



July 18, 2016

Serita Frey, Chairperson and Katherine Hartnett
Deerfield Conservation Commission
8 Raymond Road
Deerfield, NH 03037

Re: Wetland File No. SEC-2-15-02817, Northern Pass Transmission, LLC and Public Service Company of New Hampshire d/b/a Eversource Energy, and Comments on Wetlands Permit Application and Wetlands Permit Application for Northern Pass, DES File No. 2015-2830 and SEC Docket No. 2015-06

Dear Ms. Frey and Ms. Hartnett:

On behalf of Northern Pass Transmission LLC ("NPT"), we are respectfully responding to your e-mail of May 15, 2016 to Mr. Craig D. Rennie of the NH Department of Environmental Services ("NHDES") related to the Northern Pass Project. We offer the following responses to your comments.

Wetland Permit Application Process

NPT is required under Chapter 482-A:3 (amended 2014) and as a part of the NHDES Wetland Permit Application ("WPA") process to furnish complete copies of its WPA and NHDES Shoreland applications to affected municipalities with instructions to the Town Clerk of said municipalities to distribute a complete copy to the municipal conservation commission. The WPA instructions dictate the format and content of the application and are intended to ensure that the required information is provided to the NHDES. These include requests to tabulate impacts to affected resources by town and to detail proposed mitigation measures by town; all of which were done to assist local municipalities in their reviews. In addition, detailed permitting plans are arranged in a linear fashion along the Project alignment (from north to south) and the plan sheets and their extent for each town are clearly depicted on the index map located above the Northern Pass logo in the lower left-hand corner of the sheet.

To assist with the review of the technical reports, the Project was divided into sections based on location and type of work; Deerfield is located in Section S1 and the proposed Deerfield Substation Expansion is included in its own standalone section within Appendix B of the NHDES WPA which is titled, "*Wetlands, Rivers, Streams and Vernal Pools Resource Report and Impact Analysis.*" A similar approach was taken in the other technical reports, with more general summaries in the WPA itself.

Project personnel have met with various towns and agencies at their request to assist in identifying the portions of the applications of greatest relevance, and met with the Deerfield Conservation Commission on January 11, 2016 to discuss town-specific wetland resources and proposed impacts. This meeting was followed by several phone calls and emails between the Deerfield Conservation Commission and NPT, the submittal of additional materials to the Town, and the receipt of a letter from the Deerfield Conservation Commission summarizing their position on the Project and the application review process.

Wetlands Review

As you know, the natural resource documentation and assessment conducted for the applicant was completed by Normandeau Associates Inc. (Normandeau), with wetland and water resource delineations conducted by or under the direct supervision of one of Normandeau's multiple New Hampshire Certified Wetland Scientists (NHCWS). The New Hampshire wetland certification program insures that data submitted to NHDES meets its standards for quality, which relieves some of the review burden from the state and municipalities. The methodologies for all natural resource surveys associated with the Project are either those required by regulation, or were subject to review and approval by the applicable state and federal resource agencies. In addition, site visits to confirm the accuracy of the application of those methodologies were conducted with representatives of the US Army Corps of Engineers at multiple locations along the Project alignment, including at the proposed Deerfield Substation expansion site, as documented in the WPA and associated technical reports and addenda. Review and approval of field study methodologies prior to commencement, communication with resource agencies throughout Project design and development and multiple pre-application meetings to define impact types and mitigation measures, site visits, and the existence of the New Hampshire wetland scientist certification program are all ways of ensuring scientific consistency for projects of this type and scale.

In addition, Normandeau is a local company to New Hampshire, and has a long history of quality work recognized by the resource agencies in and around all regions of the State. In fact, the summary report detailing the findings associated with the *Assessment of Transmission Line Proposal on Natural Resources within the northern half of Bethlehem, New Hampshire, December 2015*, commissioned by the Town of Bethlehem, and prepared by two independent NHCWS, states on page 5 that, "Based on our field assessment and review of submitted maps, wetlands were accurately delineated and documented."

Construction Oversight and Post-Construction Performance

Notwithstanding the assertions in your comments about Eversource and its prior history of wetlands compliance, the company's record is excellent. The wetland protection strategies described in the permit application materials for the PSNH projects (NHDES wetland permits 2013-02154 and 2014-02334) referenced by the Lamprey Rivers Local Advisory Committee in their November 9, 2015 letter to NHDES were rigorously applied to those PSNH projects, and the construction monitoring reports were provided to PSNH and NHDES. The temporary timber mats, silt fence and straw wattles specified in the design and permitted by NHDES were removed after construction and the wetlands were restored as required by the project permit (Please refer to the attached Northern Pass response to the Lamprey Rivers Local Advisory Committee letter for more detailed information). However, the wetland protection methods employed by PSNH for those projects do not apply to the many other users of the ROW and access roads on these private properties. Eversource does not have the right to prevent access to private property without landowner permission, and the company is not responsible for ATV use or other access issues in the ROW if owned by others. Many portions of the existing ROW are utilized by the public, with some activities including unregulated ATV and other similar uses resulting in erosion and sedimentation problems. These unregulated activities often take place in locations previously restored following ROW maintenance or construction activities.

Furthermore, Eversource and NPT demand strict compliance from their contractors with applicable Best Management Practices (BMP), industry standards, and safety procedures for employees, contractors and public, along with permit conditions throughout construction of projects of any size. NPT will implement a robust inspection and compliance program to support the construction activities associated with the Project. This program will likely involve compliance experts employed by NPT and its contractors, along with third-party inspectors. NPT expects that all work will be subject to standard permit conditions detailing required restoration measurements and performance standards, along with site-specific details for addressing particularly sensitive locations. Northern Pass continues to work with state and federal agencies to address these sensitive locations and species.

Application Completeness

We disagree with your assertion that the WPA as submitted is incomplete. The WPA has already been deemed complete by both NHDES and the SEC. Proposed temporary natural resource impacts associated with the 192-mile Project route, six transition stations, two substation expansions, the

converter terminal, and all known on-ROW access roads, off-ROW access roads (ORAR), and proposed temporary storage and staging areas (laydown areas) have been included within the applicable state and federal permit applications, including the NHDES WPA and 404 Permit referenced above. Access roads and Temporary Storage and Staging Areas are discussed in Sections 6.1.15 and 6.1.16 of the NHDES WPA and all proposed temporary impacts associated with these components of the Project are included in tabulations and summaries. ORARs and staging areas are discussed in Sections 3.4 and 3.5 of the 404/10 Permit application with any proposed impacts included in Section 4. Locations and impacts of access roads and staging areas are also included with the NHDES WPA and the US Army Corps of Engineers Section 404/10 Permit Application plans at Appendix 47 to the SEC Application and Appendix K of the Section 404/10 Application (which is SEC Appendix 3). The location of, and proposed impacts associated with, access roads and known temporary storage and staging areas located within lands or easements owned or controlled by the Project have been identified in the WPA; however sites that may be identified in the future or where a formal agreement for use has not been completed or does not exist have not been included in the WPA. Any access roads or storage and staging areas identified in the future will be subject to the same avoidance and minimization standards and protocols that have been applied to the remainder of the Project; and no impacts will be allowed unless explicitly permitted by NHDES.

We believe the forgoing information responds to your comments.

Sincerely,



Lee E. Carbonneau
As agent for Northern Pass Transmission, LLC.
Senior Principal Scientist
Normandeau Associates, Inc.

Attach.

CC: Mr. Collis Adams (collis.adams@des.nh.gov)
Mr. Craig Rennie (craig.rennie@des.nh.gov)
Ms. Darlene Forst (darlene.forst@des.nh.gov)
Mr. Ridgely Mauck (ridgely.mauck@des.nh.gov)
Ms. Pamela Monroe, Administrator- NH Site Evaluation Committee
(pamela.monroe@sec.nh.gov)



July 18, 2016

Todd Piskovitz
Project Review Subcommittee Chair
Lamprey Rivers Advisory Committee
203 Wadleigh Falls Road
Lee, NH 03861

RE: Wetlands File No. SEC -2-15-02817 – Northern Pass Transmission Permit Application –
Response to LRAC Comments Submitted to NHDES on November 9, 2015

Dear Mr. Piskovitz:

On behalf of Northern Pass Transmission LLC (“NPT”), we are responding to your November 9, 2015 comments to Dori Wiggin, Craig Day and Ridge Mauck at NHDES on the Northern Pass permit applications referenced above. Your letters include some specific concerns about access and structure placement, and also describe the findings of a field review conducted by the Lamprey Rivers Advisory Committee (“LRAC”) at two sites in the ROW that Eversource/PSNH had worked on under previous wetland permits for which Normandeau Associates Inc. was the agent. We provide the following responses to your comments.

The wetland protection strategies described in the permit application materials for the Eversource projects referenced by LRAC (NHDES wetland permits 2013-02154 and 2014-02334) were rigorously applied to those Eversource projects, and the construction monitoring reports were provided to Eversource and NHDES. A snapshot of an existing gravel road in a ROW near Church Street showing recent sediment displacement by a wheeled vehicle (see attached photo taken by LRAC on October 29, 2015 and provided to Dori Wiggin) is unrelated to Eversource construction work over a year prior to that date (see attached photo taken by Normandeau Associates, Inc. on June 2, 2014). The temporary timber mats, silt fence and straw wattles shown in the Normandeau photo were installed and functioned as designed, and upon removal, the wetlands were restored as required by the project permits. However, the wetland protection methods employed by Eversource projects do not apply to the many other users of the ROW and access roads on these private properties. Eversource does not have the right to prevent access to private property, and the company is not responsible for ATV use or other access issues in the ROW if owned by others. Many portions of the existing ROW are utilized by the public, with some activities including unregulated ATV and other similar uses resulting in erosion and sedimentation problems. These unregulated activities often take place in locations previously restored following ROW maintenance or construction activities.

Where possible, Northern Pass construction access paths will follow existing roads to minimize new impacts, as long as those paths provide access to the necessary locations, have suitable slopes, turning radii, wire clearance, etc., and avoid sensitive resources. West from Church Street, the existing access road passes through a vernal pool as shown on the permitting plan set. Since construction of the Northern Pass Project will span two years, a different route was chosen to avoid this vernal pool.

Access to the ROW from Mountain Road, the second site mentioned by LRAC, was also used for one of the prior permitted Eversource projects (the other Eversource project which proposed to use this access road was instead completed by helicopter). Normandeau provided construction monitoring to ensure that BMPs were either installed in accordance with the plans, or revised based on field data that was reviewed and approved by the Eversource project team. During the project work in 2014, no wetland impacts or BMP failures were noted in this area. The access road clearly appears as a gravel road on aerial photos as far back as at least 1992. Historical and current aerial photos clearly show trails with wheel tracks leaving the ROW onto adjacent properties, and it is likely that ATVs use these access roads regularly. Nonetheless, Northern Pass contractors will need to improve this access path to provide a stable base for construction use. All necessary erosion and sedimentation control BMPs will be installed and maintained throughout the duration of construction activity in this, and all other locations.

Northern Pass will employ construction monitors to verify compliance with all impact avoidance and minimization commitments, permit conditions, and post-construction monitoring to verify successful restoration. In addition, the Project expects that the state and federal agencies will perform independent inspections of the work. Northern Pass will cooperate fully with all regulatory reviewers.

One of the proposed structures will be located approximately 245 feet from the edge of the Lamprey River, which is no closer than the existing structures in the ROW. This new structure will have no impact on the Lamprey River. However, shifting its location could have a ripple effect along the line that could create greater impacts to natural resources elsewhere.

Structure foundations will be designed specifically to suit each structure location based on geotechnical information that will be gathered over the coming months. The assumptions included in the Project permit applications are conservative enough to cover the possible foundation sizes and configurations. Based on these assumptions, the permanent impact to wetlands from structure foundations in Deerfield is 483 square feet. In many locations, we expect that the foundations will have even less impact than is identified in the application materials.

We believe the foregoing information addresses the comments raised in your letters. We appreciate the time and effort your organization has expended on the review of this Project.

Sincerely,



Lee E. Carbonneau
As agent for Northern Pass Transmission, LLC.
Senior Principal Scientist
Normandeau Associates, Inc.

CC: Mr. Collis Adams (collis.adams@des.nh.gov)
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Ms. Pamela Monroe, Administrator- NH Site Evaluation Committee
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Photo taken by Normandeau, June 02, 2014



Photo taken by LRLAC 10/29/2015