DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
Permitting and Compliance Division
Air and Waste Management Bureau
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DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA)

Issued For: Pine Gas Gathering, L.L.C.
Pine Gas Unit
919 South Seventh Street
Suite #407
Bismarck, ND 58504

Air Quality Permit Number: 3031-00

Preliminary Determination Issued: 12/15/98

Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) Compliance: An environmental assessment required by the MEPA, was completed for this project as follows.

Legal Description of Site: The Pine Gas Compressor Station is located in the NE¼NE¼ of Section 9, Township 11 North, Range 57 East, Wibaux County, Montana.

Description of Project: This permit is for the operation of a natural gas compressor station that supplies pressure to pipelines which distribute gas to markets in Montana and North Dakota. The current project involves the installation of one 755 Hp Waukesha compressor engine and a glycol dehydrator at a new facility to be located approximately 35 miles northwest of Baker, Montana. An additional engine will be added to the facility within the first six to eight months, but the engine will be permitted with the initial permitting action.

Benefits and Purpose of Proposal: This facility is designed to compress and transport pipeline quality natural gas. Emissions from the facility's sources will be kept at reasonable limits by installation and operation of BACT controls. The compressor and dehydration facility will allow Pine Gas to supply natural gas to the Williston Basin Interstate Pipeline Company and/or to a Shell Western E&P fuel line.

Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider: No reasonable alternatives available.

A listing and appropriate evaluation of mitigation, stipulations and other controls enforceable by the agency or another government agency: A list of enforceable conditions, including a best available control technology analysis, are contained in permit #3031-00.

Description and analysis of regulatory impacts on private property rights: The department has considered alternatives to the conditions imposed in this permit as part of the permit development. The department has determined that the permit conditions are reasonably necessary to ensure compliance with applicable requirements and demonstrate compliance with those requirements and do not unduly restrict private property rights.

Potential Impact on Physical Environment							
		Major	Moderate	Minor	None	Unknown	Comments
1	Terrestrial and Aquatic Life and Habitats			X			See Attached Comments
2	Water Quality, Quantity and Distribution			X			See Attached Comments
3	Geology and Soil Quality, Stability and Moisture			X			See Attached Comments
4	Vegetation Cover, Quantity and Quality			X			See Attached Comments
5	Aesthetics			X			See Attached Comments
6	Air Quality			X			See Attached Comments
7	Unique Endangered, Fragile or Limited Environmental Resource				X		See Attached Comments
8	Demands on Environmental Resource of Water, Air and Energy			X			See Attached Comments
9	Historical and Archaeological Sites			X			See Attached Comments
10	Cumulative and Secondary Impacts			X			See Attached Comments

Potential Impact on Human Environment							
		Major	Moderate	Minor	None	Unknown	Comments
1	Social Structures and Mores				X		See Attached Comments
2	Cultural Uniqueness and Diversity				X		See Attached Comments
3	Local and State Tax Base and Tax Revenue			X			See Attached Comments
4	Agricultural or Industrial Production				X		See Attached Comments
5	Human Health			X			See Attached Comments
6	Access to and Quality of Recreational and Wilderness Activities				X		See Attached Comments
7	Quantity and Distribution of Employment			X			See Attached Comments
8	Distribution of Population				X		See Attached Comments
9	Demands for Government Services			X			See Attached Comments
10	Industrial and Commercial Activity				X		See Attached Comments
11	Locally Adopted Environmental Plans and Goals				X		See Attached Comments
12	Cumulative and Secondary Impacts			X			See Attached Comments

POTENTIAL IMPACT ON PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. There will be minor impacts to the terrestrial and aquatic life and habitats in the immediate area of the propose project. The surrounding area is habitat for antelope, mule deer, grouse, wild turkey, skunk, cactus, sage, western red cedar, and pine trees. However, the facility is not expected to alter any of the terrestrial life or habitats. The area around the 2.52 acre site is expected to support the same terrestrial life that it supported before the project. No impacts are expected on the aquatic life and habitats in the area.

2. Water from the dehydrator is sent to the reboiler, where the glycol is heated to the boiling point of water. The resulting water vapor is released to the atmosphere. Water may be used as a dust suppressant, as necessary to maintain compliance with the opacity requirements. If water is used as a dust suppressant, only small quantities will be required. No surface water runoff problems will result from using water as a dust suppressant. No further water quality, quantity and distribution impacts are expected as a result of this project.

3. There will be minor impacts to the geology and soil quality, stability and moisture in the area as a result of the proposed facility. The local geology includes clay filled top soil with sparse vegetation. There is no exposed geology. The top soil will be moved around to provide level surfaces to house the structures and road necessary for the compressor station, but only to the extent necessary. The end result will be that only a small portion of the 2.52 acre site will be disturbed.

4. There will be minor impacts to the vegetation cover quantity and quality. The project site consists of open and broken range. The local geology includes clay filled top soil with sparse vegetation. Several structures and a road are required for proper operation of the compressor station. The vegetation cover quantity and quality will be impacted for the compressor station, but only to the extent necessary.

5. The area will not look exactly the same as it did prior to the addition of the compressor station. However, compared to the size of the surrounding area, the impacts will be minimal. The impacts to the aesthetics of the area from this facility are minor because the compressor station is small, and will only consist of several small buildings. The nearest communities are approximately 30 miles away. Noise from the facility will be minimized by enclosing the compressor engines within buildings.

6. The air quality in the area will be impacted by the addition of the compressor station to the area. By placing BACT controls on the compressor engines, the impacts to the air quality will be minimized. The BACT control that was chosen for each of the 755 Hp compressor engines was Non-Selective Catalytic Reduction (NSCR) with an Air-Fuel Ratio (AFR) Controller.

7. The department has contacted the Montana Natural Heritage Resource Program in an effort to identify any sensitive, unique, endangered, or threatened environmental resource. Search results from the Natural Heritage Resource Program indicated there is no record of species of special concern in the area.

8. The current project will place additional demands on the air and energy resources in the area. The purpose of the proposed project is to tap the natural gas resources of the Cedar Creek Anticline. More than likely, the energy demands of running the compressor station will be satisfied by using the natural gas from the field. As part of compressing the gas that is taken from the field, the facility will emit pollutants to the surrounding air. As a result, the surrounding air quality will be minimally impacted. However, physical controls on the equipment and permit conditions will minimize the impacts.

9. The department has contacted the Montana Historical Society, Historic Preservation Office to determine if there are any historical or archaeological sites located on the proposed premises. As reported by the Montana Historical Society, there is one previously recorded historic site in the area. The site 24WX109 is a historic one-room schoolhouse. The site is located in the proposed project area. The operator will give appropriate protection if any values or artifacts are discovered in the affected area; including routing around the site of discovery for a reasonable amount of time and contacting the State Historical Preservation Office.

10. Overall, the cumulative and secondary impacts from this project will result in minor impacts to the immediate area. Air pollution from the facility will be controlled by BACT controls and conditions in permit #3031-00. The proposed site is also approximately 30 miles from the nearest town, so the impacts will be less likely to affect people.

POTENTIAL IMPACT ON HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

1. There will be no change in social structures or mores as a result of the addition of the Pine Gas Facility.

2. There will be no change to the cultural uniqueness and diversity of the area as a result of the addition of the Pine Gas Facility..

3. Minor changes are expected in the local and state tax base as a result of the proposed project. The project is expected to require one new employee who may or may not be located full time in the immediate area. If located in the immediate area, the employee will contribute to the local tax base.

4. The addition of the Pine Gas facility will not cause a change in the local agricultural or industrial production. Currently, the project area is used for oil and gas production, as well as cattle grazing. The area outside the 2.52 acre site will continue to be used for oil and gas operations and cattle grazing. The product from this facility will be delivered to the Williston Basin Interstate (WBI) Pipeline Company receipt point or to a Shell Western E&P fuel line.

5. Permit #3031-00 incorporates conditions to ensure that the compressor station will be operated in compliance with all applicable rules and standards. These rules and standards are designed to be protective of human health.

6. No impacts are expected on the recreational and wilderness opportunities in the area. Currently, there are basically no recreational or wilderness opportunities available in the area, so there are no impacts expected.

7. The quantity and distribution of employment will be minimally affected by the addition of the Pine Gas facility. The Pine Gas facility may result in one new employee for Pine Gas Gathering to be located in the immediate area.

8. The addition of the Pine Gas facility will basically have no impact on the distribution of population. One new employee may relocate to the project area.

9. The only immediate demands for government services as a result of the current project will be in acquiring the appropriate permits, complying with the appropriate permits, etc.

10. No additional impacts to industrial or commercial activity are expected as a result of establishing the compressor station in the area. Commercial activity will remain unaffected by this project.

11. No locally adopted environmental plans and goals are in place that will be impacted by this project.

12. Overall, the cumulative and secondary impacts from this project will result in minor impacts to the immediate area. Air pollution from the facility will be controlled by BACT controls and conditions in permit #3031-00.

Recommendation: No EIS is required.

If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is an appropriate level of analysis: The limitations in Permit #3031-00 will restrict emissions from the Pine Gas facility. By applying the conditions that were derived through the BACT determination, the emissions from the facility will be controlled and the effects to the surrounding air quality will be minimal. The results of the EA that was performed for the Pine Gas facility reflect the minimal impacts that will result from the addition of the compressor station. For these reasons, the EA is the appropriate level of analysis and an EIS is not required.

Other groups or agencies contacted or which may have overlapping jurisdiction: None

Individuals or groups contributing to this EA: Department of Environmental Quality, Permitting and Compliance Division

EA prepared by: Dan Walsh
Date: 12/09/98