

Conservation and Reclamation INFORMATION LETTER

Two-Year Trial of Pipeline Reclamation Assessment Criteria

BACKGROUND

Under the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act* and the *Conservation and Reclamation Regulation* pipeline operators must conserve and reclaim a pipeline, and obtain a reclamation certificate following abandonment of a pipeline, unless exempted under the Regulation.

HISTORY

In 1996, NOVA Gas Transmission Ltd. (now TransCanada PipeLines Limited) established a multi-stakeholder External Soils Advisory Board (ESAB) to consider various aspects of pipeline reclamation and specifically to address the issue of a standard procedure to assess post-abandonment reclamation success. Initial activities included the selection and development of a number of rating systems for testing.

In 1997, the ESAB evaluated a number of reclamation assessment tools for effectiveness and ease of use. Two were selected for further modification and testing. An additional recommendation was that a field protocol manual be developed to guide the application of the rating systems. Subsequently, a two-phase evaluation approach, a field protocol manual and a landowner reclamation evaluation form were developed.

In 1998, the ESAB tested the modified systems, Pipeline Reclamation Assessment Phase 1 and Phase 2 and a field protocol over a broad range of Alberta conditions. It was concluded that the general concept of an overall protocol or procedures manual, a relatively rapid Phase 1 "screening" assessment and a more detailed Phase 2 "as required" soil capability evaluation is a workable approach. Recommendations for improvement included increased specificity in definitions and procedures, modification and re-testing of the vegetation component and the introduction of a provision for dealing with exceptional circumstances.

In 1999, the ESAB evaluated a revised vegetation assessment protocol in a set of field tests and the protocol was subsequently modified.

In the Winter of 1999/2000 the Alberta Pipeline Environmental Steering Committee endorsed the draft criteria and recommended that Alberta Environment accept them for trial use.

In the Spring of 2000 Alberta Environment released the criteria for public comment.

WHEN TO USE THE CRITERIA

The criteria were initially developed to assess pipelines after abandonment for reclamation certification. However they also have use for:

- Determining the reclamation status of an active pipeline.
- Assessing reclamation condition of a pipeline prior to, or after, sale to another pipeline operator.

Pipeline operators are welcome to use either the *Reclamation Assessment Criteria for Pipelines – 2001 Draft* or the access road portion of the *Reclamation Criteria for Wellsites and Associated Facilities* as an assessment tool. **Either method will be accepted by the regulators.**

IMPLEMENTATION

Alberta Environment will implement the criteria on a trial basis for a period of two years. After the trial period is complete, Alberta Environment will lead a review process to evaluate the criteria.

The *Reclamation Assessment Criteria for Pipelines – 2001 Draft* is available on the website shown below. **The criteria document contains data forms that must be filled in for each quarter section of land.**

The criteria require considerable professional judgement by soil and vegetation specialists. Operators should use appropriately trained specialists to carry out the assessments.

The criteria apply to all pipelines in the province. Operators are encouraged to discuss the need for Phase 2 assessments with the reclamation inspector in the Green Area before carrying them out.

COMMENTS

Comments on the criteria are welcome throughout this trial period, and may be directed to the contacts listed below.

CONTACTS

The following can be reached toll free by calling 310-0000 and then dialing the number shown below.

For Green Area public lands:

Alberta Sustainable Resource
Development
Public Lands Division,
3rd Floor, 9915 - 108 Street,
EDMONTON, Alberta T5K 2G8.

Phone: (780) 427-3570
Fax: (780) 422-4251
e-mail reclaim@env.gov.ab.ca

For White Area public lands:

Alberta Sustainable Resource
Development
Public Lands Division,
Room 200, J. G. O'Donoghue Building,
7000 - 113 Street,
EDMONTON, Alberta T6H 5T6.

Phone: (780) 427-6597
Fax: (780) 422-4244
Website: www.gov.ab.ca/navigation/sustain/publiclands/index.html

For all other lands:

Alberta Environment,
Science and Standards Division,
4th Floor, 9820-106 Street,
EDMONTON, Alberta T5K 2J6

Phone: (780) 427-5883
Fax: (780) 422-4192
e-mail: land.management@gov.ab.ca