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Deputy Advisory Committee Management Officer.

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DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Energy Information Administration

Agency Activities: Comment Request on Collection and Dissemination of Natural Gas Information.

SUMMARY: The Energy Information Administration (EIA) has undertaken a process to analyze its natural gas information collection and dissemination program to ensure its continuing accuracy, validity, adequacy, and reliability. As part of this process, EIA is soliciting comments from users of natural gas information as well as respondents to EIA's surveys.

DATES: Written comments must be submitted on or before June 7, 1999. If you anticipate that you will be submitting comments, but find it difficult to do so within the period of time allowed by this notice, please advise the contact listed below of your intention to do so as soon as possible.

ADDRESSES: Send comments to Ann Ducca, Energy Information Administration, EI-44, Forrestal Building, U.S. Department of Energy, Washington, DC 20585. Alternately, Ms. Ducca may be contacted at (202) 586-6137, by e-mail at Ann.Ducca@eia.doe.gov, or by FAX at (202) 586-4420.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Requests for additional information should be directed to Ms. Ducca at the address listed above.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

- I. Background
- II. Current Actions
- III. Request for Comments
- IV. Future Actions

I. Background

In order to fulfill its responsibilities under the Federal Energy Administration Act of 1974 (Pub. L. 93-275) and the Department of Energy Organization Act (Pub. L. 95-91), the Energy Information Administration (EIA) is obliged to carry out a central, comprehensive, and unified energy data and information program. As part of this program, EIA collects, evaluates, assembles, analyzes, and disseminates data and information related to energy resource reserves, production, demand, and technology, and related economic and statistical information relevant to

the adequacy of energy resources to meet demands in the near and longer term future for the Nation's economic and social needs.

With respect to natural gas, EIA collects information on reserves, production, processing, transmission, storage, distribution, and consumption. This information is used in EIA data products, analytical reports, and forecasts covering the entire natural gas industry. Appendix A contains information on EIA surveys collecting natural gas information as well as selected products.

The EIA, as part of its continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burden and to ensure the practical utility of information collected (required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13)), conducts a consultation program to provide the general public and other Federal agencies with an opportunity to comment on proposed and/or continuing reporting forms. This program helps to ensure that requested data can be provided in the desired format, reporting burden is minimized, reporting forms are clearly understood, and the impact of collection requirements on respondents can be properly assessed. In addition, comments received from this consultation program are an integral component of EIA's program to ensure the accuracy, validity, adequacy, and reliability of information collected.

II. Current Actions

Given changes in Federal laws and regulations (e.g., the Natural Gas Wellhead Decontrol Act of 1989 (Pub. L. 101-60) and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Order 636) as well as changes in the U.S. economy, the natural gas industry has undergone a significant transformation in the past ten years. One example of the effect of this transformation is shown in the chart in Appendix B. The chart illustrates the fact that EIA's published natural gas prices reflect coverage of a decreasing percentage of all natural gas purchases. This has occurred because many natural gas consumers now purchase gas from companies not presently included in EIA's surveys.

Recognizing the changes in the industry, EIA has undertaken a project titled "Next Generation * Natural Gas," also known as (NG)². The project will design and implement a new, comprehensive information program for natural gas to meet customer requirements in the post-2000 time frame. EIA wants to involve both data providers (i.e., respondents to its survey forms) and data users as part of the

(NG)² project. Working together with its stakeholders, EIA can redesign its natural gas information system to be more effective and efficient.

To begin this new project, EIA held ten focus groups and plans to conduct executive interviews to solicit comments from some data users and data providers. That information will be one input for developing a draft outline of natural gas data requirements. EIA is now requesting comments from all interested persons.

III. Request for Comments

Prospective survey respondents, data users, and other interested parties should comment on issues that EIA should address as part its natural gas information system redesign project. Issues may include, but are not limited to: (1) what natural gas information should EIA collect (including the time periods, geographic breakdowns, economic sector breakdowns, and confidentiality treatments); (2) what data are needed to describe and assess wholesale and retail natural gas markets; (3) what natural gas reports, analyses, and forecasts are important to you and why; and (4) any other important topics EIA should consider during this project. Also, persons willing to actively participate with EIA during this process are desired and are encouraged to contact the person listed above.

Comments received in response to this notice may be summarized and/or included in the later requests for Office of Management and Budget approval of EIA's natural gas surveys. They also will become a matter of public record.

IV. Future Actions

EIA will use the comments in response to this notice along with comments received by other methods to help in the development of its natural gas data requirements. Then, draft survey instruments (e.g., forms and instructions) will be designed to collect the data. The survey instruments will be tested using a variety of methods including cognitive testing and small-scale pretests. This process should result in a redesigned natural gas information collection system that will be fully operational around 2002-2003.

To keep interested persons informed of the changing natural gas market and EIA's efforts to redesign its natural gas information system, EIA is developing a page for its Internet site (<http://www.eia.doe.gov>) and an automatic e-mail notification system (<http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/email/index.htm>). Both items should be operational by late June.

Statutory Authority: Section 3506 (c)(2)(A) of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13).

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Jay H. Casselberry,

Agency Clearance Officer, Statistics and Methods Group, Energy Information Administration.

Appendix A. Energy Information Administration Natural Gas Surveys and Information Products

Major EIA surveys currently collecting natural gas information are:

- EIA-23, "Annual Survey of Domestic Oil and Gas Reserves,"
- EIA-23P, "Oil and Gas Well Operator Update Report,"
- EIA-28, "Financial Reporting System,"
- EIA-64A, "Annual Report of the Origin of Natural Gas Liquids Report,"
- EIA-176, "Annual Report of Natural and Supplemental Gas Supply and Disposition,"
- EIA-191, "Monthly Underground Gas Storage Report,"
- EIA-412, "Annual Report of Public Electric Utilities,"
- EIA-457, "Residential Energy Consumption Survey,"
- EIA-627, "Annual Quantity and Value of Natural Gas Report,"
- EIA-759, "Monthly Power Plant Report,"
- EIA-767, "Steam Electric Plant Operation and Design Report,"
- EIA-782A, "Refiners/Gas Plant Operators' Monthly Petroleum Product Sales Report,"
- EIA-816, "Monthly Natural Gas Liquids Report,"
- EIA-846, "Manufacturing Energy Consumption Survey,"
- EIA-857, "Monthly Report of Natural Gas Purchases and Deliveries to Consumers,"
- EIA-860A, "Annual Electric Generator Report—Utility,"
- EIA-860B, "Annual Electric Generator Report—Nonutility,"
- EIA-871, "Commercial Buildings Energy Consumption Report,"
- EIA-886, "Alternative Transportation Fuels and Alternative Fueled Vehicles,"
- EIA-895, "Monthly Quantity and Value of Natural Gas Report," and
- EIA-900, "Monthly Nonutility Power Report."

Additional information about these surveys is provided at EIA's Internet site (<http://www.eia.doe.gov/oss/forms.html>)

EIA produces many reports utilizing natural gas data, analyses, and forecasts. Such reports include: the *Monthly Energy Review*; *Natural Gas Monthly*; *Natural Gas Annual*; *Annual Energy Outlook*; *International Energy Annual*; *Natural Gas Issues and Trends*; and *U.S. Crude Oil, Natural Gas, and Natural Gas Liquids Reserves Annual Report*. These reports as well as other energy information products may be obtained by accessing EIA's Home Page (<http://www.eia.doe.gov>).

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Appendix B. Coverage of Natural Gas Prices Paid by Consumers

Coverage of Consumer Prices for Natural Gas will Continue to Decline in the Future

