

108 FERC ¶ 61,154
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

Before Commissioners: Pat Wood, III, Chairman;
Nora Mead Brownell, Joseph T. Kelliher,
and Suedeem G. Kelly.

Northwest Pipeline Corporation

Docket No. CP03-32-003

ORDER AMENDING CERTIFICATE

(Issued August 5, 2004)

1. On May 6, 2004, Northwest Pipeline Corporation (Northwest) filed a petition requesting the Commission to vacate, in part, the July 30, 2003 certificate that was issued for its White River Replacement Project (White River Project).¹ That order authorized Northwest to construct and operate replacement pipeline and looping and to abandon existing pipeline and looping under the White River in King County, Washington. Because Northwest is seeking to limit the scope of the certificate granted by the July 30, 2003 order, the Commission will treat Northwest's petition to vacate as a request to amend an existing certificate. It is in the public interest to amend the certificate because Northwest has determined that it will be able to continue to meet its firm contractual obligations without installing the replacement pipeline.

Background

2. The White River Project was designed to relocate Northwest's existing 26-inch and 30-inch pipelines crossing the White River to improve pipeline safety and reliability, while restoring the natural environment of the river and floodplains. The July 30, 2003 certificate order authorizes Northwest: (1) to construct and operate approximately 4,300 feet of 26-inch pipeline and 4,300 feet of 30-inch pipeline loop that will replace existing pipeline facilities; (2) to abandon, partially by removal and partially in place, approximately 3,300 feet of 26-inch pipeline and 3,300 feet of 30-inch pipeline loop

¹ Northwest Pipeline Corp., 104 FERC ¶ 61,176.

being replaced by the new facilities; and (3) to remove approximately 665 feet of 26-inch pipeline crossing the White River previously retired in place.

3. In the instant filing, Northwest states that the Office of Pipeline Safety (OPS) has recently placed restrictions on the operation of Northwest's 26-inch pipeline from Sumas to Washougal, Washington, including the requirement that Northwest operate the line at no more than 100 psig and that the line be replaced within a 3-10 year period. Considering these developments, Northwest has reevaluated the need to replace the 3,300 feet of 26-inch pipeline crossing the White River and has determined that abandoning that section without replacing it will have no significant impact on Northwest's system design or operational capacity either now or in the future. Northwest states that installation of the 30-inch replacement pipeline looping will permit Northwest to meet its contractual obligations.

4. The existing 26-inch pipeline will be abandoned, partially in place and partially by removal, as approved by the Commission's July 30, 2003 Order. Northwest states that eliminating the 26-inch replacement pipeline from the scope of the White River Project will not change previously identified environmental and land impacts since the required work areas for the 30-inch replacement pipeline looping encompass the areas that would have been necessary for the replacement of the 26-inch pipeline. Northwest also states that eliminating the 26-inch replacement work will reduced the estimated total project costs by about \$3 million, to approximately \$26.6 million.

Interventions

5. Notice of Northwest's petition was published in the *Federal Register* on June 4, 2004 (69 *Fed. Reg.* 31602). No answers to the motion were filed.

Discussion

6. The July 30, 2003 Order found that the benefits of Northwest's White River Project would outweigh any potential adverse impacts and, therefore, would be in the public convenience and necessity consistent with the Commission's statement of policy on the certification of new pipeline facilities.² The Commission also determined that Northwest may, absent any change in material circumstances, roll-in the costs associated

² Certification of New Interstate Natural Gas Pipeline Facilities (Policy Statement), 88 FERC ¶ 61,227 (1999), *order clarifying statement of policy*, 90 FERC ¶ 61,128 (2000), *order further clarifying statement of policy*, 92 FERC ¶ 61,094 (2000).

with the White River Project when it makes its next general section 4 rate filing. Those findings remain unchanged by Northwest's decision not to install 4,300 feet of 26-inch replacement pipeline.

7. The requested change will have no significant impact on the design or operational capacity of Northwest's pipeline system. Installation of the 30-inch replacement pipeline across the White River is sufficient to meet Northwest's design and operational capacity now and in the future.

8. No party opposes Northwest's petition. The White River Project will continue to benefit all system users by improving pipeline safety and reliability, while restoring the natural environment of the river and floodplains at the pipeline crossing location. The amendment of Northwest's project lowers the total projected cost of the project by about \$3 million, thereby reducing the rolled-in cost impact of the project. Therefore, the Commission finds that the public interest will be served by amending the certificate issued July 30, 2003, to reflect that authority to construct the 26-inch replacement pipeline is no longer required.

The Commission orders:

The certificate issued to Northwest on July 30, 2003, in Docket No. CP03-32-000, is amended to eliminate the authorization for Northwest to construct and operate the 26-inch replacement pipeline. In all other respects, the terms and conditions of the certificate authorization are unchanged.

By the Commission.

(S E A L)

Magalie R. Salas,
Secretary.