



BILLING CODE 6717-01-P
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

Northern Natural Gas Company

Docket No. PF20-1-000

Notice of Intent to Prepare an
Environmental Assessment for the Planned
Northern Lights 2021 Expansion 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 Northern Lights 2021 Expansion Project involving construction and operation of facilities by Northern Natural Gas Company (Northern) in Dakota, Scott, Pine, Carleton, and Morrison counties, Minnesota. 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 August 10, 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 December 6, 2019, you will need to file those comments in Docket No. PF20-1 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 planned 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 planned 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.

A fact sheet prepared by the FERC entitled "An Interstate Natural Gas Facility On My Land? What Do I Need To Know?" is available for viewing on the FERC website (www.ferc.gov) under the natural gas Landowner Topics link (<https://www.ferc.gov/industries-data/natural-gas/natural-gas-project-landownerstakeholder-topics-interest>). 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.

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/ferc-online/overview> 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 FERC Online. 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 FERC Online. 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 (PF20-1) with your submission: Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street NE, Room 1A, Washington, DC 20426.

Summary of the Planned Project

Northern plans to construct a pipeline loop¹ and a pipeline extension totaling about 1.5 miles, replace a 425-foot-long 8-inch-diameter branch line with 12-inch-diameter pipeline of the same length, construct one new compressor station, and add additional compression at one existing compressor station, all located in various counties in Minnesota. According to Northern, the planned facilities are required to serve the firm transportation requirements of its customers associated with increased energy needs.

The Northern Lights 2021 Project would consist of the following facilities:

- the Willmar D Branch Line Extension (about 0.8 mile of 24-inch-diameter pipeline);
- the Carlton Interconnect Loop (about 0.7 mile of 24-inch-diameter pipeline);

¹ A pipeline loop is a segment of pipe constructed parallel to an existing pipeline to increase capacity.

- replacement of 425 feet of 8-inch-diameter pipeline on the Viking Interconnect Branch Line with a 12-inch-diameter branch line of the same length;
- a new greenfield natural gas-fired Hinckley Compressor Station, which would include one 11,153-horsepower natural gas-fired turbine, one gas heating skid, and one natural gas-fired backup electric generator;
- modifications of the Pierz Compressor Station consisting of adding an additional 1,100 horsepower electric motor-driven compressor unit; and,
- appurtenant facilities including one new pig² receiver and one new pig launcher, and associated piping and valves.

The general location of the project facilities is shown in appendix 1.³

Land Requirements for Construction

Construction of the planned facilities would disturb about 34.8 acres of land for the aboveground facilities and the pipeline. Following construction, Northern would maintain about 14.4 acres for permanent operation of the project facilities; the remaining acreage would be restored and revert to former uses. About 95 percent of the planned pipeline routes parallel existing pipeline, utility, or road rights-of-way.

The EA Process

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

- geology and soils;
- water resources and wetlands;
- vegetation and wildlife;
- threatened and endangered species;

² A “pig” is a tool that the pipeline company inserts into and pushes through the pipeline for cleaning the pipeline, conducting internal inspections, or other purposes.

³ The appendices referenced in this notice will not appear in the Federal Register. Copies of the 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 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.

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

Commission staff will also evaluate possible alternatives to the planned project or portions of the project and make recommendations on how to lessen or avoid impacts on the various resource areas.

Although no formal application has been filed, Commission staff has already initiated a NEPA review under the Commission's pre-filing process. The purpose of the pre-filing process is to encourage early involvement of interested stakeholders and to identify and resolve issues before the Commission receives an application. As part of the pre-filing review, Commission staff will contact Federal and state agencies to discuss their involvement in the scoping process and the preparation of the EA.

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 eLibrary⁴ and the Commission's natural gas environmental documents webpage (<https://www.ferc.gov/industries-data/natural-gas/environment/environmental-documents>). 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 has the opportunity to consider and 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 related to this project to formally cooperate in the preparation of the EA.⁵ Agencies that would like to request 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

⁴ For instructions on connecting to eLibrary, refer to the last page of this notice.

⁵ The Council on Environmental Quality regulations addressing cooperating agency responsibilities are at title 40, Code of Federal Regulations, § 1501.6.

using this notice to initiate consultation with the applicable State Historic Preservation Office(s), 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.⁶ The EA for this project will document our findings on the impacts on historic properties and summarize the status of consultations under section 106.

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 planned 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).**

Becoming an Intervenor

Once Northern files its application with the Commission, you may want to become an "intervenor" which is an official party to the Commission's proceeding. Only intervenors have the right to seek rehearing of the Commission's decision and be heard by the courts if they choose to appeal the Commission's final ruling. An intervenor formally participates in the proceeding by filing a request to intervene pursuant to Rule 214 of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedures (18 CFR 385.214). Motions to intervene are more fully described at <https://www.ferc.gov/resources/guides/how-to.asp>. Please note that the Commission will not accept requests for intervenor status at this time. You must wait until the Commission receives a formal application for the

⁶ The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation 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.

project, after which the Commission will issue a public notice that establishes an intervention deadline.

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 (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., PF20-1). Be sure you have selected an appropriate date range. For assistance, please contact FERC Online Support at FercOnlineSupport@ferc.gov or toll free at (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 <https://www.ferc.gov/news-events/events> along with other related information.

Dated: July 9, 2020.

Kimberly D. Bose,
Secretary.