

Proposed Natural Gas Pipeline

Have you been wondering about the blue TDEC Public Notice signs regarding a water quality permit application for a proposed natural gas pipeline posted near Highway 72 in Loudon and Monroe Counties? The Water Quality Improvement Committee (WQIC) of the Watershed Association of the Tellico Reservoir (WATeR) was asked for details about this proposal and the potential environmental concern. A member of this committee Ron Wise, a retired civil engineer/environmental attorney, researched the records and recently reported the result of his investigation.

Wise found that East Tennessee Natural Gas, LLC has proposed to construct a new 12-inch diameter pipeline 10 miles long from an existing pipeline west of Vonore to the Tate and Lyle Plant in Loudon. This new pipeline will provide natural gas to the plant to allow conversion of existing coal fired boilers to natural gas and the installation of a new natural gas fueled combined cycle electric power plant. This conversion from coal combustion to natural gas should incrementally improve air quality throughout the Knoxville area as well as in Loudon Co.

The permit application states that the proposed route was selected from six alternatives because “it offered the least environmental and landowners impacts.” The 10 mile route extends along 9.1 miles of existing right-of-ways. The proposed construction workspace passes within 50 feet of six residences and crosses 27 waterbodies. Installing the pipeline across the upper reaches of both Bat Creek and Fork Creek Embayments of Tellico Lake and the Tennessee River near the terminus will be accomplished by drilling underground to prevent disturbing the bottom material. Crossing smaller streams may potentially “result in minor, short-term impacts including localized turbidity levels and downstream sediment deposition.”

Construction of this project is anticipated from March 2016 to August 2016. In addition to TDEC, the proposed construction plan was reviewed and approved by several State and Federal agencies including TVA, the US Corps of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency.

For further information, contact Heather Todd Ahrens, Sr. Ecologist of TRC Environmental Corp. at (770) 270-1192, ext. 203 in Norcross, GA or hahrens@trcsolutions.com. TRC prepared the environmental report for this project and Heather serves as Project Manager.

Submitted by the Water Quality Improvement Committee, WATeR