

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY**Federal Energy Regulatory Commission**

[Project No. 2077-000-NY/VT]

New England Power Company; Notice of Scoping Meetings Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 for an Applicant Prepared Environmental Assessment

May 15, 1998.

Pursuant to the Energy Policy Act of 1992, and as part of the license application, the New England Power Company (NEP) intends to prepare an Applicant Prepared Environmental Assessment (APEA) to file along with the license application, with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission) for the Fifteen Mile Falls (FMF) Project No. 2077. The license for the project expires on July 31, 2001.

In October 1995, NEP initiated the cooperative consultation process, and in December 1995, state and federal agencies, local interests, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), undertook a cooperative effort for the relicensing of the FMF Project. The process involved identification of environmental issues associated with the relicensing of the FMF Project, including: a public informational meeting in February 1996, a project site visit for agencies/stakeholders, and a public meeting to solicit comments on the Initial Consultation Document (ICD) in June 1996.

As a result of the cooperative consultation process, settlement negotiation meetings were conducted during the spring of 1997, resulting in a signed Settlement Agreement on August 6, 1997.

NEP obtained support from the parties involved in the cooperative process and Settlement Agreement to pursue the APEA process for the relicensing of the FMF Project. On March 9, 1998, NEP requested, and on April 22, 1998, obtained FERC's approval to enter the APEA process. As part of the APEA process, NEP has prepared a Scoping Document I (SDI), which provides information on the scoping process, APEA schedule, background information, environmental issues, and proposed project alternatives.

The purpose of this notice is to: (1) advise all parties as to the proposed scope of the environmental analysis, including cumulative effects, and to seek additional information pertinent to this analysis; and (2) advise all parties of their opportunity for comment.

Scoping Process

The purpose of the scoping process is to identify significant issues related to the proposed action and to determine what issues should be addressed in the document to be prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). The SDI will be circulated to enable appropriate federal, state, and local resource agencies, Indian tribes, NGOs, and other interested parties to participate in the scoping process. SDI provides a brief description of the proposed action, project alternatives, the geographic and temporal scope of a cumulative effects analysis, and a list of issues.

Scoping Meetings and Site Visit

NEP and FERC staff will conduct two scoping meetings and a site visit. All interested individuals, organizations, and agencies are invited to attend and assist in identifying the scope of environmental issues that should be analyzed in the APEA.

The public scoping meeting will be held on June 4, 1998, from 7:00 to 9:00 pm at the Littleton Opera House, Main Street, Littleton, NH. The agency scoping meeting will be held on June 5, 1998, from 9:30 to 12:00 am at the North Country Council Conference Room, 107 Glessner Road, Bethlehem, NH. The site visit will commence at 9:30 am on June 4, 1998. Those persons interested should meet at Moore Visitor Center, Rtes. 135/18, Littleton, NH. For more details, interested parties should contact John Ragonese, NEP, (603)-443-9229, prior to the meeting date.

Objectives

At the scoping meetings, NEP and FERC staff will: (1) summarize the environmental issues identified for analysis in the APEA; (2) solicit from the meeting participants all available information, especially quantified data, on the resources at issue, and (3) encourage statements from experts and the public on issues that should be analyzed in the APEA. Individuals, organizations, and agencies with environmental expertise and concerns are encouraged to attend the meetings and to assist in defining and clarifying the issues to be addressed.

Meeting Procedures

The meeting will be conducted according to the procedures used at Commission scoping meetings. Because this meeting will be a NEPA scoping meeting, the Commission will not conduct another scoping meeting when the application and APEA are filed with the Commission in Spring 1999.

The meetings will be recorded by a stenographer and become a part of the formal record of the Commission proceeding on the FMF Project. Individuals presenting statements at the meetings will be asked to identify themselves for the record. Speaking time allowed for individuals will be determined before each meeting, based on the number of persons wishing to speak and the approximate amount of time available for the session. Persons choosing not to speak but wishing to express an opinion, as well as speakers unable to summarize their positions within their allotted time, may submit written statements for inclusion in the public record no later than June 19, 1998.

All filings should contain an original and 8 copies. Failure to file an original and 8 copies may result in appropriate staff not receiving the benefit of your comments in a timely manner. All comments should be submitted to the Office of the Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20426, and should clearly show the following captions on the first page: Fifteen Mile Falls Project, FERC No. 2077. A copy of each filing should also be sent to John Ragonese, New England Power Company, 407 Miracle Mile, Suite 2, Lebanon, NH 02766.

Based on all written comments, a Scoping Document II (SDII) may be issued. SDII will include a revised list of issues, based on the scoping sessions.

For further information regarding the APEA scoping process, please contact William Guey-Lee, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street, NE, Washington, DC, 20426 at (202) 219-2794, or John Ragonese, New England Power Company, at (603) 443-9229.

Linwood A. Watson, Jr.*Acting Secretary.*

[FR Doc. 98-13482 Filed 5-20-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6717-01-M

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY**Federal Energy Regulatory Commission**

[Docket No. CP98-531-000]

NorAm Gas Transmission Company; Notice of Request Under Blanket Authorization

May 15, 1998.

Take notice that on May 11, 1998, NorAm Gas Transmission Company (NGT), 1600 Smith Street, Houston, Texas 77002, filed in Docket No. CP98-531-000 a request pursuant to Sections