

freshwater. The power plant would require up to 1,000,000 gallons per day for operating needs. The surplus would be sold for public use.

- Other facilities necessary for the operation of the cogeneration facility include a 2.3-mile-long, 230-kilovolt (kV) transmission line connecting the plant substation to an existing Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA) substation; a 3.5-mile-long, 8-inch-diameter pipeline to supply LPG to the cogeneration facility; a 2.0-mile-long, 12-inch-diameter water pipeline for connecting to an existing offsite water supply or to outside delivery systems; a 1.2-mile-long 24-inch-diameter natural gas pipeline stub; and a 1.1-mile-long, nominal 24-inch-diameter natural gas pipeline to serve the PREPA Costa Sur Power Plant.

The joint EIS has been placed in the public files of the FERC and is available for public inspection at:

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission,  
Public Reference and Files  
Maintenance Branch, 888 First Street,  
NE, Room 2E, Washington, DC 20426,  
(202) 208-1371

Puerto Rico Planning Board, P.O. Box  
41119, Santurce, Puerto Rico 00940-  
1119, (809) 727-4444

Copies have been mailed to Federal, Commonwealth, and local agencies, public interest groups, interested individuals, public libraries, newspapers, and parties to this proceeding.

A limited number of copies of the joint EIS are available from either:

Mr. Chris Zerby, Federal Energy  
Regulatory Commission, Office of  
Pipeline Regulation, Room 72-55, 888  
First Street, NE, Washington, DC  
20426, (202) 208-0111

Mrs. Maria Gordillo, Puerto Rico  
Planning Board, P.O. Box 41119,  
Santurce, Puerto Rico 00940-1119,  
(809) 727-4444

Additional information about this project is available from Mr. Chris Zerby, FERC EIS Project Manager, at (202) 208-0111. Information concerning the involvement of the Puerto Rico Planning Board can be obtained from Mrs. Maria Gordillo, PRPB EIS Project Manager, at (809) 727-4444.

Linwood A. Watson, Jr.,  
*Acting Secretary.*

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[Docket No. CP96-53-000]

**NE Hub Partners, L.P.; Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Assessment for the Proposed NE Hub Tioga Storage Project and Request for Comments on Environmental Issues**

April 29, 1996.

The staff of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC or the Commission) will prepare an environmental assessment (EA) that will discuss the environmental impacts of the construction and operation of the facilities proposed in the NE Hub Tioga Storage Project.<sup>1</sup> This EA will be used by the Commission in its decision-making process to determine whether an environmental impact statement is required and whether or not to approve the project.

**Summary of the Proposed Project**

On November 7, 1995, NE Hub Partners, L.P. (NE Hub) filed an application requesting, among other things, authority to construct and operate a high deliverability natural gas salt cavern storage facility. In conjunction with the storage facilities, NE Hub said that it, along with other partners, intended to develop a nonjurisdictional commercial salt business and possibly other nonjurisdictional business ventures at the site (i.e. compressed air storage for electric generation and petroleum storage). The project involves the construction of two gas storage caverns with a capacity of up to 3 billion standard cubic feet per cavern. Leaching of the storage caverns in the existing underground salt formation would require the withdrawal of 2,400 gallons of fresh water per minute from the Cowanesque Reservoir over about 28 months. After the water is pumped from a developing cavern, a portion of the brine water would be injected into an underground formation through brine disposal wells and the remainder would be shipped out by railroad cars to an evaporation plant. When completed, NE Hub indicated that the storage caverns would be connected to pipelines owned by CNG Transmission Corporation (CNG), Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company (Tennessee), and North Penn Gas Pipeline Company (North Penn).

In its application and subsequent responses to staff data requests, NE Hub has said that it intended to begin construction of certain bringing facilities, including cavern leaching wells, brine disposal wells, and piping.

<sup>1</sup> NE Hub Partners, L.P.'s application was filed with the Commission under section 7 of the Natural Gas Act.

in June 1996, prior to Commission action on its certificate application. NE Hub asserts that Commission jurisdiction should not attach until the cavern leaching process commences. Any facilities needed to start that process (i.e., freshwater intake and pump station; freshwater pipeline; a brining facility consisting of pumps, storage tanks, injection pumps, booster pumps, separators, centrifuges and support facilities; brine pipeline; cavern leaching wells; brine disposal wells; and possibly a rail loading facility) will be built prior to Commission certification.

We intend to review the environmental impacts of the following of NE Hub's activities which involve construction and operation:

- Two cavern leaching/storage wells used to leach two caverns (first cavern available for the 1997-1998 winter heating season and the second cavern available for the 1999-2000 winter heating season);
- Four segments of 26-inch-diameter transmission pipeline totalling 12.2 miles;
- 7.1 miles of 4-inch-diameter fuel gas lines;
- Approximately 2.5 miles of 24-inch-diameter gas storage pipeline;
- Three meter stations;
- Six compressors (18,750 horsepower total) for two storage caverns;
- Three gas heaters;
- A methanol injection system;
- Two gas withdrawal separators;
- One dehydrator;
- Other related gas facilities;
- A freshwater intake pumping station at Cowanesque Reservoir;
- 2.2 miles of 12-inch-diameter freshwater pipeline to transport water to the brining operation;
- Three brine disposal wells;
- Freshwater injection pumps;
- Freshwater and brine holding tanks;
- A leaching plant;
- Brine pumps;
- 19.2 miles of 12-inch-diameter water injection/brine disposal pipeline;
- Five storage tanks for process fluids;
- A rail car loading system to ship either the brine or crystallized salt; and potentially,
- An unspecified diameter/length pipeline and an evaporate plant to dispose of the brine and other facilities to the extent needed for brine disposal.

NE Hub's interconnections with CNG, Tennessee, and North Penn would require the construction of a hot tap, meter, pressure regulator, valves, and other related facilities at each delivery site.

The general location of the project facilities and specific locations for the know facilities on new sites are shown in appendix 1.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The appendices referenced in this notice are not being printed in the Federal Register. Copies are available from the Commission's Public Reference and Files Maintenance Branch, 888 First Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20426, or call (202) 208-1371. Copies of the appendices were sent to all those receiving this notice in the mail.

### Land Requirements for Construction

The project would require about 900 acres of land. The proposed gas pipelines would be partly built adjacent to existing pipeline or electric transmission line rights-of-way (ROW). The construction ROW would typically be 100 feet wide consisting of a 50-foot-wide permanent ROW and a 50-foot-wide temporary ROW. The construction ROW would serve as a multiple use ROW comprising gas pipelines, brine pipelines, freshwater pipelines, and fuel gas pipelines were applicable. Following construction, the disturbed area would be restored and the 50 feet of temporary ROW would be allowed to revert to its former land 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. We call this "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 requests public comments on the scope of the issues it will address in the EA. All comments received are taken into account during the preparation of the EA.

We intend to use but not duplicate work of other agencies to the greatest extent possible. The water intake at the Cowanesque Reservoir is under review by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore, Maryland District Office. The leaching process and subsurface brine disposal are under joint jurisdiction of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP). Land disposal permitting is also required by the PADEP. 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.

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, fisheries, and wetlands
- vegetation and wildlife
- endangered and threatened species
- Noise impacts
- land use
- cultural resources
- 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 recommend that the Commission approve or not approve the project.

### 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 NE Hub.

- 46 streams would be crossed and some of them are coldwater fisheries that support trout.
- 58 wetlands would be crossed totalling about 30.8 acres.
- Federal and state-listed threatened or endangered species may be affected.
- The project may impact cultural resources.
- Potential land disposal of 2,200 cubic yards of solid material (brine filter cake) may occur from the brine leaching process used to develop two caverns. The brine filter cake may be mixed into the top 2 feet of soil and spread over 9.4 acres.
- Noise impacts would occur to nearby residences from the operation of the compressor station, water and brine pumping equipment, well drilling, and the rail car loading station.
- A pipeline and evaporation plant may be constructed that would be associated with the potential salt business at an undetermined location near the project area.

The list of issues may be added to, subtracted from, or changed based on your comments and our analysis.

### Public Participation

You can make a difference by sending a letter with your specific comments or concerns about the project. You should focus on the potential environmental effects of the proposal, alternatives to the proposal (including alternative routes), and measures to avoid or lessen environmental impact. The more specific your comments, the more useful they will be. Please follow the

instructions below to ensure that your comments are received and properly recorded:

- Address your letter to: Lois Cashell, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First St., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20426;
- Reference Docket No. CP96-53-000;
- Send a *copy* of your letter to: Mr. John Wisniewski, EA Project Manager, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission; 888 First St., N.E., PR-11.2, Washington, D.C. 20426; and
- Mail your comments so that they will be received in Washington, D.C. on or before May 28, 1996.

If you wish to receive a copy of the EA, you should request one from Mr. Wisniewski at the above address.

### Becoming an Intervenor

In addition to involvement in the EA scoping process, you may want to become an official party to the proceeding or become an "intervenor". Among other things, intervenors have the right to receive copies of case-related Commission documents and filings by other intervenors. Likewise, each intervenor must provide copies of its filings to all other parties. 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).

The date for filing timely motions to intervene in this proceeding has passed. Therefore, parties now seeking to file late interventions must show good cause, as required by section 385.214(b)(3), why this time limitation should be waived. Environmental issues have been viewed as good cause for late intervention. You do not need intervenor status to have your scoping comments considered.

Additional information about the proposed project is available from Mr. John Wisniewski, EA Project Manager, at (202) 208-1073.

Linwood A. Watson, Jr.,

*Acting Secretary.*

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[Docket No. CP96-57-000]

### Northern Natural Gas Company; Notice of Availability of the Environmental Assessment for the Proposed 1996 Zone EF Expansion Project

April 29, 1996.

The staff of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC or Commission) has prepared an