



BILLING CODE 6717-01-P

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

[Docket No. CP20-460-000]

Northern Natural Gas Company; Notice of Intent to Prepare An Environmental Assessment for the Proposed Clifton to Palmyra A-Line Abandonment Project and Request for Comments on Environmental Issues

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 Clifton to Palmyra A-line Abandonment Project involving abandonment of pipeline facilities by Northern Natural Gas Company (Northern) in Clay and Washington Counties, Kansas, and Gage, Jefferson, Lancaster, and Otoe Counties, Nebraska, and construction and operation of facilities in Gage County, Nebraska. The Commission will use this EA in its decision-making process to determine whether the project is in the public convenience and necessity.

This notice announces the opening of the scoping process the Commission will use to gather input from the public and interested agencies about issues regarding the project. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires the Commission to take into account the environmental impacts that could result from its action whenever it considers the issuance of a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity. NEPA also requires the Commission to discover 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, the Commission requests public comments on the scope of issues to address in the EA. To ensure that your comments are timely and properly recorded, please submit your comments so that the Commission receives them in Washington, DC on or before 5:00 pm Eastern Time on **July 9, 2020**.

You can make a difference by submitting your specific comments or concerns about the project. Your comments should focus on the potential environmental effects, reasonable alternatives, and measures to avoid or lessen environmental impacts. Your input will help the Commission staff determine what issues they need to evaluate in the EA. Commission staff will consider all filed comments during the preparation of the EA.

If you sent comments on this project to the Commission **before** the opening of this docket on May 21, 2020, you will need to file those comments in Docket No. CP20-460-000 to ensure they are considered as part of this proceeding.

This notice is being sent to the Commission's current environmental mailing list for this project. State and local government representatives should notify their constituents of this proposed project and encourage them to comment on their areas of concern.

If you are a landowner receiving this notice, a pipeline company representative may contact you about the acquisition of an easement to construct, operate, and maintain the proposed facilities. The company would seek to negotiate a mutually acceptable easement agreement. You are not required to enter into an agreement. However, if the Commission approves the project, that approval conveys with it the right of eminent

domain. Therefore, if you and the company do not reach an easement agreement, the pipeline company could initiate condemnation proceedings in court. In such instances, compensation would be determined by a judge in accordance with state law.

Northern provided landowners with a fact sheet prepared by the FERC entitled “An Interstate Natural Gas Facility On My Land? What Do I Need To Know?” 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 also available for viewing on the FERC website (www.ferc.gov) at <https://www.ferc.gov/resources/guides/gas/gas.pdf>.

Public Participation

The Commission offers a free service called eSubscription which makes it easy to stay informed of all issuances and submittals regarding the dockets/projects to which you subscribe. These instant email notifications are the fastest way to receive notification and provide a link to the document files which can reduce the amount of time you spend researching proceedings. Go to <https://www.ferc.gov/docs-filing/ferconline.asp> to register for eSubscription.

For your convenience, there are three methods you can use to submit your comments to the Commission. The Commission encourages electronic filing of comments and has staff available to assist you at (866) 208-3676 or FercOnlineSupport@ferc.gov. Please carefully follow these instructions so that your comments are properly recorded.

- 1) You can file your comments electronically using the [eComment](#) feature, which is located on the Commission's website (www.ferc.gov) under the link to [Documents and Filings](#). Using eComment is an easy method for submitting brief, text-only comments on a project;
- 2) You can file your comments electronically by using the [eFiling](#) feature, which is located on the Commission's website (www.ferc.gov) under the link to [Documents and Filings](#). With eFiling, you can provide comments in a variety of formats by attaching them as a file with your submission. New eFiling users must first create an account by clicking on "[eRegister](#)." You will be asked to select the type of filing you are making; a comment on a particular project is considered a "Comment on a Filing"; or
- 3) You can file a paper copy of your comments by mailing them to the following address. Be sure to reference the project docket number (CP20-460-000) with your submission: Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street NE, Room 1A, Washington, DC 20426

Summary of the Proposed Project

Northern proposes to abandon in-place a total of approximately 115.9 miles of its M600A and M590A 24-inch-diameter pipeline and M600J 20-inch-diameter pipeline (collectively referred to as the A-line) from Clifton, Kansas to Palmyra, Nebraska. Northern also would increase compression capacity at its existing Beatrice Compressor Station to replace the lost capacity from the proposed abandonment. According to

Northern, the purpose of this project is to enhance the safety, security, and operational efficiency of Northern's pipeline system. Northern stated that its M600A and M590A pipelines, which were originally placed in service in the 1930s, have substantially escalating maintenance demands, and the abandonment of this segment of the A-line would improve reliability and provide for the safer long-term operation of its system.

The Clifton to Palmyra A-line Abandonment Project would consist of the following activities:

- disconnect the 24-inch-diameter M600A and the 20-inch-diameter M600J at Northern's existing Clifton Compressor Station;
- disconnect the 24-inch-diameter M590A and the 24-inch-diameter M600A at Northern's existing Beatrice Compressor Station;
- disconnect the 24-inch-diameter M590A at Northern's existing Palmyra Compressor Station;
- abandon in-place 54.3 miles of 24-inch-diameter M600A mainline in Gage and Jefferson Counties, Nebraska, and Washington and Clay Counties, Kansas;
- abandon in-place 19.9 miles of 20-inch-diameter M600J mainline in Clay and Washington Counties, Kansas;
- abandon in-place 41.7 miles of 24-inch-diameter M590A in Otoe, Lancaster, and Gage Counties, Nebraska, between Palmyra and Beatrice, Nebraska; and
- construct a new 15,900-horsepower turbine driven compressor unit at Northern's existing Beatrice Compressor Station near Beatrice, Nebraska.

The general location of the project facilities is shown in appendix 1.¹ Following abandonment activities, a non-jurisdictional third-party salvage company would purchase the pipeline.

Land Requirements for Construction

Northern would disturb approximately 46.2 acres of land to disconnect the pipeline and install the additional compressor unit. To abandon the pipeline in-place, Northern would disconnect and cap the A-line at six interconnections where it is linked to other system facilities. The disconnect locations are proposed within existing compressor station facilities owned by Northern. Northern would construct the additional turbine at the Beatrice Compressor Station within the current facility fenceline. No new land would be obtained or required for the project. The A-line is collocated with other Northern pipelines, which Northern would continue to operate and maintain.

The EA Process

The EA 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;
- water resources and wetlands;
- vegetation and wildlife;
- threatened and endangered species;

¹ The appendices referenced in this notice will not appear in the Federal Register. Copies of appendices were sent to all those receiving this notice in the mail and are available at www.ferc.gov using the link called “eLibrary” or phone (202) 502-8371. For instructions on connecting to eLibrary, refer to the last page of this notice.

- cultural resources;
- land use;
- air quality and noise;
- public safety; and
- cumulative impacts

Commission staff will also evaluate reasonable 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.

The EA will present Commission staff's independent analysis of the issues. The EA will be available in electronic format in the public record through eLibrary² and the Commission's website (<https://www.ferc.gov/industries/gas/enviro/eis.asp>). If eSubscribed, you will receive instant email notification when the EA is issued. The EA may be issued for an allotted public comment period. Commission staff will consider all comments on the EA before making recommendations to the Commission. To ensure Commission staff have the opportunity to address your comments, please carefully follow the instructions in the Public Participation section, beginning on page 2.

With this notice, the Commission is asking agencies with jurisdiction by law and/or special expertise with respect to the environmental issues of this project to formally cooperate in the preparation of the EA.³ Agencies that would like to request

² For instructions on connecting to eLibrary, refer to the last page of this notice.

³ The Council on Environmental Quality regulations addressing cooperating

cooperating agency status should follow the instructions for filing comments provided under the Public Participation section of this notice.

Consultation Under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

In accordance with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's implementing regulations for section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the Commission is using this notice to initiate consultation with the applicable State Historic Preservation Offices, and to solicit their views and those of other government agencies, interested Indian tribes, and the public on the project's potential effects on historic properties.⁴ The EA for this project will document findings on the impacts on historic properties and summarize the status of consultations under section 106.

Currently Identified Environmental Issues

Commission staff have already identified issues that deserve attention based on a preliminary review of the proposed facilities and the environmental information provided by Northern. This preliminary list of issues may change based on your comments and our analysis.

- Air quality and noise impacts; and
- cumulative impacts.

agency responsibilities are at Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1501.6.

⁴ The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's regulations are at Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 800. Those regulations define historic properties as any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

Environmental Mailing List

The environmental mailing list includes federal, state, and local government representatives and agencies; elected officials; environmental and public interest groups; Native American Tribes; other interested parties; and local libraries and newspapers.

This list also includes all affected landowners (as defined in the Commission's regulations) who are potential right-of-way grantors, whose property may be used temporarily for project purposes, or who own homes within certain distances of aboveground facilities, and anyone who submits comments on the project.

Commission staff will update the environmental mailing list as the analysis proceeds to ensure that Commission notices related to this environmental review are sent to all individuals, organizations, and government entities interested in and/or potentially affected by the proposed project.

If the Commission issues the EA for an allotted public comment period, a *Notice of Availability* of the EA will be sent to the environmental mailing list and will provide instructions to access the electronic document on the FERC's website (www.ferc.gov). **If you need to make changes to your name/address, or if you would like to remove your name from the mailing list, please return the attached "Mailing List Update Form" (appendix 2).**

Additional Information

Additional information about the project is available from the Commission's Office of External Affairs, at **(866) 208-FERC**, or on the FERC website at www.ferc.gov using the eLibrary link. Click on the eLibrary link, click on "General Search" and enter the docket number in the "Docket Number" field, excluding the last three digits (i.e., CP20-460). Be sure you have selected an appropriate date range. For assistance, please contact FERC Online Support at FercOnlineSupport@ferc.gov or (866) 208-3676, or for TTY, contact (202) 502-8659. The eLibrary link also provides access to the texts of all formal documents issued by the Commission, such as orders, notices, and rulemakings.

Public sessions or site visits will be posted on the Commission's calendar located at www.ferc.gov/EventCalendar/EventsList.aspx along with other related information.

Dated: June 9, 2020.

Kimberly D. Bose,

Secretary.

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