

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The staff of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission) has prepared this Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to fulfill requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The purpose of this document is to make public our analysis of the environmental impacts that would likely result from the construction and operation of the proposed Gulf Crossing Project (Project). This Draft EIS has been prepared in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD).

### **PROJECT BACKGROUND**

On November 17, 2006 Boardwalk Pipeline Partners, LP's, through its subsidiaries Gulf Crossing Pipeline Company LLC (Gulf Crossing) and Gulf South Pipeline, LP (Gulf South), filed a request with the Commission to implement its Pre-Filing Review Process for the Gulf Crossing Project. We<sup>1</sup> approved Gulf Crossing and Gulf South's (the Companies) request on November 30, 2006. On June 19, 2007 the Companies filed a joint application with the Commission pursuant to Section 7(c) of the Natural Gas Act and Part 157 of the Commission's regulations for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (Certificate) to construct, operate, and maintain an interstate natural gas pipeline and associated ancillary and aboveground facilities, collectively known as the Gulf Crossing Project (Project). On October 16, 2007 Gulf Crossing, under Docket Number CP07-398-001 filed an amendment to its application to modify two proposed compressor stations. We have prepared our analysis based on this application, coordination with local, state and other Federal agencies, written public comments, comments received at public meeting, information gathered at site visits, and subsequent filings by the Companies.

### **PROPOSED ACTION**

The proposed Project is expected to transport up to approximately 1.73 billion cubic feet per day of natural gas from production fields in eastern Texas and southern Oklahoma to Gulf Coast market hubs that will service the eastern United States. Gulf Crossing proposes to construct and operate:

- approximately 353.2 miles of 42-inch-diameter natural gas transmission pipeline extending east-southeast from Grayson County, Texas and Bryan County, Oklahoma to Madison Parish, Louisiana;
- four new compressor stations totaling 100,734 horsepower (hp) of compression: the Sherman, Paris, Mira, and Sterlington Compressor Stations located in Grayson and Lamar County, Texas and Caddo and Ouachita Parish, Louisiana, respectively;
- seven new metering and regulating (M/R) stations; and
- other appurtenant ancillary facilities including, mainline valves (MLV), pig<sup>2</sup> launcher and receiver facilities.

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<sup>1</sup> "We", "us", and "our" refer to the environmental staff of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's Office of Energy Projects.

<sup>2</sup> A "pig" is a mechanical device used to clean or inspect the pipeline.

Gulf South proposes to construct and operate:

- approximately 17.8 miles of 42-inch-OD pipeline loop (Mississippi Loop) extending southeast from Hinds County, Mississippi to Simpson County, Mississippi;
- addition of 30,000 hp to its recently approved Harrisville Compressor Station (Docket Number CP07-32-000); and
- other appurtenant ancillary facilities including MLV, pig launcher and receiver facilities.

Dependent upon Commission approval, the Companies propose to complete construction and begin operating the proposed Project in October 2008.

## **PUBLIC OUTREACH AND COMMENTS**

As part of our Pre-Filing review we issued a *Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement, Request for Comments on Environmental Issues and Notice of Public Scoping Meetings* for the Gulf Crossing Project on April 2, 2007. On July 12, 2007 we issued a *Supplemental Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement, Request for Comments on Environmental Issues and Notice of Public Site Visit* because of modifications in the Gulf South portion of the Project. These notices were published in the Federal Register (FR) and sent to: affected landowners; federal, state, and local government agencies; elected officials; environmental and public interest groups; Native American tribes; local libraries; newspapers; and other interested parties. In response to our notices, public site visits, and at several public meetings held along the proposed pipeline route, we received numerous comments from landowners, concerned citizens, public officials, and government agencies regarding the proposed Project. These comments expressed concerns with the location of the proposed pipeline and the effects of the proposed Project on numerous resources and land uses including: soils, waterbodies, wetlands, wildlife, vegetation, threatened and endangered species, safety, air quality, noise impacts, timber production, and state- and federally-managed lands.

This Draft EIS was filed with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and mailed to various Federal, state and local agencies; elected officials; Native American tribes, newspapers, public libraries; television and radio stations; intervenors to the FERC's proceedings; and other interested parties (i.e. landowners, miscellaneous individuals, and environmental groups who provided scoping comments or asked to remain on the mailing list). A formal notice indicating that the Draft EIS is available for review and comment will be published in the Federal Register. The public has 45 days after the date of publication in the Federal Register to comment on the Draft EIS. To ensure the public has sufficient opportunities to comment on this Draft EIS, we will hold public comment meetings along the proposed pipeline route at locations that will be publicly noticed. Comments received during this period will be considered and addressed in the Final EIS.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION**

Construction and operation of the proposed Project would result in impacts to: soils, groundwater, surface water, wetlands, vegetation, wildlife, fisheries, threatened and endangered species, cultural resources, air and noise quality, and land use.

Construction of the proposed pipeline would temporarily affect 872 surface waterbodies. Conventional open-cut waterbody construction techniques or horizontal directional drills (HDD) would be used to complete all waterbody crossings. All significant waterbodies are proposed or recommended to be crossed using the HDD method, including: major/navigable waterbodies; designated Louisiana Natural and Scenic Rivers; Nationwide Rivers Inventory listed streams; ecologically sensitive resource

waters; fisheries of special concern; the rivers most likely to contain habitat for federally-listed fish species; and the majority of the impaired waterbody crossings that would be crossed by the proposed pipeline.

Construction of the proposed pipeline would affect 147 wetlands, disturbing approximately 163.9 acres. Special-status wetlands, including wetlands in the NRCS-administered Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), and several high-quality forested wetlands would be temporarily and permanently affected by construction and operation of the proposed Project. The most significant impacts to wetlands resulting from construction and operation of the proposed Project would be the long-term and permanent conversion of forested wetlands.

In consultation with the FWS, we identified 15 federally-listed threatened and endangered species that could be affected by the proposed Project. Based on our review of these 15 species, we have determined that construction and operation of the proposed Project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect 12 federally-listed threatened and endangered species. We are recommending that the Companies provide additional information prior to the end of the Draft EIS comment period so that final determinations can be made on the final three species and the consultation with the FWS can be completed.

Recently proposed route variations, areas not yet surveyed, access roads, and contractor work areas are still under review by the state historic preservation offices (SHPO). One Texas site is considered eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Consultation with the SHPOs will be completed prior to any construction.

Construction and operation of the proposed Project would temporarily and permanently affect several land uses, resulting in short- and long-term impacts to agricultural, forests, timber production, and special use areas. Consultation with the appropriate land-managing agencies is ongoing to minimize impacts on these areas.

Operation of the proposed Project compressor stations would permanently affect both the air quality and noise environment near the compressor stations. However, we have determined that there would be no significant impacts due to air emissions from the compressor station, nor from construction activities; however, we have required further data from the Companies for compressor station construction emissions. We recommend restricting noise from the compressor stations and HDD activities to ensure a minimize noise impact for local residents.

To minimize and mitigate the environmental impacts of constructing and operating the proposed Project, the Companies have developed and would implement several measures and plans, including but not limited to the following:

- Upland Erosion Control, Revegetation, and Maintenance Plan (Plan);
- Wetland and Waterbody Construction and Mitigation Procedures (Procedures);
- Exotic and Invasive Species Control Plan;
- Well Monitoring and Mitigation Plan;
- Plan for the Unanticipated Discovery of Contaminated Media;
- Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasures Plan (SPCC Plan);
- Plan for the Containment of Inadvertent Release of Drilling Mud during Horizontal Directional Drilled Wetland and Waterbody Crossings (HDD Contingency Plan); and

- Plan for the Unanticipated Discovery of Historic Properties, Human Remains, or Potential Paleontological Evidence during Construction.

Detailed descriptions of environmental impacts including a description of cumulative impacts, the Companies' proposed impact avoidance and mitigation measures, and our recommendations to further minimize and mitigate impacts are included in Sections 2.0, 3.0, 4.0 and 5.0 of the Draft EIS.

## **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

We evaluated the No Action Alternative, the Postponed Action Alternative, alternative energy sources, and the potential effects of energy conservation, system alternatives, route alternatives, route variations, and aboveground facility site alternatives to determine whether they would be technically and economically feasible and environmentally preferable to the proposed action. During the Pre-filing process, scoping comments from the public and agencies resulted in Gulf Crossing adopting 76 route variations. In our analysis, we considered the potential impacts to environmental resources and land uses. We also evaluated alternatives that would avoid or minimize impacts to environmental resources, such as wetlands and waterbodies, and land uses, such as timber production and state- and federally-managed lands. We recommend three additional route variations along with an expanded evaluation of one alternative compressor station site that may result in further environmental benefits compared to the proposed Project.

## **CONCLUSION**

As part of our review, we developed measures that we believe would appropriately and reasonably avoid, minimize, or mitigate environmental impacts associated with construction and operation of the proposed Project. We recommend that these measures be attached as conditions to any authorization issued by the Commission. We conclude that if the proposed Project is approved and is constructed and operated in accordance with the Companies' proposed minimization and mitigation measures and our recommended mitigation measures; the proposed facilities would result in limited adverse environmental impacts. In support of this conclusion, we offer the following:

- the proposed Project would be collocated with existing utility rights-of-way for approximately 230.7 miles, or about 60 percent of the proposed route;
- the Companies would implement the Project Plan and Procedures and other plans, which would minimize and mitigate impacts to natural resources during construction and operation of the proposed Project;
- we recommend the limitation of the Companies' eminent domain authority to acquire permanent rights-of-way to 50 feet wide; and to use portions of existing, natural gas pipeline permanent rights-of-way during construction, if feasible
- we are recommending the Companies develop site-specific crossing plans for WRP lands and significant wetland areas containing mature trees and a wetland mitigation plan;
- the Companies would compensate for all unavoidable wetland impacts; and
- the Companies would implement an environmental inspection and monitoring program that would ensure compliance with all proposed and recommended mitigation measures.