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Circleville Herald

News

Pipeline benefits county

Total impact estimated at \$10 million

By **DAVID AMEY**
EDITOR

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Ten million dollars is a tremendous amount of money — more than most of us can expect in our lifetime.

But that is the economic benefit to Pickaway County of the natural gas pipeline project, according to Allen Fore, project manager.

“It’s a very conservative estimate because we’re still in the middle of the project, but I believe Pickaway County on the whole will benefit by \$10 million from the pipeline,” he said during a construction tour.

“As one of the largest natural gas pipelines built in the past 25 years, it is a significant investment in the U.S. energy infrastructure, and will help meet the nation’s growing need for energy by providing natural gas for approximately 4.1 million homes and businesses,” he said.

While the work force, known as pipeliners, are expected to be leaving the area soon after the final section of pipe is buried, their impact has been felt mightily.

Spread H is the portion of the project headquartered in Circleville on the site of the former Deercreek Auto Parts yard off U.S. Route 23. More than 700 workers are employed from the Spread H facility, and many are living temporarily in the area in motels, campgrounds, RV parks, and rental homes.

It is estimated the work crews will spend about \$2 million locally during their short stay, Fore said.

In addition Pickaway County is expected to receive approximately \$2.9 million in annual tax revenue, and Ohio is expected to receive about \$40 million in revenue from sales and use taxes paid during the construction project.

Pickaway County’s general fund benefits by about \$3,000 per week for use of cruisers from the sheriff’s department by off-duty officers, who also are compensated by the company.

“We have billed Michels \$102,962.50 since the project began 11 weeks ago,” said Lt. Robert Radcliff of the Pickaway County Sheriff’s Department. Charge for use of the cruisers is \$15 per hour, and charge for the off-duty deputies is based on a union contract. Thus far, 32 deputies have volunteered for the project.

Because work on the pipeline project is completed in six day cycles, two off-duty deputies are stationed on U.S. Route 23 near the project’s headquarters beginning at 5:30 a.m. for a three-hour shift. Two more are added for 11-hour shifts beginning at 7 a.m., and two begin three-hour shifts beginning at 4:30 p.m., again on Route 23.

“Our goal is to insure safety of citizens as well as the pipeliners,” he said.

Of immediate impact, Columbia Gas of Ohio says its natural gas prices will drop to a seven-year low in August.

The state’s largest gas utility says the typical homeowner will see an August bill of just over \$24, down by more than \$6 from last August.

Prices next month will be 52 cents per 100 cubic feet of gas, down from 68 cents in July.

REX-East is a 638-mile long pipeline that stretches from Audrain County, Mo., to Monroe County, Ohio, as part of the \$6.6 billion Rockies Express (REX) Pipeline project. When complete, the natural gas pipeline will carry approximately 1.8 billion cubic feet of natural gas per day and create tax revenue and jobs for the local economies through which it passes.

It is part of the Rockies Express system, a 1,679 mile underground pipeline which originates in Rio Blanco County,

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Workers use specialized equipment to make certain sections of the pipe are aligned. DAVID AMEY/Circleville Herald

Colorado, and is estimated to provide natural gas for more than 4 million homes and businesses.

The product will be delivered in 42-inch diameter high strength steel pipes buried underground. In the REX-East route, there are five compressor stations and 20 delivery points.

While work began at the western end of the REX-East route in 2008, construction actually began in Pickaway County late last month. Completion date is expected to be Nov. 1.

The project in Ohio is approximately 242 miles in length with compressor stations in Butler and Muskingum counties and meter sites in Warren, Fairfield, Guersey, Noble and Monroe counties.

In Pickaway County, the pipeline stretches 24.1 miles with 19.3 miles through agricultural land and 3.5 miles through forested land.

With easements obtained and a right-of-way cleared, workers bring the pipe to the line and use state-of-the-art equipment to weld it together — averaging about 70 welds per day. The line is bent mechanically to conform to the topography of the land.

Other workers, approximately two miles behind the welders, complete the burying process.

Once completed, additional crews will be on site to restore the land, as closely as possible, to preconstruction conditions, Fore said.

At the conclusions, markers will be spaced along the route to identify the buried pipeline.

Benefits of

natural gas

Economy: Natural gas commonly is used as a fuel for electric power generating plants, other industrial uses, and residential uses.

Cleanliness: Natural gas is a colorless, odorless, tasteless, non-toxic fossil fuel. It is lighter than air, which means it vents easier than heavier petroleum products such as oil.

Natural gas is the cleanest burning fossil fuel which makes it better for the environment.

Safety: Natural gas delivery systems are routinely monitored and inspected.

Most of the natural gas delivery system is underground and identified with ground markers pursuant to Department of Transportation regulations.

One-call telephone numbers have been established for public use to prevent accidental damage to the transportation system when excavating.

On the pipeline

County leaders share their experiences and opinions

"Their presence certainly has increased commerce in the area. We have seen a lot of increased sales at our locations in Circleville — Tuscan Table, J.R. Hooks Cafe, and Tootle's Pumpkin Inn."

John Rankin,

business owner

"We have had a handful of pipeliners attend our worship services at Community United Methodist Church, and I know others have been attending services in other worship centers."

Rev. Barry Burns,

pastor

"The pipeline project has been a very good thing for Pickaway County. By conservative estimates, the workers have left about 80 percent of their earnings with area merchants."

Chuck Taylor,

Circleville mayor

"It's been a shot in the arm for our economy, and we needed it badly. As a bank, we don't have much direct dealing with them other than cashing checks, but when our customers benefit, we do, too."

Stephen Gary,

President, CEO The Savings Bank

"The pipeline project came at absolutely the best time for us. Because of the need for safety, the county benefits from the use of our patrol cars, and our off-duty staff benefits from extra pay."

Lt. Robert Radcliff,

Sheriff's Dept.

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