

Brodhead Watershed Association

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4/25/2022

Re: Comments of the Brodhead Watershed Association **Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company, LLC – FERC Docket No CP21-94-000**

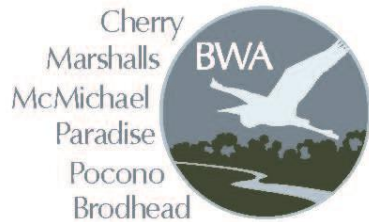
The Brodhead Watershed Association offers the following comments in response to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's ("FERC's") request for comments on the EIS. The comments are association with the approximately 13.8 miles of 42-inch-diameter pipeline collocated with Transco's Leidy Line System from MP 43.72 to MP 57.50 in Monroe County, Pennsylvania ("Effort Loop") & Existing, improved, and new access roads and contractor yards/staging areas in Monroe County, Pennsylvania.

In summary, we request the following amendments to the development plan:

- 1) Co-locate throughout the entire length of the proposed Effort loop.
- 2) All earth disturbance activity and forest/vegetative clearing must only occur between December 1st – March 31st
- 3) Study Lake Minneola Marsh associated hydrologically associated wetlands EL-4 and EL-5 in comprehensive detail.

In addition to the above 3 summary points, we formally request FERC to consider all the below points as they relate to the EIS.

- To determine current water quality, the EIS must include a survey of the established benthic community in potentially impacted streams and wetlands. This should include the composition, quantity, and diversity of the community using standardized sampling protocols consistent with the state's assessments.
- All anti-degradation streams and associated wetlands that have special designations warrant special attention and protection, especially when a tributary has EV or HQ designation.
- The EIS must fully assess impacts to wetlands including, but not limited to changes in water levels, flow characteristics, and circulation patterns, the impacts of temporary and permanent alteration of vegetation in and around wetlands, altered temperatures, changed light, altered humidity, altered groundwater or surface water flows, and/or altered flooding frequencies due to the proposed project.
- Co-location. In the Effort loop, co-location takes place in a number of locations throughout the proposed project area. If this type of collocation within the already cleared and impacted ROW is technically and



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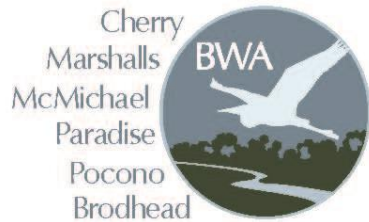
economically feasible, why can't it be done for the entire expansion? In the EV and HQ special protection watersheds collocation is certainly a better option, and will result in considerably fewer direct wetland and stream impacts.

- There's a probable presence of the federally endangered Indiana bat, northern long-eared bat, bog turtle, red knot, northeastern bulrush, and swamp pink; and also northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*), and numerous PNDI species of plants, and insects. In the instances of the bats, and bog turtles, collocation must be a serious consideration, rather than mitigating the timing of tree clearing to the dormant season.

For the Bulrush, and all other plant species, open trench cutting must not be permitted, as it's virtually impossible to avoid impact with the proposed cutting method. For example, soil compaction of heavy equipment, and humans can negatively impact the root systems during the dormant season. Simply monitoring the populations before and after construction are not satisfactory. As stationary species, their habitat must not be impacted, during any season for any reason.

Furthermore, if all activity is restricted to December 1st to March 31st any impact will be minimized.

- The timber rattlesnake mitigation methods are woefully inadequate. Simply "monitoring" construction equipment and sites is nearly meaningless in preventing mortality. Transco could hire private enforcement officers in addition to the biologists to carry out the monitoring every single work day with a checklist and summary reports. Also, to prevent mortality of the snakes, all clearing, and pipe installation activity for the entire pipeline project should take place between December 1st and March 31st when the snakes are hibernating. It's virtually impossible to prevent the crushing of the animals by heavy machinery during any other time of the year.
- As currently written the mitigation methods for Blunt manna-grass and showy goldenrod allow for mortality, and simply retains the topsoil. The showy goldenrod for example is not survived by seed alone, but overwinters as roots/ ribosomes which will be destroyed by the project. Soil alone isn't sufficient habitat because it does not take into consideration the fragile fungal networks of mycorrhiza which will also be fatally wounded by the pipeline. As such, the mitigation efforts for PA plants are woefully inadequate. A full survey of the entire 13 mile Effort loop must identify all populations of these species, and they should be fenced off and clearly delineated. The pipe can be inserted through horizontal boring under their habitat, rather than open trench method. As no disturbance whatsoever is the preferred option. Alternatively TRANSCO should transplant all species with the help of a licensed botanist with a specialty in rare and endangered



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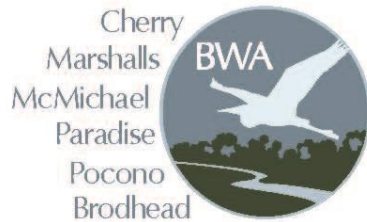
plants. This would allow the species, which survive by root, to survive in new mitigation areas. The mitigation areas should be identified in advance by a professional biologist with published research on this subject.

- While Transco has developed a Migratory Bird Plan (see table 2.3-1), (i.e., no clearing from April 1 through July 31). Transcos will avoid or reduce construction-related impacts on migratory birds. There will still be individuals migrating from other climates down and up through Pennsylvania. All clearing should instead cease between March 31st and December 1st to eliminate any chance of mortality whatsoever. Currently TRANSCO can continue to cause mortality in August, September, October, and November.
- Transco is negligent at surveying for globally rare pollinator species in the impact area. The EIS is inadequate at pointing out this negligence. In the long Pond Microsite, which is a substantial portion of the Effort Loop, the following globally rare species of moths will experience mortality and disruption to their vital mating cycles due to destruction of scrub oak, pitch pine, mesic till barrens habitat. This is a list of all the species that must be surveyed by Transco and then evaluated in the EIS. Zale Moths: *Zale submediana*, *Zale luniera*, *Zale curema*, Toothed Aphareta Moth *Sympistis dentata*, Pink Sallow Moth *Psectraglea carnosae*, Barrens Itame Moth *Macaroea expmerata*. Twilight Moth *Lycia rachelae* Blueberry Gray *Glennacognataria* Waxed Sallow Moth *Chaetoglaea cerata*.

Furthermore, when construction activity occurs at night, the lights will draw the globally rare moths from their habitat and cause mortality and disruption to their sensitive mating cycles. Why has TRANSCO ignored these globally rare species in the long pond Macro-site? The EIS Must be completed again and incorporate these globally rare moth and butterfly species in their impact analysis rather than simply choosing to ignore their existence.

To minimize impact, all sites which contain the probably presence of these species must be co-located, so as not to disrupt their eggs, adults, pupa, or larva. All construction activity must occur only between December 1st and March 31st to prevent drawing the adults to the lights and/or disrupting the mating, and development cycles.

- EL-4 and EL-5 hydrologically connected to Lake Mineola, and the shallow kettle lake which directly influence lake Mineola Marsh. According to the Monroe County NAI, Lake Mineola marsh is one of the most important wetlands in the entire state of Pennsylvania. The Lake Mineola Marsh contains a population of federally endangered bulrush species. We strongly recommend a full hydrological analysis of the proposed project in this critical watershed acreage.



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- EL-4 and EL-5 are un-named tributaries to the EV McMichael's Creek, and need to be surveyed to determine proper designation before the project begins. Currently they are unclassified on DEP E-map.
- EL4-and EL-5 are hydrologically connected to the most important ecological site in the entire Brodheads ville Quadrangle. *"The protection of the lake's naturally fluctuating water table is of critical importance. The loss of the globally-rare bulrush from Lake Mineola Marsh would be an ecological tragedy at the state, national, and international levels."*

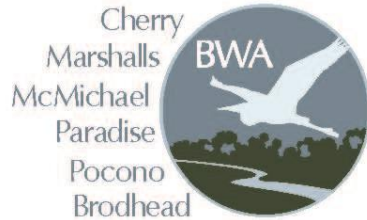
TRANSCO can prevent the loss by fully studying the hydrology of the EL-4 and EL-5 crossings. TRANSCO should analyze the 20, 50 and 100 year storm events as they relate to the temporary damming with open cutting, as currently proposed. A follow up EIS on this study should be carried out.

- Transco notes that construction of the Effort Loop would impact a total of 27 acres of habitat within the Long Pond Preserve Important Bird Area (IBA), of which 8.8 acres would be permanently impacted (i.e., forest converted to herbaceous cover). This geographic area is referred to by the Monroe County Natural Area Inventory (NAI) as the "Long Pond Microsite".
- The Long Pond Macrosite covers nearly a third of the Pocono Pines quadrangle and includes part of the end moraine and the broad area south of the end moraine drained by Tunkhannock Creek. This Long Pond Macrosite is one of the most unique ecosystems in the Northeastern US. Approximately 70% of the watershed is Exceptional Value (EV) Designation, including some of the TRANSCO crossings. As highlighted above, with the globally rare moth species, numerous plant and animal species of special concern inhabit the community. Long Pond Macrosite is the most important site in PA for the preservation of biodiversity and one of the top sites in eastern US because of this concentration of rare species.

The Monroe County NAI on Page 77 – conclusions about the Long Pond Macrosite:

"In conclusion, the Long Pond Macrosite Preserve is the jewel in the crown that is the Poconos. It is one of the last remaining areas of substantial size in the Poconos that is fairly undisturbed by human activity... The acid geology and cool mountain climate combine to produce a flora that is distinctly northern in character. All should strive to preserve this national treasure."

On the existing pipeline right of way, Page 71 of the Monroe County NAI indicates the following:



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“SP504, located near the Pocono International Raceway entrance, marks a fair population of a state-endangered grass species. This population, currently recovering from recent construction along the gas pipeline, should be checked annually to monitor its viability... Halting herbicide use near the site and mowing the pipeline right-of-way in the early spring or late fall of each year are two management strategies that would promote the grass species”.

- The ELs associated with the Pocono International Raceway are EL-13 through EL 16, and EL AR 2 – all should not be disrupted between March 31st and December 1st to limit impacts to the rare and endangered ecosystems.
- It's noted that in EL16 and EL-AR-2, EL14, and EL15, EL14, EL13, EL12, EL11, and EL10 occur within the Long Pond Macrosite and should not be impacted between March 31st and December 1st. The EL's associated with Tunkhannock Creek are EV or HQ DEP Designation. Co-location should be employed throughout the entire Long Pond Macrosite, rather than disrupting the Mesic Till Barrens habitat in any way.
- EL9 occurs in the Poplar Creek Watershed (Exceptional Value) (EV), on steep terrain, increasing the potential for sedimentation during construction. In this particular crossing, Transco should strongly consider using trenchless crossings. This is a unique circumstance where no impact to water quality or quantity can be allowed to occur. On the Poplar Creek Crossing, there must first be a full benthic macroinvertebrate sample survey before and after the project. Otherwise, how can TRANSCO possibly accurately evaluate impacts in the long term to special protection waters?
- For EL10 (Mud Run) (High quality) (HQ), Transco should also strongly consider using trenchless methods. This creek flows year round, and the expansion of the easement by clearing existing forest will increase the likelihood of thermal pollution and sedimentation. In this case, again, there must first be a full benthic macroinvertebrate sample survey before and after the project to evaluate impacts in the long term to special protection waters.

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