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**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION III
1650 Arch Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103-2029**

**FILED
SECRETARY OF THE
COMMISSION**

2015 DEC -7 A 10: 28

**FEDERAL ENERGY
REGULATORY COMMISSION**

Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
888 First Street, NE, Room 1A
Washington, DC 20426

NOV 10 2015

RE: Cooperating Agency request for the Development of an Environmental Impact Statement under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 for the PennEast Pipeline Company, LLC Luzerne County PA to Mercer County NJ (Docket No. PF15-1-000)

Dear Secretary Bose:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has received the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) letter (electronic copy) to EPA Region III extending an invitation to EPA to become a cooperating agency in the development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the above referenced project. The EIS is being prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA regulations (40 CFR parts 1500-1508). The PennEast Pipeline Company proposes construction of 36, 24, and 12-inch-diameter, 110.6 mile-long pipeline to transport about 1.0 billion cubic feet per day of natural gas from various receipt point interconnections in the eastern Marcellus region to markets in southeastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey, including a delivery point with Transcontinental Gas Pipeline Company, LLC (Transco) in Mercer County, New Jersey.

The pipeline will include interconnections with Transco and gathering systems operated by Williams Partners L.P., Regency Energy Partners LP, and UGI Energy Services, LLC, to various delivery point interconnections in northeastern natural markets, including interconnections with UGI Utilities, Inc. and Columbia Gas Transmission, LLC (Columbia Gas) in Northampton County, Pennsylvania, and Elizabethtown Gas, NRG REMA, LLC, Texas Eastern Transmission, LP (Texas Eastern) and Algonquin Gas Transmission, LLC (Algonquin), all in Hunterdon, New Jersey.

The CEQ has determined that a cooperating agency has the responsibility to assist the lead agency by involvement in the NEPA process at the earliest possible time. This participation includes engaging in the scoping process; in developing information and preparing environmental analyses including portions of the environmental assessment where the



cooperating agency has special technical expertise; and in making available staff support at the lead agency's request to enhance the lead agency's interdisciplinary capabilities. Our role as a cooperating agency in support of the subject EIS will consist of providing comments on general NEPA compliance and Clean Water Act (CWA), Section 404 issues as well as providing technical support in the development of the EIS. The EPA would like the opportunity to contribute in the EIS process in the following manner:

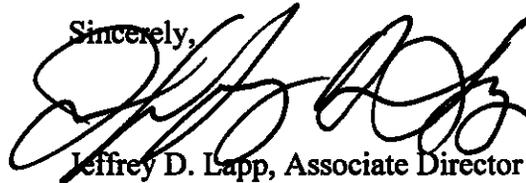
- Identification of significant issues;
- Provide technical assistance in the development of the analysis of alternatives and their environmental impact; and
- Technical assistance on Environmental Justice, cumulative impacts, etc.

The benefits of cooperating agency engagement in the preparation of NEPA analyses include disclosing relevant information early in the analytical process and establishing a mechanism for addressing intergovernmental issues. Other benefits include fostering intra- and intergovernmental trust and a common understanding and appreciation for various governmental roles in the NEPA process, as well as enhancing agencies' ability to adopt environmental documents.

Due to resource constraints, we may limit our attendance of project meetings and hope that video or telephone conference opportunities may be made available. Given reasonable time frames, we would be pleased to review preliminary project documentation including preliminary draft versions of the EIS. CEQ guidance recognizes that, while the lead agency has overall responsibility for the content of the EIS, status as a cooperating agency should not be construed as expressing agreement with the lead agency regarding the conclusions to be drawn from the EIS or selection of the preferred alternative. In addition, EPA has a number of independent responsibilities related to the proposed project, including our responsibilities pursuant to Section 309 of the Clean Air Act (CAA), Sections 402(d) and 404(b), (c), and (q) of the CWA.

EPA appreciates the opportunity to engage as a cooperating agency in the development of the documentation to satisfy the requirements of NEPA and the Clean Water Act for the PennEast Pipeline Project study while, consistent with CEQ guidance, we retain our independent obligations and right under Section 309 (a) of the CAA to review and comment on an environmental document. If there are any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Mr. Thomas Uybarreta, staff person for the project, at 215-814-2953 or uybarreta.thomas@epa.gov or Ms. Lingard Knutson, the EPA Region 2 senior staff person assisting in the EIS review at 212-637-3747 or knutson.lingard@epa.gov.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey D. Lapp, Associate Director
Office of Environmental Programs



cc: Medha Kochhar, FERC, Environmental Project Manager
Lingard Knutson, US EPA Region 2



Document Content(s)

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