



**U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
Pipeline and Hazardous  
Materials Safety  
Administration**

**1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590**

Mr. Royce A. Ramsay  
Vice President of Operations  
Northern Natural Gas Company  
1111 South 103<sup>rd</sup> Street  
Omaha, Nebraska 68124

**Ref: Special Permit Renewal April 15, 2020 to April 15, 2030**

**Docket No. PHMSA-2005-20323**

Dear Mr. Ramsay:

On October 4, 2019, pursuant to the 49 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 190.341, the Northern Natural Gas Company (Northern) applied to the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) for the renewal of the special permit, PHMSA-RSPA-2005-20323, originally issued on April 10, 2010, and renewed on April 7, 2015, with an expiration date of April 15, 2020. The existing special permit waives compliance with the 49 CFR § 192.625(b)(1) for the non-odorized operation of two (2) special permit segments, where over 50 percent of the pipeline segment mileage is in a Class 3 or Class 4 location as defined in 49 CFR § 192.5.

Special permit segment 2 is defined in the special permit as 0.369 miles of the 4½-inch diameter La Crescent Branch Line (MNB73701), located in Houston County, Minnesota. The special permit renewal allows Northern to continue the non-odorized operation of MNB73701, subject to the conditions set forth in the special permit. Northern did not request the renewal of special permit segment 1, which is defined in the special permit as 0.034 miles of the 2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>-inch Branch Line (IAB 64601), located in Greene County, Iowa. Northern reported that special permit segment 1 has been abandoned in its present location.

On December 13, 2019, PHMSA published a Federal Register notice (84 FR 68294), announcing the special permit renewal request. The special permit renewal request letter and all other pertinent documents are available for review in Docket No. PHMSA-RSPA-2005-20323 in the Federal Docket Management System located at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov).

A comment was submitted to the docket on January 14, 2020, recommending that PHMSA not issue the “special permit in order to better protect the environment and public safety” and to “nationalize the oil and gas industry”.<sup>1</sup> In addressing this comment, PHMSA’s mission is to

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=PHMSA-RSPA-2005-20323-0013>

protect people and the environment by advancing the safe transportation of energy and other hazardous materials that are essential to our daily lives. As part of this mission, PHMSA administers a national regulatory safety program for the more than 2.7 million miles of interstate and intrastate pipelines in the United States.

This program requires that pipeline operators design, construct, operate, and maintain their pipeline facilities in compliance with the Federal Pipeline Safety Regulations. PHMSA grants a special permit to waive or modify compliance with a regulatory requirement, and the permit must be consistent with pipeline safety. In its review, PHMSA determined that granting the special permit would be consistent with public safety and the protection of the environment.

PHMSA has reviewed all operational and maintenance data submitted by Northern for MNB73701. PHMSA finds that there has been no material change in conditions and that Northern continues to meet the terms of the special permit. Based on the information provided by Northern, PHMSA has determined that renewal of the special permit would not be inconsistent with pipeline safety. Furthermore, PHMSA is modifying the renewal timing interval from 5 years to 10 years, and updating the special permit contacts in Limitation 7. The modifications to Limitation 7 are *italicized* and underlined below.

**Limitation 7:** PHMSA grants this special permit for a period of no more than *ten (10)* years from the grant date. If Northern elects to seek renewal of this special permit, a renewal request must be submitted at least 180 days prior to expiration of the *ten-year* period, to the PHMSA Associate Administrator, with copies to the Director, Division of Engineering and *Research* and Director, Office of Pipeline Safety, Western Region. PHMSA may seek additional information from Northern prior to granting a request for special permit renewal.

**Accordingly, pursuant to 49 CFR § 190.341, by this Order, and as outlined in the existing special permit, PHMSA grants the renewal of PHMSA-RSPA-2005-20323, from April 15, 2020, through April 15, 2030, to Northern to continue its operation of MNB73701 in Houston County, Minnesota. This special permit renewal Order continues to waive compliance with certain Federal regulations in 49 CFR § 192.615(b)(1).**

My staff would be pleased to discuss this special permit or any other regulatory matter with you. Senth White, Director of Engineering and Research Division, may be contacted at 202-366-2415, for technical matters; and Allan Beshore, Director, Office of Pipeline Safety, PHMSA Central Region may be contacted at 816-329-3811, for operational matters specific to this special permit.

Sincerely,

Alan K. Mayberry,  
Associate Administrator for Pipeline Safety