

NY/NJ BAYKEEPER, FOOD &
WATER WATCH, CENTRAL
JERSEY SAFE ENERGY
COALITION, PRINCETON MANOR
HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION,

Petitioners,

v.

FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY
COMMISSION,

Respondent

FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY)
COMMISSION,)
)
Respondent)
)
)
_____)

Pursuant to the Natural Gas Act, 15 U.S.C. § 717r(b), and Rule 15(a) of the Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure NY/NJ Baykeeper, Food & Water Watch, Central Jersey Safe Energy Coalition, and the Princeton Manor Homeowners Association, (collectively, “Environmental & Community Groups”) hereby petition this Court for review of the following orders issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (“Commission”):

1. *Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company, LLC*, Order Issuing Certificate, Docket No. CP17-101-000, 167 FERC ¶ 61,110 (May 3, 2019) (“Certificate Order”) (Attached as Appendix A);
2. *Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company, LLC*, Order Granting Rehearing for Further Consideration, Docket No. CP17-101-001 (July 2, 2019) (“Tolling Order”) (Attached as Appendix B) and
3. *Transcontinental Pipe Line Company, LLC*, Order Denying Rehearing and Stay, Docket No. CP17-101-001, 171 FERC ¶ 61,031 (April 16, 2020) (“Rehearing Denial”) (attached as Appendix C).

This Court has jurisdiction under Section 717r of the Natural Gas Act, 15 U.S.C. §717r, over this Petition for Review. Each of the Environmental & Community Groups intervened and participated in the certificate proceeding before the Commission,¹ and together – along with the Surfrider Foundation – filed a timely Request for Rehearing of the Commission order granting the certificate on June 3, 2019.² On April 16, 2020, the Commission denied this rehearing request, thus

¹ See Princeton Manor Homeowners Association Motion to Intervene (April 25, 2017), Access No. 20170427-0026; NY/NJ Baykeeper Motion to Intervene (March 29, 2017), Access No. 2017329-5034; Central Jersey Safe Energy Coalition Motion to Intervene (April 26, 2017), Access No. 20170426-5265; and Food & Water Watch Motion to Intervene (May 13, 2018), Access No. 20180514-5568.

² Request for Rehearing and Rescission of May 3, 2019 Order and Motion for Stay By NY/NJ Baykeeper, Food & Water Watch – New Jersey, Central Jersey

rendering the Commission orders final for judicial review under Section 15 U.S.C. §717r(a). This Petition for Review is timely filed within sixty days of the Commission's order on rehearing. *See* 15 U.S.C. §717r(b).

The Environmental & Community Groups challenge the Commission's orders and ask this Court to vacate the orders on review.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Christopher Miller*

Executive Director

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Local Counsel for Environmental & Community Groups

Dated: June 15, 2020

Safe Energy Coalition, The Princeton Manor Homeowners Association and Surfrider Foundation (June 3, 2019), Access No. 20190603-5198. Because the 30th day following the Commission Certificate Order fell on Sunday, June 2, 2019, the deadline for rehearing requests was on Monday, June 3, 2019, the next day that the Commission was open for business. *See* 18 C.F.R. §385.2007(a)(2).

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE

In accordance with the Fed. R. App. P. 32(a)(7)(C)(i), I certify that the Environmental & Community Groups' Petition for Review has been prepared in a proportionally spaced typeface (using Microsoft Word 2010, in 14-point Times New Roman) and contains 404 words.

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

In accordance with the Fed. R. App. P. 25(d) and the Court's Administrative Order Regarding Electronic Case Filing, I hereby certify that I have, this 15th day of June, 2020, caused to be served the foregoing upon Robert Solomon, Solicitor, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street, NW, Washington D.C. 20426, Robert.Solomon@FERC.gov by electronic mail and to all parties below listed on the attached FERC Service List via the Commission's electronic filing system, with option for hard copy.

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Appendix A

Certificate Order

167 FERC ¶ 61,110
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

Before Commissioners: Neil Chatterjee, Chairman;
Cheryl A. LaFleur, Richard Glick,
and Bernard L. McNamee.

Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company, LLC

Docket No. CP17-101-000

ORDER ISSUING CERTIFICATE

(Issued May 3, 2019)

1. On March 27, 2017, Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company, LLC (Transco) filed an application pursuant to section 7(c) of the Natural Gas Act (NGA)¹ and Part 157 of the Commission's regulations² for authorization to construct and operate an expansion of Transco's system in Pennsylvania and New Jersey and its offshore pipeline system in New Jersey and New York state waters (Northeast Supply Enhancement Project). The Northeast Supply Enhancement Project is designed to provide up to 400,000 dekatherms per day (Dth/d) of additional firm transportation service.

2. For the reasons discussed below, we will grant the requested authorizations, subject to the conditions described herein.

I. Background and Proposal

3. Transco is a limited liability company organized and existing under the laws of the State of Delaware. Transco is a natural gas company as defined by section 2(6) of the NGA³ engaged in the transportation of natural gas in interstate commerce and subject to the Commission's jurisdiction. Transco's transmission system extends from Texas, Louisiana, and the offshore Gulf of Mexico area, through Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, to its termini in the metropolitan New York City area.

4. Transco proposes to construct and operate its Northeast Supply Enhancement Project to provide up to 400,000 Dth/d of incremental firm transportation service from its

¹ 15 U.S.C. § 717f(c) (2012).

² 18 C.F.R. pt. 157 (2018).

³ 15 U.S.C. § 717a(6).

Compressor Station 195 in York County, Pennsylvania, to its offshore Rockaway Transfer Point, an existing interconnection between Transco's Lower New York Bay Lateral and its Rockaway Delivery Lateral in New York State waters. To facilitate this service, Transco proposes to construct and operate the following facilities:

- Approximately 10.2 miles of 42-inch-diameter onshore pipeline loop located in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania (Quarryville Loop);
- Approximately 3.4 miles of 26-inch-diameter onshore pipeline loop in Middlesex County, New Jersey (Madison Loop);
- Approximately 0.2 miles of 26-inch-diameter onshore pipeline loop in Middlesex County, New Jersey, and approximately 23.3 miles of 26-inch-diameter offshore pipeline loop in Middlesex and Monmouth Counties, New Jersey, and Queens and Richmond Counties, New York (Raritan Bay Loop);⁴
- A new 21,902 horsepower (hp) electric motor-driven compression unit located at its existing Compressor Station 200 in Chester County, Pennsylvania;
- A new 32,000 hp natural gas-fired, turbine-driven compressor station consisting of two approximately 16,000 hp turbine units (Compressor Station 206) in Somerset County, New Jersey; and
- Various ancillary facilities including a communication tower, mainline valves, launchers and receivers, and other aboveground and underground facilities.

Transco estimates the cost of the Northeast Supply Enhancement Project to be approximately \$926.5 million.

5. Transco states that it held an open season from May 16 through June 9, 2016, for the Northeast Supply Enhancement Project. As a result of the open season, Transco executed binding precedent agreements for the entire 400,000 Dth/d of transportation service created by the Northeast Supply Enhancement Project with two affiliates of National Grid. Specifically, Transco executed a binding precedent agreement with The Brooklyn Union Gas Company, d/b/a National Grid NY for 211,300 Dth/d for a term of 15 years. Additionally, Transco executed a binding precedent agreement with KeySpan Gas East Corporation d/b/a National Grid for 188,700 Dth/d for a term of 15 years.

⁴ The offshore portion of the Raritan Bay Loop will cross approximately 6.0 miles of New Jersey State waters and approximately 17.3 miles of New York State waters.

Transco also states that it held a reverse open season from November 30 through December 16, 2016, and no requests to participate were received. Transco states that each of the project shippers elected to pay a negotiated rate.

6. Transco proposes to establish incremental firm recourse rates under Rate Schedule FT and to apply its generally applicable system fuel retention and electric power rates for service on the Northeast Supply Enhancement Project.

II. Notice, Interventions, and Comments

7. Notice of Transco's application was published in the *Federal Register* on April 12, 2017.⁵ Timely, unopposed motions to intervene are granted by operation of Rule 214 of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure.⁶ Late interventions were granted by notices issued on April 19 and December 31, 2018.

8. In addition, numerous entities, including landowners and individuals, filed comments raising concerns over the environmental impacts of the project. These comments are addressed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and, as appropriate, below.

Request for Formal Hearing

9. The Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association (Stony Brook) requests a formal hearing of Transco's application for the Northeast Supply Enhancement Project that would address the "environmental impacts of and public need for the project."⁷ Stony Brook does not provide any additional information regarding its request for a formal hearing.

10. An evidentiary, trial-type hearing is necessary only where there are material issues of fact in dispute that cannot be resolved on the basis of the written record.⁸ Stony Brook has not raised a material issue of fact that the Commission cannot resolve on the basis of the written record. As demonstrated by the discussion below, the existing written record provides a sufficient basis to resolve the issues relevant to this proceeding. The Commission has satisfied the hearing requirement by giving all interested parties a

⁵ 82 Fed. Reg. 17,651 (2017).

⁶ 18 C.F.R. § 385.214(c)(1) (2018).

⁷ See Stony Brook's April 27, 2017 Motion to Intervene.

⁸ See, e.g., *Southern Union Gas Co. v. FERC*, 840 F.2d 964, 970 (D.C. Cir. 1988); *Dominion Transmission, Inc.*, 141 FERC ¶ 61,183, at P 15 (2012).

full and complete opportunity to participate through evidentiary submission in written form.⁹ Therefore, we will deny Stony Brook's request for a formal hearing.

III. Discussion

11. Because the proposed facilities will be used to transport natural gas in interstate commerce, subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission, the construction and operation of the facilities are subject to subsections (c) and (e) of the NGA.

A. Application of the Certificate Policy Statement

12. The Certificate Policy Statement provides guidance for evaluating proposals to certificate new construction.¹⁰ The Certificate Policy Statement establishes criteria for determining whether there is a need for a proposed project and whether the proposed project will serve the public interest. The Certificate Policy Statement explains that in deciding whether to authorize the construction of new pipeline facilities, the Commission balances the public benefits against the potential adverse consequences. The Commission's goal is to appropriately consider the enhancement of competitive transportation alternatives, the possibility of overbuilding, subsidization by existing customers, the applicant's responsibility for unsubscribed capacity, avoidance of unnecessary disruptions of the environment, and the unneeded exercise of eminent domain in evaluating new pipeline construction.

13. Under this policy, the threshold requirement for existing pipelines proposing new projects is that the pipeline must be prepared to financially support the project without relying on subsidization from existing customers. The next step is to determine whether the applicant has made efforts to eliminate or minimize any adverse effects the project might have on the applicant's existing customers, existing pipelines in the market and their captive customers, or landowners and communities affected by the proposed route or location of the new pipeline facilities. If residual adverse effects on these interest groups are identified after efforts have been made to minimize them, the Commission will evaluate the project by balancing the evidence of public benefits to be achieved against the residual adverse effects. This is essentially an economic test. Only when the benefits outweigh the adverse effects on economic interests will the Commission proceed to complete the environmental analysis where other interests are considered.

⁹ *Moreau v. FERC*, 982 F.2d 556, 568 (D.C. Cir. 1993).

¹⁰ *Certification of New Interstate Natural Gas Pipeline Facilities*, 88 FERC ¶ 61,227; *corrected*, 89 FERC ¶ 61,040 (1999), *order on clarification*, 90 FERC ¶ 61,128; *further clarified*, 92 FERC ¶ 61,094 (2000) (Certificate Policy Statement).

14. With respect to the subsidization threshold requirement, the Commission has determined, in general, that when a pipeline proposes an incremental rate for service utilizing proposed expansion capacity that is higher than the generally applicable system rate, the pipeline satisfies the threshold requirement that the project will not be subsidized by existing customers.¹¹ As noted above, Transco has proposed an incremental recourse rate to recover the costs of the project and that rate is higher than its existing applicable system recourse rate.

15. We find that the proposed project will have no adverse effect on service to Transco's existing customers because the proposed expansion facilities are designed to provide incremental service to meet the needs of the project shippers, without degrading service to Transco's existing customers. We also find that there will be no adverse impact on other pipelines in the region or their captive customers, and no other pipelines or their captive customers have filed adverse comments regarding Transco's proposal.

16. We find that Transco has sufficiently demonstrated that there is market demand for the project. Transco has entered into long-term precedent agreements for firm service with the project shippers for the full amount of additional firm transportation service to be made possible by the project. Moreover, Ordering Paragraph (B)(4) of this order requires that Transco file a written statement affirming that it has executed contracts for service at the levels provided for in their precedent agreements prior to commencing construction.

17. We are further satisfied that Transco has taken appropriate steps to minimize adverse impacts on landowners. As discussed in greater detail in the final EIS and, as appropriate, below, the onshore portion of Transco's proposed project will disturb approximately 332 acres of land during construction, and approximately 60 acres of land during operation. Transco participated in the Commission's pre-filing process and has actively worked with local stakeholders, including homeowners and landowners, as well as federal and state agencies to develop the proposed pipeline route, as well as evaluating 39 sites for the placement of Compressor Station 206. Transco proposes to co-locate approximately 97 percent of the Quarryville Loop within and alongside the existing Transco Mainline right-of-way, and 100 percent of the Madison Loop within and alongside the existing Transco Lower Bay Loop C right-of-way. Co-locating the pipelines will allow approximately 91 percent of the Quarryville Loop right-of-way to overlap with Transco's existing right-of-way by at least 35 feet, and allow approximately

¹¹ See, e.g., *Dominion Transmission, Inc.*, 155 FERC ¶ 61,106, at P 15 (2016); *Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Corp.*, 98 FERC ¶ 61,155, at 61,552 (2002).

74 percent of Madison Loop right-of-way to overlap with Transco's existing right-of-way by at least 20 feet.¹²

18. Based on the benefits the project will provide and the minimal adverse impacts on existing shippers, other pipelines and their captive customers, and landowners and surrounding communities, we find, consistent with the Certificate Policy Statement and NGA section 7(c), that the public convenience and necessity requires approval of the project, subject to the environmental and other conditions in this order.

B. Rates

1. Recourse Rate

19. Transco proposes to establish initial incremental firm recourse rates under Rate Schedule FT for firm service using the incremental capacity created by the project facilities. Specifically, Transco proposes an initial incremental daily recourse reservation charge of \$1.21655 per Dth and an incremental usage charge of \$0.00500 per Dth. The proposed recourse reservation charge is based on a Year 1 cost of service of \$177,616,659 and annual billing determinants of 146,000,000 Dth.¹³ The proposed cost of service reflects Transco's onshore and offshore transmission depreciation rates of 2.61 percent and 1.20 percent, respectively (both including negative salvage), and a depreciation rate of 4.97 percent for turbines. The depreciation rates were approved in Transco's general rate case settlement in Docket No. RP12-993-000.¹⁴ Transco also proposes to use a pre-tax rate of return of 15.34 percent, which was utilized in Transco's approved settlement rates in Docket Nos. RP01-245-000, et al.¹⁵

¹² See Resource Report 1 of Transco's Application.

¹³ Exhibit P, Page 1 of 2. The annual billing determinants are equal to the maximum daily capacity of the project, times 365.

¹⁴ *Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Co., LLC*, 145 FERC ¶ 61,205 (2013).

¹⁵ *Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Corp.*, 100 FERC ¶ 61,085 (2002). Transco explains that it has used the specified pre-tax rate of return underlying the Docket No. RP01-245 settlement rates because the more recent Docket No. RP12-993 settlement agreement was a "black box" settlement, which does not specify a rate of return.

20. In a January 26, 2018 response to a staff data request, Transco provided an adjusted cost of service and recalculated its initial incremental rates to reflect changes in the federal tax code as per the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017,¹⁶ which became effective January 2018. Transco's work papers show that the effect of the tax code change is a reduction in the estimated cost of service to \$164,972,434, a reduction in the initial incremental daily recourse reservation charge to \$1.12995 per Dth and no change to the initial incremental usage charge of \$0.00500 per Dth. As Transco's January 26, 2018 calculation reflects the federal tax code that will be in effect when the project goes into service, the Commission finds it appropriate to use the revised incremental rates for the purpose of establishing the initial incremental rates.

21. Consistent with the D.C. Circuit's holding in *United Airlines*,¹⁷ the Commission has held that a double recovery of income tax costs results from granting a Master Limited Partnership (MLP) a separate income tax allowance and a pre-tax return on equity.¹⁸ Accordingly, the Commission has established a policy that MLPs are generally not permitted to recover an income tax allowance in their cost of service. For those pass-through business forms that are not MLPs, the Commission continues to consider how to resolve the double recovery concern raised by *United Airlines*.¹⁹ However, the Commission has clarified that a natural gas company organized as a pass-through entity, all of whose income or losses are consolidated on the federal income tax return of its corporate parent, is considered to be subject to the federal corporate income tax, and is thus eligible for a tax allowance.²⁰

¹⁶ Pub. L. No. 115-97, 131 Stat. 2054 (Dec. 22, 2017).

¹⁷ *United Airlines, Inc. v. FERC*, 827 F.3d 122, 134, 136 (D.C. Cir. 2016) (*United Airlines*).

¹⁸ *SFPP, L.P.*, Opinion No. 511-C, 162 FERC ¶ 61,228, at PP 21-30 (2018); *Enable Mississippi River Transmission, LLC*, 164 FERC ¶ 61,075, at PP 34-35 (2018) (*Enable*); see also *Inquiry Regarding the Commission's Policy for Recovery of Income Tax Costs*, 162 FERC ¶ 61,227 (Revised Policy Statement) (providing guidance that an MLP may not recover an income tax allowance), *order on reh'g*, 164 FERC ¶ 61,030 (2018).

¹⁹ Revised Policy Statement, 162 FERC ¶ 61,227 at PP 3, 45; *Trailblazer Pipeline Co., LLC*, 164 FERC ¶ 61,074, at PP 30-31 (2018) (*Trailblazer*).

²⁰ See *Enable*, 164 FERC ¶ 61,075 at PP 34-35; *BP West Coast Products, LLC v. FERC*, 374 F.3d 1263, 1289 (D.C. Cir. 2004) (disallowing an income tax allowance for an MLP's corporate unitholders, while explaining that an income tax allowance is appropriate in the cost of service of a pass-through subsidiary of a corporation "when

22. On August 31, 2018, Transco filed a general NGA section 4 rate case in Docket No. RP18-1126-000, in which Transco states that due to a “recently completed transaction” it became a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Williams Companies, Inc. (Williams). As such, Transco asserts that it is a member of a consolidated corporate return group under Williams and is permitted an income tax allowance on a stand-alone basis under Commission policy.²¹ In addition, in a November 20, 2018 response in compliance with a Commission order,²² Transco filed a written statement clarifying that Williams, a publicly traded Delaware corporation, and Williams Partners L.P. completed their merger on August 10, 2018, with Williams continuing as the surviving entity. Transco again stated that it is now indirectly owned by Williams and is a member of a consolidated corporate return group for federal income tax purposes. Therefore, Transco states that it is appropriate to include an income tax allowance in the rates for its projects.

23. Because Williams has completed the merger described above, and Transco’s rates are subject to an ongoing general NGA section 4 rate case, we accept Transco’s proposal to include the income tax allowance in its cost of service subject to the resolution of its rate case. To the extent Transco’s rate case is resolved and results in a determination that Transco is not eligible to include an income tax allowance in its rates before it files actual tariff records setting forth the initial rates for service, those records must reflect rates recalculated to remove the proposed income tax allowance and accumulated deferred income taxes (ADIT) from its cost of service. If Transco fails to remove the proposed income tax allowance and ADIT from the initial rates, then that filing will be rejected as not being in compliance with this order, and Transco will be required to refile those

such a subsidiary does not itself incur a tax liability but generates one that might appear on a consolidated return of the cosuch a subsidiary does not itself incur a tax liability but generates one that might appear on a consolidated return of the corporate group.”); *see also Interstate and Intrastate Natural Gas Pipelines; Rate Changes Relating to Federal Income Tax Rate*, Order No. 849, 83 Fed. Reg. 36,672 (July 30, 2018), 164 FERC ¶ 61,031, at P 3 (2018) (Order No. 849) (clarifying that for purposes of the FERC Form No. 501-G and limited NGA section 4 filings contemplated by the final rule “a natural gas company organized as a pass-through entity all of whose income or losses are consolidated on the federal income tax return of its corporate parent is considered to be subject to the federal corporate income tax, and is thus eligible for a tax allowance.”).

²¹ *See* Page 3 of Transco’s Transmittal Sheet in Docket No. RP18-1126-000 (citing Order No. 849, 164 FERC ¶ 61,031, at P 56).

²² *Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Co., LLC*, 165 FERC ¶ 61,154, at P 13 (2018).

records with the appropriate rates and receive Commission approval prior to going into service.

24. The Commission has reviewed Transco's proposed cost of service and initial incremental rates, as modified in its January 26, 2018 data response, and generally finds them reasonable. Under the Commission's Certificate Policy Statement, there is a presumption that incremental rates should be charged for proposed expansion capacity if the incremental rate exceeds the maximum system recourse rate.²³ Hence, the Commission will approve Transco's revised incremental rates for the project because the 100 percent load factor incremental rate (the sum of the reservation and commodity charges) of \$1.13495 per Dth is higher than the currently applicable Rate Schedule FT Zone 6-6 100 percent load factor rate of \$0.1716 per Dth.²⁴

2. Fuel

25. Transco proposes to apply its generally applicable system fuel retention and electric power rates to the project. Transco submitted a fuel study that shows that the project is expected to result in an overall reduction in fuel use attributable to existing customers.²⁵ Thus, Transco states the fuel benefit provided by the project to existing Transco shippers supports Transco's proposal to assess the project shippers the generally applicable fuel retention and electric power charges under Rate Schedule FT.²⁶ Based on the project reduction in fuel use for existing customers, the Commission approves Transco's proposal to charge its generally applicable system fuel and electric power rates for transportation on the capacity associated with the project facilities.

3. Reporting Incremental Costs

26. Section 154.309 of the Commission's regulations includes bookkeeping and accounting requirements applicable to all expansions for which incremental rates are charged. The requirements ensure that costs are properly allocated between pipelines' existing shippers and incremental expansion shippers.²⁷ Therefore, Transco must keep

²³ Certificate Policy Statement, 88 FERC at 61,746.

²⁴ Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company; FERC NGA Gas Tariff; Fifth Revised Volume No. 1, Section 1.1.1, FT - Non-Incremental Rates, 20.0.0.

²⁵ See Transco's Application, Exhibit Z-1, at 1-2.

²⁶ See Transco's Application at 8.

²⁷ 18 C.F.R. § 154.309 (2018).

separate books and accounting of costs and revenues attributable to the project, as required by section 154.309 of the Commission's regulations. The books should be maintained with applicable cross-references as required by section 154.309. This information must be in sufficient detail so that the data can be identified in Statements G, I, and J in any future NGA section 4 or 5 rate case, and the information must be provided consistent with Order No. 710.²⁸

4. Negotiated Rates

27. Transco proposes to provide service to its project shippers under negotiated rate agreements. Transco must file either negotiated rate agreements or tariff records setting forth the essential elements of the agreements in accordance with the Alternative Rate Policy Statement²⁹ and the Commission's negotiated rate policies.³⁰ Transco must file the negotiated rate agreements or tariff records at least 30 days, but no more than 60 days, before the proposed effective date for such rates.³¹

²⁸ *Revisions to Forms, Statements, and Reporting Requirements for Natural Gas Pipelines*, Order No. 710, 122 FERC ¶ 61,262, at P 23 (2008).

²⁹ *Alternatives to Traditional Cost-of-Service Ratemaking for Natural Gas Pipelines; Regulation of Negotiated Transportation Services of Natural Gas Pipelines*, 74 FERC ¶ 61,076, *order granting clarification*, 74 FERC ¶ 61,194, *order on reh'g and clarification*, 75 FERC ¶ 61,024, *reh'g denied*, 75 FERC ¶ 61,066 (1996), *petition for review denied sub nom. Burlington Resources Oil & Gas Co. v. FERC*, 172 F.3d 918 (D.C. Cir. 1998) (Alternative Rate Policy Statement).

³⁰ *Natural Gas Pipelines Negotiated Rate Policies and Practices; Modification of Negotiated Rate Policy*, 104 FERC ¶ 61,134 (2003), *order on reh'g and clarification*, 114 FERC ¶ 61,042, *dismissing reh'g and denying clarification*, 114 FERC ¶ 61,304 (2006).

³¹ Pipelines are required to file any service agreement containing non-conforming provisions and to disclose and identify any transportation term or agreement in a precedent agreement that survives the execution of the service agreement. *See, e.g. Texas Eastern Transmission, LP*, 149 FERC ¶ 61,198, at P 33 (2014). 18 C.F.R. § 154.112(b).

C. Environmental Analysis

28. To satisfy the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA),³² Commission staff evaluated the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project in an EIS. On March 23, 2018, Commission staff issued the draft EIS addressing issues raised up to the point of publication. Notice of the draft EIS was published in the Federal Register on March 30, 2018, establishing a 45-day public comment period ending on May 14, 2018.³³ Commission staff held public comment sessions on April 25 and 26, 2018 and May 2 and 3, 2018, to receive comments on the draft EIS. We also received over 2,000 written comment letters from federal, state, and local agencies; Native American tribes; various companies and organizations; and individuals in response to the draft EIS. The transcripts of the public comment sessions and all written comments on the draft EIS are part of the public record for the project.

29. On January 25, 2019, Commission staff issued the final EIS for the project, and public notice of the availability of the final EIS was published in the Federal Register on February 1, 2019.³⁴ The final EIS addresses geology; soils; water resources; wetlands; vegetation; wildlife and aquatic resources; threatened, endangered, and other special status species; land use, recreation, and visual resources; socioeconomics; cultural resources; air quality and noise; safety; cumulative impacts; and alternatives. The final EIS also addresses all substantive environmental comments received on the draft EIS.³⁵ The final EIS concludes that construction and operation of the project will result in some adverse environmental impacts, but impacts will be reduced to less-than-significant levels with the implementation of Transco's proposed, and Commission staff's recommended mitigation measures, which are included as conditions to this order, as discussed below. Environmental issues of concern, including impacts from the construction and operation of Compressor Station 206 and the impacts to aquatic resources from construction of the Raritan Bay Loop, as well any substantive comments on the final EIS, are discussed below.

1. Compressor Station 206

30. The majority of commenters expressed concerns regarding the impacts of Compressor Station 206. Compressor Station 206 would occupy about 16.1 acres within a

³² 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 *et seq.* (2012). *See also* the Commission's NEPA-implementing regulations at Title 18 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 380.

³³ 83 Fed. Reg. 13,741.

³⁴ 84 Fed. Reg. 1,119.

³⁵ Final EIS at 1-9 and Appendix M.

52.1-acre parcel that Transco has acquired to provide a buffer from surrounding land uses. The compressor building (which would house the compressor units and be the primary source of noise and air emissions) would be 2,500 feet from the nearest residence, 2,530 feet from the nearest place of worship (the New Jersey Buddhist Vihara Meditation Center (Meditation Center)), 6,300 feet from the nearest school or daycare center, and 2,100 feet from the nearest face of the Trap Rock quarry. The concerns raised centered on public safety; public health impacts from air emissions; operational noise and visual impacts (particularly on the Meditation Center); impacts on property values; the potential to encounter or exacerbate existing groundwater contamination associated with the adjacent Higgins Farm Superfund site; and alternatives.

a. Public Safety

31. Numerous commenters raised concerns regarding the potential for blasting-induced vibrations from the Trap Rock Quarry to damage the compressor station and Transco's existing pipelines in the area, as well as whether local fire departments would have sufficient resources to protect the public in the event of a fire at the compressor station. Regarding vibration impacts, Transco committed to incorporate safety factors in the final foundation designs, including a vibration monitoring system featuring 16 vibration monitors that would shut the unit down in the event of excessive vibration, to prevent displacement if future blast intensity increases.³⁶ Environmental Condition 30 further requires that Transco file its final foundation designs prior to construction. The final EIS concludes that Compressor Station 206 would be adequately protected from blasting at Trap Rock quarry, and that such blasting does not pose a safety concern to Transco's existing pipeline system. We agree with this conclusion.

32. In the event of a fire, Compressor Station 206 will include safety features including an automated system to quickly isolate gas piping, stop equipment, and safely vent station gas.³⁷ Transco states that its automated emergency shutdown system would provide the most effective way to begin to address an emergency and that no fire hydrant will be necessary to address a fire at the site. Transco will also plan for emergency response with local fire, police, and public officials in accordance with DOT requirements.³⁸ The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) of the DOT is responsible for ensuring the safe operation of interstate natural gas

³⁶ Final EIS at ES-4 – ES-5.

³⁷ Final EIS at 4-337.

³⁸ Final EIS at 5-24.

pipelines through its regulations under Part 192 of the Code of Federal Regulations.³⁹ Transco must comply with these regulations and further, as required by 157.14(a)(10)(vi) of the Commission's regulations, Transco has certified that it would design, install, inspect, test, construct, operate, replace, and maintain the project facilities in accordance with modern engineering practices that meet or exceed the DOT's Minimum Federal Safety Standards.⁴⁰

b. Operating Emissions

33. Many stakeholders asserted that existing state and federal air quality regulations are not protective of public health and recommended that a health impact assessment be conducted for Compressor Station 206.

34. The final EIS explains that ambient air quality is protected by federal and state regulations. Under the Clean Air Act (CAA), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) to protect human health and public welfare. These standards incorporate short-term (hourly or daily) levels and long-term (annual) levels to address acute and chronic exposures to pollutants.⁴¹ The NAAQS include primary standards that are designed to protect human health, including the health of sensitive individuals such as children, the elderly, and those with chronic respiratory problems. Air emission modeling conducted in accordance with EPA and New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) guidelines indicates that Compressor Station 206 would be a minor source of air emissions under the CAA Title V Operating Permit program, would meet the NAAQS, and would not contribute to an exceedance of the NAAQS.⁴² The New Jersey DEP issued Transco a permit to construct and operate Compressor Station 206 on September 7, 2017 and Transco has committed to comply with all applicable permit requirements, including for monitoring and reporting. The final EIS concludes that construction and operation of the project would not have a significant impact on air quality and that a health impact assessment of Compressor Station 206 is not warranted.⁴³ We agree with this conclusion.

³⁹ 49 C.F.R. pt. 192 (2018).

⁴⁰ Final EIS at 4-326.

⁴¹ Final EIS at ES-5.

⁴² Final EIS at ES-6.

⁴³ Final EIS at 4-313.

c. Operational Noise

35. Commenters expressed concern regarding noise from operation of Compressor Station 206. As described in the final EIS, ambient noise measurements at the nearest noise sensitive areas (NSAs) to Compressor Station 206 were used to estimate the noise that would result from normal operation of the compressor station. Based on modeling, the estimated noise increase associated with Compressor Station 206 will be below the threshold of perception for the human ear at the nearest NSAs, including the Meditation Center.⁴⁴ The estimated operational noise at the nearest point on the Meditation Center's planned meditation trail would be 46.8 decibels on the A-weighted scale (dBA) day-night sound level (L_{dn}), which would comply with our operating noise requirement at NSAs of 55 dBA L_{dn}.⁴⁵ To verify predicted operating noise levels, Environmental Condition 29 requires that Transco file a noise survey after placing Compressor Station 206 in service. Environmental Condition 28 further mandates that if the noise attributable to the operation of all of the equipment at the station under interim or full horsepower load exceeds 55 dBA L_{dn} at any nearby NSA, Transco will be required to install additional noise controls to meet the level.

36. Noise will also occur during occasional venting (blowdown) of natural gas for annual emergency shut-down system testing and during maintenance activities. Venting could also occur in the unlikely event of an emergency at the compressor station.⁴⁶ Transco will install silencers on the blowdown vents to reduce the associated noise to 60 dBA at a distance of 300 feet during planned blowdowns, although the blowdown associated with required annual testing may not be silenced. Although certain blowdown events may be audible in proximity to the compressor station, the noise would be periodic and short-term, and will diminish with distance from the station, and in nearly all cases, area landowners will have advance notice of the event.⁴⁷ Therefore, the final EIS concludes that operation of Compressor Station 206 will not result in significant noise impacts at nearby NSAs.⁴⁸ We agree with this conclusion.

⁴⁴ Ambient noise was measured at the Samadhi Buddha statue and was combined with the estimated station operating noise. Final EIS at 4-224, 238.

⁴⁵ Final EIS at ES-8.

⁴⁶ Final EIS at ES-7.

⁴⁷ *Id.*

⁴⁸ Final EIS at ES-7.

d. Visual Impacts

37. Concerns were raised regarding the visual impacts of Compressor Station 206. As explained in the final EIS, Compressor Station 206 will be centrally located on a 52.1-acre wooded parcel and a wooded buffer will be preserved around the station.⁴⁹ Visual simulations were conducted from two locations where the facility could potentially be visible for both summer (foliage) and winter (no foliage) months. At both viewpoints and for both seasonal scenarios, Compressor Station 206 will not be visible, nor will it be visible from the Meditation Center.⁵⁰ Therefore, the final EIS concludes that Compressor Station 206 will not result in a significant visual impact in the area. We agree.

e. Property Values

38. Numerous landowners were concerned about the impacts the project, specifically Compressor Station 206, could potentially have on their properties. Commission staff reviewed studies that evaluate the impact of energy infrastructure facilities on surrounding property values. The final EIS ultimately determined that there was no conclusive evidence indicating that compressor stations have a significant negative impact on property values. Accordingly, we conclude here, as we have in other cases, that the proposed project is not likely to significantly impact property values in the project area.⁵¹

f. Groundwater

39. Several commenters expressed concern regarding the impacts construction of the project may have on EPA's groundwater remediation efforts at the Higgins Farm Superfund site. Higgins Farm is adjacent to the Compressor Station 206 site and, as described in the final EIS, EPA continues to remediate and monitor contaminated groundwater emanating from the site.⁵² The EPA expects contaminant concentrations to continue to decline, but states that continued evaluation is necessary to confirm contaminant concentration reduction and the downgradient extent of contamination.

⁴⁹ Final EIS at ES-7 – ES-8.

⁵⁰ Final EIS at ES-8.

⁵¹ *Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Co., LLC*, 158 FERC ¶ 61,125, at P 106 (2017); *Mountain Valley Pipeline, LLC*, 161 FERC ¶ 61,043, at P 228 (2017).

⁵² Final EIS at 4-30.

40. Perchloroethylene is one of the primary contaminants of concern at the Higgins Farm Superfund site. Data indicates that the perchloroethylene plume is about 850 feet from the proposed compressor building, and that the affected groundwater unit occurs about 30 feet below the proposed facility.⁵³ As stated in the final EIS, EPA concluded that construction and operation of Compressor Station 206 is unlikely to affect EPA's ongoing cleanup operations at the site.⁵⁴ We agree with this conclusion.

g. Alternatives

41. Commenters suggested that alternatives existed that would negate the need for Compressor Station 206. As discussed in greater detail below, Commission staff evaluated system alternatives that would involve modifications to existing facilities to avoid the need for Compressor Station 206, alternate sites for Compressor Station 206, as well as an alternate type of compressor unit. The final EIS ultimately concluded that none of the alternatives were feasible, or offered a significant environmental advantage, and found that the proposed project, as modified by Commission staff's recommended mitigation measures, which are attached as conditions to the appendix to this order, was the preferred alternative.⁵⁵ We agree with this conclusion.

i. System Alternatives

42. The final EIS evaluates other modifications of Transco's existing system that, if implemented, avoid the need for Compressor Station 206. The system alternatives include increased compression at existing aboveground facilities, additional pipeline looping, and various combinations of added compression and looping. Based on hydraulic modeling and comparative environmental analysis, the final EIS concludes that alternative modifications of Transco's system are either infeasible due to adverse effects on existing delivery points and/or do not provide a significant environmental advantage when compared to Transco's proposal.⁵⁶

ii. Site Alternatives

43. The final EIS also evaluates 39 potential alternative locations for Compressor Station 206. Staff's preliminary review eliminated 34 of the alternative sites from further

⁵³ Final EIS at ES-9.

⁵⁴ Final EIS at 4-32.

⁵⁵ Final EIS at 5-27.

⁵⁶ Final EIS at ES-9.

consideration, and the remaining five alternative locations (which included Transco's proposed location) were evaluated in more detail.⁵⁷ The final EIS concludes that none of the alternatives offer a significant environmental advantage over Transco's proposed site.

iii. Electric Motor-driven Compressor Unit Alternative

44. The use of electric motor-driven compressors would avoid the local operating air emissions associated with the proposed natural gas-fired turbines. However, electricity is a secondary source of energy, i.e., other primary sources of energy such as fossil fuels, nuclear, wind, solar, and hydroelectric are required to generate electricity. The electric motor-driven compression alternative would also require the construction of additional electric transmission infrastructure in the area, increasing impacts on resources and landowners. Therefore, the final EIS concludes that the electric motor-driven compression alternative does not offer a significant environmental advantage over Transco's proposed use of natural gas-fired turbines at Compressor Station 206.⁵⁸

2. Raritan Bay Loop

a. Offshore Aquatic Resources

45. As detailed in the final EIS, the primary adverse effects on aquatic resources from construction of the Raritan Bay Loop include impacts from seafloor disturbing activities and noise. Because the loop would be installed beneath the seafloor, operation of the pipeline will have little to no impact on aquatic resources.⁵⁹

b. Seafloor Disturbing Activities

i. Direct Construction Impacts

46. Construction of the Raritan Bay Loop will occur within a 14,165.5-acre workspace, of which only 87.8 acres will be directly impacted by mechanical activities (e.g., excavation, pile-driving, anchoring). Despite numerous commenters' assertions that this entire area of seafloor would be affected by the project, the great majority of this workspace is needed to accommodate the anchor spread around construction barges and will be undisturbed.⁶⁰ Direct impacts due to seafloor disturbance would include

⁵⁷ Final EIS at ES-10.

⁵⁸ *Id.*

⁵⁹ *Id.*

⁶⁰ *Id.*

mortality, injury, or temporary displacement of organisms living near the 87.8 acres of affected seafloor, however pelagic fish, sea turtles, and marine mammals would likely evacuate the area temporarily to avoid the disturbance.⁶¹

ii. Turbidity and Sediment Redeposition

47. Transco conducted sampling to determine the chemical and physical characteristics of sediments along the pipeline route. This data was used to predict the turbidity and sediment deposition that would result from installing and backfilling the Raritan Bay Loop. Based on this modeling, total suspended solids (a measure of turbidity) significantly exceeding ambient conditions would extend a maximum of 3,150 feet from excavation activities, although the majority of sediment plumes from excavation would extend 262 feet to 1,345 feet from the source, and in the worst-case excavation scenario, total suspended solids would return to ambient conditions within 7.9 hours after sediment disturbance.⁶² During backfilling, concentrations significantly exceeding ambient conditions would extend up to approximately 5,000 feet from the source, but would return to ambient conditions within 3.5 hours.⁶³ Sediment transport modeling also estimated that 947.4 acres of seafloor would be indirectly affected by redeposition of at least 0.12 inch (0.3 centimeter) of sediment around excavation and backfill areas.⁶⁴

iii. Contaminated Sediments

48. Sediments within Raritan and Lower New York Bays contain contaminants from historical and ongoing anthropogenic sources. Contaminants that become resuspended during sediment-disturbing activities are expected to generally be adsorbed to organic material and fine-grained sediment and redeposited as sediment-bound compounds. The redeposited sediment is expected to be similar in contaminant concentration to the ambient conditions of the surface sediments at the depositional locations.⁶⁵ Based on the relatively limited distribution of upper-level exceedances for mercury and other heavy metals along the project route, the short duration of turbidity plumes, and the expected

⁶¹ Final EIS at ES-11.

⁶² *Id.*

⁶³ *Id.*

⁶⁴ *Id.*

⁶⁵ *Id.*

fate of metals released into the marine environment, the risk to aquatic resources from exposure to resuspended inorganic contaminants is expected to be low.⁶⁶

49. Transco conducted contaminant transport modeling for compounds exceeding New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Class C and high Class B concentration thresholds in sediment samples. Based on the modeling, the maximum contaminant concentrations would generally meet water quality standards at the edge of a 500-foot mixing zone.⁶⁷ For some of the modeled scenarios, water quality standards for mercury and copper would not be met at the edge of the mixing zone, based on conservative rates of continuous dredging. The New York State DEC will require, and Transco has committed to, monitoring of the water column for chemical contaminants in New York State waters to ensure compliance with state water quality standards as part of the project's New York State DEC Water Quality Certification.⁶⁸

50. The final EIS concludes that, based on the relatively limited duration, extent, and magnitude of project-related turbidity and sediment redeposition, as well as Transco's commitment to restrict work in sensitive areas as much as possible, no significant, long-term impacts on the benthic community or other aquatic resources are expected from the project-related seafloor-disturbing activities.⁶⁹ To more precisely inform the record, Environmental Condition 14 requires Transco to file documentation of its consultations with New York State DEC, New Jersey DEP, and the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) regarding its final mitigation for fisheries and aquatic resources, including construction timing window commitments. In addition, to verify that benthic communities recover as expected, Environmental Condition 15 requires Transco to file a 5-year post-construction benthic sampling and monitoring plan, prepared in consultation with the NMFS, for review and written approval of the Director of OEP. Further, Environmental Condition 16 requires Transco to file the final volume of dredge material for disposal at both onshore and offshore locations, the locations themselves, and any agency comments on disposal sites.

c. Underwater Noise

51. The primary sources of underwater noise associated with the project include propeller noise associated with the movement of project-related vessels and noise

⁶⁶ Final EIS at ES-12.

⁶⁷ *Id.*

⁶⁸ Final EIS at 4-125.

⁶⁹ Final EIS at ES-12.

generated during pile driving and other pipeline installation activities. Project-related underwater noise could impact fish and marine mammals in the area. The final EIS explains that aboveground construction noise is not expected to impact marine species, and operation of the Raritan Bay Loop would not be a significant source of underwater noise.⁷⁰ We agree.

52. The Raritan Bay Loop is within the largest port on the east coast of the United States. The background noise in the underwater environment is similar to the noise that would be generated by the largest vessels that would be used during construction of the pipeline. As such, the final EIS concludes that the movement of the relatively small number of vessels associated with the project is not expected to substantially affect underwater noise.⁷¹

53. Acoustic modeling indicates that the noise generated by pile driving would exceed both the injury and behavioral disturbance thresholds for fish.⁷² The distance for injury or behavioral disturbance to fish associated with other construction activities will be less than that associated with pile driving. Further, an individual fish would need to remain within this area during the entire duration of the pile driving event to experience an injury.⁷³ The final EIS concludes that, because the duration of construction activities would be limited and most fish species would be able to leave the area of disturbance, construction-related noise impacts on fish are expected to be temporary and moderate, and population-level impacts due to construction noise are not expected.⁷⁴ In addition, Environmental Condition 18 requires Transco to file a noise monitoring and mitigation plan to ensure that actual noise is consistent with the predicted values and/or to reduce the noise to acceptable levels.

54. Pile driving noise could result in sound levels capable of causing marine mammal behavior disturbance up to 13.4 miles from the source for the largest piles installed by impact hammer, and up to 1.3 miles from the source for the largest piles installed by a vibratory method.⁷⁵ Noise associated with other in-water construction methods would be

⁷⁰ Final EIS at 4-127.

⁷¹ Final EIS at ES-12.

⁷² Final EIS at ES-12 – ES-13.

⁷³ Final EIS at ES-13.

⁷⁴ Final EIS at 4-129.

⁷⁵ Final EIS at 4-130.

of limited duration and extent and, thus, would not be expected to substantially disturb marine mammals.⁷⁶ The final EIS explains that, given the amount of existing vessel traffic noise in the project area, as well as noise monitoring reports from other recent underwater pile driving activities, it is expected that the sound generated by pile driving would be masked by underwater ambient noise at much shorter distances than the modeled results.⁷⁷ Given that the auditory injury thresholds are with respect to cumulative sound impacts, a marine mammal would need to spend approximately 24 hours within this zone of exceedance to potentially experience a permanent hearing impact.⁷⁸ Marine mammal densities in the project area are low, and individual marine mammals would be unlikely to remain in the zone of exceedance long enough to be injured by pile driving noise.⁷⁹

55. Transco is consulting with NMFS and has submitted a draft application for an Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA), and anticipates that its final IHA application will request Level B takes of up to 10 marine mammal species that may be present in the vicinity of the Raritan Bay Loop during construction.⁸⁰ Environmental Condition 17 requires that Transco file its final acoustic analysis and a copy of the IHA application prior to construction of the Raritan Bay Loop. In addition, Transco developed a Marine Mammal Observer Training and Response Protocol Plan that describes the actions that would be implemented during offshore construction to further minimize impacts on marine mammals and protected species.⁸¹

56. By constructing the Raritan Bay Loop in accordance with measures that may be included in the NMFS IHA, Transco's plans, and staff's recommendations, the final EIS concludes that construction noise would not have a significant impact on fish or marine mammals in the project area. We agree.

⁷⁶ Final EIS at ES-13.

⁷⁷ Final EIS at 5-12.

⁷⁸ Final EIS at 5-13.

⁷⁹ *Id.*

⁸⁰ *Id.*

⁸¹ *Id.*

3. Federally Listed Species

57. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and NMFS, 23 federal listed or proposed species may occur in the project area.⁸² Commission staff determined that the projects would have no effect on 7 of the 23 species, and is not likely to adversely affect 12 of the 23 species.⁸³ On February 12, 2019, the New Jersey Field Office of the FWS concurred with Commission staff's conclusion that the project would not jeopardize the continued existence of the Eastern black rail, a species proposed for listing by the FWS. On April 9, 2019, the Pennsylvania Field Office of the FWS also concurred with this determination. Therefore, ESA consultation with the FWS is complete. Due to potential pile driving noise impacts, the final EIS concludes that the project may affect, and is likely to adversely affect, three federally listed aquatic species under NMFS jurisdiction: the North Atlantic right whale, fin whale, and Atlantic sturgeon.⁸⁴ In response to Commission staff's Biological Assessment for these species, the NMFS will issue a Biological Opinion as to whether or not the project would likely jeopardize the continued existence of these listed species. The Biological Opinion may include binding and/or discretionary recommendations to reduce impacts as well as an Incidental Take Statement for those actions that may harm or harass an ESA-listed species. Environmental Condition 19 requires that Commission staff complete ESA consultation with NMFS prior to any construction.

4. Final EIS Comments

58. On February 14, 2019, EPA filed comments on Commission staff's final General Conformity Determination in the final EIS.⁸⁵ On March 12, 2019, New Jersey DEP filed comments on the final EIS. New Jersey DEP's comments generally advise Transco on state permitting processes, and state that the New Jersey DEP concurs with the conclusions of the final EIS regarding Section 106 consultation for cultural and historic resources. Therefore, we do not further address the cultural and historic resource issues. In addition, New Jersey DEP comments on state-listed species, marine fisheries, drilling fluid toxicity, acid soils, and the final General Conformity Determination. On March 14, 2019, Eastern Environmental Law Center (EELC) filed comments on the final EIS reiterating its previously stated concerns with the draft EIS's analysis of alternatives

⁸² Final EIS at 5-14.

⁸³ *Id.*

⁸⁴ Final EIS at 5-14.

⁸⁵ Final EIS at 4-303 – 4-307.

and impacts on water, air quality, safety, and greenhouse gas emissions. The EPA's, New Jersey DEP's, and EELC's substantive comments are addressed below.

a. State-listed Species

59. The New Jersey DEP contends that the final EIS is deficient in its analysis of potential impacts on the state-listed bald eagle, osprey, and black-crowned night heron. The New Jersey DEP comments that habitat for these species is present in the project area, and references fresh water wetland and flood hazard area permit requirements that may include construction timing restrictions and/or work space restrictions for these species.

60. As stated in the final EIS, the Commission must comply with federal statutes including the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, which prohibits take of any bald eagle unless allowed by permit.⁸⁶ Transco has not requested such a permit, but has committed to work closely with appropriate agencies to determine if new nests are documented near the project prior to or during construction. The New Jersey Field Office of the FWS identified a known bald eagle's nest approximately 1 mile from the Madison Loop.⁸⁷ Transco proposes to implement measures in the FWS' National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines to avoid or minimize construction-related impacts on the species.⁸⁸ Transco has also applied for applicable flood hazard area and fresh water wetland permits from the New Jersey DEP, which may include construction timing restrictions and work space restrictions related to the bald eagle.

61. Regarding impacts to the osprey, the final EIS notes that the osprey is a state-listed threatened species in New Jersey, and New Jersey DEP rules prohibit work within 300 meters of an osprey nest between April 1 and August 31.⁸⁹ Transco consulted with the New Jersey DEP and surveyed the project area, identifying one potential osprey nest within 300 meters of the Madison Loop, another potential nest within 300 meters of the Raritan Bay Loop, and a third potential nest near the Raritan Bay Loop which appeared to be inactive. Transco has committed to monitor all potential osprey nests to determine if

⁸⁶ 16 U.S.C. § 668 – 668d (2012).

⁸⁷ Final EIS at 4-83.

⁸⁸ Final EIS at 4-86.

⁸⁹ Final EIS at 4-196.

they are active at the time of construction and will work with the New Jersey DEP to determine appropriate measures to avoid disturbing active nests during construction.⁹⁰

62. The final EIS also notes that a breeding-only population of the state-threatened black-crowned night heron may occur in the vicinity of the Madison Loop.⁹¹ Further, the New Jersey DEP notes that its fresh water wetland and flood hazard area permits for which Transco has applied may restrict project work between the April 1 and August 15 nesting period, which would reduce potential impacts to the black-crowned night heron. In addition, the bald eagle, osprey, and black-crowned night heron are all included in Transco's final Migratory Bird Plan, which incorporates measures from the New Jersey Field Office of the FWS intended to minimize impacts on migratory birds, including avoiding vegetation clearing between April 1 and August 31.⁹²

63. The final EIS concludes that most impacts on wildlife resources would be temporary and that impacts on migratory birds, including the species raised in the New Jersey DEP's comments on the final EIS, would not be significant. We agree.

b. Marine Fisheries

64. The New Jersey DEP provides updates regarding on-going consultations between Transco, the New Jersey DEP, the New York State DEC, and NMFS concerning construction timing restrictions and allowable work within these periods for certain marine resources. The New Jersey DEP generally agrees with updated plans for winter flounder, anadromous fish, and blue crab, with minor recommended adjustments. The New Jersey DEP also concludes that the project would result in a brief disruption to commercial and recreational fisheries which would be resolved naturally post-construction.

65. The New Jersey DEP recommends that Transco minimize impacts on surf clam areas and shellfish habitat to the greatest extent practical. The final EIS states that Transco continues to consult with the New Jersey DEP regarding mitigation for impacts on shellfish areas, which may include a monetary contribution to New Jersey DEP's dedicated account for shellfish mitigation.⁹³

⁹⁰ Final EIS at 4-196.

⁹¹ Final EIS at 4-195.

⁹² Final EIS at 4-87.

⁹³ Final EIS at 4-119.

66. Environmental Condition 14 of this order requires Transco to file documentation of its final consultations with the New Jersey DEP, the New York State DEC, and NMFS regarding its final proposed mitigation for fisheries and aquatic resources. The final EIS concludes that, with Transco's commitment to restrict work in sensitive areas as much as possible, impacts on fishery and aquatic resources would be less than significant. We agree with this conclusion.

c. Drilling Fluid Toxicity

67. The New Jersey DEP comments that safety data sheets for all drilling fluid additives which would be used in New Jersey and which are not National Sanitation Foundation/American National Standards Institute certified must be provided to the state for approval. The final EIS states that Transco would provide safety data sheets for all drilling fluid additives to both the Commission and to applicable state agencies.⁹⁴

d. Acid Soils

68. The New Jersey DEP reiterates its previous concerns regarding the potential to encounter acid forming soils during construction of the Madison and Raritan Bay Loops. In its comments, the New Jersey DEP asserts that historical aerial photographs document poor revegetation in portions of Transco's existing pipeline rights-of-way, apparently attributing the perceived lack of vegetation to the presence of acid forming soils. The New Jersey DEP also expresses concern that cuttings from the planned horizontal directional drills (HDDs) along the loops would be acid forming.

69. The final EIS summarizes Transco's project-specific Acid Producing Soils Control Plan, which was reviewed and approved by the New Jersey DEP Freehold Soil Conservation District. Among the measures that would be implemented are Transco's commitment to monitor the construction workspace after top soiling and seeding to ensure there is adequate stabilization and that no revegetation problems emerge, and to monitor locations where acid forming soils have been placed or buried for a period of at least 2 years to ensure that acid leachate does not migrate off-site.⁹⁵ The final EIS also notes that Commission staff will periodically inspect the right-of-way until restoration is complete, and that Transco would be required to extend its post-construction monitoring program and implement corrective actions if restoration is deemed insufficient.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Final EIS at 2-49.

⁹⁵ Final EIS at 4-22.

⁹⁶ Final EIS at 2-61.

70. Regarding potential impacts associated with acid forming soil becoming incorporated in HDD drill cuttings, the final EIS explains that Transco would haul HDD drilling fluids from the four onshore HDDs to an approved disposal site in accordance with applicable state and federal regulations.⁹⁷

71. The final EIS concludes that impacts on soil resources and vegetation would be reduced to less than significant levels with implementation of Transco's proposed plans and additional measures recommended by Commission staff, which are attached as conditions of this order. We agree with these conclusions.

e. Air Quality

72. The EELC reiterates its previous concerns that a health impact assessment be completed due to new New Jersey DEP reporting thresholds (established February, 2018)⁹⁸ for hazardous air pollutants (HAP) at Compressor Station 206. Table 4.10.1-6 in the final EIS lists the potential HAPs at Compressor Station 206. While the Commission acknowledges that six of these HAPs would exceed the new New Jersey DEP reporting thresholds, Transco received its air permit for Compressor Station 206 on September 7, 2017 (see table 1.5-1 in the final EIS), prior to this rule taking effect, and the new thresholds do not apply retroactively. Additionally, there are no requirements at the federal level that would necessitate a health impact assessment be completed, and given that Compressor Station 206 is a minor source of air pollution, Commission staff determined in the final EIS that a health impact assessment for a facility of this size is not warranted.⁹⁹ We concur.

f. General Conformity

73. The final EIS determines that the Madison Loop, Raritan Bay Loop, and Compressor Station 206 will be located within the New Jersey-New York-Connecticut Interstate Air Quality Control Region (AQCR), which is designated as nonattainment for various air pollutants. In particular, direct and indirect construction emissions of these project components will result in emissions of nitrogen oxides (NOx), a precursor to ozone formation, which require a General Conformity Determination under the Clean Air

⁹⁷ Final EIS at 4-46.

⁹⁸ N.J.A.C. 7:27:17.

⁹⁹ Final EIS at 4-313.

Act.¹⁰⁰ The Commission issued a draft General Conformity Determination on September 18, 2018, with a 30-day public comment period, identifying that Transco would achieve conformance by fully mitigating all NO_x construction emissions for the Madison Loop, Raritan Bay Loop, and Compressor Station 206 through a combination of direct mitigation projects and/or the purchasing of Emission Reduction Credits (ERC) or Creditable Emission Reductions (CER)¹⁰¹ within the same AQCR. A final General Conformity Determination and responses to comments on the draft General Conformity Determination were included as appendices I and M to the final EIS, respectively.

74. As an initial matter of applicability, New Jersey DEP notes that on November 14, 2018, EPA proposed to reclassify the New Jersey-New York-Connecticut Interstate AQCR from “moderate” to “serious” nonattainment. The final General Conformity Determination acknowledges this proposal, but explains that because EPA has not issued a final rulemaking, the final General Conformity Determination is based on the current designation of moderate, and notes that this proposal has no effect on this project’s applicability, as the process was triggered under the current higher threshold.¹⁰²

75. To support the final General Conformity Determination, Transco developed an Air Quality Technical Report (AQTR) which includes detailed emission estimates of the four possible construction scenarios that could occur. Transco also developed an Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP) that describes the possible mitigation pathways Transco explored, including funding direct mitigation projects and/or the purchase of offsets. Because actual emissions may vary from estimates, the AQMP includes a Construction Emission Tracking Plan (CETP) and Mitigation Project Emission Tracking Plan (MPETP) under which Transco will track actual construction emissions that occur and actual emission reductions that are realized from implemented mitigation projects.

¹⁰⁰ 40 C.F.R. pt. 93, Subpart B – Determining Conformity of General Federal Actions to State or Federal Implementation Plans.

¹⁰¹ In New York, an ERC is the actual decrease in emissions of a regulated pollutant, in tons per year. In New Jersey, a CER serves the same function as an ERC. An ERC or CER represents a permanent, quantifiable, federally enforceable surplus reduction of emissions that has or will have resulted from a physical or operational

change of an emission source subject federal air permitting. ERCs and CERs are emissions that have been retired by existing facilities and are available for purchase to offset future projects.

¹⁰² Final EIS, Appendix I: “Final General Conformity Determination”, I-5 – I-6.

76. The final General Conformity Determination included eight recommendations to finalize the selected construction emission scenario and construction equipment, revise minor aspects of the AQTR, CETP, and MPETP, and share the tracking plans with EPA, New Jersey DEP, and New York State DEC on a monthly basis during construction. New Jersey DEP concurs with seven of staff's recommendations in the final General Conformity Determination (New Jersey DEP had concerns with the eighth recommendation as discussed below). The seven recommendations have been combined and are included as Environmental Conditions 23, 24, and 25 of this order.

77. The EPA states that the General Conformity Determination "contains significant uncertainties with respect to both the project emissions and the mitigation plan" and that allowing EPA and the states to review and comment on the final AQTR, CETP, and MPETP could "further safeguard" compliance with General Conformity. New Jersey DEP notes that the currently estimated construction air emissions may change due to uncertainties associated with the equipment and the engine tier ratings of the equipment (in particular whether the clamshell dredge equipment will meet Tier 3 emission factors), and argues that the Commission should require Transco to revise its emission estimates, and mitigate the actual emissions that occur if equipment onsite does not meet their Tier 3 standards.

78. The procedures for performing a General Conformity Determination require the analysis to be "based on the latest planning assumptions" and using "the latest and most accurate emission estimation techniques available" as described in the regulations.¹⁰³ Commission staff, EPA, the New Jersey DEP, and the New York State DEC received numerous opportunities to review the AQTR and worked with Transco in refining the AQTR to ensure all emission sources used appropriate emission factors and data sources.¹⁰⁴ Drafts of the AQMP, MPETP, and CETP were also provided throughout the review of the project with opportunities for EPA and the states to comment on the methodologies for estimating and tracking project construction emissions and mitigation projects. Transco has incorporated changes to these methodologies in response to input received from EPA, the New Jersey DEP, and the New York State DEC. We acknowledge that at the time of development of the final General Conformity Determination, some planning details were still unknown (e.g., which specific pieces/models of construction equipment would be onsite during construction or which emissions scenario other agencies would ultimately permit). Transco made all efforts to refine unknowns, and justified its assumptions when it had to do so (e.g., Transco supported its assumption that clamshell dredge equipment would meet Tier 3 emission factors based on its experience with similar projects and from input received from

¹⁰³ 40 C.F.R. pt. 93.159(a), (b) (2018).

¹⁰⁴ Final EIS at 4-304.

construction contractors), so that the final General Conformity Determination could be based on the latest planning assumptions and estimates.

79. The final General Conformity Determination also recognizes that actual emissions and equipment on-site may differ from estimates. The CETP will account for each piece of equipment that is actually used during construction, how often it is used, and the emissions from that equipment. As recommended in the final General Conformity Determination, this order includes Environmental Condition 25, which requires that Transco provide copies of the MPETP and CETP reports to EPA, New Jersey DEP, and New York State DEC on a monthly basis during construction. If actual emissions are lower than those estimated, Transco is still responsible for fully offsetting the emission estimates identified in the final General Conformity Determination. The General Conformity Regulations also account for instances when actual emissions are greater than those estimated in a conformity determination, whereby a new or revised conformity determination is required if any modification to the action (e.g. schedule delays or different construction equipment) result in an increase in emissions above the General Conformity applicability thresholds.¹⁰⁵

80. With respect to mitigating emissions, EPA and New Jersey DEP comment that the “NJ TRANSIT Support Systems for New Dual Mode Locomotives” direct mitigation project included in the final General Conformity Determination is not fully explained, and may not be an eligible direct mitigation project. For example, New Jersey DEP states that if Transco is funding the actual replacement of the 17 locomotives, then it likely does qualify as a direct mitigation project; but if Transco is only providing funding for dispensing facilities associated with the diesel emission fluid, then it would not qualify. Appendix A to the final General Conformity Determination includes a summarization of each direct mitigation project and the supporting emission calculations.¹⁰⁶ As explained in Appendix A for the “NJ TRANSIT Support Systems for New Dual Mode Locomotives” direct mitigation project, in December 2017, NJ TRANSIT exercised an option to purchase 17 modernized locomotives, which will replace NJ TRANSIT’s aging fleet of locomotives, and can operate under both diesel and electric power. Appendix A further explains that the new “[locomotives] will meet the current EPA Tier 4 requirements, reducing emissions when operating in diesel mode, as compared to the locomotives to be replaced, and producing no emissions when operating

¹⁰⁵ 40 C.F.R. pt. 93.157(a). See also, Federal Aviation Administration and EPA, *General Conformity Guidance for Airports Questions and Answers*, at 24 (September 2002).

¹⁰⁶ Final EIS, Appendix I: “Final General Conformity Determination”, Appendix A “Project Mitigation Calculations” at A-5.

in electric mode.”¹⁰⁷ The description of this project makes no reference to funding fuel dispensing facilities, and appears to be solely related to the purchase of new locomotives. Therefore, we find that this project qualifies as a direct mitigation project.

81. New Jersey DEP expresses concern with the “NJ Motor Trucking Association and Other Independent Trucking Companies - Truck Replacement Programs” direct mitigation projects, which indicate an estimated total of 1,000 trucks would need to be replaced by 2020. New Jersey DEP has concerns that this amount of truck replacements may not be feasible within the timeframe needed. The final General Conformity Determination supports the Truck Replacement Program mitigation projects, stating that Transco has executed a Memorandum of Agreement which outlines the process for determining truck eligibility, replacement, and scrapping of old trucks. Further, the MPETP will track all emissions realized from the mitigation projects, and should Transco be unable to replace the current estimated number of trucks, the remaining emissions would be mitigated through the purchase of ERCs/CERs, as is described in the final General Conformity Determination.¹⁰⁸

82. New Jersey DEP disagrees with the final General Conformity Determination’s reliance on direct mitigation projects that could be implemented prior to construction of only the Raritan Bay Loop. New Jersey DEP states that other project facilities are also subject to general conformity, and mitigation projects should be implemented prior to any construction in 2020, not just construction on the Raritan Bay Loop. Therefore, applicable Environmental Conditions 23 and 26 have been revised to apply “prior to construction of the facilities which require mitigation/emission offsets under the final General Conformity Determination”.

83. New Jersey DEP also disagrees with the final General Conformity Determination’s conclusion that the use of an alternate timeline to offset emissions is not considered feasible because state agencies have not approved its use. New Jersey DEP comments that it will consider any reasonable proposed alternate timeline. We appreciate New Jersey DEP’s willingness to keep this option available. However, as discussed in the final General Conformity Determination, to use this option, the regulations require the applicable state agencies’ (New Jersey DEP and New York State DEC) approval. During an early consultation meeting¹⁰⁹ on this topic with EPA, New Jersey DEP, and New York State DEC, Commission staff explained that such approval (or at least a preliminary approval) would be needed prior to issuance of a draft General Conformity Determination,

¹⁰⁷ *Id.*

¹⁰⁸ Final EIS, Appendix I: “Final General Conformity Determination”, I-18 - I-19.

¹⁰⁹ See December 12, 2017 General Conformity Discussion, filed in Docket No. CP17-101-000 (accession no. 20171222-4003).

as staff would need to support its demonstration of a feasible method of conformance. None of the staff who attended the meeting from any of the agencies had experience with an alternate timeline, the state agencies could not provide any assurances that such a proposal would be approved or the timeline for such an approval, the approval process would introduce additional complexity in an already challenging process, and New York State DEC noted a preference for concurrent mitigation. Based on these challenges, Transco did not pursue an alternate timeline, and no state agencies approved the use of an alternate timeline. Because this provision was not included in the final General Conformity Determination, implementing it would require the issuance of a revised General Conformity Determination to disclose a change in method of conformance. Regardless, Transco has supported a sufficient number of offsets via direct mitigation projects by 2020 and the purchase of ERCs/CERs, rendering an alternate timeline unnecessary.

84. EPA and New Jersey DEP reiterate their preference for the use of direct mitigation projects over the purchase of ERCs/CERs. New Jersey DEP requests that ERCs/CERs only be used as a backup to allow for technical delays, schedule changes, or to prevent the project from being shut down while direct mitigation measures are being implemented, and applies this request to the eighth recommendation in the final General Conformity Determination. As the final General Conformity Determination states, generally, we agree that direct mitigation is preferable to ERCs/CERs; however, there are an insufficient amount of offsets that could be generated from feasible direct mitigation projects within the timeframe required.¹¹⁰ Further, as New Jersey DEP states in its comments, it may not be possible to fully implement all of the truck replacements within the required timeframe. As such, we expect at least some portion of the project's construction emissions will be mitigated through the purchase of ERCs/CERs. The final General Conformity Determination finds both methods (direct mitigation and the purchase of emissions offsets) to be acceptable methods of demonstrating conformance, and New Jersey DEP acknowledges this finding in its comments. Because this method was disclosed and selected in the final General Conformity Determination, and is legally allowable, we concur with the final General Conformity Determination's finding that the purchase of emissions offsets is acceptable for this project, and maintain the eighth recommendation as Environmental Condition 26.

85. The final General Conformity Determination states that "Transco would purchase ERCs and CERs based on agency permitting for the estimated construction emissions of NOx."¹¹¹ New Jersey DEP argues that there is no agency permitting for construction emissions and instead these need to be covered under the General Conformity Regulations. New Jersey DEP misunderstands the intent of this sentence. Each state

¹¹⁰ Final EIS, Appendix I: "Final General Conformity Determination", I-18 - I-19.

¹¹¹ Final EIS, Appendix I: "Final General Conformity Determination", I-19.

agency maintains a database of emission credits that are eligible for use in air permitting and general conformity. In order to use ERCs/CERS to offset project construction emissions, Transco must demonstrate that purchased credits are “permitted” or eligible under the respective state programs. Given the confusion, we have revised Environmental Condition 26 to clarify the requirement.

86. EPA and New Jersey DEP provide conflicting comments regarding the final General Conformity Determination’s statements that direct mitigation projects would need to be completed and operational prior to the start of construction of the Northeast Supply Enhancement Project.¹¹² EPA argues that this restriction could prevent the use of some preferred direct mitigation projects that could materialize during construction and provide contemporaneous offsets during the year in which construction occurs. EPA proposes that with appropriate safeguards in place, including emission and mitigation tracking, information sharing with EPA and the states, a contingency plan to purchase offsets if mitigation projects do not materialize, and the ability to order a halt to construction if emission offset obligations are not met, such a requirement would not be necessary. Specifically, EPA notes that the Commission could evaluate mitigation project eligibility on a year-by-year basis, if construction spans multiple calendar years, or consider whether mitigation projects are substantially complete but not fully operational at the start of construction. Conversely, New Jersey DEP references EPA’s General Conformity Training Module which states that “mitigation measures must be in place before emissions from the action start.”¹¹³ New Jersey DEP instead asks detailed questions regarding who issues a Notice to Proceed with Construction, when the notice will be issued, and if all state permits need to be obtained before the notice may be issued. New Jersey DEP expresses concern that if a notice is issued well before actual construction, the amount of time for direct mitigation projects would be limited.

87. We acknowledge that requiring mitigation to be in place prior to construction could result in more offsets being purchased, however purchasing these offsets remains a valid method of demonstrating conformance under the General Conformity regulations,¹¹⁴ and Transco is free to use this method for any portion of the emissions subject to General Conformity.

88. We also note that the required amount of purchased offsets have not always been available in the project’s AQCR. Because offsets cannot be “reserved” for Transco should they be necessary, and other entities could purchase the offsets over the next year,

¹¹² Final EIS, Appendix I: “Final General Conformity Determination”, I-16 - I-20.

¹¹³ EPA, *General Conformity Training Module 3.5: Demonstrating Conformity*, <https://www.epa.gov/general-conformity/general-conformity-training-modules>.

¹¹⁴ 40 C.F.R. pt. 93.

we find that it is not an acceptable contingency plan to purchase offsets, as they may not be available by mid-2020. Further, as identified in the final General Conformity Determination, construction in the AQCR that triggered the General Conformity Regulations would occur solely within 1 year (2020); therefore, evaluation of mitigation project eligibility on a year-by-year basis is not appropriate.

89. We also acknowledge New Jersey DEP's concerns regarding the timing of a notice authorizing construction and having mitigation in place. At the outset, we note that many of the conditions attached to this order include a timing component, requiring the conditions be satisfied in order for Commission staff to allow construction to begin. Environmental Condition 10 requires that Transco receive all applicable authorizations required under federal law (including those delegated to states) prior to construction. In 2019 Transco intends to primarily construct project components that are not subject to the General Conformity Determination. Construction of these facilities should not affect the timing of mitigation projects or offsets. We have revised Environmental Condition 26 to emphasize that this condition only applies prior to construction of the facilities subject to the final General Conformity Determination. We also note that while Environmental Condition 26 requires mitigation projects to be "in place", this language is intended accommodate the flexibility envisioned in EPA's training module as allowable under the General Conformity regulations¹¹⁵ for Transco to identify the status of its mitigation projects, along with concrete timelines for their implementation to support their use. For example, if Transco can demonstrate that trucks or replacement locomotives have been purchased and have a scheduled delivery date with timeline for implementation during 2020, this would be sufficient evidence to support construction. However, simply having a program where third parties have the voluntary option to replace their trucks, without specific, and concrete information on how many have signed up and when they will be replaced is not sufficient. With these clarifications, we find that Environmental Condition 26 sufficiently balances EPA and New Jersey DEP's concerns while ensuring the Commission's compliance with the General Conformity regulations.

g. Greenhouse Gas Emissions

90. The EELC reiterates comments it previously filed on the draft EIS, namely that the Commission fails to disclose greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, or include an estimate of the project's downstream emissions. Regarding the project's GHG emissions, the final EIS quantifies GHG emissions during project construction and operation,¹¹⁶ and EELC does not argue that any downstream end uses are causally connected to the Northeast Supply

¹¹⁵ 40 C.F.R. pt. 92.

¹¹⁶ Final EIS at 4-309 – 4-310. GHG emissions are expressed in terms of carbon dioxide equivalents, or CO₂e.

Enhancement Project such that resulting emissions need be considered in the final EIS as indirect impacts. In filings submitted on February 27 and April 24, 2019, Transco states that the project would enable National Grid to convert approximately 8,000 customers a year from heating oil to natural gas, displacing up to 900,000 barrels of oil per year.¹¹⁷ Transco also indicates that its project would more than offset net GHG emissions under a hypothetical scenario in which the entire capacity of the project would displace existing or new fuel oil use in New York.¹¹⁸

5. Environmental Analysis Conclusion

91. We have reviewed the information and analysis contained in the final EIS regarding potential environmental effects of the project, as well as other information in the record. We agree with the conclusions presented in the final EIS and find that the project, if constructed and operated as described in the final EIS, is an environmentally acceptable action. Further, for the reasons discussed throughout the order, as stated above, we find that Transco's Northeast Supply Enhancement Project is in the public convenience and necessity. Compliance with the environmental conditions appended to our orders is integral to ensuring that the environmental impacts of approved projects are consistent with those anticipated by our environmental analyses. Commission staff carefully reviews all information submitted and will only issue a notice to proceed with construction when satisfied that the applicant has complied with all applicable conditions. We also note that the Commission has the authority to take whatever steps are necessary to ensure the protection of environmental resources during construction and operation of the project, including authority to impose any additional measures deemed necessary to ensure continued compliance with the intent of the conditions of the order, as well as the avoidance or mitigation of unforeseen adverse environmental impacts resulting from project construction and operation.

92. Any state or local permits issued with respect to the jurisdictional facilities authorized herein must be consistent with the conditions of this certificate. The Commission encourages cooperation between interstate pipelines and local authorities. However, this does not mean that state and local agencies, through application of state or

¹¹⁷ Transco's February 27, 2019 Filing.

¹¹⁸ Transco's April 24, 2019 Filing. We also note that the Final EIS states, '[b]urning natural gas produces about 80 percent less particulate matter and lower emissions of other contaminants than burning no. 4 fuel oil (NYCDEP, 2012).' Final EIS at 4-389.

local laws, may prohibit or unreasonably delay the construction or operation of facilities approved by this Commission.¹¹⁹

93. The Commission on its own motion received and made a part of the record in this proceeding all evidence, including the application, and exhibits thereto, and all comments, and upon consideration of the record,

The Commission orders:

(A) A certificate of public convenience and necessity is issued to Transco, authorizing it to construct and operate the proposed facilities, as described and conditioned herein, and as more fully described in the application, and subsequent filings by the applicant, including any commitments made therein.

(B) The certificate authority issued in Ordering Paragraph (A) is conditioned on:

(1) Transco's completion of construction of the proposed facilities and making them available for service within two years of the date of this order pursuant to section 157.20(b) of the Commission's regulations;

(2) Transco's compliance with all applicable Commission regulations under the NGA including, but not limited to, Parts 154, 157, and 284, and paragraphs (a), (c), (e), and (f) of section 157.20 of the Commission's regulations;

(3) Transco's compliance with the environmental conditions listed in the appendix to this order; and

(4) Transco's filing a written statement affirming that it has executed firm service agreements for volumes and service terms equivalent to those in its precedent agreements, prior to commencing construction.

(C) Transco's revised Rate Schedule FT incremental rates are approved as the initial rates for the proposed project.

¹¹⁹ See 15 U.S.C. § 717r(d) (state or federal agency's failure to act on a permit considered to be inconsistent with Federal law); see also *Schneidewind v. ANR Pipeline Co.*, 485 U.S. 293, 310 (1988) (state regulation that interferes with FERC's regulatory authority over the transportation of natural gas is preempted) and *Dominion Transmission, Inc. v. Summers*, 723 F.3d 238, 245 (D.C. Cir. 2013) (noting that state and local regulation is preempted by the NGA to the extent it conflicts with federal regulation, or would delay the construction and operation of facilities approved by the Commission).

(D) Transco's request to utilize its system-wide fuel and electric power rates is approved.

(E) Transco shall file actual tariff records setting forth the initial rate for service no earlier than 60 days and no later than 30 days, prior to the date the project facilities go into service.

(F) Transco shall notify the Commission's environmental staff by telephone or e-mail of any environmental noncompliance identified by other federal, state, or local agencies on the same day that such agency notifies Transco. Transco shall file written confirmation of such notification with the Secretary of the Commission within 24 hours.

By the Commission. Commissioner LaFleur is concurring with a separate statement attached.

Commissioner Glick is dissenting in part with a separate statement attached.

(S E A L)

Kimberly D. Bose,
Secretary.

Appendix A – Environmental Conditions

As recommended in the environmental impact statement (EIS) and modified herein, this authorization includes the following conditions:

1. Transco shall follow the construction procedures and mitigation measures described in its application and supplements (including responses to staff data requests) and as identified in the EIS, unless modified by the Order. Transco must:
 - a. request any modification to these procedures, measures, or conditions in a filing with the Secretary of the Commission (Secretary);
 - b. justify each modification relative to site-specific conditions;
 - c. explain how that modification provides an equal or greater level of environmental protection than the original measure; and
 - d. receive approval in writing from the Director of the Office of Energy Projects (OEP) **before using that modification.**
2. The Director of OEP, or the Director's designee, has delegated authority to address any requests for approvals or authorizations necessary to carry out the conditions of the Order, and take whatever steps are necessary to ensure the protection of environmental resources during construction and operation of the project. This authority shall allow:
 - a. the modification of conditions of the Order;
 - b. stop-work authority; and
 - c. the imposition of any additional measures deemed necessary to ensure continued compliance with the intent of the environmental conditions of the Order as well as the avoidance or mitigation of unforeseen adverse environmental impact resulting from project construction and operation.
3. **Prior to any construction**, Transco shall file an affirmative statement with the Secretary, certified by a senior company official, that all company personnel, environmental inspectors (EIs), and contractor personnel will be informed of the EI's authority and have been or will be trained on the implementation of the environmental mitigation measures appropriate to their jobs **before** becoming involved with construction and restoration activities.
4. The authorized facility locations shall be as shown in the EIS, as supplemented by filed alignment sheets. **As soon as they are available, and before the start of construction**, Transco shall file with the Secretary any revised detailed survey

alignment sheets/maps at a scale not smaller than 1:6,000 with station positions for all facilities approved by the Order. All requests for modifications of environmental conditions of the Order or site-specific clearances must be written and must reference locations designated on these alignment sheets/maps.

Transco's exercise of eminent domain authority granted under Natural Gas Act section 7(h) in any condemnation proceedings related to the Order must be consistent with these authorized facilities and locations. Transco's right of eminent domain granted under Natural Gas Act section 7(h) does not authorize it to increase the size of its natural gas facilities to accommodate future needs or to acquire a right-of-way for a pipeline to transport a commodity other than natural gas.

5. Transco shall file with the Secretary detailed alignment sheets/maps and aerial photographs at a scale not smaller than 1:6,000 identifying all route realignments or facility relocations, and staging areas, pipe storage yards, new access roads, and other areas that would be used or disturbed and have not been previously identified in filings with the Secretary. Approval for each of these areas must be explicitly requested in writing. For each area, the request must include a description of the existing land use/cover type, documentation of landowner approval, whether any cultural resources or federally listed threatened or endangered species would be affected, and whether any other environmentally sensitive areas are within or abutting the area. All areas shall be clearly identified on the maps/sheets/aerial photographs. Each area must be approved in writing by the Director of OEP **before construction in or near that area.**

This requirement does not apply to extra workspace allowed by the Commission's *Upland Erosion Control, Revegetation, and Maintenance Plan* and/or minor field realignments per landowner needs and requirements which do not affect other landowners or sensitive environmental areas such as wetlands.

Examples of alterations requiring approval include all route realignments and facility location changes resulting from:

- a. implementation of cultural resources mitigation measures;
- b. implementation of endangered, threatened, or special concern species mitigation measures;
- c. recommendations by state regulatory authorities; and
- d. agreements with individual landowners that affect other landowners or could affect sensitive environmental areas.

6. **Within 60 days of the acceptance of the authorization and before construction begins**, Transco shall file an Implementation Plan with the Secretary for review and written approval by the Director of OEP. Transco must file revisions to the plan as schedules change. The plan shall identify:
- a. how Transco will implement the construction procedures and mitigation measures described in its application and supplements (including responses to staff data requests), identified in the EIS, and required by the Order;
 - b. how Transco will incorporate these requirements into the contract bid documents, construction contracts (especially penalty clauses and specifications), and construction drawings so that the mitigation required at each site is clear to onsite construction and inspection personnel;
 - c. the number of EIs assigned per spread, and how the company will ensure that sufficient personnel are available to implement the environmental mitigation;
 - d. company personnel, including EIs and contractors, who will receive copies of the appropriate material;
 - e. the location and dates of the environmental compliance training and instructions Transco will give to all personnel involved with construction and restoration (initial and refresher training as the project progresses and personnel change), with the opportunity for OEP staff to participate in the training session(s);
 - f. the company personnel (if known) and specific portion of Transco's organization having responsibility for compliance;
 - g. the procedures (including use of contract penalties) Transco will follow if noncompliance occurs; and
 - h. for each discrete facility, a Gantt or PERT chart (or similar project scheduling diagram), and dates for:
 - i. the completion of all required surveys and reports;
 - ii. the environmental compliance training of onsite personnel;
 - iii. the start of construction; and
 - iv. the start and completion of restoration.
7. Transco shall employ at least one EI per construction spread. The EI shall be:
- a. responsible for monitoring and ensuring compliance with all mitigation measures required by the Order and other grants, permits, certificates, or other authorizing documents;

- b. responsible for evaluating the construction contractor's implementation of the environmental mitigation measures required in the contract (see condition 6 above) and any other authorizing document;
 - c. empowered to order correction of acts that violate the environmental conditions of the Order, and any other authorizing document;
 - d. a full-time position, separate from all other activity inspectors;
 - e. responsible for documenting compliance with the environmental conditions of the Order, as well as any environmental conditions/permit requirements imposed by other federal, state, or local agencies; and
 - f. responsible for maintaining status reports.
8. Beginning with the filing of its Implementation Plan, Transco shall file updated status reports with the Secretary on a **weekly** basis until all construction and restoration activities are complete. On request, these status reports will also be provided to other federal and state agencies with permitting responsibilities. Status reports shall include:
- a. an update on Transco's efforts to obtain the necessary federal authorizations;
 - b. the construction status of each spread, work planned for the following reporting period, and any schedule changes for stream crossings or work in other environmentally-sensitive areas;
 - c. a listing of all problems encountered and each instance of noncompliance observed by the EIs during the reporting period (both for the conditions imposed by the Commission and any environmental conditions/permit requirements imposed by other federal, state, or local agencies);
 - d. a description of the corrective actions implemented in response to all instances of noncompliance;
 - e. the effectiveness of all corrective actions implemented;
 - f. a description of any landowner/resident complaints which may relate to compliance with the requirements of the Order, and the measures taken to satisfy their concerns; and
 - g. copies of any correspondence received by Transco from other federal, state, or local permitting agencies concerning instances of noncompliance, and Transco's response.

9. Transco shall develop and implement an environmental complaint resolution procedure, and file such procedure with the Secretary, for review and approval by the Director of OEP. The procedure shall provide landowners with clear and simple directions for identifying and resolving their environmental mitigation problems/concerns during construction of the project and restoration of the right-of-way. **Prior to construction**, Transco shall mail the complaint procedures to each landowner whose property would be crossed by the project.
 - a. In its letter to affected landowners, Transco shall:
 - i. provide a local contact that the landowners should call first with their concerns, and the letter should indicate how soon a landowner should expect a response;
 - ii. instruct the landowners that if they are not satisfied with the response, they should call Transco's Hotline, and the letter should indicate how soon to expect a response; and
 - iii. instruct the landowners that if they are still not satisfied with the response from Transco's Hotline, they should contact the Commission's Landowner Helpline at 877-337-2237 or at LandownerHelp@ferc.gov.
 - b. In addition, Transco shall include in its weekly status report a copy of a table that contains the following information for each problem/concern:
 - i. the identity of the caller and date of the call;
 - ii. the location by milepost and identification number from the authorized alignment sheet(s) of the affected property;
 - iii. a description of the problem/concern; and
 - iv. an explanation of how and when the problem was resolved, will be resolved, or why it has not been resolved.
10. Transco must receive written authorization from the Director of OEP **before commencing construction of any project facilities**. To obtain such authorization, Transco must file with the Secretary documentation that it has received all applicable authorizations required under federal law (or evidence of waiver thereof).
11. Transco must receive written authorization from the Director of OEP **before placing the project into service**. Such authorization will only be granted following

a determination that rehabilitation and restoration of the right-of-way and other areas affected by the project are proceeding satisfactorily.

12. **Within 30 days of placing the authorized facilities in service**, Transco shall file an affirmative statement with the Secretary, certified by a senior company official:
 - a. that the facilities have been constructed in compliance with all applicable conditions, and that continuing activities will be consistent with all applicable conditions; or
 - b. identifying which of the conditions in the Order Transco has complied with or will comply with. This statement shall also identify any areas affected by the project where compliance measures were not properly implemented, if not previously identified in filed status reports, and the reason for noncompliance.
13. **Prior to construction**, Transco shall file with the Secretary a final table identifying all water supply wells and springs, field-verified, within the construction workspaces of the project, and all other water supply wells and springs within 150 feet of the project workspaces. The table shall provide the location of each well and spring by milepost, and the distance and direction of each well and spring from the construction workspace. Transco shall also describe the measures that it will implement to protect any wells or springs within construction workspaces from physical damage, for review and written approval of the Director of OEP.
14. **Prior to construction of the Raritan Bay Loop**, Transco shall file with the Secretary documentation of consultation with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (New Jersey DEP), and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) regarding its final proposed mitigation for fisheries and aquatic resources, including timing restriction commitments and allowable work within these periods.
15. **Prior to construction of the Raritan Bay Loop**, Transco shall file with the Secretary a 5-year post-construction benthic sampling and monitoring plan, prepared in consultation with the NMFS, for review and written approval of the Director of OEP. The plan shall identify the timing of sampling surveys, success criteria for assessing recovery of benthic species, and reporting requirements.
16. **Prior to construction of the Raritan Bay Loop**, Transco shall file with the Secretary the final volume of dredge material for disposal at onshore and offshore locations; the final onshore and offshore dredge disposal sites; and agency comments for disposal sites.

17. **Prior to construction of the Raritan Bay Loop**, Transco shall file with the Secretary, for review and written approval of the Director of OEP, its final acoustic analysis regarding marine species and a copy of the Incidental Harassment Authorization request submitted to the NMFS.
18. **Prior to construction of the Raritan Bay Loop**, Transco shall file with the Secretary, for review and written approval of the Director of OEP, a pile driving noise monitoring and mitigation plan. The plan shall include:
 - a. a description of the equipment and methods Transco will use to measure noise during pile installation and removal;
 - b. a typical figure depicting where the measurement equipment would be placed relative to the piles;
 - c. provisions for reporting noise to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and the NMFS;
 - d. mitigation measures that Transco will implement to reduce noise to acceptable levels if the noise exceeds predicted levels; and
 - e. comments on the plan from the NMFS.
19. Transco shall **not begin construction** activities **until**:
 - a. FERC staff receives comments from the NMFS regarding the proposed action;
 - b. FERC staff completes formal Endangered Species Act of 1973 consultation with the NMFS, if required; and
 - c. Transco has received written notification from the Director of OEP that construction or use of mitigation may begin.
20. **Prior to construction**, Transco shall file with the Secretary documentation of concurrence from the New Jersey DEP, New York Department of State, and New York City Department of City Planning that the project is consistent with the Coastal Zone Management Act.
21. **Prior to construction of the offshore portion of the Raritan Bay Loop**, Transco shall file with the Secretary, for review and written approval of the Director of OEP, the final Cable Crossing Plan for the Neptune Cable and documentation of Transco's consultation with the cable owner regarding the plan.

22. Transco shall **not begin construction** of the Raritan Bay Loop and/or use of associated temporary work areas **until**:
- a. Transco files with the Secretary the results from all supplemental geotechnical soil borings along the Raritan Bay Loop, any necessary cultural resource evaluation reports and avoidance plans, and the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office and New York State Historic Preservation Office comments;
 - b. the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation is afforded an opportunity to comment if historic properties would be adversely affected; and
 - c. the FERC staff reviews and the Director of OEP approves the cultural resources reports and plans, and notifies Transco in writing that construction may proceed on the Raritan Bay Loop.

All materials filed with the Commission containing **location, character, and ownership** information about cultural resources must have the cover and any relevant pages therein clearly labeled in bold lettering: “**CUI//PRIV - DO NOT RELEASE.**”

23. **Prior to construction of the facilities which require mitigation/emission offsets under the final General Conformity Determination**, Transco shall file with the Secretary, for review and written approval by the Director of OEP, a final Construction Emissions Tracking Plan (CETP), Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP), and Mitigation Project Emissions Tracking Plan (MPETP) which include:
- a. the final General Conformity emissions scenario in all three plans;
 - b. emissions associated with the vibratory/diesel pile driving hammers in the final AQMP and CETP;
 - c. the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) engine tier rating for marine vessels and construction equipment in revised tables in attachment A of the CETP; and
 - d. specific details regarding the data to be collected for each vehicle/engine replacement using guidelines and resources from EPA’s Clean Diesel Grant Program in the final MPETP.
24. Transco shall include any other actual emission sources that are ultimately used onsite during construction, that are not currently included in the emission estimates, **in the CETP monthly reports.**

25. Transco shall provide its CETP and reports and MPETP and reports directly to contacts at EPA, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and New Jersey DEP **on a monthly basis during construction.**
26. **Prior to construction of the facilities which require mitigation/emission offsets under the final General Conformity Determination,** Transco shall file with the Secretary documentation confirming that Transco's mitigation projects are in place and/or that it has purchased eligible Emissions Reduction Credits and/or Creditable Emissions Reductions to offset all estimated construction emissions of nitrogen oxides within the New Jersey-New York-Connecticut Interstate Air Quality Control Region.
27. Transco shall file in the **weekly construction status reports** the following information for horizontal directional drill sites requiring noise mitigation:
 - a. the noise measurements from the nearest noise sensitive areas (NSA), obtained at the start of drilling operations;
 - b. the noise mitigation that Transco implemented at the start of drilling operations; and
 - c. any additional mitigation measures that Transco will implement, for review and written approval by the Director of OEP, if the initial noise measurements exceeded a day-night sound level (L_{dn}) of 55 decibels on the A-weighted scale (dBA) at the NSAs and/or increased noise is greater than 10 dBA over ambient conditions.
28. Transco shall file a noise survey with the Secretary **no later than 60 days** after placing the new equipment at existing Compressor Station 200 in service. If a full load condition noise survey is not possible, Transco shall instead file an interim survey at the maximum possible horsepower load and file the full load survey **within 6 months.** If the noise attributable to the operation of all of the equipment at the modified Compressor Station 200 under interim or full horsepower load exceeds 55 dBA L_{dn} at any nearby NSA, Transco shall file a report on what changes are needed and shall install the additional noise controls to meet the level **within 1 year** of the in-service date. Transco shall confirm compliance with the 55 dBA L_{dn} requirement by filing a second noise survey with the Secretary **no later than 60 days** after it installs the additional noise controls.
29. Transco shall file a noise survey with the Secretary **no later than 60 days** after placing Compressor Station 206 in service. If a full load condition noise survey is not possible, Transco shall instead file an interim survey at the maximum possible horsepower load and file the full load survey **within 6 months.** If the noise attributable to the operation of all of the equipment at the station under interim or

full horsepower load exceeds 55 dBA L_{dn} at any nearby NSA, Transco shall file a report on what changes are needed and shall install the additional noise controls to meet the level **within 1 year** of the in-service date. Transco shall confirm compliance with the 55 dBA L_{dn} requirement by filing a second noise survey with the Secretary **no later than 60 days** after it installs the additional noise controls.

30. **Prior to construction**, Transco shall file with the Secretary, stamped and sealed by the professional engineer-of-record in New Jersey, the final foundation designs that incorporate safety factors to prevent displacement if future blast intensity increases at the Trap Rock Quarry.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company, LLC

Docket No. CP17-101-000

(Issued May 3, 2019)

LaFLEUR, Commissioner, *concurring*:

1. Today's order grants Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company, LLC's (Transco) request for authorization to construct and operate an expansion on Transco's system in Pennsylvania and New Jersey and its offshore pipeline system in New Jersey and New York state waters (Northeast Supply Enhancement Project).¹ After carefully balancing the need for the project and its environmental impacts, I find the project is in the public interest.² For the reasons discussed below, I concur.

2. The Northeast Supply Enhancement Project will provide up to 400,000 Dekatherms per day (Dth/d) of gas delivery capacity. The natural gas would serve National Grid's residential and commercial customers in New York City and Long Island.³ National Grid plans to convert 8,000 customers per year from No. 2 fuel oil to natural gas as well as

¹ *Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company, LLC*, 167 FERC ¶ 61,110 (2019).

² *Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company*, 163 FERC ¶ 61,190 (2018) (LaFleur, Comm'r, *concurring*) (*Broad Run*) (moving beyond my disagreement with the Commission's approach to its environmental review of proposed pipeline projects, and making a case-by-case public interest determination based on all the facts in the record).

³ National Grid's April 2, 2019 Filing a 1. National Grid states that two of National Grid's gas delivery companies, The Brooklyn Union Gas Company d/b/a/ National Grid NY and KeySpan Gas East Corporation d/b/a National Grid LI, have entered into precedent agreements to purchase 100% of the firm transportation capacity created by the Northeast Supply Enhancement Project. National Grid distributes natural gas to nearly two million customers in Nassau and Suffolk Counties on Long Island and in the New York City boroughs of Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island.

providing natural gas service to new development.⁴ The project will displace approximately 900,000 barrels of oil per year.⁵

3. The Commission received detailed information on downstream end use from both Transco and National Grid. I appreciate companies proactively submitting specific information into the record to assist the Commission in quantifying and considering the downstream indirect impacts a proposed project. As I have repeatedly said, I believe it is reasonably foreseeable that the gas being transported will be burned and that downstream greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions will result from burning that gas.⁶ Here, National Grid confirms that its customers, mostly residential, rely on natural gas “for critical basic needs including home heating, cooking and hot water.”⁷ Notably, we also know that this project will displace the use of a more carbon-intensive fuel, No. 2 fuel oil, which will offset some CO₂ emissions from the project.⁸ The information provided by Transco and National Grid also provides additional context to the need for the project beyond simply the precedent agreements.

4. The project’s Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) quantified the direct GHG emissions from the project’s construction and operation,⁹ but the EIS did not quantify or consider the downstream emissions impacts. I appreciate that the Commission disclosed the information provided by Transco on downstream end use in today’s order, but it did not quantify or consider the downstream emissions. To address my concerns, I have done this analysis and considered the downstream GHG emissions as part of my public interest

⁴ Transco’s February 27, 2019 Filing at 1. Certificate Order, 167 FERC ¶ 61,110 at P 90.

⁵ Transco’s February 27, 2019 Filing at 1. Certificate Order, 167 FERC ¶ 61,110 at P 90.

⁶ See *Mid States Coalition for Progress v. Surface Transportation Board*, 345 F.3d 520, 549 (8th Cir. 2003) (*Mid States*). In *Mid States*, the Court concluded that the Surface Transportation Board erred by failing to consider the downstream impacts of the burning of transported coal. Even though the record lacked specificity regarding the extent to which the transported coal would be burned, the Court concluded the nature of the impact was clear. See also *Sierra Club v. FERC*, 867 F.3d 1357 (D.C. Cir. 2017).

⁷ National Grid’s April 2, 2019 Filing at 1.

⁸ Transco’s April 24, 2019 Filing at 2. See also Transco’s February 27, 2019 Filing at 1.

⁹ Final EIS at 4-309 — 4-310.

determination. Using a methodology developed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to estimate the downstream GHG emissions from the Northeast Supply Enhancement Project, and assuming as an upper-bound estimate that all the gas to be transported is eventually combusted, 400,000 Dth/d of natural gas service would result in approximately 7.74 million metric tons per year of downstream CO₂ emissions. This figure represents a 4.73 percent increase in GHG emissions in New York,¹⁰ and a 0.13 percent increase at the national level.¹¹ However, Transco's filings provide information to offset the downstream GHG emissions estimates. Assuming the project would result in the conversion of 8,000 customers per year from heating oil to natural gas, Transco states that the gas conversion would result in the displacement of 900,000 barrels of heating oil per year, which would result in a small offset of CO₂ emissions.¹² Transco also indicated that considerably more of the gas could be considered an alternative to heating oil for certain end uses.¹³

5. I am encouraged that parties submitted this information in the record, particularly in light of the Commission's asserted inability to ascertain such downstream information. I hope more companies follow the lead of Transco and National Grid and provide the Commission with as much information as possible regarding downstream end use. I believe that this information will assist the Commission in meeting our National Environmental Policy Act¹⁴ (NEPA) responsibilities and weighing the need for and the impact of a proposed project under the Natural Gas Act.

6. Furthermore, specific information on end uses can assist the Commission in making a significance determination. I acknowledge that the disclosure of the

¹⁰ U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2018.
<https://www.eia.gov/environment/emissions/state/>.

¹¹ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks: 1990–2016*, (April 2018).

¹² Using the same EPA methodology as above, this conversion from heating oil to natural gas would result in a reduction of approximately 109,000 metric tons per year from the full burn calculation cited above. I note that Transco provided slightly different estimates. Transco's February 27, 2019 Filing at 1 (displacing 900,000 barrels of oil reduces CO₂ emissions by 200,000 tons per year). I believe the Commission could and should provide guidance for certificate applicants about how to prepare these estimates in future proceedings.

¹³ Transco's April 24, 2019 Filing at 2.

¹⁴ National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 *et seq.*

downstream data and the context is only the first step to assist the Commission in ascribing significance to a given rate or volume of GHG emissions as part of our climate change analysis. As a second step, the NEPA requires that we analyze that information to determine whether a specific impact is, in fact, significant.¹⁵ Unfortunately, to date, the Commission has not established a framework for making a significance determination. I do not believe it is beyond the capability of this Commission to determine whether a given rate or volume of GHG emissions should be considered significant. The Commission has grappled with every other identifiable and measurable environmental impact; for example, we quantify, consider, and mitigate impacts to land, water, and species, and we make determinations on whether the impacts to wetlands or mussels are significant. For reasons that I do not find persuasive, the Commission treats climate impacts differently than all other environmental impacts in our environmental review, and refuses to make such determinations regarding climate change impacts. While it might be easier to assess significance if we had national emissions reduction targets, like EPA's Clean Power Plan or the Paris Climate Accord,¹⁶ to use as part of our framework, the lack of such targets does not prevent the Commission from making a significance determination in this or in any other case. In fact, the Commission makes challenging determinations on quantitative and qualitative issues in many other areas of our work.¹⁷

¹⁵ Under NEPA, when evaluating the significance of a particular impact, the Commission must consider both context and intensity. [40 C.F.R. § 1508.27\(a\)](#) (2017) (Context means "that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests and the locality."). [40 C.F.R. § 1508.27\(b\)](#) (2017) (Intensity refers to "the severity of the impact").

¹⁶ The EPA's Clean Power Plan and the Paris climate account are pending repeal and withdrawal, respectively.

¹⁷ Many of the core areas of the Commission's work have required the development of analytical frameworks, often a combination of quantitative measurements and qualitative assessments, to fulfill the Commission's responsibilities under its broad authorizing statutes. This work regularly requires that the Commission exercise judgment, based on its expertise, precedent, and the record before it. For example, to help determine just and reasonable returns on equity (ROEs) under the Federal Power Act, Natural Gas Act, and Interstate Commerce Act, the Commission identifies a proxy group of comparably risky companies, applies a method or methods to determine a range of potentially reasonable ROEs (i.e., the zone of reasonableness), and then considers various factors to determine the just and reasonable ROE within that range. *See also, e.g., Promoting Transmission Investment through Pricing Reform*, Order No. 679, FERC Stats.

For these reasons, I respectfully concur.

Cheryl A. LaFleur
Commissioner

& Regs. ¶ 31,222, *order on reh'g*, Order No. 679-A, FERC Stats. & Regs. ¶ 31,236 (2006), *order on reh'g*, 119 FERC ¶ 61,062 (2007) (establishing Commission regulations and policy for reviewing requests for transmission incentives); *Transmission Planning and Cost Allocation by Transmission Owning and Operating Public Utilities*, Order No. 1000, FERC Stats. & Regs. ¶ 31,323 (2011), *order on reh'g*, Order No. 1000-A, 139 FERC ¶ 61,132, *order on reh'g and clarification*, Order No. 1000-B, 141 FERC ¶ 61,044 (2012), *aff'd sub nom. S.C. Pub. Serv. Auth. v. FERC*, 762 F.3d 41 (D.C. Cir. 2014) (requiring, among other things, the development of regional cost allocation methods subject to certain general cost allocation principles); *BP Pipelines (Alaska) Inc.*, Opinion No. 544, 153 FERC ¶ 61,233 (2015) (conducting a prudence review of a significant expansion of the Trans Alaska Pipeline System). I also note that the Commission is currently considering a broad topic – resilience – whose scope and complexity might similarly require the development of new analytical frameworks for conducting the Commission's work.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company, LLC

Docket No. CP17-101-000

(Issued May 3, 2019)

GLICK, Commissioner, *dissenting in part*:

1. I dissent in part from today's order because it violates both the Natural Gas Act¹ (NGA) and the National Environmental Policy Act² (NEPA). Once again, the Commission refuses to consider the consequences its actions have for climate change. Neither the NGA nor NEPA permit the Commission to assume away the climate change implications of constructing and operating this pipeline project. Yet that is precisely what the Commission is doing today.

2. In today's order, the Commission authorizes Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company's (Transco) proposed Northeast Supply Enhancement Project (Project), which will provide an additional 400,000 dekatherms per day of firm transportation service to residential and commercial customers in the New York City area.³ Today's order suffers from two fatal flaws, both of which are a function of the Commission's continued refusal to consider the environmental consequences of natural gas infrastructure projects. First, the Commission again refuses to assess the significance of the Project's contribution to climate change, while at the same time asserting that the Project in its entirety will not have significant environmental impacts. In so doing, the Commission writes the Project's actual climate impacts out of its analysis. Second, the Commission refuses to identify or consider the Project's reasonably foreseeable impacts on upstream or downstream GHG emissions. Each flaw is sufficient in itself to render today's order inconsistent with the law, arbitrary and capricious, and not the product of reasoned decisionmaking.

I. The Commission's refusal to consider the significance of the Project's contribution to climate change is arbitrary and capricious.

3. We know with certainty what causes climate change: It is the result of GHG emissions, including carbon dioxide and methane, that can be released in large quantities

¹ 15 U.S.C. § 717f (2012).

² National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 *et seq.*

³ Northeast Supply Enhancement Project Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) at ES-1.

through the production, transportation, and the consumption of natural gas and other fossil fuels. The Commission recognizes this relationship in the record before us today, acknowledging that climate change is “driven by accumulation of GHG in the atmosphere” and that emissions from the Project’s construction and operation, in combination with emissions from other sources, would “contribute incrementally to future climate change impacts.”⁴ It is therefore critical that the Commission carefully consider the Project’s contribution to climate change, both in order to fulfill NEPA’s requirements and to determine whether the Project is in the public interest under the NGA.⁵

4. Today’s order misses that mark by a mile. The Commission insists that it need not consider whether the Project’s contribution to climate change from increased GHG emissions⁶ is significant because it lacks a “widely accepted standard” for doing so.⁷ However, the shocking part of the Commission’s rationale is what comes next. Based on this alleged inability to assess significance, the Commission concludes that the Project

⁴ EIS at 4-387, 4-389.

⁵ Section 7 of the NGA requires that, before issuing a certificate for new pipeline construction, the Commission must find both a need for the pipeline and that, on balance, the pipeline’s benefits outweigh its harms. 15 U.S.C. § 717f (2012). Furthermore, NEPA requires the Commission to take a “hard look” at the environmental impacts of its decisions. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 4332(2)(C)(iii); *Balt. Gas & Elec. Co. v. Nat. Res. Def. Council, Inc.*, 462 U.S. 87, 97 (1983). This means that the Commission must consider and discuss the significance of the harm from a pipeline’s contribution to climate change by actually evaluating the magnitude of the pipeline’s environmental impact. Doing so enables the Commission to compare the environment before and after the proposed federal action and factor the changes into its decisionmaking process. *See Sierra Club v. FERC*, 867 F.3d 1357, 1374 (D.C. Cir. 2017) (*Sabal Trail*) (“The [FEIS] needed to include a discussion of the ‘significance’ of this indirect effect.”); 40 C.F.R. § 1502.16 (a)–(b) (An agency’s environmental review must “include the environmental impacts of the alternatives including the proposed action,” as well as a discussion of direct and indirect effects *and their significance.*) (emphasis added)).

⁶ The EIS quantified the Project’s GHG emissions from construction and operation. EIS at 4-309 – 4-310 & Tables 4.10.1-4 & 4.10.1-5.

⁷ *See* EIS at 4-389 – 4-390 (explaining that “we cannot determine whether the NESE’s Project’s contribution [to cumulative impacts on climate change] would be significant,” purportedly because “there is no widely accepted standard, per international, federal, or state policy, or as a matter of physical science, to determine the significance of the Project’s GHG emissions”).

will have no significant environmental impact.⁸ That is the equivalent of concluding that an action known to be dangerous is actually safe because the majority claims not to know exactly how dangerous it is.⁹ In addition to being ludicrous, that reasoning fails to give climate change the serious consideration it deserves and that the law demands.

5. The implications of the Commission's approach to evaluating the impacts of GHG emissions extend beyond this proceeding. Taking the Commission's approach to its logical conclusion, the Commission would approve any project regardless of the amount of GHGs emitted without ever determining the significance of their environmental impact. If the Commission continues to assume that a project will not have a significant environmental impact no matter the volume of GHG emissions it causes, those emissions and their consequences cannot meaningfully factor into the public interest determination. Approving a project that may significantly contribute to the harms caused by climate change without evaluating the significance of that impact or considering it as part of the public interest determination is contrary to law, arbitrary and capricious, and not the product of reasoned decisionmaking.¹⁰

6. In addition, the Commission's assertion that it cannot assess the significance of a project's contribution to climate change is itself not the product of reasoned decisionmaking. The claim that the Commission lacks a widely accepted standard for evaluating the significance of GHG emissions is a red herring. The lack of any single "standard" methodology does not prevent the Commission from adopting *a* methodology, even if others are available. In any case, the Commission has several tools to assess the

⁸ See, e.g., EIS at ES-14; see also *Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Co., LLC*, 167 FERC ¶ 61,110, at P 29 (2019) (Certificate Order) (noting EIS conclusion that the Project's adverse environmental impacts will be reduced to less than significant levels through implementation of certain mitigation measures).

⁹ See, e.g., *Michigan v. EPA*, 135 S. Ct. 2699, 2706 (2015) ("Not only must an agency's decreed result be within the scope of its lawful authority, but the process by which it reaches that result must be logical and rational.") (internal quotation marks omitted); see also *Motor Vehicle Mfrs. Ass'n, Inc. v. State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co.*, 463 U.S. 29, 43 (1983) (Agency action is "arbitrary and capricious if the agency has . . . entirely failed to consider an important aspect of the problem, [or] offered an explanation for its decision that runs counter to the evidence before the agency."); cf. *Soundboard Ass'n v. FTC*, 888 F.3d 1261, 1274 (D.C. Cir. 2018) (Millett, J., dissenting) ("Why let reality get in the way of a good bureaucratic construct?").

¹⁰ As noted, the NGA "requires the Commission to evaluate all factors bearing on the public interest," *Atl. Ref. Co. v. Pub. Serv. Comm'n of N.Y.*, 360 U.S. 378, 391 (1959), which *Sabal Trail* held includes a facility's contribution to the harms caused by climate change, 867 F.3d at 1373.

harm from the Project's contribution to climate change. The Social Cost of Carbon, for example, measures the long-term damage inflicted by a ton of carbon dioxide. This tool provides the "hard look" required by NEPA, and gives both the Commission and the public a means to translate a discrete project's climate impacts into concrete and comprehensible terms.¹¹

7. Besides particular methodologies, the Commission also can use its expertise and discretion to consider all factors and determine, quantitatively or qualitatively, whether the Project's GHG emissions have a significant impact on climate change. That is precisely what the Commission does in other aspects of its environmental review. Take, for example, the Commission's evaluation of the Project's impact on migratory birds. The EIS determined that 13.5 acres of upland forest and 2.6 acres of forested wetlands that serve as bird habitat would be permanently lost, yet found these impacts not significant.¹² Notwithstanding the lack of any "widely accepted standard"¹³ as to this particular environmental impact, the Commission still uses its judgment to conduct a qualitative review of the Project's impact on bird habitat. The Commission's refusal to even attempt a similar qualitative judgment on the significance of GHG emissions is willfully ignorant, and certainly arbitrary and capricious.

¹¹ As the Environmental Protection Agency has explained, the Commission may use estimates of the Social Cost of Carbon "for project analysis when [the Commission] determines that a monetary assessment of the impacts associated with the estimated net change in GHG emissions provides useful information in its environmental review or public interest determination." United States Environmental Protection Agency, Comments, Docket No. PL18-1-000, at 4–5 (filed June 21, 2018). The Council on Environmental Quality also recognized under a prior administration that monetizing an impact is appropriate in the NEPA document, if doing so is necessary for an agency to fully evaluate the environmental consequences of its decisions. *See* CEQ, Final Guidance for Federal Departments and Agencies on Consideration of Greenhouse Gas Emissions and the Effects of Climate Change in National Environmental Policy Act Reviews at 32–33 (Aug. 1, 2016), https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/documents/nepa_final_ghg_guidance.pdf.

¹² EIS at 4-85 – 4-86, 5-9; *see also id.* at 4-64 & 4-68 (noting that recovery of forested wetlands "may take up to 30 years or more," but concluding that the Project would not result in significant impact on wetland resources).

¹³ *See* EIS at 4-389 (referencing lack of a "widely accepted standard" for assessing the significance of GHG emissions).

II. The Commission's failure to identify the reasonably foreseeable indirect effects of the Project is arbitrary and capricious.

8. The Commission also ignores the Project's reasonably foreseeable GHG emissions from downstream combustion and upstream production. In so doing, the Commission adopts an overly narrow and circular definition of indirect effects and disregards the Project's central purpose—to facilitate natural gas consumption by residential and commercial customers in New York City.

9. With regard to downstream emissions, *Sabal Trail* held the reasonably foreseeable combustion of gas transported through a pipeline was an indirect effect.¹⁴ There is no real question that the natural gas to be transported by the Project will be combusted. Indeed, the very purpose of the Project is to provide natural gas to residential and commercial customers in New York City.¹⁵ Transco states in its application that it needs the Project “to meet customer demand in time for the 2019/2020 winter heating season.”¹⁶ And none of the Project's alleged benefits—improved reliability and access to economic supplies of natural gas—will occur unless the natural gas is actually used, and that use will largely (if not entirely) entail combustion.¹⁷ In fact, as the Commission recognizes, Transco has stated in the record that the Project would transport natural gas to replace fuel oil heating systems in New York City, potentially displacing up to 900,000 barrels of oil per year.¹⁸ But even with this record that demonstrates that the natural gas

¹⁴ See *Sabal Trail*, 867 F.3d at 1371-72.

¹⁵ Certificate Order P 90; EIS at ES-1, 1-3, 1-15.

¹⁶ EIS at 1-15; see also *Sabal Trail*, 867 F.3d at 1371-72.

¹⁷ See EIS at 1-3 (explaining that the purpose and need of the Project is to provide incremental interstate pipeline transportation service to Brooklyn Union Gas Company and KeySpan Gas East Corporation to serve National Grid's residential and commercial customers in New York City, ensure diverse sources of natural gas supply, and improve system reliability); Transco Certificate Application at 14 (noting National Grid's forecast of need for additional natural gas supply to meet “residential and commercial demands due to population and market growth within its service territory,” in particular “beginning in the 2019/2020 heating season because current forecast models . . . indicate an increasing peak day demand year over year”); see also Jayni Hein *et al.*, Institute for Policy Integrity, *Pipeline Approvals and Greenhouse Gas Emissions* 25 (2019) (explaining that, in 2017, 97% of all natural gas consumed was combusted).

¹⁸ Certificate Order P 90 (referencing Transco February 27 and April 24, 2019 filings); EIS at 4-389; see also Transco Letter at 2 (Apr. 24, 2019) (disclosing estimate of reduced GHG emissions from downstream combustion of Project capacity replacing No.

transported by the Project will be combusted, releasing GHG emissions, the Commission still refuses to acknowledge those downstream emissions as a reasonably foreseeable indirect effect of the Project.¹⁹ The failure to consider that indirect effect is arbitrary and capricious.

10. The Commission's approach effectively confines *Sabal Trail* to its facts. Here, we know the location (New York City) and the end-use (a replacement heating source) of the natural gas to be transported, and yet the Commission mysteriously concludes that it cannot reasonably foresee the GHG emissions released when the gas is burned—which is, to my knowledge, the only way that natural gas is used to provide heating. The Commission appears to be taking the position that GHG emissions from burning natural gas will only be reasonably foreseeable if we know the specific power plant in which the gas will be used.²⁰ But nothing in *Sabal Trail* supports such a narrow and myopic view. Rather, the court's holding that downstream emissions were reasonably foreseeable was based on the purpose of that project—*i.e.*, transporting gas to Florida power plants so that gas can be burned.²¹

11. In any event, even if the Commission does not have exact information about the source or end use of the gas to be transported, it still can produce comparably useful information based on reasonable forecasts of the GHG emissions associated with

2 fuel oil).

¹⁹ See, e.g., *Sabal Trail*, 867 F.3d at 1372 (“It is just as foreseeable, and FERC does not dispute, that burning natural gas will release into the atmosphere the sorts of carbon compounds that contribute to climate change.”); *WildEarth Guardians v. Zinke*, No. 16-1724 (RC), 2019 WL 1273181, at *18 (D.D.C. Mar. 19, 2019) (holding that the Bureau of Land Management was required to consider downstream GHG emissions as an indirect effect of oil and gas leasing because downstream use and resulting GHG emissions were reasonably foreseeable effects of oil and gas leasing); *San Juan Citizens All. v. U.S. Bureau of Land Mgmt.*, No. 16-cv-376-MCA-JHR, 2018 WL 2994406, at *10 (D.N.M. June 14, 2018) (holding that the agency's conclusion “that consumption is not ‘an indirect effect of oil and gas production because production is not a proximate cause of GHG emissions resulting from consumption’” was arbitrary as well as “circular and worded as though it is a legal conclusion”).

²⁰ See, e.g., FERC Brief at 23-24, *Otsego 2000, Inc. v. FERC*, D.C. Cir. No. 18-1188 (filed Jan. 25, 2019).

²¹ *Sabal Trail*, 867 F.3d at 1371-72 (“What are the ‘reasonably foreseeable’ effects of authorizing a pipeline that will transport natural gas to Florida power plants? First, that gas will be burned in those power plants. This is not just ‘reasonably foreseeable,’ it is the project's entire purpose, as the pipeline developers themselves explain.”).

production and consumption. NEPA does not require exact certainty—rather, it requires only reasonable forecasting.²² Forecasting environmental impacts is a regular component of NEPA reviews and a reasonable estimate may inform the federal decisionmaking process even where the agency is not completely confident in the results of its forecast.²³ Similar forecasts can play a useful role in the Commission’s evaluation of the public interest, even in those instances when the Commission must make a number of assumptions in its forecasting process.²⁴

12. The Commission’s refusal to consider the significance of the reasonably foreseeable indirect effects of downstream emissions is particularly vexing here because the Commission notes—without any verification—the “hypothetical scenario” posited by Transco that would cause the Project to “more than offset net GHG emissions.”²⁵

13. If, instead of taking a results-oriented approach, the Commission had bothered to evaluate the Project’s downstream emissions, it could have pointed out that Transco’s hypothetical statement was just that—hypothetical. As Commissioner LaFleur notes in

²² See, e.g., *Sabal Trail*, 867 F.3d at 1374 (“[W]e have previously held that NEPA analysis necessarily involves some ‘reasonable forecasting,’ and that agencies may sometimes need to make educated assumptions about an uncertain future.”) (citing *Del. Riverkeeper Network v. FERC*, 753 F.3d 1304, 1310 (D.C. Cir. 2014)); see also *Dep’t of Transp. v. Pub. Citizen*, 541 U.S. 752, 768 (2004) (quoting *Robertson v. Methow Valley Citizens Council*, 490 U.S. 332, 349 (1989)).

²³ In determining what constitutes reasonable forecasting, it is relevant to consider the “usefulness of any new potential information to the decisionmaking process.” *Sierra Club v. U.S. Dep’t of Energy*, 867 F.3d 189, 198 (D.C. Cir. 2017) (quoting *Pub. Citizen*, 541 U.S. at 767).

²⁴ In comments submitted in the Commission’s pending review of the natural gas certification process, the Environmental Protection Agency identified a number of tools the Commission can use to quantify the reasonably foreseeable “upstream and downstream GHG emissions associated with a proposed natural gas pipeline.” These include “economic modeling tools” that can aid in determining the “reasonably foreseeable energy market impacts of a proposed project.” U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Comments, Docket No. PL18-1-000, at 3–4 (filed June 21, 2018) (explaining that the “EPA has emission factors and methods” available to estimate GHG emissions—from activities upstream and downstream of a proposed natural gas pipeline—through the U.S. Greenhouse Gas Inventory and the Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program); see *Certification of New Interstate Natural Gas Facilities*, Notice of Inquiry, 163 FERC ¶ 61,042 (2018).

²⁵ See Certificate Order P 90.

her concurring statement, even if we take Transco's assumption that the Project would result in conversion of 8,000 customers per year from heating oil to natural gas and displace 900,000 barrels of heating oil per year, it would only reduce the Project's downstream GHG emissions by a small amount.²⁶

14. The Commission compounds this error by failing to evaluate how the Project's downstream emissions will impact climate change. By not considering any of the Project's downstream effects, there is no place to consider benefits from the Project.²⁷ While Commissioner LaFleur wrestled with the significance of the impact of the Project's downstream GHG emissions, her concurring statement does not remedy the Commission's refusal to evaluate the significance of the Project's contribution to climate change; nor can that concurrence remedy the Commission's assumption that, regardless of what that contribution is, the Project has no significant environmental impact.

15. The Commission's failure to evaluate upstream GHG emissions caused by the Project is equally frustrating. The Commission cannot ignore the fact that adding firm transportation capacity is likely to "spur demand" for natural gas.²⁸ As noted, one of the purposes of the Project is to expand the supplies of economic natural gas, which, by the law of supply and demand, ought to put downward pressure on the price of natural gas in the region, potentially increasing demand. Given this potential to affect upstream emissions, the Commission must at least examine the effects that an expansion of pipeline capacity might have on consumption and production.²⁹

²⁶ Certificate Order, 167 FERC ¶ 61,110 (LaFleur, Comm'r, concurring at P 4).

²⁷ *Sabal Trail*, 867 F.3d at 1374-75 ("Nor is FERC excused from making emissions estimates just because the emissions in question might be partially offset by reductions elsewhere. . . . The effects an EIS is required to cover 'include those resulting from actions which may have both beneficial and detrimental effects, even if on balance the agency believes that the effect will be beneficial.' In other words, when an agency thinks the good consequences of a project will outweigh the bad, the agency still needs to discuss both the good and the bad.") (quoting 40 C.F.R. § 1508.8).

²⁸ *Barnes v. U.S. Dep't of Transp.*, 655 F.3d 1124, 1138 (9th Cir. 2011) (holding that it "is completely inadequate" for an agency to ignore a project's "growth inducing effects" where the project has a unique potential to spur demand); *id.* at 1139 ("[O]ur cases have consistently noted that a new runway has a unique potential to spur demand, which sets it apart from other airport improvements, like changing flight patterns, improving a terminal, or adding a taxiway, which increase demand only marginally, if at all.").

²⁹ See, e.g., *Mid States Coal. for Progress v. Surface Transp. Bd.*, 345 F.3d 520, 549 (8th Cir. 2003) (when the "nature of the effect" (end-use emissions) is reasonably

* * *

16. Climate change poses an existential threat to our security, economy, environment, and, ultimately, the health of individual citizens. Unlike many of the challenges that our society faces, we know with certainty what causes climate change: It is the result of GHG emissions, including carbon dioxide and methane—which can be released in large quantities through the production and the consumption of natural gas. Congress determined under the NGA that no entity may transport natural gas interstate, or construct or expand interstate natural gas facilities, without the Commission first determining the activity is in the public interest. This requires the Commission to find, on balance, that a project’s benefits outweigh the harms, including the environmental impacts from climate change that result from authorizing additional transportation. Accordingly, it is critical that, as an agency of the federal government, the Commission comply with its statutory responsibility to document and consider how its authorization of a natural gas pipeline facility will lead to the emission of GHGs, contributing to climate change.

For these reasons, I respectfully dissent in part.

Richard Glick
Commissioner

foreseeable, but “its extent is not” (specific consumption activity producing emissions), an agency may not simply ignore the effect).

Appendix B

Tolling Order

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company, LLC

Docket No. CP17-101-001

ORDER GRANTING REHEARING FOR
FURTHER CONSIDERATION

(July 2, 2019)

Rehearing has been timely requested of the Commission's order issued on May 3, 2019, in this proceeding. *Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company, LLC*, 167 FERC ¶ 61,110 (2019). In the absence of Commission action within 30 days from the date the rehearing request was filed, the request for rehearing (and any timely requests for rehearing filed subsequently)¹ would be deemed denied. 18 C.F.R. § 385.713 (2018).

In order to afford additional time for consideration of the matters raised or to be raised, rehearing of the Commission's order is hereby granted for the limited purpose of further consideration, and timely-filed rehearing requests will not be deemed denied by operation of law. Rehearing requests of the above-cited order filed in this proceeding will be addressed in a future order. As provided in 18 C.F.R. § 385.713(d), no answers to the rehearing requests will be entertained.

Nathaniel J. Davis, Sr.,
Deputy Secretary.

¹ See *San Diego Gas & Electric Company v. Sellers of Energy and Ancillary Services into Markets Operated by the California Independent System Operator and the California Power Exchange, et al.*, 95 FERC ¶ 61,173 (2001) (clarifying that a single tolling order applies to all rehearing requests that were timely filed).

Document Content(s)

CP17-101-001.DOCX.....1-1

Appendix C

Rehearing Request

171 FERC ¶ 61,031
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

Before Commissioners: Neil Chatterjee, Chairman;
Richard Glick, Bernard L. McNamee,
and James P. Danly.

Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company, LLC

Docket No. CP17-101-001

ORDER DENYING REHEARING AND STAY

(Issued April 16, 2020)

1. On May 3, 2019, the Commission issued an order pursuant to section 7(c) of the Natural Gas Act (NGA)¹ authorizing Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company, LLC (Transco) to construct and operate pipeline looping and compression known as the Northeast Supply Enhancement Project.² The project would provide an additional 400,000 dekatherms per day (Dth/d) of firm transportation service on Transco's system from northern Pennsylvania through New Jersey to reach New York City area markets.³

2. On June 3, 2019, NY/NJ Baykeeper, Food & Water Watch–New Jersey, Central Jersey Safe Energy Coalition, the Princeton Manor Homeowners Association, and the Surfrider Foundation (collectively, Community Groups) sought rehearing and a stay of the Certificate Order. The Community Groups allege that the Commission violated the NGA, our regulations governing the release of Critical Energy Infrastructure Information (CEII), and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). As discussed below, we deny the Community Groups' rehearing requests and dismiss its request for stay as moot.

¹ 15 U.S.C. § 717f(c) (2018).

² *Transcon. Gas Pipe Line Co., LLC*, 167 FERC ¶ 61,110 (2019) (Certificate Order).

³ More information on the project proposal and background can be found in the Certificate Order. *Id.* PP 3-6.

I. Procedural Matters

3. On June 18, 2019, Transco submitted an answer to Community Groups' stay request and, on July 1, 2019, separately submitted a motion for leave to answer and answer to Community Groups' rehearing request. Rule 713(d)(1) of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure prohibits answers to a request for rehearing.⁴ Accordingly, we reject Transco's July 1, 2019 filing.

II. Stay Request and Commission Response

4. Community Groups request that the Commission stay the Certificate Order pending resolution of the merits of Community Groups' request for rehearing and rescission.⁵ This order addresses and denies or dismisses their requests for rehearing; accordingly, we dismiss the request for stay as moot.

III. Rehearing Requests and Commission Response**A. Issues Addressed in the Certificate Order**

5. Community Groups allege that the Commission violated NEPA by failing to conduct a health impact assessment for the project's Compressor Station 206⁶ and by failing to take a hard look at water quality concerns associated with contaminated sediments within Raritan Bay.⁷ The Commission fully addressed these issues in the Certificate Order.⁸ Accordingly, we deny rehearing for the reasons articulated by the Commission in the Certificate Order.

⁴ 18 C.F.R. § 385.713(d)(1) (2019).

⁵ Rehearing and Stay Request at 28-29.

⁶ *Id.* at 28.

⁷ *Id.* at 24-27.

⁸ Certificate Order, 167 FERC ¶ 61,110 at PP 48-50 (discussing impacts associated with contaminated sediments), P 72 (discussing air quality impacts and why the requested health impact assessment is unnecessary). We note since the issuance of the Certificate Order, Transco conducted additional contaminate transport modeling in Raritan Bay based on reduced dredging rates and confirmed that there would be no New York State water quality criteria violations. FERC August 27, 2019 Letter to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Services Providing a Supplemental Biological Assessment, Enclosure at 11-12.

B. Precedent Agreements with Shippers Are Appropriate Indicators of Project Need

6. Community Groups argue that the Commission failed to substantiate the market need for the project as required by the NGA.⁹ The Community Groups argue that the shippers' need for the project is undercut by demand projections, including a report by 350.org, which purportedly shows that the justification for the project rests on flawed, unsupported evidence of demand for natural gas in the New York City market area.¹⁰

7. A showing of market need is a precondition for the Commission to issue a certificate of public convenience and necessity.¹¹ A certificate applicant can make a showing of market need for the facilities by presenting evidence of preconstruction contracts for gas transportation service.¹² Multiple courts have confirmed that nothing in the Commission's Certificate Policy Statement, nor any precedent construing it, indicates that the Commission must look beyond the market need reflected by the applicant's precedent agreements with shippers.¹³

⁹ Rehearing and Stay Request at 6.

¹⁰ *Id.* at 6-7 (citing False Demand: The Case Against the Williams Fracked Pipeline (Mar. 2019), https://350.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Stop_Williams_False_Demand.pdf).

¹¹ *See Certification of New Interstate Natural Gas Pipeline Facilities*, 88 FERC ¶ 61,227, at 61,246 (1999), *clarified*, 90 FERC ¶ 61,128, *further clarified*, 92 FERC ¶ 61,094 (2000).

¹² *See Id.* at 88 FERC ¶ 61,748 (explaining that “contracts or precedent agreements always will be important evidence of demand for a project”).

¹³ *See, e.g., Twp. of Bordentown, N.J. v. FERC*, 903 F.3d 234, at 262-63 (Third Cir. 2018) (“A contract for a pipeline’s capacity is a useful indicator of need because it reflects a ‘business decision’ that such a need exists. If there were no objective market demand for the additional gas, no rational company would spend money to secure the excess capacity.”); *Sierra Club v. FERC*, 867 F.3d 1357, 1379 (D.C. Cir. 2017) (explaining that an applicant can make a showing of market need “by presenting evidence of preconstruction contracts for gas transportation service” (internal quotation marks omitted)); *Myersville Citizens for a Rural Cmty., Inc. v. FERC*, 783 F.3d 1301, 1311 (D.C. Cir. 2015) (rejecting the argument that precedent agreements are inadequate to demonstrate market need); *Minisink Residents for Env'tl. Pres. and Safety v. FERC*, 762 F.3d 97, 112 n.10 (D.C. Cir. 2014) (noting that FERC need not “look beyond the market need reflected by the applicant’s existing contracts with shippers”).

8. Transco demonstrated that the project is needed by submitting long-term precedent agreements with two of National Grid's affiliates for all the project's capacity. Brooklyn Union Gas Company, d/b/a National Grid NY contracted for 211,300 Dth/d for a term of 15 years, and KeySpan Gas East Corporation d/b/a National Grid LI contracted for 188,700 Dth/d for a term of 15 years.¹⁴ We find that the contracts entered into by the shippers are the best evidence that additional gas will be needed in the markets served by the project.¹⁵

9. Community Groups acknowledge that the Commission is not required to look behind precedent agreements, but nonetheless argue that the pipeline is not needed to address future demand because New York State and national gas consumption has remained relatively flat due to efficiency gains and population shifts.¹⁶

10. As an initial matter, we note that it is Commission policy not to look behind precedent or service agreements to make judgments about the needs or business decisions of individual shippers.¹⁷ National Grid's affiliated local distribution companies (LDCs), who have contracted with Transco, are not regulated by this Commission and thus we have no authority to dictate their practices for procuring services. Our jurisdiction under the NGA does not extend to regulating how LDCs plan to meet their customers' energy demands. State regulatory commissions are responsible for approving any associated expenditures by state-regulated utilities.¹⁸

¹⁴ Certificate Order, 167 FERC ¶ 61,110 at PP 5, 16.

¹⁵ *Id.* P 16.

¹⁶ Rehearing and Stay Request at 10-11.

¹⁷ Certificate Policy Statement, 88 FERC at 61,744 (citing *Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Co., LLC*, 82 FERC ¶ 61,084, at 61,316 (1998)). *See, e.g., Millennium Pipe Line Company L.P.*, 100 FERC ¶ 61,277, at P 57 (2002). (“[A]s long as the precedent agreements are long-term and binding, we do not distinguish between pipelines’ precedent agreements with affiliates or independent marketers in establishing the market need for a proposed project”).

¹⁸ *See, e.g., Fla. Se. Connection, LLC*, 154 FERC ¶ 61,080, at P 67 n.39 (2016) (noting that the extent to which it is appropriate for a project shipper and end-user to pass costs through to its rate payers is not with the Commission's jurisdiction); *Spire STL Pipeline LLC*, 169 FERC ¶ 61,134, at P 16 (2019) (explaining that looking behind precedent agreements entered into by state-regulated utilities would infringe upon a state regulator's role in determining whether those expenditures are prudent).

11. Nonetheless, we note, as Community Groups recognize, despite statewide or national trends, the number of residential and commercial natural gas customers has increased in the New York City market area.¹⁹ Transco and National Grid provided additional evidence substantiating this demand.²⁰ National Grid forecasted a need for additional natural gas supplies increasing over the next ten years by more than ten percent.²¹

12. Community Groups next argue that a 350.org report shows that the project is not needed to meet new demand created by the conversion of residential and commercial heating customers from heavy oil to natural gas in New York City.²² We are not persuaded by the Community Groups. The need for the project is broader than Community Group's focus on heating oil conversions. The project is expected to serve users whose heating system will convert from fuel oil to natural gas,²³ but it will also serve additional demand from residential and commercial end users.²⁴

13. Community Groups next argue that Transco's claim that the project is needed to guarantee continued firm natural gas transportation service is inaccurate because National Grid customers do not currently go without heat on peak demand days.²⁵ The project is primarily designed to serve new customers, but the project will also provide needed ancillary reliability benefits by creating a second service feed into Brooklyn. The project will serve the Rockaway Delivery Lateral, which currently is served by a single line, and will enable needed service in the event the single line is out of service due to maintenance or an emergency.²⁶ Similarly, the project will allow National Grid to pursue needed

¹⁹ Rehearing and Stay Request at 10.

²⁰ National Grid April 2, 2019 Comments in Support; National Grid May 14, 2019 Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement; National Grid April 26, 2017 Motion to Intervene and Comments in Support; Transco February 27, 2019 Letter to Chairman Chatterjee, FERC.

²¹ The stated need for natural gas supplies begins in the 2019/2020 heating season. National Grid May 14, 2019 Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement at 1-2.

²² Rehearing and Stay Request at 6-9.

²³ Transco February 27, 2019 Letter to Chairman Chatterjee, FERC.

²⁴ National Grid April 2, 2019 Comments in Support at 1.

²⁵ Rehearing and Stay Request at 10.

²⁶ EIS at 1-3.

upgrades at its liquefied natural gas plants, which provide storage for National Grid's downstate New York service territories.²⁷

14. Finally, even if the demand for the project exists, Community Groups contend that other capacity additions – including the Rockaway Delivery Lateral/Northwest Connector Project²⁸ and the New York Bay Expansion Project²⁹ – can meet National Grid's energy demands. This claim is mistaken. The cited projects serve New York City, but each was approved and placed into service several years ago.³⁰ As these projects were each fully subscribed for a 15-year term, neither can provide the additional natural gas capacity required by National Grid.³¹

C. Access to Information

15. Community Groups argue that the Commission unlawfully delayed acting on requests, filed by Messrs. Aaron Kleinbaum and Richard Kuprewicz for Exhibit G flow diagrams and corresponding hydraulic models, filed with the Commission as CEII pursuant to 18 C.F.R. § 388.113, until after the draft and final environmental impact statement (EIS) had been issued.³² Specifically, Community Groups argue the Commission must provide CEII during the NEPA comment period because: (1) section 388.113(g)(5)(iv) of the Commission's regulations³³ requires public requests for CEII to demonstrate a legitimate need; and (2) the Commission has stated that it will try to provide requested information within the same period as Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, i.e., 20 working days, or in response to requested

²⁷ National Grid's April 26, 2017 Comments at 4-5.

²⁸ Docket No. CP13-136-000.

²⁹ Docket No. CP15-527-000.

³⁰ The Rockaway Lateral/Northwest Connector was approved in 2014 and placed into service on May 15, 2015. *Transcon. Gas Pipe Line Co., LLC*, 147 FERC ¶ 61,102 (2014); Transco May 18, 2015 Notification of Placement into Service (CP13-136-000). The New York Bay Expansion Project was approved in 2016 and placed into service on October 6, 2017. *Transcon. Gas Pipe Line Co., LLC*, 156 FERC ¶ 61,021 (2016); Transco October 10, 2017 Notification of Placement into Service (CP15-527-000).

³¹ See *Transcon. Gas Pipe Line Co., LLC*, 147 FERC ¶ 61,102 at PP 9, 15; *Transcon. Gas Pipe Line Co., LLC*, 156 FERC ¶ 61,021 at P 5.

³² Rehearing and Stay Request at 11-19.

³³ 18 C.F.R. § 388.113(g)(5)(i)(B) (2019).

timeframes.³⁴ In addition, Community Groups acknowledge that they eventually received the requested Exhibit G flow diagrams and hydraulic models, but claim that their expert, Richard Kuprewicz, could not evaluate safety and system alternatives, or substantiate Transco's claims that the project is needed because the information was incomplete.³⁵ On rehearing, Community Groups separately filed an analysis of alternatives and project need by Mr. Kuprewicz under the CEII designation.³⁶

16. The Commission's regulations direct an applicant for an NGA section 7 certificate to omit CEII data, such as Exhibit G flow diagrams and hydraulic models, from the public filing.³⁷ In turn, the Commission's regulations provide avenues specifically intended for parties to a proceeding who desire access to CEII. Specifically, section 388.113(g)(4) provides that

[a]ny person who is a participant in a proceeding or has filed a motion to intervene or notice of intervention in a proceeding may make a written request *to the filer* for a copy of the complete CEII version of the document without following the procedures outlined in paragraph (g)(5) of this section.^[38]

To the Commission's knowledge, Community Groups failed to follow this procedure.

³⁴ Rehearing and Stay Request at 14-15.

³⁵ *Id.* at 27.

³⁶ We note that this analysis is dated April 24, 2019 but was submitted to the Commission on June 3, 2019 with the Community Group's rehearing and stay request.

³⁷ 18 C.F.R. § 157.10(d)(1) (2019) ("If this section requires an applicant to reveal Critical Energy Infrastructure Information (CEII), as defined in § 388.113(c) of this chapter, to the public, the applicant shall omit the CEII from the information made available"). The rationale for section 157 requiring protection of CEII, defined in part as information that "[c]ould be useful to a person in planning an attack on critical infrastructure," 18 C.F.R. § 388.113(c)(2)(ii), is more fully developed in other Commission orders. *See Critical Energy Infrastructure Information*, Order No. 630, FERC Stats. & Regs. ¶ 31,140, at 30,264 (cross-referenced at 102 FERC ¶ 61,190, at PP 12-13), *order on reh'g*, Order No. 630-A, FERC Stats. & Regs. ¶ 31,147 (cross-referenced 104 FERC ¶ 61,106) (2003).

³⁸ 18 C.F.R. § 388.113(d)(4) (emphasis added).

17. Instead, Community Groups took the steps outlined in section 388.113(g)(5), which applies to requests for CEII by non-parties. As they acknowledge,³⁹ however, the Commission is not required to act within a specified timeline on CEII requests under section 388.113(g)(5) of the Commission's regulations.

18. Regardless, Community Groups received the requested CEII and had an opportunity to raise their concerns.⁴⁰ The Commission's findings here are consistent with *Myersville Citizens for a Rural Community, Inc. v. FERC (Myersville)*⁴¹ and *Minisink Residents for Environmental Preservation and Safety v. FERC (Minisink Residents)*.⁴² There the court explained that "[d]ue process requires only a 'meaningful opportunity' to challenge new evidence."⁴³ In those cases, the court found no due-process violations because, like the Community Groups, the parties had access to all record evidence filed by the applicants and relied on by the Commission, including CEII, prior to the filing due dates for requests for rehearing. The parties in *Minisink Residents* and *Myersville* also properly sought access to CEII material from the applicant through a non-disclosure agreement in compliance with our regulations.⁴⁴ Community Groups had the opportunity to obtain the materials but did not follow the prescribed procedures.

19. In any event, we disagree with Community Groups' assertion that the Exhibit G flow diagrams and corresponding hydraulic models are incomplete, and that they are therefore unable to assess whether the project facilities are needed or whether system alternatives may be appropriate.⁴⁵ Consistent with Commission staff's long-standing practice, staff used an industry standard hydraulic pipeline simulation software package,

³⁹ Rehearing and Stay Request at 14-15.

⁴⁰ To the extent that Community Groups object to the nature or timing of action on their requests under section 388.113(g)(5), we note that that action is not part of the record in this proceeding, and that section 388.113(g)(5)(iv) provides that an appeal may be taken under the procedures set forth in 18 C.F.R. § 388.110 (2019). *See, e.g.*, Rehearing Request at 16 ("FERC's application of its CEII regulations to Mr. Kleinbaum and Mr. Kuprewicz's CEII requests – while not reviewable under FOIA or NEPA – is subject to the ordinary administrative law principles of review.").

⁴¹ 783 F.3d 1301, 1327 (D.C. Cir. 2015).

⁴² 762 F.3d 97 (D.C. Cir. 2014).

⁴³ *Myersville*, 783 F.3d at 1327; *see also Minisink Residents*, 762 F.3d at 115.

⁴⁴ *Dominion Transmission, Inc.*, 143 FERC ¶ 61,148, at PP 50-52 (2013); *Millennium Pipeline Co. L.L.C.*, 141 FERC ¶ 61,198, at PP 71-73 (2012).

⁴⁵ Rehearing and Stay Request at 19.

in conjunction with the same Exhibit G flow diagrams and hydraulic models Community Groups have received, to evaluate whether the proposed project was properly designed to meet existing and proposed system delivery requirements. Mr. Kuprewicz claims that this information is incomplete, but Commission staff has thoroughly scrutinized all data provided by Transco and found it sufficient to perform the analysis. Based on detailed pipeline hydraulic simulations conducted by Commission staff, the Commission accurately concluded that the project has been properly designed to provide the additional 400,000 Dth/d of incremental firm transportation service.⁴⁶

20. Regarding Mr. Kuprewicz's claim that Compressor Station 206 is not needed and is too close to upstream Compressor Station 205, Mr. Kuprewicz fails to consider National Grid's delivery pressure requirements. Staff review of Exhibit G data shows that Compressor Station 206 is needed to ensure natural gas is transported at the pressure necessary to be delivered to National Grid's system while maintaining Transco's system operating pressures.⁴⁷ As discussed in the EIS, Commission staff performed hydraulic analyses for alternatives to Compressor Station 206 by adding a pipeline loop and/or expanding compression at Compressor Stations 205 and 207. These alternatives would result in significant deterioration of delivery pressures.⁴⁸ Although other compression and looping alternatives may be technically viable, the EIS concluded, and we agree, that they do not offer a significant environmental advantage over the construction and operation of Compressor Station 206.⁴⁹

21. In Mr. Kuprewicz's CEII filing, he claims that the Exhibit G flow diagrams do not show crucial information, such as flow directions, mileage, receipt and delivery points, and information on the existing pipeline system.⁵⁰ He is mistaken. All this information is incorporated into the Exhibit G flow models. Mr. Kuprewicz also asks that the Commission supply him with a pressure/flow confirmation graph comparing the existing and proposed project facilities, but the models provide the underlying information for such analysis. Finally, Mr. Kuprewicz asks the Commission to define the Northeast and Southeast shift cases. As shown in the flow diagrams, these cases are models that confirm that Transco has enough capacity to meet all deliveries during periods of constraint because it can shift its capacity obligations for certain delivery points in

⁴⁶ EIS at 3-27.

⁴⁷ *Id.* at 3-27 to 3-28.

⁴⁸ *Id.* at 3-6 to 3-12.

⁴⁹ *Id.*

⁵⁰ Rehearing and Stay Request at Enclosure 1, 4.

response to demand in New York (i.e., the Northeast shift case) and New Jersey (i.e., the Southeast shift case).

D. The Commission Satisfied the National Environmental Policy Act

1. No Action and Renewable Energy Alternatives

22. Community Groups claim that the Commission violated NEPA by excluding renewable energy and conservation measures as a viable no-action alternative.⁵¹ The EIS explained that it excluded renewable energy and energy efficiency alternatives because renewable energy and energy efficiency measures do not transport natural gas.⁵² Because these energy technologies would not feasibly achieve the project's aims, they were not considered or evaluated further. Community Groups contend that this approach is impermissibly restrictive, but for purposes of NEPA,⁵³ an agency may consider an applicant's needs and goals when assessing alternatives, so long as it does not limit the alternatives to only those that would adopt the applicant's proposal.⁵⁴

2. Greenhouse Gas Emissions

23. Community Groups allege that the Commission violated NEPA by failing to consider, as an indirect effect, the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with the downstream combustion of gas transported through the pipeline by end-users. Community Groups state that the natural gas to be transported by the project will be combusted because the project will serve residential and commercial customers in New York,⁵⁵ and asks the Commission to prepare a new EIS with this information.⁵⁶

24. We deny rehearing. NEPA requires agencies to consider indirect effects or impacts that are "caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable."⁵⁷ With respect to causation, "NEPA requires a

⁵¹ *Id.* at 20.

⁵² EIS at 3-1, 3-3.

⁵³ Rehearing and Stay Request at 20.

⁵⁴ *Theodore Roosevelt Conservation P'ship v. Salazar*, 661 F.3d 66, 73 (D.C. Cir. 2011).

⁵⁵ Rehearing and Stay Request at 21.

⁵⁶ *Id.* at 22-23 ("only a new EIS would ensure the agency took a hard look at these environmental consequences and properly disclosed them to the public").

⁵⁷ 40 C.F.R. § 1508.8 (2019).

‘reasonably close causal relationship’ between the environmental effect and the alleged cause” in order “to make an agency responsible for a particular effect under NEPA.”⁵⁸ As the Supreme Court explained, “a ‘but for’ causal relationship is insufficient [to establish cause for purposes of NEPA].”⁵⁹ Thus, “[s]ome effects that are ‘caused by’ a change in the physical environment in the sense of ‘but for’ causation, will nonetheless not fall within [NEPA] because the causal chain is too attenuated.”⁶⁰ Further, the Court has stated that “where an agency has no ability to prevent a certain effect due to its limited statutory authority over the relevant actions, the agency cannot be considered a legally relevant ‘cause’ of the effect.”⁶¹

25. The D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals in *Sierra Club v. FERC* held that where it is known that the natural gas transported by a project will be used for a specific end-use combustion, the Commission should “estimate[] the amount of power-plant carbon emissions that the pipelines will make possible.”⁶² However, outside the context of known specific end use, the D.C. Circuit held in *Birckhead v. FERC*, that “emissions from downstream gas combustions are [not], as a categorical matter, always a reasonably foreseeable indirect effect of a pipeline project.”⁶³ Further, courts have found that an impact is reasonably foreseeable if it is “sufficiently likely to occur that a person of ordinary prudence would take it into account in reaching a decision.”⁶⁴ Although courts have held that NEPA requires “reasonable forecasting,” an agency is not required “to engage in speculative analysis” or “to do the impractical, if not enough information is available to permit meaningful consideration.”⁶⁵ The court in *Birckhead* also noted that “NEPA . . . requires the Commission to at least attempt to obtain the information

⁵⁸ *U.S. Dep’t of Transp. v. Pub. Citizen*, 541 U.S. 752,767 (2004) (*Pub. Citizen*) (quoting *Metro. Edison Co. v. People Against Nuclear Energy*, 460 U.S. 766,774 (1983)).

⁵⁹ *Pub. Citizen*, 541 U.S. at 767.

⁶⁰ *Metro. Edison*, 460 U.S. at 774.

⁶¹ *Pub. Citizen*, 541 U.S. at 770.

⁶² *Sierra Club v. FERC*, 867 F.3d 1357, 1371 (D.C. Cir. 2017) (*Sierra Club*).

⁶³ *Birckhead v. FERC*, 925 F.3d 510, 519 (D.C. Cir. 2019) (citing *Calvert Cliffs’ Coordinating Comm. v U.S Atomic Energy Commission* 449 F.2d 1122(D.C. Cir. 1971)).

⁶⁴ *EarthReports, Inc. v. FERC*, 828 F.3d 949, 955 (D.C. Cir. 2016) (citations omitted); see also *Sierra Club v. Marsh*, 976 F.2d 763, 767 (First Cir. 1992).

⁶⁵ *N. Plains Res. Council v. Surface Transp. Bd.*, 668 F.3d 1067, 1078 (Nine Cir. 2011).

necessary to fulfill its statutory responsibilities,” but citing to *Delaware Riverkeeper Network*, the court acknowledged that NEPA does not “demand forecasting that is not meaningfully possible.”⁶⁶

26. Community Groups claim that because Transco has represented that the project will serve residential and commercial end-users in New York, the Commission must assess the emissions associated with that use as an indirect effect of the project. We disagree.⁶⁷ As noted above, in supplemental filings, Transco stated that the project is expected to serve users whose heating systems will convert from fuel oil to natural gas,⁶⁸ and will also serve additional demand from residential and commercial end users.⁶⁹ By contrast to these generalized statements, in *Sierra Club v. FERC*, the court relied on record evidence that the gas would be used in identified power plants.⁷⁰ Here, these generalized statements regarding the end-use of gas delivered by the project by “residential and commercial” end users, with some unquantified volume to be used for heating, cooking, and water heating purposes, are insufficient to render the emissions associated with consumption of the gas to be transported a reasonably foreseeable indirect effect of the project.⁷¹ In addition, we note that the total consumed volume is also unknown because the project’s transportation capacity is designed for intermittent peak use.⁷² We further note, however, as discussed in the Certificate Order, the

⁶⁶ *Birckhead*, 925 F.3d at 520 (quoting *Del. Riverkeeper Network v. FERC*, 753 F.3d 1304, 1310 (D.C. Cir. 2014)).

⁶⁷ See generally *Adelphia Gateway LLC*, 169 FERC ¶ 61,220 (2019) (McNamee Comm’r concurrence) (elaborating on the purpose of the NGA and that one of its purposes is to facilitate the development and access to natural gas, as well as an analysis of consideration of indirect effects under NEPA).

⁶⁸ Transco February 27, 2019 Letter to Chairman Chatterjee, FERC.

⁶⁹ National Grid April 2, 2019 Comments in Support at 1.

⁷⁰ *Sierra Club*, 867 F.3d at 1372 (“What are the “reasonably foreseeable” effects of authorizing a pipeline that will transport natural gas to Florida power plants? First, that gas will be burned in those power plants.”).

⁷¹ National Grid April 2, 2019 Comments in Support at 1.

⁷² National Grid April 26, 2017 Motion to Intervene and Comments in Support at 4 (“[T]he contract for capacity on the NESE Project . . . meets an identified need for additional peak day supplies beginning in the winter of 2019 - 2020 with year-over-year peak day demand growth expected to continue through the winter of 2025 – 2026 and beyond.”).

greenhouse gas emissions would be offset in part by the conversion of customers from fuel oil to natural gas.⁷³

27. Community Groups next claim that adding firm transportation capacity is likely to spur demand for natural gas and thus increase natural gas production activities and associated emissions.⁷⁴ We disagree.⁷⁵ Here, the Commission was not required to address the effects of increased natural gas production because there is no evidence that the project will increase production. Moreover, there is no record evidence that would help the Commission determine the origin of the natural gas that will be transported on the project, let alone predict the number and location of any additional wells that would be drilled as a result.⁷⁶

28. Nonetheless, Community Groups claim the Commission's refusal to consider upstream production runs counter to court rulings in *Barnes v. U.S. Department of Transportation*,⁷⁷ which they claim supports their assertion that pipeline projects have the unique potential to spur natural gas production, resulting in upstream GHG emissions as indirect project effects.⁷⁸

⁷³ Certificate Order, 167 FERC ¶ 61,110 at P 90 ("Transco states that the project would enable National Grid to convert approximately 8,000 customers a year from heating oil to natural gas, displacing up to 900,000 barrels of oil per year. Transco also indicates that its project would more than offset net GHG emissions under a hypothetical scenario in which the entire capacity of the project would displace existing or new fuel oil use in New York.") (citing Transco's February 27, 2019 Filing; Transco's April 24, 2019 Filing).

⁷⁴ Rehearing and Stay Request at 21.

⁷⁵ See *supra* note 67.

⁷⁶ *Birckhead v. FERC*, 925 F.3d 510, 518 (D.C. Cir. 2019) (ruling that the Commission was not obliged by NEPA to assess impacts of upstream gas production simply because there is a market need for a given project). See also *Sierra Club v. U.S. Dep't of Energy*, 867 F.3d 189, 199 (D.C. Cir. 2017) (accepting the U.S. Department of Energy's explanation that "it would be impossible to identify with any confidence the marginal production at the wellhead or local level" that would be induced by a specific natural gas export project, given that every natural-gas-producing region across the lower 48 states is part of the interconnected pipeline system and may respond in unpredictable ways to prices that rise or fall with export demand).

⁷⁷ *Barnes v. U.S Dep't of Transp.*, 655 F.3d 1124, 1138 (Nine Cir. 2011) (*Barnes*).

⁷⁸ Rehearing and Stay Request at 21.

29. We disagree. In *Barnes*, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals noted that the Federal Aviation Administration had acknowledged that runway expansion projects have the unique potential to spur demand, but the agency failed to explain and support with record evidence its conclusion that the proposed project, the addition of a third runway at a two-runway airport, was unlikely to attract more private aircraft.⁷⁹ The court thus held that it was reasonably foreseeable that the addition of third runway would have a growth-inducing effect on aviation demand because airport capacity is primarily a factor of runway capacity.⁸⁰ In contrast, with this project, which is adding a small amount of incremental capacity on Transco's existing 10,000-mile interstate pipeline system, there is no evidence that the project will spur additional production.

30. Finally, Community Groups argue that the Commission violated NEPA by failing to use the Social Cost of Carbon to put GHG emissions into context.⁸¹ As the Commission has previously explained, using this tool to monetize GHG emissions is not helpful given that there is no context for those monetized costs.⁸² Neither EPA nor the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) have stated that the Social Cost of Carbon should be used to assess the significance of GHG emissions. Nor does CEQ require a

⁷⁹ See *Barnes*, 655 F.3d at 1137-38.

⁸⁰ *Id.* 1138.

⁸¹ Rehearing and Stay Request at 21.

⁸² *Fla. Se. Connection, LLC*, 164 FERC ¶ 61,099, at P 35 (2018) (explaining that “[t]he Commission’s policy on the use of the Social Cost of Carbon has been to recognize the availability of this tool, while concluding that it is not appropriate for use in project-level NEPA reviews”). See generally *Adelphia Gateway LLC*, 169 FERC ¶ 61,220 (2019) (McNamee Comm’r concurrence) (elaborating on how the Social Cost of Carbon is not a useful tool for determining whether GHG emissions are significant). We note that the EIS quantified the GHGs emitted from the construction and operation of the project. See EIS at 4-309 to 4-310. In an effort to provide context, we compared the direct operational emissions of GHGs of the project to the New York and National GHG Inventories. Operation of the project will result in about a 0.08 percent annual increase of GHG emissions in New York based upon the 2017 GHG Inventory. See U.S. Energy Information Administration, State Carbon Dioxide Emissions Data, State of New York grand total data for 2017 (Oct. 23, 2019). From a national perspective, direct operational GHG emissions would result in a 0.002 percent increase in national GHG emissions. See U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks: 1990 - 2017, 2017 Data, Table ES-2 (Apr. 2019).

monetary cost-benefit analysis when weighing alternatives under NEPA.⁸³ Indeed, CEQ states that such an analysis should not be undertaken when there are important qualitative considerations, such as those involved in siting infrastructure.⁸⁴ In addition, the Social Cost of Carbon tool has methodological limitations. For example, different discount rates introduce substantial variation in results and no basis exists to ascribe significance to a calculated monetized value.⁸⁵ Further, the Social Cost of Carbon methodology is no longer representative of government policy.⁸⁶

E. Wetlands Impacts from Compressor Station 206

31. Community Groups claim that the EIS stated that Transco's construction and operation of Compressor Station 206 would comply with all applicable laws and regulations and, therefore, it would not have significant environmental impacts on wetlands.⁸⁷ Community Groups contend that the Commission cannot reach this conclusion because the EIS relies on generalized assumptions, and is inadequate to ensure compliance with various New Jersey and Clean Water Act section 404⁸⁸ requirements.⁸⁹

32. The EIS fully analyzed impacts to wetlands and waterbodies associated with the construction and operation of Compressor Station 206 on a 52.1-acre parcel in Somerset County, New Jersey. The EIS explained that Transco sited the compressor station

⁸³ *Fla. Se. Connection, LLC*, 164 FERC ¶ 61,099, at P 28 (citing 40 C.F.R. § 1502.23 (2019) ("the weighing of the merits and drawbacks of the various alternatives need not be displayed in a monetary cost-benefit analysis and should not be when there are important qualitative considerations")); *Fla. Se. Connection, LLC*, 162 FERC ¶ 61,233, at P 40 (2018).

⁸⁴ *Fla. Se. Connection, LLC*, 162 FERC ¶ 61,233 at P 40.

⁸⁵ *Id.* at PP 45-51.

⁸⁶ *See* Exec. Order No. 13783, *Promoting Energy Independence and Economic Growth*, 82 Fed. Reg. 16,093 (Mar. 28, 2017) (disbanding the Interagency Working Group on Social Cost of Carbon and withdrawing its reports and supporting documents as no longer representative of government policy).

⁸⁷ Rehearing and Stay Request at 24 (citing EIS at 4-1).

⁸⁸ 33 U.S.C. § 1344 (2018).

⁸⁹ Rehearing and Stay Request at 24.

primarily on upland areas of the parcel to avoid wetland impacts,⁹⁰ but the facility would impact a total of 1.9 acres of palustrine emergent, palustrine scrub-scrub, and palustrine forested wetlands and the station's proposed access road would impact approximately 5.1 acres of these wetlands types as well.⁹¹ Using New Jersey's classification of wetlands, the EIS explained that no exceptional value or high-quality wetlands would be affected by Compressor Station 206.⁹² The EIS also explained that in New Jersey, the Army Corps of Engineers does not require compensatory mitigation for project-related wetland impacts under its jurisdiction, but Transco, in consultation with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, will prepare a project-specific wetland mitigation plan to maintain no net loss of wetlands and to adequately replace lost functions.⁹³

33. The EIS explained that where Transco could not avoid wetlands, it would minimize impacts and restore the construction right-of-way by implementing its construction and restoration plans and complying with any necessary permits.⁹⁴ But the EIS did not improperly rely on compliance with applicable laws to assess the project's environmental impacts.⁹⁵ Contrary to Community Groups' claims, Transco's commitment to comply with these laws does not mean the EIS must provide all information required for other regulatory authorities to process their permits. Other regulatory authorities have their own processes to obtain information necessary for their permitting processes and, to the extent Community Groups contend that Transco's applications for other permits are inadequate, those concerns are properly directed to those other regulatory authorities.

⁹⁰ EIS at 4-65.

⁹¹ *Id.* at 4-60, 4-62. We note that the EIS examined 39 other sites but of the five potentially feasible alternatives, each impacted more wetlands than the proposed action. The EIS also acknowledged that an alternative route to Compressor Station 206 would avoid the 5.1 acres of wetlands but did not recommend the site because it is opposed by property owners. *Id.* at 3-36, 4-39.

⁹² *Id.* at 4-63.

⁹³ *Id.* at 4-67.

⁹⁴ *Id.* at 4-1.

⁹⁵ *Id.* at 3-36, 3-39, 4-60, 4-63, 4-65.

34. We note, however, that Transco recently sought to amend the Project certificate to allow Transco to use an existing road to access Transco's Compressor Station 206 in Somerset County, New Jersey in lieu of constructing an entirely new access road. This request is currently pending before the Commission.⁹⁶

F. Safety Impacts

35. Community Groups allege that the Commission cannot rely on Transco's assurances that it will comply with the Department of Transportation Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration's (PHMSA) safety requirements when Transco has violated these standards twice in the past.⁹⁷ Community Groups argue that Transco has failed to show that the project will not exacerbate corrosion on its older mainline system.⁹⁸

36. Transco is required to comply with PHMSA regulations to prevent corrosion and ensure the safety of the pipeline should any corrosion occur. As explained in the Certificate Order, PHMSA is responsible for ensuring the safe operation of interstate natural gas pipelines through its regulations under Part 192 of the 49 Code of Federal Regulations.⁹⁹ Transco certified to the Commission that it would design, install, inspect, test, construct, operate, replace, and maintain the project facilities in accordance with modern engineering practices that meet or exceed these standards.¹⁰⁰

37. With regard to Community Groups' specific corrosion concerns, the EIS explained that Transco's facilities are designed, constructed, and operated in accordance with PHMSA regulations that specifically address pipeline corrosion.¹⁰¹ In addition, Commission staff confirmed that the increase in gas velocity from the project's compression would not be expected to increase corrosion.¹⁰² Moreover, Transco's system is optimized to minimize moisture and Transco developed, pursuant to PHMSA

⁹⁶ Transco January 31, 2020 Application to Amend the Certificate of the Northeast Supply Enhancement Project (CP20-49-000).

⁹⁷ Rehearing and Stay Request at 27-28.

⁹⁸ *Id.* at 27.

⁹⁹ Certificate Order, 167 FERC ¶ 61,110 at P 32 (citing 49 C.F.R. pt. 192 (2019)).

¹⁰⁰ EIS at 4-326.

¹⁰¹ *Id.* at 5-24.

¹⁰² *Id.* (explaining that the increased velocity from compression would not increase corrosion because dry, flowing, tariff quality gas reduces the potential for water to occur).

requirements, an enhanced pipeline Integrity Management Program to improve pipeline safety along its entire pipeline system.¹⁰³

The Commission orders:

(A) The Community Groups' request for rehearing is hereby denied, as discussed in the body of this order.

(B) The Community Groups' request for stay is hereby dismissed, as discussed in the body of this order.

(C) Transco's July 1, 2019 answer is rejected.

By the Commission. Commissioner Glick is dissenting in part with a separate statement attached.

Commissioner McNamee is concurring with a separate statement attached.

(S E A L)

Nathaniel J. Davis, Sr.,
Deputy Secretary.

¹⁰³ *Id.*

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company, LLC

Docket No. CP17-101-001

(Issued April 16, 2020)

GLICK, Commissioner, *dissenting in part*:

1. I dissent in part from today's order on rehearing because I believe that the Commission's action violates both the Natural Gas Act¹ (NGA) and the National Environmental Policy Act² (NEPA). The Commission once again refuses to consider the consequences its actions have for climate change. Although neither the NGA nor NEPA permit the Commission to assume away the climate change implications of constructing and operating this project, that is precisely what the Commission is doing here.

2. In today's order, the Commission denies rehearing of its order authorizing Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company's (Transco) proposed Northeast Supply Enhancement Project (Project),³ and continues to treat greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and climate change differently than all other environmental impacts.⁴ The Commission again refuses to consider whether the Project's contribution to climate change from GHG emissions would be significant, even though it quantified the direct GHG emissions from the Project's construction and operation.⁵ That failure forms an integral part of the Commission's decisionmaking: The refusal to assess the significance of the Project's contribution to the harm caused by climate change is what allows the Commission to misleadingly state that the Project's environmental impacts "will be reduced to less-than-

¹ 15 U.S.C. § 717f (2018).

² National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 *et seq.*

³ *Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company, LLC*, 167 FERC ¶ 61,110 (2019) (Certificate Order), *order on reh'g*, 171 FERC ¶ 61,031 (2020) (Rehearing Order).

⁴ *See* Rehearing Order, 171 FERC ¶ 61,031 at PP 26, 29.

⁵ Northeast Supply Enhancement Project Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) at 4-309 – 4-310 & Tables 4.10.1-4 & 4.10.1-5; *see* Certificate Order, 161 FERC ¶ 61,314 at P 90.

significant levels,”⁶ and, as a result, conclude that the Project is required by the public convenience and necessity.⁷ Claiming that a project has no significant environmental impacts while at the same time refusing to assess the significance of the project’s impact on the most important environmental issue of our time is not reasoned decisionmaking.

3. Making matters worse, the Commission again refuses to make a serious effort to assess the indirect effects of the Project. The United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit (D.C. Circuit) has repeatedly criticized the Commission for its stubborn refusal to identify and consider the reasonably foreseeable GHG emissions caused by the downstream combustion of natural gas transported through an interstate pipeline. But even so, today’s order doubles down on approaches that the D.C. Circuit has already rejected. So long as the Commission refuses to heed the court’s unambiguous directives, I have no choice but to dissent.

I. The Commission’s Public Interest Determination Is Not the Product of Reasoned Decisionmaking

4. We know with certainty what causes climate change: It is the result of GHG emissions, including carbon dioxide and methane, released in large quantities through the production, transportation, and consumption of fossil fuels, including natural gas. The Commission recognizes this relationship, finding, as it must, that climate change is “driven by accumulation of GHG in the atmosphere” and that emissions from the Project’s construction and operation, in combination with emissions from other sources, would “contribute incrementally to future climate change impacts.”⁸ In light of this undisputed relationship between anthropogenic GHG emissions and climate change, the Commission must carefully consider the Project’s contribution to climate change, both in order to fulfill NEPA’s requirements and to determine whether the Project is required by the public convenience and necessity.⁹

⁶ Certificate Order, 167 FERC ¶ 61,110 at P 29.

⁷ *Id.* P 91.

⁸ EIS at 4-387, 4-389.

⁹ Section 7 of the NGA requires that, before issuing a certificate for new pipeline construction, the Commission must find both a need for the pipeline and that, on balance, the pipeline’s benefits outweigh its harms. 15 U.S.C. § 717f. Furthermore, NEPA requires the Commission to take a “hard look” at the environmental impacts of its decisions. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 4332(2)(C)(iii); *Balt. Gas & Elec. Co. v. Nat. Res. Def. Council, Inc.*, 462 U.S. 87, 97 (1983). This means that the Commission must consider and discuss the significance of the harm from a pipeline’s contribution to climate change

5. Today's order on rehearing falls short of that standard. As part of its public interest determination, the Commission must examine the Project's impact on the environment and public safety, which includes the facilities' impact on climate change.¹⁰ That is now clearly established D.C. Circuit precedent.¹¹ And yet the Commission continues to insist that it need not consider whether the Project's contribution to climate change is significant because, without a "widely accepted standard," it—simply put—"cannot."¹² However, the most troubling part of the Commission's rationale is what

by actually evaluating the magnitude of the pipeline's environmental impact. Doing so enables the Commission to compare the environment before and after the proposed federal action and factor the changes into its decisionmaking process. *See Sierra Club v. FERC*, 867 F.3d 1357, 1374 (D.C. Cir. 2017) (*Sabal Trail*) ("The [FEIS] needed to include a discussion of the 'significance' of this indirect effect."); 40 C.F.R. § 1502.16 (a)–(b) (An agency's environmental review must "include the environmental impacts of the alternatives including the proposed action," as well as a discussion of direct and indirect effects *and their significance*. (emphasis added)). Commissioner McNamee argues that the Commission can consider a project's direct GHG emissions in its public convenience and necessity determination (while ignoring the project's indirect GHG emissions) without actually determining whether the GHG emissions are significant. Rehearing Order, 171 FERC ¶ 61,031 (McNamee, Comm'r, concurring at P 15). This argument defies logic and reason and has no basis in a proceeding entirely devoid of even the affectation that the Commission is factoring the Project's GHG emissions in its decisionmaking.

¹⁰ *See Sabal Trail*, 867 F.3d at 1373 (explaining that the Commission must consider a pipeline's direct and indirect GHG emissions because the Commission may "deny a pipeline certificate on the ground that the pipeline would be too harmful to the environment"); *see also Atl. Ref. Co. v. Pub. Serv. Comm'n of N.Y.*, 360 U.S. 378, 391 (1959) (holding that the NGA requires the Commission to consider "all factors bearing on the public interest").

¹¹ *See Allegheny Def. Project v. FERC*, 932 F.3d 940, 945-46 (D.C. Cir. 2019), *reh'g en banc granted, judgment vacated*, 2019 WL 6605464 (D.C. Cir. Dec. 5, 2019); *Birckhead v. FERC*, 925 F.3d 510, 518-19 (D.C. Cir. 2019); *Sabal Trail*, 867 F.3d at 1371-72.

¹² *See* EIS at 4-389 – 4-390 (explaining that "we cannot determine whether the NESE's Project's contribution [to cumulative impacts on climate change] would be significant," because "there is no widely accepted standard, per international, federal, or state policy, or as a matter of physical science, to determine the significance of the Project's GHG emissions").

comes next. Based on this alleged inability to assess significance, the Commission concludes that the Project's impacts will generally be reduced to "less-than-significant" levels.¹³ Think about that. The Commission is simultaneously stating that it cannot assess the significance of the Project's impact on climate change, while concluding that all environmental impacts are acceptable to the public interest.¹⁴ That is unreasoned and an abdication of our responsibility to give climate change the "hard look" that the law demands.¹⁵

6. It also means that the Project's impact on climate change does not play a meaningful role in the Commission's public interest determination, no matter how often the Commission assures us that it does. Using the approach in today's order, the Commission will always conclude that a project will not have a significant environmental impact irrespective of that project's actual GHG emissions or those emissions' impact on climate change. If the Commission's conclusion will not change no matter how many GHG emissions a project causes, those emissions cannot, as a logical matter, play a meaningful role in the Commission's public interest determination. A public interest determination that systematically excludes the most important environmental consideration of our time is contrary to law, arbitrary and capricious, and not the product of reasoned decisionmaking.

¹³ See, e.g., EIS at ES-14; see also Certificate Order, 167 FERC ¶ 61,110 at P 29 (noting EIS conclusion that the Project's adverse environmental impacts will be reduced to less than significant levels through implementation of certain mitigation measures).

¹⁴ Certificate Order, 167 FERC ¶ 61,110 at P 91.

¹⁵ E.g., *Myersville Citizens for a Rural Cmty., Inc. v. FERC*, 783 F.3d 1301, 1322 (D.C. Cir. 2015) ("[A]gencies cannot overlook a single environmental consequence if it is even 'arguably significant.'"); see *Michigan v. EPA*, 135 S. Ct. 2699, 2706 (2015) ("Not only must an agency's decreed result be within the scope of its lawful authority, but the process by which it reaches that result must be logical and rational." (internal quotation marks omitted)); see also *Motor Vehicle Mfrs. Ass'n, Inc. v. State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co.*, 463 U.S. 29, 43 (1983) (explaining that agency action is "arbitrary and capricious if the agency has . . . entirely failed to consider an important aspect of the problem, [or] offered an explanation for its decision that runs counter to the evidence before the agency").

7. Commissioner McNamee argues that the D.C. Circuit cases cited above¹⁶ were wrongly decided.¹⁷ Although that is his prerogative, it is irrelevant to the task before us. As he has explained, we are called on to apply the law and the facts, not our personal policy preferences. But surely, implicit in that statement, is a recognition that we must apply the law as it is, not as we wish it were. The D.C. Circuit has unambiguously interpreted the “public convenience and necessity” standard in section 7 of the NGA to encompass the authority to consider and, if appropriate, act upon “the direct and indirect environmental effects” of a proposed pipeline.¹⁸ As Commissioners, our job is to apply that law, not to attack binding judicial precedent in favor of an interpretation that was, in fact, expressly rejected by the court.¹⁹

II. The Commission’s NEPA Analysis of the Project’s Contribution to Climate Change Is Deficient

8. The Commission’s NEPA analysis is similarly flawed. When conducting a NEPA review, an agency must consider both the direct and the indirect effects of the project under consideration.²⁰ While the Commission quantifies the GHG emissions related to Project’s construction and operation,²¹ it fails to consider the indirect GHG emissions resulting from the incremental natural gas capacity facilitated by the Project. The D.C. Circuit has repeatedly instructed the Commission that the GHG emissions caused by the reasonably foreseeable combustion of natural gas transported through a pipeline are an indirect effect and must, therefore, be included within the Commission’s NEPA analysis.²² It is past time for the Commission to learn that lesson.

¹⁶ *Supra* notes 10-11.

¹⁷ See Rehearing Order, 171 FERC ¶ 61,031 (McNamee, Comm’r, concurring at PP 13-14).

¹⁸ *E.g.*, *Sabal Trail*, 867 F.3d at 1373.

¹⁹ *Id.*; see *Birckhead*, 925 F.3d at 519 (explaining that in “the pipeline certification context the Commission does have statutory authority to act” on the reasonably foreseeable GHG emissions caused by the pipeline (citing *Sabal Trail*, 867 F.3d at 1373)).

²⁰ 40 C.F.R. §§ 1502.16(b), 1508.8(b); *Sabal Trail*, 867 F.3d at 1371.

²¹ See *supra* note 5.

²² See *Allegheny Def. Project*, 932 F.3d at 945-46; *Birckhead*, 925 F.3d at 518-19;

9. Beginning with *Sabal Trail*, the D.C. Circuit has held unambiguously that the Commission must identify and consider reasonably foreseeable downstream GHG emissions as part of its NEPA analysis.²³ Shortly after that decision, the Commission attempted to cabin *Sabal Trail* to its facts, taking the position that it was required to consider downstream GHG emissions *only* under the exact facts presented in *Sabal Trail*—i.e., where the pipeline was transporting natural gas for combustion at a particular natural gas power plant (or plants).²⁴ In *Birckhead*, the D.C. Circuit rejected that argument, admonishing the Commission that it must examine the specific record before it and that it may not categorically ignore a pipeline’s downstream emissions just because it does not fit neatly within the facts of *Sabal Trail*. Indeed, the Court expressly rejected the Commission’s argument “that downstream emissions are an indirect effect of a project only when the project’s ‘entire purpose’ is to transport gas to be burned at ‘specifically-identified’ destinations”—i.e., the facts of *Sabal Trail*.²⁵ Since *Birckhead*, the court has continued to turn aside the Commission’s efforts to ignore reasonably foreseeable downstream GHG emissions.²⁶

10. Nevertheless, the Commission refuses to calculate or consider the downstream GHG emissions that will likely result from natural gas transported by the Project. Instead, the Commission takes the position that if it does not know the specific volume and end-use of the natural gas, any associated GHG emissions are categorically

Sabal Trail, 867 F.3d at 1371-72.

²³ *Sabal Trail*, 867 F.3d at 1371-72; *see also id.* at 1371 (“Effects are reasonably foreseeable if they are ‘sufficiently likely to occur that a person of ordinary prudence would take [them] into account in reaching a decision.’” (quoting *EarthReports, Inc. v. FERC*, 828 F.3d 949, 955 (D.C. Cir. 2016))).

²⁴ *Birckhead*, 925 F.3d at 518-19 (rejecting the “Commission[’s] conten[tion] [that *Sabal Trail*] . . . is narrowly limited to the facts of that case” (internal quotation marks omitted)).

²⁵ *Id.* at 519 (citing the Commission’s brief in that case).

²⁶ *See Allegheny Def. Project*, 932 F.3d at 945-46 (holding that the petitioners are “correct that NEPA required the Commission to consider both the direct and indirect environmental effects of the Project, and that, despite what the Commission argues, the downstream greenhouse-gas emissions are just such an indirect effect”).

not reasonably foreseeable.²⁷ That is nothing more than a warmed-over version of the policy that the D.C. Circuit rejected in *Birckhead*—*i.e.*, that the Commission will ignore downstream GHG emissions, without more detailed information on exactly how the gas would be used.²⁸ Today’s holding means that, almost by definition, the Commission will never consider the GHG emissions resulting from the gas consumption by customers of local distribution companies, even when the record indicates that the gas will be used in combustion, as it does here.²⁹

11. Under the current set of fact presented in today’s record, there are plenty of steps that the Commission could take to consider the GHGs associated with the Project’s incremental capacity if it were actually inclined to take a ‘hard look’ at climate change. At a minimum, we know that the vast majority, 97 percent, of all natural gas consumed in the United States is combusted³⁰—a fact that, on its own might be sufficient to make downstream emissions reasonably foreseeable, at least absent contrary evidence. Moreover, the record here makes this a relatively easy case: The stated purpose for the expansion capacity is to facilitate natural gas consumption by residential and commercial customers in New York City.³¹ National Grid, which subscribed the Project’s entire

²⁷ Rehearing Order, 171 FERC ¶ 61,031 at P 26.

²⁸ *See id.* The Commission notes that *Birckhead* held that downstream GHG emissions are not categorically reasonably foreseeable. *Id.* P 25. That’s true. But the fact that the Commission does not have to consider downstream GHG emissions in *every* case hardly explains why it was justified in ignoring those emissions in *this* particular case. *See Calvert Cliffs’ Coordinating Comm., Inc. v. U.S. Atomic Energy Comm’n*, 449 F.2d 1109, 1122 (D.C. Cir. 1971) (“NEPA compels a case-by-case examination . . . of discrete factors.”) (quoted in *Birckhead*, 925 F.3d at 519).

²⁹ *See infra* P 11.

³⁰ U.S. Energy Info. Admin., *September 2019 Monthly Energy Review* 22, 97 (2019) (reporting that, in 2018, 778 Bcf of natural gas had a non-combustion use compared to 29,956 Bcf of total consumption), <https://www.eia.gov/totalenergy/data/monthly/archive/00351908.pdf>; *see also* Jayni Hein *et al.*, Institute for Policy Integrity, *Pipeline Approvals and Greenhouse Gas Emissions* 25 (2019) (explaining that, in 2017, 97% of all natural gas consumed was combusted).

³¹ *See* Certificate Order, 167 FERC ¶ 61,110 at P 90; EIS at ES-1, 1-3, 1-15 (explaining that the purpose and need of the Project is to provide incremental interstate pipeline transportation service to Brooklyn Union Gas Company and KeySpan Gas East Corporation to serve National Grid’s residential and commercial customers in New York City, ensure diverse sources of natural gas supply, and improve system reliability);

capacity, confirms that its customers, mostly residential, rely on natural gas “for critical basic needs including home heating, cooking and hot water.”³² Using that information, the Commission could have easily engaged in a little “reasonable forecasting” aided by “educated assumptions”—which is precisely what NEPA requires—in order to develop an estimate or a range of estimates of the likely emissions caused by the Project.³³

12. Although quantifying the Project’s GHG emissions is a necessary step toward meeting the Commission’s NEPA obligations, simply reporting the volume of emissions is insufficient.³⁴ In *Sabal Trail*, the court explained that the Commission was required

Transco Certificate Application at 14 (noting National Grid’s forecast of need for additional natural gas supply to meet “residential and commercial demands due to population and market growth within its service territory,” in particular “beginning in the 2019/2020 heating season because current forecast models . . . indicate an increasing peak day demand year over year”). And none of the Project’s alleged benefits—improved reliability and access to economic supplies of natural gas—will occur unless the natural gas is actually used, and that use will largely (if not entirely) entail combustion.

³² See Certificate Order, 167 FERC ¶ 61,110 (LaFleur, Comm’r concurring at P 3) (explaining that the record contains detailed information on downstream end use from both Transco and National Grid, including National Grid’s confirmation that “its customers, mostly residential, rely on natural gas ‘for critical basic needs including home heating, cooking and hot water’”); see also National Grid’s April 2, 2019 Filing at 1.

³³ *Sabal Trail*, 867 F.3d at 1374 (quoting *Del. Riverkeeper Network v. FERC*, 753 F.3d 1304, 1310 (D.C. Cir. 2014)); see *id.* (“We understand that emission estimates would be largely influenced by assumptions rather than direct parameters about the project, but some educated assumptions are inevitable in the NEPA process. And the effects of assumptions on estimates can be checked by disclosing those assumptions so that readers can take the resulting estimates with the appropriate amount of salt.” (internal citations and quotation marks omitted)).

³⁴ See *Ctr. for Biological Diversity*, 538 F.3d at 1216 (“While the [environmental document] quantifies the expected amount of CO2 emitted . . . , it does not evaluate the ‘incremental impact’ that these emissions will have on climate change or on the environment more generally”); *Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Ctr. v. Bureau of Land Mgmt.*, 387 F.3d 989, 995 (9th Cir. 2004) (“A calculation of the total number of acres to be harvested in the watershed is a necessary component . . . , but it is not a sufficient description of the actual environmental effects that can be expected from logging those acres.”).

“to include a discussion of the ‘significance’ of” the indirect effects of the Project, including its GHG emissions.³⁵ That makes sense. Identifying and evaluating the consequences that a project’s GHG emissions may have for climate change is essential if NEPA is to play the disclosure and good government roles for which it was designed.³⁶ But in today’s order on rehearing, the Commission refuses to provide that discussion or even attempt to assess the significance of the Project’s GHG emissions or how they contribute to climate change.³⁷ It is hard to see how hiding the ball by refusing to assess the significance of the Project’s climate impacts is consistent with either of those purposes.

13. In addition, under NEPA, a finding of significance informs the Commission’s inquiry into potential ways of mitigating environmental impacts.³⁸ An environmental review document must “contain a detailed discussion of possible mitigation measures” to address adverse environmental impacts.³⁹ “Without such a discussion, neither the agency nor other interested groups and individuals can properly evaluate the severity of the adverse effects” of a project, making an examination of possible mitigation measures necessary to ensure that the agency has taken a “hard look” at the environmental

³⁵ *Sabal Trail*, 867 F.3d at 1374.

³⁶ See, e.g., *Robertson v. Methow Valley Citizens Council*, 490 U.S. 332, 349 (1989) (explaining that one of NEPA’s purposes is to ensure that “relevant information will be made available to the larger audience that may also play a role in both the decisionmaking process and the implementation of that decision”); *Lemon v. Geren*, 514 F.3d 1312, 1315 (D.C. Cir. 2008) (“The idea behind NEPA is that if the agency’s eyes are open to the environmental consequences of its actions and if it considers options that entail less environmental damage, it may be persuaded to alter what it proposed.”).

³⁷ Rehearing Order, 171 FERC ¶ 61,031 at PP 24-27, 29-30; see also Certificate Order, 167 FERC ¶ 61,110 at P 90 (omitting any discussion of the significance of the environmental impact from the Project’s GHG emissions except to note Transco’s indication that the Project “would more than offset net GHG emissions under a hypothetical scenario”).

³⁸ 40 C.F.R. § 1502.16 (2018) (NEPA requires an implementing agency to form a “scientific and analytic basis for the comparisons” of the environmental consequences of its action in its environmental review, which “shall include discussions of . . . [d]irect effects and their significance.”).

³⁹ *Robertson*, 490 U.S. at 351

consequences of the action at issue.⁴⁰

14. Instead, the Commission continues to insist that it need not assess the significance of the Project's GHG emissions because it lacks a "widely accepted standard," to "determine the significance of the Project's GHG emissions"⁴¹ But that does not excuse the Commission's failure to evaluate these emissions. As an initial matter, the lack of a single methodology does not prevent the Commission from adopting *a* methodology, even if that methodology is not universally accepted. The Commission has several tools to assess the harm from the Project's contribution to climate change, including, for example, the Social Cost of Carbon. By measuring the long-term damage done by a ton of carbon dioxide, the Social Cost of Carbon links GHG emissions to actual environmental effects from climate change, thereby facilitating the necessary "hard look" at the Project's environmental impacts that NEPA requires. Especially when it comes to a global problem like climate change, a measure for translating a project's climate change impacts into concrete and comprehensible terms plays a useful role in the NEPA process by putting the harms from climate change in terms that are readily accessible for both agency decisionmakers and the public at large. The Commission, however, continues to ignore the tools at its disposal, relying on deeply flawed reasoning that I have previously critiqued at length.⁴²

15. Regardless of tools or methodologies available, the Commission also can use its expertise to consider all factors and determine, quantitatively or qualitatively, whether the Project's GHG emissions have a significant impact on climate change. That is precisely what the Commission does in other aspects of its environmental review. Consider, for example, the Commission's findings that the Project will not have a significant effect on

⁴⁰ *Id.* at 352.

⁴¹ *See supra* note 12.

⁴² *See, e.g., Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Co., LLC*, 167 FERC ¶ 61,110 (2019) (Glick, Comm'r, dissenting in part at P 6 & n.11) (noting that the Social Cost of Carbon "gives both the Commission and the public a means to translate a discrete project's climate impacts into concrete and comprehensible terms"); *Fla. Se. Connection, LLC*, 164 FERC ¶ 61,099 (2018) (Glick, Comm'r, dissenting).

issues as diverse as “soils,”⁴³ “migratory bird habitat,”⁴⁴ and “fisheries.”⁴⁵ Notwithstanding the lack of any standard or “universally accepted methodology” to assess these impacts, the Commission managed to use its judgment to conduct a qualitative review, and assess the significance of the Project’s effect on those considerations. The Commission’s refusal to, at the very least, exercise similar qualitative judgment to assess the significance of GHG emissions here is arbitrary and capricious.⁴⁶

16. That refusal is even more mystifying because NEPA “does not dictate particular decisional outcomes.”⁴⁷ NEPA “‘merely prohibits uninformed—rather than unwise—agency action.’”⁴⁸ In other words, taking the matter seriously—and rigorously examining a project’s impacts on climate change—does not necessarily prevent any Commissioner from ultimately concluding that a project meets the public interest standard.

17. Even if the Commission were to determine that a project’s GHG emissions are significant, that would not be the end of the inquiry nor would it mean that the project is not in the public interest. Instead, the Commission could require mitigation—as the Commission often does with regard to other environmental impacts. The Supreme Court

⁴³ EIS at 4-22.

⁴⁴ EIS at 4-85 – 4-86, 5-9; *see also id.* at 4-64 & 4-68 (noting that recovery of forested wetlands “may take up to 30 years or more,” but concluding that the Project would not result in significant impact on wetland resources). Notwithstanding the lack of any “widely accepted standard” as to this particular environmental impact, the Commission still uses its judgment to conduct a qualitative review of the Project’s impact on bird habitat.

⁴⁵ *Id.* at 4-119.

⁴⁶ After all, the standard the Commission typically uses for evaluating significance is whether the adverse impact would result in a substantial adverse change in the physical environment. *See e.g.* Adelphia Gateway Project Environmental Assessment, Docket No. CP18-46-000 at 33 (Jan 1, 2019). Surely that standard is open to some subjective interpretation by each Commissioner. What today’s order does not explain is why it is appropriate to exercise subjective interpretation and judgment when it comes to impacts such as soils, migratory bird habitat, and fisheries, but not climate change.

⁴⁷ *Sierra Club v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*, 803 F.3d 31, 37 (D.C. Cir. 2015).

⁴⁸ *Id.* (quoting *Robertson*, 490 U.S. at 351).

has held that, when a project may cause potentially significant environmental impacts, the relevant environmental impact statement must “contain a detailed discussion of possible mitigation measures” to address adverse environmental impacts.⁴⁹ The Court explained that, “[w]ithout such a discussion, neither the agency nor other interested groups and individuals can properly evaluate the severity of the adverse effects” of a project, making an examination of possible mitigation measures necessary to ensure that the agency has taken a “hard look” at the environmental consequences of the action at issue.⁵⁰ The Commission not only has the obligation to discuss mitigation of adverse environmental impacts under NEPA, but also the authority to condition certificates under section 7 of the NGA,⁵¹ which could encompass measures to mitigate a project’s GHG emissions.

18. Furthermore, a rigorous examination and determination of significance regarding climate change impacts would bolster any finding of public interest by providing the Commission a more complete set of information necessary to weigh benefits against adverse effects. By refusing to assess significance, however, the Commission short circuits any discussion of mitigation measures for the Project’s GHG emissions, eliminating a potential pathway for us to achieve consensus on whether the Project is consistent with the public interest.

* * *

19. Today’s order on rehearing is not the product of reasoned decisionmaking. Its analysis of the Project’s contribution to climate change is shoddy and its conclusion that the Project will not have any significant environmental impacts is illogical. After all, the Commission itself acknowledges that the Project will contribute to climate change, but refuses to consider whether that contribution might be significant before proclaiming that the Project will have no significant environmental impacts. So long as that is the case, the record simply cannot support the Commission’s conclusion that there will be no significant environmental impacts. Simply put, the Commission’s analysis of the Project’s consequences for climate change does not represent the “hard look” that the law

⁴⁹ *Robertson*, 490 U.S. at 351.

⁵⁰ *Id.* at 352; *see also* 40 C.F.R. §§ 1508.20 (defining mitigation), 1508.25 (including in the scope of an environmental impact statement mitigation measures).

⁵¹ 15 U.S.C. § 717f(e); Certificate Order, 167 FERC ¶ 61,110 at P 91 (“[T]he Commission has the authority to take whatever steps are necessary to ensure the protection of environmental resources . . . , including authority to impose any additional measures deemed necessary . . .”).

requires.

For these reasons, I respectfully dissent in part.

Richard Glick
Commissioner

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company, LLC

Docket No. CP17-101-001

(Issued April 16, 2020)

McNAMEE, Commissioner, *concurring*:

1. Today's order denies NY/NJ Baykeeper, Food & Water Watch-New Jersey, Central Jersey Safe Energy Coalition, the Princeton Manor Homeowners Association, and the Surfrider Foundation's (collectively, Community Groups) joint request for rehearing of the Commission's certificate order authorizing the construction and operation of Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company, LLC's (Transco) Northeast Supply Enhancement Project (Project).¹ The Project will provide 400,000 dekatherms per day of natural gas transportation service for two affiliates of National Grid.²

2. I agree with today's order that, contrary to the Community Groups' contentions, the Commission's certificate order complies with both the Natural Gas Act (NGA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Among other findings, today's order concludes that the Commission was not required to consider environmental effects related to upstream production or downstream use of natural gas because those effects are not reasonably foreseeable effects caused by the construction or operation of the Project.³ Consistent with the holding in *Sierra Club v. FERC (Sabal Trail)*,⁴ the Commission quantified and considered the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions directly associated with the construction and operation of the Project.⁵ The Commission also found that the

¹ *Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Co., LLC*, 170 FERC ¶ 61,031 (2020) (Rehearing Order).

² *Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Co.*, 167 FERC ¶ 61,110, at P 5 (2019) (Certificate Order).

³ Rehearing Order, 170 FERC ¶ 61,031 at PP 23-30.

⁴ 867 F.3d 1357 (D.C. Cir. 2017). This case is commonly referred to as "Sabal Trail" because the Sabal Trail Pipeline is one of the three pipelines making up the Southeast Market Pipelines Project.

⁵ Certificate Order, 167 FERC ¶ 61,110 at P 90; Final Environmental Assessment at 4-309 to 4-310 and 4-387 to 4-390.

Social Cost of Carbon is not a suitable methodology to determine whether the Project would have a significant impact on climate change.⁶

3. Although I fully support today's order, I write separately to further address arguments that the Commission can deny a certificate application based on environmental effects related to the upstream production or downstream use of natural gas, or that the Commission can mitigate such effects. As in this case, there have been contentions in certificate proceedings that the NGA authorizes the Commission to deny a certificate application based on the environmental effects that result from the upstream production and downstream use of natural gas.⁷ There have also been contentions that the NGA authorizes the Commission to establish measures to mitigate GHG emissions, and that the Commission violates the NGA and NEPA by not determining whether GHG emissions significantly affect the environment. I disagree.

4. A close examination of the statutory text and foundation of the NGA demonstrates that the Commission does not have the authority under the NGA or NEPA to deny a pipeline certificate application based on the environmental effects of the upstream production or downstream use of natural gas, nor does the Commission have the authority to unilaterally establish measures to mitigate GHG emissions. Further, the Commission has no reasoned basis to determine whether GHG emissions will have a significant effect on climate change nor the authority to establish its own basis for making such determination.

5. It is my intention that my discussion of the statutory text and foundation will assist the Commission, the courts, and other parties in their arguments regarding the meaning of the "public convenience and necessity" and the Commission's consideration of a project's effect on climate change. Further, my review of appellate briefs filed with the court and the Commission's orders suggests that the court may not have been presented with the arguments I make here. Before I offer my arguments, it is important that I further expound on the current debate.

I. Current debate

6. When acting on a certificate application, the Commission has two primary statutory obligations: (1) to determine whether the project is required by the "public convenience and necessity" as required by the NGA;⁸ and (2) to take a "hard look" at the

⁶ Rehearing Order, 170 FERC ¶ 61,031 at P 30.

⁷ Community Groups June 3, 2019 Request for Rehearing at 21-23 (arguing the Commission should have considered environmental effects related to upstream production and downstream use of natural gas).

⁸ 15 U.S.C. § 717f(e) (2018).

direct,⁹ indirect,¹⁰ and cumulative effects¹¹ of the proposed action as required by NEPA and the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) implementing regulations. Recently, there has been much debate concerning what factors the Commission can consider in determining whether a proposed project is in the "public convenience and necessity," and whether the effects of upstream production and downstream use of natural gas are indirect effects of a certificate application as defined by NEPA.

7. Equating NGA section 7's "public convenience and necessity" standard with a "public interest" standard, my colleague has argued that NGA section 7 requires the Commission to weigh GHGs emitted from project facilities and related to the upstream production or downstream use of natural gas.¹² In support of his contention, my colleague has cited the holding in *Sabal Trail* and dicta in *Atlantic Refining Co. v. Public Service Commission of State of New York (CATCO)*.¹³ My colleague has argued that the NGA requires the Commission to determine whether GHG emissions have a significant impact on climate change in order for climate change to "play a meaningful role in the Commission's public interest determination."¹⁴ And he argues that by not determining the significance of those emissions, the "public interest determination [] systematically

⁹ Direct effects are those "which are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place." 40 C.F.R. § 1508.8(a) (2019).

¹⁰ Indirect effects are those "caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable." 40 C.F.R. § 1508.8(b) (2019). The U.S. Supreme Court held that NEPA requires an indirect effect to have "a reasonably close causal relationship" with the alleged cause; "a 'but for' causal relationship is insufficient to make an agency responsible for a particular effect under NEPA and the relevant regulations." *Dep't of Transp. v. Pub. Citizen*, 541 U.S. 752, 767 (2004).

¹¹ Cumulative effects are those "which result[] from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions." 40 C.F.R. § 1508.7 (2019).

¹² See, e.g., *Adelphia Gateway, LLC*, 169 FERC ¶ 61,220 (2019) (Glick, Comm'r, dissenting at P 3) (*Adelphia Dissent*); *Cheyenne Connector, LLC*, 168 FERC ¶ 61,180 (2019) (Glick, Comm'r, dissenting at P 4) (*Cheyenne Connector Dissent*).

¹³ *Adelphia Dissent* P 4 n.7 (citing *CATCO*, 360 U.S. 378, 391 (1959)). The case *Atlantic Refining Co. v. Public Service Commission of State of New York* is commonly known as "*CATCO*" because the petitioners were sometimes identified by that name.

¹⁴ *Adelphia Dissent* P 5.

excludes the most important environmental consideration of our time” and “is contrary to law, arbitrary and capricious” and is not “the product of reasoned decisionmaking.”¹⁵

8. My colleague has also argued that the emissions from all downstream use of natural gas are indirect effects of a project and must be considered in the Commission’s NEPA environmental documents.¹⁶ In other proceedings, he has argued that the Commission must also consider as indirect effects GHG emissions from upstream natural gas production.¹⁷ He has asserted that NEPA requires the Commission to determine whether GHG emissions will have a significant effect on climate change and that the Commission could make that determination using the Social Cost of Carbon or its own expertise.¹⁸ Further, he has contended that the Commission could mitigate any GHG emissions in the event that it made a finding that the GHG emissions had a significant impact on climate change.¹⁹

9. Several recent cases before the United States Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit have also considered the Commission’s obligations under NGA section 7 and NEPA as they apply to what environmental effects the Commission is required to consider under NEPA.²⁰ In *Sabal Trail*, the D.C. Circuit vacated and remanded the Commission’s order issuing a certificate for the Southeast Market Pipelines Project, finding that the Commission inadequately assessed GHGs emitted from downstream power plants in its Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the project.²¹ The court held that the

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ *Id.* P 6.

¹⁷ Cheyenne Connector Dissent P 10.

¹⁸ Adelphia Dissent PP 8-10.

¹⁹ *Id.* P 12.

²⁰ The courts have not explicitly opined on whether the Commission is required to determine whether GHG emissions will have a significant impact on climate change or whether the Commission must mitigate GHG emissions. The D.C. Circuit, however, has suggested that the Commission is not required to determine whether GHG emissions are significant. *Appalachian Voices v. FERC*, 2019 WL 847199, *2 (D.C. Cir. Feb. 19, 2019) (unpublished) (“FERC provided an estimate of the upper bound of emissions resulting from end-use combustion, and it gave several reasons why it believed petitioner’s preferred metric, the Social Cost of Carbon, is not an appropriate measure of project-level climate change impacts and their significance under NEPA or the Natural Gas Act. That is all that is required for NEPA purposes.”).

²¹ *Sabal Trail*, 867 F.3d 1357.

downstream GHG emissions resulting from burning the natural gas at the power plants were a reasonably foreseeable indirect effect of authorizing the project and, at a minimum, the Commission should have estimated those emissions.

10. Further, the *Sabal Trail* court found the Commission's authorization of the project was the legally relevant cause of the GHGs emitted from the downstream power plants "because FERC could deny a pipeline certificate on the ground that the pipeline would be too harmful to the environment."²² The court stated the Commission could do so because, when considering whether pipeline applications are in the public convenience and necessity, "FERC will balance 'the public benefits against the adverse effects of the project,' see *Minisink Residents for Envtl. Pres. & Safety v. FERC*, 762 F.3d 97, 101-02 (D.C. Cir. 2014) (internal quotation marks omitted), including adverse environmental effects, see *Myersville Citizens for a Rural Cmty. v. FERC*, 783 F.3d 1301, 1309 (D.C. Cir. 2015)."²³ Relying on its finding that the Commission could deny a pipeline on environmental grounds, the court distinguished *Sabal Trail* from the Supreme Court's holding in *Public Citizen*, where the Court held "when the agency has no *legal* power to prevent a certain environmental effect, there is no decision to inform, and the agency need not analyze the effect in its NEPA review"²⁴ and the D.C. Circuit's decision in *Sierra Club v. FERC (Freeport)*, where it held "that FERC had *no legal authority to prevent* the adverse environmental effects of natural gas exports."²⁵

11. Based on these findings, the court concluded that "greenhouse-gas emissions are an indirect effect of authorizing this project, which FERC could reasonably foresee, and which the agency has legal authority to mitigate."²⁶ The court also held "the EIS for the Southeast Market Pipelines Project should have either given a quantitative estimate of the downstream greenhouse emissions . . . or explained more specifically why it could not have done so."²⁷ The court impressed that "[it did] not hold that quantification of greenhouse-gas emissions is required *every* time those emissions are an indirect effect of

²² *Id.* at 1373.

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ *Id.* at 1372 (citing *Pub. Citizen*, 541 U.S. at 770) (emphasis in original).

²⁵ *Id.* at 1373 (citing *Freeport*, 827 F.3d 36, 47 (D.C. Cir. 2016)) (emphasis in original).

²⁶ *Id.* at 1374 (citing 15 U.S.C. § 717f(e)).

²⁷ *Id.*

an agency action” and recognized that “in some cases quantification may not be feasible.”²⁸

12. More recently, in *Birckhead v. FERC*,²⁹ the D.C. Circuit commented in dicta on the Commission’s authority to consider downstream emissions. The court stated that because the Commission could “‘deny a pipeline certificate on the ground that the pipeline would be too harmful to the environment, the agency is the legally relevant cause of the direct and indirect environmental effects of pipelines it approves’—even where it lacks jurisdiction over the producer or distributor of the gas transported by the pipeline.”³⁰ The court also examined whether the Commission was required to consider environmental effects related to upstream gas production, stating it was “left with no basis for concluding that the Commission acted arbitrarily or capriciously or otherwise violated NEPA in declining to consider the environmental impacts of upstream gas production.”³¹

13. I respect the holding of the court in *Sabal Trail* and the discussion in *Birckhead*, and I recognize that the *Sabal Trail* holding is binding on the Commission. However, I respectfully disagree with the court’s finding that the Commission can, pursuant to the NGA, deny a pipeline based on environmental effects stemming from the upstream production or downstream use of natural gas, and that the Commission is therefore required to consider such environmental effects under the NGA and NEPA.³²

14. The U.S. Supreme Court has observed that NEPA requires an indirect effect to have “a reasonably close causal relationship” with the alleged cause.³³ Whether there is a reasonably close causal relationship depends on “the underlying policies or legislative intent” of the agency’s organic statute “to draw a manageable line between those causal

²⁸ *Id.* (emphasis in original).

²⁹ 925 F.3d 510 (D.C. Cir. 2019).

³⁰ *Id.* at 519 (citing *Sabal Trail*, 867 F.3d at 1373) (internal quotations omitted).

³¹ *Id.* at 518.

³² Though the D.C. Circuit’s holding in *Sabal Trail* is binding on the Commission, it is not appropriate to expand that holding through the dicta in *Birckhead* so as to establish new authorities under the NGA and NEPA. The Commission is still bound by the NGA and NEPA as enacted by Congress, and interpreted by the U.S. Supreme Court and the D.C. Circuit. Our obligation is to read the statutes and case law in harmony. This concurrence articulates the legal reasoning by which to do so.

³³ *Metro. Edison Co. v. People Against Nuclear Energy*, 460 U.S. 766, 774 (1983).

changes that may make an actor responsible for an effect and those that do not.”³⁴

Below, I review the text of the NGA and subsequent acts by Congress to demonstrate that the “public convenience and necessity” standard in the NGA is not so broad as to include environmental effects of the upstream production or downstream use of natural gas, and that the Commission cannot be responsible for those effects.

15. As for GHGs emitted from pipeline facilities themselves, I believe that the Commission can consider such emissions in its public convenience and necessity determination and is required to consider them in its NEPA analysis. As I set forth below, however, the Commission cannot unilaterally establish measures to mitigate GHG emissions, and there currently is no suitable method for the Commission to determine whether GHG emissions are significant.

II. The NGA does not permit the Commission to deny a certificate application based on environmental effects related to the upstream production or downstream use of natural gas

16. To interpret the meaning of “public convenience and necessity,” we must begin with the text of the NGA.³⁵ I recognize that the Commission³⁶ and the courts have equated the “public convenience and necessity” standard with “all factors bearing on the public interest.”³⁷ However, the phrase “all factors bearing on the public interest” does

³⁴ *Id.* at 774 n.7.

³⁵ 15 U.S.C. § 717f(e) (2018). *See infra* PP 42-48. It is noteworthy that the phrase “public interest” is not included in NGA section 7(c)(1)(A) (requiring pipelines to have a certificate) or NGA section 7(e) (requiring the Commission to issue certificates). Rather, these provisions use the phrase “public convenience and necessity.” NGA section 7(c)(1)(B) does refer to public interest when discussing how the Commission can issue a temporary certificate in cases of emergency. *Id.* § 717f(c)(1)(B). Congress is “presumed to have used no superfluous words.” *Platt v. Union Pac. R.R. Co.*, 99 U.S. 48, 58 (1878); *see also U.S. ex rel. Totten v. Bombardier Corp.*, 380 F.3d 488, 499 (D.C. Cir. 2004) (“It is, of course, a ‘cardinal principle of statutory construction that a statute ought, upon the whole, to be so construed that, if it can be prevented, no clause, sentence, or word shall be superfluous, void, or insignificant.’” (citing *Alaska Dep’t of Env’tl. Conservation v. EPA*, 540 U.S. 461, n.13 (2004))).

³⁶ *See, e.g., North Carolina Gas Corp.*, 10 FPC 469, 475 (1950).

³⁷ *CATCO*, 360 U.S. at 391 (“This is not to say that rates are the only factor bearing on the public convenience and necessity, for § 7(e) requires the Commission to evaluate all factors bearing on the public interest.”). The Court never expounded further on that statement.

not mean that the Commission has “broad license to promote the general public welfare”³⁸ or address greater societal concerns. Rather, the courts have stated that the words must “take meaning from the purposes of regulatory legislation.”³⁹ The Court has made clear that statutory language “cannot be construed in a vacuum. It is a fundamental canon of statutory construction that the words of a statute must be read in their context and with a view to their place in the overall statutory scheme.”⁴⁰ The Court has further instructed that one must “construe statutes, not isolated provisions.”⁴¹

17. Indeed, that is how the Court in *CATCO* – the first U.S. Supreme Court case including the “all factors bearing on the public interest” language – interpreted the phrase “public convenience and necessity.” In that case, the Court held that the public convenience and necessity requires the Commission to closely scrutinize initial rates *based on the framework and text* of the NGA.⁴²

³⁸ *NAACP v. FPC*, 425 U.S. 662, 669 (1976).

³⁹ *Id.*; see also *Office of Consumers’ Counsel v. FERC*, 655 F.2d 1132, 1147 (D.C. Cir. 1980) (“Any such authority to consider all factors bearing on the ‘public interest’ must take into account what the ‘public interest’ means in the context of the Natural Gas Act. FERC’s authority to consider all factors bearing on the public interest when issuing certificates means authority to look into those factors which reasonably relate to the purposes for which FERC was given certification authority. It does not imply authority to issue orders regarding any circumstance in which FERC’s regulatory tools might be useful.”).

⁴⁰ *Davis v. Mich. Dep’t of Treasury*, 489 U.S. 803, 809 (1989).

⁴¹ *Graham Cty. Soil & Water Conservation Dist. v. U.S. ex rel. Wilson*, 559 U.S. 280, 290 (2010) (quoting *Gustafson v. Alloyd Co.*, 513 U.S. 561, 568 (1995)).

⁴² *CATCO*, 360 U.S. 378, 388-91. The Court stated “[t]he Act was so framed as to afford consumers a complete, permanent and effective bond of protection from excessive rates and charges.” *Id.* at 388. The Court found that the text of NGA sections 4 and 5 supported the premise that Congress designed the Act to provide complete protection from excessive rates and charges. *Id.* (“The heart of the Act is found in those provisions requiring . . . that all rates and charges ‘made, demanded, or received’ shall be ‘just and reasonable.’”); *id.* at 389 (“The overriding intent of the Congress to give full protective coverage to the consumer as to price is further emphasized in § 5 of the Act . . .”). The Court recognized that the Commission’s role in setting initial rates was a critical component of providing consumers complete protection because “the delay incident to determination in § 5 proceedings through which initial certificated rates are reviewable appears nigh interminable” and “would provide a windfall for the natural gas company with a consequent squall for the consumers,” which “Congress did not intend.” *Id.*

18. Following this precedent, the phrase “public convenience and necessity” must therefore be read within the overall statutory scheme of the NGA. As set forth below, construing the NGA *as a statute* demonstrates that Congress determined the public interest required (i) the public to have access to natural gas and (ii) economic regulation of the transportation and sale of natural gas to protect such public access.

A. The text of the NGA does not support denying a certificate application based on the environmental effects of the upstream production or downstream use of natural gas

1. NGA section 1(a)—limited meaning of “public interest”

19. Section 1 of the NGA sets out the reason for its enactment. NGA section 1(a) states, “[a]s disclosed in reports of the Federal Trade Commission [(FTC)] made pursuant to S. Res. 83 (Seventieth Congress, first session) and other reports made pursuant to the authority of Congress, it is declared that the business of transporting and selling natural gas for ultimate distribution to the public *is affected with a public interest*, and that Federal regulation in matters relating to the transportation of natural gas and the sale thereof in interstate and foreign commerce is necessary in the *public interest*.”⁴³

20. A review of the FTC Report referred to in NGA section 1 demonstrates that the NGA was enacted to counter activities that would limit the public’s access to natural gas and subject the public to abusive pricing. Specifically, the FTC Report states “[a]ll communities and industries within the capacity and reasonable distance of existing or future transmission facilities should be assured a natural-gas supply and receive it at fair, nondiscriminatory prices.”⁴⁴

21. The FTC Report further states “[a]ny proposed Federal legislation should be premised, in part at least, on the fact that natural gas is a valuable, but limited, natural resource in Nation-wide demand, which is produced only in certain States and limited areas, and the conservation, production, transportation, and distribution of which,

at 389-90.

⁴³ 15 U.S.C. § 717(a) (2018) (emphasis added).

⁴⁴ FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION, UTILITY CORPORATIONS FINAL REPORT OF THE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION TO THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES PURSUANT TO SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 83, 70TH CONGRESS, 1ST SESSION ON ECONOMIC, CORPORATE, OPERATING, AND FINANCIAL PHASES OF THE NATURAL-GAS-PRODUCING, PIPE-LINE, AND UTILITY INDUSTRIES WITH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS NO. 84-A at 609 (1936) (FTC Report), <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=ien.35556021351598&view=1up&seq=718>.

therefore, under proper control and regulation, are matters charged with high national public interest.”⁴⁵

22. The text of NGA section 1(a) and its reference to the FTC Report make clear that “public interest” is directly linked to ensuring the public’s access to natural gas through regulating its transport and sale. Moreover, the NGA is designed to promote the “public interest” primarily through economic regulation. This is apparent in the text of the NGA and by its reference to the FTC Report that identifies the concern with monopolistic activity that would limit access to natural gas.⁴⁶

23. Therefore, there is no textual support in NGA section 1 for the claim that the Commission may deny a pipeline application due to potential upstream and downstream effects of GHG emissions on climate change. But, this is not the end of the analysis. We must also examine the Commission’s specific authority under NGA section 7.

2. NGA section 7—Congress grants the Commission and pipelines authority to ensure the public’s access to natural gas

24. Like NGA section 1, the text of NGA section 7 makes clear that its purpose is to ensure that the public has access to natural gas. A review of the various provisions of NGA section 7 make this point evident:

⁴⁵ *Id.* at 611.

⁴⁶ 15 U.S.C. § 717(a) (2018) (“Federal regulation in matters relating to the transportation of natural gas and the sale thereof in interstate and foreign commerce is necessary in the public interest”). The limited, economic regulation meaning of “public interest” was clear at the time the NGA was adopted. The NGA’s use of the phrase “affected with the public interest” is consistent with the States’ use of this phrase when enacting laws regulating public utilities. Historically, state legislatures used the phrase “affected with the public interest” as the basis of their authority to regulate rates charged for the sale of commodities, rendered services, or use of private property. *Munn v. Illinois*, 94 U.S. 113, 125-26 (1876). The Court found that businesses affected with a public interest or “said to be clothed with a public interest justifying some public regulation” include “[b]usinesses, which, though not public at their inception, may be fairly said to have risen to be such and have become subject in consequence to some government regulation.” *Charles Wolff Packing Co. v. Court of Indus. Relations*, 262 U.S. 522, 535 (1923). In essence, these businesses became quasi-public enterprises and were determined to have an “indispensable nature.” *Id.* at 538. Such a conclusion also meant that if these businesses were not restrained by the government, the public could be subject to “the exorbitant charges and arbitrary control to which the public might be subjected without regulation.” *Id.*

- Section 7(a) authorizes the Commission to “direct a natural-gas company to extend or improve its transportation facilities, to establish physical connection of its transportation facilities with the facilities of, and sell natural gas . . . to the public”⁴⁷ The Commission has stated that “[s]ection 7(a) clearly established the means whereby the Commission could secure *the benefits* of gas service for certain communities, markets and territories adjacent to those originally established by the gas industry, where in the public interest.”⁴⁸
- Section 7(b) requires Commission approval for a natural gas pipeline company to “abandon all or any portion of its facilities subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission, or any service rendered by means of such facilities.”⁴⁹ That is, Congress considered access to natural gas to be so important that it even prohibited natural gas pipeline companies from abandoning service without Commission approval.
- Section 7(c)(1)(B) authorizes the Commission to “issue a temporary certificate in cases of emergency, to assure maintenance of adequate service or to serve particular customers, without notice or hearing, pending the determination of an application for a certificate.”⁵⁰ The underlying presumption of this section is that the need for natural gas can be so important that the Commission can issue a certificate without notice and hearing.
- Section 7(e) states “a certificate *shall* be issued” when a project is in the public convenience and necessity,⁵¹ leaving the Commission no discretion after determining a project meets the public convenience and necessity standard.
- Section 7(h) grants the pipeline certificate holder the powers of the sovereign to “exercise of the right of eminent domain in the district court of

⁴⁷ 15 U.S.C. § 717f(a) (2018).

⁴⁸ *Arcadian Corp. v. Southern Nat. Gas Co.*, 61 FERC ¶ 61,183, at 61,676 (1992) (emphasis added). The Commission’s analysis in this regard was unaffected by the opinion in *Atlanta Gas Light Co. v. FERC*, 140 F.3d 1392 (11th Cir. 1998) (vacating the Commission’s 1991 and 1992 orders on other grounds).

⁴⁹ 15 U.S.C. § 717f(b) (2018).

⁵⁰ *Id.* § 717f(c)(1)(B).

⁵¹ *Id.* § 717f(e) (emphasis added).

the United States.”⁵² By granting the power of eminent domain, Congress made clear the importance of ensuring that natural gas could be delivered from its source to the public by not allowing traditional property rights to stand in the way of pipeline construction. Furthermore, the sovereign’s power of eminent domain must be for a public use⁵³ and Congress considered natural gas pipelines a public use.

25. Each of these textual provisions illuminate the ultimate purpose of the NGA: to ensure that the public has access to natural gas because Congress considered such access to be in the public interest.⁵⁴ To now interpret “public convenience and necessity” to mean that the Commission has the authority to deny a certificate for a pipeline due to upstream or downstream emissions because the pipeline may result in access to, and the use of, natural gas would radically rewrite the NGA and undermine its stated purpose.

3. NGA section 1(b) and section 201 of the Federal Power Act (FPA)—authority over environmental effects related to the upstream production and downstream use of transported natural gas reserved to States

26. Statutory text also confirms that control over the physical environmental effects related to the upstream production and downstream use of natural gas are squarely reserved for the States. NGA section 1(b) provides that “[t]he provisions of this chapter . . . shall not apply to any other transportation or sale of natural gas or to the local distribution of natural gas or to the facilities for such distribution or to the production or gathering of natural gas.”⁵⁵ The Ninth Circuit and the D.C. Circuit have interpreted the

⁵² *Id.* § 717f(h).

⁵³ *Miss. & Rum River Boom Co. v. Patterson*, 98 U.S. 403, 406 (1878) (“The right of eminent domain, that is, the right to take private property for public uses, appertains to every independent government.”).

⁵⁴ This interpretation is also supported by the Commission’s 1999 Certificate Policy Statement. *Certification of New Interstate Natural Gas Pipeline Facilities*, 88 FERC ¶ 61,227, 61,743 (1999), *clarified*, 90 FERC ¶ 61,128, *further clarified*, 92 FERC ¶ 61,094 (2000) (Certificate Policy Statement) (“[I]t should be designed to foster competitive markets, protect captive customers, and avoid unnecessary environmental and community impacts *while serving increasing demands for natural gas*.”) (emphasis added); *id.* at 61,751 (“[T]he Commission is urged to authorize new pipeline capacity to meet an anticipated increase in demand for natural gas . . .”).

⁵⁵ 15 U.S.C. § 717(b) (2018); *see Pennzoil v. FERC*, 645 F.2d 360, 380-82 (5th Cir. 1981) (holding that FERC lacks the power to even interpret gas purchase agreements between producers and pipelines for the sale of gas that has been removed

reference to distribution as meaning that States have exclusive authority over the gas once the gas moves beyond high-pressure mainlines.⁵⁶ Likewise, FPA section 201 specifically reserves the authority to make generation decisions to the States.⁵⁷

27. U.S. Supreme Court precedent and legislative history confirm that the regulation of the physical upstream production and downstream use of gas is reserved for the States.⁵⁸ The Court has observed that Congress enacted the NGA to address “specific evils” related to non-transparent rates for the interstate transportation and sale of natural

from NGA jurisdiction).

⁵⁶ See *S. Coast Air Quality Mgmt. Dist. v. FERC*, 621 F.3d 1085, 1092 (9th Cir. 2010) (“In sum, the history and judicial construction of the Natural Gas Act suggest that all aspects related to the direct consumption of gas . . . remain within the exclusive purview of the states.”); *Pub. Utils. Comm’n of Cal. v. FERC*, 900 F.2d 269, 277 (D.C. Cir. 1990) (“[T]he state . . . has authority over the gas once it moves beyond the high-pressure mains into the hands of an end user.”). I note that the court in *Sabal Trail* did not discuss or distinguish *Public Utilities Commission of State of Cal v. FERC*.

⁵⁷ 16 U.S.C. § 824(b)(1) (2018) (“The Commission . . . shall not have jurisdiction, except as specifically provided in this subchapter and subchapter III of this chapter, over facilities used for the generation of electric energy . . .”). Despite Congress explicitly denying the Commission jurisdiction over generation decisions in the FPA, some argue that the Commission has the authority to prevent natural gas generation through general language in the NGA regarding public convenience and necessity. Such an approach violates the principle that explicit language trumps general provisions. See, e.g., *Passamaquoddy Tribe v. State of Me.*, 897 F. Supp. 632, 635 (“In this case, the unequivocal language in the Maine Settlement Act clearly trumps the Gaming Act’s general provisions that are silent as to Maine.”).

⁵⁸ Some will argue that the Court’s dicta in *FPC v. Hope Natural Gas Co.* (*Hope*)—“[t]he Commission is required to take account of the ultimate use of the gas,” 320 U.S. 591, 639 (1944)—means that the Commission can consider environmental effects related to the downstream use of natural gas. However, such argument takes the Court’s statement out of context. In fact, that Court makes that statement in support of its argument that while the 1942 amendments to the NGA eliminated the language, “the intention of Congress that natural gas shall be sold in interstate commerce for resale for ultimate public consumption for domestic, commercial, industrial, or any other use at the lowest possible reasonable rate consistent with the maintenance of adequate service in the public interest,” “there is nothing to indicate that it was not and is still not an accurate statement of purpose of the Act.” *Id.* at 638. Such argument further supports that Congress enacted the NGA to provide access to natural gas and to protect consumers from monopoly power.

gas and the monopoly power of holding companies that owned natural gas pipeline company stock.⁵⁹ The Court has also found that Congress enacted the NGA to

fill the regulatory void created by the Court's earlier decisions prohibiting States from regulating interstate transportation and sales for resale of natural gas, while at the same time leaving undisturbed the recognized power of the States to regulate all in-state gas sales directly to consumers. Thus, the NGA "was drawn with meticulous regard for the continued exercise of state power, not to handicap it any way."⁶⁰

⁵⁹ *Id.* at 610 ("state commissions found it difficult or impossible to discover what it cost interstate pipe-line companies to deliver gas within the consuming states"); *id.* ("[T]he investigations of the Federal Trade Commission had disclosed the majority of the pipe-line mileage in the country used to transport natural gas, together with an increasing percentage of the natural gas supply for pipe-line transportation, had been acquired by a handful of holding companies."). Senate Resolution 83, which directed the FTC to develop the report that the NGA is founded on, also demonstrates that Congress was only concerned with consumer protection and monopoly power. The resolution directed the FTC to investigate capital assets and liabilities of natural gas companies, issuance of securities by the natural gas companies, the relationship between company stockholders and holding companies, other services provided by the holding companies, adverse impacts of holding companies controlling natural gas companies, and potential legislation to correct any abuses by holding companies. FTC Report at 1.

⁶⁰ *Gen. Motors Corp. v. Tracy*, 519 U.S. 278, 292 (1997) (internal citations omitted) (quoting *Panhandle E. Pipeline Co. v. Pub. Serv. Comm'n of Ind.*, 332 U.S. 507, 516-22 (1947) (*Panhandle*)); *see also* *Nw. Cent. Pipeline v. State Corp. Comm'n*, 489 U.S. 493, 512 (1989) ("The NGA 'was designed to supplement state power and to produce a harmonious and comprehensive regulation of the industry. Neither state nor federal regulatory body was to encroach upon the jurisdiction of the other.'" (quoting *Panhandle*, 332 U.S. at 513)); *Panhandle*, 332 U.S. at 520 (In recognizing that the NGA articulated a legislative program recognizing the respective responsibilities of federal and state regulatory agencies, the Court noted that the NGA does not "contemplate ineffective regulation at either level as Congress meant to create a comprehensive and effective regulatory scheme, complementary in its operation to those of the states and in no manner usurping their authority."). Congress continued to draw the NGA with meticulous regard to State power when it amended the NGA in 1954 to add the Hinshaw pipeline exemption so as "to preserve state control over local distributors who purchase gas from interstate pipelines." *Louisiana Power & Light Co. v. Fed. Power Comm'n*, 483 F.2d 623, 633 (5th Cir. 1973).

28. In *Transco*,⁶¹ the Court also recognized that “Congress did not desire that an important aspect of this field be left unregulated.”⁶² Thus, the Court held that where congressional authority is not explicit and States cannot practicably regulate a given area, the Commission can consider the issue in its public convenience and necessity determination.⁶³

29. Based on this rule, and legislative history,⁶⁴ the *Transco* Court found that in its public convenience and necessity determination, the Commission appropriately considered whether the end-use of the gas in a non-producing state was economically wasteful as there was a regulatory gap and no State could be expected to control how gas is used in another State.⁶⁵ The Court also impressed that

The Commission ha[d] not attempted to exert its influence over such “*physically*” wasteful practices as improper well spacing and the flaring of unused gas which result in the entire loss of gas and are properly of concern to the producing State; nor has the Commission attempted to regulate the “economic” aspects of gas used within the producing State.⁶⁶

30. In contrast, there is no legislative history to support the Commission considering environmental effects related to the upstream production or downstream use of gas. Furthermore, the field of environmental regulation of such activities is not one that has been left unregulated.⁶⁷ Unlike in *Transco*, States can reasonably be expected to regulate

⁶¹ *Transco*, 365 U.S. 1 (1961).

⁶² *Id.* at 19.

⁶³ *Id.* at 19-20.

⁶⁴ *Id.* at 10-19.

⁶⁵ *Id.* at 20-21.

⁶⁶ *Id.* at 20 (emphasis added).

⁶⁷ I note that the Federal Power Commission, the Commission’s predecessor, at times previously considered environmental impacts in its need analysis when weighing the beneficial use of natural gas between competing uses. The Federal Power Commission did not consider negative environmental impacts of downstream end use as a reason to deny the use of natural gas. See, e.g., *El Paso Natural Gas Co.*, 50 FPC 1264 (1973) (denying a certificate because the proposed project would impact existing customers dependent on natural gas and use of gas was not needed to keep sulfur emissions within the national ambient air quality standards); *Transwestern Pipeline Co.*, 36 FPC 176 (1966) (discussing use of gas instead of oil or coal and noting potential air

air emissions from the upstream production or downstream use of natural gas: “air pollution control at its source is the primary responsibility of States and local governments.”⁶⁸ The Clean Air Act vests States with authority to issue permits to regulate stationary sources related to upstream and downstream activities.⁶⁹ In addition, pursuant to their police powers, States have the ability to regulate environmental effects related to the upstream production and downstream use of natural gas within their jurisdictions.⁷⁰ The FTC Report referenced in NGA section 1(a) recognizes States’ ability to regulate the use of natural gas.⁷¹ And, various States have exercised this ability.

pollution benefits); *El Paso Nat. Gas Co.*, 22 FPC 900, 950 (1959) (“[T]he use of natural gas as boiler fuel in the Los Angeles area should be considered as being in a different category than gas being used for such a purpose in some other community where the smog problem does not exist and that the use of gas for boiler fuel in this area should not be considered an inferior use.”); *see also* FPC ANNUAL REP. at 2 (1966) (“Any showing that additional gas for boiler fuel use would substantially reduce air pollution merits serious consideration. Important as this factor may be, however, it cannot be considered in isolation.”). Often these orders discussed sulfur and smog air pollution that occurred in the area where the natural gas would be transported when determining need as compared to the need or use of natural gas somewhere else. All of this was premised on the Commission’s NGA authority to use its public convenience and necessity authority to provide access to natural gas and to conserve gas by preventing economic waste. The Commission appears to have stopped this analysis in the late-1970s. It is noteworthy that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was established in 1970, Congress established more comprehensive air emissions regulation by amending the Clean Air Act in 1970 and 1977 (Pub. L. 91-604, 84 Stat. 1676 (1970); Pub. L. 95-95, 91 Stat. 685 (1977)), and Congress enacted the Department of Energy Organization Act, which replaced the Federal Power Commission with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 42 U.S.C. §§ 7101 *et seq.*

⁶⁸ 42 U.S.C. § 7401 (2018).

⁶⁹ *Id.* § 7661e (“Nothing in this subchapter shall prevent a State, or interstate permitting authority, from establishing additional permitting requirements not inconsistent with this chapter.”). The Act defines “permitting authority” as “the Administrator or the air pollution control agency authorized by the Administrator to carry out a permit program under this subchapter.” *Id.* § 7661.

⁷⁰ *Huron Portland Cement Co. v. Detroit*, 362 U.S. 440, 442 (1960) (“Legislation designed to free from pollution the very air that people breathe clearly falls within the exercise of even the more traditional concept of what is compendiously known as the police power.”).

⁷¹ FTC Report at 716 (describing Louisiana) (“The department of conservation be, and it is hereby, given supervision over the production and use of natural gas in

For example, Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont participate in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), which requires power plants with a capacity over 25 megawatts to hold allowances equal to their CO₂ emissions over a three-year control period.⁷²

31. Some may make the argument that “considering” the environmental effects related to upstream production and downstream use is hardly “regulating” such activities. I disagree. For the Commission to consider such effects would be an attempt to exert influence over States’ regulation of physical upstream production or downstream use of natural gas, which the Court in *Transco* suggested would be encroaching upon forbidden ground. If, for example, the Commission considered and denied a certificate based on the GHG emissions released from production activities, the Commission would be making a judgment that such production is too harmful for the environment and preempting a State’s authority to decide whether and how to regulate upstream production of natural gas. Furthermore, for the Commission to consider and deny a project based on emissions from end users, the Commission would be making a judgment that natural gas should not be used for certain activities.⁷³ Such exertion of influence is impermissible: “when the Congress explicitly reserves jurisdiction over a matter to the states, as here, the Commission has no business considering how to ‘induc[e] a change [of state] policy’ with respect to that matter.”⁷⁴

connection with the manufacture of carbon black in other manufacturing enterprises and for domestic consumption.”).

⁷² REGIONAL GREENHOUSE GAS INITIATIVE, <https://www.rggi.org/program-overview-and-design/elements> (LAST ACCESSED NOV. 18, 2019).

⁷³ See also *Myersville Citizens for a Rural Cmty., Inc. v. FERC*, 783 F.3d 1301, 1320 (D.C. Cir. 2015) (“The Commission’s power to preempt state and local regulation by approving the construction of natural gas facilities is limited by the Natural Gas Act’s savings clause, which provides that the Natural Gas Act’s terms must not be construed to ‘affect[] the rights of States’ under the Clean Air Act. 15 U.S.C. § 717b(d)(2).”); *Dominion Transmission, Inc. v. Summers*, 723 F.3d 238, 243 (D.C. Cir. 2013) (“But Congress expressly saved states’ [Clean Air Act] powers from preemption.”).

⁷⁴ *Altamont Gas Transmission Co. v. FERC*, 92 F.3d 1239, 1248 (D.C. Cir. 1996); see *ANR Pipeline Co. v. FERC*, 876 F.2d 124, 132 (D.C. Cir. 1989) (“We think it would be a considerable stretch from there to say that, in certifying transportation that is necessary to carry out a sale, the Commission is required to reconsider the very aspects of the sale that have been assessed by an agency specifically vested by Congress with authority over the subject.”).

32. Hence, there is no jurisdictional gap in regulating GHG emissions for the Commission to fill. The NGA reserves authority over the upstream production and downstream use of natural gas to the States, and States can practicably regulate GHGs emitted by those activities. And, even if there were a gap that federal regulation could fill, as discussed below, it is nonsensical for the Commission to attempt to fill a gap that Congress has clearly meant for the EPA to occupy.⁷⁵ Therefore, because GHG emissions from the upstream production and downstream use of natural gas are not properly of concern to the Commission, the Commission cannot deny a certificate application based on such effects.

B. Denying a pipeline based on upstream or downstream environmental effects would undermine other acts of Congress

33. Since enactment of the NGA and NEPA, Congress has enacted additional legislation promoting the production and use of natural gas and limiting the Commission's authority over the natural gas commodity. Each of these legislation enactments indicates that the Commission's authority over upstream production and downstream use of natural gas has been further limited by Congress. Arguments that the Commission can rely on the NGA's public convenience and necessity standard and NEPA to deny a pipeline application so as to prevent the upstream production or downstream use of natural gas would undermine these acts of Congress.

1. Natural Gas Policy Act of 1978

34. Determining that federal regulation of natural gas limited interstate access to the commodity, resulting in shortages and high prices, Congress passed the Natural Gas Policy Act of 1978 (NGPA). The NGPA significantly deregulated the natural gas industry.⁷⁶ Importantly, NGPA section 601(c)(1) states, "[t]he Commission may not deny, or condition the grant of, any certificate under section 7 of the Natural Gas Act based upon the amount paid in any sale of natural gas, if such amount is deemed to be just and reasonable under subsection (b) of this section."⁷⁷

⁷⁵ See *infra* PP 53-58.

⁷⁶ Generally, the NGPA limited the Commission's authority over gas that is not transported in interstate commerce, new sales of gas, sales of gas and transportation by Hinshaw pipelines, and certain sales, transportation and allocation of gas during certain gas supply emergencies. See, e.g., NGPA sections 601(a)(1)(A)-(D), 15 U.S.C. § 3431(a)(1)(A)-(D) (2018).

⁷⁷ *Id.* § 3431(c)(1) (2018). In addition, section 121(a) provides, "the provisions of subtitle A respecting the maximum lawful price for the first sale of each of the following categories of natural gas shall, except as provided in subsections (d) and (e), cease to apply effective January 1, 1985." 15 U.S.C. § 3331(a), *repealed by* the Wellhead

35. Besides using price deregulation to promote access to natural gas, Congress gave explicit powers to the President to ensure that natural gas reached consumers. NGPA section 302(c) explicitly provides, “[t]he President may, by order, require any pipeline to transport natural gas, and to construct and operate such facilities for the transportation of natural gas, as he determines necessary to carry out any contract authorized under subsection (a).”⁷⁸ Similarly, the NGPA gave authority to the Secretary of Energy to promote access to natural gas.⁷⁹

36. There can be no doubt about the plain language of the NGPA: the Court observed that Congress passed the NGPA to “promote gas transportation by interstate and intrastate pipelines.”⁸⁰ Furthermore, the NGPA was “intended to provide investors with adequate incentive to develop new sources of supply.”⁸¹

2. Powerplant and Industrial Fuel Use Act of 1978

37. With respect to natural gas as a fuel source for electric generation, in 1987 Congress repealed sections of the Powerplant and Industrial Fuel Use Act of 1978 (Fuel

Decontrol Act of 1989, Pub. L. 101-60 § 2(b), 103 Stat. 157 (1989).

⁷⁸ *Id.* § 3362.

⁷⁹ *See id.* § 3391(a) (“[T]he Secretary of Energy shall prescribe and make effective a rule . . . which provides . . . no curtailment plan of an interstate pipeline may provide for curtailment of deliveries for any essential agricultural use”); *id.* § 3392(a) (“The Secretary of Energy shall prescribe and make effective a rule which provides that notwithstanding any other provisions of law (other than subsection (b)) and to the maximum extent practicable, no interstate pipeline may curtail deliveries of natural gas for any essential industrial process or feedstock use”); *id.* § 3392(a) (“The Secretary of Energy shall determine and certify to the Commission the natural gas requirements (expressed either as volumes or percentages of use) of persons (or classes thereof) for essential industrial process and feedstock uses (other than those referred to in section 3391(f)(1)(B)).”); *id.* § 3393(a) (“The Secretary of Energy shall prescribe the rules under sections 3391 and 3392 of this title pursuant to his authority under the Department of Energy Organization Act to establish and review priorities for curtailments under the Natural Gas Act.”).

⁸⁰ *Gen. Motors Corp. v. Tracy*, 519 U.S. at 283 (quoting 57 Fed. Reg. 13271 (Apr. 16, 1992)).

⁸¹ *Pub. Serv. Comm’n of State of N.Y. v. Mid-Louisiana Gas Co.*, 463 U.S. 319, 334 (1983).

Use Act),⁸² which had restricted the use of natural gas in electric generation so as to conserve it for other uses. With the repeal of the Fuel Use Act, Congress made clear that natural gas could be used for electric generation and that the regulation of the use of natural gas by power plants unnecessary.⁸³

3. Natural Gas Wellhead Decontrol Act of 1989

38. If there were any remaining doubt that the Commission has no authority to consider the upstream production of natural gas and its environmental effects, such doubt was put to rest when Congress enacted the Wellhead Decontrol Act.⁸⁴ In this legislation, Congress specifically removed the Commission's authority over the upstream production of natural gas.⁸⁵

⁸² 42 U.S.C. § 8342, *repealed by* Pub. L. 100-42, § 1(a), 101 Stat. 310 (1987).

⁸³ The Commission need not look any further than the text of the statutes to determine its authority. In the case of the repeal of the Fuel Use Act, the legislative history is informative as to Congress's reasoning. *See* H.R. Rep. 100-78 *2 ("By amending [Fuel Use Act], H.R. 1941 will remove artificial government restrictions on the use of oil and gas; allow energy consumers to make their own fuel choices in an increasingly deregulated energy marketplace; encourage multifuel competition among oil, gas, coal, and other fuels based on their price, availability, and environmental merits; preserve the 'coal option' for new baseload electric powerplants which are long-lived and use so much fuel; and provide potential new markets for financially distressed oil and gas producers."); *id.* *6 ("Indeed, a major purpose of this bill is to allow individual choices and competition and fuels and technologies . . ."); *see also* President Ronald Reagan's Remarks on Signing H.R. 1941 Into Law, 23 WEEKLY COMP. PRES. DOC. 568, (May 21, 1987) ("This legislation eliminates unnecessary restrictions on the use of natural gas. It promotes efficient production and development of our energy resources by returning fuel choices to the marketplace. I've long believed that our country's natural gas resources should be free from regulatory burdens that are costly and counterproductive.").

⁸⁴ Pub. L. 101-60, 103 Stat. 157 (1989).

⁸⁵ The Wellhead Decontrol Act amended NGPA section 601(a)(1)(A) to read, "[f]or purposes of section 1(b) of the Natural Gas Act, the provisions of the Natural Gas Act and the jurisdiction of the Commission under such Act shall not apply to any natural gas solely by reason of any first sale of such natural gas." 15 U.S.C. § 3431(a)(1)(A), *amended by*, Pub. L. 101-60 § 3(a)(7)(A), 103 Stat. 157 (1989). *United Distrib. Cos. v. FERC*, 88 F.3d 1105, 1166 (D.C. Cir. 1996) ("That enactment contemplates a considerably changed natural gas world in which regulation plays a much reduced role and the free market operates at the wellhead.").

39. But the Wellhead Decontrol Act was not merely about deregulating upstream natural gas production. Congress explained that the reason for deregulating natural gas at the wellhead was important to ensuring that end users had access to the commodity. The Senate Committee Report for the Wellhead Decontrol Act states “the purpose (of the legislation) is to promote competition for natural gas at the wellhead *to ensure consumers an adequate and reliable supply of natural gas at the lowest reasonable price.*”⁸⁶ Similarly, the House Committee Report to the Wellhead Decontrol Act notes, “[a]ll sellers must be able to reasonably reach the highest-bidding buyer in an increasingly national market. All buyers must be free to reach the lowest-selling producer, and obtain shipment of its gas to them on even terms with other suppliers.”⁸⁷ The House Committee Report also states the Commission’s “current competitive ‘open access’ pipeline system [should be] maintained.”⁸⁸ With this statement, the House Committee Report references Order No. 436 in which the Commission stated that open access transportation “is designed to remove any unnecessary regulatory obstacles and to facilitate transportation of gas to any end user that requests transportation service.”⁸⁹

4. Energy Policy Act of 1992

40. In the Energy Policy Act of 1992 (EPAct 1992), Congress also expressed a preference for providing the public access to natural gas. EPAct section 202 states, “[i]t is the sense of the Congress that natural gas consumers and producers, and the national economy, are best served by a competitive natural gas wellhead market.”⁹⁰

41. The NGA, NGPA, the repeal of the Fuel Use Act, the Wellhead Decontrol Act, and EPAct 1992 each reflect Congressional mandates to promote the production, transportation, and use of natural gas. None of these acts, and no other law, including NEPA, modifies the presumption in the NGA to facilitate access to natural gas. And, it is not for the Commission to substitute its judgment for that of Congress in determining energy policy.

⁸⁶ S. Rep. No. 101-39 at 1 (emphasis added).

⁸⁷ H.R. Rep. No. 101-29 at 6.

⁸⁸ *Id.* at 7.

⁸⁹ *Regulation of Natural Gas Pipelines After Partial Wellhead Decontrol*, Order No. 436, 50 Fed. Reg. 42,408, 42,478 (Oct. 18, 1985) (Order No. 436).

⁹⁰ Pub. L. No. 102-486, 106 Stat. 2776 (1992).

C. **“Public convenience and necessity” does not support consideration of environmental effects related to upstream production or downstream use of natural gas**

42. In addition to considering the text of the NGA as a whole and subsequent-related acts, we must interpret the phrase “public convenience and necessity” as used when enacted. As discussed below, “public convenience and necessity” has always been understood to mean “need” for the service. To the extent the environment is considered, such consideration is limited to the effects stemming from the construction and operation of the proposed facilities and is not as broad as some would believe.⁹¹

43. When Congress enacted the NGA, the phrase “public convenience and necessity” was a term of art used in state and federal public utility regulation.⁹² In 1939, one year after the NGA’s enactment, the Commission’s predecessor agency, the Federal Power Commission, defined public convenience and necessity as “a public need or benefit without which the public is inconvenienced to the extent of being handicapped in the pursuit of business or comfort or both, without which the public generally in the area involved is denied to its detriment that which is enjoyed by the public of other areas similarly situated.”⁹³ To make such showing, the Commission required certificate applicants to demonstrate that the public needed its proposed project, the applicant could perform the proposed service, and the service would be provided at reasonable rates.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Some will cite the reference to environment in footnote 6 in *NAACP v. FPC* to argue that the Commission can consider the environmental effects of upstream production and downstream use of natural gas. *NAACP v. FPC*, 425 U.S. 662, 670 n.6. The Court’s statement does not support that argument. The Court states that the environment could be a subsidiary purpose of the NGA and FPA by referencing FPA section 10, which states the Commission shall consider whether a hydroelectric project is best adapted to a comprehensive waterway by considering, among other things, the proposed *hydroelectric project’s effect* on the adequate protection, mitigation, and enhancement of fish and wildlife. Nothing in the Court’s statement or the citation would support the consideration of upstream and downstream impacts. *See supra* note 67 (explaining that the Federal Power Commission previously considered environmental impacts of downstream end use when weighing the beneficial use of natural gas between competing uses).

⁹² William K. Jones, *Origins of the Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity: Developments in the States, 1870-1920*, 79 COLUM. L. REV. 426, 427-28 (1979) (Jones).

⁹³ *Kan. Pipe Line & Gas Co.*, 2 FPC 29, 56 (1939).

⁹⁴ *See* Order No. 436, at 42,474 (listing the requirements outlined in *Kan. Pipe*

44. To the extent that public convenience and necessity included factors other than need, they were limited and directly related to the proposed facilities, not upstream or downstream effects related to the natural gas commodity. Such considerations included the effects on pipeline competition, duplication of facilities, and social costs, such as misuse of eminent domain and environmental impacts resulting from the creation of the right-of-way or service.⁹⁵ For example, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts considered environmental impacts resulting from the creation of the right-of-way and service in denying an application to build a railroad along a beach. The Commonwealth found that “the demand for train service was held to be outweighed by the fact the beach traversed ‘will cease to be attractive when it is defaced and made dangerous by a steam railroad.’”⁹⁶

45. The Commission’s current guidance for determining whether a proposed project is in the public convenience and necessity is consistent with the historic use of the term. As outlined in its 1999 Certificate Policy Statement, the Commission implements an economic balancing test that is focused on whether there is a need for the facilities and adverse economic effects stemming from the construction and operation of the proposed facilities themselves. The Commission designed its balancing test “to foster competitive markets, protect captive customers, and avoid unnecessary environmental and community impacts while serving increasing demands for natural gas.”⁹⁷ The Commission also stated that its balancing test “provide[s] appropriate incentives for the optimal level of construction and efficient customer choices.”⁹⁸ To accomplish these objectives, the Commission determines whether a project is in the public convenience and necessity by balancing the public benefits of the project against the adverse economic impacts on the

Line & Gas Co.: “(1) they possess a supply of natural gas adequate to meet those demands which it is reasonable to assume will be made upon them; (2) there exist in the territory proposed to be served customers who can reasonably be expected to use such natural-gas service; (3) the facilities for which they seek a certificate are adequate; (4) the costs of construction of the facilities which they propose are both adequate and reasonable; (5) the anticipated fixed charges or the amount of such fixed charges are reasonable; and (6) the rates proposed to be charged are reasonable.”).

⁹⁵ Jones at 428.

⁹⁶ *Id.* at 436.

⁹⁷ Certificate Policy Statement, 88 FERC ¶ at 61,743.

⁹⁸ *Id.*

applicant's existing shippers, competitor pipelines and their captive customers, and landowners.⁹⁹

46. Although the Certificate Policy Statement also recognizes the need to consider certain environmental issues related to a project, it makes clear that the environmental impacts to be considered are related to the construction and operation of the pipeline itself and the creation of the right-of-way.¹⁰⁰ As noted above, it is the Commission's objective to avoid *unnecessary* environmental impacts, meaning to route the pipeline to avoid environmental effects where possible and feasible, not to prevent or mitigate environmental effects from the upstream production or downstream use of natural gas. This is confirmed when one considers that, if the project had unnecessary adverse environmental effects, the Commission would require the applicant to reroute the pipeline: "If the environmental analysis following a preliminary determination indicates a preferred route other than the one proposed by the applicant, the earlier balancing of the public benefits of the project against its adverse effects would be reopened to take into account the adverse effects on landowners who would be affected by the changed route."¹⁰¹

47. Further, the Certificate Policy Statement provides, "[i]deally, an applicant will structure its proposed project to avoid adverse economic, competitive, environmental, or other effects on the relevant interests from the construction of the new project."¹⁰² And that is what occurred in this case. Transco modified its workspace to reduce impacts on a forested area by 16 percent at the request of a landowner.¹⁰³ Further, Transco co-located 97 percent of the Quarryville Loop with existing rights-of-way and 100 percent of the Madison Loop with existing rights-of-way.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰⁰ See also *Ctr. for Biological Diversity v. U.S. Army Corps of Eng'rs*, 941 F.3d 1288, 1299 (11th Cir. 2019) ("Regulations cannot contradict their animating statutes or manufacture additional agency power.") (citing *FDA v. Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp.*, 529 U.S. 120, 125-26 (2000)).

¹⁰¹ Certificate Policy Statement, 88 FERC ¶ at 61,749.

¹⁰² *Id.* at 61,747.

¹⁰³ Final EIS at 4-73.

¹⁰⁴ Certificate Order, 167 FERC ¶ 61,110 at P 17; Final EIS at 4-73.

48. In sum, the meaning of “public convenience and necessity” does not support weighing the public need for the project against effects related to the upstream production or downstream use of natural gas.

D. NEPA does not authorize the Commission to deny a certificate application based on emissions from the upstream production or downstream use of transported natural gas

49. The text of the NGA, and the related subsequent acts by Congress, cannot be revised by NEPA or CEQ regulations to authorize the Commission to deny a certificate application based on effects from the upstream production and downstream use of natural gas.

50. The courts have made clear that NEPA does not expand a federal agency’s substantive or jurisdictional powers.¹⁰⁵ Nor does NEPA repeal by implication any other statute.¹⁰⁶ Rather, NEPA is a merely procedural statute that requires federal agencies to take a “hard look” at the environmental effects of a proposed action before acting on it.¹⁰⁷ NEPA also does not require a particular result. In fact, the Supreme Court has stated, even if a NEPA analysis identifies an environmental harm, the agency can still approve the project.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ *Nat. Res. Def. Council, Inc. v. EPA*, 822 F.2d 104, 129 (D.C. Cir. 1987) (“NEPA, as a procedural device, does not work a broadening of the agency’s substantive powers. Whatever action the agency chooses to take must, of course, be within its province in the first instance.”) (citations omitted); *Cape May Greene, Inc. v. Warren*, 698 F.2d 179, 188 (3d Cir. 1986) (“The National Environmental Policy Act does not expand the jurisdiction of an agency beyond that set forth in its organic statute.”); *Gage v. U.S. Atomic Energy Comm’n*, 479 F.2d 1214, 1220 n.19 (D.C. Cir. 1973) (“NEPA does not mandate action which goes beyond the agency’s organic jurisdiction.”); *see also Flint Ridge Dev. Co. v. Scenic Rivers Ass’n of Okla.*, 426 U.S. 776, 788 (1976) (“where a clear and unavoidable conflict in statutory authority exists, NEPA must give way”).

¹⁰⁶ *U.S. v. Students Challenging Regulatory Agency Procedures*, 412 U.S. 669, 694 (1973).

¹⁰⁷ *Vt. Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. Nat. Res. Def. Council, Inc.*, 435 U.S. 519, 558 (1978) (“NEPA does set forth significant substantive goals for the Nation, but its mandate to the agencies is essentially procedural.”).

¹⁰⁸ *Robertson v. Methow Valley Citizens Council*, 490 U.S. 332, 350 (1989) (“Although these procedures are almost certain to affect the agency’s substantive decision, it is now well settled that NEPA itself does not mandate particular results, but simply prescribes the necessary process.”).

51. Further, CEQ's regulations on indirect effects cannot make the GHG emissions from upstream production or downstream use part of the Commission's public convenience and necessity determination under the NGA. As stated above, an agency's obligation under NEPA to consider indirect environmental effects is not limitless. Indirect effects must have "a reasonably close causal relationship" with the alleged cause, and that relationship is dependent on the "underlying policies or legislative intent."¹⁰⁹ NEPA requires such reasonably close causal relationship because "inherent in NEPA and its implementing regulations is a 'rule of reason,'"¹¹⁰ which "recognizes that it is pointless to require agencies to consider information they have no power to act on, or effects they have no power to prevent."¹¹¹ Thus, "where an agency has no ability to prevent a certain effect due to its limited statutory authority over the relevant actions, the agency cannot be considered a legally relevant 'cause' of the effect."¹¹²

52. The Commission has no power to deny a certificate for effects related to the upstream production or downstream use of natural gas. As explained above, the Commission's consideration of adverse environmental effects is limited to those effects stemming from the construction and operation of the pipeline facility and the related right-of-way. For the Commission to deny a pipeline based on GHGs emitted from the upstream production or downstream use of natural gas would be contrary to the text of the NGA and subsequent acts by Congress. The NGA reserves such considerations for the States, and the Commission must respect the jurisdictional boundaries set by Congress. Suggesting that the Commission can consider such effects not only risks duplicative regulation but in fact defies Congress.

¹⁰⁹ *Metro. Edison Co. v. People Against Nuclear Energy*, 460 U.S. 766, 774 n.7 (1983).

¹¹⁰ *Pub. Citizen*, 541 U.S. at 767.

¹¹¹ *Ctr. for Biological Diversity*, 941 F.3d at 1297; *see also Town of Barnstable v. FAA*, 740 F.3d 681, 691 (D.C. Cir. 2014) ("NEPA's 'rule of reason' does not require the FAA to prepare an EIS when it would 'serve no purpose.'").

¹¹² *Pub. Citizen*, 541 U.S. at 770; *see also Town of Barnstable*, 740 F.3d at 691 ("Because the FAA 'simply lacks the power to act on whatever information might be contained in the [environmental impact statement ('EIS')], NEPA does not apply to its no hazard determinations.") (internal citation omitted); *Ohio Valley Envtl. Coal. v. Aracoma Coal Co.*, 556 F.3d 177, 196-97 (4th Cir. 2009) (finding that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) was not required to consider the valley fill projects because "[West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection], and not the Corps, [had] 'control and responsibility' over all aspects of the valley fill projects beyond the filling of jurisdictional waters.").

III. The NGA does not contemplate the Commission establishing mitigation for GHG emissions from pipeline facilities

53. My colleague has also suggested that the Commission should require the mitigation of GHG emissions from the certificated pipeline facilities and the upstream production and downstream use of natural gas transported on those facilities. I understand his suggestions as proposing a carbon emissions fee, offsets or tax (similar to the Corps' compensatory wetland mitigation program), technology requirements (such as scrubbers or electric-powered compressor units),¹¹³ or emission caps. Some argue that the Commission can require such mitigation under NGA section 7(e), which provides "[t]he Commission shall have the power to attach to the issuance of the certificate . . . such reasonable terms and conditions as the public convenience and necessity may require."¹¹⁴

54. I disagree. The Commission cannot interpret NGA section 7(e) to allow the Commission to unilaterally establish measures to mitigate GHG emissions because Congress, through the Clean Air Act, assigned the EPA and the States exclusive authority to establish such measures. Congress designated the EPA as the expert agency "best suited to serve as primary regulator of greenhouse gas emissions,"¹¹⁵ not the Commission.

55. The Clean Air Act establishes an all-encompassing regulatory program, supervised by the EPA to deal comprehensively with interstate air pollution.¹¹⁶ Congress entrusted the Administrator of the EPA with significant discretion to determine appropriate emissions measures. Congress delegated the Administrator the authority to determine whether pipelines and other stationary sources endanger public health and welfare; section 111 of the Clean Air Act directs the Administrator of the EPA "to publish (and from time to time thereafter shall revise) a list of categories of stationary sources. He shall include a category of sources in such list if in *his judgment* it causes, or contributes significantly to, air pollution which may reasonably be anticipated to endanger public

¹¹³ It is also important to consider the impact on reliability that would result from requiring electric-compressor units on a gas pipeline. In the event of a power outage, a pipeline with electric-compressor units may be unable to compress and transport gas to end-users, including power plants and residences for heating and cooking.

¹¹⁴ *Id.* § 717f(e) (2018).

¹¹⁵ *American Elec. Power Co., Inc. v. Conn.*, 564 U.S. 410, 428 (2011).

¹¹⁶ *See id.* at 419.

health or welfare”¹¹⁷ and to establish standards of performance for the identified stationary sources.¹¹⁸ The Clean Air Act requires the Administrator to conduct complex balancing when determining a standard of performance, taking into consideration what is technologically achievable and the cost to achieve that standard.¹¹⁹

56. In addition, the Clean Air Act allows the Administrator to “distinguish among classes, types, and sizes within categories of new sources for the purpose of establishing such standards.”¹²⁰ The Act also permits the Administrator, with the consent of the Governor of the State in which the source is to be located, to waive its requirements “to encourage the use of an innovative technological system or systems of continuous emission reduction.”¹²¹

57. Congress also intended that States would have a role in establishing measures to mitigate emissions from stationary sources. Section 111(f) notes that “[b]efore promulgating any regulations . . . or listing any category of major stationary sources . . . the Administrator shall consult with appropriate representatives of the Governors and of State air pollution control agencies.”¹²²

58. Thus, the text of the Clean Air Act demonstrates it is improbable that NGA section 7(e) allows the Commission to establish GHG emission standards or mitigation measures out of whole cloth. To argue otherwise would defeat the significant discretion and complex balancing that the Clean Air Act entrusts in the EPA Administrator, and would eliminate the role of the States.

59. Furthermore, to argue that the Commission may use its NGA conditioning authority to establish GHG emission mitigation—a field in which the Commission has no expertise—and address climate change—an issue that has been subject to profound debate across our nation for decades—is an extraordinary leap. The Supreme Court’s “major rules” canon advises that agency rules on issues that have vast economic and political significance must be treated “with a measure of skepticism” and require Congress to provide clear authorization.¹²³ The Court has articulated this canon because

¹¹⁷ 42 U.S.C. § 7411(b)(1)(A) (2018).

¹¹⁸ *Id.* § 7411(b)(1)(B).

¹¹⁹ *Id.* § 7411(a)(1).

¹²⁰ *Id.* § 7411(a)(2).

¹²¹ *Id.* § 7411(j)(1)(A).

¹²² *Id.* § 7411(f)(3).

¹²³ *Util. Air Regulatory Grp. v. EPA*, 573 U.S. 302, 324 (2014); *Brown &*

Congress does not “hide elephants in mouseholes”¹²⁴ and “Congress is more likely to have focused upon, and answered, major questions, while leaving interstitial matters to answer themselves in the course of the statute’s daily administration.”¹²⁵

60. Courts would undoubtedly treat with skepticism any attempt by the Commission to establish GHG emission mitigation measures. Congress has introduced climate change bills since at least 1977,¹²⁶ over four decades ago. Over the last 15 years, Congress has introduced and failed to pass 70 legislative bills to reduce GHG emissions—29 of those were carbon emission fees or taxes.¹²⁷ For the Commission to suddenly declare such climate mitigation power resides in the long-extant NGA and that Congress’s efforts were superfluous strains credibility. Establishing a carbon emissions fee or tax, or GHG mitigation out of whole cloth would be a major rule, and Congress has made no indication that the Commission has such authority.

61. Some may make the argument that the Commission can develop mitigation measures without establishing a standard. I disagree. Establishing mitigation measures requires determining how much mitigation is required – i.e., setting a limit, or establishing a standard, that quantifies the amount of GHG emissions that will adversely affect the human environment. Some may also argue that the Commission has

Williamson, 529 U.S. at 160 (“Congress could not have intended to delegate a decision of such economic and political significance to an agency in so cryptic a fashion.”); *see also Gonzales v. Oregon*, 546 U.S. 243, 267-68 (2006) (finding regulation regarding issue of profound debate suspect).

¹²⁴ *Whitman v. American Trucking Ass.*, 531 U.S. 457, 468 (2001).

¹²⁵ *FDA v. Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp.*, 529 U.S. 12, 159 (quoting Justice Breyer, *Judicial Review of Questions of Law and Policy*, 38 ADMIN. L. REV. 363, 370 (1986)); *see also* Abbe R. Gluck & Lisa Schultz Bressman, *Statutory Interpretation from the Inside—An Empirical Study of Congressional Drafting, Delegation, and the Canons: PART I*, 65 STAN. L. REV. 901, 1004 (2013) (“Major policy questions, major economic questions, major political questions, preemption questions are all the same. Drafters don’t intend to leave them unresolved.”).

¹²⁶ National Climate Program Act, S. 1980, 95th Cong. (1977).

¹²⁷ CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE, MARKET-BASED GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSION REDUCTION LEGISLATION: 108TH THROUGH 116TH CONGRESSES at 3 (Oct. 23, 2019), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R45472.pdf>. Likewise, the CEQ issued guidance on the consideration of GHG emissions in 2010, 2014, 2016, and 2019. None of those documents require, let alone recommend, that an agency establish a carbon emissions fee or tax.

unilaterally established mitigation in other contexts, including wetlands, soil conservation, and noise. These examples, however, are distinguishable. Congress did not exclusively assign the authority to establish avoidance or restoration measures for mitigating effects on wetlands or soil to a specific agency. The Corps and the EPA developed a wetlands mitigation bank program pursuant to section 404 of the Clean Water Act.¹²⁸ Congress endorsed such mitigation.¹²⁹ As for noise, the Clean Air Act assigns the EPA Administrator authority over determining the level of noise that amounts to a public nuisance and requires federal agencies to consult with the EPA when its actions exceed the public nuisance standard.¹³⁰ The Commission complies with the Clean Air Act by requiring project noise levels in certain areas to not exceed 55 dBA Ldn, as required by EPA's guidelines.¹³¹

62. Accordingly, there is no support that the Commission can use its NGA section 7(e) authority to establish measures to mitigate GHG emissions from proposed pipeline facilities or from the upstream production or downstream use of natural gas.¹³²

¹²⁸ 33 U.S.C. § 1344 (2018).

¹²⁹ See Water Resources Development Act, Pub. L. 110-114, § 2036(c), 121 Stat. 1041, 1094 (2007); National Defense Authorization Act, Pub. L. 108-136, § 314, 117 Stat. 1392, 1430 (2004); Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, Pub. L. 105-178, § 103 (b)(6)(M), 112 Stat. 107, 133 (1998); Water Resources Development Act of 1990, Pub. L. 101-640, § (a)(18)(C), 104 Stat. 4604, 4609 (1990).

¹³⁰ 42 U.S.C. § 7641(c) (“In any case where any Federal department or agency is carrying out or sponsoring any activity resulting in noise which the Administrator determines amounts to a public nuisance or is otherwise objectionable, such department or agency shall consult with the Administrator to determine possible means of abating such noise.”).

¹³¹ See *Williams Gas Pipelines Cent., Inc.*, 93 FERC ¶ 61,159, at 61,531-52 (2000).

¹³² In addition, requiring a pipeline to mitigate emissions from the upstream production or downstream use of natural gas would not be “a reasonable term or condition as the public convenience and necessity may require.” 15 U.S.C. § 717f(e) (2018). It would be unreasonable to require a pipeline to mitigate an effect it has no control over. Further, as discussed above, emissions from the upstream production and downstream use of natural gas are not relevant to the NGA's public convenience and necessity determination.

IV. The Commission has no standard for determining whether GHG emissions significantly affect the environment

63. My colleague has argued that the Commission violates the NGA and NEPA by not determining the significance of GHG emissions that are effects of a project.¹³³ He has challenged the Commission's explanation that it cannot determine significance because there is no standard for determining the significance of GHG emissions.¹³⁴ He has argued that the Commission can adopt the Social Cost of Carbon¹³⁵ to determine whether GHG emissions are significant or rely on its own expertise as it does for other environmental resources, such as soils, groundwater, and wetland resources.¹³⁶ He has suggested that the Commission does not make a finding of significance in order to deceptively find that a project is in the public convenience and necessity.¹³⁷

64. I disagree. The Social Cost of Carbon is not a suitable method for determining whether GHG emissions that are caused by a proposed project will have a significant effect on climate change, and the Commission has no authority or reasoned basis using its own expertise to make such determination.

A. Social Cost of Carbon is not a suitable method to determine significance

65. The Commission has found, and I agree, that the Social Cost of Carbon is not a suitable method for the Commission to determine significance of GHG emissions.¹³⁸

¹³³ Cheyenne Connector PP 2, 7.

¹³⁴ *Id.* PP 12-13.

¹³⁵ *Id.* P 13.

¹³⁶ *Dominion Energy Transmission, Inc.*, 169 FERC ¶ 61,229 (2019) (Comm'r, Glick, dissenting at P 10).

¹³⁷ *Id.* P 2. The dissent uses the phrase "public interest"; however, as noted earlier, the Commission issues certificates when required by the public convenience and necessity. NGA section 7(e) does not include the phrase "public interest." To the extent that the courts and the Commission have equated the "public convenience and necessity" with "public interest," the "public convenience and necessity" is not as broad as some would argue. *See supra* P 16.

¹³⁸ *Fla. Se. Connection, LLC*, 162 FERC ¶ 61,233, at P 48 (2018); *see also PennEast Pipeline Co., LLC*, 164 FERC ¶ 61,098, at P 123 ("Moreover, EPA recently confirmed to the Commission that the tool, which 'no longer represents government policy,' was developed to assist in rulemakings and 'was not designed for, and may not be appropriate for, analysis of project-level decision-making.'") (citing EPA's July 26,

Because the courts have repeatedly upheld the Commission's reasoning,¹³⁹ I will not restate the Commission's reasoning here.

66. However, I will address the suggestion that the Social Cost of Carbon can translate a project's impact on climate change into "concrete and comprehensible terms" that will help inform agency decision-makers and the public at large.¹⁴⁰ The Social Cost of Carbon, described as an estimate of "the monetized damages associated with an incremental increase in carbon emissions in a given year,"¹⁴¹ may appear straightforward. On closer inspection, however, the Social Cost of Carbon and its calculated outputs are not so simple to interpret or evaluate.¹⁴² When the Social Cost of Carbon estimates that

2018 Comments in PL18-1-000).

¹³⁹ *Appalachian Voices*, 2019 WL 847199, *2; *EarthReports, Inc. v. FERC*, 828 F.3d 949, 956 (D.C. Cir. 2016); *Sierra Club v. FERC*, 672 F. App'x 38, (D.C. Cir. 2016); *see also 350 Montana v. Bernhardt*, No. CV 19-12-M-DWM, 2020 WL 1139674, *6 (D. Mont. March 9, 2020) (upholding the agency's decision to not use the Social Cost of Carbon because it is too uncertain and indeterminate to be useful); *Citizens for a Healthy Cmty. v. U.S. Bureau of Land Mgmt.*, 377 F. Supp. 3d 1223, 1239-41 (D. Colo. 2019) (upholding the agency's decision to not use the Social Cost of Carbon); *WildEarth Guardians v. Zinke*, 368 F. Supp. 3d 41, 77-79 (D.D.C. 2019) (upholding the agency's decision to not use the Social Cost of Carbon); *High Country Conservation Advocates v. U.S. Forest Serv.*, 333 F. Supp. 3d 1107, 1132 (D. Colo. 2018) vacated and remanded on other grounds 2020 WL 994988 (10th Cir. March 2, 2020) ("[T]he *High Country* decision did not mandate that the Agencies apply the social cost of carbon protocol in their decisions; the court merely found arbitrary the Agencies' failure to do so without explanation.").

¹⁴⁰ Cheyenne Connector Dissent P 13 n.27.

¹⁴¹ Interagency Working Group on the Social Cost of Greenhouse Gases, *Technical Support Document – Technical Update of the Social Cost of Carbon for Regulatory impact Analysis – Under Executive Order 12866* at 1 (Aug. 2016), https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-12/documents/sc_co2_tsd_august_2016.pdf (2016 Technical Support Document).

¹⁴² In fact, the website for the Climate Framework for Uncertainty Negotiation and Distribution (FUND) – one of the three integrated assessment models that the Social Cost of Carbon uses – states "[m]odels are often quite useless in unexperienced hands, and sometimes misleading. No one is smart enough to master in a short period what took someone else years to develop. Not-understood models are irrelevant, half-understood models are treacherous, and mis-understood models dangerous." FUND-Climate Framework for Uncertainty, Negotiation and Distribution, <http://www.fund-model.org/>

one metric ton of CO₂ costs \$12 (the 2020 cost using a discount rate of 5 percent),¹⁴³ agency decision-makers and the public have no reasoned basis or benchmark to determine whether that cost is significant. Bare numbers standing alone simply *cannot* ascribe significance.

B. The Commission has no authority or reasoned basis to establish its own framework

67. Some argue that the lack of externally established targets does not relieve the Commission from establishing a framework or targets on its own. Some have suggested that the Commission can make up its own framework, citing the Commission's framework for determining return on equity (ROE) as an example. However, they overlook the fact that Congress designated the EPA, not the Commission, with exclusive authority to determine the amount of emissions that are harmful to the environment. In addition, there are no available resources or agency expertise upon which the Commission could reasonably base a framework or target.

68. As I explain above, Congress enacted the Clean Air Act to establish an all-encompassing regulatory program, supervised by the EPA to deal comprehensively with interstate air pollution. Section 111 of the Clean Air Act directs the Administrator of the EPA to identify stationary sources that "in his judgment cause[], or contribute[] significantly to, air pollution which may reasonably be anticipated to endanger public health or welfare"¹⁴⁴ and to establish standards of performance for the identified stationary sources.¹⁴⁵ Thus, the EPA has exclusive authority for determining whether emissions from pipeline facilities will have a significant effect on the environment.

69. Further, the Commission is not positioned to unilaterally establish a standard for determining whether GHG emissions will significantly affect the environment when there is neither federal guidance nor an accepted scientific consensus on these matters.¹⁴⁶ This

(LAST VISITED NOV. 18, 2019).

¹⁴³ See 2016 Technical Support Document at 4. The Social Cost of Carbon produces wide-ranging dollar values based upon a chosen discount rate, and the assumptions made. The Interagency Working Group on Social Cost of Greenhouse Gases estimated in 2016 that the Social Cost of one ton of carbon dioxide for the year 2020 ranged from \$12 to \$123. *Id.*

¹⁴⁴ 42 U.S.C. § 7411(b)(1)(A) (2018).

¹⁴⁵ *Id.* § 7411(b)(1)(B).

¹⁴⁶ The Council on Environmental Quality's 2019 Draft Greenhouse Gas Guidance states, "[a]gencies need not undertake new research or analysis of potential climate effects and may rely on available information and relevant scientific literature." CEQ,

inability to find an acceptable methodology is not for a lack of trying. The Commission reviews the climate science, state and national targets, and climate models that could inform its decision-making.¹⁴⁷

70. Moreover, assessing the significance of project effects on climate change is unlike the Commission's determination of ROE. Establishing ROE has been one of the core functions of the Commission since its inception under the FPA as the Federal Power Commission.¹⁴⁸ And, setting ROE has been an activity of state public utility commissions, even before the creation of the Federal Power Commission.¹⁴⁹ The Commission's methodology is also founded in established economic theory.¹⁵⁰ In contrast, assessing the significance of GHG emissions is not one of the Commission's core missions and there is no suitable methodology for making such determination.

71. It has been argued that the Commission can establish its own methodology for determining significance, pointing out that the Commission has determined the significance of effects on soils, groundwater, and wetland resources, using its own expertise and without generally accepted significance criteria or a standard methodology.

Draft National Environmental Policy Act Guidance on Consideration of Greenhouse Gas Emissions, 84 Fed. Reg. 30,097, 30,098 (June 26, 2019); *see also* CEQ FINAL GUIDANCE FOR FEDERAL DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES ON CONSIDERATION OF GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS AND THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT REVIEWS at 22 (Aug. 1, 2016) ("agencies need not undertake new research or analysis of potential climate change impacts in the proposed action area, but may instead summarize and incorporate by reference the relevant scientific literature"), https://ceq.doe.gov/docs/ceq-regulations-and-guidance/nepa_final_ghg_guidance.pdf.

¹⁴⁷ *Fla. Se. Connection, LLC*, 162 FERC ¶ 61,233, at P 36; *see also WildEarth Guardians*, 738 F.3d 298, 309 (D.C. Cir. 2013) ("Because current science does not allow for the specificity demanded by the Appellants, the BLM was not required to identify specific effects on the climate in order to prepare an adequate EIS.").

¹⁴⁸ *Hope*, 320 U.S. 591 (1944); *FPC v. Nat. Gas Pipeline Co. of America*, 315 U.S. 575 (1942).

¹⁴⁹ *See, e.g., Willcox v. Consol. Gas Co.*, 212 U.S. 19, 41 (1909) (finding New York State must provide "a fair return upon the reasonable value of the property at the time it is being used for the public.").

¹⁵⁰ *Inquiry Regarding the Commission's Policy for Determining Return on Equity*, 166 FERC ¶ 61,207 (2019) (describing the Commission's use of the Discounted Cash Flow model that was originally developed in the 1950s as a method for investors to estimate the value of securities).

72. I disagree. As an initial matter, it is important to note that when the Commission states it has no suitable methodology for determining the significance of GHG emissions, the Commission means that it has no reasoned basis for making such finding. The Commission's findings regarding significance for soils, groundwater, and wetland resources have a reasoned basis. For example for groundwater resources, using information provided by the U.S. Geological Service, the Commission identified major groundwater aquifers, water supply wells, and springs crossed by the project.¹⁵¹ Using geotechnical soil boring results, the Commission concluded that the majority of the Project would occur above the shallow, surficial aquifers that typically occur in unconsolidated deposits in the Project area.¹⁵² The Commission also found that the Project could impact shallow groundwater resources, and that those impacts would primarily be associated with increased turbidity or potential contamination.¹⁵³ The Commission found that those impacts would be temporary and would be mitigated by Transco implementing its Plan and Procedures, Unanticipated Discovery of Contamination Plan, Materials and Waste Management Plan, Onshore Horizontal Directional Drilling Contingency Plan, and other state and local permits.¹⁵⁴ Based on this information, the Commission had a reasoned basis to find that the Project would not result in significant impacts on groundwater resources.¹⁵⁵

73. In contrast, the Commission has no reasoned basis to determine whether a project has a significant effect on climate change. To assess a project's effect on climate change, the Commission can only quantify the amount of project emissions and compare that number to national emissions to calculate a percentage of national emissions. That calculated number cannot inform the Commission on climate change effects caused by the project, e.g., increase of sea level rise, effect on weather patterns, or effect on ocean acidification. Nor are there acceptable scientific models that the Commission may use to attribute every ton of GHG emissions to a physical climate change effect.

74. Without adequate support or a reasoned target, the Commission cannot ascribe significance to particular amounts of GHG emissions. To do so would not only exceed our agency's authority, but would risk reversal upon judicial review. Courts require agencies to "consider[] the relevant factors and articulate[] a rational connection between

¹⁵¹ Final EIS at 4-23 to 4-28.

¹⁵² *Id.* 4-32.

¹⁵³ *Id.* 4-33 to 4-35.

¹⁵⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵⁵ *Id.* at 4-35.

the facts found and the choice made.”¹⁵⁶ Simply put, stating that an amount of GHG emissions appears significant without any support fails to meet the agency’s obligations under the Administrative Procedure Act (APA).

V. Conclusion

75. This concurrence is intended to assist the Commission, courts, and other parties in their consideration of the Commission’s obligations under the NGA and NEPA. The Commission cannot act *ultra vires* and claim more authority than the NGA provides it, regardless of the importance of the issue sought to be addressed.¹⁵⁷ The NGA provides the Commission no authority to deny a certificate application based on the environmental effects from the upstream production or downstream use of natural gas. Congress enacted the NGA, and subsequent legislation, to ensure the Commission provided public access to natural gas. Further, Congress designed the NGA to preserve States’ authority to regulate the physical effects from the upstream production and downstream use of natural gas, and did not leave that field unregulated. Congress simply did not authorize the Commission to judge whether the upstream production or downstream use of gas will be too environmentally harmful.

76. Nor does the Commission have the ability to establish measures to mitigate GHG emissions. Pursuant to the Clean Air Act, Congress exclusively assigned that authority to the EPA and the States. Finally, the Commission has no reasoned basis for determining whether GHG emissions are significant that would satisfy the Commission’s APA obligations and survive judicial review.

77. I recognize that some believe the Commission should do more to address climate change. The Commission, an energy agency with a limited statutory authority, is not the appropriate authority to establish a new regulatory regime.

For these reasons, I respectfully concur.

¹⁵⁶ *City of Tacoma v. FERC*, 460 F.3d 53, 76 (D.C Cir. 2006) (quoting *Ariz. Cattle Growers’ Ass’n v. FWS*, 273 F.3d 1229, 1235-36 (9th Cir. 2001)); *see also American Rivers v. FERC*, 895 F.3d 32, 51 (D.C. Cir. 2018) (“ . . . the Commission’s NEPA analysis was woefully light on reliable data and reasoned analysis and heavy on unsubstantiated inferences and *non sequiturs*”) (italics in original); *Found. for N. Am. Wild Sheep v. U.S. Dep’t of Agr.*, 681 F.2d 1172, 1179 (9th Cir. 1982) (“The EA provides no foundation for the inference that a valid comparison may be drawn between the sheep’s reaction to hikers and their reaction to large, noisy ten-wheel ore trucks.”).

¹⁵⁷ *Office of Consumers’ Counsel*, 655 F.2d at 1152 (“[A]ppropriate respect for legislative authority requires regulatory agencies to refrain from the temptation to stretch their jurisdiction to decide questions of competing public priorities whose resolution properly lies with Congress.”).

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Commissioner