

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
Easement for EQT Gathering, LLC NITE-S005 Pipeline Project
Crooked Creek Lake, Armstrong County, Pennsylvania
December 2013

The United States, acting by and through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Pittsburgh District, is proposing to grant a pipeline easement for construction and maintenance of a natural gas pipeline to EQT Gathering, LLC. This project will serve as a gathering system for the transport of natural gas to market via an interconnect with an existing transmission pipeline located east of Crooked Creek Lake Park. The proposed crossing is located beneath the surface of the Crooked Creek crossing, running perpendicular to Cochrans Mills Road (S.R. 2028) in the vicinity of Ford City, Armstrong County, Pennsylvania.

EQT is proposing to install a 12-inch diameter buried natural gas pipeline and utilize an existing gravel access road within the Crooked Creek Lake management area labeled - tracts L-27 and L-28. The pipeline is approximately 8.1 miles long with a 2,337-foot long by 75-foot wide section (0.4 miles) crossing Federal lands. Under the Agency Preferred Alternative, approximately 1,788 feet of pipeline will be installed via horizontal directional drill and 549 feet open-cut at either end of the project area near the state road corridor on one side and at the connection with an existing pipeline on the other side of the property boundary. For the portion of the pipeline installed via the HDD method, no surface disturbing activities would occur and overall surface disturbance to USACE-managed lands would be minimized to approximately 2.0 acres.

Under the National Environmental Policy Act, Kleinfelder East, Inc. was retained by EQT Gathering, LLC to conduct an Environmental Assessment (EA) at the request of the Pittsburgh District for the portion of the project that crosses the Crooked Creek Lake property. The EA identified and evaluated alternatives to the project to determine whether one would be preferable to the proposed action. These alternatives included the proposed action, no-action, other installation method, and routing around Federal land.

The proposed action alternative takes a direct, perpendicular route beneath the Crooked Creek management area via HDD with limited open-cut areas at the terminal ends of the project area. Analysis of this alternative determined that it has the least amount of environmental impacts.

The no-action alternative was not found to be feasible as it did not satisfy the purpose of providing the additional infrastructure and incremental capacity necessary to transport natural gas.

The second alternative is shorter (1,247 linear feet), but due to technical constraints caused by topography and subsurface conditions, the entire length of the pipeline route would have to be installed via open-cut installation. Four temporary workspaces would be constructed totaling approximately 0.8 acres (Table 2.3-1). This alternative would require the construction of 643 feet of temporary access road from the northeast corner of the Project Area

to the pipeline right-of-way. After analysis, this alternative was not selected due to the greater amount of surface disturbance than the Agency Preferred Alternative.

Potential impacts were addressed with regard to floodplains, vegetation, fish and wildlife, water quality, air quality, wetlands, endangered species, cultural resources, regulated hazardous contaminants, transportation, noise, aesthetics, wild and scenic rivers, land use, and socioeconomic resources. Coordination was made with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. Preventive measures will be taken to limit impacts to potential Indiana bat habitats within the project area that require clearing. Due to the HDD installation methods, no environmental or cultural resources in the vicinity of the proposed project will be significantly impacted. The project will comply with all applicable environmental laws and EQT Gathering, LLC has obtained all necessary permits and approvals.

After having carefully evaluated and balanced all beneficial and detrimental aspects of the action proposed in the SRC Pipeline Project Environmental Assessment, 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 is being circulated for a 30-day review to concerned agencies, organizations and the interested public for review and comment. This Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) precedes the Corps of Engineers' final decision on the proposed action. A copy of this Final FONSI will be placed on the District's website (<http://www.lrp.usace.army.mil>).