

PROJECT PROFILE / **FERC SUPPORT FOR MOUNTAINEER XPRESS PROJECT**

# SECURING COMMISSION CERTIFICATION WITH THOROUGH DOCUMENTATION

As with any big pipeline project, Columbia Gas Transmission's Mountaineer XPress Project — a 170-mile-long greenfield pipeline stretching across 13 counties in West Virginia — required an experienced team with intimate knowledge of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) review and certificate process.



# A WELL-FORMED ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT ADDRESSED AGENCY AND PUBLIC CONCERNS

Incorporating feedback from outreach efforts and interagency discussions resulted in a certificate of public convenience and necessity.

## PROJECT STATS

### CLIENT

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, third-party contractor to Columbia Gas Transmission LLC

### LOCATION

West Virginia

### PRE-FILING APPROVAL:

September 2015

**FEIS ISSUED:** July 2017

**FERC ORDER:** December 2017

# 170

MILES OF PIPELINE

# 3

NEW COMPRESSOR STATIONS

# 3

NEW REGULATOR STATIONS

## CHALLENGE

After deciding to expand its natural gas pipeline system, Columbia Gas Transmission set its sights on the design, permitting and construction of a 170-mile-long greenfield pipeline in West Virginia. With a substantial project such as this — which included 164 miles of 36-inch pipeline and 6 miles of 24-inch pipeline — FERC required support during its rigorous environmental review process, with the ultimate challenge and objective being the development of a thorough and defensible environmental impact statement (EIS). The robust project scope included adequately analyzing and solving for potential impacts from project construction and operation; addressing public, agency and nongovernmental organizations' questions and concerns; and recommending appropriate mitigation measures.

## SOLUTION

For this extensive pipeline project, Columbia Gas Transmission — which now is an 11,500-mile pipeline network that serves millions of customers from New York to the Gulf of Mexico — was required to submit a request to participate in FERC's prefilling process. Additional application requirements included the submission of 13 environmental resource reports (ERRs), starting with ERR1, which included the project description, purpose and need, construction methodologies and schedule.

Subsequent reports presented descriptions of environmental resources, potential project-related impacts, and proposed mitigation strategies, alternatives and land use, among others. Each was backed by a wealth of research, field studies and background information. Under the direction of FERC staff, our team quickly jumped into the documentation review process, which played a key role in the development of the draft EIS (DEIS).

With hundreds of pages of submitted documentation, the first order of business was to review the preliminary project description and alternatives analysis and attend open houses hosted by Columbia Gas Transmission. From there, our team provided a comprehensive review of all ERRs and conducted in-depth research in preparation of drafting the preliminary administrative EIS in accordance with laws and regulations under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). To comply with NEPA guidelines, this document covered Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, among others.

To fully evaluate and document potential project-related impacts in the DEIS, our team worked closely with FERC's air quality and noise technical professionals. This thorough review and



collaboration included an evaluation of local, state and federal regulations, as well as emissions calculations, regulatory thresholds and dispersion modeling analyses. The noise reports and calculations were examined to verify the construction and operation of compressor, metering and regulating stations, and that the pipeline met applicable regulations.

Further addressing specific environmental concerns, our Third-Party FERC project team regularly met with and incorporated feedback from cooperating agencies, such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources.

Public opinion also played a significant role in preparing for and drafting the EIS. Third-party support included scheduling and participating in public scoping meetings — eight coordinated by our team — to garner public perception and obtain comments and questions on the proposed project. Information gathered during these conversations and meetings identified public concerns and helped shape the environmental document.

After the preliminary administrative DEIS was reviewed and revised by FERC, the administrative DEIS was shared with all cooperating agencies.

Once all comments from these agencies were adequately addressed, the DEIS was released for public review. Multiple public scoping sessions were held to obtain responses from stakeholders regarding the findings discussed in the DEIS. As the third-party contractor, it was our team's responsibility to track and respond to every comment and question.

After the public scoping period closed, the final EIS (FEIS) was developed based on feedback, questions and comments submitted by local and regional stakeholders, federal and state agencies, and nongovernment agencies through the FERC e-filing website, mail-ins, court reporters and oral comments received at scoping meetings. Also, recommendations were included in the FEIS to help minimize and/or mitigate potential impacts. These recommendations were ultimately compiled under Appendix C of the commission's order as "Environmental Conditions."

Additional third-party efforts included preparation of routine project mail-outs and design and printing of display boards and handouts for public comment meetings and public scoping meetings. We coordinated site visits of Columbia Gas Transmission's proposed facility locations with FERC's Office of Energy Projects staff and reviewed the pipeline's implementation

plan, variance requests and request for notice to proceed. Our team also drafted the environmental insert for the FERC order, which was submitted in December 2017.

## RESULTS

FERC approved Columbia Gas Transmission's application for a certificate of public convenience and necessity through the issuance of the commission's order. From Columbia Gas Transmission's August 2015 request to participate in FERC's pre-filing process through the issuance of the order, it took about 27 months to complete the robust project scope: participation in open house meetings, public comment sessions, public scoping meetings and interagency meetings; the technical review of hundreds of pages of ERRs, studies and analyses; site visits; and the preparation of multiple iterations of the EIS and a final order to satisfy the rigorous requirements of NEPA and section 7(c) of the Natural Gas Act.

The pipeline was completed and placed into service in June 2019 and is currently undergoing final restoration. On behalf of FERC, in April 2021, our team completed third-party environmental compliance monitoring in the field, verifying that restoration activities were in compliance with permits and other environmental commitments.





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