



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Executive Office of Environmental Affairs

100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900

Boston, MA 02114-2524

MITT ROMNEY
GOVERNOR

KERRY HEALEY
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

STEPHEN R. PRITCHARD
SECRETARY

Tel. (617) 626-1000
Fax. (617) 626-1181
<http://www.mass.gov/envir>

May 10, 2006

CERTIFICATE OF THE SECRETARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL NOTIFICATION FORM

PROJECT NAME : Uxbridge to Northbridge 115kV Transmission
Tap Line Project
PROJECT MUNICIPALITY : Northbridge and Uxbridge
PROJECT WATERSHED : Blackstone River
EOEA NUMBER : 13772
PROJECT PROPONENT : New England Power Company (d/b/a National Grid)
DATE NOTICED IN MONITOR : April 10, 2006

Pursuant to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (G. L. c. 30, ss. 61-62H) and Section 11.06 of the MEPA regulations (301 CMR 11.00), I hereby determine that this project **does not require** the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

The proposed project consists of installation of a 115kV electricity transmission tap line, approximately 1.3 miles in length along an existing right-of-way (ROW). The proposed transmission line will be constructed approximately 40 feet northwest of, and parallel to, an existing transmission line in the ROW. The new transmission line is being proposed to improve reliability and meet electricity supply needs in Northbridge, Uxbridge, Sutton, Upton, and Douglas. The new transmission line will extend from the Whitins Pond substation, off Castle Hill Road in Northbridge, to a tap point with an existing 115kV transmission line, which is west of Rawson Road in Uxbridge.

The proposed project involves alteration of approximately 6.3 acre of land, including 41,672 square feet (sf) of bordering vegetated wetlands (BVW). Construction of the new transmission line will result in an approximately 40-foot wide clearing along the ROW corridor, increasing the average width of clearing from 115 feet to 155 feet. Vegetation clearing associated with the project will result in a change from forest to scrub-shrub habitat. BVW impacts include 85 sf of alteration due to installation of two pole structures, 38,852 sf of alteration due to clearing and temporary placement of swamp mats, and 2,735 sf of alteration due to placement of swamp



mats in other areas not proposed for clearing. The project will also result in 32 linear feet of impact to Bank from two equipment crossings.

The project is undergoing review pursuant to Section 11.03(3)(b)(1)(d) because it involves alteration of 5,000 or more sf of BVW. The project requires a 401 Water Quality Certification from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and an Order of Conditions from the Town of Northbridge and the Town of Uxbridge Conservation Commissions (and, on appeal only, a Superseding Order from DEP). The project requires a Section 72 approval from the Department of Telecommunications and Energy (DTE). The project also requires a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Construction Activities Permit from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The proponent is not seeking financial assistance from the Commonwealth. Therefore, MEPA jurisdiction applies to those aspects of the project within the subject matter of required state permits with the potential to cause Damage to the Environment as defined in the MEPA regulations. In this case, MEPA jurisdiction extends to wetlands and water quality, energy, land and stormwater.

The project area includes the A. Whipple House, at 398 Sutton Street, which is listed in the State and National Registers of Historic Places. The Massachusetts Historic Commission (MHC), as further detailed in its comment letter, has determined that the proposed project will have "no adverse effect" on the significant characteristics of the A. Whipple House and the vegetative buffer in the vicinity of the A. Whipple House will be maintained as indicated in project plans. As further detailed in the Environmental Notification Form (ENF), another listed historic property, the Moses Adams House, is located approximately 400 feet to the north of the existing transmission structures and will not be directly affected by the project.

The ENF presents a summary of an alternative analysis conducted by the proponent. Alternatives evaluated included the no-build alternative, an underground alternative, alternative overhead routes, alternative locations within the existing ROW, and structure alternatives for the proposed transmission tap line. The alternatives analysis resulted in the selection of the preferred alternative, which incorporates design changes to reduce tree clearing and wetlands impacts. The proponent has committed to a range of measures to avoid, minimize and mitigate adverse environmental impacts. These include:

- Location of new transmission line and support structures as close as possible to existing line and structures;
- Use of existing access roads to the extent feasible, and use of the existing cleared areas in ROW;
- Selection of a davit-arm structure instead of a H-frame structure for transmission line support, which has a narrower profile, requires less clearing and earthwork, and results in lower post-construction magnetic field levels at the edges of the ROW;
- Establishment of site access and construction performance standards to be followed by employees and contractors;
- Implementation of a stormwater pollution prevention plan;

- Creation of a 220 sf wetlands replication area as mitigation for the 85 sf area impacted by construction of pole structures and foundations;
- Best Management Practices, which include:
 - conducting clearing activities during frozen conditions to minimize wetlands impacts;
 - erosion and sedimentation controls;
 - preservation of low-growing vegetation to the extent feasible;
 - use of timber mats and swamp mats to minimize wetlands impacts and soil disturbance;
 - restoration of disturbed areas;
 - implementation of a five-year vegetation management plan, which encourages growth of low-growing shrubs, ferns, wildflowers and grasses in areas that are cleared during the construction phase.

The ENF has defined the nature and general elements of the project and proposed measures to avoid, minimize and mitigate adverse environmental impacts. I am satisfied that any remaining issues can be adequately addressed during the state and local permit and review processes. The proposed project requires no further review under MEPA.

May 10, 2006

DATE



Stephen R. Pritchard, Secretary

Comments Received:

4/28/06 Massachusetts Historical Commission

SRP/AE/ae