

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ or commission) proposes an amendment to §50.113.

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF THE FACTUAL BASIS FOR THE PROPOSED RULE

House Bill (HB) 2201, passed by the 79th Legislature, 2005, directs the commission to establish by rule, streamlined permitting procedures for FutureGen projects. FutureGen refers to a combination of technologies for carbon sequestration, carbon dioxide enhanced oil recovery, electric generation, and hydrogen production. FutureGen is a technology demonstration project that is a partnership between industry participants and the United States Department of Energy. In HB 2201, the legislature concluded in its findings that this technology demonstration project could result in major economic, social, and environmental benefits for Texas, and that streamlining the permitting process for FutureGen projects would serve the public's interest by improving the state's ability to compete for federal funding for FutureGen projects. A specific requirement of HB 2201 is that FutureGen permit applications shall not be subject to a contested case hearing. Under the proposed rule, the eligible permit applications for FutureGen projects will be subject to the same permitting and public participation processes that would otherwise apply to applications for most types of commission permits, except for contested case hearings. Other portions of HB 2201 reflected in the proposed rule define relevant terms, establish an emissions profile, and clarify jurisdiction issues between TCEQ and the Railroad Commission of Texas. Much of the content of the proposed rule originates from new Texas Health and Safety Code (THSC), §382.0565, Clean Coal Project Permitting Procedure, and new Texas Water Code (TWC), §5.558 and §27.022, which were created by HB 2201.

The purpose of the proposed amendment to Chapter 50 is to implement the requirements of HB 2201

with respect to a streamlined permitting process for applications required to authorize a component of the FutureGen project. Because HB 2201 eliminates contested case hearings on applications for permits required to authorize a component of the FutureGen project, the proposed amendment to §50.113 allows the commission to act on an application for a permit, registration, license, or other type of authorization required to construct, operate, or authorize a component of the FutureGen project without holding a contested case hearing. The proposed §50.113 does not include an expiration date or sunset date, but the commission specifically requests comment on whether an expiration date or sunset date is necessary.

Corresponding rulemakings are published in this issue of the *Texas Register* that include changes to 30 TAC Chapter 55, Requests for Reconsideration and Contested Case Hearings; Public Comment; 30 TAC Chapter 91, Alternative Public Notice and Public Participation Requirements for Specific Designated Facilities; 30 TAC Chapter 116, Control of Air Pollution by Permits for New Construction or Modification; and 30 TAC Chapter 331, Underground Injection Control.

SECTION DISCUSSION

§50.113, Applicability and Action on Application.

The proposed amendment would add a new subsection (d)(5) stating that the commission may act on an application for a permit, registration, license, or other type of authorization required to construct, operate, or authorize a component of the FutureGen project as defined in §91.30, Definitions, without holding a contested case hearing. Concurrently, proposed new Chapter 91, provides the streamlined permitting process for applications for a permit, registration, license, or other type of authorization required to construct, operate, or authorize a component of the FutureGen.

FISCAL NOTE: COSTS TO STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Jeff Horvath, Analyst, Strategic Planning and Assessment Section, determined that for the first five-year period that the proposed amendment is in effect, no fiscal implications are anticipated for the agency or other units of state or local government. Any entities wishing to be permitted under the proposed rule may experience some cost savings due to a streamlined permitting process.

The proposed rule implements HB 2201. HB 2201 directs the agency to establish by rule, streamlined permitting procedures for FutureGen projects. FutureGen refers to a combination of technologies for carbon sequestration, carbon dioxide enhanced oil recovery, electric generation, and hydrogen production. FutureGen is a technology demonstration project that is a partnership between industry participants and the United States Department of Energy. The legislature determined that this technology demonstration project could result in major economic, social, and environmental benefits for Texas, and determined that streamlining the permitting process for FutureGen projects would serve the public interest by improving the state's ability to compete for federal funding for FutureGen projects.

At this time, there have been no permits issued by the agency for FutureGen projects. It is anticipated that there may be one entity in the state that may apply for such a permit in the future. As the proposed rule would eliminate the contested case hearing process for specific projects and does not impose any new requirements for the agency, there may be minor cost savings to TCEQ and the State Office of Administrative Hearings due to the reduction in the number of contested case hearings.

PUBLIC BENEFITS AND COSTS

Mr. Horvath also determined that for each year of the first five years that the proposed amendment is in effect, the public benefit anticipated from the changes due to the proposed rule will be compliance with state law and improving the state's ability to compete for federal funding for FutureGen projects.

These projects are anticipated to result in the development of cleaner sources of power to meet energy demands.

The proposed rule may result in some reduced costs for eligible industry projects, but in general any cost savings are not expected to be significant.

The proposed rule is expected to only apply to one project at the current time. The project involves a variety of equipment used for power generation, hydrogen production, and carbon dioxide sequestration. This equipment may include bulk fuel handling equipment, gasifiers, reactors, separators, turbines, sulfur recovery units, and emission control equipment. Industry projects eligible for the proposed rule would no longer be subject to a contested case hearing.

The elimination of contested case hearings may reduce travel costs for applicants, and may result in reduced administrative or professional costs that would have been incurred by the applicant to prepare for a contested case hearing.

SMALL BUSINESS AND MICRO-BUSINESS ASSESSMENT

No adverse fiscal implications are anticipated for small or micro-businesses as a result of the proposed rulemaking. Small or micro-businesses are not expected to apply for permits for FutureGen projects, but if they do, they would experience the same cost savings as large businesses.

LOCAL EMPLOYMENT IMPACT STATEMENT

The commission reviewed this proposed rulemaking and determined that a local employment impact statement is not required because the proposed rule does not adversely affect a local economy in a material way for the first five years that the proposed rule is in effect.

DRAFT REGULATORY IMPACT ANALYSIS DETERMINATION

The commission reviewed the proposed rulemaking in light of the regulatory analysis requirements of Texas Government Code, §2001.0225, and determined that the rule does not meet the definition of a “major environmental rule.” Under Texas Government Code, §2001.0225, “major environmental rule” means a rule the specific intent of which is to protect the environment or reduce risks to human health from environmental exposure, and that may adversely affect in a material way the economy, a sector of the economy, productivity, competition, jobs, the environment, or the public health and safety of the state or a sector of the state. The proposed rule is intended to establish procedural requirements for authorizing certain types of projects required for the FutureGen project without holding a contested case hearing. The proposed rule is only a procedural rule for processing applications for permits for the FutureGen project and is not specifically intended to protect the environment or to reduce risks to human health. The proposed rule is intended to provide an alternative mechanism for public participation and does not alter the underlying technical review requirements. Therefore, because this rulemaking will not adversely affect in a material way the economy, a sector of the economy, productivity, competition, jobs, the environment, or the public health and safety of the state or a sector of the state, the rulemaking does not fit the Texas Government Code, §2001.0225, definition of “major environmental rule.”

Furthermore, the proposed rulemaking does not meet any of the four applicable requirements listed in Texas Government Code, §2001.0225(a). Texas Government Code, §2001.0225(a), only applies to a major environmental rule adopted by an agency, the result of which is to: 1) exceed a standard set by federal law, unless the rule is specifically required by state law; 2) exceed an express requirement of state law, unless the rule is specifically required by federal law; 3) exceed a requirement of a delegation agreement or contract between the state and an agency or representative of the federal government to implement a state and federal program; or 4) adopt a rule solely under the general powers of the agency instead of under a specific state law.

In this case, the proposed rule does not meet any of these applicability requirements. First, the proposed rule is consistent with, and does not exceed, the standards set by federal law. Second, the proposed rule does not exceed an express requirement of state law, instead the rule implements HB 2201. Third, the rule does not exceed an express requirement of a delegation agreement or contract between the state and an agency or representative of the federal government to implement a state and federal program. Fourth, the commission does not propose the rule solely under the general powers of the agency, but rather under the authority of THSC, §382,0565, as added by HB 2201, which directs the commission to implement reasonably streamlined processes for issuing permits required to construct a component of a FutureGen project, as authorized by federal law; TWC, §5.558, as amended by HB 2201, which directs the commission to implement reasonably streamlined processes for issuing permits required to construct a component of a FutureGen project, as authorized by federal law; and TWC, §27.022, as added by HB 2201, which establishes the commission's jurisdiction over the injection of carbon dioxide produced by a clean coal project to the extent authorized by federal law.

Because this proposal does not constitute a major environmental rule, a regulatory impact analysis is not required. The commission invites public comment regarding this draft regulatory impact analysis determination.

TAKINGS IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The commission evaluated this proposed rulemaking and performed a preliminary assessment of whether this rulemaking would constitute a takings under Texas Government Code, Chapter 2007. The proposed rule is intended to establish a streamlined process for authorizing certain types of projects required for the FutureGen project. The proposed rule is only a procedural rule establishing a system to administer the program for permitting FutureGen projects and is not specifically intended to protect the environment or to reduce risks to human health. The proposed rule is intended to provide an alternative mechanism for public participation and does not alter the underlying technical review requirements. Promulgation and enforcement of the rule will not affect private real property in a manner that would require compensation to private real property owners under the United States Constitution or the Texas Constitution. The proposed rule also will not affect private real property in a manner that restricts or limits an owner's right to the property that would otherwise exist in the absence of the governmental action. Consequently, this proposal does not meet the definition of a takings under Texas Government Code, §2007.002(5). Therefore, the proposed rule will not constitute a takings under Texas Government Code, Chapter 2007. The commission invites public comment on this preliminary takings impact assessment.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE COASTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The commission determined that this rulemaking relates to an action or actions subject to the Texas Coastal Management Program (CMP) in accordance with the Coastal Coordination Act of 1991, as amended (Texas Natural Resources Code, §§33.201 *et seq.*), and commission rules in 30 TAC Chapter 281, Subchapter B, concerning Consistency with Texas Coastal Management Program. As required by §281.45(a)(3), Actions Subject to Consistency with the Goals and Policies of the Texas Coastal Management Program (CMP), and 31 TAC §505.11(b)(2), relating to Actions and Rules Subject to the Coastal Management Program, commission rules governing air pollutant emissions must be consistent with the applicable goals and policies of the CMP. The commission reviewed this rulemaking for consistency with the CMP goals and policies in accordance with the rules of the Coastal Coordination Council, and determined that the rulemaking is consistent with the applicable CMP goals and policies. The CMP goal applicable to this rulemaking is the goal to protect, preserve, and enhance the diversity, quality, quantity, functions, and values of coastal natural resource areas (31 TAC §501.12(l)). The proposed revision includes procedural mechanisms to authorize new sources of air contaminants; however, the proposed revision does not create any new types of authorizations for new sources of air contaminants. The CMP policy applicable to this rulemaking is the policy that commission rules comply with federal regulations in 40 Code of Federal Regulations to protect and enhance air quality in the coastal areas (31 TAC §501.14(q)). This rulemaking complies with 40 Code of Federal Regulations Part 51, Requirements for Preparation, Adoption, and Submittal of Implementation Plans. Therefore, in accordance with 31 TAC §505.22(e), the commission affirms that this rulemaking is consistent with CMP goals and policies. The commission solicits comments on the consistency of the proposed rulemaking with the CMP during the public comment period.

EFFECT ON SITES SUBJECT TO THE FEDERAL OPERATING PERMITS PROGRAM

FutureGen projects may or may not be subject to the federal operating permits program depending on the quantity and type of their emissions and their location. If subject, facilities will be required to meet all requirements of the Federal Operating Permits Program.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF HEARING

The commission will hold a public hearing on this proposal in Austin on December 20, 2005, at 10:00 a.m. in Building B, Room 201A, at the TCEQ's complex, located at 12100 Park 35 Circle. The hearing will be structured for the receipt of oral or written comments by interested persons. Individuals may present oral statements when called upon in order of registration. There will be no open discussion during the hearing; however, an agency staff member will be available to discuss the proposal 30 minutes prior to the hearing and will answer questions before and after the hearing.

Persons who have special communication or other accommodation needs who are planning to attend the hearing should contact Joyce Spencer, Office of Legal Services, at (512) 239-5017. Requests should be made as far in advance as possible.

SUBMITTAL OF COMMENTS

Comments may be submitted to Joyce Spencer, MC 205, Office of Legal Services, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, P.O. Box 13087, Austin, Texas 78711-3087, or faxed to (512) 239-4808.

All comments should reference Rule Project Number 2005-053-091-PR. The proposed rules may be viewed on the commission's Web site at http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/nav/rules/propose_adopt.html.

Comments must be received by 5:00 p.m., December 27, 2005. For further information, please contact Michael Wilhoit, Air Permits Division, at (512) 239-1222.

SUBCHAPTER F: ACTION BY THE COMMISSION
§50.113

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

The amendment is proposed under TWC, §5.103, concerning Rules, and TWC, §5.105, concerning General Policy, which authorize the commission to adopt rules necessary to carry out its powers and duties under the TWC; and under THSC, §382.017, concerning Rules, which authorizes the commission to adopt rules consistent with the policy and purposes of the Texas Clean Air Act. The amendment is also proposed under THSC, §382.002, concerning Policy and Purpose, which establishes the commission purpose to safeguard the state's air resources, consistent with the protection of public health, general welfare, and physical property; THSC, §382.011, concerning General Powers and Duties, which authorizes the commission to control the quality of the state's air; THSC, §382.012, concerning State Air Control Plan, which authorizes the commission to prepare and develop a general, comprehensive plan for the control of the state's air; THSC, §382.0518, concerning preconstruction permits; THSC, §382.056, concerning notice of intent to obtain permit or permit review and hearing; THSC, §382.0565, concerning clean coal project permitting procedure; and TWC, §5.558, concerning clean coal project permitting.

The proposed amendment implements TWC, §5.558(c) and THSC, §382.0565(d).

§50.113. Applicability and Action on Application.

(a) - (c) (No change.)

(d) Without holding a contested case hearing, the commission may act on:

(1) - (5) (No change.)

(6) an application for pre-injection unit registration under §331.17 of this title (relating to Pre-Injection Units Registration); [and]

(7) an application for a permit, registration, license, or other type of authorization required to construct, operate, or authorize a component of the FutureGen project as defined in §91.30 of this title (relating to Definitions); and

(8) [(7)] other types of applications where a contested case hearing request has been filed but no opportunity for hearing is provided by law.