

Boston's telecom regulator has big plans

In a report from the *Boston Business Journal*, new telecommunications regulator, Sharon Gillett, has outlined new plans since taking over the new Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Cable in May. Her goals include:

- Expand high-speed Internet services in rural areas;
- Provide more help to consumers buying phone and cable services; and
- Reevaluate the state's competitive telecommunications regulations.

However, before these goals can be realized, the new agency must hire a general counsel and administrative director along with several other of the agency's key positions.

Gov. Deval Patrick announced plans to set aside \$25 million to expand broadband access to 32 communities in western Massachusetts where neither cable nor local phone companies provide high-speed Internet service. Another 63 communities have only limited access.

But Gillett said there has been little attention so far to the impact of the problem on companies. She said some companies that would like to relocate or expand to western Massachusetts cannot do so because of the lack of broadband. And workers cannot telecommute from the region.

The agency is also studying what information it can put on its Web site to help consumers and businesses choose cable and telecommunications providers. Currently, the state collects information about complaints and outages, but does not make the information readily available to the public – something Gillett says should change. In one of her first decisions, Gillett recently denied a request from Verizon Communications Inc. to keep the number of its video customers it has in the state confidential.

Gillett also said the agency needs to be more responsive to consumer needs in general. "We need to put the consumer back into the term 'consumer affairs.'"

Trans Mountain Pipeline expands

Kinder Morgan Canada has begun construction on the approximately \$443 million (CAN) Anchor Loop project, the second phase of the

Trans Mountain pipeline system expansion that will increase capacity on Trans Mountain from about 260,000 to 300,000 barrels per day (bpd). The project is expected to be completed in November 2008.

Trans Mountain transports crude oil and refined products from Edmonton, Alberta, to marketing terminals and refineries in British Columbia and Washington state. Earlier this year Kinder Morgan Canada commissioned 11 new pump stations which boosted capacity on Trans Mountain from 225,000 to approximately 260,000 bpd. The pipeline has been operating at capacity since then.

San Diego to spend \$1 billion on sewage system improvements

San Diego expects to spend \$1 billion over the next six years to upgrade its sewer system under a consent decree with federal agencies finalized on July 31. The settlement is the third and final one between the city, the U.S. Justice Dept. and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, addressing sewage spills in local waterways, the ocean and streets. Under the terms, most funds will be used for repairs on 250 miles of pipeline by 2013. The city also will upgrade and repair pump stations, secure 5,800 manhole covers and conduct a sewer capacity assessment.

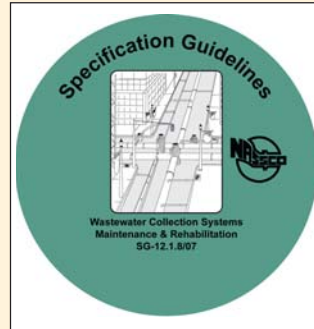
Alaska gas-line applications extended

Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin has extended the application deadline for owner companies seeking to build a natural gas pipeline from the North Slope of Alaska from Oct. 1 to Nov. 30. A state spokesperson says the extension is in response to comments received during an outreach effort to potential applicants and through the project's Web site.

The governor said that even with the two months extension, she still hopes to choose a proposal and provide the Legislature with notice of intent to award during the regular legislative session with runs from January to April.

However, a spokesperson for BP, PLC, London, says the extension doesn't change his company's plans. "The governor's decision to extend the deadline doesn't affect us because we had determined, and made clear when the bill passed, that we could not submit an application" under the proposed terms, says Steve Rinehart.

NASSCO Spec Guide Now Available



The National Association of Sewer Services Companies (NASSCO) has released its latest revision to the *Specifications Guidelines*. The new SG-12.0.8/07 replaces the SG-11-1.5/05 that was previously issued in May 2005.

This latest revision to the *Specification Guidelines* includes more

than 120 specifications and guidelines; an upgrade from the SG-11 version which contained 64 specifications and guidelines. The specifications are a compilation of member/vendor firms who have submitted the information organized on a handy CD-ROM.

"This CD-ROM format is much easier to use on a job-site," explains Irv Gemora, executive director of NASSCO. "It would require a book of more than 600 pages if it were available in a hard copy format."

This comprehensive guide contains specs for many areas of the industry and benefits a wide range of users.

"It is interesting to note that the previous version (SG-11) contained 11 specifications that dealt with manhole rehabilitation," says Gemora. "This new version (SG-12) contains 31 specifications that deal with manhole rehabilitation. There also are specifications listed for pipebursting, grouting, sliplining, cured-in-place, fold n' form, cleaning, smoke testing, etc.

"The *Specifications Guidelines* benefits the supplier who has a product listed because the company can use the guide as a marketing tool," adds Gemora. "It also benefits consulting engineering firms who may not be aware of all the various technologies available; and municipalities who want to make sure they are getting the latest technologies in the marketplace."

The *Specification Guidelines* CD is a useful tool to anyone in the pipeline/manhole rehabilitation industry because it provides logical groupings of products and processes widely used and provided by NASSCO members. It is expected that thousands of copies will be distributed between now and the next revision in the spring/summer of 2009.

A free copy of the SG-12 is available to all NASSCO members as part of the on-going member services efforts within NASSCO. Non-members can purchase a copy of the SG-12 for \$95 each and members can buy additional copies for \$45 each. The SG-12 also can be purchased online at the NASSCO website www.nassco.org by selecting "Publications" from the menu of options.

New U.S. EPA stormwater program too slow

A new U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, issued May 31, reveals that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has made little progress in implementing stormwater pollu-

tion requirements for urban communities. According to the report, approximately 11 percent of municipal storm sewer systems have not received permits as of December 2006 – although the deadline was 1993 for large communities, and 2003 for small communities. As part of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System

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(NPDES) program, EPA issued Phase I regulations for communities with populations of 100,000 or more in 1990, and Phase II regulations for smaller communities in 1999. The regulations also require MS4s – municipalities with separate sewer systems for stormwater – to obtain permits and implement pollution control activities.

The GAO found that 11 out of the 220 larger urban areas and 809 of the more than 5,000 smaller communities were not yet permitted as of fall 2006. In addition, more than half of all state and federal permitting authorities have not issued all of their permits. According to the report, some permitting authorities – including those in Washington and EPA Region 6, serving Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas – have not issued any of their Phase II permits for smaller communities. GAO stated that several factors influence the extent to which the program burdens a community, and that the burden varies depending on whether communities can use the flexibility built into EPA's regulations to implement less expensive measures, or are able to benefit from prior stormwater management experience.

According to the report, legal challenges were partially responsible for delays in issuing separate storm system permits, particularly the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit's decision in 2003 that small municipalities covered under the Phase II stormwater rule must make their compliance plans available to the public for comment. GAO also identified other obstacles, such as budget constraints, as contributors to the slow implementation of stormwater regulations. The report is available at www.goa.gov/new.items.d07479.pdf.

Fiber-optic services sparks controversy

The *Portland Business Journal* reports that the city of Portland, OR, is deciding whether it will add fiber-to-the-premises (FTTP) systems that would provide businesses and residents with another high-speed Internet and cable choice. However, broadband service providers are objecting to the city entering the high-speed Internet business.

By providing fiber-optic services directly to consumers, speeds would range from four times to more than 12 times faster and 20 percent less expensive than those

offered by commercial providers, which typically charge up to \$100 per month for cable and Internet.

Portland's City Council will be looking at research it is conducting, financing and other recommendations to determine the direction it will take on whether to install a fiber system by year end.

Since Portland does not operate its own power utility service, it could cost at least \$500 million to steer fiber lines to each home and business. The city could examine partnerships, such as enlisting venture capitalists or private equity firms, to help build its fiber lines.

However, Qwest and Comcast will lobby hard against it. They say municipally operated networks in other areas are failing.

Elected city leaders seem interested in bringing faster online and cable services to residents. Commissioners Erik Sten and Randy Leonard seem supportive, as does Mayor Tom Potter.

"It's cheaper and it's faster and it injects some good old competition into a system that's virtually unregulated in terms of price," Leonard said.

Commissioner Dan Saltzman, who oversees the city's cable office, is undecided. He did concede that the early returns look promising.

"The surveys so far show that smaller businesses are making demands for higher speed and lower prices," he said. "But financing is still an issue, and the proper role of government still has to be sorted out."

Joint venture pipeline proposed for Oregon

Palomar Gas Transmission LLC, a newly formed joint venture of TransCanada Corporation and Northwest Natural Gas Company, announced a proposal to build a natural gas pipeline that would serve growing markets in Oregon, the Pacific Northwest, and the western U.S. If approved, the new transmission line is scheduled to begin service in late 2011.

Palomar was formed by TransCanada and NW Natural to design, construct and own the Palomar pipeline. TransCanada and NW Natural are equal owners of the joint venture. TransCanada's Gas Transmission Northwest System (GTN), headquartered in Portland, will operate the proposed pipeline. The partners are seeking a federal certificate to build and operate a pipeline extending approximately 220 miles from northwestern Oregon to north-central Oregon.

The Palomar pipeline will connect TransCanada's existing GTN System in central Oregon with NW Natural's distribution system near Molalla, OR, approximately 30 miles southeast of Portland. NW Natural's utility operations has agreed to contract for about 100 million cubic feet per day of capacity on the 36-inch diameter pipeline.

"NW Natural currently depends on a single interstate pipeline for its supply, approximately two-thirds of which comes through the Columbia Gorge," said Gregg Kantor, president and chief operating officer of NW Natural. "The Palomar pipeline would significantly diversify our delivery options and enhance reliability for NW Natural's customers." NW Natural serves about 641,000 residential, business, and industrial customers in Oregon and southwest Washington.

NorthernStar LLC, developer of the proposed Bradwood Landing liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal, may elect to take capacity on Palomar should the Bradwood Landing terminal and the Palomar pipeline be constructed.

"This project is being designed so that, if an LNG terminal is constructed on the Columbia River, the Palomar pipeline can be extended to serve it," Kantor said.

The total cost of the project is estimated to be between \$600-700 million in current dollars if both proposed sections are built.

Palomar will request preliminary environmental approval for the project from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), the pipeline's principal regulator. Even before that filing is made, Palomar will begin the public engagement process in which parties, including landowners, will have the opportunity to ask questions, register comments, and provide input into the overall pipeline certificate process.

ARA scholarships awarded

The American Rental Association Foundation has awarded \$28,000 in scholarships to 17 students from throughout the United States, all pursuing careers in the equipment rental industry. Scholarship awards ranged from \$500 to \$3,000.

Jennifer Kasten of Rental Land, Cape Girardeau, MO, was selected for the ARA Foundation/ARA Insurance Services Scholarship of \$3,000, the top scholarship award. Her grandfather, Eugene Kasten,

and her father, Mark Kasten, are the owners of the rental business. She is attending Southeast Missouri State University, pursuing a degree in organizational leadership and political science, and is scheduled to graduate in December.

For the 2007/2008 academic year, the Foundation's board of trustees added two additional scholarships specifically for students attending technical or vocational schools. The scholarships, worth \$500 each, bring the total scholarships awarded this year to 17, up from 15 last year.

The recipients of these scholarships were chosen by the Foundation's scholarship committee. All ARA Foundation scholarships are awarded based on academic achievement, leadership, rental industry involvement, a written essay on the applicant's future plans in the rental industry and references. Applicants must be owners, managers or employees of equipment rental stores or their family members.

In Memoriam

John "Tinker" Holt, 38, of Deer Park, TX, passed away Aug. 12. A graduate of Sam Houston State University, Holt was a co-owner of Horseshoe Construction. He is survived by his wife, Katherine; son, Kolton; daughters, Jessica and Jennifer; two brothers and their families. He was preceded in death by his mother and father, James David and Catherine Ann Holt.

In honor of John Holt, a scholarship fund has been established for his children. Donations can be made to the Holt Children Scholarship Fund, 4027 Hallmark Fair, Houston, TX 77059 or at any WellsFargo location account # 3648945453. ■