

MAJOR ENERGY RIGHT-OF-WAY (ROW) PROJECTS

PURPOSE OF BRIEFING DOCUMENT:

To provide an update on major ROW projects crossing BLM land in Montana and the Dakotas.

ISSUES:

Electric transmission lines and oil and natural gas pipeline systems will traverse Montana and the Dakotas to support energy development and transport products to markets. The BLM is involved to process applications and issue ROW authorizations where federal lands are crossed. Depending on the type of project, BLM may be the lead agency and/or lead state for the project; and could be the lead, co-lead, or a cooperating agency for compliance with NEPA.

BACKGROUND:

With the assistance of BLM national project managers, we are currently working on three major ROW projects:

Keystone XL Pipeline Project – a buried 36-inch pipeline that will transport crude oil from Canada to the Gulf Coast in Texas. Of the 1,375 miles of new construction in the U.S., the project crosses 32 miles of BLM-administered public land in Montana. The Department of State is the lead federal agency for NEPA; Montana BLM is a cooperating agency. Currently, BLM is reviewing a revised plan of development and anticipates receipt of draft EIS (prepared under a third-party contractor) in September 2009 to review. Montana BLM will be the lead state to prepare, issue, and administer the ROW grant when issued. TransCanada anticipates a decision on its ROW application by early 2010 and plans an in-service date in the fourth-quarter 2011.

Mountain States Transmission Intertie (MSTI) 500-kV Transmission Line Project – approximately 430 miles in length, crossing Montana and Idaho. The BLM is the lead federal agency for NEPA compliance and Montana BLM is the lead state for the ROW grant issuance and administration. The Forest Service is a cooperating agency and will issue authorizations for the segments crossing the national forest lands. The BLM is working on route realignment issues and cultural concerns. The EIS is being prepared under a third-party contractor. Northwestern Energy anticipates a decision on its BLM ROW application by summer 2010 and plans an in-service date of 2013.

Bison Pipeline Project – a buried 24-inch natural gas pipeline approximately 297 miles in length through Wyoming, Montana and North Dakota. FERC is the lead federal agency for NEPA compliance; BLM is a cooperating agency. The Wyoming BLM is the lead state for ROW grant issuance and administration. The BLM is working on the EIS under a third-party contractor. TransCanada anticipates a decision on its BLM ROW application by summer 2010 and plans an in-service date of 2013.

Future Projects - BLM may see a new major ROW project (Chinook) from TransCanada for a 500kV transmission line in Montana and Idaho.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE:

Montana BLM will process ROW applications for major projects to support the interconnectivity with the electric grid system and to transport oil and gas to help reduce U.S. dependence on unstable foreign supply sources. Processing the applications may require the assistance of BLM national project managers.

CONTACTS:

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