

APPENDIX I
NATCHEZ TRACE PARKWAY ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

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Natchez Trace Parkway

1.0 NACHEZ TRACE PARKWAY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The environmental staff of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) prepared this assessment to address the proposed crossing of the Natchez Trace Parkway (Parkway) in Hinds County, Mississippi, by the Midcontinent Express Pipeline Project (Project) proposed by Midcontinent Express Pipeline, LLC (MEP). The FERC has also prepared an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to assess the overall environmental impacts associated with the construction and operation of the facilities proposed by MEP. Although this assessment incorporates by reference Sections of the EIS, our intent was to consolidate the most pertinent information relevant to the Natchez Trace Parkway. The Parkway is managed by the National Park Service (NPS), and the proposed crossing of the Parkway would require that NPS grant MEP a right-of-way easement. Granting of such an easement would constitute a federal action, and as such, would be subject to compliance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). For this reason, the NPS (2007) agreed to serve as a federal cooperating agency with the FERC in the development of the EIS. A federal cooperating agency has jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental impact involved with the proposal and is involved in the NEPA analysis. The NPS, as a federal cooperating agency, may use this assessment and the EIS to support its decision on the right-of-way application for the proposed Project.

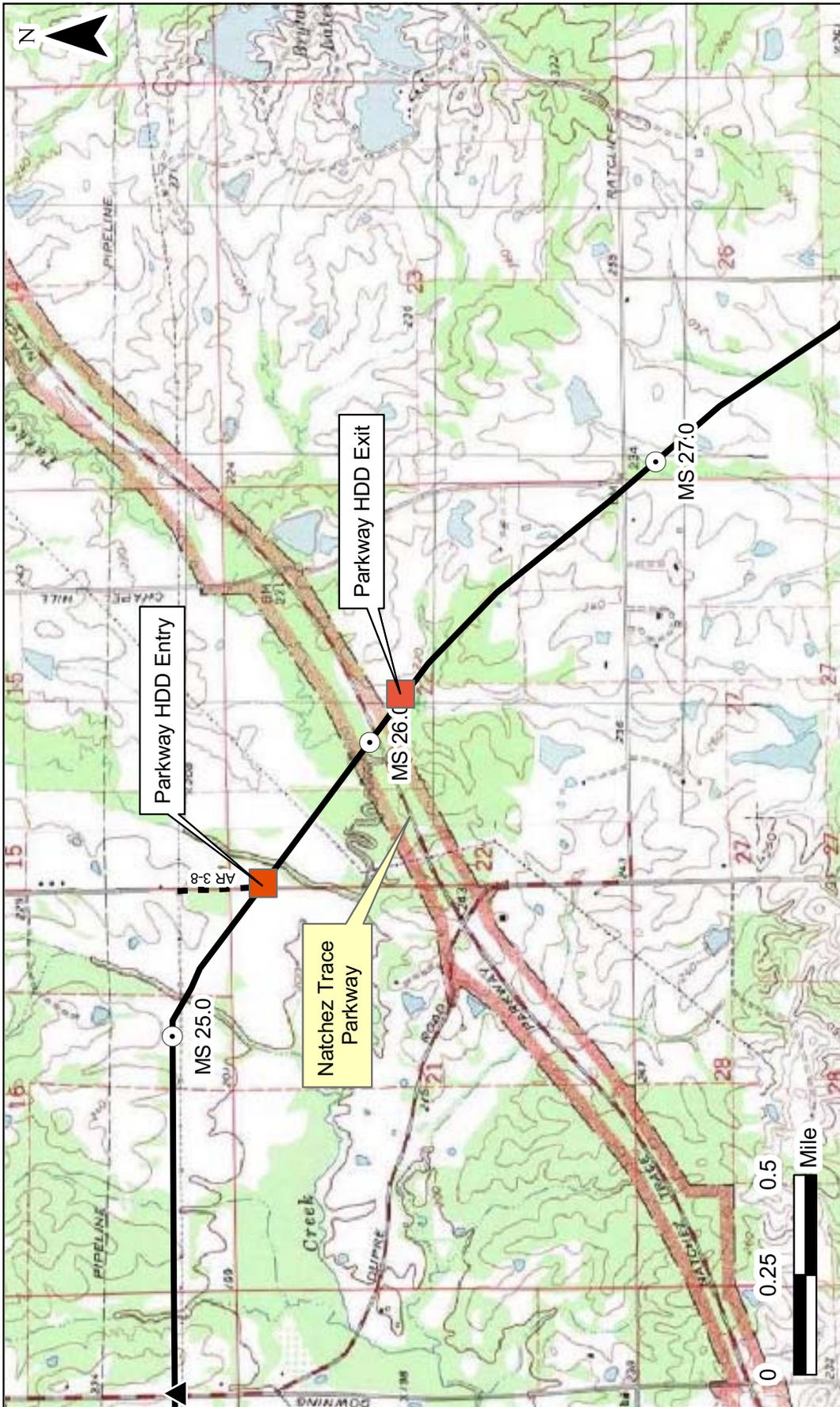
The Parkway is a 444-mile-long elongated park and roadway in Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee (NPS 2007a). The Parkway was authorized by Congress in 1938 and commemorates the historic Old Natchez Trace. The Old Natchez Trace was historically used for centuries by Native Americans, traders, military personnel, and early settlers as a pathway connecting the mid-South with the lower Mississippi River. The Parkway connects Nashville, Tennessee and Natchez, Mississippi. The roadway is also designated as a National Scenic Byway and All-American Road due the presence of significant archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities. The Congressionally designated purpose of the Natchez Trace Parkway is to provide and maintain a scenic and recreational roadway.

1.2 NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

The overall purpose and need of the proposed Project is described in detail in Section 1.1 of the EIS. In general, there is a need to transport domestic supplies of natural gas from production fields in Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Texas to markets in other portions of the United States. The increased access to domestic natural gas supplies provided by the proposed Project would help meet growing energy demands, enhance system reliability, and result in supply diversification. Interstate natural gas pipelines extending in an east to west direction through the State of Mississippi would be likely to encounter the Natchez Trace Parkway, which as a linear feature extends across most of the state in a southwest to northeast direction. As such, and given the proposed Project origin and terminus in Bryan County, Oklahoma, and Choctaw County, Alabama, respectively, the Project pipeline route would result in an unavoidable crossing of the Parkway at some point.

1.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed Project crossing of the Parkway is located near approximate Parkway milepost (MP) 75. Parkway MPs begin at 0.0 near Natchez, Mississippi, increase sequentially as the roadway proceeds generally to the northeast, and end at MP 444 near Nashville, Tennessee. In the vicinity of the proposed Project crossing, the Parkway boundary extends approximately 475 feet to the northwest and approximately 325 feet to the southeast (see Figure 1.3-1).



MIDCONTINENT EXPRESS PIPELINE PROJECT	
Appendix I Figure 1.3-1	
Natchez Trace Parkway Crossing	
DATE: May 2008	
Legend	
Proposed Pipeline Route	Pipe Storage & Contract Yard
Access Roads	Pig Launcher/Receiver
Compressor Station	Mainline Valve
Meter Station	Milepost

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MEP proposes to cross the Parkway via a horizontal directional drill (HDD) that would extend from boundary to boundary and incorporate an additional 1,702 feet of buffer beyond the western Parkway boundary (Project MP MS 25.6 to MP MS 26.0). HDD is a trenchless crossing method that may be used to avoid direct impacts to sensitive resources, such as waterbodies and wetlands, or infrastructure (e.g., roads and railways) by directionally drilling beneath them. HDD installation of the proposed

Project would result in a pipeline that is installed beneath the ground surface by pulling the pipeline through a pre-drilled bore hole. HDD installation is typically carried out in three stages: (1) directional drilling of a small-diameter pilot hole; (2) enlarging the pilot hole to a sufficient diameter to accommodate the pipeline; and (3) pulling the prefabricated pipeline, or pull string, into the enlarged bore hole. Further discussion of HDD installation method is described in Section 2.3.2 of the EIS. HDD staging areas would be located outside of the Parkway boundary in a pine plantation at Project MP MS 25.6 and a forested area at Project MP MS 26.1. Prior to construction, MEP would prepare and file with the FERC and NPS a site-specific HDD crossing plan that would describe construction details, such as the Parkway crossing depth, that would be used to guide construction efforts in the area..

HDD methods are not without risk as inadvertent drilling fluid releases would result if the drilling fluid escapes containment at pits that would be excavated at the HDD entrance and exit points or if a “frac-out” occurs. A frac-out occurs when drilling fluids escape the drill bore hole and is forced through the subsurface substrate to the ground surface. The proposed HDD drilling fluid would consist of water and bentonite. Bentonite is a mixture of non-toxic clays and rock particles consisting of about 85 percent montmorillonite clay, 10 percent quartz and feldspars, and 5 percent accessory materials, such as calcite and gypsum. Though potentially toxic additives are added to drilling fluids used in some applications, MEP has stated that it would not use any synthetic or potentially toxic drilling fluid additives.

As a component of the Environmental Management & Construction Plan (EMCP), MEP has developed a Directional Drill Contingency Plan (DDCP), as described in Section 2.3.2 of the EIS that describes the procedures that would be implemented to monitor for, contain, and clean up any potential releases of drilling fluid during HDD operations. Each of the proposed HDD crossings would be constructed in accordance with MEP’s Upland Erosion Control, Revegetation, and Maintenance Plan (Plan) and Wetland and Waterbody Construction and Mitigation Procedures (Procedures) and the terms of any applicable federal or state permits that may be granted. Additionally, MEP would implement its DDCP to monitor for and address any inadvertent releases of drilling fluids.

1.4 SCOPING

The public review, comment, and scoping process that the FERC implemented in association with the environmental review of the proposed Project is discussed in Section 1.4 of the EIS. In specific regard to the Natchez Trace Parkway, the NPS agreed to be a cooperating federal agency in the development of the EIS in their letter dated May 9, 2007 (NPS 2007b), participated in multiple interagency scoping meetings, and provided guidance regarding the environmental review process. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) also participated in the development of the EIS as federal cooperating agencies. MEP and the FERC have also consulted with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History regarding compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and with other Mississippi state agencies such as the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks and the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality.

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1.5 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

As required by NEPA, we evaluated several alternatives to the proposed Project to determine whether they would be technically and economically feasible and environmentally preferable to the proposed action, as described in Section 4.0 of the EIS. We also considered the no action or postponed action alternative, as discussed below. As surface impacts within the Parkway boundary would be completely avoided through implementation of the proposed HDD crossing, we did not evaluate route variations for the proposed Project alignment through the Parkway.

1.5.1 No Action or Postponed Action Alternative

Under the no action or postponed action alternative, the proposed Project would not be constructed and the Project pipeline would not cross the Parkway, at least in the 2008 timeframe proposed by MEP. If the FERC denied MEP's application, the NPS denied the proposed crossing of the Parkway, or if MEP withdrew its application, then the environmental impacts discussed in this assessment and the EIS would not occur. If the proposed Project were delayed through postponed action, then the identified impacts would be delayed as well. However, if approval for the proposed Project were denied, or if it were significantly delayed, then the objectives of the Project would not be met and MEP would not be able to provide a new source of natural gas to markets that can be accessed through the proposed pipeline interconnects. In light of this analysis, and the more detailed information presented in Section 4.1 of the EIS, we do not recommend the no action or the postponed action alternative.

1.6 AFFECTED RESOURCES, IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION

This Section discusses the resources that would be affected by the proposed Project within the Parkway boundary, as well as relevant resources in adjacent areas. Information regarding potential impacts and mitigation is also presented in consolidated subsections. Several resource areas, including socioeconomics (Section 3.9), air quality (Section 3.11), and reliability and safety (Section 3.12), are discussed in other sections of the EIS and are not evaluated further in this assessment. Based on the nature of the proposed Project in relation to the Parkway, we have selected several other environmental resource areas for specific evaluation as described below.

1.6.1 Geology and Paleontology

The Catahoula geologic formation, part of the East Gulf Coastal Plain Physiographic Province, underlies the Parkway at the Project crossing location. The Catahoula formation is comprised of sand and sandstone, mottled clay, and some quartzite and gravel that were formed during the Miocene period. No bedrock requiring blasting would be located along the Project route in this area and no paleontological resources have been identified in the vicinity of the proposed Project crossing.

The primary geologic resource effect associated with the overall proposed Project would be disturbances to topographic features found within the construction right-of-way. Due to the avoidance of surface impacts within the Parkway, topographic impacts would be avoided. Prior to crossing the Parkway via HDD, MEP would complete a geotechnical survey to identify geological features that would potentially cause a "frac-out" during directional drilling. As a component of the EMCP, the DDCP would be implemented to minimize any impacts to geologic resources in the event a "frac-out" were to occur. We believe that the lack of disturbance to Parkway topography in conjunction with proposed geotechnical survey and implementation of the DDCP would adequately minimize impacts to the Parkway's geologic resources.

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Also contained within the EMCP, the Unanticipated Discoveries Plan outlines the procedures for documenting unanticipated discoveries of paleontological resources, including photographing and describing the disposition of specimens, recording detailed location data, and reporting such findings to applicable state natural history museums and/or geological survey departments. Due to the low probability of paleontological resources being located along the HDD path and the implementation of the Unanticipated Discoveries Plan, we do not anticipate that the Project would significantly impact paleontological resources within Parkway boundaries.

1.6.2 Soils and Prime Farmland

Soils at the proposed Project crossing of the Parkway are comprised of the Riedtown silt loam soil series. Soils of this series were formed in silty alluvium on flood plains and low terraces along streams. This soil series is classified as a prime farmland and consists of deep, moderately well drained, moderately permeable soil. Soil slopes typically range between zero and two percent. These soils typically have low erosion potential, good revegetation potential, are usually not subject to soil compaction, and do not have shallow bedrock.

MEP proposes to cross the Parkway via HDD; thereby avoiding surface impacts to Parkway soils or prime farmland. We believe that implementation of the proposed HDD crossing of the Parkway would adequately minimize the potential for effects to soils and prime farmland within the Parkway boundary.

1.6.3 Water Resources and Wetlands

The proposed Project route would not cross any sensitive groundwater resources or wetlands within the Parkway boundary. The proposed HDD of the Parkway would traverse Turkey Creek, an associated forested wetland, and two unnamed tributaries to Turkey Creek. The proposed crossing of Turkey Creek is located at MP MS 25.9 within the Parkway boundary. However, the use of HDD would entirely avoid direct surface impacts to this waterbody. Three unnamed, intermittent tributaries to Turkey Creek would be crossed outside of the Parkway boundary via open-cut trenching at Project MPs MS 26.3, MS 27.0, and MS 27.4. These crossings would occur upstream of the tributary confluence with Turkey Creek, which could result in minor, temporary impacts to the tributaries and the portion of Turkey Creek within the Parkway boundary. The proposed Project would also cross 9 additional unnamed tributaries to Turkey Creek via open-cut between Project MP MS 23.1 and MP MS 25.1, but all of these waterways would drain into Turkey Creek downstream of the Parkway crossing.

MEP would adhere to the mitigation and minimization measures outlined in its Plan and Procedures to minimize Project-related impacts to waterbodies that would be crossed via open-cut trenching. We believe that the potential impact of soil erosion upon water quality would be prevented or effectively minimized through the implementation of MEP's Plan and Procedures. Further, MEP's Spill Prevention, Containment, and Control (SPCC) Plan would prevent or minimize impacts to water quality from spills. Given avoidance of impacts to Turkey Creek through the use of HDD and the implementation of the impact minimization and mitigation measures identified to minimize impacts to other waterbodies, we believe that the proposed Project would not have a significant effect on water resources within the Parkway.

1.6.4 Vegetation

Vegetation types occurring within the Parkway boundary, under which the proposed Project would cross, includes maintained grass adjacent to and on the side slopes of the roadway, as well as upland forested areas extending to both sides of the Parkway boundaries.

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The use of HDD would avoid direct surface impacts to the Parkway, including its vegetation resources. HDD extra workspaces and staging locations would be sited so as to avoid any fringe impacts to Parkway vegetation. Given the lack of surface disturbance and the vegetative buffer that would be maintained between HDD staging areas and the Parkway boundaries, we believe that the proposed Project would adequately minimize impacts to vegetation resources of the Parkway.

1.6.5 Wildlife and Fisheries

Wildlife species likely to be present in the vicinity of the proposed crossing include the American toad (*Bufo americanus*), southern black racer (*Coluber constrictor*), eastern tufted titmouse (*Parus bicolor*), and opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*) (NPS 2002). Due to the lack of surface impacts associated with implementation of the proposed HDD crossing, vegetation resources and associated wildlife habitat within the Parkway boundaries would not be impacted by Project construction and operation.

Waterways supporting fisheries of special concern include areas containing exceptional recreational or commercial fisheries, specially designated streams or rivers, and waterbodies supporting rare or endangered aquatic species. Turkey Creek, located at MP MS 25.9, is listed as supporting fisheries of special concern due to the presence of the bayou darter, a federally listed threatened species. MEP surveys indicated that the portion of Turkey Creek crossed by the proposed Project does not contain suitable bayou darter habitat. Additionally, and as described in Section 1.6.3 of this assessment, all waterbodies within Parkway boundaries would be crossed via HDD to avoid direct impacts to aquatic habitat and water quality. The proposed HDD crossing would be constructed in accordance with MEP's Procedures and the terms of any applicable federal or state permits that may be granted. Additionally, MEP would implement its DDCP to monitor for and address any inadvertent releases of drilling fluids that could be released during a 'frac-out'. These factors would effectively minimize the potential for adverse aquatic impacts associated with the proposed Project crossing of the Parkway. No other sensitive wildlife or aquatic features or habitats have been identified within the Parkway boundaries.

Impacts to wildlife, including migratory bird species, and fisheries habitat resulting from the proposed Project crossing of the Parkway are not anticipated due to avoidance of surface impacts by the proposed HDD crossing. Therefore, we believe that the proposed Project would not significantly impact the wildlife and fishery resources of the Parkway.

1.6.6 Threatened and Endangered Species

The FWS indicated that six federally listed threatened species may potentially occur in Hinds County, Mississippi. These species, which are also discussed in detail in Section 3.7 of the EIS, include the Louisiana black bear, interior least tern, ringed map turtle, bayou darter, gulf sturgeon, and inflated heelsplitter mussel. Louisiana black bears are typically associated with forests, particularly forested wetlands. The ringed map turtle, gulf sturgeon, interior least tern, and inflated heelsplitter mussel typically occur in large rivers, such as the Pearl River. The bayou darter is found in meandering streams with gravel riffles or exposed sandstone.

The preferred habitat of these federally listed species is not present at the proposed Project crossing of the Parkway, nor is it present in immediately adjacent areas. Given this lack of suitable habitat and the proposed Parkway crossing method, no effect to federally listed species is anticipated in association with the proposed Project crossing of the Parkway.

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1.6.7 Roads and Transportation

The Parkway is a paved, two-lane road that provides access and transportation routes to local residents and tourists. Given its status, associated historic attractions, and views, the Parkway is primarily used for sightseeing and tourism. Commercial traffic is prohibited on the Parkway and the established speed limit is 50 miles per hour.

Pipeline installation would be accomplished by directionally drilling beneath the Parkway, with no need for road closure or construction activity on the road surface or adjacent side slopes. Additionally, Project construction traffic would not use the Parkway. For these reasons, the proposed Project would not result in any Project-related impact to traffic flow on the Parkway.

1.6.8 Visual Resources

The primary visual resources associated with the proposed Parkway crossing include those areas and objects visible to motorists traveling along the Parkway. These areas include the roadway itself, the grassy side slopes located immediately adjacent to the roadway, and forested lands located on both sides of the Parkway. Secondary visual resources, which include views of the Parkway and its associated property from adjacent areas, are virtually identical to the primary resources identified.

MEP has proposed to cross under the Parkway from boundary to boundary using a HDD crossing technique that would not require physical disturbance to the Parkway nor the adjacent forested areas. All temporary extra workspaces associated with the HDD crossing would be located beyond the Parkway's forested lands in pine plantation or forested areas. The presence of forested areas between cleared Project workspaces and the Parkway would eliminate any Project-related visual impacts to roadway users.

1.6.9 Noise

The existing noise environment at the proposed Project crossing of the Parkway reflects the predominately rural landscape. Audible noise sources at the Parkway crossing site are consistent with this setting and include insects, birds, and wind. Vehicular traffic on the Parkway also results in intermittent noise, although traffic volumes are considered light to moderate and commercial traffic is prohibited on the Parkway.

Construction noise related to the proposed HDD crossing of the Parkway would result in temporary increases in ambient noise levels. This HDD construction noise would likely occur on a 24-hour per day basis until pipeline installation were completed in the area. HDD entry and exit points would be located approximately 0.2 and 0.5 mile from the Parkway and outside of its forested boundary, thereby providing a natural sound buffer. Any increase in noise perceived at the Parkway would be temporary overall and would likely be perceptible to motorists traveling along the Parkway for only a short duration (estimated at approximately one minute or less assuming that the vehicle passed the site at the speed limit of 50 miles per hour). Given the temporary and minor nature of the impact anticipated, we believe that the proposed Project would not have a significant impact on the noise environment of the Parkway.

1.6.10 Cultural Resources

The Natchez Trace Parkway is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in its entirety as "a designed cultural landscape" (NPS 2006). The Old Natchez Trace was historically used first by Native Americans, and then by traders and early settlers. The Old Natchez Trace provided an

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early and valuable transportation route connecting the lower Mississippi River and Gulf Coast to areas located well inland as far north as Tennessee.

MEP conducted cultural surveys along the proposed Project route in Mississippi during the spring and summer of 2007. The purpose of the survey effort was to identify archaeological sites or historic structures that may occur along the proposed Project route. Except for the proposed crossing of the Parkway itself, no other cultural resources such as archaeological sites or historic structures were identified within one mile of the Parkway. MEP submitted the cultural resources survey report to the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, which functions as the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) in Mississippi, on August 28, 2007. In a correspondence dated October 15, 2007, the Mississippi SHPO concurred with the findings of the August 28, 2007, submittal.

If any undiscovered cultural artifacts are present along the Project alignment within the Parkway boundary, the lack of surface impacts associated with the HDD crossing method would leave these cultural sites intact. MEP has developed an Unanticipated Discoveries Plan that outlines the procedures that would be followed in the event that unanticipated cultural resources or human remains were encountered during construction of the proposed Project in areas adjacent to Parkway boundaries. If unanticipated cultural resources or human remains are encountered, work would cease and appropriate authorities would be notified and consulted. Work would not resume until appropriate clearance is granted.

Given the lack of cultural resources identified within the Parkway along the Project alignment and the avoidance of Parkway surface impacts, we believe that the Project crossing would not impact cultural resources of the Parkway.

1.6.11 Cumulative Impacts

In accordance with NEPA and FERC policy, we considered the cumulative impacts of the proposed Project and other projects in the general area, as described in Section 3.13 of the EIS. Based on our research and coordination with NPS, we identified six other projects that would cross the Natchez Trace Parkway and potentially contribute to cumulative effects to resources of the Parkway. These projects include three natural gas pipeline projects, two roadway projects, and a carbon dioxide pipeline Project. Information regarding these proposed Projects is provided in Table 1.6-1, though detailed information regarding the specific resources affected and any associated mitigation is currently lacking for several of the projects not regulated by the FERC.

The three natural gas pipeline projects that would cross the Parkway are either recently constructed, currently under construction, pending construction, or undergoing environmental review. The East Texas to Mississippi Expansion Project (FERC Docket No. CP06-446) has recently been completed and placed into service. The Parkway crossing for the East Texas to Mississippi Expansion Project would occur in an agricultural area, which would minimize long-term visual impacts to the Parkway. We issued a Final EIS for the Southeast Supply Header Project (FERC Docket No. CP07-044 & CP07-45) in August 2007, and construction of that Project commenced in November 2007. The Southeast Supply Header Project would be collocated with an existing roadway for the entire length of its crossing of the Parkway to minimize visual impacts. We issued a Final EIS for the Fayetteville/Greenville Expansion Project (FERC Docket No. CP07-417) in March 2008. The Fayetteville/Greenville Expansion Project would be collocated with an existing electric transmission line right-of-way across the Parkway to avoid creation of a new corridor through the Parkway. All of these projects have undergone extensive FERC environmental review and consultations with NPS to ensure that Parkway impacts would be adequately minimized.

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With the exception of the natural gas pipeline projects under our purview, the FERC has no authority over permitting, licensing, funding, construction, or operation of the projects listed in Table 1.6-1. Federal, state, and/or local agencies must review these projects for compliance with requirements for construction of facilities at sites or places where a governmental license or permit may be required. Expansion or construction of intrastate pipelines would require state or federal permits and approvals to ensure compliance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act; Sections 401, 402, and 404 of the Clean Water Act; the Clean Air Act, and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Issuance of the necessary permits and approvals would reduce or avoid the potential for significant impacts from these facilities on environmental resources of the Parkway.

TABLE 1.6-1 Recent, Current, or Proposed Projects that Would Cumulatively Impact the Natchez Trace Parkway			
Project Name	Sponsor	Project Type	Natchez Trace Parkway Location
Highway 6 ReRoute	Mississippi Department of Transportation	New highway construction in support of a reroute.	MP 255
Barnes Crossing Roadway	Mississippi Department of Transportation	Construction of new roadway.	MP 265
Denbury Resources, Inc. New Pipeline Project	Denbury Resources, Inc.	Construction of a new CO ₂ pipeline.	MP 117
Fayetteville/Greenville Expansion Project	Texas Gas Transmission, LLC	36- inch diameter natural gas pipeline	MP 157
East Texas to Mississippi Expansion Project	Gulf South Pipeline Company, LP	36- and 42- inch diameter natural gas pipeline	MP 73
Southeast Supply Header Project	Southeast Supply Header, LLC / Duke Energy	36-inch-diameter natural gas pipeline.	MP 49

Although each of these unrelated projects would likely result in temporary and minor effects to the Parkway and associated resources during construction, each Project has been or would be designed and routed in consultation with the NPS to avoid or minimize impacts to cultural and visual resources, wetlands, waterbodies, and other sensitive resources. Additionally, any significant unavoidable impacts to sensitive resources resulting from these projects would be mitigated. Mitigation generally leads to avoidance or minimization of cumulative impacts. We therefore consider that the potential cumulative impacts of the four proposed pipeline projects under our review would be minimized.

We believe that impacts to the Natchez Trace Parkway associated with the Midcontinent Express Project would be relatively minor. The potential for environmental impacts associated with the proposed Project would be avoided or minimized through implementation of an HDD crossing that would extend beyond the Parkway boundaries. Consequently, only a small cumulative effect is anticipated when the impacts of the proposed Project are added to the other identified projects that would affect the Parkway.

1.6.12 Conclusion

Based on our review of the resources present within the Parkway boundaries and the proposed Project crossing method, we conclude that construction and operation of the proposed Project would not result in a significant effect on the Natchez Trace Parkway.

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