

## Natural Gas Compressor Station Proposed for Owego

*FERC Conducting Environmental Review; public comment accepted through July 26*

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On Thursday, July 15, environmental engineers from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) headed out to the field to get a first-hand look at the proposed site for a natural gas compressor station. Eight people, including officials from Owego, Soil and Water Conservation District, NYS Ag and Markets, and local residents, laced up their boots and joined representatives from FERC and Central New York Oil and Gas Company (CNYOG) on the walk to the site. It was more people than FERC environmental project manager Rich McGuire expected, as usually no one shows up for site reviews.

CNYOG, an Inergy company, plans to construct a new compressor station near their existing facility, but located closer to the Millennium pipeline. This is part of their North-South Project that links the Stagecoach storage fields to the Millennium and Tennessee Gas pipelines. A new compressor will allow them more flexibility in moving gas from the storage field to the pipelines.

The current compressor is located on the Reeves Farm, between McLean Road and East Beecher Hill in Owego. “The problem,” said CNYOG representative Randy Parker, “is that the current compressor just doesn’t have enough horsepower.” They plan to install an electric 13,400-horsepower centrifugal compressor uphill from the current compressor. They’ll also need an electric substation at the site.

Noise shouldn’t be an issue, Parker noted, because FERC regulations set that level at 55 decibels (dB). When asked about emissions, Parker explained that was the primary reason for building an electric-powered compressor. Except for fugitive emissions from the pipeline, there shouldn’t be any emissions, he said.

McGuire asked, “Why here?” One reason, Parker explained, is that the construction won’t impact other land owners. The farmer who owns the land is agreeable to selling the 25 acres required for the access road and compressor. More important, though, is the proximity to the Millennium pipeline. CNYOG looked at other areas but one was too close to the pipeline, and the other was too steep a slope. This site, while near the top of a hill, is fairly level. It is also within a half mile of McLean, Lisle, and East Beecher Roads.

So far, Parker said, the only concerns from adjacent landowners are how the compressor construction will affect hunting, and the potential for storm water runoff.

The facility itself will be unmanned, monitored electronically from a distance. In addition to monitors, the station will have alarms and the capacity to automatically “blow-down” the walls in the event of a gas leak.

Plans include retaining a wooded buffer between the compressor site and the landowners. “The current landowners are not opposed to the plans at all,” Parker said. “In fact, they plan to incorporate the site into their hay-rides.” And neighboring landowners and hunters seem to appreciate the deer habitat the clearing will provide.

Amy Gonzales, of AK Environmental, is working on the environmental assessment for the project as well. She addressed storm water runoff and wetland concerns. “We will be doing erosion and sediment control during construction,” she said. This includes such things as using a silt fence, hay bales, or erosion control blankets. She also explained that they will re-seed and mulch exposed soil and access roads.

“Erosion control is a major issue on any pipeline project,” Gonzales said. “FERC has a little more oversight and stricter regulations than other agencies.”

CNYOG plans to begin construction next spring. But that depends on the environmental assessment, McGuire noted. FERC will review all comments they receive. Usually they don’t hold additional public meetings, but he noted that the level of public interest and input has an influence on that.

### **Public Hearing**

Later that day, a handful of residents showed up at the Treadway Inn in Owego for the public hearing. One property owner was concerned about noise, water runoff and how this expansion would affect property values for neighboring landowners. Another was concerned about eminent domain issues. The last wanted assurances that the contractors would segregate topsoil, using it to cover the pipeline once construction was completed. He observed that the restoration behind the current metering station looked as though that hadn’t been done.

FERC environmental engineer Jessica Harris explained that FERC requires companies to segregate the topsoil – except in forested areas where they want to reduce the width of the right-of-way, and where there is very little topsoil to separate.

“We monitor the restoration for three years post-construction and then throughout the life of the project,” she added. She noted that their erosion control document is online at their website, [www.ferc.gov](http://www.ferc.gov).

### **Where to Submit Comments**

FERC is accepting comments on the proposed compressor project through Monday, July 26. When you write your comments make sure you reference the project docket number, CP10-194-000. There are three ways to submit written comments:

- 1) File electronically by using the Quick Comment feature located at [www.ferc.gov](http://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](mailto:efiling@ferc.gov);
- 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.