

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
OFFICE OF ELECTRICITY DELIVERY AND ENERGY RELIABILITY
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
PRESIDENTIAL PERMIT PP-412 ITC LAKE ERIE CONNECTOR
DOE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT EA-2019

SUMMARY: On May 29, 2015, ITC Lake Erie Connector LLC (ITC Lake Erie or Applicant) applied to the Department of Energy (DOE) for a Presidential permit to construct, operate, maintain, and connect a high-voltage direct current (HVDC) transmission line across the U.S.-Canada border. The U.S. portion of the proposed transmission line, approximately 42.8 miles, would be capable of transmitting up to 1,000 megawatts (MW) of power. The HVDC line would extend south from the U.S.-Canada international border buried under the bottom of Lake Erie for approximately 35.4 miles, leave the Lake via Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) for the approximately 7 mile terrestrial portion along or in existing roads to the proposed 6 acre Erie Converter Station (DC to Alternating Current (AC)), where an approximately 0.6 mile high-voltage alternating current (HVAC) line would connect to the existing Penelec Erie West Substation in Erie County Pennsylvania.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The proposed Lake Erie Connector Project consists of an approximate 72-mile long, 1,000-megawatt (MW) HVDC electric power transmission system that originates in Haldimand County, Ontario, Canada and terminates in Erie County, Pennsylvania, United States. The proposed project would cross the United States-Canadian border in Lake Erie as a submerged cable and extend approximately 35.4 miles underwater through Lake Erie and emerge onshore in Erie County, Pennsylvania on private property west of Erie Bluffs Park. The proposed project would run approximately 7 miles underground to a proposed converter station in Conneaut Township, Erie County, Pennsylvania. Approximately 0.6 mile of 345 kV AC underground transmission cables would run between the proposed new Erie Converter Station and the nearby Penelec Erie West Substation. The proposed Project would terminate at the existing Penelec Erie West Substation and interconnect with the transmission system operated by PJM Interconnection, LLC, (PJM), a Regional Transmission Operator (RTO).

On August 28, 2015, DOE determined that the appropriate level of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review for this project was an environmental assessment (EA). The Lake Erie Connector Project EA was prepared by the DOE pursuant to NEPA and its implementing regulations. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)-Pittsburgh District was a cooperating agency in preparing the Lake Erie Connector Project EA.

The proposed DOE action in the EA is to issue a Presidential permit to the applicant, which would authorize ITC Lake Erie to construct, operate and maintain a new electric transmission line across the U.S.-Canada border in Lake Erie, Pennsylvania.

DOE prepared the EA to evaluate the potential environmental impacts in the United States of the proposed action and the range of reasonable alternatives, including the No Action alternative. Under the No Action alternative, the Presidential permit would not be granted, and the proposed transmission line would not cross the U.S.-Canada border.

Comments on the Draft EA were accepted from June 3, 2016 – July 5, 2016, following publication of the Notice of Availability (NOA) in the Erie Times newspaper. The NOA was sent to interested parties, including federal, state, and local officials; regulatory agency representatives; stakeholder organizations; and private individuals in the vicinity of the proposed transmission line. The Draft EA was available to the general public on the Project website at www.lakeerieconnectorea.com. All comments were considered during preparation of the Final EA. Appendix I-Comment Response Document of the Final EA contains revisions and new information based in part on comments received on the Draft EA.

The Final EA was distributed to all individuals and parties that submitted substantive comments on the Draft EA and to other interested parties who requested a copy of the Final EA. DOE received no comments on the Final EA. The Final EA is available via the Lake Erie Connector Project website <http://lakeerieconnectorea.com>, as well as the DOE NEPA website at <http://www.energy.gov/nepa/>

All discussion and analysis related to the potential environmental impacts of construction and operation of the proposed project are contained in the Final EA (DOE/EA-2019), herein incorporated by reference. In the Final EA, DOE evaluated in detail 19 resource areas for potential impacts associated with the proposed project. In addition, DOE prepared this Floodplain Statement of Findings in accordance with DOE's regulations, entitled "Compliance with Floodplain and Wetland Environmental Review Requirements" (10 CFR part 1022). The floodplain assessment was conducted during development and preparation of the EA (see Sections 3.1.1.3 and 5.2.3.2 of the EA). DOE has determined that the proposed project involved no permanent above-ground alterations or new impervious surfaces that would affect infiltration, flood storage or flooding hazards. The proposed transmission cable would be buried, and construction of the proposed project would have no permanent effects on the FEMA-mapped floodplains. Erosion and sedimentation controls would be implemented during proposed construction, and disturbed areas would be restored to pre-existing grading to minimize effects on floodplains. Overall, the current design for the proposed project minimizes floodplain impacts to the extent practicable.

DETERMINATION: On the basis of the EA, DOE has determined that issuance of a Presidential permit to the Applicant to construct, operate and maintain a new electric transmission line across the U.S.-Canada border in Lake Erie, Pennsylvania will not have a significant effect on the human environment. The preparation of an environmental impact statement, therefore, is not required and DOE is issuing this FONSI.

The EA and FONSI will be available on the Lake Erie Connector Project website <http://lakeerieconnectorea.com> as well as the DOE NEPA website at <http://www.energy.gov/nepa/>.

Signed in Washington, D.C. on January 12, 2017.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Meghan Conklin', written in a cursive style.

Meghan Conklin
Deputy Assistant Secretary

Office of Electricity Delivery and
Energy Reliability

U.S. Department of Energy