National Energy Board

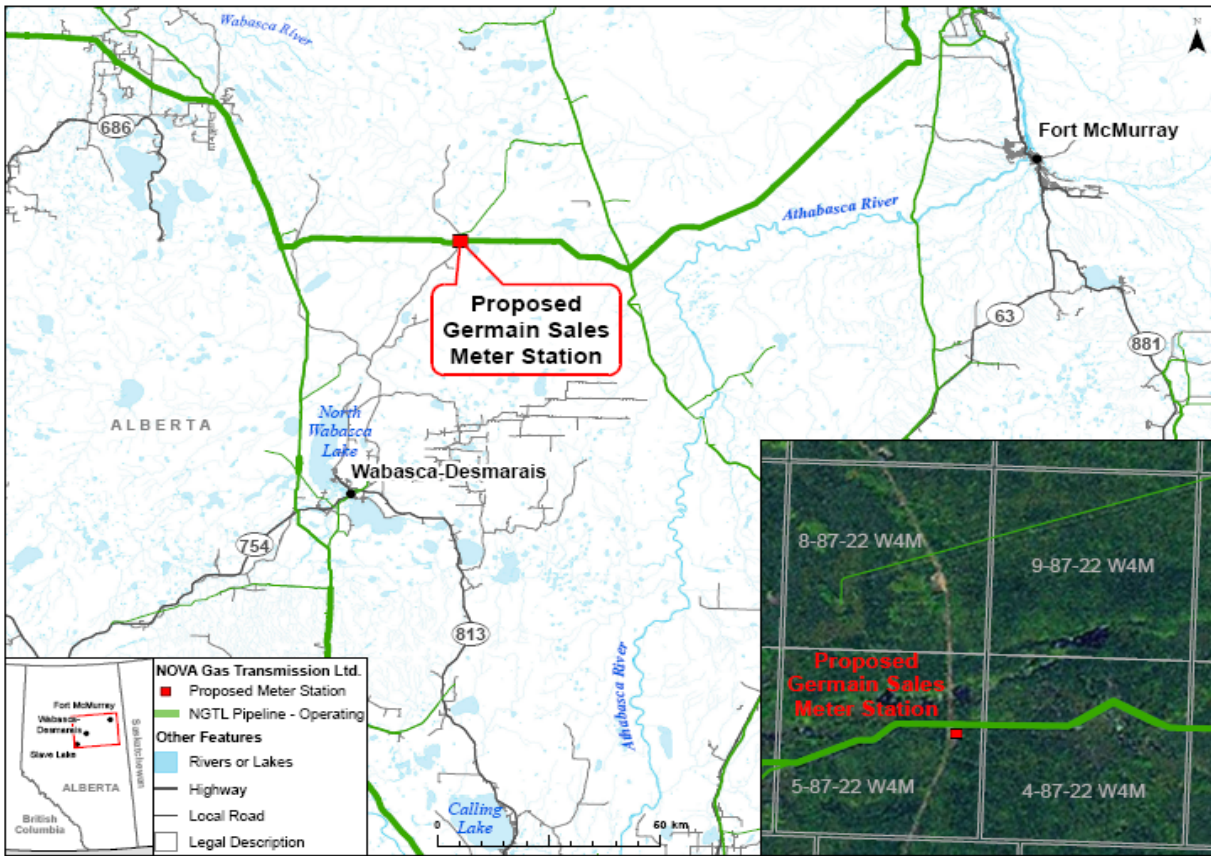
Office national de l'énergie

ENVIRONMENTAL SCREENING REPORT

Pursuant to the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* (CEA Act)

Germain Sales Meter Station

Applicant Name:	NOVA Gas Transmission Ltd.		
Application Date:	9 March 2012	**CEA Act Registration Date:**	19 March 2012
National Energy Board File Number:	OF-Fac-Gas-N081-2012-02 01	**Canadian Environmental Assessment Registry Number:**	12-01-67062
CEA Act Law List Trigger:	Subsection 58(1) of the *National Energy Board Act*	**CEA Act Determination Date:**	29 May 2012



1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Description of the Project

NOVA Gas Transmission Ltd. (NGTL) applied to the National Energy Board (Board or NEB) for authorization to construct and operate the proposed Germain Sales Meter Station and associated facilities (the Project). The Project would be located at LSD 09-05-087-22 W4M, approximately 62 km northeast of Wabasca-Demarais, Alberta. The Project would be situated on a 100 metre (m) x 60 m site (0.6 hectares (ha)) on provincial Crown land. The Project site would be directly adjacent to an existing high grade gravel road and overlap an existing NGTL pipeline right-of-way. The Project would require 0.36 ha of new clearing.

The Project would consist of the installation of two skid-mounted meter-run and instrumentation buildings, and approximately 60 metres of NPS 6 yard pipeline. The Project would include associated facility piping, yard piping, valves, instrumentation, controls, communication devices and pipeline appurtenances. No new access would be required for the site.

The meter station site would be stripped and graded. The buildings and above-ground facilities associated with the Project would be fenced within a 30 m x 30 m area. The fenced area would be graveled and topsoil stored on-site for future reclamation. Disturbed land outside of the fenced area would be reclaimed using either natural revegetation or an approved native seed mix.

Construction is proposed to commence 1 August 2012, with an in-service date of 1 September 2012. The estimated service life of the Project is 25 years. Eventual abandonment of the facility would require an application pursuant to the NEB Act, at which time the NEB would also assess the environmental effects of abandonment.

1.2 Rationale for the Project

The Project would tie the Laricina Energy Ltd. solvent-cyclic steam assisted gravity drainage (SAGD) plant to NGTL's Alberta System, and provide metering service for sweet natural gas.

1.3 Baseline Information and Sources

The analysis for this ESR was based on NGTL’s application, responses to information requests and a letter of comment from Environment Canada (EC). Information filed with respect to the Project application can be found within “Regulatory Documents” on the NEB’s website (www.neb-one.gc.ca) by entering the filing identification number A39846. For more details on how to obtain documents, please contact the Secretary of the NEB at the address specified in Section 7.0 of this report.

2.0 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA) PROCESS

The application for this Project was filed pursuant to subsection 58(1) of the NEB Act which, being on the CEA Act *Law List Regulations*, required the preparation of this ESR.

On 21 March 2012, the NEB issued a Federal Coordination Notification (FCN) letter pursuant to section 5 of the CEA Act regulations *Respecting the Coordination by Federal Authorities of Environmental Assessment Procedures and Requirements* (Federal Coordination Regulations) to identify the potential involvement of federal departments in the EA process. The FCN letter was also sent to provincial agencies in Alberta.

The NEB is the Federal Environment Assessment Coordinator and the Responsible Authority for this Project. Environment Canada is a Federal Authority in possession of specialist advice.

3.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The Project would be located on previously-cleared as well as forested land within the Central Mixedwood Natural Subregion of Alberta. The nearest watercourse to the Project is an unnamed tributary to the Wabasca River, approximately 250 m north of the Project.

Several wildlife species listed under Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) or by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) with known ranges and habitat that overlap the Project include: woodland caribou, common nighthawk, barn swallow and short-eared owl. The Project would lie within the provincially-designated West Side Athabasca River caribou range.

NGTL reported that there were no historical records of occurrence of wildlife species of concern within 2 km of the Project. NGTL noted that the Project is not located in optimal caribou habitat, due to its proximity to existing disturbances (existing pipeline rights-of-way and a nearby high grade gravel road) as well as the lack of habitat features (bogs, fens or lichens) that would be preferred by caribou. The open habitat preferred by barn swallows, common nighthawk and short-eared owls is found in the vicinity of the Project.

There are no residences within the vicinity of the Project. The Project would be located entirely on Crown land within asserted Treaty 8 territory. The project would not traverse any reserve lands. Existing land use in the Project area includes trapping, forestry, and oil and gas developments.

4.0 LETTER OF COMMENT

On 17 April 2012, EC submitted a letter of comment to the Board with respect to the Project. Within the letter, EC provided information on the legislative requirements of SARA and the *Migratory Bird Convention Act*. EC also recommended that vehicles be inspected and maintained to reduce the spread of invasive species; and, that the site be monitored regularly for invasive species and managed appropriately to reduce spread.

5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS ANALYSIS

5.1 Methodology

In assessing the environmental effects of the Project, the NEB used an issue-based approach. The NEB first considered how the Project would interact with the environment, including those elements listed in Section 5.2 below. The NEB also considered the factors set out in paragraphs 16(1) (a) through (d) of the CEA Act.

For those environmental elements for which Project interactions were predicted, the NEB then identified any potential adverse environmental effects. These were compared with any mitigating circumstances or company proposed measures, and any effects still potentially present after mitigation were assessed for their significance. The NEB also considered cumulative effects, the need for any issue-specific regulatory condition, and the need for additional mitigation or monitoring as appropriate.

5.2 Project – Environment Interactions

In assessing the environmental effects of the Project, the NEB considered how the Project would interact with the following elements:

- Terrain and Physical Environment
- Soil and Soil Productivity
- Water Quality and Quantity
- Air Quality
- Acoustic Environment
- Vegetation
- Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat
- Species at Risk or of Special Status
- Human Occupancy and Resource Use
- Heritage Resources
- Accidents and Malfunctions

The primary Project-environment interactions would be from clearing and ground-breaking activities, and from construction and operation of the Project facilities. These activities can be expected to potentially affect human occupancy and resource use, vegetation, wildlife and wildlife habitat, and species at risk (particularly caribou).

5.3 Potential Adverse Environmental Effects and Standard Mitigation

NGTL committed to minimizing the environmental impacts of the Project by implementing standard mitigation measures, including but not limited to, those outlined in the table below.

Potential Adverse Environmental Effect	Proposed Standard Design or Mitigation Measures
Soils - topsoil/subsoil mixing; erosion; compaction; contamination from spills, reduction of soil productivity	▪ Salvage strippings, including organic layer, from areas to be graded. ▪ Store strippings from areas to be graveled. Ensure strippings stockpiles are protected from erosion with good vegetation establishment. ▪ Preserve organic material by grubbing tree roots with hoe and thumb or alternate equipment.

Potential Adverse Environmental Effect	Proposed Standard Design or Mitigation Measures
	▪ Suspend affected construction activity upon indication of wet soils. ▪ Place an impervious tarp underneath equipment/vehicles when servicing equipment/vehicles with the potential for accidental spills. ▪ Complete clean-up immediately following construction. Regrade areas with vehicle ruts, erosion gullies or where settlement has occurred. ▪ Implement NGTL's *Adverse Weather, Wet Soils* and *Spill Contingency Plans*, as warranted.
Water Quality and Quantity – alteration of natural drainage patterns; reduction in ground water quality	▪ Maintain natural drainage contour away from the road. Install a culvert at existing ditch line to allow cross drainage, if warranted. ▪ Prohibit fuel storage, refueling or servicing equipment within 100 m of watercourses, drainages, and wetlands except where secondary containment is provided. ▪ Implement NGTL's *Spill Contingency Plan* in the event of a spill.
Vegetation – loss or alteration of native vegetation; introduction or spread of weeds	▪ Do not clear timber, stumps, brush and other vegetation beyond the marked facility boundaries. ▪ All equipment must be clean and free of soil or vegetative debris prior to arrival on site. ▪ Seed non-graveled disturbed areas as close as possible to final clean-up and strippings replacement with native seed mix, free of legumes and noxious weeds. ▪ Gravel entire area within the fenced boundaries of the meter station. ▪ Ensure strippings stockpiles retained for abandonment are properly protected from erosion, with good vegetation establishment. ▪ Adhere to the recommendations provided by EC on invasive species: inspect and maintain vehicles to reduce the spread of invasive species; monitor the site regularly for invasive species and manage appropriately to reduce spread. ▪ Implement monitoring and treatment of weed infestation on site during Project construction and operation in accordance with TransCanada PipeLines Limited's *Invasive Vegetation Weed Control Management* procedure.
Species at Risk, Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat – loss or alteration of wildlife habitat; sensory disturbance; attraction of nuisance animals; direct or indirect mortality due to increased vehicle traffic; displacement of species at risk away from the Project area; stress, injury, reduced reproductive success and mortality of caribou in particular	▪ Submit a Caribou Protection Plan to Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD) annually, as part of NGTL's regional operations. ▪ Project construction and routine maintenance and operation activities will be completed outside of the critical spring period for caribou (mid-March to mid-July), unless otherwise approved by ASRD. ▪ No construction or clean-up activities are to occur within the migratory bird nesting period (1 May to 31 July). A bird nest survey will be conducted by a qualified avian biologist if scheduling changes result in clearing or construction activities occurring within the migratory bird nesting period. Any nesting activity noted would be subject to additional mitigation strategies or work in the area would be suspended until the nest is no longer active. ▪ In the event of confirmed or potential discovery of a wildlife species at risk, mitigation would include suspension of work and consultation with applicable regulatory agencies to develop specific mitigation.

Potential Adverse Environmental Effect	Proposed Standard Design or Mitigation Measures
	▪ Implement NGTL's *Wildlife Species of Concern Discovery Contingency Plan* and *Wildlife Encounter Contingency Plan* in the event of an encounter with species at risk or other wildlife species.
Human occupancy and resource use - disruption of trapping activities; reduction in forestry land base; alteration to local viewscape.	▪ Do not clear timber, stumps, brush and other vegetation beyond the marked facility boundaries. ▪ Confine construction equipment to designated construction footprint. ▪ Notify the registered trapper of the proposed facility and construction schedule prior to construction. ▪ Reduce light intrusion on areas adjacent to the meter station by reducing number of light and light intensity, as much as practical, without compromising safety.
Heritage Resources – disturbance of previously unidentified surface and buried heritage resources.	▪ Follow conditions on the Historical Resources Act Clearance obtained for the Project. ▪ If historical or palaeontological features not previously identified are found on the facility site during construction, follow conditions outlined in the *Heritage Resource Discovery Contingency Plan*. ▪ NGTL will prohibit collection of historical resources by Project personnel.
Accidents and Malfunctions – contamination of soils, vegetation, air and water; injury to people and wildlife	▪ Locate and flag all existing buried utility lines. ▪ Do not burn slash if fire hazard is high. If burning is delayed, store slash within facility boundary, in natural clearings, or approved push-outs until fire hazard is low. Implement the *Fire Prevention and Suppression Contingency Plan* in the event of a fire. ▪ Implement the NGTL's *Spill Contingency Plan* and follow the NEB *Remediation Process Guide* in the event of a spill.
NGTL's environmental interactions table specifies further details on standard mitigation. In addition, NGTL has committed to having and implementing an Environmental Protection Plan (EPP) for the Project.	

5.4 Evaluation of Project Related Adverse Effects after Mitigation

The NEB is of the view that the potential adverse effects that would arise from Project interactions with the environmental elements would be minor or temporary, and could be resolved through the use of the standard design or routine mitigation measures outlined in NGTL's application and related filings. The effects of construction activities would be temporary and of short-term duration, while the long term alteration of land use resulting from the Project would be localized and small in scale.

The Board notes that NGTL proposed to either seed or naturally revegetate the Project site post-construction. Given the location of the site next to a roadway, and the associated risk of introduction and spread of invasive vegetation, the Board is of the view that it would be inappropriate to allow the site to revegetate naturally. In order to minimize the potential adverse effects of the Project with respect to invasive vegetation, the Board recommends that NGTL develop a reclamation plan for the site as set out in **Recommendation B.**

The NEB is of the view that, due to the Project's small scale, proximity to other anthropogenic disturbances and the lack of high quality of caribou habitat within its immediate vicinity, the potential for adverse effects of this Project on caribou and caribou habitat is not likely to be significant.

In its assessment, the NEB considered the potential for cumulative environmental effects of this Project in combination with other projects or activities that have been or will be carried out. Due to the nature of the Project in a disturbed area, the NEB determined that the Project would not contribute significantly to cumulative effects in the area.

For these reasons, the NEB also considered that a follow-up program would not be appropriate for this Project.

5.5 Recommendations

It is recommended that in any Order that the NEB may grant, the following be included as conditions.

A. NGTL shall implement or cause to be implemented all of the policies, practices, programs, mitigation measures, recommendations, procedures and commitments for the protection of the environment included in or referred to in its application or as otherwise agreed to in its related submissions.

B. NGTL shall submit a reclamation plan, at least 14 days prior to the commencement of construction, which would include re-seeding of non-gravelled disturbed areas of the Project site immediately following construction. The reclamation plan should include a description of the condition to which the applicant intends to reclaim and maintain the Project site once construction has been completed, and a description of measurable goals for reclamation, including preventing, eradicating and managing the establishment of invasive vegetation.

6.0 THE NEB'S CONCLUSION

The NEB is of the view that with the implementation of NGTL's standard environmental protection procedures, plans and mitigation measures and the NEB's recommendations, the proposed Project is not likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects.

This represents a determination pursuant to paragraph 20(1) (a) of the CEA Act. This ESR was approved by the NEB on the date specified on the cover page of this report under the heading CEA Act Determination Date.

7.0 NEB CONTACT

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