

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Federal Energy Regulatory
Commission

[Docket No. CP05-49-000]

Northern Natural Gas Company; Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Assessment for the Proposed Bluff Creek/Tomah Expansion Project and Request for Comments on Environmental Issues

February 15, 2005.

The staff of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC or Commission) will prepare an environmental assessment (EA) that will discuss the environmental impacts of the Bluff Creek/Tomah Expansion Project involving construction and operation of facilities by Northern Natural Gas Company (Northern) in Lafayette County, Wisconsin, and Fillmore County, Minnesota.¹ These facilities would consist of adding approximately 3.2 miles of 30-inch diameter pipeline at the Bluff Creek Interconnect, located at the terminus of Northern's East Leg pipeline system and increasing the horsepower (HP) at Northern's existing Chatfield compressor station. This EA will be used by the Commission in its decision-making process to determine whether the project is in the public convenience and necessity.

If you are a landowner receiving this notice, you may be contacted by a pipeline company representative about the acquisition of an easement to construct, operate, and maintain the proposed facilities. The pipeline company would seek to negotiate a mutually acceptable agreement. However, if the project is approved by the Commission, that approval conveys with it the right of eminent domain. Therefore, if easement negotiations fail to produce an agreement, the pipeline company could initiate condemnation proceedings in accordance with state law.

A fact sheet prepared by the FERC entitled "An Interstate Natural Gas Facility On My Land? What Do I Need To Know?" was attached to the project notice Northern provided to landowners. This fact sheet addresses a number of typically asked questions, including the use of eminent domain and how to participate in the Commission's proceedings. It is available for viewing on the FERC Internet Web site (<http://www.ferc.gov>).

¹Northern's application was filed with the Commission under section 7 of the Natural Gas Act and Part 157 of the Commission's regulations.

Summary of the Proposed Project

Northern proposes to construct and operate approximately 3.2 miles of 30-inch diameter pipeline in Lafayette County, Wisconsin at the Bluff Creek Interconnect terminus of Northern's East Leg pipeline system; and increase the horsepower (hp) at its existing Chatfield compressor station (CS) located in Fillmore County, Minnesota.

Northern also plans to install auxiliary above ground facilities (crossover with a shutoff valve, blow-down valve, and pipe and fittings) adjacent to the pipeline construction right-of-way at the end of the pipeline.

Northern's Chatfield CS upgrade would consist of replacing the existing 1,750 hp motor with a 2,500 HP compressor. The new compressor and various auxiliary equipment (lube oil pump, pulsation bottles, instrumentation controls) would be housed in a new building, approximately 50 feet by 40 feet, with acoustical walls and ceiling for noise attenuation. A new control building, approximately 25 feet by 12 feet, would also be installed to contain all electrical distribution, control functions, and office space. An additional 250 feet of pipe will be installed within the compressor station yard. The existing control building, containing the electrical distribution and controls for the existing compressor would remain in-place. The new compressor, auxiliary equipment, and control building would be located within Northern's existing Chatfield CS yard.

The work may require up to two pipe yards for pipe storage, staging areas and contractor yards during construction. The primary pipe yard site would be located at the beginning of the proposed pipeline extension in Lafayette County, Wisconsin. The other pipe yard site is an alternate and would be located within an existing river barge off-loading terminal on the Mississippi River in Jo Daviess County, Illinois.

The location of the project facilities is shown in Appendix 1.²

Land Requirements for Construction

Construction of the proposed facilities would require about 92.7 acres of land (including 42 acres for the alternative pipe yard). Following construction,

²The appendices referenced in this notice are not being printed in the **Federal Register**. Copies of all appendices, other than Appendix 1 (maps), are available on the Commission's Web site at the "eLibrary" link or from the Commission's Public Reference Room, 888 First Street, NE., Washington, DC 20426, or call (202) 502-8371. For instructions on connecting to eLibrary refer to the last page of this notice. Copies of the appendices were sent to all those receiving this notice in the mail.

about 18.9 acres would be maintained as operational right-of-way or facility site. The remaining 73.8 acres of land would be restored and allowed to revert to its former use.

The EA Process

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires the Commission to take into account the environmental impacts that could result from an action whenever it considers the issuance of a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity. NEPA also requires us to discover and address concerns the public may have about proposals. This process is referred to as "scoping." The main goal of the scoping process is to focus the analysis in the EA on the important environmental issues. By this Notice of Intent, the Commission staff requests public comments on the scope of the issues to address in the EA. All comments received are considered during the preparation of the EA. State and local government representatives are encouraged to notify their constituents of this proposed action and encourage them to comment on their areas of concern.

In the EA we³ will discuss impacts that could occur as a result of the construction and operation of the proposed project under these general headings:

- Geology and soils.
- Land use.
- Water resources, fisheries, and wetlands.
- Cultural resources.
- Vegetation and wildlife.
- Air quality and noise.
- Endangered and threatened species.
- Hazardous waste.
- Public safety.

We will also evaluate possible alternatives to the proposed project or portions of the project, and make recommendations on how to lessen or avoid impacts on the various resource areas.

Our independent analysis of the issues will be in the EA. Depending on the comments received during the scoping process, the EA may be published and mailed to federal, state, and local agencies, public interest groups, interested individuals, affected landowners, newspapers, libraries, and the Commission's official service list for this proceeding. A comment period will be allotted for review if the EA is published. We will consider all comments on the EA before we make our recommendations to the Commission.

³"We," "us", and "our" refer to the environmental staff of the Office of Energy Projects (OEP).

To ensure your comments are considered, please carefully follow the instructions in the public participation section below.

Currently Identified Environmental Issues

We have already identified several issues that we think deserve attention based on a preliminary review of the proposed facilities and the environmental information provided by Northern. This preliminary list of issues may be changed based on your comments and our analysis.

- The Galena River, a Wisconsin Natural Heritage Inventory Water, would be crossed by the pipeline.
- Three residences are located within 2,000 feet of the compressor upgrade location.

Public Participation

You can make a difference by providing us with your specific comments or concerns about the project. By becoming a commentor, your concerns will be addressed in the EA/EIS and considered by the Commission. You should focus on the potential environmental effects of the proposal, alternatives to the proposal and measures to avoid or lessen environmental impact. The more specific your comments, the more useful they will be. Please carefully follow these instructions to ensure that your comments are received in time and properly recorded:

- Send an original and two copies of your letter to: Magalie R. Salas, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First St., NE., Room 1A, Washington, DC 20426.
- Label one copy of the comments for the attention of Gas Branch 2.
- Reference Docket No. CP05-49-000.
- Mail your comments so that they will be received in Washington, DC on or before March 17, 2005.

Please note that we are continuing to experience delays in mail deliveries from the U.S. Postal Service. As a result, we will include all comments that we receive within a reasonable time frame in our environmental analysis of this project. However, the Commission strongly encourages electronic filing of any comments or interventions or protests to this proceeding. See 18 CFR 385.2001(a)(1)(iii) and the instructions on the Commission's Web site at <http://www.ferc.gov> under the "e-Filing" link and the link to the User's Guide. Before you can file comments you will need to create a free account which can be created on-line.

We may mail the EA for comment. If you are interested in receiving it, please return the Information Request (Appendix 4). If you do not return the Information Request, you will be taken off the mailing list.

Becoming an Intervenor

In addition to involvement in the EA/EIS scoping process, you may want to become an official party to the proceeding known as an "intervenor." Intervenor play a more formal role in the process. Among other things, intervenors have the right to receive copies of case-related Commission documents and filings by other intervenors. Likewise, each intervenor must send one electronic copy (using the Commission's e-Filing system) or 14 paper copies of its filings to the Secretary of the Commission and must send a copy of its filings to all other parties on the Commission's service list for this proceeding. If you want to become an intervenor you must file a motion to intervene according to Rule 214 of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure (18 CFR 385.214) (see Appendix 2).⁴ Only intervenors have the right to seek rehearing of the Commission's decision.

Affected landowners and parties with environmental concerns may be granted intervenor status upon showing good cause by stating that they have a clear and direct interest in this proceeding which would not be adequately represented by any other parties. You do not need intervenor status to have your environmental comments considered.

Environmental Mailing List

An effort is being made to send this notice to all individuals, organizations, and government entities interested in and/or potentially affected by the proposed project. This includes all landowners who are potential right-of-way grantors, whose property may be used temporarily for project purposes, or who own homes within distances defined in the Commission's regulations of certain aboveground facilities. By this notice we are also asking governmental agencies, especially those in Appendix 3, to express their interest in becoming cooperating agencies for the preparation of the EA.

Additional Information

Additional information about the project is available from the Commission's Office of External Affairs, at 1-866-208-FERC or on the FERC

⁴ Interventions may also be filed electronically via the Internet in lieu of paper. See the previous discussion on filing comments electronically.

Internet Web site (<http://www.ferc.gov>) using the eLibrary link. Click on the eLibrary link, click on "General Search" and enter the docket number excluding the last three digits in the Docket Number field. Be sure you have selected an appropriate date range. For assistance, please contact FERC Online Support at FercOnlineSupport@ferc.gov or toll free at 1-866-208-3676, or for TTY, contact (202)502-8659. The eLibrary link also provides access to the texts of formal documents issued by the Commission, such as orders, notices, and rulemakings.

In addition, the Commission now offers a free service called eSubscription which allows you to keep track of all formal issuances and submittals in specific dockets. This can reduce the amount of time you spend researching proceedings by automatically providing you with notification of these filings, document summaries and direct links to the documents. Go to <http://www.ferc.gov/esubscribenow.htm>.

Finally, public meetings or site visits will be posted on the Commission's calendar located at <http://www.ferc.gov/EventCalendar/EventsList.aspx> along with other related information.

Magalie R. Salas,

Secretary.

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DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

Notice of Application Accepted for Filing and Soliciting Motions To Intervene, Protests, and Comments

February 16, 2005.

Take notice that the following hydroelectric application has been filed with the Commission and is available for public inspection:

a. *Type of Application:* Preliminary permit.

b. *Project No.:* 12516-000.

c. *Date filed:* July 6, 2004.

d. *Applicant:* Edward T. Navickis.

e. *Name of Project:* Parshall Canal Project.

f. *Location:* On the North Fork of American River, in Placer County, California. The existing canal is owned by Pacific Gas and Electric Company.

g. *Filed Pursuant to:* Federal Power Act, 16 U.S.C. 791(a)-825(r).

h. *Applicant Contact:* Mr. Edward T. Navickis, P.O. Box 910, Penn Valley, CA 95946, (530) 432-9226.

i. *FERC Contact:* Robert Bell, (202) 502-6062.