



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Eastern
Region

January 2018



Record of Decision

Final Northern Pass Transmission Line Project Environmental Impact Statement

WHITE MOUNTAIN NATIONAL FOREST

Grafton County, New Hampshire



In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Record of Decision

**Final Northern Pass
Transmission Line Project
Environmental Impact Statement**

WHITE MOUNTAIN NATIONAL FOREST

Grafton County, New Hampshire

Lead Agency:	USDA Forest Service
Responsible Official:	Clare R. Mendelsohn, Forest Supervisor White Mountain National Forest
For Information Contact:	Stacy Lemieux, Project Leader White Mountain National Forest 71 White Mountain Drive Campton, NH 03223 slemieux@fs.fed.us

This page intentionally left blank.

1. Record of Decision

1.1 Introduction

This Record of Decision (ROD) documents my decision to authorize use and occupancy of National Forest System (NFS) lands by Northern Pass Transmission, LLC¹ (Northern Pass or Applicant) to construct, operate, and maintain an electrical power transmission line crossing portions of the White Mountain National Forest (WMNF) in Grafton County, New Hampshire (NH). My decision is based on, and supported by, the *Final Northern Pass Transmission Line Project Environmental Impact Statement* (final EIS, DOE/EIS-0463) and the project file.

1.2 Background

The Northern Pass Transmission Line Project is a proposed electrical power transmission line that would cross the international border from Canada into the United States (U.S.) in Pittsburg, NH. It would extend up to approximately 192 miles (309 km), depending on the final siting, through the State of New Hampshire to an existing electricity substation in Deerfield, NH. The project would include both overhead and underground lines, along with the installation and operation of up to six new transition stations, one new converter station, and two upgraded substations. The proposed line would be constructed and owned by Northern Pass Transmission, LLC. Portions of the project would cross the WMNF, requiring authorization for use and occupancy of NFS lands through a special use permit (SUP) from the USDA Forest Service (USFS). Additional details regarding the selected alternatives are presented in **Section 1.4.1**.

On October 14, 2010, Northern Pass applied to the Department of Energy (DOE) for a Presidential permit pursuant to Executive Order (EO) 10485, as amended by the EO 12038, and the regulations codified at 10 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 205.320 *et seq.* (2000), “Application for Presidential Permit Authorizing the Construction, Connection, Operation, and Maintenance of Facilities for Transmission of Electric Energy at International Boundaries.”² The Presidential permit for the Applicant (OE Docket Number PP-362), if issued, would authorize Northern Pass to construct, operate, maintain, and connect facilities at the international border of the U.S. for the transmission of electrical energy across the U.S./Canada border in northern NH. DOE does not have siting or project alignment authority for projects proposed in applications for Presidential permits. The New Hampshire Site Evaluation Committee has siting authority on state and private lands in New Hampshire. The USFS has siting authority on NFS lands.

The DOE began preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS) in compliance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing the NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500–1508), and other applicable federal laws. To properly inform the decision makers, the EIS considered and disclosed impacts from the entire transmission line on U.S. soil.

¹ Northern Pass Transmission, LLC is owned by Eversource Energy Transmission Ventures, Inc. (formerly NU Transmission Ventures, Inc.), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Eversource Energy (formerly Northeast Utilities), which is a publicly-held public utility holding company. Public Service of New Hampshire (PSNH) is also a wholly-owned subsidiary of Eversource Energy, and does business as Eversource Energy.

² Full text of the federal laws can be accessed at the following website: <http://uscode.house.gov/browse.xhtml>. EOs can be accessed at the following website: <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/executive-orders/disposition.html>. Full text of the state laws can be accessed at the following website: <http://www.nh.gov/government.laws.html>.

The EIS was prepared to meet the following key objectives:

- Identify baseline conditions within the study area (see **Section 3.1** of the final EIS for a definition of the study area for each resource),
- Identify and assess potential impacts on the natural and human environment that may result in the U.S. from construction, operation and maintenance of the electrical transmission line as a result of issuing the Presidential and SUPs for the Project,
- Describe and evaluate the range of reasonable alternatives to the Proposed Action in the U.S., including the No Action Alternative,³
- Identify specific mitigation measures, as appropriate, to minimize potential environmental impacts, and
- Inform decision-making by the DOE, USFS, and other applicable federal and New Hampshire regulatory agencies responsible for the issuance of associated permits and approvals.

The DOE invited several federal and state agencies to participate in the preparation of the final EIS as cooperating agencies because of their special expertise or jurisdiction by law (see **Section 1.8** of this document). The cooperating agencies are the USFS – WMNF, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – Region 1, the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) – New England District, and the New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning (NHOEP).

Since their initial application, Northern Pass submitted two amended applications for a Presidential Permit to reflect changes to the proposed route. The first amended application (submitted July 2013) was addressed in the DOE’s draft *Northern Pass Transmission Line Project Environmental Impact Statement* (draft EIS) (80 *Federal Register* [FR] 45652 [July 31, 2015]). The second amended application (submitted August 2015) outlined further changes to the Applicant’s proposed project, including burial of an additional 52 miles (84 km) of the transmission line in roadway corridors between Bethlehem and Bridgewater, NH, with approximately 11 (16) of the 52 miles (84 km) on NFS lands.⁴ These changes prompted the DOE to issue a *Supplement to the Draft Northern Pass Transmission Line Project Environmental Impact Statement* (DOE/EIS-0463-S1) in November 2015. This supplemental draft EIS included the Applicant’s proposed project per their August 2015 amended application as Alternative 7.

On August 18, 2017, a Notice of Availability for the final EIS was published in the Federal Register (82 FR 39424). The final EIS analyzes potential environmental impacts from the Proposed Action (analyzed as Alternative 7 in the supplement to the draft EIS) and the range of reasonable alternatives (collectively referred to as “the Project”). The final EIS presents a summary of detailed information contained in the Technical Resource Reports, which were prepared for each resource area evaluated. These reports were prepared by independent experts at the direction of the DOE and with guidance from the USFS, and are available for review on the final EIS website (<http://www.northernpasseis.us/library/final-eis/technical-reports>).

³ **Chapter 2** of the final EIS describes all alternatives considered in the analysis. **Chapter 2** of the final EIS also provides a description of the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action, and the range of reasonable alternatives.

⁴ The original Proposed Action (Alternative 2 in the draft EIS) included approximately 8 miles (13 km) of underground cable. The revised Proposed Action (Alternative 7 in the final EIS) includes an additional 52 miles (84 km) of underground cable, for a total of approximately 60 miles (97 km) of underground cable.

Northern Pass applied to the USFS on June 28, 2011, for a SUP that would authorize use and occupancy of NFS lands on the WMNF for Northern Pass to construct, own, operate, and maintain an electrical transmission line. On September 5, 2013, Northern Pass submitted an amended SUP application to the USFS to reflect their initial proposed changes to the route of the Project. The previous Forest Supervisor, Tom Wagner, determined there was not a need for Northern Pass to file an amendment to our special use application for their changes outlined in their August 2015 document since the amended proposed action was within the range of the reasonable alternatives being considered for the transmission line to cross NFS lands. The USFS has been a cooperating agency in the preparation of the draft, supplement, and final EIS since December 22, 2010.

A summary of the Proposed Action and alternatives to the proposal is provided in **Section 1.5** of this document. Additional project information including alternatives to the proposal is provided in **Chapter 2** of the final EIS, and maps of the Project are contained in **Appendix A** of the final EIS.

Information regarding Northern Pass' Presidential permit application and the NEPA process is available on the DOE website for the EIS, found at <http://www.northernpasseis.us/>. Additional project information is available on the Applicant's website at <http://www.northernpass.us/>.

1.3 Purpose and Need

1.3.1 Forest Service's Purpose of and Need for Action

Northern Pass has applied to the USFS for a SUP authorizing Northern Pass to construct, operate, and maintain an electric power transmission line crossing portions of the WMNF.

The purpose of, and need for, the USFS's action is to decide whether to authorize use and occupancy through the granting of a SUP for the Project. The USFS considered the application for use of NFS lands and determined whether the Project is in the public interest and is appropriate, based on the WMNF Forest Plan (USDA Forest Service 2005a).⁵ I used the final EIS to inform my decision regarding: 1) whether to issue a Special Use Authorization under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act; 2) selection of a preferred alternative; 3) any need to amend the Forest Plan; and 4) specific terms and conditions needed to protect the resources of the Forest.

1.3.2 Project Objectives

Northern Pass set forth a detailed range of project objectives and benefits in its permit applications to the DOE and USFS. The DOE and cooperating agencies reviewed this documentation and determined the following general project objectives.

Purpose: The purpose of the Project is to build and operate a participant-funded electric transmission line to deliver 1,090 MW of low-carbon, non-intermittent power (approximately 98 percent hydropower) from Québec to southern New Hampshire to serve the New England region.

Needs: The Project would address three primary needs concerning New England's electricity supply:

- Diverse electricity supply
- Low-carbon electricity supply
- Non-intermittent electricity supply

⁵ All citations provided herein are tied directly to the *Final Northern Pass Transmission Line Project Environmental Impact Statement*. Refer to **Chapter 7** of the EIS for complete references.

Each of these needs is described briefly herein, and in greater detail in the final EIS.

1.3.2.1 Electricity Diversity

New England Independent Systems Operator (ISO-NE) reported in their 2014 Regional System Plan that “New England is increasingly dependent on natural gas as a primary fuel for generating electric energy...” (ISO-NE 2014a). Subsequent ISO-NE studies and reports have confirmed this trend (ISO-NE 2015a and 2017a). In 2016 natural gas plants provided approximately 49 percent of the system’s electric energy production, as compared to 15 percent in 2000 and 45 percent in 2013 (ISO-NE 2013a, 2014a, and 2017a). The ISO-NE 2015 Regional System Plan notes that “New England increasingly relies on natural gas as a primary fuel for generating electric energy” due to the addition of new natural-gas-fired units; the generally low price of natural gas; the displacement of older, less efficient oil- and coal-fired units; and the recent retirements of non-natural-gas-fired generation (ISO-NE 2015a). ISO-NE predicts that natural-gas-fired generation’s proportion of the system capacity mix will grow to approximately 56.7 percent by 2024 (ISO-NE 2015a).

Because New England does not have indigenous supplies of natural gas, it depends on natural gas importation. ISO-NE’s 2015 Regional System Plan states that New England’s increasing dependence on natural gas “continuously exposes the regional electric power system to potential reliability problems and an associated increased cost of electricity when natural gas prices are high” (ISO-NE 2015a). A 2013 report commissioned by the New England States Committee on Electricity similarly concluded that “in the absence of infrastructure or other solutions to increase supply or reduce demand, New England will experience significant natural gas infrastructure constraints” (Black & Veatch Corporation 2013a). On cold days, natural gas supply pipelines run at or near maximum capacity solely to meet heating demand, leaving a severely limited supply to be used for electricity generation (ISO-NE 2017a). Limitations to natural gas supply threaten the reliable supply of electricity and increase wholesale electricity prices and air emissions (ISO-NE 2017a). ISO-NE notes that during periods of extreme demand on the natural gas supply, ISO system operators could be forced to order controlled power outages if there were not enough supply to meet both heating and electricity generation demand (ISO-NE 2017a).

ISO-NE, regional stakeholders, and industry are taking actions to mitigate regional risks due to its reliance on natural gas (ISO-NE 2013a, 2017a, NHOEP 2014a). A variety of electricity generation alternatives are being considered by ISO-NE and New England states to increase the diversity of electricity supply, including renewables (wind, solar, etc.), energy efficiency, imports of Canadian hydropower, and others (ISO-NE 2015a, 2017a, NHOEP 2014a).

1.3.2.2 Low Carbon Electricity Supply

In addition to diversifying the electricity supply, utilization of low-carbon hydropower can help meet public policy goals to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. In 2012 Hydro-Québec’s generation capacity was 35,829 MW, 98 percent of which was hydroelectric power (NESCOE 2013a). Hydroelectric power is documented as a low-carbon energy source.⁶

⁶ In 2010 DOE National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) conducted a comprehensive review and analysis of Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) studies to systematically review estimates of life cycle GHG emissions published between 1970 and 2010 from electricity generation technologies. The LCA considered emissions from all stages in the life cycle of an electricity generation technology, from component manufacturing, to operation of the generation facility to its decommissioning, and including acquisition, processing, and transport of any required fuels. The results of this study demonstrate that hydropower was equivalent to other sources of low-carbon power (wind and solar). Results can be found at http://www.nrel.gov/analysis/sustain_lca_hydro.html. Visit the following site to view comparative graphics displaying the lifetime GHG emissions from various energy sources: <http://en.openei.org/apps/LCA/>.

Low-carbon hydropower can help achieve objectives and/or statutory requirements to reduce carbon emissions such as those presented in the New Hampshire Climate Action Plan, Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), and the New England Governors' Regional Cooperation on Energy Infrastructure (NESCOE 2013a).⁷ The New Hampshire Climate Action Plan includes a number of recommendations designed to “achieve a long-term reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050,” including importation of Canadian hydropower (NHDES 2009). In February 2013 the RGGI released revised GHG emissions standards for participating states that include a reduction of the 2014 regional carbon dioxide budget of 45 percent (RGGI 2013a).⁸ Additionally, the Hydropower Regulatory Efficiency Act of 2013 promotes use of hydropower resources (Public Law 113-23 [2013]).

New England states have recently demonstrated their commitment to GHG emission reductions through two requests for proposals (RFPs) for renewable energy suppliers to the region. The “New England Clean Energy RFP” was issued on November 12, 2015 by state agencies and electric distribution companies in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island (Commonwealth of Massachusetts et al. 2015). The RFP provided a mechanism for the states to procure low carbon energy generation along with the transmission infrastructure needed to deliver it.

1.3.2.3 Non-Intermittent Power Supply

In its 2017 Regional Electricity Outlook, ISO-NE notes that federal and state efforts to cut carbon emissions are impacting “traditional resource types needed to meet the region’s electricity needs, balance intermittent renewable generation, and provide the grid-stability services that renewables don’t” (ISO-NE 2017a). Currently, nuclear power provides roughly 30 percent of ISO-NE’s baseload generation (ISO-NE 2017a). As these sources retire, as demonstrated by retirement of non-natural-gas-fired baseload units as described in **Section 1.3.3.1**, there will be a need in the near term for non-intermittent, reliable power in New England (USNRC 2015a). A whitepaper published by the New England States Committee on Electricity also states that “it is no longer possible to safely assume that nuclear power will continue to provide the same approximate percentage of the region’s base load power for the next decades in the face of low natural gas prices” (NESCOE 2013a). With a decline in baseload power from nuclear sources, and a need to diversify to avoid over-reliance on natural gas, hydroelectric power provides a logical solution to those needs (NESCOE 2013a).

1.4 The Decision and Rationale for the Decision

My role in the Project authorization process is limited to lands under jurisdiction of the WMNF, where I have the authority to consider the appropriateness of a SUP for use and occupancy of NFS land. I understand the context of my decision, which principally encompasses a segment of the WMNF approximately 11 miles (17 km) in length. Depending on the alternative considered, it makes up anywhere from 2 to 10 percent of the overall project proposal. While my decision represents a small part of the overall transmission routing decision, it potentially has a significant effect on the future management of the WMNF. My responsibility is to look at the benefits and tradeoffs associated with the proposed action, and alternatives, and to make a balanced and informed decision for current and future generations.

⁷ The New Hampshire Climate Action Plan can be found at: http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/air/tsb/tps/climate/action_plan/nh_climate_action_plan.htm The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative website is located at: <http://www.rggi.org/> The New England Governors' Regional Cooperation on Energy Infrastructure can be found at: http://www.nescoe.com/uploads/6_State_Joint_Statement_FINAL_4-22-15_12-3.36pm_w-sealsf.pdf.

⁸ For Canadian hydropower to be eligible for credit under RGGI, the generation and transmission facilities would need to be outfitted with tracking and reporting systems to validate the clean energy attributes of the electricity.

My predecessor, Tom Wagner, was involved with this Northern Pass Transmission Line Project for seven years. He used the following information to help make his draft decision:

- 1) The many laws and policies that help guide the short- and long-term management of NFS lands, particularly National Forest Management Act and the National Environmental Policy Act.
- 2) The Federal Energy Policy Act (2005) and the Forest Strategic Energy Framework (2011) that address the appropriateness of using federal lands for electricity transmission and distribution.
- 3) Forest Service Manual (FSM) direction for special use authorizations (FSM 2700) that directs the WMNF to consider proposals that are in the public interest but, cannot be reasonably accommodated on non-NFS lands.
- 4) The extensive public input received on this project over many years, particularly the comments received on the draft EIS.
- 5) The final EIS.
- 6) The Objection Reviewing Officer's letter in response to objections filed in reference to the Draft Record of Decision.

I have only been Forest Supervisor since October 2017 and thus do not have the same depth of understanding of some of these sources as they apply to this project. I relied on my knowledge of relevant laws, USFS direction, the FEIS and, importantly, my confidence in Tom Wagner's experience, objectivity, and integrity to guide my decision.

After thoroughly considering the Purpose and Need (**Section 1.3**), Project Objectives (**Section 1.4**), issues (**Section 1.5.4** of the final EIS), alternatives (**Section 1.8**), and extensive analyses presented in the final EIS, as well as the public and agency comments, my decision is to authorize use and occupancy of NFS lands for the project. The USFS will issue the necessary Special Use Authorization to allow the Project to be buried within the WMNF within NH Routes 112 and 116 and shoulder areas between approximately mile posts (MP) 82–95. This decision is consistent with Alternatives 4c and 7, which are detailed and assessed in the final EIS. Because the scope of my decision is limited to NFS lands, I selected the two alternatives that route the Project across the WMNF in the same location along NH Routes 112 and 116. Alternative 7 also includes a 2-mile (3 km) segment on the WMNF immediately east of Northumberland, NH that is authorized by a standing easement. The siting of the Project to the north and south of the WMNF section is not within my authority. The New Hampshire Site Evaluation Committee has siting authority on state and private lands in New Hampshire.

Under my decision, this Project would cross the Appalachian National Scenic Trail at approximately MP 90 under an existing roadway corridor (NH Route 112).

1.4.1 The Selected Alternatives

My decision is to approve the portion of Alternatives 4c and 7 that traverses the WMNF, and would be buried within the roadway and shoulder areas along NH Routes 112 and 116. As displayed on the attached figure (*White Mountain National Forest Record of Decision Selected Alternatives*) these two alternatives are identical in where the transmission line would cross the WMNF. As detailed in the Forest Plan Consistency Analysis included in **Appendix F** of the final EIS, each of the Selected Alternatives is consistent with the Forest Plan and would not require its amendment.

Under my decision, the WMNF would work with the Applicant to issue the necessary special use authorizations with appropriate mitigations (see **Section 1.4.3**) to allow the installation, operation, and maintenance of the Project on NFS lands. The Project corridor along NH Routes 112 and 116 would be

located in existing roadway corridors that are not existing transmission routes but do make use of previously impacted lands from highway construction and maintenance. All roads in the WMNF that are part of this decision are under state or federal jurisdiction. Transportation uses of these road corridors are authorized through transportation easements granted by the USFS to the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). These easements do not authorize use and occupancy of NFS lands along these road corridors for any other uses, including energy transmission lines. My decision would approve the construction, operation, and maintenance of the direct current line and would be coordinated with the NHDOT to ensure their rights are not compromised and that the project is consistent with all state requirements related to additional uses in state highway corridors.

A 2-mile (3 km) segment of the Project in Alternative 7 would be located on the WMNF immediately east of Northumberland, NH (between Lost Nation and Stark, NH) in an existing Public Service of New Hampshire (PSNH) transmission route authorized by standing easement. A review of the easements for the existing PSNH transmission route indicate the Applicant presently has the ability to construct, operate, and maintain the Project within this segment without further authorization or approval. These easements existed when the land was purchased by the federal government in 1988 to be managed as part of the WMNF.

1.4.2 Decision Rationale

In my capacity as Forest Supervisor, I am charged with the stewardship of the WMNF, including its uses and management. The credibility of the WMNF is of critical importance to me. I believe the USFS, the DOE, and the EIS contractors have completed the entirety of the environmental review and documentation process with integrity, diligence, and clear objectivity. The result is a thorough environmental review that enables me to make an informed and balanced decision.

My predecessor, Tom Wagner, was involved with the Northern Pass Transmission Line Project for seven years as the Forest Supervisor of the WMNF. He was actively engaged throughout the environmental analysis and public engagement process. As a result, he developed a full understanding of the Proposed Action, array of alternatives, and anticipated environmental and social effects. He worked with the DOE, cooperating agencies, and contractors to ensure that the FEIS is consistent with USFS requirements and provides a comprehensive summary of the process and assessment of potential effects to support a decision on whether to authorize this project on NFS lands. As he approached retirement, Tom shared with me as much of his understanding of this project and the FEIS as possible. Since then, I have learned more by reading project documents and talking with my staff, local publics, partners, the project proponent, and the contractors who conducted much of the analysis.

Since becoming Forest Supervisor in October of 2017, I have had the opportunity to review the final EIS and am aware of the impacts of my decision. The final EIS and supporting documents disclose, using the best available science and information, the qualitative and quantitative effects on the human and biological environment that are anticipated to result with the implementation of the Project. My assessment of the quality of the analysis was confirmed by the Objection Reviewing Officer's assessment that the analysis is sufficient and no instructions were needed in response to the objections.

I understand a primary objective of the Project is to provide diverse and renewable sources of electricity for the people of New Hampshire and New England. To evaluate potential impacts of the Project on wholesale electricity prices, a dynamic model of the energy grid, including all other forms of generation like natural gas, was performed by independent consultants. The model was re-run prior to issuance of the FEIS to ensure that modeling outputs reflected current market conditions (the best information reasonably

available) at the time of analysis. 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 Applicant (and their engineers) have outlined the technology and capabilities that presently exist to bury the transmission infrastructure through the WMNF. The EIS contractors independently verified much of this information. I believe that the technology is comprehensive, and that the Applicant possesses the ability to effectively construct, operate, and maintain the line underground. There will be short-term impacts in the areas under my jurisdiction, particularly from construction of the transmission line, but the outlined mitigation measures will minimize long-term effects, as summarized in **Section 2.5** of the final EIS. 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 Applicant amended its original proposed route in August of 2015. This change was partially in response to public concerns expressed about their original overhead route through the WMNF and the findings in the draft EIS that the original proposal would require Forest Plan amendments related to the Appalachian National Scenic Trail and scenery. The resulting proposed route (Alternative 7) was a reasonable alternative since it was already imbedded in portions of the alternatives in the draft EIS. Burial of the transmission line through the WMNF resolved Forest Plan consistency issues related to visuals and effects on the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.

My predecessor and I considered other alternatives that would bury the project on the WMNF along Interstate Highway 93 (I-93) through Franconia Notch and subsequently through Franconia Notch State Park. This alignment is represented by Alternatives 4a, 5a, and 6a. The total length of the crossing of the WMNF would be shorter than alternatives along NH Routes 116 and 112; however, these alternatives would require underground construction in a narrow canyon along the single lane I-93. The Interstate in this section is unique in the Interstate Highway System. Its construction was restricted to a single lane in each direction as a result of a settlement agreement among multiple parties to protect the values associated with Franconia Notch State Park. In addition, both the FHWA and NHDOT have expressed safety and traffic concerns with this potential transmission route.

Franconia Notch State Park is one of the flagship parks within the New Hampshire State Park System and also serves as one of the primary access points to key parts of the WMNF trail system. It receives heavy public use in all four seasons. Construction in this area could take two years to complete and result in significant disruptions to the public visiting this area during construction season. This route is also the gateway for heavy commercial and tourism traffic to destinations in northern New Hampshire and Vermont. I expect delays in this area could more negatively impact the regional economy than delays along NH Routes 116 and 112.

In addition, the alternatives utilizing I-93 are not consistent with my understanding of NHDOT policies. The 2010 NHDOT Utility Accommodations Manual stipulates that "Longitudinal installations [utility lines] are not permitted within the LAROW [Limited Access ROW, i.e., I-93]" unless the Applicant is capable of demonstrating that "an extreme hardship" would be imposed on the Applicant, and that "alternate locations are not available." Because the Applicant has proposed the Project configuration as detailed in Alternative 7, which proposes the transmission line to be buried along NH Routes 112 and 116, the Applicant could not demonstrate that "alternate locations are not available," and/or that "an extreme hardship" would be imposed. If the State Siting Evaluation Committee determined that I-93 is an appropriate location for the project, that would alter my perspective of alternatives using I-93.

My concerns for construction-related impacts to natural and cultural resources, traffic, and parking, and associated effects on recreation and tourism in Franconia Notch/Franconia Notch State Park outweigh

similar concerns regarding project-related impacts along NH Routes 112 and 116. Therefore, I did not select alternatives that buried the transmission line across the WMNF in the I-93 corridor.

I believe the longer crossing of the WMNF by the transmission line along NH Routes 112 and 116 is a reasonable way to transmit electrical power through the WMNF in a minimally impactful way when considering all available alternatives. 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 outweighed by the benefits associated with bringing additional hydropower to the New England grid.

I fully recognize that this decision affects not only the WMNF, but has implications in areas north and south of the WMNF on private and state lands. While I know some of the Forest's stakeholders will be disappointed in my decision, I have made this decision consistent with my responsibilities under applicable laws and policy. My predecessor and I considered the anticipated environmental and social impacts of the Project as a whole, including the full potential for connected impacts to areas beyond the WMNF. I am aware that deciding whether to approve the remaining portions of the project on state and private lands is the responsibility of the New Hampshire Site Evaluation Committee. The fact that the DOE recently approved the crossing of the international border as proposed did not affect my decision or reasoning.

1.4.2.1 Public Interest Determination

In considering new or modified special uses of NFS lands, the USFS is guided by federal regulations (36 CFR Part 251) and FSM 2700. Specifically, permitted special uses of NFS lands must be determined to be in the public interest (36 CFR § 251.54). This is separate from the DOE's determination of public interest, which was made in the Record of Decision signed on November 16, 2017.

When my predecessor, Tom Wagner, considered Northern Pass Transmission LLC's proposal for a SUP, he indicated that the analysis in the EIS would evaluate whether or not the project is in the public interest. To make that determination I now have to consider three things (FSH 2703.2): the USFS's responsibility under the Energy Policy Act of 2005 to facilitate energy transmission on NFS lands, whether the proposed use is consistent with managing NFS lands in a manner that will best meet the present and future needs of the American people, and whether the proposed use can be reasonably accommodated off of NFS lands.

Informed by the analysis summarized within the final EIS, I have considered a wide range of anticipated consequences to both the biological and human environments which may result with implementation of the Project. In contemplating authorization of the Project, I have considered whether the Project is in the public interest. In addition to the Decision Rationale detailed herein, I believe that the Project will benefit the public by providing a low-carbon, non-intermittent, and diversified source of electricity for the people of New Hampshire and New England. Additionally, the Project provides meaningful benefits to air quality and the Class I air sheds in the WMNF through a substantial reduction in the emission of regulated contaminants.⁹ The project is consistent with the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and the Forest Service Strategic Energy Framework for transmission of energy across NFS lands.

Consistent with manual guidance for SUPs, I have considered whether this project could be reasonably accommodated on non-NFS lands. Public comment suggested that other alternatives be considered to completely avoid locating the line in New Hampshire. There is not currently any broad programmatic energy transmission routing policy at the federal or state level that evaluates energy transmission on a

⁹ Air emissions of the project are qualified and quantified within the final EIS in **Sections S.9.10, 4.1.10, 4.2.10, 4.3.10, 4.4.10, 4.5.10, and 5.1.10.**

broader geographic scale. Without that broad policy decision or direction, it is my responsibility to evaluate accepted valid special use applications against the Forest Plan Goals and Objectives and other laws, regulations, and policies. The environmental analysis, and my decision, find Alternatives 4c and 7 to be consistent with the Forest Plan and existing federal energy policy. Based on the extensive range of alternatives considered in the FEIS, there is no reasonable way to transmit power from the border crossing to the substation in Deerfield, NH without crossing lands administered by the WMNF.

1.4.2.2 Alternatives Not Selected

I carefully considered all the alternatives identified in the final EIS (see **Section 1.6** for more on the range of alternatives). The reasons detailed herein explain why I have decided to authorize the Project along NH Routes 112 and 116. In this section, I want to very briefly explain why I did not select the other alternatives that were analyzed in detail.

I did not select Alternative 1, No Action, because I believe the Project to be in the public interest, as discussed in **Section 1.4.2.1**. Alternatives 2 and 3 proposed locating the transmission line on the WMNF entirely in the existing powerline right-of-way. Alternative 2 is inconsistent with Forest Plan standards related to the Appalachian National Scenic Trail and scenery and would have required Forest Plan amendments. Other feasible alternatives exist that would not require amendment of the Forest Plan, so I did not select Alternative 2. **Section 4.5** of the final EIS indicates that burying the transmission line in the existing powerline right-of-way over Kinsman Ridge would have resulted in soil, water, and vegetative disturbance in sensitive areas, such as the Bog Pond area. Burying the line in or near state highways avoids those impacts, prompting me not to select Alternative 3.

Alternatives 5b and 5c would bury portions of the Project along NH Routes 112 and 116, but have several aboveground structures that would be located on the WMNF and would be inconsistent with the scenic integrity objectives in the Forest Plan. It is, therefore, my decision not to include Alternatives 5b and 5c among the Project alternatives being approved. It is my decision not to authorize the segment of the Project alternatives which would follow US Route 3 through the WMNF from just south of Carroll, NH to the intersection of US Route 3 and I-93 (immediately north of Franconia Notch State Park). This segment is included as a portion of Alternatives 4a, 4b, 5a, 6a, and 6b. I have determined that adequate alternative routes are available to accommodate the Project that do not require the use and occupancy of these additional NFS lands.

1.4.3 Management Requirements

My decision is predicated on the Applicant adhering to all of the following, which will be incorporated as appropriate into the SUP:

- Applicant-proposed impact avoidance and minimization measures detailed in **Appendix H** of the final EIS.
- Forest-wide and management area-specific standards and guidelines identified in the WMNF Forest Plan, including direction associated with the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.
- Additional requirements that may be imposed by state agencies through the NH Site Evaluation Committee process.
- Mitigation identified in the Biological Evaluation.
- Measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects to historic properties (as defined in 36 CFR § 800.16 and the Programmatic Agreement to include NHRP listed or eligible properties, sites, and landscapes) on NFS land outlined in the Historic Properties Treatment Plan developed in accordance with the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement for this project.

1.5 Public Involvement

On February 11, 2011, the DOE published a “Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement and to Conduct Public Scoping Meetings and notice of Floodplains and Wetlands Involvement” (the NOI) in the *Federal Register* (75 FR 7828). In the NOI, the DOE announced its intention to prepare an EIS to assess the potential environmental impacts of issuing a Presidential permit for the Northern Pass Transmission Line Project. After the Applicant amended its Presidential permit application and its SUP application, the DOE published an “Amended Notice of Intent to Modify the Scope of the Environmental Impact Statement and to Conduct Public Scoping Meetings and Notice of Floodplains and Wetlands Involvement” (the amended NOI) in the *Federal Register* (78 FR 54876) on September 6, 2013. As described more fully in **Section 1.7.2**, the DOE conducted a total of eleven scoping meetings in New Hampshire during the public scoping period following publication of the NOI and following publication of the amended NOI.

In July 2015 the public review period for the draft EIS was initiated through publication of a Notice of Availability (NOA) in the *Federal Register* by the EPA (80 FR 45652 [July 31, 2015]). Subsequent to the publication of the NOA for the draft EIS, the DOE prepared a supplement to the draft EIS in response to Northern Pass’ August 31, 2015 amendment to its Presidential permit application (80 FR 58725 [September 30, 2015]). As a result, DOE extended the public review period. In total, DOE provided a 248-day public review period and held four public hearings for the draft EIS.

The DOE notified the public and applicable federal and state agencies of the public review period for the draft EIS through several methods, including distribution of the document to individuals or parties who submitted scoping comments and to other interested parties that requested a copy of the draft EIS. The DOE made the draft EIS available online at the DOE website for the EIS (<http://www.northernpasseis.us>), on the DOE NEPA website (<http://energy.gov/nepa>), and in hard copy and CD format at 30 public libraries located in the proposed Project area. The draft EIS was also circulated to federal, state, and local agencies with jurisdiction by law or special subject matter expertise and to any person, stakeholder organization, or agency that requested a copy.

The final EIS includes, in **Appendix L**, comments on the draft EIS and the DOE’s responses to those comments. A variety of issues and concerns were raised during the public review period on the draft EIS. All substantive comments on the draft EIS received or postmarked before the end of the comment period were considered in preparing the final EIS. Comments received after the end of the comment period were considered to the extent practicable. **Appendix L** includes responses to all comments that are within the scope of and relevant to the analysis in the final EIS.

The EPA issued an NOA for the final EIS that was published in the *Federal Register* (August 18, 2017) that announced the availability of the final EIS. The final EIS was distributed to all individuals and parties that received a copy of the draft EIS, submitted comments on the draft EIS, or requested a copy of the final EIS.

The DOE issued its ROD and Presidential Permit granting Northern Pass Transmission LLC permission to construct, own, maintain, and connect electric transmission facilities at the international border on November 16, 2017.

The USFS *draft* ROD was published on September 1, 2017, initiating the USFS pre-decisional objection period during which eligible individuals could file objections to the proposed decision (see **Section 1.9**). More than 60 individuals and organizations filed objections, which were reviewed by the Reviewing Officer and an objection review team of specialists pursuant to 36 CFR Part 218 (see **Section 1.9** for more information).

A chronology of the Presidential permit application process and EIS public notices to date for the proposed Northern Pass Transmission Line Project is provided in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Proposed Northern Pass Transmission Line Project Presidential Permit Application Milestones

Date	Action	Summary
October 14, 2010	Initial Presidential permit application submitted	Initial Project consisted of 140 miles (225 km) of overhead HVDC transmission lines and 34 miles (55 km) of overhead HVAC transmission lines delivering 1,200 MW of electricity to Deerfield, NH.
November 16, 2010	Notice of Application published in the Federal Register	DOE issued a Notice of Application announcing that the Applicant had applied for a Presidential permit.
February 11, 2011	DOE issued NOI to prepare an EIS and initiate public scoping	DOE announced its intention to prepare an EIS and conduct public scoping meetings.
March 14–20, 2011	Public scoping meetings held	DOE held public scoping meetings to collect comments from the public for consideration in preparation of the EIS.
July 1, 2013	Amendment to the Presidential permit application submitted	The Applicant amended its application to change the route of the proposed Project and include approximately 8 miles (13 km) of underground cable.
September 6, 2013	DOE issued Amended NOI	DOE announced its intent to modify the scope of the EIS and conduct additional public scoping meetings.
September 23–26, 2013	Public scoping meetings held	DOE held public scoping meetings to collect comments from the public for consideration in preparation of the EIS.
July 31, 2015	EPA issued NOA for draft EIS	EPA issued a NOA announcing that the draft EIS was available for public review.
August 31, 2015	Amendment to the Presidential permit application submitted	The Applicant amended its application to change the route of the proposed Project and include approximately 52 miles (84 km) of additional underground cable.
September 30, 2015	DOE issued NOI to prepare a supplement to the draft EIS	DOE announced its intention to prepare a supplement to the draft EIS to incorporate changes to the proposed Project, and announced a postponement of draft EIS public hearings.
November 20, 2015	EPA issued NOA for supplement to draft EIS	EPA issued a NOA announcing that the supplement to the draft EIS was available for public review.
March 7, 9–11, 2016	Draft EIS public hearings	DOE held public hearings to collect comments from the public on the draft EIS and supplement.
August 18, 2017	EPA issued NOA for final EIS	EPA issued a NOA announcing that the final EIS was available.
September 1, 2017	USFS issued draft ROD	Legal notice published announcing availability of the USFS's draft Record of Decision, initiating the 45-day objection period.
November 16, 2017	DOE issued ROD and Presidential Permit	DOE signed and issued Record of Decision and Presidential Permit.

1.6 Consideration of Other Alternatives

NEPA requires that a range of reasonable alternatives to the Proposed Action be developed and analyzed. By definition, alternatives must meet the Purpose and Need while responding to issues identified during scoping (FSH 1909.15 Chapter 10 §§ 12.33 and 14). Input from internal and external scoping led to the identification of issues that generated alternatives to the Proposed Action. Both Council on Environmental Quality regulations and Forest Service Handbook (FSH) direction emphasize that alternatives must be “reasonable” in order to warrant detailed analysis (FSH 1909.15 Chapter 10 §§ 12.33 and 14).

I am confident that the EIS analyzed a reasonable range of alternatives early in the NEPA process, and that the twelve alternatives, including the required No Action Alternative, analyzed in the final EIS are appropriate and adequate to inform my decision. A description of the full range of alternatives, including those dismissed with rationale, is included in **Chapter 2** of the final EIS.

1.6.1 Alternative 1 – No Action

As required for an EIS by the NEPA, a No Action Alternative was included in this analysis for review alongside the action alternatives (40 CFR § 1502.14(d)). By definition, the No Action Alternative represents a continuation of existing management practices without changes or additions to existing conditions. This alternative provides a baseline for comparing the effects of the action alternatives. The No Action Alternative is depicted in **Map 5** of **Appendix A** the final EIS.

1.6.2 Additional Alternatives Considered in Detail

A total of eleven additional alternatives were considered in detail in the EIS. Scoping comments expressed concern with visual impacts from an aboveground transmission line. It was determined that alternatives with increased use of underground infrastructure and burial of project segments should be analyzed in detail in response to concerns about effects to scenery and associated tourism. In consultation with independent transmission engineers, the DOE determined that the 1,200 MW design capacity included in Alternative 2 (original proposed action) would not be feasible if applied to a project with substantial underground segments. However, in order to assess the range of reasonable alternatives in the EIS, including an evaluation of options that are fully or partially underground, the draft EIS analyzed several alternatives with reduced transmission capacity (1,000 MW) and determined that extensive burial at this capacity would be practical and technically feasible. As a result of alternative development for the draft EIS, the range of alternatives evaluated in the draft EIS included eight that were wholly or partially buried and would have a transmission capacity of 1,000 MW.¹⁰

In August 2015, subsequent to the publication of the draft EIS, Northern Pass submitted a “Further Amendment to Presidential Permit Application” (Northern Pass 2015) that made changes to the Applicant’s proposed Project. Specifically, the August 2015 amendment proposed to bury an additional 52 miles (84 km) of the transmission line in roadway corridors between Bethlehem and Bridgewater, NH; changed the Project size from 1,200 MW to 1,090 MW; adjusted the border crossing location by approximately 100 feet (30 m); and other design changes (e.g., change in converter technology and type of cable). This revised proposal was analyzed in the supplement to the draft EIS and is analyzed in the final EIS as Alternative 7 (the Proposed Action). The additional design details developed by the Applicant

¹⁰ Extensive transmission cable burial requires the use of different cable technology that is not capable of transmitting 1,200 MW. The actual capacity of a project using this technology would be determined by several factors that are outside the scope of DOE’s analysis. In the draft EIS, DOE assumed that alternatives using this technology would be capable of transmitting up to 1,000 MW, but in the final EIS it is assumed that they would be capable of transmitting up to 1,090 MW, based on new information provided by the Applicant.

for Alternative 7 have been used to update the descriptions of other action alternatives described in this chapter, as appropriate.

The alternatives considered in detail, including transmission capacity specifications and overhead/burial distances, are summarized in **Table 2**, and described in detail in **Section 2.3** of the final EIS. For a visual description of the alternatives, refer to **Maps 5–19** in **Appendix A** of the final EIS.

Table 2. Alternatives Considered in Detail

Alternative	Description	Length Overhead miles (km)	Length Underground miles (km)	Total Length miles (km) ^a	Operational Capacity (MW)
1	No Action	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
2	Primarily overhead in existing Public Service of New Hampshire (PSNH) transmission route, convert from HVDC to HVAC at Franklin Converter Station, overhead HVAC to Deerfield Substation	179 (288)	8 (13)	187 (301)	1,200
3	Underground in Alternative 2 alignment, convert from HVDC to HVAC at alternate North Road Converter Station, underground HVAC to Deerfield Substation	0	187 (301)	187 (301)	1,090
4	Underground in roadway corridors				
4a	Underground in roadway corridors, I-93 through Franconia Notch, convert from HVDC to HVAC at alternate North Road Converter Station, underground HVAC to Deerfield Substation	0	175 (282)	175 (282)	1,090
4b	Underground in roadway corridors, NH Routes 112 and 116 through WMNF, convert from HVDC to HVAC at alternate North Road Converter Station, underground HVAC to Deerfield Substation	0	190 (306)	190 (306)	1,090
4c	Underground in roadway corridors, NH Routes 112 and 116 through WMNF, US Route 3 from North Woodstock to Ashland, NH, convert from HVDC to HVAC at alternate North Road Converter Station, underground HVAC to Deerfield Substation	0	182 (293)	182 (293)	1,090
5	Alternative 2, except underground in roadway corridors in the vicinity of the WMNF				
5a	Alternative 2 except underground in I-93 corridor through Franconia Notch	156 (251)	28 (45)	184 (296)	1,090
5b	Alternative 2 except underground in NH Routes 112 and 116 through WMNF	170 (274)	21 (34)	190 (306)	1,200
5c	Alternative 2 except underground in NH Routes 18, 112 and 116 through Sugar Hill, Franconia, Easton, NH, and WMNF	157 (253)	33 (53)	191 (307)	1,090
6	Underground in roadway corridors until Franklin, NH and co-located HVAC between Franklin and Deerfield, NH				
6a	Underground in roadway corridors, I-93 through Franconia Notch, convert from HVDC to HVAC at Franklin Converter Station, co-located overhead HVAC to Deerfield Substation	34 (55)	139 (224)	173 (278)	1,090
6b	Underground in roadway corridors, NH Routes 112 and 116 through WMNF, convert from HVDC to HVAC at Franklin Converter Station, co-located overhead HVAC to Deerfield Substation	34 (55)	154 (248)	188 (303)	1,090
7	Proposed Action – Alternative 2 except underground in NH Routes 18, 112, 116, and US Routes 3 and 302 from Bethlehem to Bridgewater, NH	132 (212)	60 (97)	192 (309)	1,090

^a Due to rounding, the total length of the Project may vary slightly from the sum of its parts.

1.6.3 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Further Detailed Analysis

Several technology, alignment, and construction alternatives were suggested during the public scoping and draft EIS review periods. The following 17 alternatives were considered but eliminated from further detailed analysis because they were determined not to be reasonable.¹¹ The alternatives and reason they were eliminated are described in detail in **Section 2.4** of the final EIS.

- Underground transmission cable with 1,200 MW capacity
- Underground transmission cable in railroad and connecting roadway corridors
- Use the National Grid Phase I/II route
- Underwater transmission cable in navigable waterways
- Overhead in railroad and connecting roadway corridors
- Multiple aboveground, belowground options in Alternative 2 alignment
- Other transmission projects
- Power generation alternatives
- Energy conservation
- Alternative 2 except underground transmission cable through Connecticut Lakes Headwaters property
- Transmission line in an aboveground pipeline within Alternative 2 alignment
- Bury existing line, install new line as proposed
- Co-locate the project (HVDC and HVAC) with the existing 115 kV AC transmission line on the same set of new towers
- Relocate proposed project converter station and terminus substation
- Overhead alternatives convert to HVAC at the North Road Converter Station location
- Underground HVAC from the Franklin Converter Station to the Deerfield Substation
- Alternative Vermont border crossings

1.7 Environmentally Preferable Alternative

In accordance with CEQ regulations, I am required to identify the alternative or alternatives that could be considered environmentally preferable (40 CFR § 1505.2[b]). Forest Service policy (FSH 1909.15, Section 05) defines “environmentally preferable” as:

“...is the alternative that will best promote the national environmental policy as expressed in NEPA’s section 101 (42 U.S.C. § 4321). Ordinarily, the environmentally preferable alternative is that which causes the least harm to the biological and physical environment; it also is the alternative which best protects and preserves historic, cultural, and natural resources. In some situations, there may be more than one environmentally preferable alternative.”

¹¹ “Reasonable alternatives include those that are practical or feasible from the technical and economic standpoint and using common sense, rather than simply desirable from the standpoint of the applicant” (CEQ 1981a).

Based on the review of the alternatives, Alternative 1 (the No Action Alternative) is the environmentally preferable alternative. Alternative 1 is identified as the environmentally preferable alternative because, by its nature, it would not create any of the acknowledged impacts to the human or biological environment associated with any of the other alternatives, including the Selected Alternatives. Alternative 1 would impact air quality, but the effects to the biological and physical environment from the other alternatives would be even greater.

1.8 Findings Required by Laws, Regulations and Agency Policy

This approval is consistent with the Forest Plan's long-term goals and objectives (USDA Forest Service 2005a). The project was designed in conformance with Forest Plan forest-wide management direction and incorporates appropriate Forest Plan guidance; an amendment is not needed for the project to be consistent with the Forest Plan.

As Forest Supervisor for the WMNF, I am required to manage the Forest in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. This authority, which includes approval and issuance of SUPs, is delegated to me through agency policy described in FSM 1200. Based on the analysis in the final EIS (summarized in **Section 2.5** of the final EIS) and accompanying record, I have concluded that my decision is consistent with all relevant laws, regulations and requirements.

This project is subject to the potential permits, approvals, and consultations detailed in **Table 3**; several of these also inform my determination that my decision is consistent with relevant laws, regulations, and requirements. Additional information regarding interagency coordination is detailed in **Section 1.7** of the final EIS.

Table 3. Other Potential Permits, Approvals, and Consultations Associated with the Project

Agency	Permit/Approval/Consultation
Federal	
DOE	Review applications for Presidential permits for construction, operation, and maintenance of a cross-border facility for the transmission of electrical energy.
EPA	Consult with USACE on CWA Section 404 permit applications. Issue National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for stormwater impacts.
USACE	Issue CWA Section 404 permits.
FERC	Approve negotiated rates as regulated under the Federal Power Act (FPA).
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)	Ensure compliance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), and issue permit to traverse the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge.
Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)	Issue hazard determinations for aboveground structures and vegetation in the vicinity of airports.
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)	Authorize Use and Occupancy Agreements according to NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT) Utility Accommodation Manual.
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP)	Participate in Section 106 consultation.

Table 3. Other Potential Permits, Approvals, and Consultations Associated with the Project

Agency	Permit/Approval/Consultation
State of New Hampshire	
NH Site Evaluation Committee (SEC)	Review and act upon application to construct an energy facility in order to issue Certificate of Site and Facility.
NH State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)	Advise and assist DOE in carrying out its Section 106 responsibilities.
NHDOT	Issue Excavation Permits, Encroachment Permits, Driveway Permits, Utility Pole Licenses, and Use and Occupancy Agreements according to NHDOT Utility Accommodation Manual.
NH Department of Environmental Services (DES)	Issue National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit from EPA for stormwater impacts, Alteration of Terrain permit for disturbance over 100,000 square feet, and Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act permit, if applicable. Ensure compliance with New Hampshire Rivers Management and Protection Program for Designated Rivers.
Municipal	
Municipalities along the Project corridor	Issue permits and consents for use of municipal lands (including roads) for construction and operation of the transmission line.

1.9 Objection Provisions and Implementation Date

This proposed project is subject to the objection process pursuant to 36 CFR Part 218, subparts A and B.

A legal notice announcing the availability of the *draft* Record of Decision Impact was published on September 1, 2017. The *draft* ROD was posted on the project website and all interested parties, including everyone who commented on the project during a designated comment period, were notified of its availability and provided with copies if requested. See **Section 1.5** for additional information on the pre-decisional objection process.

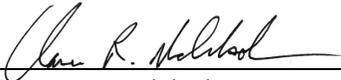
The Objection Reviewing Officer convened an independent team of specialists to review the objection issues. The review team conducted a thorough review of the objection issues. They considered the information in the project file and the specific USFS decision to be made in their review. Based on this review, the Reviewing Officer determined the analysis was sufficient and addressed the concerns identified by all objectors as appropriate for the USFS decision. No instructions were issued in the Reviewing Officer's response to the objections. Several minor corrections and clarifications were suggested by the review team. Those associated with the *draft* ROD are incorporated into this ROD; the others are included as appropriate in the project file. None of these minor suggested edits change the analysis or the rationale for my decision.

A SUP authorizing occupancy and use of NFS lands consistent with my decision can be issued at any time after this ROD is signed.

1.10 Contact Person

For additional information concerning this ROD or the final EIS, contact:

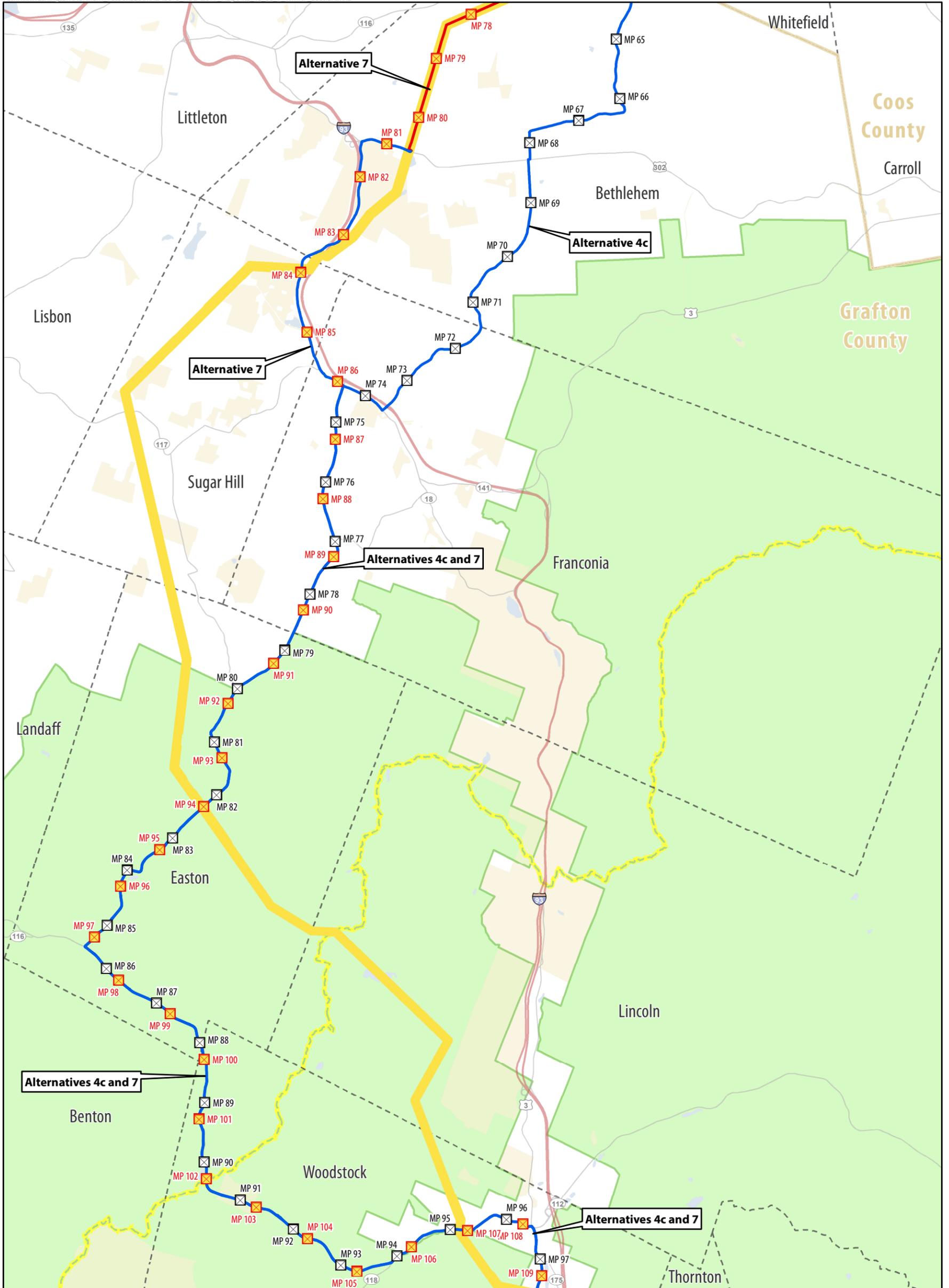
Stacy Lemieux, Project Leader
White Mountain National Forest
71 White Mountain Drive
Campton, NH 03223
slemieux@fs.fed.us



Clare R. Mendelsohn
Forest Supervisor
White Mountain National Forest

01/05/2018

Date



Legend

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Existing Conditions | Appalachian National Scenic Trail |
| State Boundary | Waterbody |
| County Boundary | NH Conservation Land (WMA, State Forest, Conservation Areas, etc.) |
| Political Boundary | White Mountain National Forest |
| Freeway | Existing PSNH Transmission Route |
| Major Road | |
| Secondary Road | |

- Alternatives 4c and 7 Components**
- Alternative 4c Project Milepost
 - Alternative 7 Project Milepost
 - OVH Direct Current
 - UG Direct Current

**White Mountain National Forest
Record of Decision
Selected Alternatives**
Northern Pass Transmission Line Project
New Hampshire



SCALE

