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From: rrcwebcontact@gmail.com
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To: rulescoordinator
Subject: Comment Form for Proposed Rulemakings



Comments Form for Proposed Rulemakings

Date Submitted

Sunday, August 24, 2014 2:57:45 PM

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§3.70: Amend T-4 pipeline permit procedures

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The proposed amendment to Rule 3.70 is inadequate and too vague and is little more than the current RRC permitting process.

Examples of the Amendment being too vague per the RRC Memo to the Commission:

- p. 1, Line 20

Indicates that the RRC will ask for "certain additional information"

There is no delineation of what that "certain additional information" required would be within this amendment.

- p. 1, Line 23 refers to "any other information" the Commission may also request. There is no indication within the text of what that additional info is that the RRC may ask for.

- p. 2, Line 8 indicates the RRC will conduct "its own review" of the applicant.

There is no indication of what the RRC means by "its own review" of the applicant. Is the RRC staff simply reading the application without verifying its accuracy? There is no indication staff will actually investigate if in fact the applicant is a "pipeline for hire," or "for the public good" as required by law to be a common carrier. Since the agency says it should need no monies for additional staff to review applications, there is no indication that staff will

indeed verify the voracity of the applicant by spending staff time talking to FERC, shippers, etc.

There is no specificity whatsoever about what changes may be to the T-4 form for "what additional information" will be asked for. Currently an applicant can just check a few boxes and sign off on a one-page vague application form.

2) NO STANDARDS FOR COMMON CARRIER are indicated in the proposed amendment. Nothing in the amendment indicates specific criteria an applicant has to meet other than the basics of a contact, address, etc.. Nor does the amendment indicate what factors are cause for revocation of a permit.

3) A PROCESS FOR PUBLIC NOTICE for common carrier is not indicated but should be provided for in the proposed amendment. A more "balanced" approach would a similar procedure to what the Public Utility Commission or the TCEQ follow in permits/notice. There should be a 30-day first notice of the application and the applicant should be required to provide a route. All landowners, municipalities, and county officials within a minimum 2-mile distance of the pipeline should receive MAILED notice (not electronic due to lack of good internet service in rural areas) of the application. There should be a 2nd notice with a 30-60 day window when an application is considered "complete" via newspaper with a mailing to "affected" parties for a public hearing re: the common carrier permit. There should be a mechanism for landowners to gain standing if the common carrier permit is contested.

5) PERMIT REVIEW AND APPROVAL SHOULD NOT BE A CLOSED AGENCY PROCESS

p. 2, Line 19 The RRC states it can "administratively issue pipeline permits."

It appears that the RRC is trying to maintain a closed process which indicates no involvement for an "independent" review if a common carrier permit application is challenged. The logical place for an independent review is the State Office of Administrative Hearings or SOAH. The RRC Commissioners receive contributions for their elections by some of the applicants who have applied and will continue to seek a "common carrier" permit. An independent SOAH review gives the public a more balanced process.

Though the local district court process of a common carrier challenge appears to be preserved, this is an expensive process where individual landowners must each hire attorneys in various districts. A contested common carrier permit may be enjoined in a SOAH hearing expediting each individual common carrier challenge into one contested case.

6) APPLICANTS SHOULD BE ASSESSED A FEE to ensure that staff time and resources are compensated to thoroughly review, investigate, and validate applications. A fee should also be assessed upon renewal or the amendment of a common carrier permit to ensure staff time is covered and the state's natural resources and landowners are protected.

Finally, the RRC has stated itself before the legislature that it has no jurisdiction over INTERSTATE pipelines or their construction -- that authority is relegated to PHMSA. Many references are made to RRC staffer Polly McDonald in this memo regarding this amendment. The RRC can and should ask for "expanded jurisdiction" to have the authority to monitor INTERSTATE pipelines as 4 other states currently do to check how a pipeline is built, monitored, etc. to better ensure public safety in collaboration with PHMSA.