feasibility study				
Request relates to land acquisition or protection				
Request is associated with a <i>renewal</i> of an existing permit, with no modifications				
Group 2. If you check one of these boxes, fill out Parts I – VII of this form and submit required attachments A, B, and C.				
Request is associated with a <i>new</i> state or federal permit application				
Request is associated with modification of an existing permit				
Request is associated with a permit enforcement action				
Request regards site management or planning, requiring detailed species recommendations				
Request regards a state funded project, state agency activity, or CEPA request				
If you are filing this request as part of a state or federal permit application enter the application information below.				
Permitting Agency and Application Name:				
State DEEP Application Number, if known:				
State DEEP Enforcement Action Number, if known:				
State DEEP Permit Analyst/Engineer, if known:				
Is this request related to a previously submitted NDDB request? Yes No				
Enter the previous NDDB Request Number(s), if known:				

Part VI: Supporting Documents

Check each attachment submitted as verification that *all* applicable attachments have been supplied with this request form. Label each attachment as indicated in this part (e.g., Attachment A, etc.) and be sure to include the requester's name, site name and the date. **Please note that Attachments A and B are required for all requesters.** Attachment C (DEP-APP-007C) is supplied at the end of this form.

	Overview Map: an 8 1/2" X 11" print/copy of the relevant portion of a USGS Topographic Quadrangle Map clearly indicating the exact location of the site.			
	Detailed Site Map: fine scaled map showing site boundary details on aerial imagery with relevant landmarks labeled. (Site boundaries in GIS [ESRI ArcView shapefile, in NAD83, State Plane, feet] format can be substituted for detailed maps, see instruction document)			
☐ Attachment C:	Supplemental Information, Group 2 requirement (attached, DEP-APP-007C) Section i: Supplemental Site Information and supporting documents Section ii: Supplemental Project Information and supporting documents			

Part VII: Requester Certification

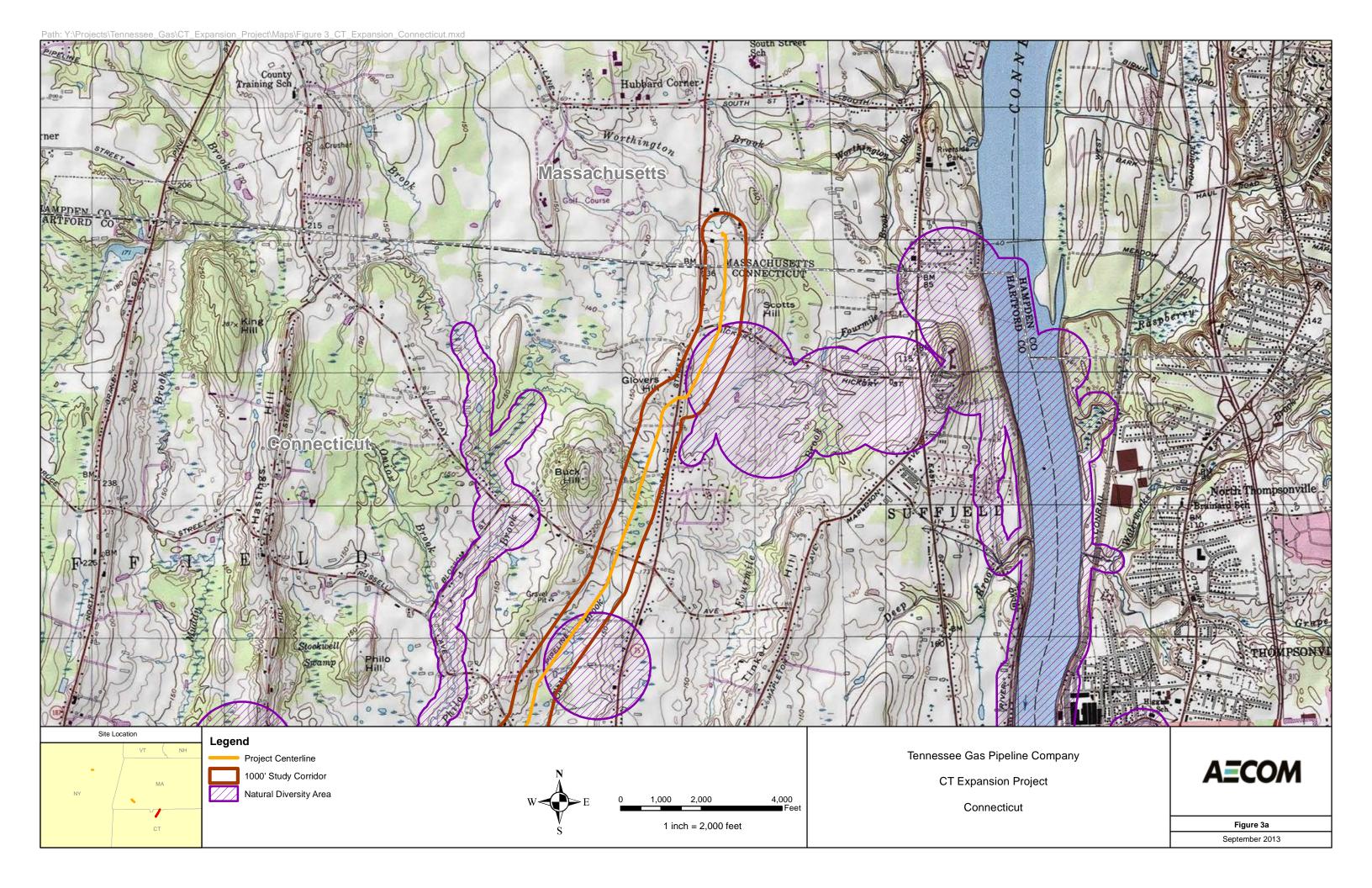
The requester *and* the individual(s) responsible for actually preparing the request must sign this part. A request will be considered incomplete unless all required signatures are provided.

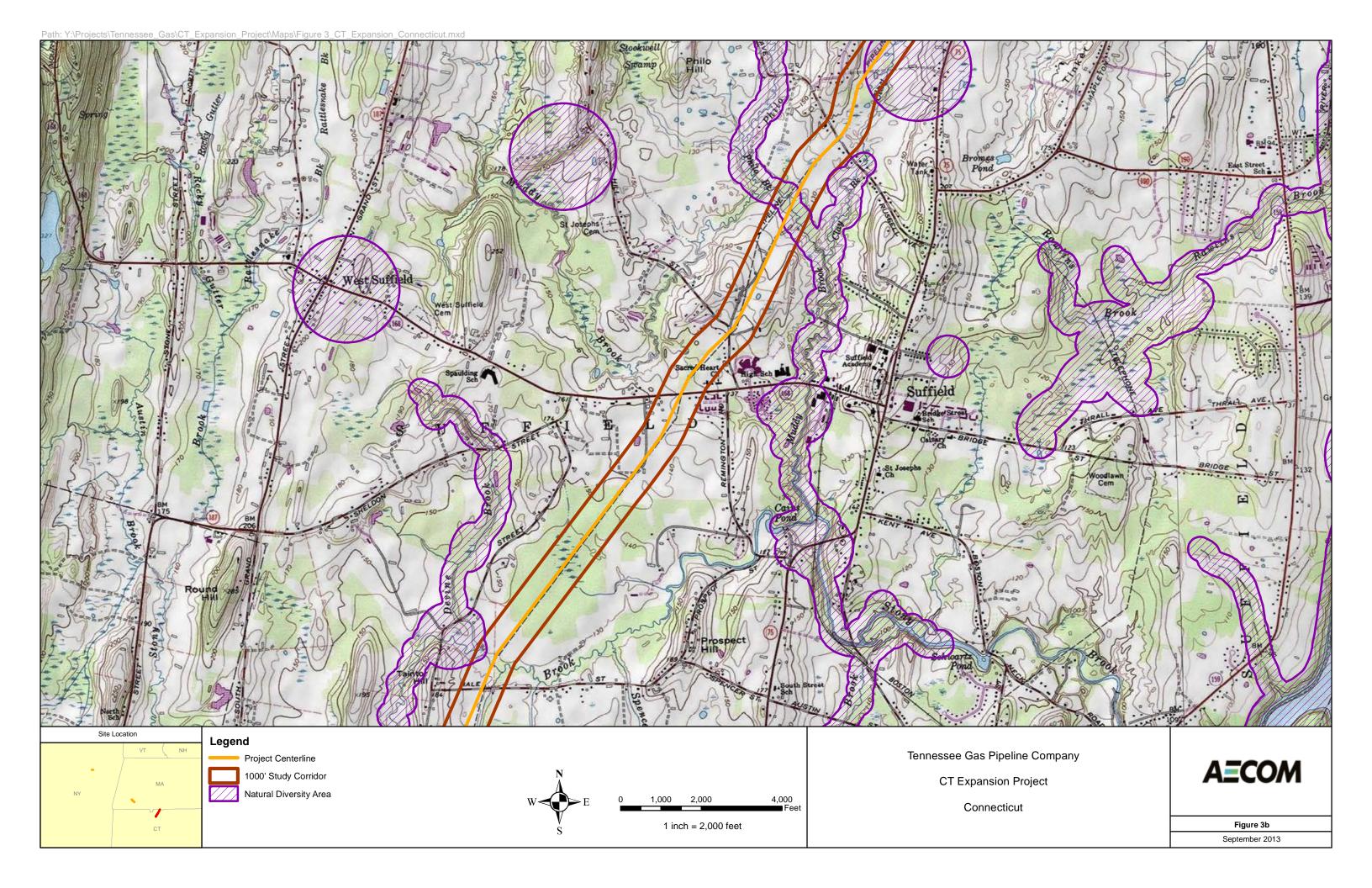
"I have personally examined and am familiar with the information submitted in this document and all attachments thereto, and I certify that based on reasonable investigation, including my inquiry of the individuals responsible for obtaining the information, the submitted information is true, accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief."				
	September 10, 2013			
Signature of Requester	Date			
Julia Stearns	Wetland Scientist			
Name of Requester (print or type)	Title (if applicable)			
Signature of Preparer (if different than above)	Date			
Name of Preparer (print or type)	Title (if applicable)			

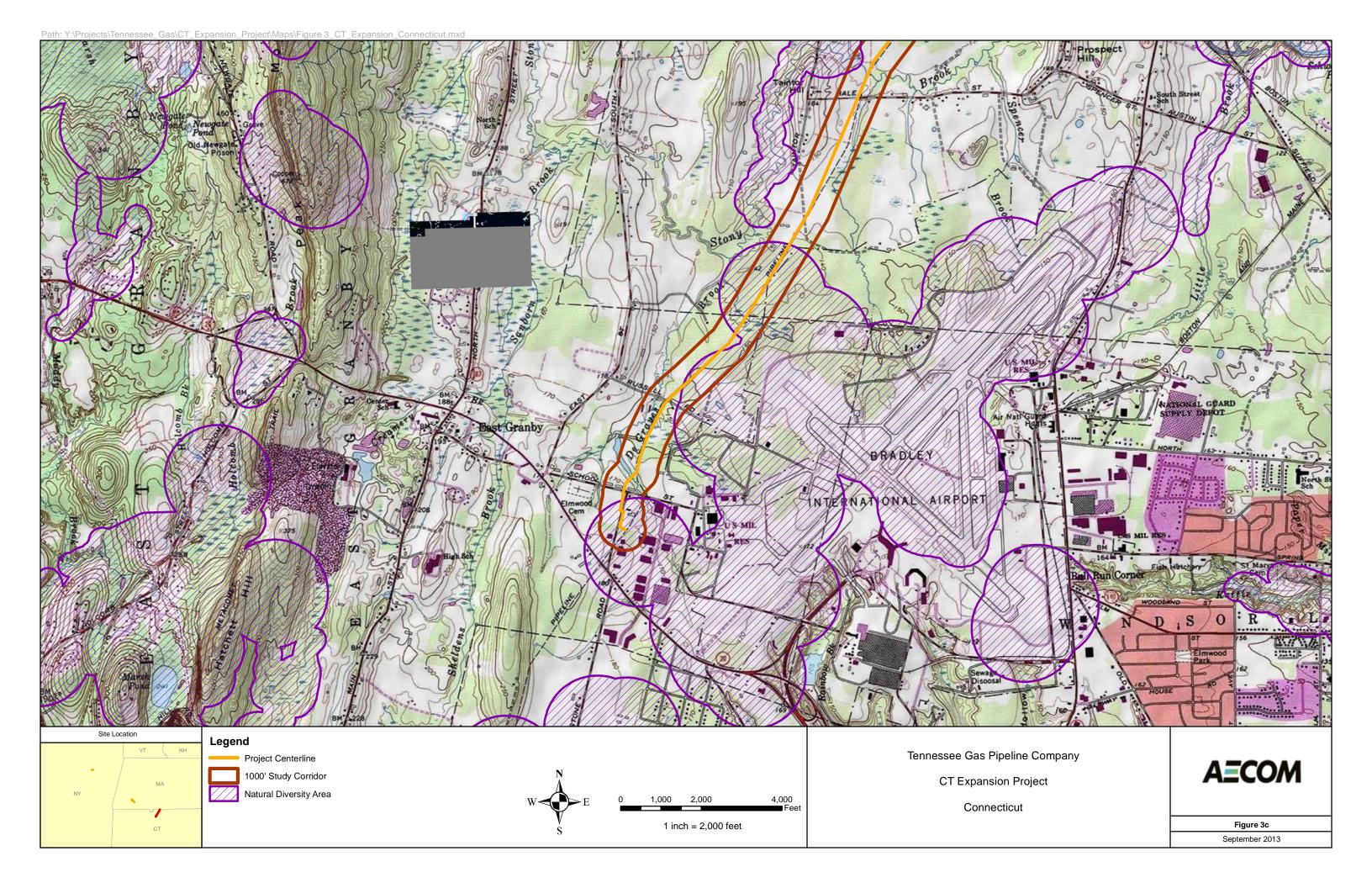
Note: Please submit the completed Request Form and all Supporting Documents to:

CENTRAL PERMIT PROCESSING UNIT DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION 79 ELM STREET HARTFORD, CT 06106-5127

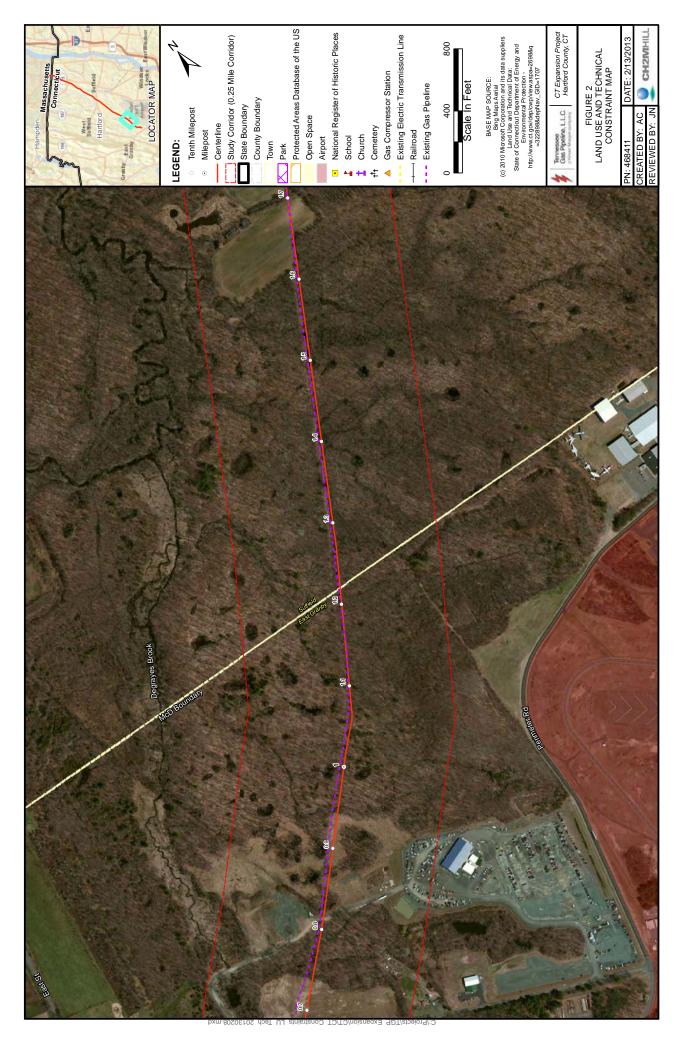
Or email request to: dep.nddbrequest@ct.gov



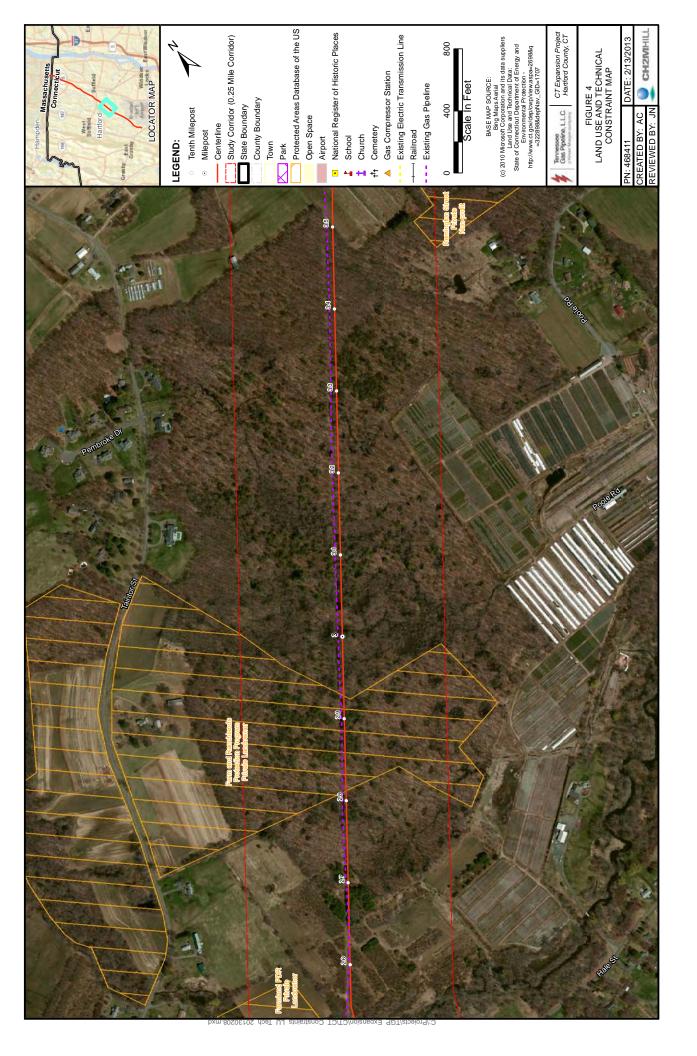


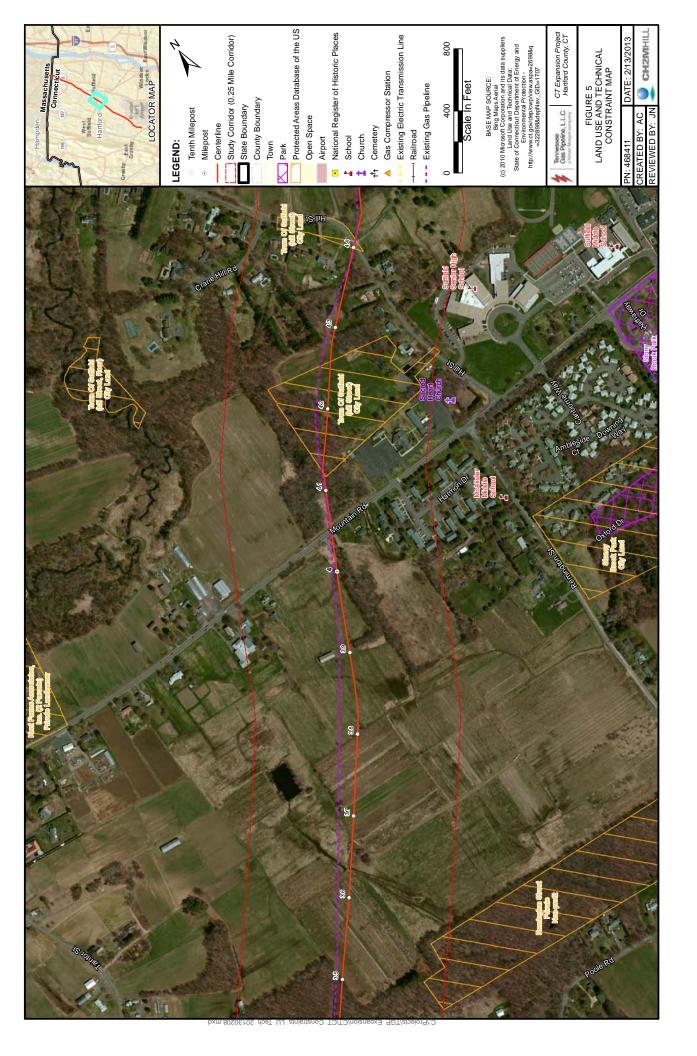




















September 29, 2013

Mr. Anthony P. Tur
Endangered Species Specialist
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
New England Field Office
70 Commercial Street, Suite 300
Concord, New Hampshire 03301-5087

RE: Rare Species Data Request
Connecticut Expansion Project
Agawam, and Sandisfield, Massachusetts; East Granby, and Suffield,
Connecticut

Dear Mr. Tur:

Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company (Tennessee), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Kinder Morgan and a major supplier of natural gas to utilities and power generators in the Northeast, is seeking a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) pursuant to Section 7(c) of the Natural Gas Act authorizing the construction and operation of the Connecticut Expansion Project. The proposed project, as currently configured, would involve the construction of approximately 13.3-miles of pipeline looping (i.e., the installation of additional pipe to adjacent to the existing pipeline) in New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. The proposed Connecticut Expansion Project facilities are as follows:

- 1.4-miles of 36-inch pipeline loop in Albany County, New York;
- 3.8-miles of 36-inch pipeline loop in Berkshire County, Massachusetts;
- 8.1-miles of 24-inch pipeline loop in Hampden County, Massachusetts and Hartford County, Connecticut;
- Minor tie-in piping; and
- Moving and relocating certain pigging facilities.

This request specifically addresses the requirement for documented consultation in regard to compliance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq*). We respectfully request correspondence from your office regarding the occurrence of any threatened or endangered species (T&E) and/or their critical habitats within the project areas. To assist you in your review, we have provided U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) maps showing the locations of the proposed Connecticut Expansion Project facilities described above in Massachusetts and Connecticut.

Tennessee consulted the USFWS website to identify updated listed species occurrence information, if any. Based on this review, the dwarf wedgemussel (*Alasmidonta heterodon*) was identified as a federally-listed endangered species in the town of East Granby, Connecticut. Suitable habitat for this species is found in the Farmington and Podunk Rivers, outside of the project area. Based on review of the updated listed species occurrence for Hampden and Berkshire Counties in Massachusetts the small whorled pogonia (*Isotria medeoloides*) was identified in Hampden County in the town of Southwick and the bog turtle (*Glyptemys muhlenbergii*) was identified in Berkshire County in the towns of Egermont and Sheffield. The project corridor is not located within these towns. No other species were listed on the USFWS website to occur within the project area.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Should you have any questions pertaining to this matter, please contact us at 401-274-5685 (ext 1102820) or Timothy O'Sullivan (AECOM Environment) at (978) 621-6756.

Sincerely,

AECOM Environment

Julia Stearns

Wetland Biologist/Permitting

Attachments: A

Site Locus

В

USFWS Federally Listed Species in Connecticut and

Massachusetts

CC:

Mark Gardella, AECOM (w/o encl. - via email)

T. O'Sullivan, AECOM (w/o encl. – via email)

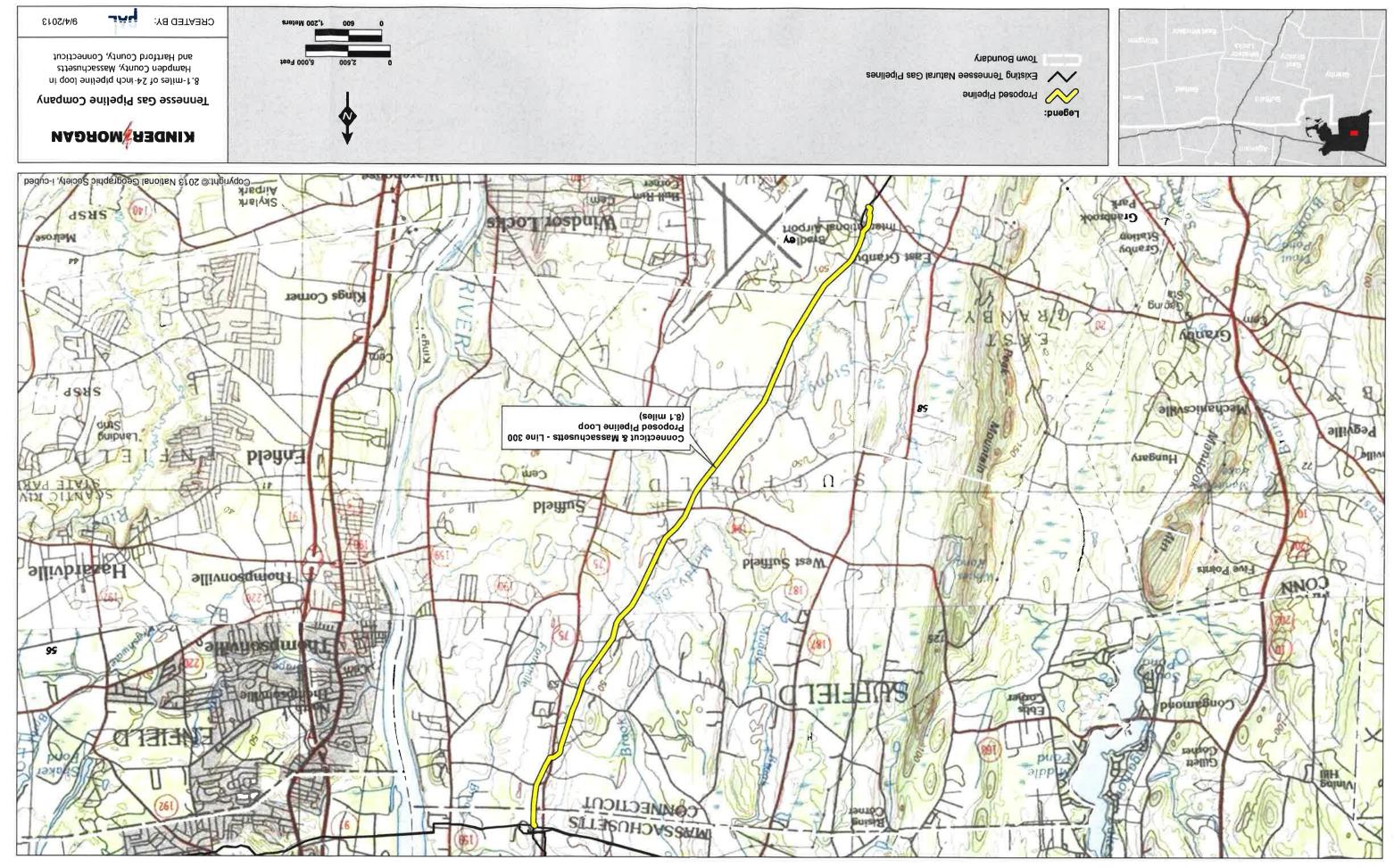


Figure 4. Overview map of the TGP Connecticut Expansion pipeline loop project in Hampden County, Massachusetts and Hartford County, Connecticut shown on the Holyoke and Hartford USGS topographic quad maps, 100k series.

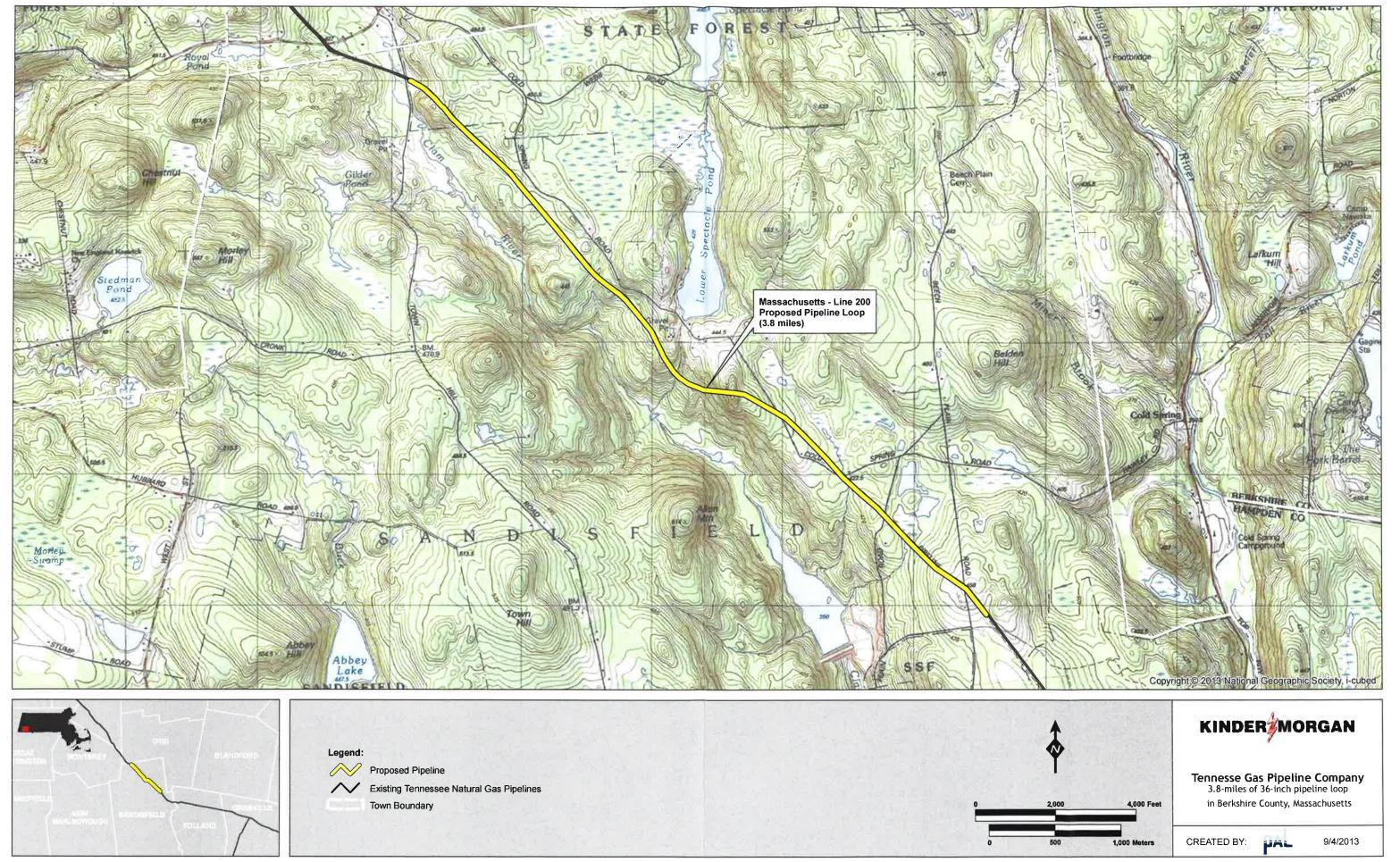


Figure 3. Overview map of the TGP Connecticut Expansion project pipeline loop in Berkshire County, Massachusetts shown on the Monterey and Otis USGS topographic quad maps, 7.5 minute series.

FEDERALLY LISTED ENDANGERED AND THREATENED SPECIES IN CONNECTICUT

COUNTY	SPECIES	FEDERAL STATUS	GENERAL LOCATION/HABITAT	TOWNS	
	Piping Plover	Threatened	Coastal Beaches	Westport, Bridgeport and Stratford	
Fairfield	Roseate Tern	Endangered	Coastal beaches, Islands and the Atlantic Ocean	Westport and Stratford	
	Bog Turtle	Threatened	Wetlands	Ridgefield and Danbury.	
Hartford	Dwarf wedgemussel	Endangered	Farmington and Podunk Rivers	South Windsor, East Granby, Simsbury, Avon and Bloomfield.	
Litchfield	Small whorled Pogonia	Threatened	Forests with somewhat poorly drained soils and/or a seasonally high water table	Sharon.	
	Bog Turtle	Threatened	Wetlands	Sharon and Salisbury.	
Middlesex	Roseate Tern	Endangered	Coastal beaches, islands and the Atlantic Ocean	Westbrook	
	Piping Plover	Threatened	Coastal Beaches	Clinton, Westbrook, Old Saybrook.	
	Puritan Tiger Beetle	Threatened	Sandy beaches along the Connecticut River	Cromwell, Portland	
	Bog Turtle	Threatened	Wetlands	Southbury	
New Haven	Piping Plover	Threatened	Coastal Beaches	Milford, Madison and West Haven	
	Roseate Tern	Endangered	Coastal beaches, Islands and the Atlantic Ocean	Branford, Guilford and Madison	
	Indiana Bat	Endangered	Mines, Caves		
New London	Piping Plover	Threatened	Coastal Beaches	Old Lyme, Waterford, Groton and Stonington.	
	Roseate Tern	Endangered	Coastal beaches, Islands and the Atlantic Ocean	East Lyme, New London and Waterford.	
	Small whorled Pogonia	Threatened	Forests with somewhat poorly drained soils and/or a seasonally high water table	Waterford	
Tolland	None				

⁻Eastern cougar, gray wolf, Indiana bat, Seabeach amaranth and American burying beetle are considered extirpated in Connecticut.

7/31/2008

⁻There is no federally-designated Critical Habitat in Connecticut.

FEDERALLY LISTED ENDANGERED AND THREATENED SPECIES IN MASSACHUSETTS

COUNTY	SPECIES	FEDERAL STATUS	GENERAL LOCATION/HABITAT	TOWNS	
Barnstable	Piping Plover	Threatened	Coastal Beaches	All Towns	
	Roseate Tem	Endangered	Coastal beaches and the Atlantic Ocean	All Towns	
	Northeastern beach tiger beetle	Threatened	Coastal Beaches	Chatham	
	Sandplain gerardia	Endangered	Open areas with sandy soils.	Sandwich and Falmouth.	
	Northern Red-bellied Cooter	Endangered	Inland Ponds and Rivers	Bourne (north of the Cape Cod Canal)	
Berkshire	Bog Turtle	Threatened	Wetlands	Egremont and Sheffield	
Bristol	Piping Plover	Threatened	Coastal Beaches	Fairhaven, Dartmouth, Westport	
	Roseate Tern	Endangered	Coastal beaches and the Atlantic Ocean	Fairhaven, New Bedford, Dartmouth, Westport	
	Northern Red-bellied Cooter	Endangered	Inland Ponds and Rivers	Taunton	
Dukes	Roseate Tern	Endangered	Coastal beaches and the Atlantic Ocean	All Towns	
	Piping Plover	Threatened	Coastal Beaches	All Towns	
	Northeastern beach tiger beetle	Threatened	Coastal Beaches	Aquinnah and Chilmark	
	Sandplain gerardia	Endangered	Open areas with sandy soils.	West Tisbury	
Essex	Small whorled Pogonia	Threatened	Forests with somewhat poorly drained soils and/or a seasonally high water table	Gloucester, Essex and Manchester	
	Piping Plover	Threatened	Coastal Beaches	Gloucester, Essex, Ipswich, Rowley, Revere, Newbury, Newburyport and Salisbury	
Franklin	Northeastern bulrush	Endangered	Wetlands	Montague, Warwick	
7	Dwarf wedgemussel	Endangered	Mill River	Whately	
Hampshire	Small whorled Pogonia	Threatened	Forests with somewhat poorly drained soils and/or a seasonally high water table	Hadley	
	Puritan tiger beetle	Threatened	Sandy beaches along the Connecticut River	Northampton and Hadley	
	Dwarf wedgemussel	Endangered	Rivers and Streams.	Hatfield, Amherst and Northampton	
Hampden	Small whorled Pogonia	Threatened	Forests with somewhat poorly drained soils and/or a seasonally high water table	Southwick	
Middlesex	Small whorled Pogonia	Threatened	Forests with somewhat poorly drained soils and/or a seasonally high water table	Groton	
Nantucket	Piping Plover	Threatened	Coastal Beaches	Nantucket	
	Roseate Tern	Endangered	Coastal beaches and the Atlantic Ocean	Nantucket	
	American burying beetle	Endangered	Upland grassy meadows	Nantucket	
Plymouth	Piping Plover	Threatened	Coastal Beaches	Scituate, Marshfield, Duxbury, Plymouth, Wareham and Mattapoisett	
	Northern Red-bellied Cooter	Endangered	Inland Ponds and Rivers	Kingston, Middleborough, Carver, Plymouth, Bourne, Wareham, Halifax, and Pembroke	
	Roseate Tern	Endangered	Coastal beaches and the Atlantic Ocean	Plymouth, Marion, Wareham, and Mattapoisett.	
Suffolk	Piping Plover	Threatened	Coastal Beaches	Winthrop	
Worcester	Small whorled Pogonia	Threatened	Forests with somewhat poorly drained soils and/or a seasonally high water table	Leominster	

⁻Eastern cougar and gray wolf are considered extirpated in Massachusetts.

⁻Endangered gray wolves are not known to be present in Massachusetts, but dispersing individuals from source populations in Canada may occur statewide.

⁻Critical habitat for the Northern Red-bellied Cooter is present in Plymouth County.



November 23, 2013

Ms. Julia Stearns AECOM Environment 10 Orms Street, Suite 405 Providence, RI 02901

Project: Preliminary Assessment of Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company Connecticut Expansion Project,

Suffield to East Granby, Connecticut NDDB Determination No.: 201304121

Dear Ms. Stearns,

I have reviewed Natural Diversity Data Base maps and files regarding the area delineated on the map provided for the Preliminary Assessment of Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company Connecticut Expansion Project, Suffield to East Granby, Connecticut. I have attached a list of Federal and State Listed species that are known to occur within your project boundaries. Please be advised that this is a preliminary review and not a final determination. A more detailed review will be necessary to move forward with any subsequent environmental permit applications submitted to DEEP for the proposed project. This determination is good for one year.

Natural Diversity Data Base information includes all information regarding critical biological resources available to us at the time of the request. This information is a compilation of data collected over the years by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's Natural History Survey and cooperating units of DEEP, private conservation groups and the scientific community. This information is not necessarily the result of comprehensive or site-specific field investigations. Consultations with the Data Base should not be substitutes for on-site surveys required for environmental assessments. Current research projects and new contributors continue to identify additional populations of species and locations of habitats of concern, as well as, enhance existing data. Such new information is incorporated into the Data Base as it becomes available. The result of this review does not preclude the possibility that listed species may be encountered on site and that additional action may be necessary to remain in compliance with certain state permits.

Please contact me if you have further questions at (860) 424-3592, or dawn.mckay@ct.gov . Thank you for consulting the Natural Diversity Data Base.

Sincerely,

Dawn M. McKay

Coun M. moka

Environmental Analyst 3

Species List for Request Number

R201304121

11/23/2013

Scientific Name	Common Name	State Protection Statu
nals		
Alasmidonta heterodon	Dwarf wedge mussel	E
Alasmidonta varicosa	Brook floater	E
Ammodramus savannarum	Grasshopper sparrow	E
Apamea burgessi	Apamea moth	SC
Bartramia longicauda	Upland sandpiper	E
Brachinus cyanipennis	Bombardier beetle	SC
Cicindela formosa generosa	Pine barrens tiger beetle	SC
Circus cyaneus	Northern harrier	E
Dolichonyx oryzivorus	Bobolink	SC
Eremophila alpestris	Horned lark	Е
Euchlaena madusaria	Scrub euchlaena	SC
Eumacaria latiferrugata	Brown-bordered geometer	SC
Euxoa violaris	Violet dart moth	T
Falco sparverius	American kestrel	T
Glyptemys insculpta	Wood turtle	SC
Grammia phyllira	Phyllira tiger moth	E
Harpalus eraticus	Ground beetle	SC
Heterodon platirhinos	Eastern hognose snake	SC
Passerculus sandwichensis	Savannah sparrow	SC
Pooecetes gramineus	Vesper sparrow	E
Schinia spinosae	Noctuid moth	SC
Sturnella magna	Eastern meadowlark	SC
Terrapene carolina carolina	Eastern box turtle	SC
Tetragonoderus fasciatus	Ground beetle	SC
Toxostoma rufum	Brown thrasher	SC

Natural Communities

Sand barren

Plants

Carex bushii	Sedge	SC
Carex squarrosa	Sedge	SC
Helianthemum propinquum	Low frostweed	T
Vitis x novae-angliae	New England grape	SC



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

New England Field Office 70 Commercial Street, Suite 300 Concord, NH 03301-5087 http://www.fws.gov/newengland

March 21, 2014

Ms. Julia Stearns AECOM 10 Orms Street, Suite 405 Providence, Rhode Island 02904

Dear Ms. Stearns:

This responds to your correspondence, dated September 29, 2013, requesting information on the presence of federally listed and/or proposed endangered or threatened species in relation to the Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company's proposal to construct and operate the Connecticut Expansion Project. Additional information was received on November 11, 2013. The project involves the installation of approximately 13.3 miles of pipeline looping (installation of new pipeline along existing pipeline within active rights-of-way) in New York, Massachusetts and Connecticut. Pursuant to section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531-1533), federal agencies, including the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, have a responsibility to consult with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) when projects they fund, authorize, or carry out result in effects to federally listed or proposed species. Our comments are provided in accordance with section 7 of the ESA.

This letter addresses only those portions of the project located in Massachusetts and Connecticut. For review of the New York portions of the project, please send a duplicate request for review package to the Service's New York Field Office at 3817 Luker Road, Cortland, New York 13045.

Endangered Species

Dwarf wedgemussel

The 8.1-mile-long Line 300 loop extending from East Granby, Connecticut north to the Massachusetts border crosses Muddy Brook at a point located approximately 4.75 miles north of the proposed project's southernmost point. The federally endangered dwarf wedgemussel (*Alasmidonta heterodon*) is known to occur at several upstream and downstream locations within close proximity to the project area in Muddy Brook. Accordingly, this species may occur in the project area. Since the proposed project crosses habitat known to support dwarf wedgemussel, further consultation with

this office regarding the project is recommended. Specifically, we request project-specific details regarding construction techniques including erosion and sedimentation control measures, along with your determination as to whether or not the proposed crossing of Muddy Brook may affect the dwarf wedgemussel or its habitat.

Species Undergoing Review

In an effort to improve ESA implementation, the Service developed a multiyear-listing work plan that will enable the agency to systematically review and address the needs of more than 250 species listed on the 2010 Candidate Notice of Review, to determine if they should be added to the Federal Lists of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants. This work plan was subsequently filed as part of a Multi-District Litigation (MDL) court-approved settlement agreement with the Center for Biological Diversity and WildEarth Guardians, whereby the Service has committed to publish certain ESA listing actions (i.e., petition findings, listing determinations, and critical habitat designations) in fiscal years (FY) 2013 to 2016 (the federal fiscal year ends September 30). The Service recently extended the MDL work plan to include FYs 2017 and 2018 (see the work plan available at: http://www.fws.gov/endangered/improving_ESA/listing_workplan_FY13-18.html [accessed March 2014]).

Although not currently listed, the New England cottontail rabbit (*Sylvilagus transitionalis*) and the northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) are species that appear on the MDL work plan and may occur in the vicinity of the project. While there is currently no legal obligation to avoid affecting the habitat of these species at the present time, the Service strongly encourages their consideration during project planning. Early consideration of these species in project planning may allow the project to be designed in a manner that avoids adverse effects to these species. This early consideration may help to avert future project delays, since a determination that listing of these species under authority of the ESA is warranted will trigger the need for consultation pursuant to section 7 of the ESA.

New England cottontail

The Service's MDL work plan schedule specifies that we will develop a Proposed Rule to list the New England cottontail or conclude that listing of the New England cottontail is not warranted during FY 2015. We are not aware that any comprehensive surveys or other studies have been conducted for this species within the project area. However, the 3.8-mile-long Line 200 portion of the project located in Berkshire County, Massachusetts is located in an area known to be occupied by the New England cottontail. Vegetation management along utility rights-of-way can have a significant impact on the New England cottontail. Long-term management that converts scrub-shrub corridors into herbaceous vegetative cover eliminates habitat and hinders cottontail dispersal, while short-term management of shrubs results in a temporary impact to habitat. These short-term impacts to shrub communities may be necessary to ensure vegetation succession does not proceed to the point where habitat is no longer suitable for the New England cottontail. Given the conservation status of the New England cottontail and their potential presence in the project area, consideration of the species during project planning is strongly advised.

Northern long-eared bats

The northern long-eared bat is currently proposed for listing under the ESA. The Service's MDL work plan schedule indicates that we will develop a Final Rule to list the northern long-eared bat or conclude that listing of the species is not warranted during FY 2014. During summer months, northern long-eared bats roost singly or in colonies underneath bark, in cavities, or in crevices of both live and dead trees. Males and non-reproductive females may also roost in cooler places, like caves and mines. This bat species appears to be opportunistic in selecting roosts, using various tree species based on suitability to retain bark or provide cavities or crevices. It has also been found in rare instances roosting in structures like barns and sheds.

Lines 200 and 300 are both located within the known range of the northern long-eared bat. Since the northern long-eared bat may be listed prior to the completion of the Connecticut Expansion Project, we recommend time-of-year restrictions to avoid cutting of occupied summer roosting habitat during the period of April 1 to September 30. If this time-of-year restriction cannot be implemented, further consultation to determine impacts of the project to this species is recommended to avoid potential project delays in the event the species becomes listed.

Thank you for your coordination on this project. Please contact Maria Tur of this office at 603-223-2541 with any additional information or for further assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Thomas R. Chapman

Supervisor

New England Field Office

Ms. Julia Stearns March 21, 2014

cc: FERC

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MaryEllen VanDonsel

Reading file

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