BEFORE THE TENNESSEE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

November 26, 2024

IN RE:

PIEDMONT NATURAL GAS COMPANY ACTUAL COST ADJUSTMENT (ACA) AUDIT | **Docket No. 24-00062**

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

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 (hereafter "ACA") Component of the Purchased Gas Adjustment Rule ("PGA Rule") for Piedmont Natural Gas Company (hereafter 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 July 2023 through June 2024.

2. The Company's ACA filing was received on August 29, 2024. Audit Staff ("Staff") completed its audit of the same on November 25, 2024.

3. On November 13, 2024, the Utilities Division submitted its preliminary ACA audit findings to the Company via email. The Company responded on November 15, 2024, via email and the response has been incorporated into the final report. The report is attached hereto as Exhibit A and is fully incorporated herein by this reference.

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 requests approval of the recommendations and findings contained therein.

Respectfully Submitted:

Emily Qingshe

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Emily Qingshe, Audit Manager
Utilities Division of the
Tennessee Public Utility Commission

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on this 26th day of November 2024, a true and exact copy of the foregoing has been either hand-delivered or delivered via U.S. Mail, postage prepaid, to the following persons:

David F. Jones
Chair
Tennessee Public Utility Commission
502 Deaderick Street, 4th Floor
Nashville, TN 37243

Ms. Pia Powers
Managing Director of Gas Rates & Regulatory
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Emily Qingshe

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Emily Qingshe

EXHIBIT A

COMPLIANCE AUDIT REPORT

OF

<u>Piedmont Natural Gas Company</u>

<u>ACTUAL COST ADJUSTMENT</u>

DOCKET NO. 24-00062

PREPARED BY

<u>TENNESSEE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION</u>

UTILITIES DIVISION

November 2024

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

PIEDMONT NATURAL GAS COMPANY

ACTUAL COST ADJUSTMENT

DOCKET NO. 24-00062

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I. INTRODUCTION

The subject of this audit is Piedmont Natural Gas Company's ("Piedmont" "Company" or "PNG") compliance with the Actual Cost Adjustment and Refund Adjustment of the Purchased Gas Adjustment Rule ("PGA Rule") of the Tennessee Public Utility Commission (hereafter the "TPUC" or the "Commission")[1]. The objective of the audit was to determine whether the Purchased Gas Adjustments ("PGA"), which are encompassed by the Actual Cost Adjustment ("ACA")[2], for the twelve (12) months ended June 30, 2024, were calculated correctly and were supported by appropriate source documentation.

II. AUDIT OPINION

On August 29, 2024, the TPUC Audit Staff (hereafter "Staff") received PNG's ACA filing supporting the activity in its deferred gas cost account ("ACA Account") for the period July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024. Staff's audit resulted in three (3) findings[3]. The net amount of these findings is **$118,782.99 in under-recovered gas costs**. The Company's reported June 30, 2024, over-recovered ACA balance of 6,913,905.16 is decreased by $118,782.99 due to under-collected gas costs determined in this audit. The corrected balance in the ACA Account as of June 30, 2024 is **6,795,122.17 in over-recovered gas costs**. The amount of the Company's errors represents less than one percent of its total gas invoices and is therefore immaterial by comparison. Staff concludes that except for the findings noted in this report, PNG is correctly implementing its Purchased Gas Adjustment Rider as calculated in the Actual Cost Adjustment, in accordance with TPUC rules for Piedmont Natural Gas Company.

III. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON COMPANY AND GAS SUPPLIERS

Piedmont Natural Gas Company (local distribution company), with headquarters at 83 Century Boulevard, Nashville, Tennessee, is an operating division of Piedmont Natural Gas Company (parent company), which has its headquarters at 4720 Piedmont Row Drive, Charlotte, North Carolina. On February 12, 2008, the Company notified the Authority of its intent to change the name under which it operates in Tennessee from Nashville Gas Company to its corporate name of Piedmont Natural Gas Company, Inc. The Authority issued an order on March 31, 2008 in Docket No. 08-00028 approving the change. Piedmont is a natural gas distributor that provides service to several communities in the Middle Tennessee area. The natural gas used to serve these areas is purchased from producers and marketers and transported to Piedmont's city gate through the interstate transmission facilities of Tennessee Gas Pipeline ("TGP"), Columbia Gas Transmission Corporation ("CGTC"), Texas Eastern Gas Pipeline ("TETCO") and Midwestern Gas Transmission Company ("MGT").

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[1] As of April 5, 2017, the name of Tennessee Regulatory Authority has changed to the Tennessee Public Utility Commission and board member of the agency will be known as Commissioners rather than Directors.
[2] The ACA is more fully described in Section V.
[3] Refer to Section VII for a description of the findings.

IV. JURISDICTION OF THE TENNESSEE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

Tennessee Code Annotated ("T.C.A".) gave jurisdiction and control over public utilities to the Tennessee Regulatory Authority, now the Tennessee Public Utility Commission. T.C.A. §65-4-104 states that:

> The [A]uthority 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 Authority 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 Staff of the TPUC is responsible for auditing those energy, water and wastewater utilities under the Commission's jurisdiction to ensure that each company is abiding by Tennessee statute as well as the Rules and Regulations of the Commission. This audit was performed by Grace Marek, Aisha Salem, and Emily Qingshe of the Utilities Division.

V. DESCRIPTION OF PURCHASED GAS ADJUSTMENT RULE

Actual Cost Adjustment Audits:

The PGA Rule can be found in Chapter 1220-4-7 of the Rules of the Tennessee Regulatory Authority, now 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) as reflected in the Deferred Gas Cost account. The ACA then "trues-up" the difference between the actual gas costs and the gas costs recovered from customers through a surcharge or a refund. The RA refunds the "true-up" along with other supplier refunds. For a more complete definition of the GCA and RA, please see the PGA Formula in Appendix A.

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

> Each year, the Company shall file with the [Authority] an annual report reflecting the transactions in the Deferred Gas Cost Account. Unless the [Authority] 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 [Authority] Staff or by order of the [Authority].

Prudence Audit of Gas Purchases:

Section 1220-4-7-.05 of the PGA Rule requires, unless otherwise ordered by the Authority, an “Audit of Prudence of Gas Purchases” by a qualified consultant. This specialized audit evaluates and reports annually on the prudence of any gas costs included in the PGA. In Docket 96-00805, Nashville Gas was authorized to operate under a Performance-Based Ratemaking Mechanism (“PBR” or “Incentive Plan”), beginning July 1, 1998, and continuing each year unless terminated by the Company or the Authority. For each year that the mechanism is in effect, the requirements of Section 1220-4-7-.05 of the PGA Rule are waived. On December 14, 2007, the TRA issued an order in Docket 05-00165 approving a revised Incentive Plan for Nashville Gas, effective July 1, 2006. This revised Incentive Plan replaces the annual prudence review of the Company’s gas purchasing activities.

VI. SCOPE OF ACTUAL COST ADJUSTMENT AUDIT

The ACA audit is a limited compliance audit of PNG’s ACA Account. The audit goal is to verify that the Company’s calculations of gas costs incurred and recovered are materially correct,[4] and that the Company is following all Commission orders and directives with respect to its calculation of the ACA Account balance. On August 28, 2024, Piedmont filed a PGA to change the ACA factor to begin refunding the net unaudited balance in the ACA Account at July 31, 2024, effective October 1, 2024.[5]

To accomplish the audit goal, Staff reviewed gas supply invoices, as well as supplemental schedules and other source documentation provided by the Company. Where appropriate, Staff requested additional information to clarify the filing.

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[4] 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.

[5] Tariff No. 2024-0047. At July 31, 2024, the net balance in ACA Account was negative $6,825,453.

VII. ACA AUDIT FINDINGS

Staff's audit findings totaled a net under-recovery of $118,782.99. This amount results from the net total of three (3) findings and represents a decrease to the Company's reported over-recovered ending balance in the ACA Account on June 30, 2024, of $6,913,905.16. When added to the Company's calculated balance, the findings result in a net ending balance in the ACA account of $6,795,122.17 in over-recovered gas costs. 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 findings.

SUMMARY OF THE ACA ACCOUNT:

	Company	Staff	Difference (Findings)
Commodity Balance at 7/1/23	($15,404,656.32)	($ 15,404,656.32)	$ 0.00
Plus ACA Audit Adjustment[6]	20,710.87	20,710.87	0.00
Plus WNA Audit Adjustment[7]	0.00	159,687.00	159,687.00
Plus Gas Costs	62,164,630.58	62,122,758.08	(41,872.50)
Minus Recoveries	(50,970,178.64)	(50,970,178.64)	0.00
Ending Balance before Interest	($ 4,189,493.51)	($ 4,071,679.01)	$ 117,814.50
Plus Interest	(839,170.17)	(838,201.68)	968.49
Commodity Balance at 6/30/24	($ 5,028,663.68)	($ 4,909,880.69)	$ 118,782.99
Demand Balance at 7/1/23	($ 4,154,136.53)	($ 4,154,136.53)	$ 0.00
Plus Gas Costs	15,237,141.53	15,237,141.53	0.00
Minus Recoveries	(12,675,506.39)	(12,675,506.39)	0.00
Ending Balance before Interest	($ 1,592,501.39)	($ 1,592,501.39)	$ 0.00
Plus Interest	(292,740.09)	(292,740.09)	0.00
Demand Balance at 6/30/24	($ 1,885,241.48)	($ 1,885,241.48)	$ 0.00
Total ACA Ending Balance at 6/30/24	($ 6,913,905.16)	($ 6,795,122.17)	$ 118,782.99

Note: A negative number indicates an over-recovery of gas costs.

[6] ACA Audit Finding from Docket 23-00060.
[7] WNA Audit Finding from Docket No. 24-00031.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

COMMODITY:

				See page
FINDING #1	WNA Audit Adjustment	$ 159,687.00	Under-recovery	5
FINDING #2	Gas Costs	$ 41,872.50	Over-recovery	5
FINDING #3	Interest - Commodity	$ 968.49	Under-recovery	6
	Net Result	**$ 118,782.99**	**Under-recovery**	

FINDING #1:

Exception

The Company's filing did not reflect the prior years' WNA Audit findings.

Discussion

The Commission's order on August 28, 2024, in WNA audit Docket 24-00031 states: "Piedmont Natural Gas Company shall include the under-collected amount in its next Actual Cost Adjustment filing with the Tennessee Public Utility Commission." The Company's original ACA filing under the Docket 24-00062 does not include this WNA adjustment. On October 23, 2024, the Company submitted a revised ACA calculation via E-mail which included the WNA adjustment. However, Staff's ACA audits must be based upon the Company's original filing. This finding **decreases the Company's over-recovered ACA Account Balance as of June 30, 2024, by a net $159,687.**

Company Response

Piedmont has no objection to the audit finding.

FINDING #2:

Exception

The Company inappropriately included the legal fees related to the Triennial Review in its ACA filing.

Discussion

Following past practices, the legal fees associated with the Triennial Review process are included in the Company's base rates, which are determined through rate cases, or alternatively, through the Company's Annual Rate Review Mechanism ("ARRM"). Therefore, Staff adjusted the Company's Triennial Review Costs to exclude these associated legal fees. This finding **increases the Company's over-recovered ACA Account Balance as of June 30, 2024, by a net $41,872.50.**

Company Response

Piedmont has no objection to the exclusion of these legal fees from the ACA Account Balance as of June 30, 2024.

FINDING #3:

Exception

The Company overstated the amount of interest due to customers in the Commodity component of the ACA filing.

Discussion

Based on the corrections discussed in Finding #1 & #2, Staff was required to re-calculate total interest based on the corrected monthly balances in the Piedmont ACA Account. This finding **decreases the Company's reported over-recovered ACA Account Balance as of June 30, 2024, by $968.49 in the Commodity component.**

Company Response

Piedmont has no objection to the audit finding.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff reviewed the gas costs and recoveries of Piedmont Natural Gas Company for the 12-month period ended June 30, 2024. As reported in the body of this report, Staff concludes that the Purchased Gas Adjustment mechanism, as calculated in the Actual Cost Adjustment, appears to be working properly and in accordance with the TPUC rules for PNG. Staff's audit procedures revealed three (3) monetary findings reported in Section VII, with which the Company concurs. Based on the Company's filing and the audit adjustments by Staff, **the net balance in the ACA Account as of June 30, 2024, was negative $6,795,122.17**. This means that as of June 30, 2024, the Company had over-collected this amount from its customers. This balance will become the beginning balance on July 1, 2024, in the Company's next ACA filing. **Staff recommends approval of the Company's adjusted ACA Account balances, as filed.**

APPENDIX A

PGA FORMULA[8]

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

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

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

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.
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.

[8] Pursuant to Docket 03-00209, the PGA Formula has been amended to include the gas cost portion of uncollectible accounts.

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

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

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

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.