

Northern Pass EIS Process and Scoping Comments Overview

Tim Duggan
Responsible Energy Action, LLC
23 September 2012

- An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required by National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
- EIS Provides a Comprehensive Assessment of Environmental Risks – both during Construction and Operation
- DOE is overseeing the EIS preparation because the project crosses the US border (requires a Presidential Permit)
- The Northern Pass EIS preparation is not “On Hold” pending a new route. The process is proceeding.
- Every project is different and therefore every EIS is different. Each EIS will cover topics unique to that project.
- “Scoping” is the process used to determine what topics will be covered in the EIS. Public “comments” on Environmental Impacts are used as input to the Scoping Process
- What is the definition of “The Environment”?
“The Environment” is comprehensive. Traditional definition (air, water, soil, vegetation, wildlife) plus human (social, cultural, historic, economic, and personal) aspects.
 - Air Quality - Paints, lubricants, ionized air particles
 - Groundwater Resources - Pesticides, defoliants, lubricants, construction runoff
 - Geography, Geology, and Soils - Erosion from construction activities
 - Land Use - Recreation, farming
 - Ecological - Vegetation, Wildlife, Habitats
 - Public Health and Safety - Emergency radios, large scale accident response
 - Visual Resources and aesthetics - Views, vistas
 - Floodplains and wetlands - Construction runoff
 - Socioeconomic impacts - Tourism, real estate, environmental justice
 - Cultural and Historic Resources - Churches, Native lands, landmarks,
 - Cumulative Effects - Incremental impacts of ROW expansion/overloading
- “DOE will evaluate scoping comments received on the EIS in determining the full range of potential environmental impacts to analyze”
- There are no limits on the number of comments a single person or group can submit
- A DOE contractor maintains the EIS website: northernpasseis.us
- Submit comments online using the comment form on the EIS website. Also email, mail, phone, and fax. You can also go to protectwmnf.org and click on the link to enter a scoping comment.

- Older comments have been categorized by the DOE contractor. New comments are submitter categorized.
- 24 Possible Categories (plus “other”). The submitter can select one or more to file a comment under:

Purpose and Need	Alternatives	Health and Safety
Vegetation	Wildlife	View shed/Scenery
Water/Wetlands	Soils	Recreation
Private Property/Land Use	Taxes	Historic/Cultural
Economic	Traffic	National Security
Tourism	Quality of Life	Air Quality
Cumulative Effects	Noise	Forest Service Lands
NEPA Process	Environmental Justice	Design Criteria/Mitigation Measures
- Expect DOE to provide comments in the “Forest Service Lands” category (currently 171 comments) to the USFS.

- **REAL Scoping Comments Overview**

Total Comments Received	1,874
Comments Supporting the Project	57
Comments Opposing the Project	1,692
Other Comments	125

Most Mentioned Negative Impacts

1. Ruined landscape (1,021 comments)
2. Economic decline from decreased tourism and vacation activities (615 comments)
3. Decreased property values (496 comments)

Most Mentioned Issues

1. Power not needed in, or destined for, NH (485 comments)
2. Project is for power company profit only (294 comments)
3. Use of Eminent Domain by a private project (258 comments)

Most Mentioned Project Alternatives

1. Burial (311 comments)
2. Domestic alternative power sources (200 comments)
3. Use existing HVDC corridor in Vermont (165 comments)

- DOE will close the scoping period sometime after “additional routing information is received from Northern Pass”
- Next steps: Scoping Summary -> Draft EIS -> Public Review/Comments -> Final EIS -> Decision