

## DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Federal Energy Regulatory  
Commission

[Docket No. PF03-3-000]

**Williston Basin Interstate Pipeline  
Company; Notice of Intent To Prepare  
an Environmental Assessment for the  
Proposed Grasslands Expansion  
Project and Request for Comments on  
Environmental Issues**

October 8, 2003.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC or Commission) staff will prepare an environmental assessment (EA) on Williston Basin Interstate Pipeline Company's (Williston Basin) proposed Grasslands Expansion Project in Wyoming, Montana, and North Dakota. This notice announces the opening of the scoping process we<sup>1</sup> will use to gather input from the public and interested agencies on the project. Your input will help us determine which issues need to be addressed in the EA. Details on how to submit written comments are provided in the public participation section of this notice. Please note that the scoping period will close on November 24, 2003.

We are sending this notice to potentially-affected landowners whose properties are within an approximate 1-mile radius of the project locations; Federal, state, and local government agencies; elected officials; environmental and public interest groups; Native American tribes; and local libraries and newspapers. We are asking state and local government representatives to notify their constituents of this planned action and encourage them to comment on their areas of concern.

**Summary of the Proposed Project**

Williston Basin states that the Grasslands Expansion Project would allow transportation of an additional 120 million cubic feet per day (mmcf/d) to the Northern Border Pipeline on the Grasslands Pipeline. This would increase the capacity of the Grasslands Pipeline to 200 mmcf/d. The Grasslands Pipeline (Docket Nos. CP02-37-000, 002, and 003) was originally designed to transport 80 mmcf/d.

The project facilities include:

- construction of up to three new compressor stations; one each in Campbell County, Wyoming; Carter County, Montana; and Golden Valley County, North Dakota; and

- installation of additional compression at the existing Manning Compressor Station in Dunn County, North Dakota.

Construction and operation of the planned compressor stations would require a total of about 30 acres. Construction at the existing Manning Compressor Station would occur on the existing site. A general location map of the project facilities is shown in Appendix 1.<sup>2</sup>

Williston Basin also plans to construct additional facilities in Fallon County, Montana that are associated with the Grasslands Expansion Project, but are not under the jurisdiction of the Commission. These non-jurisdictional facilities, which include a supply lateral, gathering lines, and well field compression, would help alleviate transmission constraints and provide needed capacity for future production increases out of the Baker Production Area.

Williston Basin plans to construct this project in 2004, with the goal of placing it in-service by November 1, 2004, if the project is fully subscribed by the time they make application with the Commission (tentatively November 1, 2003). If not fully subscribed at the time of application, Williston Basin has stated that they may propose to phase its construction schedule of the various facilities over more than 1 year.

**The EA Process**

The Commission will be the lead Federal agency for this EA process which is being conducted to satisfy the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Commission will use the EA to consider the environmental impacts that could result if it issues Williston Basin a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity for its proposed project.

This notice formally announces our preparation of the EA and the beginning of the process referred to as "scoping." We are soliciting input from the public and interested agencies to help us focus the analysis in the EA on the potentially significant environmental issues related to the proposed action. All comments received will be considered during the preparation of the EA which will

include our independent analysis of the identified issues.

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 timely comments on the EA before we make our recommendations to the Commission.

Although Williston Basin has not filed a formal certificate application yet, we are initiating our review under the NEPA Pre-filing Process. The purpose of the FERC's NEPA Pre-filing Process is to: (1) Establish a framework for constructive discussion between the project proponents, potentially affected landowners, agencies, and the Commission staff; (2) encourage the early involvement of interested stakeholders to identify issues and study needs; and (3) attempt to resolve issues early, before an application is filed with the FERC.

A docket number (PF03-3-000) has been established to place information filed by Williston Basin, and related documents issued by the Commission, in the public record.<sup>3</sup> When Williston Basin files an application, it will be assigned a "CP docket" number, and all information filed under Docket No. PF03-3-000 will become part of the record for the "CP docket."

With this notice, we are asking other Federal, state, local, and tribal agencies with jurisdiction and/or special expertise with respect to the environmental issues to formally cooperate with us in the preparation of the EA. These agencies may choose to participate once they have evaluated the proposal relative to their responsibilities. Agencies, which would like to request cooperating status, should follow the instructions for filing comments described later in this notice.

If you are an affected property owner receiving this letter, a Williston Basin representative may contact you about the acquisition of an easement to construct, operate, and maintain the planned facilities. You may have already been contacted by Williston Basin about the Grasslands Expansion Project, or may have attended the open houses sponsored by Williston Basin in early August 2003. A fact sheet has been prepared by the FERC entitled "An

<sup>1</sup> "We", "us" and "our", refer to the environmental staff of the Office of Energy Projects.

<sup>2</sup> The appendices referenced in this notice are not being printed in the **Federal Register**. Copies of all appendices are available on the Commission's Web site (<http://www.ferc.gov>) at the "eLibrary" link or from the Commission's Public Reference and Files Maintenance Branch, 888 First Street, NE., Washington, DC 20426, or call at (202) 502-8371. For instructions on connecting to eLibrary refer to the last page of this notice. Copies of the appendices were sent to all those receiving this notice in the mail.

<sup>3</sup> To view information in the docket, follow the instructions for using the eLibrary link at the end of this notice.