

December 2, 2016

William J Curry

[REDACTED]  
Elk Point, SD 57025  
[REDACTED]

RE: Docket NG 16-04

In these days of pipeline protest, a person wonders about 1952 when Northern Natural Gas approached landowners about installing a natural gas pipeline through their farms. Did they protest? Highly doubtful! Northern Natural paid \$1.00/lineal rod (16.5') to put in a 16" 700lb pressure natural gas pipeline underground. For 80 dollars, Northern Natural was able to put a perpetual pipeline across a quarter mile run. They were able to get easements for the entire 40 acres, not just a 20 ft. wide parcel. This project benefited Eastern South Dakota for commercial and residential customers. The State of South Dakota Public Utilities Commission would have had to agree to allow Northern Natural to install the pipeline for the benefit of the people of South Dakota. As a benefit to South Dakota, eminent domain would have likely been used. For benefiting the South Dakota consumers, rural land owners were allowed a farm tap to utilize the massive natural gas line installed on their land. The farm tap allowed a fuel source to rural customers that urban residents were able to receive in the towns and cities of South Dakota.

My family utilizes three of the four farm taps that were allowed and agreed by Northern Natural. My family currently has approximately 2 ½ miles of the pipeline through land we farm and/or own. The pipeline has a half mile easement through the land that was homesteaded in 1861 by our family.

Of the three taps, two farm taps have had totally updated pipelines, consisting of two houses and three irrigation wells as of 1990. The third tap supplies two houses and has had a new meter installed in 2015. We have paid for the materials and installation to competent contractors that were recommended by Northern Natural Gas employees.

It would be very expensive to change to another source of fuel for heat and powering irrigation engines. To utilize a different fuel source would not be as environmentally friendly as clean burning natural gas.

The inconvenience of farming over the top of 2 ½ miles of natural gas pipeline has required numerous 811 calls and awareness of possible damage to a very important fuel source to Eastern South Dakota. Our family maintains our farm taps, we read our meters and pay our bills. The little that NorthWestern Gas has done for us is only been for gas usage billing. Other than that, we have not had much contact. Our contact with Northern Natural Gas has been excellent. Northern Natural Gas replaced part of the main pipeline a few years ago on our property in order to service the town of Elk Point. The crews were courteous and understanding as well as careful. When we contact 811 to do ditching or land leveling Northern Natural Gas has always been able to locate the mainline. So, our contact with them has been excellent which is good considering the 2 ½ miles of pipeline across property we farm.

To penalize the 197 farm taps due to NorthWestern Energy's trying to cut expenses should not be allowed under the South Dakota PUC because NorthWestern is eliminating the outer fringe but keeping the 60 communities that they service.

We are contacting our District 16 House of Representatives and Senator to be part of the decision making of the PUC for their constituents. As a family farm, we have been farming in South Dakota for 155 years. We are part of South Dakota. We have seen Northern Natural Gas Company become Enron and then return to Northern Natural Gas under Berkshire/Hathaway. We have seen NorthWestern Public Service become NorthWestern Corporation go bankrupt in 2003 and return as NorthWestern Energy. As a farm family, we still prevail and ask the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission to represent us as South Dakota citizens to the best of their capabilities.

We believe that the possibility of NorthWestern Energy eliminating South Dakota farm taps would be detrimental to rural users of natural gas in South Dakota.

Please represent for the betterment of South Dakota residents in considering Docket NG16-014.

Please follow the mandate of SDCL 49-34A-2 that states service may not be discontinued to the farm tap customers without first obtaining permission from the Commission. Then, deny NorthWestern Energy that permission. As farm tap users we would like South Dakota Public Utility Commission representation and the continuation of honoring the wording of the easement that was granted by Northern Natural Gas Company to my forefathers. Copies of two easements are enclosed and copies of the other easements can be provided if you request them.

We as a farm family are asking for the same consideration that is given to the rural communities and cities in South Dakota.

William J Curry

[REDACTED]

Elk Point, SD 57025

[REDACTED]

cc: [REDACTED] Patricia VanGerpen & Chris Nelson

[REDACTED]

Kevin Jensen