

DRAFT

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

PENNEAST PIPELINE PROJECT CROSSING OF

BELTZVILLE DAM AND LAKE

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, *as amended*, 40 CFR 1500-1508, and 33 CFR 230, an Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared to evaluate the potential impacts associated with the PennEast Pipeline Company, LLC natural gas pipeline project (Project) where it crosses through United States Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) owned/administrated properties at the Beltzville Dam and Lake located in Carbon County, Pennsylvania. The Proposed Action requires a 30-year easement agreement in accordance with 30 U.S.C. 185, allowing PennEast Pipeline Company, LLC to construct and operate the pipeline through USACE owned/administered properties.

The purpose of the Beltzville Lake crossing is to facilitate construction of the Mainline Route of the natural gas pipeline Project. The Mainline Route and associated Project facilities would provide approximately 1.1 million dekatherms per day of year-round transportation service from northern PA to markets in eastern and southeastern PA, NJ and surrounding states. The Project is designed to provide a long-term solution to bring the lowest cost natural gas available produced in northern PA's Marcellus Shale region to homes and businesses in PA, NJ and surrounding states.

The entire PennEast pipeline project would entail the construction of approximately 114.6 miles of 36-inch diameter pipeline from Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, to Mercer County, New Jersey. The Project's approximately 114.6-mile Mainline Route crosses USACE owned/administrated properties between Mile Post 42.9 and Mile Post 43.9. Within these USACE owned/administrated lands, the pipeline would cross Wild Creek and Pohopoco Creek approximately 5.1 and 5.4 river miles upstream of the dam, respectively.

Alternatives for the Proposed Action considered in this EA include the No Action Alternative, and three different routing alternatives: 1) Open cut dry crossing (coffer dam); 2) Two shorter horizontal directional drills (HDD), one for each waterbody crossing; and 3) One single HDD spanning across both Wild Creek and Pohopoco Creek. The No Action Alternative, which provides environmental baseline conditions, was determined to be unfeasible as it does not address the project's purpose and need. The open cut and two shorter HDD lengths alternatives were determined to have greater impacts on vegetation, water and wetland resources, recreation and recreational areas, viewshed, and other resources than the single HDD crossing alternative.

The preferred alternative involves the use of the HDD method to cross both waterbodies, thereby avoiding and minimizing direct impacts to Wild Creek and Pohopoco Creek, the surrounding forested uplands, wetlands, Beltzville State Park recreational facilities and USACE owned/administrated properties. One single bore measuring approximately 6,100 feet in drill length would cross under both waterbodies. The drill entry point would be sited in an open

agricultural field adjacent to an upland forested area within the park boundaries. The drill exit point would be located on a property south of the USACE owned/administrated lands. Through use of a single HDD bore, PennEast would avoid and minimize impacts to forests, wetlands, waterbodies, and recreational facilities such as trails. All natural and social environmental factors that may be relevant to the Proposed Action, including the cumulative effects thereof, were considered by the EA.

The EA determined that the Proposed Action would not result in significant impacts to the natural or human environment, but temporary and minor impacts would include, and are not limited to, temporary noise and displacement of wildlife during construction, changes in existing land uses and existing visual and aesthetic resources, temporary impact on traffic and transportation, and minor impacts to topography, vegetation and geology. The Proposed Action will avoid and minimize impacts on resources in the project area and will include the restoration and mitigation of all impacts to these resources, consistent with USACE's restoration goals.

After having carefully evaluated and balanced all beneficial and detrimental aspects of the Proposed Action, including all regulatory agency input, I have reasonably concluded that the proposed project would not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment and is in accordance with 40 C.F.R. § 1508.13. Consequently, the preparation of an environmental impact statement under the National Environmental Policy Act for this action is not warranted. The public interest will be best served by the implementation of the Proposed Action. Further, the proposed work is in compliance with all applicable Federal, State, and local laws and regulations. This document was circulated for a 30-day notice to concerned agencies, organizations and the interested public for review and comment. There were no substantive comments on the document.

Date

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District Commander