[Docket Nos. CP97–168–000 and CP97–169–000]

Alliance Pipeline L.P.; Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Alliance Pipeline Project, Request for Comments on Environmental Issues, and Notice of Public Scoping Meetings and Site Visit

February 21, 1997.

The staff of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC or Commission) will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that will address the environmental impacts of the construction and operation of approximately 887 miles of natural gas transmission pipeline, seven compressor stations, metering and delivery facilities, and other appurtenant facilities proposed in the Alliance Pipeline Project.[1] This EIS will be used by the Commission in its decision-making process to determine whether to approve the project.

Summary of the Proposed Project

Alliance Pipeline L.P. (Alliance) wants to build new natural gas pipeline transmission facilities in North Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa and Illinois with an initial capacity to transport 1.3 billion cubic feet per day of natural gas from Canada to interconnections with existing natural gas pipeline systems in the Chicago, Illinois area. Alliance requests Commission authorization, in Docket No. CP97–168–000, to construct and operate the following facilities:

- 887 miles of 36-inch-diameter mainline pipeline extending from the border of the United States (U.S.) and Canada near Sherwood, Renville County, North Dakota, to a point near Joliet, Will County, Illinois. Of the 887-mile-long mainline, about 324 miles would be in North Dakota, 252 miles would be in Minnesota, 189 miles would be in Iowa, and 122 miles would be in Illinois.
- Seven new compressor stations with a total of 320,000 horsepower (hp) of compression:

—Towner Compressor Station (40,000 hp) in McHenry County, North Dakota.
—Wimbledon Compressor Station (40,000 hp) in Barnes County, North Dakota.
—Fairmount Compressor Station (40,000 hp) in Richland County, North Dakota.
—Olivia Compressor Station (40,000 hp) in Renville County, Minnesota.
—Albert Lea Compressor Station (40,000 hp) in Freeborn County, Minnesota.
—Manchester Compressor Station (40,000 hp) in Delaware County, Iowa.
—Tampico Compressor Station (80,000 hp) in Whiteside County, Illinois.

- Five new meter stations located in Grundy and Will Counties, Illinois, and a new measurement and pressure control station located in Grundy County, Illinois.
- A total of 1.1 mile of 36-inch-diameter pipeline connecting Alliance's proposed meter stations with existing natural gas pipeline facilities in Grundy and Will Counties, Illinois.
- Associated pipeline facilities, including 47 mainline block valves, seven internal tool launchers/receivers, and permanent access roads for access to compressor stations and valves. Communication and electric service facilities associated with the compressor stations may also be required.

In addition, Alliance requests in Docket No. CP97–169–000 a Presidential Permit authorizing construction, operation and maintenance of facilities at the International Border for the importation of natural gas. These facilities would consist only of the portion of the mainline extending across the border and will be evaluated in the EIS as part of the facilities described above.

In connection with the facilities proposed by Alliance, a natural gas liquids (NGL) extraction plant would be constructed near Morris, Illinois by Aux Sable Liquid Products L.P. The purpose of the NGL plant would be to extract ethane and other natural gas liquids that may be present in Alliance's gas stream. For the purpose of comprehensive environmental review, the NGL extraction plant will be included within the scope of the EIS.

Alliance also plans to construct a 982-mile-long natural gas pipeline system in Canada extending from gas production areas in western Canada to the U.S./Canadian border where it would connect with Alliance's proposed facilities in the U.S. However, environmental review of the Canadian portion of the project will not be included in our EIS.

The location of the project facilities is shown in appendix 1.

Land Requirements for Construction

Construction of the Alliance Pipeline Project facilities would affect a total of about 13,312 acres. Of this total, about 11,313 acres would be disturbed by construction of the pipeline. Approximately 814.1 miles (90 percent) of the new pipeline be installed parallel to various existing pipeline rights-of-way occupied by other pipelines. Alliance's pipeline would deviate from the existing rights-of-way in several locations to avoid environmental or engineering constraints or reduce the total length of new pipeline required. Alliance would generally use a right-of-way width for construction of 105 feet, with provisions for extra temporary work areas for waterbody, highway and railroad crossings, additional topsoil storage, and pipe and equipment yards.

Following construction and restoration of the right-of-way and temporary work spaces, Alliance would retain a 60-foot-wide permanent pipeline right-of-way. Existing land uses on the remainder of the disturbed areas, as well as most land uses on the permanent right-of-way, would be allowed to continue following construction. Total land requirements for the permanent right-of-way would be about 6,449 acres.

The extra work areas and aboveground facilities, including compressor and meter stations, internal tool launchers/receivers, and permanent access roads would affect approximately 1,999 acres of land during construction. Mainline valves would be built within or adjacent to the permanent right-of-way. No locations have been identified for the communication and electrical service facilities.

The NGL extraction plant would be located on a 100-acre parcel currently occupied by an abandoned synthetic natural gas plant owned by Northern Illinois Gas Company.

The EIS 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. The EIS we are preparing will give the Commission the information to do that. 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 EIS 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 EIS. All comments received are considered during the preparation of the EIS. We encourage state and local government representatives to notify their constituents of this proposed action and encourage them to comment.

[1] Alliance Pipeline L.P.'s applications were filed with the Commission under Sections 3 and 7 of the Natural Gas Act and Part 157 of the Commission's regulations on December 24, 1996.

Currently Identified Environmental Issues

The EIS will discuss impacts that could occur as a result of the construction and operation of the proposed project. We have already identified a number of issues that we think deserve attention based on a preliminary review of the proposed facilities and the environmental information provided by Alliance. These issues are listed below. 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.

- Soils.

—Temporary and permanent impacts on prime farmland soils.
—Mixing of topsoil and subsoil during construction.
—Compaction of soil by heavy equipment.
—Impacts on drain tiles and irrigation systems.
—Erosion control and restoration of the right-of-way.

- Water Resources.

—Crossing of 616 waterbodies, canals and drainages.
—Crossing of 11 rivers or canals 100 feet wide or greater, including the James, Chippewa, Minnesota, Bois de Sioux, Wapsipinicon, Mississippi, Rock, Fox and Des Planes rivers, and the Illinois and Michigan Canals.
—Potential for erosion and sediment transport to the waterbodies.
—Effect of construction on groundwater and surface water supplies.
—Impact on wetlands.

- Biological Resources.

—Effect on wildlife and fisheries habitats.
—Effect on federally listed endangered and threatened species.

- Cultural Resources.

—Impact on historic and prehistoric sites.
—Native American and tribal concerns.

- Socioeconomics.

—Effect of the construction workforce on demands for services in surrounding areas.
—Impact on property values.

- Land Use.

—Impact on crop production and grazing.
—Impact on residential areas.
—Effect on public lands and special use areas, including: Rural Economic and Community Development Services areas, a state game refuge, and several proposed segments of the North Country National Scenic Trail in North Dakota; a National Waterfowl Production Area, Seven Mile Creek County Park, East Minnesota River State Game Refuge, Sakatah Singing Hills River State Trail, and Lyle-Austin Wildlife Management Area in Minnesota; Price Wildlife Habitat in Iowa; and Camp Hauberg, Hennepin Canal Parkway State Park, Fox River Natural Area, and Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor and State Trail in Illinois.
—Impact on future land uses.
—Visual effect of the aboveground facilities on surrounding areas.

- Air Quality and Noise.

—Impact on local air quality and noise environment during construction.
—Impact on local and regional air quality and local noise environment from operation of new compressor stations and the NGL extraction plant.

- Reliability.

—Assessment of hazards associated with natural gas pipelines, and natural gas liquids extraction operations.

- Cumulative Impact.

—Assessment of the combined effect of the proposed project with other projects, including other natural gas transmission lines, which have been or may be proposed in the same region and similar time frames.

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 presented in a Draft EIS which will be mailed to Federal, state, and local agencies, public interest groups, interested individuals, affected landowners, newspapers, libraries, and the Commission's official service lists for these proceedings. A 45-day comment period will be allotted for review of the Draft EIS. We will consider all comments on the Draft EIS and revise the document, as necessary, before issuing a Final EIS. The Final EIS will include our response to all comments received.

Public Participation and Scoping Meetings

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 (including alternative locations and 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:

- Reference Docket Nos. CP97–168–000 and CP97–169–000.
- Send two copies of your comments to: Lois Cashell, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20426.
- Label *one* copy for the attention of the Environmental Review and Compliance Branch, PR–11.1.
- Please mail your comments so that they will be received in Washington, DC on or before March 28, 1997.

In addition to or in lieu of sending written comments, you are invited to attend one of the four public scoping meetings being held in the project area. Meetings will be held at the following times and locations:

March 17, 1997

7:00 pm—Chieftain Motor Lodge, (701) 652–3131, Highway 281, Carrington, North Dakota

March 18, 1997

7:00 pm—Mankato Civic Center, (507) 389–3000, One Civic Center Plaza, Mankato, Minnesota

March 19, 1997

7:00 pm—Falcon Civic Center, (319) 334–2606, 1305 5th Avenue, N.E., Independence, Iowa

March 20, 1997

7:00 pm—Days Inn, (815) 875–3371, (formerly Lincoln Inn), 2238 North Main Street, Princeton, Illinois

The purpose of the scoping meetings is to obtain information from state and local governments and from the public. Federal agencies have formal channels for participating in the process as cooperating agencies (including separate meetings, where appropriate). Federal agencies are expected to file their written comments directly with the FERC and not use the scoping meetings for this purpose.

Alliance will be present at the scoping meetings to describe their proposal. Interested groups and individuals are encouraged to attend the meetings and present oral comments on the environmental issues which they believe should be addressed in the Draft EIS. A transcript will be made of the meetings and the comments will be made part of the Commission's record in this proceeding.

We are asking a number of federal agencies to indicate whether they wish to cooperate with us in the preparation of the EIS. These agencies may choose to participate once they have evaluated the proposal relative to their agencies'

responsibilities. The list of agencies is provided in appendix 2.[2]

On the above dates we will also be conducting limited site visits to the project area in the vicinity of each scoping meeting location. Anyone interested in participating in the site visit may contact the Commission's Office of External Affairs, identified at the end of this notice, for more details and must provide their own transportation.

Becoming an Intervenor

In addition to involvement in the EIS scoping process, you may want to become an official party to the proceedings, known as 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 on the Commission's service lists for these proceedings. 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 3).

The date for filing of timely motions to intervene in these proceedings has passed, having ended January 29, 1997. 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. However, you do not need intervenor status to have your scoping comments considered.

Environmental Mailing List

This notice is being sent to individuals, organizations, and government entities interested and/or potentially affected by the proposed project.

Anyone offering scoping comments will be automatically kept on our environmental mailing list for this project. If you do not want to offer comments at this time but still want to keep informed and receive copies of the Draft and Final EISs, please return the Environmental Mailing List Information (appendix 4). If you do not return the card you will be taken off the mailing list.

Additional information about the proposed project is available from Paul McKee in the Commission's Office of External Affairs at (202) 208–1088.

Lois D. Cashell,

Secretary.

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[2] 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, Room 2A, or call (202) 208–1371. Copies of the appendices were 2A, or call (202) 208–1371. Copies of the appendices were sent to all those receiving this notice in the mail.

Notice of Plan To Provide Additional Recreation Facilities

February 21, 1997.

Take notice that the following hydroelectric application has been filed with the Commission and is available for public inspection:

a. Type of Filing: Plan to Provide Additional Recreation Facilities.

b. Project Name and No: Mottville Hydroelectric Project, FERC Project No. 401–019.

c. Date Filed: July 19, 1996.

d. Licensee: Indiana Michigan Power Company.

e. Location: St. Joseph River in St. Joseph County, Michigan near Mottville.

f. Filed pursuant to: Federal Power Act, 16 U.S.C. § 791(a)–825(r).

g. Licensee Contact: William Vineyard, Associate Manager, Fossil and Hydro, Operations, American Electric Power Service Corporation, 1 Riverside Plaza, Columbus, Ohio 43215–2373, (614) 223–1702.

h. FERC Contact: Steve Naugle, (202) 219–2805.

i. Comment Date: March 31, 1997.

j. Description of the filing: The licensee proposes to add the following recreation improvements at the project: (1) reservoir and tailwater boat launch facilities, a parking area, and associated road and pathway extensions at Mottville Canoe Park; and (2) parking and picnic areas and fishing access at the project powerhouse.

k. This notice also consists of the following standard paragraphs: B, C1, D2.

B. Comments, Protests, or Motions to Intervene—Anyone may submit comments, a protest, or a motion to intervene in accordance with the requirements of Rules of Practice and Procedure, 18 CFR 385.210, .211, .214. In determining the appropriate action to take, the Commission will consider all protests or other comments filed, but only those who file a motion to intervene in accordance with the Commission's Rules may become a party to the proceeding. Any comments, protests, or motions to intervene must be received on or before the specified comment date for the particular application.

C1. Filing and Service of Responsive Documents—Any filings must bear in all capital letters the title ''COMMENTS'', RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TERMS AND CONDITIONS'', ''PROTEST'', or ''MOTION TO INTERVENE'', as applicable, and the Project Number of the particular application to which the filing refers. Any of the above-named documents must be filed by providing the original and the number of copies provided by the Commission's regulations to: The Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's regulations to: The Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20426. A copy of any motion to intervene must also be served upon each representative of the Applicant specified in the particular application.

D2. Agency Comments—Federal, state, and local agencies are invited to file comments on the described application. A copy of the application may be obtained by agencies directly from the Applicant. If an agency does not file comments within the time specified for filing comments, it will be presumed to have no comments. One copy of an agency's comments must also be sent to the Applicant's representatives.

Lois D. Cashell,

Secretary.

[FR Doc. 97–4809 Filed 2–26–97; 8:45 am]

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[Docket No. RP–97–225–000]

Williams Natural Gas Company; Notice of Technical Conference

February 21, 1997.

In the Commission's order issued on February 7, 1997,[1] in the above-captioned proceeding, the Commission held that the filing raises issues for which a technical conference is to be convened.

The conference to address the issues has been scheduled for Tuesday, March 11, 1997 at 10:00 a.m. in a room to be designated at the offices of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20426.

[1] 78 FERC ¶ 61,112 (1997).