

Compressor Stations a Possibility in Tioga Co. NY and Bradford Co. PA

FERC beginning environmental assessment

by Sue Smith-Heavenrich

Broader View Weekly, July 8, 2010

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is beginning an environmental assessment to examine potential environmental impacts involved in the construction and operation of two compressor facilities in Tioga County, NY and Bradford County, PA. The compressor stations are part of the North-South natural gas pipeline project associated with the Central New York Oil and Gas Company (CNYOG) existing Stagecoach Storage Project.

FERC will use the environmental assessment to determine whether the project is in the public convenience and necessity. The agency is soliciting public comment on the project during their scoping period, which closes on Monday, July 26. People may submit comments in writing, or verbally during a July 15 Public Scoping Meeting that will be held in Owego, NY (see below).

Commission staff will also conduct two environmental site reviews of the proposed compressor station locations, and invite all interested parties to accompany them into the field. The Environmental Site Review in Bradford County will be on Wednesday afternoon, July 14 and the Tioga County review takes place early Thursday morning (see “Public Input...” section below).

Proposed Project

CNYOG proposes to construct and operate two new compressor stations to increase their gas-transport capacity and improve their interconnections with both the Millennium and Tennessee Gas pipelines. This is part of their North-South Project linking their Stagecoach storage fields to the major transportation pipelines.

Plans call for an electric-driven 13,400-horsepower centrifugal compressor at the NS1 compressor station in Tioga County, as well as an electric substation at the site. The site in Bradford County (NS2) would gain an electric-driven 15,300-hp Solar C45 centrifugal compressor and a 1,800-foot-long non-jurisdictional power line. CNYOG also plans to expand metering facilities at the interconnections between CNYOG’s North and South Laterals and the Millennium and Tennessee Gas pipelines. That means putting in two 30-inch natural gas pipelines about 900 feet long from NS2 to the Tennessee Gas pipeline.

CNYOG estimates that construction of these facilities would temporarily disturb a little over 54 acres. Once construction is completed, they would need to maintain 5 acres at each site for permanent operation of the compressor stations. About 2 acres would be maintained for access roads, 1 acre would be maintained as a pipeline right-of-way, and about 7 acres would be used for the powerline right-of-way. They propose to restore the remaining 34 acres, allowing that land to revert to former uses.

The Environmental Assessment Process

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires FERC to take into account environmental impacts that could result from an action whenever it considers issuing a “Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity”. That includes a scoping process to discover and address concerns the public may have about proposals.

During the environmental assessment, FERC will discuss impacts that could occur as a result of the construction and operation of the proposed project, including: geology and soils; land use; water resources, fisheries, and wetlands; cultural resources; vegetation and wildlife; air quality and noise; endangered and threatened species; and public safety.

FERC 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 valued resources.

Public Input Invited

There are a number of ways for citizens to provide feedback to FERC on this project. The most immediate way is to join one of the environmental site reviews and provide oral comments at the public scoping meeting.

The Public Scoping Meeting will be held on Thursday, July 15 at 7pm in the Treadway Inn and Conference Center, 1100 State Route 17C. Owego, NY. This is an opportunity for people in the area to provide comments to FERC regarding potential environmental effects, reasonable alternatives, and measures to avoid or lessen environmental impacts.

The environmental site review for compressor station NS2 will take place on Wednesday, July 14. People attending should meet at 2pm at the Tennessee Gas Pipeline's Station 319 (driveway) on Turkey Path Road (State Route 1004) in Wyalusing, PA.

Those attending the environmental site review for compressor station NS1 should meet at 8am on Thursday, July 15 in the lobby of the Treadway Inn and Conference Center, 1100 State Route 17C in Owego, NY.

FERC also provides three ways for citizens to submit written comments – make sure you reference the project docket number CP10-194-000. How to comment:

1) File electronically by using the Quick Comment feature located at www.ferc.gov under the link called “Documents and Filings”;

2) File electronically using the “eFiling” feature listed under the “Documents and Filings” link. First you need to save your typed comments in a file on your computer's hard drive. When you use eFiling you will attach that file to your submission. New eFiling users must first create an account by clicking on the links called “Sign up” or “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”. You may contact the eFiling staff for assistance at 202-502-8258 or by email at efiling@ferc.gov; or

3) Mail a paper copy of your comments to: Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street NE, Room 1A, Washington DC 20426.

-----**SIDEBAR**

What is FERC?

FERC is an independent agency that regulates the interstate transmission of natural gas, oil, and electricity. FERC also regulates natural gas and hydropower projects.

What FERC does:

- Regulates transmission and sale of natural gas for resale in interstate commerce;
- Regulates transmission of oil by pipeline in interstate commerce;
- Regulates transmission and wholesale sales of electricity in interstate commerce;
- Administers accounting and financial reporting regulations and conduct of regulated companies;
- Licenses and inspects private, municipal, and state hydropower projects;
- Approves the siting of and abandonment of interstate natural gas facilities, including pipelines, storage and liquefied natural gas;
- Oversees environmental matters related to natural gas and hydropower projects and major electricity policy initiatives

What FERC doesn't do:

- Regulate retail electricity and natural gas sales to consumers;
- Regulate oil company mergers and acquisitions;
- Regulate municipal power systems, federal power marketing agencies like the Tennessee Valley Authority, and most rural electric cooperatives;
- Approve construction of electric generation, transmission, or distribution facilities, except hydropower;
- Regulate nuclear power plants;
- Oversee oil pipeline construction;
- Regulate abandonment of service related to oil facilities;
- Regulate pipeline safety or pipeline transportation on or across the Outer Continental Shelf;
- Regulate local distribution pipelines of natural gas;
- Regulate development and operation of natural gas vehicles

Information provided from FERC