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**Lois D. Cashell,**

*Secretary.*

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[Docket No. CP95-119-001]

**Steuben Gas Storage Company; Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Assessment for the Proposed Thomas Corners Gas Storage Field Project and Request for Comments on Environmental Issues**

May 8, 1995.

On April 18, 1995, Steuben Gas Storage Company (Steuben) filed an amendment to its application which substantially changed the routing of its proposed 12-inch-diameter gathering header. The beginning and ending points and the approximate length of the gathering header, as well as all other aspects of Steuben's proposal remain unchanged by this amendment. This notice supplements the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC or Commission) "Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Assessment for the Proposed Thomas Corners Gas Storage Field Project and Request for Comments on Environmental Issues" issued March 3, 1995 (March 3 Notice).

The staff of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC or Commission) will prepare an environmental assessment (EA) that will discuss the environmental impacts of the construction and operation of facilities proposed in the Thomas Corners Gas Storage Field 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 necessary and whether or not to approve the project.

**Summary of the Proposed Project**

Steuben requests Commission authorization to convert a depleted natural gas production field to storage use in Steuben County, New York. It proposes to construct and operate:

- 13 injection/withdrawal wells (11 new wells drilled from one central location and two converted from existing gas production wells);
  - One observation well;
  - 0.6 mile of 4-inch-diameter well laterals;
  - 0.3 mile of 12-inch-diameter well laterals;

<sup>1</sup> Steuben's application was filed with the Commission under section 7 of the Natural Gas Act and Parts 157 and 284 of the Commission's regulations.

- A 3,284 horsepower compressor station;
- 6.5 miles of 12-inch-diameter gathering header including a pipeline drip and storage tank; and
- Dehydration facilities.

Steuben indicates that the proposed storage field, when fully developed, would have a working gas capacity of 5,300,000 thousand cubic feet of gas. Customers interested in using Steuben's storage service would have to arrange for their own transportation. Steuben's existing facilities are interconnected with the facilities of CNG Transmission Corporation (CNG) in the town of Woodhull, Steuben County, New York. The 6.5 miles of gathering header would connect the Thomas Corners Gas Storage Field to Steuben's existing facilities.

Steuben states that the storage facility would be developed in the nearly depleted Thomas Corners gas production reservoir. It lies about 3,530 feet below the surface. The aerial extent of the reservoir is about 430 acres.

The location of the project facilities is shown in appendix 1.<sup>2</sup>

**Land Requirements for Construction**

Steuben proposes to use a nominal 70-foot-wide right-of-way for construction of the 6.5 miles of 12-inch-diameter pipeline. Following construction, a 50-foot-wide easement would be permanently maintained; the remaining 20 feet would be restored and allowed to revert to its former use.

Additional working right-of-way width would be needed in areas of steep side slopes and in agricultural areas where topsoil would be segregated. Additional working space would also be needed adjacent to road and stream crossings. About 60 acres would be required for construction of the 12-inch-diameter gathering header.

A total of 37 acres would be needed for construction of the Thomas Corners Gas Storage Field. All new injection/withdrawal wells would be directionally drilled from one central pad area covering approximately 31 acres. The wells would be drilled at 150-foot centers around the perimeter of the pad area. All of the 4- and 12-inch-diameter well laterals would be constructed within the central well pad area.

An additional 6-acre work space would be required adjacent to the pad

<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, Room 3104, 941 North Capitol 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.

area for drilling, completion, maintenance operations, and equipment staging. After construction is complete, this area would be used for the dehydration facilities.

The proposed compressor station would be located on Steuben's existing Adrian Compressor Station site.

**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. 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.
- Public safety.
- Land use.
- Cultural resources.
- Hazardous waste.
- Air and noise quality.

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.