



Update Newsletter

Susquehanna to Roseland 500 kV Transmission Line Environmental Impact Statement

Dear friends,

The National Park Service (NPS) has been preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate the impacts of a power transmission project that replaces an existing 230 kilovolt (kV) line that currently crosses three park units: Appalachian National Scenic Trail, Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, and Middle Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River. The proposed project would include a new double circuit 500 kV line crossing the park units. This newsletter updates you on this process.

In our newsletter of August 2010, we presented alternatives being considered in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS). The NPS impact analysis evaluates the alternatives only as they cross the lands and waters of the park units. We have now evaluated more data. This has resulted in changes to the alternatives we introduced during scoping. Two of the alternatives, alternatives 6 and 7, were dismissed when further study showed they were not sufficiently responsive to the applicants' request and did not adequately meet the selection criteria. Furthermore, a new alternative developed by the applicants has been added to the analysis: alternative 2b. Alternative 2b would be built within the existing right-of-way (ROW) of the applicants' original proposal, alternative 2. Under alternative 2b, the applicants would not request any additional ROW. They have stated they can safely operate the new line within the existing ROW, which has some sections 100 feet in width. Construction would still require additional clearing for access roads and other features.

We also completed fieldwork needed to characterize the natural, historic and scenic resources that would be affected by the proposed transmission line project. Natural resources surveys included wetlands, rare plants and raptor nesting locations. We completed surveys of archeological resources, historic structures and scenic resources. In addition, existing data were compiled to determine the impacts to soundscapes and cultural resources.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers withdrew as a cooperating agency, opting to perform their own compliance process. In February 2011, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) agreed to become a cooperating agency in the EIS process. Two alternatives cross lands within the designated boundary of Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Through this collaboration, we can gain an improved understanding of the impacts to the resources from the proposed action. In this manner, we can make the most informed decision for protecting and preserving the natural, cultural, scenic, and recreational resources within these federal lands.

The Draft EIS for the Susquehanna to Roseland double 500kV Transmission Line Project will be available for public comment and review in winter 2011/2012. In conjunction with the release of the Draft EIS, we will again hold a series of public meetings to present information on the Draft EIS to the public and to collect public comments. In the meantime, we invite you to familiarize yourself with our continued work on this important project. These are your lands and waters and you have a critical role in what decision is ultimately made on uses that occur within these parks and refuges.

Thank you for your attention and continued interest in this process.

Sincerely,

John J. Donahue, Superintendent
Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area
Middle Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River

Pamela Underhill, Superintendent
Appalachian National Scenic Trail

Update on Alternatives

During public review and comment on the alternatives in the fall of 2010, the applicants submitted comments recommending the evaluation of an alternative to their original proposal. After significant study and discussion, we agreed to include this alternative in our analysis. The new alternative, alternative 2b, would use the same corridor as the applicants' original proposal. The primary difference is that there would be no expansion of the ROW; the alternative would be constructed within the existing ROW, which is in places 100 feet wide.

As the National Park Service team evaluated the alternatives, it was decided that alternatives 6 and 7 were not sufficiently responsive to the applicants' request and they were dismissed.

Field Studies

Natural Resources

The National Park Service is charged with protecting the natural resources of the national park system. To document the potential impacts to natural resources from the applicants' proposal and action alternatives, we completed a number of surveys in the summer and fall of 2010 and spring of 2011. We surveyed for rare, threatened and endangered plants along the alignments of the alternatives, along proposed access roads, and within habitats adjacent to the alignments that would be cleared for construction. We used this information along with other existing data to complete the impact analyses.



Scenic Resources

The National Park Service team identified numerous scenic vistas within the project area that visitors enjoy. These views include the Delaware River, heavily wooded forests, clearings along the Appalachian Trail, and cultural landscapes. We took photographs at these locations to document the existing condition of vistas. The photos were used to create simulations that depict how the visual quality at these vistas would change if the 500 kV transmission line were constructed. These simulations allow us to assess the potential impacts to important viewsheds for park and trail visitors at large.

Raptor Study

We conducted surveys for raptor nests and raptor breeding territories along the alignments of the alternatives in the spring of 2011. By broadcasting taped raptor calls at points along the alignments, we were able to get responses from three of the four target raptor species.

This allowed us to locate potential territories and/or nests for three species along the alternative alignments.



Visitor Use

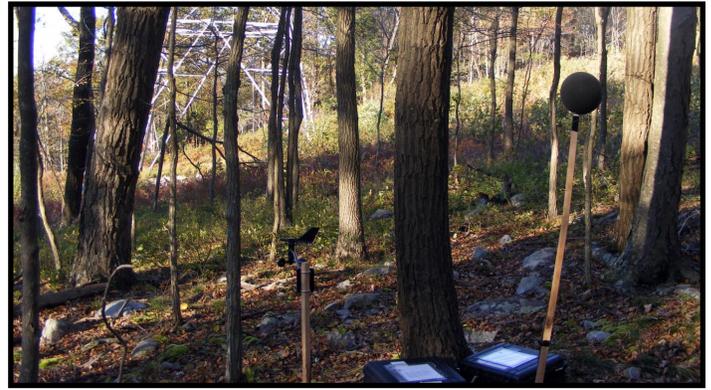
To better understand how visitors might be affected by the proposed alternatives, we identified recreation uses in the three national park system units. From this, we developed a list of locations that could be affected by the proposed action within Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, Middle Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River, and along the Appalachian Trail, and we collected information on the types of recreation use observed at each location.

The types of uses we documented included river recreationists (canoeists, kayakers, tubers, motor boaters), hikers, cyclists, bird watchers, photographers, picnickers, anglers, campers, river campers, visitors interested in local history, drivers, backpackers, swimmers, model airplane club members, and rock climbers. This information will help characterize potential impacts to recreation activities and visitor experience.



Cultural Resources

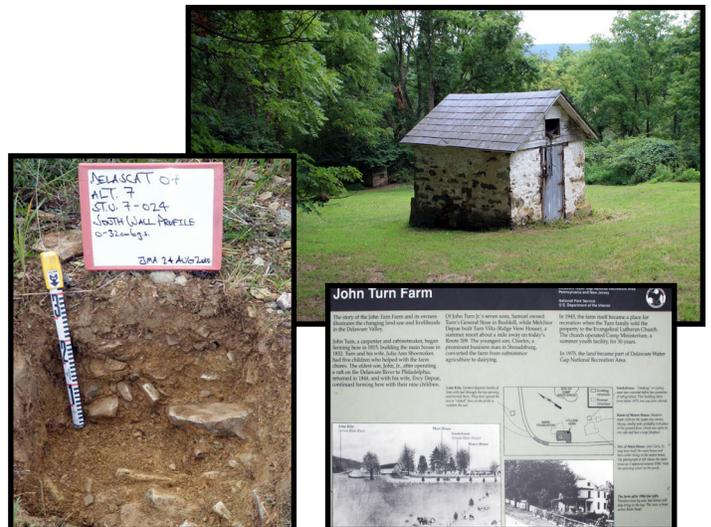
The National Park Service team tested for the presence of historic and prehistoric archeological resources by completing shovel tests along the alignments. A shovel test is a method used by archeologists to find buried remains or archeological sites, artifacts, or features that occur below the ground's surface. Several archeological sites were located during testing. In addition, we identified more than 150 cultural landscapes along the alignments. We are also consulting with the Pennsylvania and New Jersey State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) and Tribal Governments to identify important cultural resources that may be impacted.



Soundscapes

High voltage transmission lines can generate noise during corona discharges, which primarily occur in foul weather when droplets form on the conductors. The National Park Service team conducted sound monitoring surveys at representative locations in the vicinity of the proposed alternatives. We monitored at different locations within the study area.

We collected data using sound monitoring devices. We used these data to establish baseline conditions within the study area, determining natural and human-produced sources of noise. These data allowed us to predict audible noise from the proposed transmission lines through modeling. The results of the modeling are being used to analyze effects of the proposed line on the soundscape and on visitors to the parks and the environment.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
 DENVER SERVICE CENTER – STEVE CULVER, TRANSPORTATION
 12795 WEST ALAMEDA PARKWAY
 PO Box 25287
 DENVER CO 80225-0287

FIRST-CLASS MAIL
 POSTAGE & FEES PAID
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
 PERMIT NO. G-83

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
 PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE \$300



**Appalachian National Scenic Trail
 Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area
 Middle Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River**

New Jersey and Pennsylvania

Newsletter 3
 September 2011

National Park Service
 U.S. Department of the Interior



How To Participate	Project Schedule		
	Dates	Planning Activity	How To Get Involved
<p>The planning team appreciates your interest and involvement in the planning process. Your comments have helped guide the process during public scoping and analysis of proposed alternatives.</p> <p>The next document for public review will be the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, which we plan to publish for review this winter. We hope you stay involved in the process by letting us know your thoughts and ideas.</p> <p>Information on the project and process can be found at http://parkplanning.nps.gov/dewa.</p> 	Winter 2011/2012	<i>Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the draft EIS • Send us your ideas and comments • Attend the public meetings
	Fall 2012	<i>Final EIS and Record of Decision (ROD)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the final EIS, including NPS responses to substantive public comments and official letters • The ROD is published in the Federal Register
	2012 and Beyond	<i>Implement the Approved EIS</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with NPS to implement the findings of the EIS