



## **\*AMENDMENT\*** Proposal amendment to include lowering an existing natural gas pipeline beneath Big Sandy Creek in the Big Thicket National Preserve, Polk County, Texas

### Project Scoping for Environmental Analysis

Dear Friend of Big Thicket National Preserve,

November 10, 2011 the National Park Service (NPS) issued a scoping brochure for public review detailing a proposal by Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company (Tennessee Gas) to install permeable matting material or culverts along a natural gas right-of-way (ROW) within the Big Sandy Creek Unit of the Big Thicket National Preserve in Polk County, Texas. The scope of this project has been modified to include the removal and lowering of a 24-inch natural gas pipeline under Big Sandy Creek. The existing segment of pipe was installed in the early 1950's and through the natural migration of Big Sandy Creek over time the pipe has become exposed.

Tennessee Gas proposes to remove the exposed pipe and replace it to a greater depth below Big Sandy Creek to prevent future exposure by natural processes. The NPS is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The purpose of an EA is to evaluate the impacts of the proposed project on the natural environment, consider reasonable alternatives to meet the project objectives, and identify appropriate mitigation measures to minimize potential impacts. The purpose of this scoping brochure is to provide information on changes to the proposed project.

As the Superintendent of Big Thicket National Preserve, I invite you to participate in this scoping process.

Sincerely,

Douglas Neighbor

### Overview of the Process

Project Milestones Include:

- **Public Scoping Period (Closes April 27)\***
- Preparation of environmental assessment
- Public review of environmental assessment\*
- Analysis of public comment
- Preparation of decision document
- Announcement of decision on proposal

**Bold** indicates where we are now; \* indicates opportunities for public comment

### Alternatives Considered

The preliminary alternatives, including the proposed action, to be evaluated in the EA are:

1) **Alternative A: No-Action Alternative** "No-Action" means the project would not take place. In this case the "No-Action" alternative would result in the continued exposure of the existing pipe that would continue to be undermined by the stream flow. This alternative represents the baseline for comparison of the proposed action and other alternatives.

2) **Alternative B: Proposed Action** Under the proposed action, Tennessee Gas proposes to remove and lower the exposed pipe to a greater depth beneath Big Sandy Creek using the conventional open cut method. This alternative will result in ground and streambed disturbance; however, impacts from this alternative will be temporary and limited to the existing maintained ROW.

3) **Alternative C: Horizontal Directional Drilling.** Tennessee Gas would use horizontal directional drilling (HDD) techniques to place the pipe to a greater depth beneath Big Sandy Creek. This alternative would result in less ground disturbance than the open cut method; however it would require the use of workspace outside of the existing ROW, including tree clearing to accommodate the equipment needed. Additionally, disturbance would occur within the streambed and bank to remove the currently exposed pipeline.

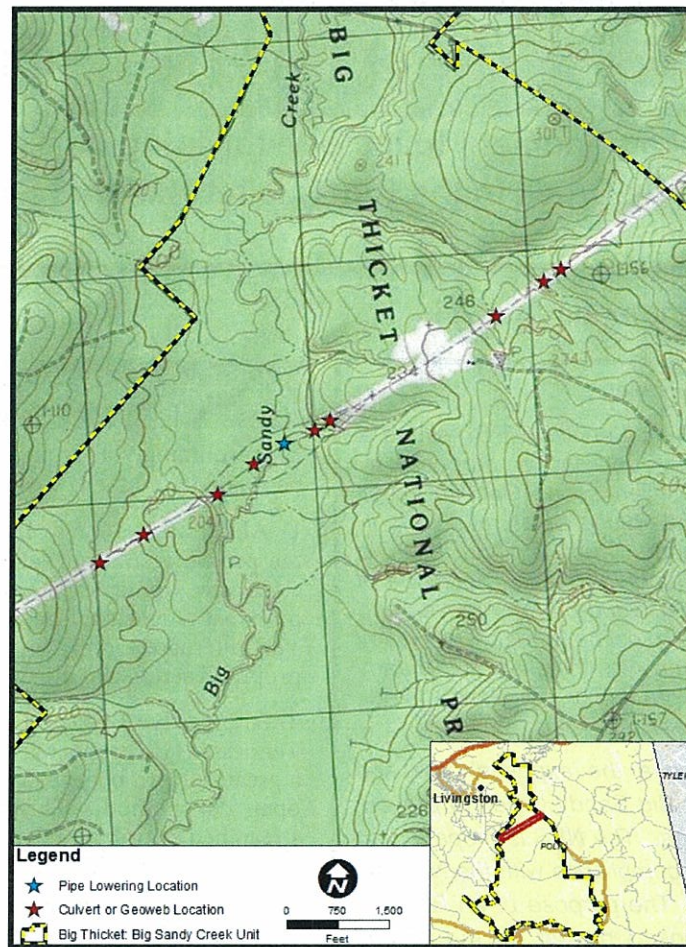
### Resources and Concerns

Initial internal project scoping identified the following resources and other concerns for consideration in the environmental assessment (EA).

- |                                |                        |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| ♦Air Quality                   | ♦Cultural Resources    |
| ♦Geology and Soils             | ♦Environmental Justice |
| ♦Water Resources               | ♦Visitor Use           |
| ♦Floodplains/Wetlands          | ♦Natural Soundscapes   |
| ♦Vegetation                    | ♦Adjacent Landowners   |
| ♦Fish and Wildlife             | ♦Socioeconomics        |
| ♦Species of Management Concern |                        |

***\*Please see the back of this page for a project map.\****





**Figure 1: Project Map**

## Ideas to Consider

Following are a few ideas to keep in mind as you develop your comments on this proposal:

1. Do you have any ideas to share about the alternatives and resources/concerns listed in the scoping brochure, or are there any other issues/concerns about the project that you think we should consider?
2. Are there any other alternatives that you think should be considered?
3. Do you have other comments and suggestions for us to consider in the EA?

## How Do I Comment on This Project?

Please submit your comments online at the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website:

**<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/bith>**

**Please provide all comments by April 27th.** If you wish to be added to or removed from the Preserve's mailing list for future correspondence, please indicate that in your response.

If you are unable to submit comments electronically through this website, then you may also submit written comments to:

**Superintendent  
Big Thicket National Preserve  
Attn: Stephanie Burgess  
6044 FM 420  
Kountze, TX 77625**

You may also hand-deliver written comments to the visitor center at Big Thicket National Preserve.