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National Park Service Identifies Preferred Alternative for Proposed Susquehanna-Roseland Transmission Line

*Preferred alternative allows proposed line to follow corridor of existing transmission line;
Will be evaluated in Final Environmental Impact Statement expected in September*

Philadelphia— The National Park Service (NPS) has identified a “preferred alternative” for the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the application by PPL Electric Utilities (PPL) and Public Service Electric and Gas Company (PSE&G) for the expansion of an existing electric transmission line that crosses National Park Service lands within Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Under the preferred alternative, the proposed Susquehanna-Roseland power line expansion project would follow the route of the existing transmission line.

The NPS identified the preferred alternative, Alternative 2, after reviewing public and agency comments received during a 60-day comment period on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). In December 2011, the NPS issued the DEIS to evaluate the impacts of the transmission line project on National Park Service lands; a preferred alternative was not identified in the DEIS in order to allow the NPS to consider comments on the proposal and the alternatives. The NPS also held several public meetings, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

“In identifying the preferred alternative, we closely examined the existing easements owned by the utilities, the impacts of the proposed transmission line, alternatives to the proposal, and mitigation measures to avoid and minimize adverse impacts to park resources,” said NPS Regional Director for the Northeast Region Dennis Reidenbach.

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The identification of the preferred alternative is not a final decision. NPS will make a final decision on the construction and right of way permit application in a Record of Decision that will be issued no sooner than 30 days following the public release of the Final EIS, which is expected in September 2012. Robust mitigation analysis will occur throughout the remaining parts of the NEPA process. Additionally, the NPS is consulting with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which shares some boundaries with the NPS in the Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge, and with Tribal governments and State Historic Preservation Offices. All comments received by the NPS during the 60-day public comment period will be available in the Final EIS.

The Susquehanna-Roseland power line proposal includes the replacement of an existing transmission line with an approximately 145-mile long 500 kV transmission line from the Susquehanna Substation in Pennsylvania to the Roseland Substation in New Jersey, and several 500 – 230 kV substations in both Pennsylvania and New Jersey. In March 2010, PPL and PSE&G submitted a complete application to the NPS for construction and right-of-way (ROW) permits, which would be needed in addition to their existing easements, for where the line crosses three national parks; Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, Middle Delaware National Recreational River, and Appalachian National Scenic Trail.

The proposed Susquehanna-Roseland project is one of seven pilot transmission line projects identified as part of President Obama’s Rapid Response Team for Transmission (RRTT). The RRTT is examining the seven pilot projects to capture lessons learned and best practices regarding transmission permitting and siting processes in order to improve efficiencies and communication among federal, state, local, and tribal government agencies on current and future projects. The RRTT is not tasked with conducting the substantive environmental review of any project.

For more information, please visit:

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=25147>.

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