

**NOTICE OF APPLICATION ACCEPTANCE - PUBLIC INFORMATION  
AND COMPARATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS SCOPING  
MEETING**

*Issued: February 4, 2016*

**In the Matter of the Application of Minnesota Energy Resources Corporation for a Route Permit for the Rochester Natural Gas Pipeline Project in Olmsted County**

**Public Utilities Commission (PUC) Docket Number: G-011/GP-15-858**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>
Monday, February 29, 2016	2:00pm	Kahler Apache 1517 16 <sup>th</sup> Street SW, Rochester MN 55902
Monday, February 29, 2016	6:00pm	Kahler Apache 1517 16 <sup>th</sup> Street SW, Rochester MN 55902

**Bad weather?** Find out if a meeting is canceled. Call (toll-free) 1-855-731-6208 or 651-201-2213 or visit [mn.gov/puc](http://mn.gov/puc)

**Project Description**

Minnesota Energy Resources Corporation (MERC) proposes to construct approximately 13.1 miles of new natural gas pipeline west and south of the city of Rochester in Olmsted County, Minnesota. The proposed pipeline will include installation of approximately 5.1 miles of 16-inch outside diameter and 8.0 miles of 12-inch outside diameter steel pipeline designed to operate at pressures between 400-475 pounds per square inch gauge (psig). The proposed project will tie together the northern and southern portions of MERC's existing natural gas distribution system.

The proposed project will also include construction of two town border stations. Town border stations receive high pressure natural gas from the natural gas transmission system (900-1,000 psig) and regulate it down for use on the local distribution system (400-500 psig). The project will also include construction of a district regulator station. District regulator stations take high pressure distribution natural gas (400-500 psig) and regulate it down further (60-100 psig) for delivery to the low pressure distribution system.

MERC states the project is needed to provide firm and reliable natural gas service to an expanding Rochester customer base.

## Meeting Information

- The meeting starts on time.
- Arrive a few minutes early so you have time to sign in, pick up materials, and find a seat.
- State agency staff members run the meeting.
- A public advisor will be available to advise any person how to effectively participate in the project.
- Public Utilities Commission, Department of Commerce, and MERC staff members are available to respond to questions about the permitting process and the project.
- You may add verbal comments, written comments, or both into the record.
- The Department of Commerce uses comments received at the meeting and during the comment period to develop the scope of the comparative environmental analysis for this project.

## Submit Comments, Alternative Routes, Alternative Route Segments

### Topics Open for Public Comment:

- Please focus your comments on information that will help answer the following questions.
- In your comments, please state which question(s) you are addressing.
  1. What human and environmental impacts of the proposed pipeline should be studied in the comparative environmental analysis (CEA) prepared for this project?
  2. Are there any specific methods to address (avoid, minimize, mitigate) these impacts that should be studied in the CEA?
  3. Are there any alternative routes or route segments that should be considered to address specific project related impacts?

If proposing an alternative route or route segment, consider the following:

- What impact does the route alternative or route segment address?
- What environmental or socioeconomic benefits does the route alternative or route segment offer significant compared to the applicant's preferred and alternative routes?
- The alternative must be clearly identified on a map or aerial photo.
- The alternative must include an analysis of human and environmental impacts – unless mostly the same as information MERC provided.

Department of Commerce Energy Environmental Review and Analysis (EERA) staff will respond to any incomplete proposals and provide ten days to submit any missing information.

**Comment Period**      Comments accepted through April 13, 2016

- Please include the PUC Docket Number (15-858) in all communications

**Online**                <http://mn.gov/commerce/energyfacilities/#comment=&tabs1=2>

**Email**                [larry.hartman@state.mn.us](mailto:larry.hartman@state.mn.us)

**U.S. Mail** Larry Hartman, Environmental Review Manager  
Minnesota Department of Commerce  
85 7<sup>th</sup> Place East, Suite 500  
St. Paul MN 55101

**Fax** 651-539-0109

**Important** Comments will be made available to the public via the Public Utilities Commission's and the Department of Commerce's websites, except in limited circumstances consistent with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. Personally identifying information is not edited or deleted from submissions.

## Process Information

The Public Utilities Commission (Commission) must approve a route permit before the project can be built. The route permit process designates the route for the pipeline and associated facilities. It includes conditions for right-of-way preparation, construction, clean-up, and restoration. This process studies alternative routes and route segments for the pipeline.

The Commission accepted MERC's route permit application on February 3, 2016. This means the company submitted all the information required to begin the review process. The Commission's decision-making process takes about twelve months.

After the Commission reviews the proposed alternative routes, the Department of Commerce Energy Environmental Review and Analysis staff members prepare a comparative environmental analysis for this project. The comparative environmental analysis reviews the potential human and environmental impacts of the proposed project and alternatives, as well as ways to address impacts.

After the comparative environmental analysis is completed, an Administrative Law Judge holds a public hearing. You may speak at the hearing, ask questions, and submit written comments about the project.

After the public hearing, the Commission reviews all the information in the record, including written comments and comments received at the public hearings. The Commission must consider the following criteria for a pipeline routing permit: human settlement, existence and density of populated areas, existing and planned future land use, and management plans; the natural environment, public and designated lands, including but not limited to natural areas, wildlife habitat, water, and recreational lands; lands of historical, archaeological, and cultural significance; economies within the route, including agricultural, commercial or industrial, forestry, recreational, and mining operations; pipeline cost and accessibility; use of existing rights-of-way and right-of-way sharing or paralleling; natural resources and features; the extent to which human or environmental effects are subject to mitigation by regulatory control and by application of the permit conditions for pipeline right-of-way preparation, construction, cleanup, and restoration practices; cumulative potential effects of related or anticipated future pipeline construction; and the relevant applicable policies, rules, and regulations of other state and federal agencies, and local government land use laws including ordinances related to the location, design, construction, or operation of the proposed pipeline and associated facilities.

The Commission's final decision on the route permit for this project is expected around November 2016.

**Eminent Domain:** If the Commission issues a route permit, MERC may use the power of eminent domain to acquire land for this project.

## How to Learn More

**Department of Commerce Project Website:**

<http://mn.gov/commerce/energyfacilities/Docket.html?Id=34318>

**Project Mailing List:** Sign up to receive notices about project milestones and opportunities to participate (meetings, comment periods, etc.).

Contact [docketing.puc@state.mn.us](mailto:docketing.puc@state.mn.us), 651-201-2204, or 1-800-657-3782 with the docket number (15-858), your name, mailing address, and email address.

**Full Case Record:** See all documents filed in this docket via the Commission's website - [mn.gov/puc](http://mn.gov/puc), select *Search eDockets*, enter the year (15) and the docket number (858), select *Search*.

**Subscribe** to receive email notification when new documents are filed.

1. [mn.gov/puc](http://mn.gov/puc)
2. Select *Subscribe*
3. Type your email address
4. For *Type of Subscription*, select *Docket Number*
5. For *Docket Number*, select 15 in the first box, type 858 in the second box
6. Select *Add to List*
7. Select *Save*

*Note* - subscribing may result in a large number of emails.

**Community Locations:** The pipeline route permit application is available at:

- Rochester Public Library, 101 2<sup>nd</sup> Street SE, Rochester

**Minnesota Statutes and Rules:** This project is reviewed under Minnesota Statute 216G.02 and Minnesota Rules Chapter 7852, available at [www.revisor.mn.gov](http://www.revisor.mn.gov)

## **Project Contacts**

### **Public Utilities Commission Public Advisor**

Tracy Smetana - [consumer.puc@state.mn.us](mailto:consumer.puc@state.mn.us), 651-296-0406 or 1-800-657-3782

### **Public Utilities Commission Energy Facilities Planner**

Michael Kaluzniak – [mike.kaluzniak@state.mn.us](mailto:mike.kaluzniak@state.mn.us) or 651-201-2257

### **Department of Commerce Environmental Review Manager**

Larry Hartman – [larry.hartman@state.mn.us](mailto:larry.hartman@state.mn.us), 651-539-1839 or 1-800-657-3794

### **Minnesota Energy Resources Corporation Project Contact**

Rick J. Moser – [RJMoser@integrysgroup.com](mailto:RJMoser@integrysgroup.com) or 920-433-2290

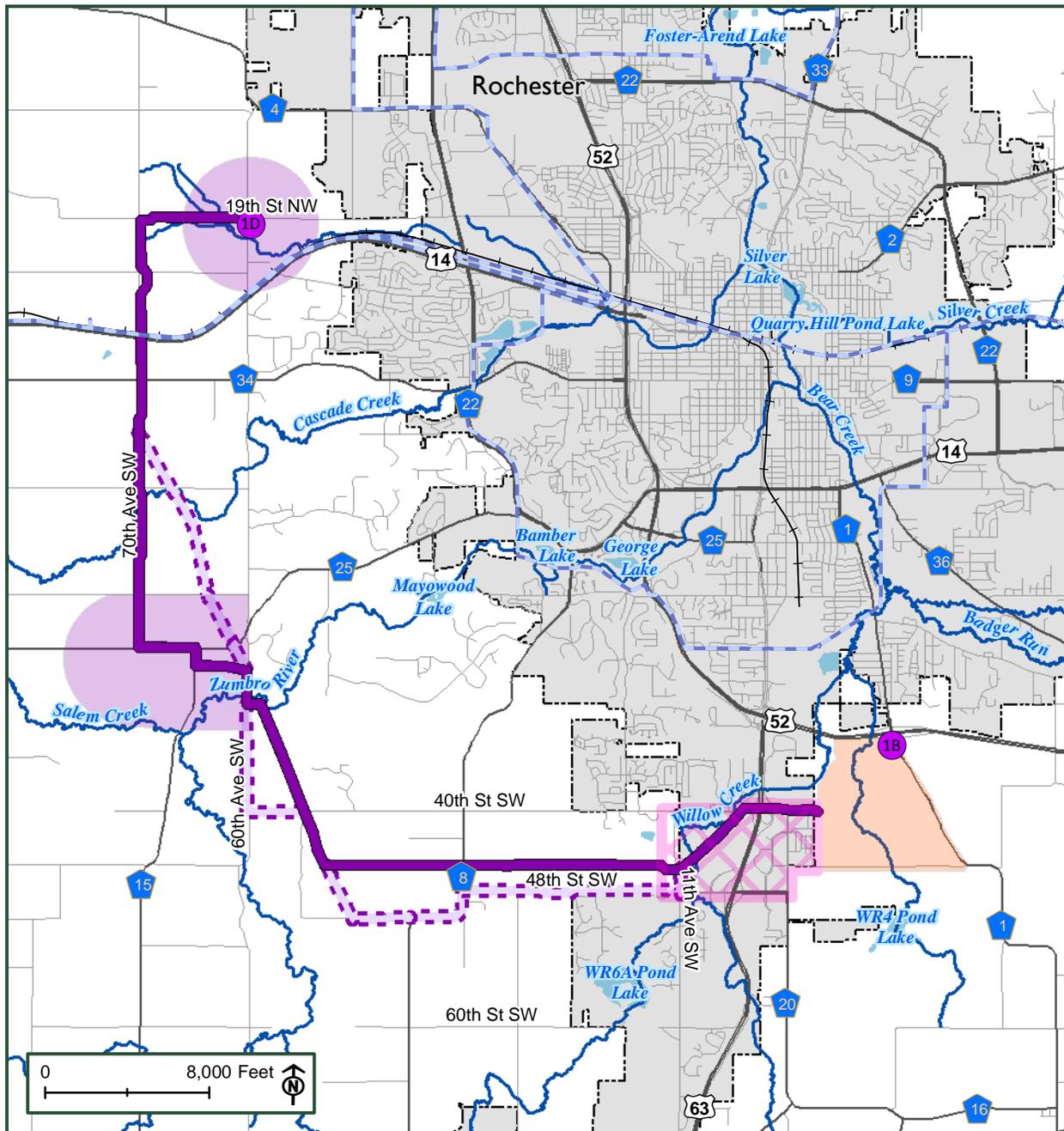
This document can be made available in alternative formats (e.g., large print or audio) by calling 651-296-0406 (voice). Persons with hearing or speech disabilities may call us through their preferred Telecommunications Relay Service.

If any reasonable accommodation is needed to enable you to fully participate in these meetings (e.g., sign language, foreign language interpreter, large print materials), please contact the Commission at 651-296-0406 or 1-800-657-3782 at least one week in advance of the meeting.



Project Area Overview

Figure 1



Legend	
	Preferred Route
	Alternate Route
	Town Border Station (TBS)
	Route Alternative Buffer
	Proposed Town Border Station & Route Buffer
	Proposed District Regulator Station & Route Buffer
	PWI Stream
	Waterbody/NWI Wetland
	City / Township Boundary
	Railroad
	161kV AC Transmission Line
	Road
	US / State / County Highway

\*Buffer distance is 1.25 miles