
Chapter 1 Purpose of and Need for Action

The following changes were made in Chapter 1 between the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement. Minor corrections, explanations and edits are not included in this list.

- The former Purpose and Need section has been replaced with a more detailed description.

Background

On May 17, 2000, Coos County, Oregon (hereafter referenced as “the County”), acting by and through its Board of Commissioners, filed application OR55754 with the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for a perpetual or renewable (with the longest allowable initial term) ROW to construct, operate and maintain a 12-inch diameter natural gas transportation pipeline across BLM-managed lands. Portions of the proposed action will be located within 3 miles of BLM ROW designated for roads or utility corridors.

Application is made to establish the pipeline in accordance with: 1) The Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, Section 28, as amended (30 USC 185); and 2) regulations at 43 Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) 2800.

In August, 2000, the County filed application (Form BPA F 4300.03e) with Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) for consent to build sections of its natural gas pipeline within BPA utility corridors.

On November 10, 2000, the County filed application to the COE, a cooperating federal agency, for authorization to construct the proposed pipeline across streams and wetlands along the proposed action. The COE has assigned application No. 2000-00544 to the project.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed action is to construct a 12 inch natural gas transmission pipeline from near Roseburg to Coos County. Natural gas transported by the pipeline would provide an alternative source of energy for existing or potential residential, commercial or industrial customers within the Coos County service area. This EIS provides the analysis necessary for BLM to make a decision on granting a discretionary right-of-way permit for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the pipeline on approximately three miles of BLM-administered land.

The total length of the pipeline is about 60 miles. Approximately 28 miles of smaller pipeline laterals would eventually be constructed to serve the Coos County cities of Coquille, Myrtle Point and possibly Bandon. Gas distribution systems would be built in each city, most likely by Northwest Natural Gas (hereafter referred to as NW Natural). The laterals and distribution lines would be located entirely on private properties.

Coos County has never had direct access to natural gas as an energy source, but has relied on petroleum products and propane, electricity, or wood for energy sources. Utility gas is available in every state, including Alaska and Hawaii. More than half of all homes in the United States are heated with natural gas. Natural gas accounts for about one-quarter of all energy needs in the country. Natural gas is more efficient and less expensive than electricity, heating oil or propane, and much cleaner than wood fuel. Natural gas service is nearly as common to US towns and cities as are electricity, community water and sewer, and telephone services.

Of the 17 Western states, natural gas is available in approximately 950 of 1,060 counties, with about 99 percent of the population of the West. With a population of about 63,000 (Census 2000), Coos County is the largest county in the Western United States that does not have natural gas.

In 1999, Coos County leaders recognized the necessity for natural gas as critical to the community’s economic survival. Government and civic leaders, local industries and support businesses all supported a public awareness campaign, which resulted in a grant from the State of Oregon to publicly fund a gas pipeline. Ballot Measure #6-63, authorizing additional taxpayer funds for construction of a natural gas pipeline, was passed by a double majority of Coos County voters in November 1999.

Summary of scoping and significant issues of the EIS

Scoping is required for preparation of an EIS. Its use with the proposed action was a help in determining some potential effects to assess. The formal scoping notice for preparation of the EIS was published in the Federal Register on March 29, 2001. A public scoping meeting was held in Coos Bay on April 4, and at the McKinley Grange on April 18, 2001. The formal scoping period closed on April 30, 2001. A total of 40 letters were received during the scoping period.

The proposed action is a result of numerous feasibility studies conducted over the course of approximately 35 years. Participants in the EIS analysis used these studies, along with additional recent studies, for the basis of information included in this EIS.

The following issues arose from the Inter-disciplinary Team (IDT) scoping process:

- Regulations affecting the proposed action;
- Impacts (effects) - (1) Impacts on aquatic and riparian habitats and water quality; (2) Impacts on air pollution and soil productivity; (3) Impacts on plants and terrestrial species and habitats, which includes Port-Orford-cedar, Noxious Weeds, Special Status Species, Survey & Manage Species, T&E Species, as well as related Critical Habitat Units (CHUs); (4) Cultural resource-site protection (including Native American Religious Concerns); and (5) Economic impacts;
- Under private or public (Federal, State or local) jurisdiction or ownership;
- Direct, Indirect and Cumulative effects: short and long term effects of the proposed action and its ancillary facilities;
- Agency concerns (Federal, State or local agency analysis of impacts);
- Public concerns: All public comments, questions and concerns are listed in Appendices G-G2.

This FEIS addresses the proposed action's real or potential impacts to environmental resource components. Impacts are presented for affected land ownership. The impact analysis defines the interaction of the component(s) of the proposed action with its surrounding environment, including affected environments extending beyond the project construction boundary (the ROW easement).

Conformance with BLM Resource Management Plan EIS

Both the Coos Bay and Roseburg BLM District Resource Management Plans (herein referred to as 'RMP'), specifically encourage use of existing ROW, such as the BPA corridor utilized in the proposed action. Both RMPs suggest that the location of new ROW are placed in these existing utility corridors. Placement of a pipeline in the CBW Road, the BPA utility corridor and the Pacific Power & Light (owned by Pacificorp, herein referred to as PP&L) utility corridor would be consistent with the RMP guidelines and recommendations.

Authorizing Actions and Relationship to Statutes and Regulations

The proposed action would comply with the following:

- Federal Land Policy and Management Act ("FLPMA") of 1976 (90 Stat. 2743, 43 U.S.C. 1701, et seq.);
 - Revested Oregon and California (O&C) Railroad and Reconveyed Coos Bay Wagon Road Grant Lands Act of 1937 (50 Stat. 874, U.S.C. 1181a., et seq.);
 - National Environmental Policy Act of 1969;
 - Federal Pipeline Safety Regulations 49 CFR, parts 190-199;
 - United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Air and Water Quality guidelines;
 - Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) regulations (relating to Oregon Highways);
 - American Indian Religious Freedom Act (42 USC 1996). Guidelines for protecting sites;
 - Northwest Forest Plan (NFP) 1994;
 - Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973;
 - Magnuson-Stevens Conservation and Management Act as amended by the Sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996;
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- Section 10, Rivers and Harbors Act 1899 (33 U.S.C. 402);
 - Section 404, Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1344).

Interrelationship with Other Projects

Anticipated Future Gas Pipeline Projects

Anticipated Interrelationships with future projects would likely (not automatically) take place after approval of the proposed action.

Additional (smaller) pipelines would likely be installed to the communities of North Bend, Coquille, Myrtle Point, Empire, Charleston and possibly Bandon if this community grants a franchise to NW Natural. NW Natural also plans to extend the pipeline to the North Spit of Coos Bay within three to four years of completion of the proposed action. These future projects would be planned based on market needs within the area they would serve, which would include determination of pipeline size. Funding for these projects, except in the case of Bandon, will be provided by NW Natural. Bandon would have the option to build their own distribution system, including a pipeline extending from the proposed action or its lateral pipelines, if they decide to have natural gas supplied to their community.

Although the final locations of the laterals are not known, it is anticipated that 28 miles of pipeline laterals would likely be constructed to Coquille, Myrtle Point and Bandon. Impacts associated with construction of the laterals are anticipated to be similar to, but of lower magnitude than, the main pipeline because the laterals would cross fewer streams and would not be adjacent to late-successional habitats. No Federal land would be impacted.

New Industrial Gas Users

This natural gas pipeline project was proposed by Coos County and funded by county and state taxpayers for economic development. The proposed action would result in the availability of natural gas to most commercial and industrial areas of Coos County. It is hoped that the availability of natural gas will attract new manufacturing and commercial facilities to Coos County. It is also likely that existing industrial users of oil, wood and other fuels would convert to natural gas.

Natural gas is often an important factor in site selection, but other critical factors include transportation facilities (access to Interstate highways, rail, ports and airports), location relative to raw materials and markets, available work force, local wages, educational resources, quality of life and other factors. Natural gas availability alone, however, would not cause new manufacturing facilities to be built. Because no industrial commitments have yet occurred, it is not possible to quantify the potential environmental impacts of unknown future facilities and their potential locations. Future new facilities utilizing natural gas will be required to undergo their own environmental impacts analyses, within the required permitting processes for new construction.

Interdependencies

Interdependencies are projects that would likely occur upon approval of the proposed action. That is, approval of the proposed action would likely “trigger” the interdependent action.

Natural Gas Distribution System

The proposed action 12-inch mainline would end at Ocean Boulevard by the old water plant in Coos Bay. The city gate station would include a meter, a piping manifold to send gas in different directions, and possibly pressure regulators to reduce pressure. NW Natural will build a gas distribution system. The design of the system will not be finalized until more marketing studies are finished to identify size and type of gas loads.

Location and construction of the distribution lines to natural gas end customers would be funded by NW Natural. Distribution lines are not expected to cross any federally managed lands. Impacts associated with the lateral lines and distribution system would be subject to regulation by the Oregon Public Utility Commission (“OPUC”).