response. This restriction does not limit the Government's right to use or disclose data obtained without restriction from any source including the respondent.

#### Submission

Each submittal should consist of six copies, one original and five photocopies. The original copy of the Expression of Interest shall contain all documents that bear original signatures. DOE is under no obligation to pay for any costs associated with the preparation or submission of Expressions of Interest in response to this notice. DOE reserves the right to respond or not respond to any portion, all, or none of the Expressions of Interest submitted in response to this notice.

Issued in Washington, D.C., on November 21, 1995.

Terry R. Lash,

Director, Office of Nuclear Energy, Science and Technology.

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# Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

[Docket No. CP96-32-000]

Viking Gas Transmission Company; Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Assessment for the Proposed VGT Expansion Project and Request for Comments on Environmental Issues

December 5, 1995.

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 the facilities proposed in the VGT Expansion Project. This EA will be used by the Commission in its decision-making process to determine whether an environmental impact statement is necessary and whether to approve the project.

Summary of the Proposed Project

Viking Gas Transmission Company (VGT) wants to expand the capacity of its facilities in Kittson and Norman Counties, Minnesota, to transport an additional 19,420 decatherms per day of natural gas. VGT requests authorization to construct and operate two 24-inch-

diameter pipeline loops, totalling 13.51 miles in length, and appurtenant facilities.

The general location of the project facilities is shown in appendix 1.2

Land Requirements for Construction

Construction of the proposed facilities would require about 179.3 acres of land, including 81.9 acres of temporary right-of-way. Following construction, all of the land would be restored and allowed to revert to its former use. No new permanent right-of-way is required for the project.

### 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 considered 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
  - air quality and noise
  - hazardous waste

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 issues that we think deserve attention based on a preliminary review of the proposed facilities and the environmental information provided by VGT.

- A total of 155 acres of agricultural land, virtually all of it is prime farmland soils, would be affected.
- One perennial stream (the North Branch, Two Rivers) would be crossed.

Keep in mind that this is a preliminary list. 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 addressing your specific comments or concerns about the project. you should focus on the potential environmental effects of the proposal, alternatives to the proposal, 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. CP96–32–000;
- Send a *copy* of your letter to: Mr. Jeff Shenot, EA Project Manager, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First St., N.E., Room 7L–05, Washington, D.C. 20426; and
- Mail your comments so that they will be received in Washington, D.C. on or before January 10, 1996.

If you wish to receive a copy of the EA, you should request one from Mr. Shenot 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".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Viking Gas Transmission Company's application was filed with the Commission under Section 7 of the Natural Gas Act and Part 157 of the Commission's regulations.

<sup>&</sup>lt;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, NE., Washington, DC 20426, or call (202) 208–1371. Copies of the appendices were sent to all those receiving this notice in the mail.