

**PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF OREGON
STAFF REPORT
PUBLIC MEETING DATE: February 13, 2020**

REGULAR _____ CONSENT X EFFECTIVE DATE March 1, 2020

DATE: February 3, 2020

TO: Public Utility Commission

FROM: Mitchell Moore

THROUGH: Michael Dougherty, John Crider, and Matt Muldoon **SIGNED**

SUBJECT: NORTHWEST NATURAL:
(Docket No. ADV 1079/Advice No. 20-1)
Revises Schedule B – Bills and Bill Payment Options

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Commission approve Northwest Natural’s (NW Natural or Company) filing that revises Schedule B – Bills and Bill Payment Options to accommodate new forms of payment, updates outdated language and revises information within the Auto Pay Plan Section, with an effective date of March 1, 2020.

ISSUE:

Whether the Commission should approve NWN’s proposed updates to its Schedule B Bills and Bill Payments Options, with an effective date of March 1, 2020.

DISCUSSION:

Applicable Law

The Commission may approve tariff changes if they are deemed to be fair, just and reasonable. ORS 757.210. Tariff revisions may be made by filing revised sheets with the information required under the Commission’s administrative rules, including OAR 860-022-0025. Filings that propose any change in rates, tolls, charges, rules, or regulations must be filed with the Commission at least 30 days before the effective date of the change. See ORS 757.220; OAR 860-022-0020.

Overview

On January 8, 2020, NWN filed Advice No. 20-1, requesting an update to Schedule B – Bills and Bill Payments Options tariff. The purpose of the filing is to: 1) accommodate new forms of payment; 2) update outdated language related to bankcard payments, paper forms and letters; and 3) streamline the flow of information within the Auto Pay Plan section.

Analysis

Schedule B provides a general description of the various billing and bill payment options available to NW Natural's customers. In 2020, NW Natural will be working with a new payment processor for transacting payments online. As a result, the Company's customers will be able to make electronic payments using a variety of methods that are not currently listed in Schedule B. This filing revises Schedule B to accommodate these new payment forms.

Additionally, the filing revises other language in the tariff to better reflect the current bill and bill payment options available to its customers.

Among the changes proposed by NW Natural are:

- Removes language delineating specific electronic payment methods, which ensures that future new electronic payment methods that become available are not excluded.
- Revises the reference to e-mail with regard to the monthly bill notification, to indicate that notification may be provided via e-mail or a text or other electronic means.
- Removes the restriction for Interruptible Service or Transportation Service schedule customers from using Paperless Billing, to reflect NW Natural's updated billing system capability to provide the service to these customers.
- Restricts third-party commercial payers and payment aggregators from using non-ACH payments so that these entities do not benefit from the Company's fee-free non-ACH payment service.
- Removes language allowing NW Customers to enroll in auto-payment ACH billing process through submitting a written form, and requiring customers to sign up for this process through the Company's website. This reduces Company and

customer risk in receiving and storing customers' personally identifiable information. Customer's that need assistance in signing up for auto-pay billing will be accommodated by contacting customer support by phone.

Conclusion

Staff and the Commission's Consumer Services division reviewed the Company's filing and redline changes to the Company's Schedule B – Bill and Bill Payment Options. Staff is satisfied that the changes are appropriate and reasonable, and will better reflect the bill and bill payment options available to its customers. Staff recommends the update to Schedule B be approved.

The tariff changes proposed in this filing will have no impact on customer rates.

PROPOSED COMMISSION MOTION:

Approve NW Natural's filing that revises Schedule B – Bills and Bill Payment Options to accommodate new forms of payment, updates outdated language and revises information within the Auto Pay Plan Section, with an effective date of March 1, 2020.