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February 8, 2013

Via Electronic Filing

Ms. Barcy McNeal
Administration/Docketing
Public Utilities Commission of Ohio
180 East Broad Street, 11th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215-3793

**Re: Construction Notice for Brunstetter Connection, Village
of Lordstown, Trumbull County, Ohio High Pressure
Distribution Line, OPSB Case No. 13-203-GA-BNR**

Dear Ms. McNeal:

On January 14, 2013, Dominion East Ohio Gas Company ("DEO") filed a Construction Notice for the Brunstetter Connection, Village of Lordstown, Trumbull County, Ohio. At the request of Staff, DEO submits a copy of the US Fish and Wildlife Service's response to DEO's February 4, 2013 letter requesting information regarding federally listed threatened and endangered species in the vicinity of the Brunstetter Project.

Please note that DEO will directional drill all three (3) stream crossings and will avoid the wetland at the far west end of the project. Additional permitting for these disturbances will not be required.

If you have any questions please call at the number listed above.

Sincerely,

Sally W. Bloomfield

Cc: Ed Steele (w/Enclosure)



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Ecological Services
4625 Morse Road, Suite 104
Columbus, Ohio 43230
(614) 416-8993 / FAX (614) 416-8994
February 6, 2013

Dominion Resources Services
Attn: Tara Miletti
320 Springside Drive, Suite 320
Akron, OH 44333

TAILS: 03E15000-2013-TA-0514

Re: The East Ohio Gas Company, Brunstetter Connector
Lordstown Township, Trumbull County, Ohio.

Dear Ms. Miletti:

This is in reference to your February 4, 2013 letter requesting information regarding federally listed threatened and endangered species in the vicinity of the subject line project. The proposed project involves the installation of approximately 2500 feet of new 12-inch natural gas pipeline within a new 60-foot Right of Way. The project area currently consists of agricultural fields, maintained lawn, new field, and forest. The project will also involve 3 stream crossings and 4 wetland crossings. You have indicated that stream and some of the wetland impacts will be avoided by using directional drilling for installation.

There are no Federal wildlife refuges, wilderness areas, or Critical Habitat within the vicinity of this site.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recommends that proposed activities minimize water quality impacts and impacts to quality fish and wildlife habitat, such as forests, streams, and wetlands. Riparian zone habitat should be preserved wherever possible. Vegetated areas along streams and rivers stabilize the banks, provide fish and wildlife habitat, filter pollutants and excess nutrients, store excess water during storm events, and minimize sedimentation. Best Management Practices (BMP's) should be utilized to minimize sedimentation and erosion. All disturbed areas should be mulched and revegetated with native woody and herbaceous species. While directional drilling will generally result in less aquatic impacts than open cutting through a waterbody, the Service is concerned with the potential for frac outs within the streams which could negatively impact water quality and wildlife habitat. To avoid such a situation, we recommend that soil data be carefully examined prior to finalizing drilling plans to ensure that frac outs are not likely. Furthermore, test drilling should be completed ahead of time if soils are questionable. Finally, a contingency plan should be put in place to immediately quarantine frac out areas and remediate them.

ENDANGERED SPECIES COMMENTS: The proposed project lies within the range of the **Indiana bat** (*Myotis sodalis*), a federally listed endangered species. Since first listed as endangered in 1967, their population has declined by nearly 60%. Several factors have contributed to the decline of the Indiana bat, including the loss and degradation of suitable hibernacula, human disturbance during hibernation, pesticides, and the loss and degradation of forested habitat, particularly stands of large, mature trees. Fragmentation of forest habitat may also contribute to declines. During winter, Indiana bats hibernate in caves and abandoned mines. Summer habitat requirements for the species are not well defined but the following are considered important:

- (1) dead or live trees and snags with peeling or exfoliating bark, split tree trunk and/or branches, or cavities, which may be used as maternity roost areas;

- (2) live trees (such as shagbark hickory and oaks) which have exfoliating bark;
- (3) stream corridors, riparian areas, and upland woodlots which provide forage sites.

You have indicated that 10 potential roost trees exist in the project area. You have also indicated that 7 of the identified trees will be cleared to complete the project as proposed. In order to avoid potential impacts to Indiana bats, you have proposed to conduct tree clearing in the winter while bats are hibernating. The Service recommends that potential roost trees be avoided wherever possible. If these trees cannot be avoided, they should only be cut between the dates of October 1 and March 31. Based upon the linear nature of the project, the presence of alternate roost trees in the vicinity, and the implementation of seasonal cutting restrictions, impact to this species are likely to be insignificant or discountable.

The project lies within the range of the **eastern massasauga** (*Sistrurus catenatus*), a small, docile rattlesnake that is currently a Federal candidate species. Since designated as a candidate species in 1999, it has declined significantly throughout its range and populations in Ohio that were once throughout glaciated portions of the state, are now small and isolated. The species has been listed by the State of Ohio as endangered since 1996. Several factors have contributed to the decline of the species including habitat loss and fragmentation, indiscriminate killing, collection, gene pool contamination and incompatible land use practices.

Eastern massasaugas use both upland and wetland habitat and these habitats differ by season. During the winter, massasaugas hibernate in low wet areas, primarily in crayfish burrows, but may use other structures. Presence of a water table near the surface is important for a suitable hibernaculum. In the summer, massasaugas use drier, open areas that contain a mix of grasses and forbs such as goldenrods and other prairie plants that may be intermixed with trees or shrubs. Adjoining lowland and upland habitat with variable elevations between are critical for the species to travel back and forth seasonally. While the proposed project site does not constitute optimal habitat for this species, the Service is concerned that eastern massasaugas may be in the vicinity based on the presence of suitable habitat outside the project area. In order to avoid potential impacts to this species, we recommend that ground disturbing activities in or near wetlands occur after May 15 when massasaugas are no longer hibernating in burrows. Additionally, workers at the site should be instructed not to handle or harm any snakes encountered at the site because they may be venomous and a State Endangered Species.

The project lies within the range of the **snuffbox** (*Epioblasma triquetra*) and the **clubshell** (*Pleurobema clava*), both are federally endangered freshwater mussels. Due to the project type, size, and location, we do not anticipate any impact to these species, or their habitat. Relative to these species, this precludes the need for further action on this project.

These comments have been prepared under the authority of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.), the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), as amended, and are consistent with the intent of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Mitigation Policy. This letter provides technical assistance only and does not serve as a completed section 7 consultation document. If you have questions, or if we may be of further assistance in this matter, please contact David Henry at extension 27 in this office.

Sincerely,



Mary Knapp, Ph.D.
Field Supervisor

cc: ODNR, DOW, SCEA Unit, Columbus, OH

This foregoing document was electronically filed with the Public Utilities

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Case No(s). 13-0203-GA-BNR

Summary: Correspondence Transmitting Staff Requested Documents electronically filed by
Teresa Orahod on behalf of Sally Bloomfield for Dominion East Ohio Gas