



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Tennessee Ecological Services Field Office

446 Neal Street

Cookeville, Tennessee 38501

(931) 528-6481



March 25, 2022

Ms. Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
888 First Street NE, Room 1A
Washington DC 20426

Attn: OEP – Gas 4, PJ – 11.4

Subject: FWS #2022-0011291. Environmental Review New Posting Notification:
Department of Interior ER22/0092 Notice of Scoping Comments for the
Cumberland Project, Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company, LLC. FERC Docket No.
PF22-2-000, Dickson, Houston, and Stewart Counties, Tennessee.

Dear Ms. Bose,

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) personnel have reviewed your “Notice of Scoping Period Requesting Comments on Environmental Issues for the Planned Cumberland Project”. This project would involve installation of approximately 32 miles of 30-inch diameter natural gas pipeline to facilitate the proposed replacement of coal-fired units at the Cumberland Fossil Plant with a gas-based system. The pipeline would generally follow an existing Tennessee Valley Authority electric transmission line right-of-way, and the project would also include installation of a new pressure regulation station on the southeast end of the pipeline, a meter station at the northwest end of the line, new in-line inspection traps at each end of the line, and a new mainline valve at an intermediate location along the line.

As a designated non-federal representative for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company, LLC (TGP) has consulted with the Service, evaluating approximately 1,189 acres relative to potential impacts to federally listed species. Information about species that could potentially be affected by the project was generated during a search of the Service’s Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) system. Those species are: the gray bat (*Myotis grisescens*), Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*), northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*), rabbitsfoot (*Quadrula cylindrica cylindrica*), tan riffleshell (*Epioblasma florentina walkeri*), Price’s potato-bean (*Apios priceana*), and Short’s bladderpod (*Physaria globosa*). Surveys for the bats, mussels, and plants specified in the IPaC list all resulted in negative findings (with exception of the gray bat), and we understand that caves have not been

documented in the vicinity of the project area. Based on the survey findings, habitat conditions, and the obligation to implement conservation measures (including standard water quality control measures), TGP has determined that the project is not likely to adversely affect (NLAA) any of these seven species. TGP requested our concurrence with that determination. Also - in order to minimize effects to nesting birds, TGP proposed clearing of trees outside of the period of April 15 to August 1 and maintenance mowing outside of the period of April 15 to July 1.

Pedestrian field surveys of the study area were conducted between June and September 2021 to assess potential habitats for bats, mussels, and plants; and all suitable habitats were searched for Price's Potato-bean and Short's bladderpod during that timeframe. That effort did not result in the finding of either species.

Bat netting surveys were conducted between June 21 and August 13, 2021. Forty-seven sample sites were located at forested sites along the entire length of the project route in accordance with the 2020 Range-Wide Indiana Bat Summer Survey Guidelines. The survey resulted in captures of 120 individuals of four common species (big brown bat, evening bat, eastern red bat, and tricolored bat) and nine gray bats. Gray bat roost sites are not known to occur within 0.5 mile of the project route, and TGP has determined that standard sediment control measures will sufficiently address the potential for impacts to the aquatic invertebrate forage base upon which the gray bat relies. Note, in regard to "lifespan" of the bat survey data, the results are valid for a period of five years after completion of the survey (i.e., through March 2027).

Mussels were surveyed at each stream crossing that exhibits potential for the presence of mussels. Eight sites were surveyed on September 8 and 9, 2021. All suitable substrate along each crossing site was disturbed in order to document, thorough sampling and visual searches, the presence of mussel shells. Neither the rabbitsfoot nor tan riffleshell was found during the survey; only the painted creekshell, a common species, was documented.

Based on location of the project site, survey findings, and implementation of conservation measures as discussed, the Service provided a statement of concurrence on the NLAA determinations for each of the seven species. The Service considers that concurrence statement to conclude the coordination requirements of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended. Further coordination will be necessary if (1) new information reveals impacts of the proposed action that may affect listed species or critical habitat in a manner not previously considered, (2) the proposed action is subsequently modified to include activities which were not considered during this consultation, or (3) new species are listed or critical habitat designated that might be affected by the proposed action.

Finally, although not required in accordance with requirements under the ESA, we have recommended that clearing of trees and maintenance mowing be conducted during the period of October 15 – March 31 to the greatest extent feasible (while adhering to standard sediment control measures during the rainy season) or, at a minimum, to conduct these activities as late in summer as feasible. This would benefit bats and migratory birds that would potentially be roosting / nesting within the project area. Also, we recommend that revegetation of the project area be conducted in a manner that maximizes benefits to pollinators (e.g., use of milkweed to

enhance habitat for the monarch butterfly). Otherwise, we have no comments regarding environmental issues.

We appreciate the opportunity to address potential environmental impacts through your scoping process. If you have questions, please contact David Pelren at 931-261-5844 or by email at david_pelren@fws.gov.

Sincerely,

Field Supervisor