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**Questar Pipeline Company's
Main Line No. 41 Reroute at Skyline Mine**

Final Environmental Impact Statement

**Abstract,
Summary, and
Record of Decision**

Manti-La Sal National Forest

July 1990

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Questar Pipeline Company Main Line No. 41 Reroute Project

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Manti-La Sal National Forest
599 West Price River Drive
Price, Utah 84501

Cooperating Federal Agency: U.S. Department of the Interior
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Abstract:

Questar Pipeline Company has applied to the Forest Service for an amendment to a special use permit to allow relocation of a 4.25-mile section of a buried, 18-inch, natural-gas-transmission pipeline located on the Manti-La Sal National Forest. The existing pipeline, Main Line No. 41, which has been operating since 1953, crosses coal reserves that are proposed for mining beginning in the Fall of 1990 by Utah Fuel Company's Skyline Mine. Questar Pipeline Company is pursuing the project at the request of Utah Fuel Company to enable coal mining activities to proceed at the Skyline Mine. Relocating the pipeline would avoid potential damage and costly repairs that could be caused by the proposed coal-mining activities.

Alternatives include:

- A. No Action - leave pipeline in existing location, allow only limited mining, do not allow subsidence
- B. Leave pipeline in existing location, allow complete mining of reserves beneath, restore or repair subsidence-induced damage, protect against interruption of service
- C. Relocate to Burnout Canyon Route
- D. Relocate to Gooseberry Route
(Valley Camp Triangle Connectors - common to existing, Burnout Canyon, and Gooseberry routes)
- E. Relocate to Winter Quarters Route

The Forest Service's preferred alternative is Burnout Canyon Route (3), which includes Valley Camp Triangle Connector (1) and using modifications to the route presented in the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS), in the areas of the Connellville fault, mouth of Burnout Canyon, and near The Kitchen.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT SUMMARY

PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

Questar Pipeline Company (Questar Pipeline) has applied to the Forest Service for an amendment to a special use permit to allow relocation of a 4.25-mile section of a buried, 18-inch, natural-gas-transmission pipeline, Main Line No. 41, located on the Manti-La Sal National Forest. The existing pipeline, which has been operating since 1953, crosses the Skyline Mine permit area affecting 14.9 million tons of recoverable coal reserves. Utah Fuel Company (Utah Fuel), owner of the Skyline Mine, proposes to begin mining these reserves in the Fall of 1990. Questar Pipeline is pursuing an amendment at the request of Utah Fuel to enable mining activities to proceed this Fall. Relocating the pipeline would avoid potential damage and costly repairs that could be caused by the proposed coal mining activities. The pipeline serves approximately 70,000 residential and commercial customers in the region consisting of Utah Valley south to St. George.

The Forest Supervisor of the Manti-La Sal National Forest is the official responsible for deciding on Questar Pipeline's application to amend its present special use permit to allow relocation of Main Line No. 41.

Forest Service personnel reviewed Questar Pipeline's application, initiated project scoping, and identified a number of potential issues that were included in the August 1989 scoping document. The Forest Service notified the public of the proposed project through a Federal Register notice, news articles, and letters in August 1989. The initial opportunity for the public to comment on the project was at a public scoping meeting on August 30, 1989, in Price, Utah.

Resulting comments further assisted to identify the scope of issues to be addressed during the environmental analysis for this environmental impact statement (EIS). Issues identified by the Forest Service and comments from the public are summarized below.

- potential for degradation of watershed, floodplain conditions, water quality (caused by sedimentation), streambank stability, vegetation (especially riparian vegetation along Upper Huntington Creek), and visual quality
- potential effects on grazing
- potential for disruption of recreation during construction
- potential damage to, safety conflicts with public uses on, and maintenance of State Highways 264 and 96, and Skyline Drive during construction
- potential impacts to livestock, wildlife, and fish caused from construction
- potential for pipeline construction inducing land failures in unstable areas
- the inclusion of affected landowners and agencies along alternative proposed routes in the evaluation process
- minimization of conflicts between pipeline protection and coal recovery to allow maximum coal recovery from Federal lands

Valley Camp Triangle Connectors - (common to Burnout Canyon and Gooseberry routes)

- (1) 1.0 mile entire connector, 0.6 mile of new pipeline
- (2) 0.9 mile entire connector, 0.6 mile of new pipeline
- (3) 0.5 mile entire connector, 0.5 mile of new pipeline

Alternative E - Winter Quarters Routes - (2 variations)

- (1) 16.1 (20.2*) miles entire route, 12.4 miles new pipeline
- (2) 17.2 (20.2*) miles entire route, 12.2 miles new pipeline

(*If either of the Alternative E routes are selected, sections of existing pipeline, not part of the routes, provide local service and could not be abandoned. Affects to resources are addressed as appropriate.)

The Forest Service's preferred alternative is Burnout Canyon Route (3), which includes Valley Camp Triangle Connector (1), using modifications to the route, presented in the DEIS, in the areas of the Connellville fault, mouth of Burnout Canyon, and near The Kitchen.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The project area is located north of Electric Lake in Sanpete, Carbon, and Emery counties in the State of Utah. The area lies at the western edge of the Wasatch Plateau, an area composed of coal-bearing strata of sandstone, siltstone, mudstone, and shale. Water is present in small perennial streams, reservoirs, and numerous springs and seeps. Soils are mostly clay loams, sandy loams, and loams located on steep hillslopes and ridges. Wet soils are present along perennial streams, marshes, springs, and seeps. Landslides and debris flows have occurred throughout the area and are primarily associated with weak clay layers, wet soil conditions, and local faults.

A number of different biological habitats are present, each with characteristic plant and animal communities. The existing and proposed routes involve crossing or paralleling riparian and associated wetland areas, important vegetation types, and habitat for big game and fish (Yellowstone cutthroat trout in Upper Huntington Creek are of particular note).

The project area is primarily rural. Land uses include agriculture (grazing), recreation, dispersed residential, and mining. There are private lands, as well as lands under the jurisdiction of the State of Utah and Forest Service (Manti-La Sal National Forest).

The overall setting of the area is pastoral and mountainous, features that are very appealing to recreation visitors. Highway 264 is proposed as a National Scenic Byway, and Skyline Drive in the western portion of the project area (along the Gooseberry Route) is a scenic backway.

Important or potentially important cultural resources along the proposed routes include a prehistoric camp site, an unused railroad track, three potentially sensitive historic localities, and four areas where there is a possibility of encountering buried Pleistocene vertebrate remains, which could be of both archaeological and paleontological importance.

impacts (services and goods) to the local economy could range from \$173,800 to \$294,800 from construction and about \$272,250 from installation of strain gauges for a total of \$567,050.

Alternative C - Burnout Canyon Routes. An estimated 14.7 mmt to 17.4 mmt of recoverable coal (\$29.4 million to \$34.8 million in Federal royalties) underlie the entire alternative routes. The length of this route varies from 14.9 to 15.3 miles depending upon the variation selected; 5.2 to 5.9 miles of new pipeline would be constructed. Construction would require approximately 40 days and probably could be completed this year. This proposed route would have little effect on current coal-mining operations. Approximately 2.6 mmt to 2.9 mmt of recoverable coal (\$5.2 million to \$5.8 million in Federal royalties) underlie the segments proposed for the new pipeline. Mining beneath a pipeline along Upper Huntington Creek and Burnout Creek, which the Burnout Canyon routes would parallel, is restricted to protect the perennial streams. The cost of construction and average reclamation is an estimated \$1,898,000 to \$3,060,200. Annual maintenance costs for the entire route would be \$26,820 to \$28,220. There would be no acquisition costs in regard to obtaining rights to the coal and surface area that would be committed to operation of the pipeline.

If a route on the east side of Highway 264 is selected, there is a potential for 10 pipeline stream crossings in Burnout and Upper Huntington Canyons, which could result in low-to-moderate impacts to wet soils from construction equipment compaction; low-to-moderate, short-term impacts to water quality from sedimentation (disturbance of banks and streambeds); and moderate-to-high impacts to the trout spawning areas. Also, adjacent riparian areas would be subject to short-term adverse impacts (until vegetation has regenerated). Existing impacts caused by unstable slopes occur along the northwestern portion of the route (existing pipeline). If a route on the west side of Highway 264 is selected, there would be, according to the Forest Service, 3 pipeline stream crossings.

Short-term moderate visual impacts would occur during construction along Highway 264, a proposed National Scenic Byway. A long-term moderate visual impact would occur where trees would be removed on the steep-sloped wall of Burnout Canyon, which is somewhat visible to travelers heading south on Highway 264. Roads would not be closed, but traffic flows would be reduced and delays would occur along Highway 264 during construction. Benefits from construction to the local economy could range from \$522,500 to \$1,235,000.

Alternative D - Gooseberry Route. The length of this route is about 16.7 miles, 12.6 miles of which would be new pipeline construction. Construction would require 80 to 90 days unless additional crews and equipment are used. The cost of construction and average reclamation is estimated at \$3,937,000 million. The route would not be entirely on Federal land and would require additional time and costs for acquisition of land. Also, there is a potential that Questar Pipeline would have to financially negotiate the rights for privately owned coal where its recovery would be impacted by the pipeline. Acquisition costs for surface rights-of-way and coal would be approximately \$4,612,800. Annual maintenance costs for the entire route would be approximately \$30,060.

An estimated 11.8 mmt of recoverable coal (approximately \$19 million in Federal royalties) underlie the entire route. Approximately 9.6 mmt of recoverable coal (\$14.6 million in Federal royalties) underlie the segments of proposed new pipeline.

An estimated 18.9 mmt to 24.7 mmt of recoverable coal (approximately \$29.2 million to \$42.4 million in Federal royalties) underlie the entire route and associated existing pipeline sections that could not be abandoned. Approximately 11.6 mmt to 17.4 mmt of recoverable coal (\$14.6 million to \$27.8 million in royalties) underlie the segments of proposed new pipeline.

New pipeline would cross Winter Quarters Creek and Mud Creek. The route would cross two riparian areas near Scofield that are already disturbed by grazing. Along the southern portion of the route, one variation (Segment 21) would parallel Mud Creek riparian areas that are in excellent condition (moderate-to-high impacts). During construction, no roads would close but traffic flows along Highway 96 would be reduced and delays of about 15 minutes could be anticipated. Construction disturbance would create moderate-to-high, short-term visual impacts to views from residences and Highway 96. High impacts would result from construction along Segment 21 where it descends the steep-sloped north ridge of Broads Canyon, openly visible from Highway 96. Also, existing impacts caused by unstable slopes occur along the northwestern portion of the route (existing pipeline). Benefits from construction to the local economy could range from \$1,037,500 to \$1,917,500.

PUBLIC REVIEW OF THE DEIS

Once the draft EIS (DEIS) was completed, a Notice of Availability of the DEIS was published by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the Federal Register on May 18, 1990, which initiated the 45-day public review period.

During the review period, on June 13 and 14, the Forest Service hosted an open house to discuss the DEIS, answer questions, and solicit comments on the DEIS. A news release announcing the open house was submitted to local newspapers, the Sun Advocate and Emery County Progress, and to the local radio station. Seventeen individuals attended the open house. No substantive comments were received.

A total of 89 letters were received during the review period. Generally, the comments supported the Burnout Canyon Route and emphasized the importance of the mining industry to the region.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE

QUESTAR PIPELINE COMPANY
MAIN LINE NO. 41 REROUTE AT SKYLINE MINE

MANTI-LA SAL NATIONAL FOREST
CARBON, EMERY AND SANPETE COUNTIES, UTAH

RECORD OF DECISION
FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Questar Pipeline Company (Questar Pipeline) has applied to the Forest Service for an amendment to a special use permit to allow relocation of 4.25 miles of a buried, 18-inch, natural-gas-transmission pipeline, Main Line No. 41, located on the Price District of the Manti-La Sal National Forest. The existing pipeline, which has been in place since 1953, crosses the Skyline Mine permit area affecting 14.9 million tons of recoverable coal reserves. Utah Fuel Company (Utah Fuel), owner of Skyline Mine, proposes to begin mining these reserves in 1990. Questar Pipeline is pursuing an amendment at the request of Utah Fuel to enable mining activities to proceed. Relocating the pipeline would avoid potential damage and costly repairs that could be caused by the proposed mining activities. The pipeline serves approximately 70,000 residential and commercial customers from American Fork to St. George, Utah.

Based on the analysis contain in the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Main Line No. 41 Reroute at Skyline Mine (FEIS), it is my decision to select Alternative C - Burnout Canyon Route (3) with Valley Camp Connector (1) as the best balance between known needs and potential impacts. My decision is based upon its being consistent with the standards and guidelines contained in the Manti-La Sal National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan), and upon a review of environmental consequences of alternatives as disclosed in Chapter 4 of the FEIS. Particular attention was given to responsiveness of the selected alternative to issues identified in the scoping phase of the project and public comment received on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Public involvement documents are contained in Appendix D of the FEIS. Public comments and Forest Service responses are contained in Chapter 6 of the FEIS.

Alternative C would amend Questar Pipeline's special use permit to allow relocation of a 4.25 mile section to a 5.9 mile route in Burnout and Upper Huntington canyons. This alternative responds to user demands, while giving consideration to critical environmental issues, user costs, and public concerns.

Environmental impacts from construction, operation, and maintenance of the selected alternative will be kept within the acceptable levels established by laws, regulations, and the Forest Plan. Questar Pipeline will adhere to the stipulations contained in Attachment A of Appendix A of the FEIS. All practical means to avoid or minimize environmental harm resulting from implementation of the selected alternative have been adopted.

Burnout Canyon Route (4) - This alternative route was very close in preference to the selected route but was not chosen because it had more impacts to recoverable coal, riparian resources and would have 2 additional intermittent stream crossings.

Alternative D - Gooseberry Route

This alternative would allow for relocating the pipeline in Burnout Canyon, Upper Huntington Canyon, Swens Canyon, and Gooseberry drainages. Utah Fuels would mine the same amount of coal under this alternative as Alternative C - Burnout Canyon Routes (1) and (2).

This alternative was somewhat close in preference to the selected alternative route but was not chosen because it would have higher riparian and spawning/fisheries habitat impacts, twice the stream crossings and cost \$5.5 million more than the selected alternative route. New construction on this route is the longest and would affect more unstable slopes than any other relocation routes.

Valley Camp Triangle Connectors (common to Burnout Canyon & Gooseberry Routes)

Analysis in the FEIS shows that all 3 connectors have little total difference between them. Connector (1) was selected because, after mitigation, it would have the least affect on wet, unstable slopes and recoverable coal resources. It would cost the least to construct.

Alternative E - Winter Quarters Routes (1),(2)

This alternative would allow the relocation of the pipeline in the Pleasant Valley and Winter Quarters drainages. The length of these routes would be primarily on private lands off National Forest System lands.

Winter Quarters (1) - This alternative route was not selected because new pipeline construction would preclude the mining of the greatest amount of recoverable coal reserves and cost more than any other route. It would also have a low probability of being completed this year and could affect an additional 3 to 9 million tons of recoverable coal. This is the longest route of all.

Winter Quarter (2) - This alternative route was not chosen because, compared to the selected alternative, it is more than twice as long, would affect 9 more million tons of recoverable coal, would have 2 more perennial stream crossings, and would cost 3 times more. It also has a low probability of being completed this year and could affect an additional 3 to 9 million tons of recoverable coal.

The issues discussed in the alternatives formed the basis for the decision. The issues varied in importance and value, and in some instances, the differences in advantages were so small they were insignificant in the selection process. No single issue determined selection. Rather, all environmental, social and economic factors were blended to best resolve the identified issues and to select an alternative.

