

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

Valley Link Transmission Maryland, LLC  
Valley Link Transmission Virginia, LLC  
Valley Link Transmission West Virginia, LLC

Docket No. EL25-77-000

PROTECTIVE ORDER

Issued July 16, 2025

1. Participants in this proceeding(s) may exchange documents or materials that are deemed to contain Privileged Material and/or Critical Energy/Electric Infrastructure Information (CEII), as those terms are defined herein. Accordingly, IT IS ORDERED THAT this Protective Order shall govern the use of all such material produced by, or on behalf of, any Participant in the above-captioned proceeding(s).
2. The Commission's regulations<sup>1</sup> and its policy governing the labelling of controlled unclassified information (CUI),<sup>2</sup> establish and distinguish the respective designations of Privileged Material and CEII. As to these designations, this Protective Order provides that a Participant:
  - A. *may* designate as Privileged Material any material which customarily is treated by that Participant as commercially sensitive or proprietary or material subject to a legal privilege, which is not otherwise available to the public, and which, if disclosed, would subject that Participant or its customers to risk of competitive disadvantage or other business injury; and
  - B. *must* designate as CEII, any material that meets the definition of that term as provided by 18 C.F.R. §§ 388.113(a), (c).

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<sup>1</sup> Compare 18 C.F.R. § 388.112, with 18 C.F.R. § 388.113. This Protective Order does not alter the respective requirements imposed by these sections on Privileged Material or CEII.

<sup>2</sup> *Notice of Document Labelling Guidance for Documents Submitted to or Filed with the Commission or Commission Staff*, 82 Fed. Reg. 18,632 (Apr. 20, 2017) (issued by Commission Apr. 14, 2017).

3. For the purposes of this Protective Order, the listed terms are defined as follows:
- A. Participant(s): As defined at 18 C.F.R. § 385.102(b).
  - B. Privileged Material:<sup>3</sup>
    - i. Material (including depositions) provided by a Participant in response to discovery requests or filed with the Commission, and that is designated as Privileged Material by such Participant;<sup>4</sup>
    - ii. Material that is privileged under federal, state, or foreign law, such as work-product privilege, attorney-client privilege, or governmental privilege, and that is designated as Privileged Material by such Participant;<sup>5</sup>
    - iii. Any information contained in or obtained from such designated material;
    - iv. Any other material which is made subject to this Protective Order by the Presiding Administrative Law Judge (Presiding Judge) or the Chief Administrative Law Judge (Chief Judge) in the absence of the Presiding Judge or where no presiding judge is designated, the

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<sup>3</sup> The Commission's regulations state that "[f]or the purposes of the Commission's filing requirements, non-CEII subject to an outstanding claim of exemption from disclosure under FOIA will be referred to as privileged material." 18 C.F.R. § 388.112(a). The regulations further state that "[f]or material filed in proceedings set for trial-type hearing or settlement judge proceedings, a participant's access to material for which privileged treatment is claimed is governed by the presiding official's protective order." 18 C.F.R. § 388.112(b)(2)(v).

<sup>4</sup> See *infra* P 11 for the procedures governing the labeling of this designation.

<sup>5</sup> The Commission's regulations state that "[a] presiding officer may, by order . . . restrict public disclosure of discoverable matter in order to . . . [p]reserve a privilege of a participant. . . ." 18 C.F.R. § 385.410(c)(3). To adjudicate such privileges, the regulations further state that "[i]n the absence of controlling Commission precedent, privileges will be determined in accordance with decisions of the Federal courts with due consideration to the Commission's need to obtain information necessary to discharge its regulatory responsibilities." 18 C.F.R. § 385.410(d)(1)(i).

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission), any court, or other body having appropriate authority, or by agreement of the Participants (subject to approval by the relevant authority);

- v. Notes of Privileged Material (memoranda, handwritten notes, or any other form of information (including electronic form) which copies or discloses Privileged Material);<sup>6</sup> or
  - vi. Copies of Privileged Material.
  - vii. Privileged Material does not include:
    - a. Any information or document that has been filed with and accepted into the public files of the Commission, or contained in the public files of any other federal or state agency, or any federal or state court, unless the information or document has been determined to be privileged by such agency or court;
    - b. Information that is public knowledge, or which becomes public knowledge, other than through disclosure in violation of this Protective Order; or
- C. Critical Energy/Electric Infrastructure Information (CEII): As defined at 18 C.F.R. §§ 388.113(a), (c).
- D. Non-Disclosure Certificate: The certificate attached to this Protective Order, by which Participants granted access to Privileged Material and/or CEII must certify their understanding that such access to such material is provided pursuant to the terms and restrictions of this Protective Order, and that such Participants have read the Protective Order and agree to be bound by it. All executed Non-Disclosure Certificates must be served on all Participants on the official service list maintained by the Secretary of the Commission for this proceeding.

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<sup>6</sup> Notes of Privileged Material are subject to the same restrictions for Privileged Material except as specifically provided in this Protective Order.

E. Reviewing Representative: A person who has signed a Non-Disclosure Certificate and who is:

- i. Commission Trial Staff designated as such in this proceeding;
- ii. An attorney who has made an appearance in this proceeding for a Participant;
- iii. Attorneys, paralegals, and other employees associated for purposes of this case with an attorney who has made an appearance in this proceeding on behalf of a Participant;
- iv. An expert or an employee of an expert retained by a Participant for the purpose of advising, preparing for, submitting evidence or testifying in this proceeding;
- v. A person designated as a Reviewing Representative by order of the Presiding Judge, the Chief Judge, or the Commission; or
- vi. Employees or other representatives of Participants appearing in this proceeding with significant responsibility for this docket.

4. Privileged Material and/or CEII shall be made available under the terms of this Protective Order only to Participants and only to their Reviewing Representatives as provided in Paragraphs 6-10 of this Protective Order. The contents of Privileged Material, CEII or any other form of information that copies or discloses such materials shall not be disclosed to anyone other than in accordance with this Protective Order and shall be used only in connection with this specific proceeding.

5. All Privileged Material and/or CEII must be maintained in a secure place. Access to those materials must be limited to Reviewing Representatives specifically authorized pursuant to Paragraphs 7-9 of this Protective Order.

6. Privileged Material and/or CEII must be handled by each Participant and by each Reviewing Representative in accordance with the Non-Disclosure Certificate executed pursuant to Paragraph 9 of this Protective Order. Privileged Material and/or CEII shall not be used except as necessary for the conduct of this proceeding, nor shall they (or the substance of their contents) be disclosed in any manner to any person except a Reviewing Representative who is engaged in this proceeding and who needs to know the information in order to carry out that person's responsibilities in this proceeding. Reviewing Representatives may make copies of Privileged Material and/or CEII, but such copies automatically become Privileged Material and/or CEII. Reviewing Representatives may

make notes of Privileged Material, which shall be treated as Notes of Privileged Material if they reflect the contents of Privileged Material.

7. If a Reviewing Representative's scope of employment includes any of the activities listed under this Paragraph 7, such Reviewing Representative may not use information contained in any Privileged Material and/or CEII obtained in this proceeding for a commercial purpose (e.g. to give a Participant or competitor of any Participant a commercial advantage):

- A. Energy marketing;
- B. Direct supervision of any employee or employees whose duties include energy marketing; or
- C. The provision of consulting services to any person whose duties include energy marketing.

8. If a Participant wishes to designate a person not described in Paragraph 3.E above as a Reviewing Representative, the Participant must seek agreement from the Participant providing the Privileged Material and/or CEII. If an agreement is reached, the designee shall be a Reviewing Representative pursuant to Paragraph 3.D of this Protective Order with respect to those materials. If no agreement is reached, the matter must be submitted to the Presiding Judge for resolution.

9. A Reviewing Representative shall not be permitted to inspect, participate in discussions regarding, or otherwise be permitted access to Privileged Material and/or CEII pursuant to this Protective Order until three business days after that Reviewing Representative first has executed and served a Non-Disclosure Certificate.<sup>7</sup> However, if an attorney qualified as a Reviewing Representative has executed a Non-Disclosure Certificate, any participating paralegal, secretarial and clerical personnel under the attorney's instruction, supervision or control need not do so. Attorneys designated Reviewing Representatives are responsible for ensuring that persons under their supervision or control comply with this Protective Order, and must take all reasonable precautions to ensure that Privileged Material and/or CEII are not disclosed to unauthorized persons. All executed Non-Disclosure Certificates must be served on all

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<sup>7</sup> During this three-day period, a Participant may file an objection with the Presiding Judge or the Commission contesting that an individual qualifies as a Reviewing Representative, and the individual shall not receive access to the Privileged Material and/or CEII until resolution of the dispute.

Participants on the official service list maintained by the Secretary of the Commission for the proceeding.

10. Any Reviewing Representative may disclose Privileged Material and/or CEII to any other Reviewing Representative as long as both Reviewing Representatives have executed a Non-Disclosure Certificate. In the event any Reviewing Representative to whom Privileged Material and/or CEII are disclosed ceases to participate in this proceeding, or becomes employed or retained for a position that renders him or her ineligible to be a Reviewing Representative under Paragraph 3.D of this Protective Order, access to such materials by that person shall be terminated. Even if no longer engaged in this proceeding, every person who has executed a Non-Disclosure Certificate shall continue to be bound by the provisions of this Protective Order and the Non-Disclosure Certificate for as long as the Protective Order is in effect.<sup>8</sup>

11. All Privileged Material and/or CEII in this proceeding filed with the Commission, submitted to the Presiding Judge, or submitted to any Commission personnel, must comply with the Commission's *Notice of Document Labelling Guidance for Documents Submitted to or Filed with the Commission or Commission Staff*.<sup>9</sup> Consistent with those requirements:

- A. Documents that contain Privileged Material must include a top center header on each page of the document with the following text: CUI//PRIV. Any corresponding electronic files must also include this text in the file name.
- B. Documents that contain CEII must include a top center header on each page of the document with the following text: CUI//CEII. Any corresponding electronic files must also include this text in the file name.
- C. Documents that contain both Privileged Material and CEII must include a top center header on each page of the document with the following text: CUI//CEII//PRIV. Any corresponding electronic files must also include this text in the file name.
- D. The specific content on each page of the document that constitutes Privileged Material and/or CEII must also be clearly identified. For

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<sup>8</sup> See *infra* P 19.

<sup>9</sup> 82 Fed. Reg. 18,632 (Apr. 20, 2017) (issued by Commission Apr. 14, 2017).

example, lines or individual words or numbers that include both Privileged Material and CEII shall be prefaced and end with “BEGIN CUI//CEII/PRIV” and “END CUI//CEII/PRIV”.

12. If any Participant desires to include, utilize, or refer to Privileged Material or information derived from Privileged Material in testimony or other exhibits during the hearing in this proceeding in a manner that might require disclosure of such materials to persons other than Reviewing Representatives, that Participant first must notify both counsel for the disclosing Participant and the Presiding Judge, and identify all such Privileged Material. Thereafter, use of such Privileged Material will be governed by procedures determined by the Presiding Judge.

13. Nothing in this Protective Order shall be construed as precluding any Participant from objecting to the production or use of Privileged Material and/or CEII on any appropriate ground.

14. Nothing in this Protective Order shall preclude any Participant from requesting the Presiding Judge (or the Chief Judge in the Presiding Judge’s absence or where no presiding judge is designated), the Commission, or any other body having appropriate authority, to find this Protective Order should not apply to all or any materials previously designated Privileged Material pursuant to this Protective Order. The Presiding Judge (or the Chief Judge in the Presiding Judge’s absence or where no presiding judge is designated), the Commission, or any other body having appropriate authority may alter or amend this Protective Order as circumstances warrant at any time during the course of this proceeding.

15. Each Participant governed by this Protective Order has the right to seek changes in it as appropriate from the Presiding Judge (or the Chief Judge in the Presiding Judge’s absence or where no presiding judge is designated), the Commission, or any other body having appropriate authority.

16. Subject to Paragraph 18, the Presiding Judge (or the Chief Judge in the Presiding Judge’s absence or where no presiding judge is designated), or the Commission shall resolve any disputes arising under this Protective Order pertaining to Privileged Material according to the following procedures. Prior to presenting any such dispute to the Presiding Judge, the Chief Judge or the Commission, the Participants to the dispute shall employ good faith best efforts to resolve it.

- A. Any Participant that contests the designation of material as Privileged Material shall notify the Participant that provided the Privileged Material by specifying in writing the material for which the designation is contested.

- B. In any challenge to the designation of material as Privileged Material, the burden of proof shall be on the Participant seeking protection. If the Presiding Judge, the Chief Judge, or the Commission finds that the material at issue is not entitled to the designation, the procedures of Paragraph 18 shall apply.
- C. The procedures described above shall not apply to material designated by a Participant as CEII. Material so designated shall remain subject to the provisions of this Protective Order, unless a Participant requests and obtains a determination from the Commission's CEII Coordinator that such material need not retain that designation.

17. The designator will have five (5) days in which to respond to any pleading requesting disclosure of Privileged Material. Should the Presiding Judge, the Chief Judge, or the Commission, as appropriate, determine that the information should be made public, the Presiding Judge, the Chief Judge, or the Commission will provide notice to the designator no less than five (5) days prior to the date on which the material will become public. This Protective Order shall automatically cease to apply to such material on the sixth (6th) calendar day after the notification is made unless the designator files a motion with the Presiding Judge, the Chief Judge, or the Commission, as appropriate, with supporting affidavits, demonstrating why the material should continue to be privileged. Should such a motion be filed, the material will remain confidential until such time as the interlocutory appeal or certified question has been addressed by the Motions Commissioner or Commission, as provided in the Commission's regulations, 18 C.F.R. §§ 385.714, .715. No Participant waives its rights to seek additional administrative or judicial remedies after a Presiding Judge or Chief Judge decision regarding Privileged Material or the Commission's denial of any appeal thereof or determination in response to any certified question. The provisions of 18 C.F.R. §§ 388.112 and 388.113 shall apply to any requests under the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. § 552) for Privileged Material and/or CEII in the files of the Commission.

18. Privileged Material and/or CEII shall remain available to Participants until the later of 1) the date an order terminating this proceeding no longer is subject to judicial review, or 2) the date any other Commission proceeding relating to the Privileged Material and/or CEII is concluded and no longer subject to judicial review. After this time, the Participant that produced the Privileged Material and/or CEII may request (in writing) that all other Participants return or destroy the Privileged Material and/or CEII. This request must be satisfied within fifteen (15) days of the date the request is made. However, copies of filings, official transcripts and exhibits in this proceeding containing Privileged Material, or Notes of Privileged Material, may be retained if they are

maintained in accordance with Paragraph 5 of this Protective Order. If requested, each Participant also must submit to the Participant making the request an affidavit stating that to the best of its knowledge it has satisfied the request to return or destroy the Privileged Material and/or CEII. To the extent Privileged Material and/or CEII are not returned or destroyed, they shall remain subject to this Protective Order.

19. Regardless of any order terminating this proceeding, this Protective Order shall remain in effect until specifically modified or terminated by the Presiding Judge, the Chief Judge, or the Commission. All CEII designations shall be subject to the “[d]uration of the CEII designation” provisions of 18 C.F.R. § 388.113(e).

20. Any violation of this Protective Order and of any Non-Disclosure Certificate executed hereunder shall constitute a violation of an order of the Commission.

**RENEE TERRY** Digitally signed by  
RENEE TERRY  
Renee Terry  
Deputy Chief Administrative Law Judge

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION**

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Docket No. EL25-77-000

**NON-DISCLOSURE CERTIFICATE**

I hereby certify my understanding that access to Privileged Material and/or Critical Energy/Electric Infrastructure Information (CEII) is provided to me pursuant to the terms and restrictions of the Protective Order in this proceeding, that I have been given a copy of and have read the Protective Order, and that I agree to be bound by it. I understand that the contents of Privileged Material and/or CEII, any notes or other memoranda, or any other form of information that copies or discloses such materials, shall not be disclosed to anyone other than in accordance with the Protective Order. I acknowledge that a violation of this certificate constitutes a violation of an order of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Representing: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_