

**BEFORE THE TENNESSEE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

**NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE**

<b>IN RE:</b>	<b>May 14, 2018</b>	)	
		)	
<b>COUNCE NATURAL GAS ACTUAL</b>		)	<b>DOCKET NO.</b>
<b>COST ADJUSTMENT FILING FOR THE</b>		)	<b>17-00141</b>
<b>PERIOD OCTOBER 1, 2016 THROUGH</b>		)	
<b>SEPTEMBER 30, 2017</b>		)	

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**ORDER ADOPTING ACA AUDIT REPORT OF  
TENNESSEE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION'S UTILITIES DIVISION**

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This matter came before Commissioner Herbert H. Hilliard, Commissioner Kenneth C. Hill and Commissioner Keith Jordan of the Tennessee Public Utility Commission ("Commission" or "TPUC"), the voting panel assigned to this docket, during a regularly scheduled Conference held on April 9, 2017 to consider the Commission's Utilities Division Staff (the "Staff") audit report of Counce Natural Gas Company's ("Counce" or the "Company") annual deferred gas cost account filing for the year ended September 30, 2017. The Actual Cost Adjustment ("ACA") Compliance Audit Report (the "Report") attached hereto as Exhibit 1, and incorporated into this document as if fully rewritten herein, contains the conclusions and recommendations of the Staff.

On December 6, 2017, Counce filed its annual report of the transactions in the ACA Account for the period of October 1, 2016, through September 30, 2017. The Staff completed its audit of the Company's filing on March 26, 2018, and the preliminary ACA audit findings were sent to Counce for comment. The Company responded on March 26, 2018 via email, and its comments were incorporated into the final Audit Report (attached hereto as Exhibit 1).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Memorandum, p. 2 (March 29, 2018).

The Staff filed its Report on March 27, 2018 for public review and approval by this Commission. The Report contained one finding totaling \$266.05 in un-recovered gas costs. The finding, when added to the Company's calculated balance of \$11,851.17, results in a corrected net ending balance in the ACA account of \$12,117.22 which represents the Company's under-recovered gas costs as of September 30, 2017 as shown on page 5 of the Audit Report.<sup>2</sup> The Company acknowledged its mistake and stated it will make every effort to correctly record the interest in future filings. Counce concurred with the findings and recommendations in the Report.

During the regularly scheduled Commission Conference held on April 9, 2018, the voting panel unanimously approved and adopted the Report, as filed, including the calculated ending balance in the ACA Account as of September 30, 2017 of \$12,117.22 in under-collected gas costs. This balance will become the beginning balance in the Company's next Actual Cost Adjustment Filing for October 2017 through September 2018. Spreading the \$12,117.22 balance over the 12 month-to-date September 2017 sales of 11,160 Mcf produces an ACA adjustment factor of positive \$1.09 surcharge per Mcf, as shown in Attachment 1 to the Audit Report.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the Commission directed Counce to file as soon as possible a PGA tariff showing the approved rate of \$1.09 per Mcf effective with its March 2018 billing.

**IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED THAT:**

1. The Actual Cost Adjustment Compliance Audit Report of Counce Natural Gas's annual deferred gas cost account filing for the year ended September 30, 2017, a copy of which is attached to this Order as Exhibit 1, is approved and adopted, and it is incorporated in this Order as though fully rewritten herein.

<sup>2</sup> *ACA Report*, Exhibit A to *Notice of Filing by the Utilities Division of the Tennessee Public Utility Commission*, p.5 (March 27, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* See Attachment 1 for detail of the calculation of the ACA Factor.

2. Counce shall file a Purchase Gas Adjustment tariff implementing the approved surcharge rate of \$1.09 per Mcf effective with its March 2018 customer billing.

**Commissioner Herbert H. Hilliard, Commissioner Kenneth C. Hill and Commissioner Keith Jordan concur.**

**ATTEST:**

  
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**Earl R. Taylor, Executive Director**

# **EXHIBIT 1**

**BEFORE THE TENNESSEE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

**NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE**

**March 27, 2018**

**IN RE:** )  
 )  
**COUNCE NATURAL GAS COMPANY** ) **Docket No. 17-00141**  
**ACTUAL COST ADJUSTMENT (ACA) AUDIT** )

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**NOTICE OF FILING BY THE UTILITIES DIVISION OF THE TENNESSEE  
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

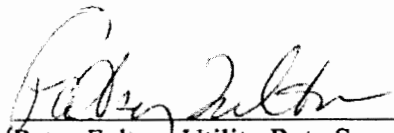
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Pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. §§ 65-4-104, 65-4-111 and 65-3-108, the Utilities Division of the Tennessee Public Utility Commission hereby gives notice of its filing of the Compliance Audit Report of the Actual Cost Adjustment (“ACA”) Component of the Purchased Gas Adjustment Rule (“PGA Rule”) for Counce Natural Gas Company (the “Company”) in this docket and would respectfully state as follows:

1. The present docket was opened by the Commission to hear matters arising out of the audit of the Company’s ACA filing for the period October 1, 2016 through September 30, 2017.
2. The Company’s ACA filing was received on December 6, 2017, and the Compliance Audit Staff (“Staff”) completed its audit of same on March 22, 2018.
3. On March 23, 2018, the Utilities Division submitted its preliminary ACA audit findings to the Company via e-mail. The Company responded on March 26, 2018 via e-mail and this response has been incorporated into the final report.

4. The Utilities Division hereby files its Report attached as Exhibit A with the Tennessee Public Utility Commission for deposit as a public record and approval of the Report and recommendations contained therein.

Respectfully Submitted:

  
Patsy Fulton, Utility Rate Specialist IV  
Utilities Division  
Tennessee Public Utility Commission

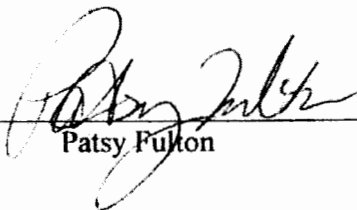
**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that on this 27<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2018, a true and exact copy of the foregoing has been either hand-delivered or delivered via U.S. Mail, postage pre-paid, to the following persons:

David F. Jones  
Chairman  
Tennessee Public Utility Commission  
502 Deaderick Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Nashville, TN 37243

Mr. Mike Horton, President  
Counce Natural Gas Company  
P.O. Box 385  
Burnsville, MS 38833

Mr. Vance L. Broemel  
Office of the Attorney General  
Consumer Advocate and Protection Division  
P. O. Box 20207  
Nashville, TN 37202

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Patsy Fulton

**EXHIBIT A**

**COMPLIANCE AUDIT REPORT**

**OF**

**COUNCE NATURAL GAS COMPANY**

**ACTUAL COST ADJUSTMENT**

**Docket No. 17-00141**

**PREPARED BY THE**

**TENNESSEE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

**UTILITIES DIVISION**

**March 27, 2018**



**COUNCE NATURAL GAS COMPANY**  
**COMPLIANCE AUDIT REPORT OF**  
**ACTUAL COST ADJUSTMENT FILING**  
**DOCKET NO. 17-00141**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The subject of this audit is Counce Natural Gas Company's ("Company" or "Counce") compliance with the Actual Cost Adjustment and Refund Adjustment of the Purchased Gas Adjustment Rule<sup>1</sup> ("PGA Rule") of the Tennessee Public Utility Commission ("TPUC" or the "Commission"). The objective of the audit was to determine whether the Purchased Gas Adjustments, which are encompassed by the Actual Cost Adjustment ("ACA")<sup>2</sup>, for the twelve (12) months ended September 30, 2017, were calculated correctly and were supported by appropriate source documentation.

## **II. AUDIT OPINION**

Audit Staff ("Staff") reviewed the Company's ACA filing and the underlying documentation supporting its calculation of the ending balance of the ACA account. Staff's review, using a random sampling of bills, determined that customers were billed without error during the period October 1, 2016 thru September 30, 2017. The audit resulted in one (1) finding, described in Section VIII. Since the finding was immaterial, Staff can provide assurance that Counce is correctly reporting the Gas Charge Adjustment, the Refund Adjustment, and the Actual Cost Adjustment in accordance with the Purchased Gas Adjustment Rules for TPUC regulated gas companies.

## **III. SUMMARY OF COMPANY FILING**

On December 6, 2017, Staff received Counce's ACA filing supporting the activity in its deferred gas cost account ("ACA Account") for the period October 1, 2016 through September 30, 2017. For the period under review, the Company's ACA filing showed a beginning balance of negative \$259.17 in over-recovered gas costs. To the beginning balance, the Company added \$57,209.22 in total gas costs for the current period, subtracted \$45,144.88<sup>3</sup> in costs recovered from customers through rates during the same period and added interest of \$46 due from customers resulting in a calculated ending balance in the ACA Account of positive of \$11,851.17 in under-recovered gas costs. The following chart shows the ACA Account as filed by Counce. A comparison of the Company's filing to the Staff's corrected filing is shown in Section VIII.

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<sup>1</sup> TPUC Rule 1220-4-7.

<sup>2</sup> The ACA is more fully described in Section VI.

<sup>3</sup> This amount includes PGA adjustment recoveries and ACA adjustment recoveries.

**COUNCE NATURAL GAS COMPANY  
ACA FILING OCTOBER 2016 TO SEPTEMBER 2017:<sup>4</sup>**

Line No.		Company (as filed)
1	Beginning Balance at 10/01/16	\$ (259.17)
2	<b>Activity During Current Period:</b>	
3	Plus Gas Costs	57,209.22
4	Minus ACA Recoveries (refund)	(9,315.92)
5	Minus PGA Recoveries (surcharge)	<u>54,460.80</u>
6	Ending Balance before Interest (line 1 + line 3 – line 4 – line 5)	11,805.17
7	Plus Interest	<u>46.00</u>
8	<b>Ending Balance Including Interest at 09/30/17 (line 6 + line 7)</b>	<b><u>\$ 11,851.17</u></b>

**IV. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON COMPANY AND GAS SUPPLIERS**

Counce Natural Gas Company, with its headquarters in Burnsville, MS, is a wholly owned subsidiary of Tumlinson Engineering, Inc., and was formed in 1995 for the purpose of acquiring the operating authority of Hardin County Gas Company and providing natural gas service to customers in Hardin County, Tennessee. Hardin County Gas Company's certificate of convenience and necessity ("CCN") was transferred to Counce on December 22, 1995, in Docket No. 95-03379. In October 2000, ownership of Tumlinson Engineering, Inc. was transferred from Ted Tumlinson to Mike Horton.

The natural gas used to serve this area is purchased from Horton Enterprises, Inc (an affiliate), which is owned by Mike Horton. Horton Enterprises, Inc operates as a reseller of gas from Atmos Energy Marketing.

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<sup>4</sup> A negative balance in the ACA Account represents an over-collection (or over-recovery) of gas costs; a positive balance represents an under-collection (or under-recovery) of gas costs.

## **V. JURISDICTION OF THE TENNESSEE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

Tennessee Code Annotated (T.C.A.) gives jurisdiction and control over public utilities to the Tennessee Public Utility Commission. T.C.A. §65-4-104 states:

The Commission has general supervisory and regulatory power, jurisdiction, and control over all public utilities, and also over their property, property rights, facilities, and franchises, so far as may be necessary for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this chapter.

Further, T.C.A. §65-4-105 grants the same power to the Commission with reference to all public utilities within its jurisdiction as chapters 3 and 5 of Title 65 of the T.C.A. have conferred on the Department of Transportation's oversight of the railroads or the Department of Safety's oversight of transportation companies. By virtue of T.C.A. §65-3-108, this power includes the right to audit:

The department is given full power to examine the books and papers of the companies, and to examine, under oath, the officers, agents, and employees of the companies and any other persons, to procure the necessary information to intelligently and justly discharge its duties and carry out the provisions of this chapter and chapter 5 of this title.

The Utilities Division of the TPUC is responsible for auditing energy, water and communications utilities under its jurisdiction to ensure that each company is abiding by Tennessee statute as well as the Rules and Regulations of the Authority. Patsy Fulton of the Utilities Division conducted this audit.

## **VI. DESCRIPTION OF PURCHASED GAS ADJUSTMENT RULE**

The PGA Rule is located at Chapter 1220-4-7 of the Rules of the Tennessee Public Utility Commission. The PGA Rule permits a gas company to recover, in a timely fashion, the total cost of gas purchased for delivery to its customers and to assure that a company does not over-collect or under-collect gas costs from its customers. The PGA consists of three major components:

- 1) The Actual Cost Adjustment (ACA)**
- 2) The Gas Charge Adjustment (GCA)**
- 3) The Refund Adjustment (RA)**

The ACA is the difference between the revenues billed customers by means of the GCA and the cost of gas invoiced the Company by suppliers plus margin loss (if allowed by order of the TPUC in another docket) and related interest as reflected in the Deferred Gas Cost account. The ACA then "true-up" the difference between the actual gas costs and the gas costs recovered from customers. The RA (refunds) surcharges the "true-up" along with other supplier refunds. For a

more complete definition of the GCA and RA, refer to the PGA Formula attached as Appendix A to this report.

Section 1220-4-7-.03(2) of the PGA Rule requires:

Each year, the Company shall file with the [Commission] an annual report reflecting the transactions in the Deferred Gas Cost Account. Unless the [Commission] provides written notification to the Company within one hundred eighty (180) days from the date of filing the report, the Deferred Gas Cost Adjustment Account shall be deemed in compliance with the provisions of these Rules. This 180-day notification period may be extended by mutual consent of the Company and the [Commission] Staff or by order of the [Commission].

## **VII. SCOPE OF ACTUAL COST ADJUSTMENT AUDIT**

The ACA audit is a limited compliance audit of Counce's ACA Account. The objective of the audit is to verify that the Company's calculations of gas costs incurred and recovered were materially correct,<sup>5</sup> and that the Company is following all Authority orders and directives with respect to its calculation of the ACA Account balance. Refer to the ACA Account detail provided in Section III, SUMMARY OF COMPANY FILING (Counce's ACA filing for October 2016 to September 2017).

To accomplish the audit goal, Staff reviewed gas supply invoices, copies of the Company's canceled checks, as well as supplemental schedules and other source documentation provided by the Company. Where appropriate, Staff requested additional information to clarify the filing. Staff also audited a sample of customer bills to determine if the proper tariff rates, as well as PGA and ACA rates were applied in the Company's calculation of customer bills during the audit period. After sampling Company bills, Staff found that Counce had billed the correct TPUC approved PGA and ACA tariff rates.

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<sup>5</sup> The audit goal is not to guarantee that the Company's results are 100% correct. Where it is appropriate, Staff utilizes sampling techniques to determine whether the Company's calculations are materially correct. Material discrepancies would dictate a broadening of the scope of Staff's review.

## VIII. ACA FINDINGS

Staff's audit revealed one (1) finding totaling positive \$266.05 in un-recovered gas costs. The finding, when added to the Company's calculated balance of positive \$11,851.17, results in a corrected net ending balance in the ACA account of positive \$12,117.22 which represents the Company's under-recovered gas costs as of September 30, 2017. A summary of the ACA Account as filed by the Company and as adjusted by the Staff is shown below, followed by a description of the finding.

### SUMMARY OF THE ACA ACCOUNT:

Line No.		Company (as filed)	Staff (as adjusted)	Difference (Findings)
1	Beginning Balance at 9/30/16	\$ (\$259.17)	\$ (\$259.17)	\$0.00
2	<b><u>Activity During Current Period:</u></b>			
	Plus:			
3	Gas Costs	57,209.22	57,209.22	0.00
	Minus:			
4	ACA Recoveries	(9,315.92)	(9,315.92)	0.00
5	PGA Recoveries	<u>54,460.80</u>	<u>54,460.80</u>	<u>0.00</u>
6	Ending Balance before Interest (line 1 + line 3 – line 4 – line 5)	11,805.17	11,805.17	0.00
	Plus:			
7	Interest	<u>46.00</u>	<u>312.05</u>	<u>266.05</u>
8	<b>Ending Balance Including Interest at 09/30/17 (line 6 + line 7)</b>	<b><u>\$11,851.17</u></b>	<b><u>\$12,117.22</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 266.05</u></b>

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

<b>Finding #1</b>	<b>Interest Expense</b>	<b><u>\$ 266.05</u></b>
	<b>Net Results</b>	<b><u>\$ 266.05</u></b>

**FINDING:**

**Exception**

The Company understated the amount of interest due from customers.

**Discussion**

Pursuant to the Purchased Gas Adjustment Rule ("PGA Rule"), interest is calculated on the average monthly balance in the ACA Account. The interest rate computation uses the prime rate as published by the Federal Reserve and can be found in the PGA Rule 1220-4-7-.03(1)(b)2(vii). TPUC Staff calculates the interest rates quarterly and provides these rates to the gas utilities.

In this year's annual filing, Counce did not use the approved interest rates in its calculation of monthly interest. Instead, the Company added a flat dollar amount to the average monthly ACA Account balance, specifically \$3.50 for the months of October 2016 through February 2017, \$3.96 for the months of March through May 2017, and \$4.21 for the months June through September 2017. This resulted in a reported total interest of \$46.00 due from customers for the period. Applying the approved interest rates of 3.50% for the fourth quarter of 2016 through the second quarter of 2017 and 4.21% for the third quarter of 2017 yields a Staff corrected total interest amount of \$312.05 due from customers. The difference of **\$266.05** represents an **under-recovery of gas costs**.

**Company Response**

The company understands and will make every effort to correctly record the interest from now on. Thank you.

## IX. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Actual Cost Adjustment is the difference between the **actual** invoiced gas costs paid by the utility and the **actual** gas costs recovered (or collected) by the utility from its customers via their approved tariff rates. The annual true-up process produces an ACA adjustment factor to be used in billing during the ensuing period until a new factor is determined.

The Staff's corrected balance in the ACA Account as of September 30, 2017 is a positive **\$12,117.22, representing under-recovered gas costs.**<sup>6</sup> This balance will be used as the beginning balance for the October 2017 – September 2018 ACA filing. Spreading the positive \$12,117.22 balance over the 12 month-to-date September 2017 sales of 11,160 MCF produces an **ACA adjustment factor**<sup>7</sup> of positive **\$1.09 surcharge per MCF.**<sup>8</sup>

## APPENDIX A

### PGA FORMULA

The computation of the GCA can be broken down into the following formulas:

$$\text{Firm GCA} = \frac{D + \text{DACA}}{\text{SF}} - \text{DB} + \frac{P + T + \text{SR} + \text{CACA}}{\text{ST}} - \text{CB}$$

$$\text{Non-Firm GCA} = \frac{P + T + \text{SR} + \text{CACA}}{\text{ST}} - \text{CB}$$

where

GCA = The Gas Charge Adjustment in dollars per Ccf/Therm, rounded to no more than five decimal places.

D = The sum of all fixed Gas Costs.

<sup>6</sup> Staff's calculation of this balance is shown in Section VIII, ACA Findings.

<sup>7</sup> Small gas companies, such as Counce, do not automatically surcharge or refund the balance in the ACA Account until the Staff's audit is complete and the surcharge or refund factor is determined by the TPUC.

<sup>8</sup> See Attachment 1 for detail of the calculation of the ACA factor.



DACA = The demand portion of the ACA.

P = The sum of all commodity/gas charges.

T = The sum of all transportation charges.

SR = The sum of all FERC approved surcharges.

CACA = The commodity portion of the ACA.

DB = The per unit rate of demand costs or other fixed charges included in base rates in the most recently completed general rate case (which may be zero if the Company so elects and the Commission so approves).

CB = The per unit rate of variable gas costs included in base rates in the most recently completed general rate case (which may be zero if the Company so elects and the Commission so approves).

SF = Firm Sales.

ST = Total Sales.

The computation of the RA can be computed using the following formulas:

$$\text{Firm RA} = \frac{\text{DR1} - \text{DR2}}{\text{SFR}} + \frac{\text{CR1} - \text{CR2} + \text{CR3} + i}{\text{STR}}$$

$$\text{Non-Firm RA} = \frac{\text{CR1} - \text{CR2} + \text{CR3} + i}{\text{STR}}$$

where

RA = The Refund Adjustment in dollars per Ccf/Therm, rounded to no more than five decimal places.

DR1 = Demand refund not included in a currently effective Refund Adjustment, and received from suppliers by check, wire transfer, or credit memo.

DR2 =	A demand surcharge from a supplier not includable in the GCA, and not included in a currently effective Refund Adjustment.
CR1 =	Commodity refund not included in a currently effective Refund Adjustment, and received from suppliers by check, wire transfer, or credit memo.
CR2 =	A commodity surcharge from a supplier not includable in the GCA, and not included in a currently effective Refund Adjustment.
CR3 =	The residual balance of an expired Refund Adjustment.
i =	Interest on the "Refund Due Customers" account, using the average monthly balances based on the beginning and ending monthly balances. The interest rates for each calendar quarter used to compute such interest shall be the arithmetic mean (to the nearest one-hundredth of one percent) of the prime rate value published in the "Federal Reserve Bulletin" or in the Federal Reserve's "Selected Interest Rates" for the 4th, 3rd, and 2nd months preceding the 1st month of the calendar quarter.
SFR =	Firm sales as defined in the GCA computation, less sales under a transportation or negotiated rate schedule.
STR =	Total sales as defined in the GCA computation, less sales under a transportation or negotiated rate schedule.

## ATTACHMENT 1

# ATTACHMENT 1

## Counce Natural Gas Corporation

### Calculation of the ACA factor

Docket No. 17-00141

<u>Line No.</u>	<b>Factor to be applied to residential, commercial and industrial customers:</b>	
1	Invoiced Gas Costs (10/1/016 - 9/30/17)	\$ <u>57,209.22</u>
2	Gas Cost (PGA) Recovered (10/1/15 - 9/30/16)	<u>54,460.80</u>
3	Under/(Over) Recovery (line 1 minus line 2)	\$ 2,748.42
4	Interest on Average Monthly Balances	312.05
5	ACA Surcharges/(Refunds) (10/1/16 - 9/30/17)	(9,315.92)
6	Beginning Balance at 10/01/16	<u>(259.17)</u>
7	<b>ACA BALANCE INCLUDING INTEREST at 9/30/17 (line 3 + line 4 - line 5 + line 6)</b>	\$ <u><b>12,117.22</b></u>
8	Sales Volumes (Actual MCF for 12 month ended 9/30/17)	11,160
9	ACA Factor per MCF (line 7 divided by line 8)	\$ <u><b>1.09</b></u>