

Finding of No Significant Impact

RALPHTON WATER PROJECT JENNER AND QUEMAHONING TOWNSHIPS, SOMERSET COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA SECTION 313, ENVIRONMENTAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Pittsburgh District, proposes to participate in the design and construction of a water system expansion within Jenner and Quemahoning Townships, Somerset County, Pennsylvania, under Section 313 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1992 (PL 102-580) as amended by Section 107 of the conference report accompanying the FY96 Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act, Public Law 102-580, as amended.

The purpose of this project is to relieve the Village of Ralphton of its water supply issues by expanding the existing water system that is owned and operated by the Municipal Water Authority of the Township of Jenner (MWATJ). Residents in the Village of Ralphton utilize home-owned wells and suffer from a lack of safe drinking water due to extensive coal mining, and a lack of wastewater infrastructure. Even with water conservation practices, the Village of Ralphton consistently runs out of clean, safe water. An expansion of the existing system is needed to provide safe drinking water and to provide a fire protection infrastructure for local residents. The total project work will consist of the design and construction of approximately 15,000 total lineal feet of 8-inch PVC waterline from Jenner Township to the Village of Ralphton. The project includes an 8-inch transmission pipeline, appurtenances, service taps for approximately 30 properties, and 10 fire hydrants for fire protection in Jenner and Quemahoning Townships, and the Village of Ralphton in Somerset County, Pennsylvania. The 12,500-foot section of pipeline will connect the MWATJ's existing storage tank located at the North Star Industrial Park to the Village of Ralphton.

Under the National Environmental Policy Act, Somerset Planning and Engineering Services prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the local sponsor and consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Pennsylvania Game Commission, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP), and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission in its preparation. The EA addresses multiple alternatives, including the proposed action and the no action alternative, to address the lack of safe drinking water in the project area that is creating a public health risk. Should no action be taken to rectify the problem of unsafe, costly, and unreliable potable water in the Ralphton area, the residents will continue to face public health and safety challenges daily. The area would continue to endure the risk of fire devastation without the reassurance of nearby fire hydrants, and was therefore rejected as a viable option. Purchasing and maintaining individual private water treatment systems in this low to moderate-income area would detract from property values and produce negative social impacts as fundamental sustenance may be given up or traded off for treated water. It was also determined that the construction of a new water treatment facility would not be feasible. Funding for a project of that magnitude is simply not available. The proposed action will utilize a booster pump station to supply Ralphton's existing water storage tank with water from Jennerstown Borough's safe, reliable source.

Potential impacts were addressed with regard to land use, floodplains, wetlands, historic resources, sensitive biological resources, water quality, socio-economic issues, air quality, transportation, noise, and wild and scenic rivers. No significant environmental and cultural resources have been identified in the immediate vicinity of the proposed project. Adherence to the Erosion and Sedimentation Control Plan approved by the Somerset County Conservation District will minimize impacts from construction. Also, a permit has been acquired from PADEP for the five stream crossings associated with this project. This project design will comply with all applicable environmental laws.

I have reasonably determined that the construction of the proposed water system expansion within Jenner and Quemahoning Townships, Somerset County, Pennsylvania would not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the human environment as defined in the Council on Environmental Quality's current regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act. The preparation of an environmental impact statement under the National Environmental Policy Act is not warranted. This determination precedes the Corps of Engineers' final decision concerning this proposed action. A notice of availability of this FONSI will be placed at the Conemaugh Township Library, 120 Whistler Street, Conemaugh, Pennsylvania and on the District's website.

1 SEPT 11
Date



William H. Graham
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Engineer