

# western slopes pipeline field survey activities.



## About the Western Slopes Pipeline

APA is progressing preliminary studies for construction of a 461-kilometre (approximate) gas pipeline – the Western Slopes Pipeline – connecting natural gas from Santos' proposed Narrabri Gas Project to the New South Wales gas transmission network, via the Moomba Sydney Pipeline.

The Western Slopes Pipeline will transport natural gas from new supply areas in north-west NSW to help meet the State's future gas needs. The development of additional natural gas production will provide increased competition in the national gas market. This is good for consumers and promises greater energy security and economic and social benefits for regional communities.

## Why is APA undertaking field surveys?

The preliminary alignment for the Western Slopes Pipeline requires further investigation to address specific landowner considerations, identify and develop a plan of management for potential impacts, and to resolve potential constructability issues. To do this we need to undertake a range of survey activities along the length of the preliminary pipeline alignment and immediately adjacent land.

The proposed survey activities will be undertaken by specialist consultants operating under APA's supervision. Prior to any surveys you will be provided suitable notice and details regarding the proposed activities, equipment to be used, areas of the property to be accessed and planned points of entry.

We are committed to building positive long-term relationships with all landowners along the proposed Western Slopes Pipeline alignment. We are respectful of your rights and understand that while we are working on or near your property, we need consider how this may affect you and your operations.

## What is proposed?

APA will be undertaking a range of field survey activities to inform the design and environmental assessment of the Western Slopes Pipeline. Environmental field studies which are likely to require

access to private land include the following surveys:

- Ecology – flora, fauna and aquatic ecology
- Soils and geology
- Cultural heritage

Cadastral and feature surveys will also need to be undertaken along the preliminary alignment.

Field survey teams will use 4wd-vehicles to drive and inspect the route. Wherever possible existing access roads and tracks will be used. Areas will be accessed on foot where not passable by vehicle, or where a more detailed inspection is required (eg heavy vegetation).

## Ecological surveys

Ecological surveys help identify existing animal and plant species and their habitats. This assists us to avoid or minimise impacts, and develop mitigation measures or environmental offsets where needed. Field teams will have the necessary permits and approvals in place to conduct their work, and comply with the relevant State and Commonwealth Government ecological survey guidelines.

## Flora surveys

Flora (plant) surveys involve a traverse on foot of identified areas, with plant species photographed and in some cases sampled where species verification is required. In selected locations, detailed surveys will be needed to accurately sample the number and distribution of any species of conservation significance or to measure the structure of forest and woodland patches.

Flora surveys usually occur during daylight hours, involving two ecologists. The duration of the surveys will vary. It may be necessary to conduct surveys at certain times of the year when certain species are more easily detected. Flora surveys are typically conducted during spring.

## Fauna surveys

Fauna (animal) surveys are designed to detect particular species of interest. Since many Australian species are nocturnal, many of these surveys will occur at dawn, dusk and sometimes

evenings. Fauna surveys are usually undertaken in a team of two ecologists, for up to a week. It may be necessary to conduct these studies at certain times of the year when certain species are more easily detected, such as breeding or migration seasons.

The fauna survey method will depend on the species of interest. Surveys may involve observations during a walk using spotlights, using specialist call back and recording equipment, and placing nets or traps to gather hair samples, or catch animals. Traps are usually placed on the ground although some traps may be placed on trees. All traps are checked at dawn to prevent harm to captive animals, and to allow them to return to their daytime nests.



Above: an ecologist undertaking a flora survey

Below: a Western Pygmy Possum captured during an ecological survey for APA's Eastern Goldfields Pipeline.



## Aquatic ecology surveys

Water based studies identify existing aquatic life in streams, creeks and rivers. Such surveys usually involve a team of two ecologists accessing a watercourse to assess aquatic habitats.

Water quality surveys may also be undertaken to measure or identify trends in water quality and turbidity (amount of sediment in the water) levels in watercourses. Sampling is usually done by hand, and samples are sent to laboratories for analysis.

Aquatic ecology surveys will typically require access to a watercourse for a half day to a full day, depending on the number of sampling sites.

## Soil and geology surveys

Soil and geology surveys will be undertaken to inform the environmental assessment and design of the pipeline. These investigations help us to understand the physical characteristics of the ground by documenting the characteristics of the soils and areas where rock is encountered.

Soils will be sampled at selected sites along the preliminary alignment using a hand auger. This sampling method has a very small disturbance footprint.



Above: Soil sampling with a hand auger

## Cultural heritage surveys

Cultural heritage surveys are undertaken to understand the extent to which cultural heritage sites or objects on the preliminary alignment may be impacted by planned works, and how any impacts can be managed.



Above: Archaeologists inspecting a potential cultural heritage site.

Cultural heritage surveys involve our archaeologists walking the pipeline alignment to identify cultural heritage sites and objects. In some locations, shallow archaeological investigations (also known as test pits) may be undertaken to gain a better understanding of Aboriginal artefacts located beneath the ground surface in areas of higher cultural heritage sensitivity. Soils will be reinstated upon conclusion of any archaeological investigations.

Other heritage surveys may also be undertaken on private land to assess the presence or potential for non-Indigenous cultural heritage.

## Cadastral and Feature Surveys

APA will also be undertaking cadastral and feature surveys to accurately locate the preliminary alignment relative to existing infrastructure and property boundaries. This will typically involve two surveyors walking along the alignment and using theodolites and GPS equipment to capture spatial data. Survey pegs may also need to be placed at points along the alignment.

## Other Studies

Other environmental field studies to be undertaken for the Western Slopes Pipeline, but which typically do not require access to private land, include the following:

- Noise
- Air quality
- Traffic and transport
- Social studies
- Land use
- Visual amenity
- Flooding and hydrology

Specialist personnel completing these

surveys may undertake a general reconnaissance of the area traversed by the pipeline alignment using public roads or by helicopter.

## Landowner feedback

We recognise that landowners are uniquely placed to provide information regarding the features of their property. We welcome your feedback regarding the proposed alignment and any features or constraints that need to be taken into consideration during this planning and assessment phase of the project.

You may also wish to accompany the survey team during the survey; we often find that landowners are as interested in the results as we are.

## Need more information?

APA is committed to working with landowners during this early planning and assessment phase of the project and your feedback is important to us. If you have any questions about the proposed field survey activities or any other aspect of the project please let us know.

More information can also be found at

<https://www.apa.com.au/about-apa/our-projects/western-slopes-pipeline/>

## You can also contact us by:

- Telephoning **1800 941 145** (Free call 24 hours/7 days)
- Emailing us at [westernslopespipeline@apa.com.au](mailto:westernslopespipeline@apa.com.au)
- Our [online enquiry form](#)