

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

PENNEAST PIPELINE PROJECT CROSSING OF

FRANCIS E. WALTER DAM AND RESERVOIR

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 Francis E. Walter Dam and Reservoir located in Carbon and Luzerne Counties, 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 Francis E. Walter Reservoir 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 at the Francis E. Water Reservoir between mile post 23.0 and 23.1. The proposed pipeline would cross the Lehigh River approximately 2.8 river miles upstream of the Francis E. Walter Dam.

Alternatives for the Proposed Action considered in this EA include the No Action Alternative, and four different routing alternatives. The selected proposed final alignment route through the project area was based on public and agency input and included a minimization and avoidance of impacts. The proposed alignment was further evaluated using construction method alternatives: 1) dam and pump open cut crossing; 2) flume crossing; 3) Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD); and 4) direct pipe. 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 flume crossing, direct pipe and HDD alternatives were determined to have potential for greater environmental impacts based on the project area footprint and constructability. The preferred alternative involves the use of the dam and pump open cut crossing methodology. This method would avoid and minimize impacts to the Lehigh River and surrounding resources. All 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 will not result in significant impacts to the natural or human environment, but impacts will include, and are not limited to, temporary noise and

displacement of wildlife during construction, changes in existing land uses and existing visual/aesthetic resources, topography, wildlife habitats, and vegetation. Short term impacts on aquatic resources, traffic, and recreation could also be expected. The Proposed Action will avoid and minimize all impacts on resources in the project area and will include the restoration and mitigation of 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. The Environmental Assessment 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

Michael A. Bliss, P.E.
Lieutenant Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Commander