



# United States Department of the Interior

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**  
Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building  
1 Federal Drive  
Fort Snelling, MN 55111-4056

IN REPLY REFER TO:

FWS/ES

APR - 8 2008

Dear Interested Party:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is pleased to provide you with the Scoping Report for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) being prepared by the Service for the potential issuance of a 50-year Incidental Take Permit (ITP) to NiSource Inc. ITPs allow the take of federally threatened and endangered species. NiSource Inc. has applied for an ITP and is in the process of developing a multi-species Habitat Conservation Plan for its pipeline network in 14 Midwestern states. Scoping is part of the process required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to develop an EIS. The NEPA requires full public disclosure and analysis of environmental impacts of a proposed federal action – which in this case is the potential issuance of an ITP to NiSource Inc.

As part of this NEPA process, the Service conducted 13 public scoping meetings between November 5 and November 13, 2007. We have consulted with various Federal, State, tribal and local agencies in Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, New Hampshire, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, and other interested parties regarding the scope of the EIS and the range of reasonable alternatives. The purpose of these meetings and consultations was to solicit input from the general public, tribes, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations to assist the Service in identifying issues to be addressed in the EIS, as well as to develop a reasonable range of alternatives to be analyzed in the EIS. The Scoping Report documents the scoping process and presents feedback obtained from the scoping process.

The Scoping Report includes the following information related to the scoping process and development of the draft EIS:

- Background information on the regulatory framework relative to the issuance of an ITP to NiSource Inc. or any of its interstate natural gas transmission subsidiaries;
- Definition, and purpose and need for the proposed action;
- Description of the proposed alternatives, including the no-action alternative;
- Summary of the scoping process and comments received; and,
- Summary of impact areas and issues to be addressed in the EIS.

Interested Party

2

The Scoping Report, including appendices, can also be found on our website at:  
[http://www.fws.gov/midwest/Endangered/permits/hcp/hcp\\_nisource.html](http://www.fws.gov/midwest/Endangered/permits/hcp/hcp_nisource.html).

For additional information or if you have any questions about the Scoping Report, EIS, or the NiSource Habitat Conservation Plan, please contact Mr. Thomas Magnuson, (612) 713-5467, [tom\\_magnuson@fws.gov](mailto:tom_magnuson@fws.gov); or Mr. Forest Clark, (812) 334-4261 ext. 206, [forest\\_clark@fws.gov](mailto:forest_clark@fws.gov).

Sincerely,

  
**Christopher Jensen**  
**Acting Regional Director**

Enclosure