

U.S. Forest Service Issues

DRAFT RECORD OF DECISION

Document proposes approval of Northern Pass underground route in the White Mountain National Forest

Northern Pass was pleased to get the news in early September that the U.S. Forest Service had released its Draft Record of Decision (ROD) recommending that the agency issue a special use permit allowing the project to bury approximately 11 miles of transmission lines in areas along existing roads through the White Mountain National Forest (WMNF). The Draft ROD is another significant step forward for Northern Pass in the permitting process, and comes on the heels of the Final Environmental Impact Statement released by the U.S. Department of Energy in August — both highlighting the soundness of the proposal and the benefits to New Hampshire and the region.

“This proposed decision by the U.S. Forest Service continues to move Northern Pass forward so that it will have all necessary state and federal permits to begin construction by mid-2018,” Eversource New Hampshire President Bill Quinlan said. *“It is consistent with the key findings of other permitting agencies, including the Department of Energy, the NH Department of Environmental Services and the NH Department of Transportation.”*

The Draft ROD is the culmination of seven years of review and extensive public input. In 2015, Northern Pass announced an improved route that included 52 additional miles of underground to avoid any potential view impacts in and around the WMNF or along the Appalachian Trail. The Draft ROD supports the project’s conclusion that burial along Interstate 93 is not a reasonable alternative, and states that the improved route *“is a reasonable way to transmit electrical power through the WMNF in a minimally impactful way when considering all available alternatives.”*

The Forest Service also said that the project will increase the reliability of New England’s power supply by reducing reliance on imported natural gas; helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions consistent with public policy goals and the New Hampshire Climate Action Plan; and, providing *“meaningful benefits to air quality”* in the White Mountain National Forest.

“Meeting long-term energy needs in a sustainable, secure, and cost-effective manner for this region of the country is certainly in the public’s interest,” the Forest Service states.

Important Agreement, Part of Federal Permitting Process Finalized

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has finalized a Programmatic Agreement (PA) regarding Northern Pass, which marks further progress in the federal permitting process for the clean energy project. The PA is a legally binding agreement that prescribes the steps necessary to complete the federal and state agency review of historic and archeological resources, including addressing any adverse effects. The PA is part of a larger process under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, and is separate from the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) environmental review.

The signatories to the PA include officials from DOE, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Department of Interior, the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources, and Northern Pass Transmission.

The following excerpts are from the U.S. Forest Service Draft Decision

- *“I fully understand and acknowledge that there will be short-term, construction-related, impacts to natural and cultural resources on the WMNF, visitors to the area, and private lands/properties located along NH Routes 112 and 116. My decision does not ignore or make light of these effects. **I believe the intensity and duration of these effects is more than outweighed by the benefits associated with bringing additional hydropower to the New England grid.**”*
- *“I believe that the technology is comprehensive, and that the Applicant possesses the ability to effectively construct, operate, and maintain the line underground...since these alternatives bury the line on the WMNF, instead of the initial proposal for overhead lines, I believe the tradeoffs and environmental impacts to the National Forest and connected areas under Alternatives 4c and 7 are reasonable.”*
- *“...the alternatives utilizing I-93 are not consistent with my understanding of NHDOT policies... Therefore, **I did not select alternatives that buried the transmission line across the WMNF in the I-93 corridor.**”*

WHAT’S NEXT FOR NORTHERN PASS

- The Counsel for the Public and intervenors are set to begin presenting witness testimony in October.
- The DOE has announced its intention to issue a Presidential Permit for Northern Pass.



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Facts ABOUT NORTHERN PASS



FACT: Northern Pass will not impact views in the White Mountain National Forest

New Hampshire is a beautiful place and our mountains and protected lands are part of the state's character. That is why more than 80 percent of the project is along existing power line corridors or buried under public roads, including 52 miles in and around the White Mountain National Forest (WMNF). Scenic vistas within the WMNF, from the Appalachian Trail, and Franconia Notch State Park would not be impacted.

The U.S. Department of Energy recently released its Environmental Impact Statement, which determined the average scenic impact from the project is "low to very low." The U.S. Forest Service also reviewed a portion of the underground route in the WMNF and determined it "is a reasonable way to transmit electrical power through the WMNF in a minimally impactful way when considering all available alternatives."



FACT: Northern Pass will provide many benefits to New Hampshire

Northern Pass will provide millions of dollars in benefits to New Hampshire. Here are some of the benefits the state will see:

- \$30 million in additional tax revenue for communities along the route.
- \$62 million savings annually in energy costs
- 2,600 jobs, with a commitment to hire local workers first
- Reducing CO₂ emissions by 3.2 million, or the equivalent of taking 670,000 cars off the road
- \$200 million Forward NH Fund for economic development, community betterment, tourism and clean energy initiatives in communities throughout the state
- \$7.5 million North Country Job Creation Fund, run by and administered to North Country residents to help businesses grow and hire more workers
- Preserving a 7-acre parcel in Concord to expand the habitat of the Karner blue butterfly, New Hampshire's state butterfly
- A \$3 million payment to NH's Aquatic Resource Mitigation Fund (ARM) to address potential impacts from construction
- \$3 million to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to support the Partners for New Hampshire's Fish and Wildlife grants, which have already funded dozens of conservation and restoration projects in New Hampshire.



FACT: N.H. will benefit from Northern Pass' power

Northern Pass will carry clean hydropower from the New Hampshire border with Canada, south to where it will be distributed throughout the regional grid from a substation in Deerfield. A portion of the energy will be used in New Hampshire, as well as the other New England states.

In our regional energy system, the price of electricity is based on how much power is available to everyone in all New England states. When a new source of low-cost energy is added, it affects the price of electricity for everyone. An energy market study showed that the added power from Northern Pass will lower energy costs by \$600 million regionally and by \$62 million annually here in New Hampshire.



FACT: Northern Pass has environmental benefits

The U.S. Department of Energy recently issued its Final Environmental Impact Statement, which said it intended to issue the project a Presidential Permit. After a multi-year review of the project, the DOE concluded our proposal is the "preferred alternative" and the project will help diversify the electric supply and provide clean hydropower that "can help meet public policy goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions." The N.H. Department of Environmental Services has also concluded its technical review and has recommended approval of the project.

Northern Pass will have a major impact on the region's efforts to reduce greenhouse gasses. The project will reduce CO₂ emissions by 3.2 million tons per year, equivalent to taking 670,000 cars off the road. It will make the New England electric grid, which New Hampshire is a part of, less reliant on natural gas for generating electricity, and provides a clean back-up source of energy for other intermittent sources, like wind and solar.

ABOUT NORTHERN PASS

Northern Pass is a 192-mile electric transmission line project that will provide New Hampshire and New England up to 1,090 megawatts of clean hydropower. This reliable and competitively-priced power will also bring a range of benefits to New Hampshire, including hundreds of millions of dollars in energy cost savings, additional tax revenue, and thousands of jobs during construction and beyond. To learn more about Northern Pass, go to www.northernpass.us. You can also email questions to info@northernpass.us or call **1-800-286-7305**.