



**VIA ELECTRONIC FILING**

May 13, 2019

Docket Management Facility  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave, S.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

**Re: Docket No. PHMSA-2014-0092, Request for Revision of a Previously  
Approved Information Collection: National Pipeline Mapping System Program**

To Whom It May Concern:

On April 11, 2019, the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) published a notice in the *Federal Register* asking for public comment on proposed changes to the information collection for the National Pipeline Mapping System (NPMS).<sup>1</sup> PHMSA published the notice to respond to earlier comments in the proceeding, notify the public about proposed revisions to the information collection, and announce PHMSA's request to obtain a three-year approval from the Office of Management and Budget. The information collection concerns geospatial data that operators would need to submit to the NPMS for certain pipeline attributes.<sup>2</sup>

GPA Midstream Association (GPA Midstream) welcomes the opportunity to provide comments in response to the Notice. GPA Midstream has served the U.S. energy industry since 1921.<sup>3</sup> GPA Midstream is composed of nearly 100 corporate members that are engaged in the gathering and processing of natural gas into merchantable pipeline gas, commonly referred to in the industry as "midstream activities." Such processing includes the removal of impurities from the raw gas stream produced at the wellhead as well as the extraction for sale of natural gas liquid products (NGLs) such as ethane, propane, butane, and natural gasoline or in the manufacture, transportation, or further processing of liquid products from natural gas. GPA Midstream

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<sup>1</sup> Pipeline Safety: Request for Revision of a Previously Approved Information Collection: National Pipeline Mapping System Program, 84 Fed. Reg. 14,717 (Apr. 11, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> The attributes include pipe diameter, wall thickness, commodity details, pipe material, pipe grade, pipe join material, seam type, decade of installation, coating, onshore or offshore designation, in-line inspection capability, most recent assessment method and year, class location, gas high consequence area (HCA), could affect HCA segment, facility response plan sequence numbers, and abandoned pipelines. PHMSA wants to collect the new data using a phased approach over a five-year period.

<sup>3</sup> Additional information about GPA Midstream is available at <https://gpaglobal.org/>. Prior to April 2016, GPA Midstream was known as the Gas Processors Association.

membership accounts for more than 90% of the NGLs produced in the United States from natural gas processing.

## **I. The Long-Standing Statutory Exemption for Gathering Lines from NPMS Requirements Should Not be Changed.**

In the Pipeline Safety and Improvement Act of 2002 (2002 Act), Congress amended the Pipeline Safety Act to require pipeline operators to submit geospatial data to NPMS.<sup>4</sup> Consistent with the scope of an existing PHMSA mapping program, gathering and distribution pipelines were excluded from the NPMS mandate in the 2002 Act.<sup>5</sup> Congress did not amend that exemption in the three subsequent reauthorizations of the Pipeline Safety Act,<sup>6</sup> and PHMSA has consistently acknowledged that gathering line operators are not subject to the NPMS program requirements. Nor is there any indication that requiring gathering line operators to participate in the NPMS would produce justifiable safety benefits. Accordingly, GPA Midstream respectfully requests that PHMSA reaffirm its commitment to maintaining the gathering line exemption.

By way of background, the exception for gathering and distribution pipelines from the NPMS dates to a voluntary mapping program that PHMSA developed in the late 1990s.<sup>7</sup> The purpose of that program was to create a digital mapping system of natural gas transmission, hazardous liquid pipelines, and LNG facilities.<sup>8</sup> “[G]as service lines, gas distribution lines, gathering lines, flow lines, or spur lines” were excluded from the original digital mapping program.<sup>9</sup> When Congress added the NPMS mandate to the Pipeline Safety Act a few years later, it codified these exemptions into the statute.

Since the passage of the 2002 Act, PHMSA’s regulations and guidance documents have consistently acknowledged that gathering line operators are not subject to the NPMS program requirements.<sup>10</sup> In fact, PHMSA recently proposed amendments to the NPMS regulations that make the exemption for gathering line operators even more explicit.<sup>11</sup> GPA Midstream believes these actions reflect PHMSA’s ongoing commitment to fulfilling the intent of Congress and the wisdom of its original decision to limit the reach of the NPMS program.

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<sup>4</sup> Pipeline Safety and Improvement Act of 2002, Pub. L. 107–355, § 15, 116 Stat. 2985, 3005 (2002) (codified at 49 U.S.C. § 60132).

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> Pipeline Inspection, Protection, Enforcement, and Safety Act of 2006, Pub. L. 109-468, 120 Stat. 3486 (2006); Pipeline Safety, Regulatory Certainty, and Job Creation Act of 2011, Pub. L. 112-90, 125 Stat. 1904 (2012); Protecting Our Infrastructure of Pipelines and Enhancing Safety Act of 2016, Pub. L. 114-183, 130 Stat. 514 (2016).

<sup>7</sup> National Pipeline Mapping System, 63 Fed. Reg. 36,030 (July 1, 1998).

<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 36,031.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> PHMSA, National Pipeline Mapping System, Standards for Pipeline, Liquefied Natural Gas and Breakout Tank Farm Operator Submissions (Oct. 2017), [https://www.npms.phmsa.dot.gov/Documents/Operator\\_Standards.pdf](https://www.npms.phmsa.dot.gov/Documents/Operator_Standards.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Safety of Gas Transmission and Gathering Pipelines, 81 Fed. Reg. 20,722 (Apr. 8, 2016) (proposing to add subsection (c) to § 191.29 that would state “this section does not apply to gathering lines.”).

The overwhelming majority of gathering line mileage in the United States is located in rural areas. Rural gathering lines present a minimal risk to public safety and have traditionally been outside the reach of PHMSA's regulations.<sup>12</sup> Unlike gas transmission companies, rural gathering line operators do not have a long history of complying with PHMSA's regulations and may not have access to the information or technology necessary to participate in the NPMS program. Nor is there any data available indicating that requiring gathering line operators to participate in the NPMS program would produce safety benefits that justify the potential costs. For these reasons, GPA Midstream respectfully requests that PHMSA reaffirm its commitment to maintaining the gathering line exemption in this proceeding.

## **II. State Damage Prevention and One-Call Laws and Regulations Require Gathering Line Operators to Know the Location of their Systems, and in some cases submit Location Information to the Appropriate Regulatory Authority.**

Gathering lines are not prevalent in most states. According to PHMSA's latest data, only 28 states have regulated gathering lines, and only 10 of those states have more than 200 miles of regulated gathering lines.<sup>13</sup>

State	Type A (mi)	Type B (mi)	Offshore (mi)	Total (mi)
<b>Texas</b>	4489	645	497	5631
<b>Ohio</b>	457	738	0	1195
<b>Louisiana</b>	488	10	552	1050
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	576	315	0	891
<b>Colorado</b>	776	66	0	842
<b>Oklahoma</b>	226	531	0	757
<b>West Virginia</b>	192	338	0	530
<b>Kentucky</b>	144	271	0	415
<b>New Mexico</b>	233	95	0	328
<b>Michigan</b>	304	1	0	305

Five states with PHMSA-regulated gathering lines require certain operators to maintain, and in some cases submit to state authorities, maps of gathering systems.<sup>14</sup> For example, Ohio requires all gas gathering line operators to establish and maintain maps of their systems and make

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<sup>12</sup> PHMSA is in the process of amending the federal reporting requirements to obtain additional information about gathering lines. In particular, PHMSA has proposed to extend its incident and annual reporting requirements to gas gathering lines in rural, Class 1 locations. PHMSA has also proposed to extend its accident and annual reporting requirements to petroleum gathering lines in rural areas in a parallel rulemaking proceeding. GPA Midstream generally supports these proposals.

<sup>13</sup> Pipeline Mileage and Facilities, <https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/data-and-statistics/pipeline/pipeline-mileage-and-facilities> (last updated Oct. 31, 2017).

<sup>14</sup> Arkansas Oil and Gas Comm'n, General Rules and Regulations, Rule D-17(c); N.Y. Comp. Codes R. & Regs. tit. 16, § 255.9; Kansas Admin. Regs. § 82-3-801; Cal. Code Regs. tit. 14, § 1774.2.

those maps available for inspection.<sup>15</sup> Ohio also requires certain gathering line operators to provide pipeline routing information to state regulators before and after constructing a gathering system.<sup>16</sup>

State Damage Prevention (or One Call) Laws also require operators to maintain and provide information about the location of underground facilities, including pipelines. To reduce accidents and failures due to excavation damage, Damage Prevention Laws require use of a one-call system to notify operators prior to excavation, include damage reporting requirements, and include locating and marking requirements. While the requirements vary from state to state, most gathering line operators participate in these state programs and know the location of their pipeline systems within a certain margin of accuracy.

However, operators are not necessarily required to keep or submit geospatial maps to participate in State Damage Prevention Programs. In many cases, these program requirements can be met with basic, paper maps. The NPMS program requires operators to submit mapping information in a GIS format, and all gathering line operators would need to have access to that technology to participate in the program. Although operators generally have basic maps and know the location of their gathering systems under state law requirements, requiring gathering line operators to submit information to NPMS in a GPS format could be costly, particularly for small operators.

In summary, GPA Midstream does not believe the long-standing exception of gathering lines from NPMS requirements should be removed from the Pipeline Safety Laws or Regulations. Gathering line operators know the locations of their lines and mark them appropriately under state damage prevention laws. GPA Midstream believes it would be unduly burdensome to require gathering operators to submit geospatial mapping information on gathering systems to NPMS.

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GPA Midstream appreciates the opportunity to submit comments on PHMSA's NPMS information collection. We offer our continued assistance to PHMSA as it evaluates comments and remain available to provide additional data or answer questions that PHMSA may have. If you have questions, please contact me at (202) 279-1664 or by email at [mhite@GPAglobal.org](mailto:mhite@GPAglobal.org).

Sincerely,



Matthew Hite  
Vice President of Government Affairs  
GPA Midstream Association

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<sup>15</sup> Ohio Admin. Code § 4901:1-16-04.

<sup>16</sup> *Id.* § 4901:1-16-15.