The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
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10/20/97

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October 16, 1997

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CERTIFICATF OF THE SECRETARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
ON THE
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

PROJECT NAME	: ANP Bellingham Energy Project
PROJECT LOCATION	: Bellingham
EOEA NUMBER	: 11101
PROJECT PROPONENT	: American National Power
DATE NOTICED IN MONITOR	: August 25, 1997

As the Secretary of Environmental Affairs, I hereby determine that the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) submitted on this project **adequately and properly complies** with the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (M.G.L. c. 30, ss. 61-62H) and with its implementing regulations (301 CMR 11.00).

The project consists of the construction of a 580 Megawatt (MW) natural gas fired combined-cycle power plant on a 125-acre parcel located off Maple Street in Bellingham. In response to local concerns voiced at public meetings held subsequent to the issuance of the ENF Certificate, the proponent has moved the location of the access road further south on Maple Street to a point just west of the New England Power (NEP) easement. Because this new alignment would have resulted in greater wetland resource impacts than that associated with other access alternatives, the proponent has committed to spanning the wetlands with a bridge structure to lessen direct impacts to wetlands. Of the total site acreage, 20.8 acres will be permanently utilized and 7.7 acres will be disturbed during construction. Following construction and restoration of the 7.7 acres, approximately 100 acres of land will be preserved for use by the Town of Bellingham.

RECYCLED PAPER

The plant will be fueled by natural gas, supplied through an Algonquin Gas Transmission (AGT) pipeline located approximately one mile to the north. I note that AGT will assume responsibility for the environmental permitting of this pipeline although the temporary and permanent impacts to wetlands associated with the construction and use of that pipeline are summarily presented in the wetlands section of the DEIR. The northern portion of the site is crossed by a NEP 345 kV transmission line that will be utilized to connect the power plant to the regional power grid. There are no wetland impacts associated with connection to the overhead power lines.

Since the filing of the ENF, a significant change in the project is the elimination of the million or so gallons of 0.05% distillate oil as back-up fuel. Because of the plant's close proximity to the Charles River, the Town requested that the oil storage tank be eliminated and the proponent has agreed to do so. Therefore, there will be no back-up fuel to operate the plant should the flow of natural gas be interrupted.

The facility has been designed to meet Lowest Achievable Rate (LAER) and Best Available Control Technology (BACT) standards to be in compliance with all Federal and Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) air regulatory requirements. The project will be required to obtain air emissions offsets and will also have the potential to improve regional air quality by out-competing older, less efficient power plants (that will cost more to operate) in the area.

The power plant will utilize dry cooling technology to minimize water usage. However, a significant volume of water will still be required. Although the report suggests that the project water needs are on the order of 14,000 gallons per day (gpd) for normal baseload operations, the Town of Bellingham has agreed to supply a maximum of 250,000 gpd for the period from November 15 through March 15 and total of 100,000 gpd for the remainder of the year. All water is expected to be obtained from the Town of Bellingham from existing permitted supplies. According to the DEIR, the total permitted capacity of the Bellingham water system is in excess of 4.0 million gallons per

day (mgd) and the total summer peak demand currently approaches 3.0 mgd. The proponent has also agreed to contribute funds to the Town to implement well improvements at several town wells currently producing significantly less than their permitted capacities. This may allow the Town to delay seeking additional sources of supply.

The DEIR addresses the issues raised in the Certificate on the ENF, and the Final EIR may incorporate by reference those portions of the DEIR that are not specifically referenced in this Certificate. The Final EIR should address the issues discussed below and in the enclosed comment letters.

Scope

General

The Final EIR should follow Section 11.07 of the MEPA regulations, as modified by this scope, for outline and content. The FEIR must include a copy of this Certificate and copies of the attached comments, which must be addressed as they relate to this Scope.

Water and Wastewater

The Final EIR must more explicitly address the water needs of the plant. The impacts of steam augmentation on water consumption and other miscellaneous uses of up to 30,000 gallons per day have not been adequately disclosed. Detailed water balances under the various operating scenarios should be included in the FEIR.

As stated above, the DEIR indicates that the Town of Bellingham has 4.0 mgd of permitted water capacity. However, the DEP states that the current total registered and permitted withdrawal volumes are 2.43 mgd. This discrepancy should be addressed in the FEIR.

My Certificate on the ENF required that the cumulative impact on the town's water resources of the existing IDC plant, the proposed IDC plant and this project be included in the DEIR. This analysis was not conducted. Rather, it was stated that the Town has sufficient water to supply this project. In light of DEP's comment that the Town has permitted withdrawals of only 2.43 mgd, the cumulative analysis needs to be conducted in order to ensure that the Town of Bellingham does indeed have the water sources available to serve the existing development, the power plants and contemplated future development.

I commend the proponent's commitment to work with the Town to retrofit municipal buildings with water saving devices; to improve the Town's leak detection program; to enhance public education on water conservation; and, to help fund the Title 5 septic systems to reduce the potential for groundwater contamination.

With respect to the on-site disposal of 3,000 gallons per day of waste water, DEP cites 310 CMR 15.004(4) which states that on-site disposal is prohibited when sufficient municipal wastewater collection and treatment system capacity exists. This issue needs to be resolved in the FEIR.

Air Quality

My Certificate on the ENF, and more recently my Certificates on the IDC-Bellingham and ANP-Blackstone power plant proposals required that the air quality analysis consider the cumulative impacts of this facility combined with other generators within a predetermined radius. I understand that because the air quality analysis determined that the project will not contribute air contaminants above Significant Impact Levels (SILs), the interactive source modeling was not conducted. However, based on the concentration of existing and proposed power plants as well as other existing sources, DEP has requested that the cumulative impact analysis be conducted whether or not this single plant exceeds SILs. I request again, therefore, that the interactive modeling be performed for this project. The

interactive model should account for the cumulative impacts of existing and proposed facilities with criteria emissions in excess of 100 tons per year within a 10-mile radius of this facility. This should not impart an undue hardship since the proponent is required to do a similar analysis for the ANP-Blackstone proposal and the IDC-Bellingham proposal has been required to perform the analysis as well.

The proponent should also consult with the Conservation Law Foundation, which has offered its expertise to develop a greenhouse gas mitigation package for and other projects proposed for the Blackstone Valley.

Noise

The noise analysis indicates that, under the current design and mitigative measures employed, compliance with DEP noise policy will not be possible at the northwestern and western site property lines. The Final EIR should include measures that will make the project comply or otherwise include in greater detail the reasons why a request for a variance from the policy should be considered. I am concerned with the statement that "compliance with the DEP noise policy will be achieved at each of the noise-sensitive receptors analyzed" and expect that the FEIR will more conclusively state that no present sensitive receptor or future sensitive receptor properties (i.e., residentially zoned property and the like) will be negatively impacted by power plant construction or operation.

Wetlands

Regardless of the construction methodology used (directional drilling versus open cut) to construct the pipeline across the Charles River, a significant area of bordering vegetated wetland (BVW) and other wetland resource areas will be altered. Based on the magnitude of impacts proposed, I suggest strongly that an alternative route to lessen impact to wetlands be considered. Since Algonquin Gas will be responsible for obtaining permits for the pipeline construction, I remind AGT that under the proposal presented, it appears that the construction of the pipeline is

categorically included for the preparation of an EIR pursuant to Section 11.25 (2) in that the project will result in the alteration of more than one acre of BVW.

Impacts associated with the gas pipeline crossing the Charles River either by directional drilling or open cut construction:

a) Directional drilling (with proposed entry and exit point on both sides of the Charles River amounting to approximately 150' X 135' completely within wetlands) results in the alteration of 40,500 sf of BVW. Why are the working pits so large and situated in wetlands? or,

b) Open cut construction will impact 107,625 sf of BVW, 150 linear feet of bank, 3,750 lf of land under water.

I expect that the FEIR will present a preferred construction methodology, the environmental impacts associated with it and the mitigation proposed to offset it.

Maintenance of the right-of-way, presumably under either scenario will involve permanent alteration of 48,375 sf of BVW and 22,500 sf of riverfront area.

Also, under either sceanrio, pipeline construction impacts in wetland area 1 will result in approximately 33,750 sf of "temporary" wetland impact and 20,250 sf of permanent impacts to BVW.

The FEIR should present in tabular form the wetland impacts associated with access road construction separately from that associated with pipeline construction. In addition, as stated above, the FEIR should present real alternative pipeline routes. If the pipeline route has been or will be determined based on construction costs rather than environmental considerations, the FEIR should make that clear.

I refer the proponent specifically to the comment received from the Bellingham Conservation Commission for guidance on the level of detail expected to be included in the FEIR.

The revised impacts to wetlands section should also include a discussion of the environmental inspection and reporting plan for construction activities and a long term monitoring and for contingency purposes, an eradication plan for exotic plant species (e.g., purple loosestrife, phragmites, etc.).

Archaeological Survey Results

The Massachusetts Historical Commission states that it has not received the intensive archaeological survey conducted by the Public Archaeology Lab and therefore is unable to comment on the impacts of the project. The FEIR should indicate how this issue has been resolved.

Response to Comments

The Final EIR should address fully the comments received on the Draft EIR.

FEIR Distribution

The Final EIR should be distributed as required by Section 11.24 of the MEPA regulations and to all those listed below.

October 16, 1997
Date

Trudy Coxe, Secretary

cc: Algonquin Gas Transmission Company

Comments received :
Bellingham Conservation Commission (9/15/97)
State Senator David P. Magnani (9/23/97)

Comments Received Continued:

Metropolitan Area Planning Council (9/24/97)
Metacomet Land Trust (9/24/97)
Conservation Law Foundation (9/25/97)
Massachusetts Audubon Society (9/25/97)
DEP-CERO; Attn: Mary Richards (9/26/97)
MHC; Attn: Brona Simon (9/29/97)
Robert B. Lovett (10/7/97)
Town of Franklin (10/8/97)
Justine R. Dolan (10/9/97)
Wrentham Research Group (10/9/97)
Mark Brady (10/9/97)
Charles River Watershed Association (10/10/97)
Andy Tolland (10/10/97)

TC/DEV/dv