

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
OF OREGON**

UM 2123

In the Matter of

NORTHWEST NATURAL GAS
COMPANY, dba NW NATURAL,

Application to Defer Net Curtailment and
Entitlement Revenues.

ORDER

DISPOSITION: STAFF'S RECOMMENDATION ADOPTED

At its public meeting on May 18, 2021 the Public Utility Commission of Oregon adopted Staff's recommendation in this matter. The Staff Report with the recommendation is attached as Appendix A.

BY THE COMMISSION:



Nolan Moser

Chief Administrative Law Judge



A party may request rehearing or reconsideration of this order under ORS 756.561. A request for rehearing or reconsideration must be filed with the Commission within 60 days of the date of service of this order. The request must comply with the requirements in OAR 860-001-0720. A copy of the request must also be served on each party to the proceedings as provided in OAR 860-001-0180(2). A party may appeal this order by filing a petition for review with the Circuit Court for Marion County in compliance with ORS 183.484.

ITEM NO. CA5

**PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF OREGON
STAFF REPORT
PUBLIC MEETING DATE: May 18, 2021**

REGULAR CONSENT EFFECTIVE DATE November 1, 2020

DATE: May 10, 2021

TO: Public Utility Commission

FROM: Mitchell Moore

THROUGH: Bryan Conway, John Crider, and Matt Muldoon **SIGNED**

SUBJECT: NORTHWEST NATURAL:
(Docket No. UM 2123)
Requests authorization to defer net curtailment and entitlement revenues.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Commission approve Northwest Natural Gas Company's (NW Natural, NWN, or Company) application to defer revenues associated with net curtailment and entitlement revenues for the 12-month period beginning November 1, 2020.

DISCUSSION:

Issue

Whether the Commission should approve NW Natural's request for authorization to defer revenues associated with net curtailment and entitlement.

Applicable Law

ORS 757.259 allows the Commission to authorize deferred accounting for later incorporation into rates. Specific amounts eligible for deferred accounting treatment with interest authorized by the Commission include, "[i]dentifiable utility expenses or revenues, the recovery or refund of which the Commission finds should be deferred in order to minimize the frequency of rate changes or the fluctuations of rate levels or to match appropriately the costs borne by and benefits received by ratepayers."
ORS 757.259(2)(e).

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In OAR 860-027-0300(3), the Commission has set the requirements for the contents of deferred accounting applications. Applications for reauthorization must include a description and explanation of the entries in the deferred account, up to the date of the application for reauthorization, as well as the reason for continuation of deferred accounting. OAR 860-027-0300(4). Notice of the application must be provided pursuant to OAR 860-027-0300(6).

Unless subject to an automatic adjustment clause under ORS 757.210(1), amounts deferred under ORS 757.259(5) and OAR 860-027-0300 are allowed in rates only to the extent authorized by the Commission in a proceeding under ORS 757.210 to change rates and upon a prudence review and review of the utility's earnings. With some exceptions, a company's amortization of amounts deferred under ORS 757.259(5) cannot exceed an amount equal to three percent of the company's gross revenues from the preceding year. ORS 757.259(6).

Analysis

Background

In the Company's most recent general rate case, UG 388, the Commission issued Order No. 20-364 approving a Stipulation in which the parties agreed that NW Natural will credit net curtailment and entitlement revenues to firm sales customers through the Purchased Gas Adjustment ("PGA") on an equal percent of margin basis. To effectuate this agreement, NW Natural has filed a new tariff schedule, Schedule Temporary Rate Adjustment – Net Curtailment and Entitlement, in compliance with Order No. 20-364.

Curtailment revenue is revenue that NW Natural receives when an interruptible customer does not follow the Company's order to curtail service. Entitlement revenue is revenue that NW Natural receives when a transportation service customer does not follow the Company's order to control gas usage to be within a specified threshold percentage as detailed in its Tariff.

Current filing

In this deferral, NW Natural requests to defer amounts, net of incremental costs, to the extent they are collected through its Temporary Rate Adjustment – Net Curtailment and Entitlement as specified in the Commission's Order. The net amounts would be refunded to customers through the Purchased Gas Adjustment.

Proposed Accounting

Beginning on November 1, 2020, NW Natural proposes to account for the amounts associated with curtailment and entitlement revenues by recording the deferral in Account 186. NW Natural will credit net curtailment and entitlement revenues to firm sales customers through the PGA on an equal percent of margin basis. However, the

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amount of revenues to be credited to firm sales customers will be offset by identifiable incremental costs that arise from customer curtailment or entitlement orders. In the absence of approval of deferred accounting, NW Natural would record the amounts in several accounts affecting the Company's income statement and balance sheet.

Estimated Deferrals in Authorization Period

Curtailment and entitlement revenues are infrequent and therefore the Company cannot estimate the amount to be recorded in the deferred account.

Conclusion

Staff has reviewed the Company's application and concludes that NW Natural's request meets the requirements of ORS 757.259 and OAR 860-027-0300, as well as the requirements contained in Commission Order No. 20-208. On this basis, Staff supports the request and recommends it be approved.

PROPOSED COMMISSION MOTION:

Approve NW Natural's application to defer revenues associated with net curtailment and entitlement for the 12-month period beginning November 1, 2020.