

DPL Piney Grove to New Church Project (Wicomico and Worcester Counties) PSC Case Number 9766 PPRP Manager: Fred Kelley

Note:
This summary was last updated on
January 6, 2025
For current information, follow this link:
[PSC Docket Case #9766](#)

Note:
This summary is based on information
provided in the CPCN Application
dated **December 04, 2024**, which is
subject to change and has not yet
been fully reviewed by PPRP

CPCN Timeline

CPCN Application filed on December 04, 2024
Pre-Hearing Conference: January 9, 2025
Staff, OPC, and PPRP File Direct Testimony: August 8, 2025
Public Hearing Date: Week of August 16, 2025
Rebuttal Testimony Due: September 10, 2025
PSC Evidentiary Hearing: September 25-26, 2025

Project Location:

The Project is in Wicomico and Worcester Counties and extends approximately 20.7 miles south to the Maryland-Virginia state line from the Piney Grove Substation ([Google Map Link](#)) to the New Church Substation([Google Map Link](#))

Project Overview:

Delmarva Power & Light (DPL) filed for a CPCN to rebuild an existing 138 kV overhead transmission line on an existing right-of-way (ROW) from the Piney Grove Substation in Wicomico County to the Maryland/Virginia state line that is needed to maintain the electric system reliability due to the age of the current transmission line.

The Piney Grove to MD-VA Segment will involve upgrading 20.7 miles of 138 kV transmission line to 230 kV standards. However, the line will only be energized to 138 kV. Segment components include:

- Removal of 142 existing 138 kV wooden H-frame structures, with an average height of 78 feet;
- Installation of 115 230 kV galvanized steel monopoles with an average height of 134 feet;
- Replacement of all existing conductors; and
- Upgrading the shield wire to 230kV standards.

Site Description

The Project consists of overhead transmission line work on existing ROW corridors that range from 150 feet to 300 feet wide. The total acreage of the ROW corridor for the Project is approximately 603 acres, with 411 acres in Maryland. The Project Study Area is located across Wicomico and Worcester Counties. Land uses along the Project ROW include forest edges, open agricultural fields, residential properties, low and very low-density residential areas, medium intensity developed residential areas, commercial areas, industrial areas, institutional areas, open land, wetlands, water, barren, and other developed lands. The route crosses through the Chesapeake Forest Lands and Pocomoke State Forest. The route also crosses multiple streams, wetlands, and roads. DPL anticipates construction to begin in Quarter 3 of 2026 and for the project to be in operation by June 2027.

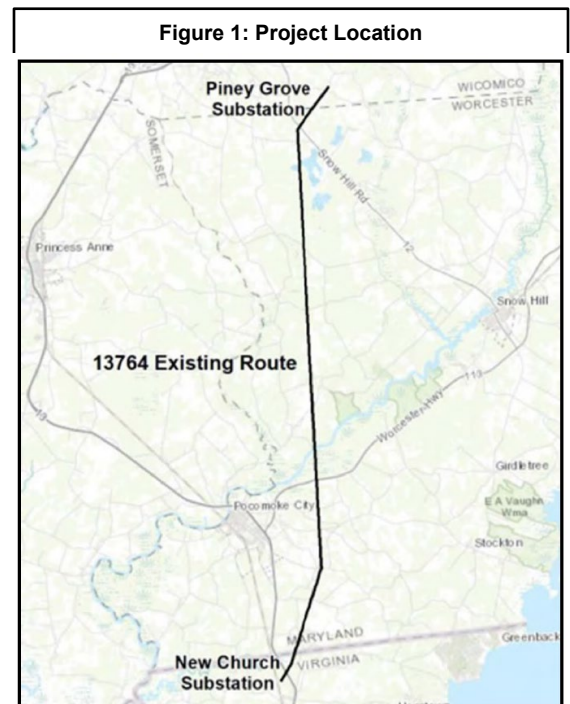
Impact Assessment Highlights

Electrical Need, Reliability, and Costs

- The Applicant states that the PJM Interconnection LLC (PJM) recommended that the Piney Grove to New Church circuit to be rebuilt to current transmission standards as the circuit could be overloaded in certain conditions.
- DPL estimates the Project will cost \$63.5 million.

Air Quality

- Earthwork activities such as digging at the proposed pole locations and traversing unpaved roads may generate fugitive dust. DPL intends to incorporate BMPs during construction to minimize dust generation.
- Operation of heavy equipment will result in combustion by-product emissions.



Biological

- The Applicant completed a wetland delineation along the ROW in June 2023, which will be reviewed by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) during the Joint Permit Application (JPA) review process. The survey identified a total of 18 watercourses and 144 wetlands.
 - The Applicant indicates that the Project will result in permanent impacts to approximately 1,054 square feet (SF;0.03 acres) of nontidal wetlands and 402 SF (0.01 acres) of nontidal wetland buffers. No permanent impacts to tidal wetlands are anticipated.
 - The Applicant indicates that the use of temporary matting for construction access will result in temporary impacts to 1,047,274 SF (24.04 acres) of nontidal wetlands, 3,386 SF (0.08 acres) of tidal wetlands, and 476,767 SF (10.9 acres) of nontidal wetland buffer.
 - Ten Wetlands of Special State Concern (WSSC) occur within the Project study areas. One WSSC buffer located near the Pocomoke River.
 - The Applicant is currently coordinating with the United States Army Core of Engineers (USACE) and MDE. The Applicant plans to submit the Wetlands and Waterways JPA in Quarter 1 of 2025.
 - No temporary or permanent impacts to waterways/streams in the Project Study Area are expected because no in-stream construction is proposed. Streams will be crossed via existing culverts or temporary bank-to-bank bridges.
- The Project Study Area crosses through six 100-year floodplains.
- A portion of the ROW crosses through a Tier II watershed (Nassawango Creek).
- The ROW crosses the Pocomoke Scenic River.
- The ROW crosses two Critical Area Resource Conservation Areas (RCAs), and is directly adjacent to one RCA, that are all associated with the Pocomoke River.
- The Applicant consulted with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Wildlife Heritage Service (WHS), which indicated that the Project Study Area contains 26 state-listed species. DNR WHS has encouraged the Applicant to adhere stringently to all appropriate best management practices for sediment and erosion control during all phases of work, in order to reduce the likelihood of adverse impacts.
- The Applicant also utilized the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) online project screening tool to identify sensitive wildlife species near the Project. The USFWS screening tool indicated that there are three federally listed threatened, endangered, or candidate species that may be present within the Project Study Area: the Northern Long-eared Bat (*Myotis septentrionalis* – Endangered), the Tricolored Bat (*Perimyotis subflavus* – Proposed Endangered), and Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus* – Candidate).
- Raptor nest surveys were conducted in April 2024. The survey confirmed presence of one bald eagle nest of unknown occupancy and one active red-shouldered hawk nest. Follow-up raptor nest surveys will be completed during the 2025 and 2026 nesting seasons prior to the onset of construction to ensure that no disturbance will occur to nesting species.
- The Applicant anticipates that routine vegetation management, including tree clearing and/or trimming, will likely be required on various portions of the Project.
- The ROW crosses 0.2 acres of Green Infrastructure Corridors, 216 acres of Green Infrastructure Hubs, 238 acres of FIDS habitat, 273 acres of Sensitive Species Project Review Areas (SSPRA), and 465 acres of Targeted Ecological Areas.

Economic and Fiscal

- The Applicant estimates the capital cost of the Project to be approximately \$63.5 million and the annual operating cost to be \$1.76 million.
- The estimated total annual taxes for Maryland will be \$385,080.

Transportation

- The Project crosses multiple roads and four highways.
- DPL will use existing paved, gravel, and dirt roads for temporary construction access and an existing laydown area located at Northwood Drive in Salisbury to store construction materials.
- The Project is located approximately three and a half miles northwest of the Salisbury-Ocean City Wicomico Regional Airport. The nearest airport is a private airport, Fair's Airport in Pocomoke City, about three miles west.

Land Use

- The Applicant indicates that the Project will have no impact on land use, as DPL does not anticipate the need to acquire new land easements for the Project. The proposed structures will be entirely contained within existing

ROW, and as such will not change the zoning, landscape, or potential for alternative uses of any portion of land along the existing ROW.

- The Applicant indicates that during construction, there may be some noise and traffic impacts, typical of construction projects and indicates that these impacts will be temporary.
- There is approximately 81.7 acres of prime farmland and 277.8 acres of farmland of statewide importance within the Project Study Area.
- Approximately 12.2 acres of the Study Area are located within the Critical Area and there are four existing structures located within the Critical Area, additionally 14 hazard trees will be removed from the ROW within the Critical Area.

Cultural and Aesthetic

- Maryland Historic Trust (MHT) indicated that they have no concerns related to historic properties or archaeological sites within the vicinity of the Project Study Area.
- The Applicant indicates that there are no properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) within the Study Area and 10 sites listed in the Maryland Inventory of Historic properties within the Study Area.
- One historic grave was identified in the ROW during a field visit, the headstone will not be impacted by the Project and MHT has provided guidelines for avoiding impacts, including installing a protective fence.
- The Project Study Area crosses through four Chesapeake Forest Land complexes. Land uses include public and leased hunting. The Project Study Area also crosses the Pocomoke State Forest. Approximately 59 acres of the Pocomoke State Forest and 130 acres of the Chesapeake Forest Lands are within the Project Study Area.
- DPL has initiated coordination with Maryland Forest Service to coordinate with Maryland DNR to ensure impacts to parklands and resources are minimized and compliance is maintained with DNR's land management and conservation goals.

Visual

- There will be minimal visual quality impacts from the Project, primarily due to increase in height of the structures.
 - The average height of the structures will increase from an original height of 70-85 feet to a new height of 100-167 feet.
 - The Project is in an area that is primarily forested or agricultural.
 - The Project does not cross through any greenways in Wicomico County, but crosses one greenway and one Maryland Scenic Byway in Worcester County (Chesapeake Country Scenic Byway).