

WEST-WIDE ENERGY CORRIDOR)
PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL)
IMPACT STATEMENT.)

ORIGINAL

PUBLIC HEARING - AFTERNOON SESSION

Heard at the Elkhorn Conference Room
Holiday Inn Downtown
22 North Last Chance Gulch
Helena, Montana
October 27, 2005
2:00 p.m.

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BE IT REMEMBERED, that the proceedings in the above-captioned matter was heard at the Elkhorn Conference Room, Holiday Inn Downtown, 22 North Last Chance Gulch, Helena, Montana, on the 27th day of October, 2005, beginning at the hour of 2:00 p.m., pursuant to the Montana Rules of Civil Procedure, before Laurie Crutcher, Registered Professional Reporter, Notary Public.

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1 power station wind generation stations being
2 developed within Meagher County.

3 As the lady from Anaconda/Deer Lodge
4 said, we are from counties that desperately need
5 economic help, but we also have I think something
6 that we are able to give. It would be a great
7 opportunity for us to finally put that wind to
8 use. Thank you for your time.

9 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Is there going to be
10 an opportunity for just questions?

11 MR. POWERS: Yes, there is, as soon as
12 we finish with the formal presentation. Is there
13 anybody else that wanted to speak? **MT05**

14 MR. MARKS: My name is Bob Marks. I'm
15 representing myself, and also Jefferson Local
16 Development Corporation. I wasn't quite sure what
17 I would expect here, and I thought we'd get more
18 of a presentation than we have so far, so we could
19 comment on that. The gentleman from Northwestern
20 Energy gave us an indication of what their plans
21 were, but there wasn't any definition as to
22 whether those power lines or corridors would be
23 operated by Northwestern Energy or by others.

24 We've had an experience in southwest
25 Montana, and also western Montana, twenty some

1 years ago with the construction of the corridor
2 from Colstrip, to Taft, to Hot Springs, and so on,
3 in western Montana, some of which involved a
4 federal agency, the BPA. I think there's a
5 concern -- and I'll speak some for the counties.
6 I appreciate the comments made previously.

7 Sometimes when those corridors go
8 through, the operators and the owners of those
9 facilities are privately held. They have a
10 significant tax base. Other times they are, for
11 whatever reason, owned by public entities, which
12 may or may not have a tax base to the local
13 entities. Part of the sting of having a high
14 power line going through your community is
15 alleviated somewhat by the amount of resources
16 local entities get from that. I think the people
17 speaking on behalf of the counties appreciate that
18 help from the taxation that comes back to help
19 their local schools.

20 I would hope that when these corridors
21 are developed, that in the development of the EIS,
22 you also take into consideration some of the lands
23 other than government lands that you're going to
24 have to go through. There isn't a blanket of
25 government land from any of these places to any

1 other place in the state that doesn't have to
2 cross private land. While one of the commentators
3 mentioned that they wouldn't dare go through the
4 Bob Marshall Wilderness, some ranchers I know have
5 the equivalent value on their land as other people
6 who don't own any land have on the Bob Marshall.
7 So I hope that you consider that.

8 I think it's going to be difficult to
9 make a comment on the EIS because we don't know
10 what we're talking about. We're talking about a
11 generic process, rather than an intimate process,
12 where we could talk about locations. And I think
13 that's extremely important for people to consider
14 when they make comments as to whose ox is going to
15 get gored, meaning the private land owners and
16 other entities. It's hard to comment whether a
17 line from Townsend to Idaho is going to cross my
18 ranch or my neighbor's ranch, when you don't know
19 for sure where it's going.

20 I think it would be important, either in
21 the scoping process or another process, to
22 identify those peculiar areas, particularly so
23 people can make meaningful comments. I don't see
24 how federal agencies can ignore the needs and
25 wishes of private land owners. Even in some of

1 the areas that are generally considered BLM or
2 Forest Service, you're going to have in-holdings
3 there that will be impacted as well.

4 I think the other thing that I'm
5 concerned about is from some experience. When
6 some of the private utility companies propose
7 power lines, it ends up becoming a public entity,
8 such as BPA. I think both Broadwater County,
9 Jefferson County, and four counties west of here
10 encountered that some years ago when BPA built the
11 line. I'm not sure what the motive was, but part
12 of it was to dodge some of the issues on the part
13 of the private power company -- at that time
14 Montana Power Company -- to meet some of the
15 criterias necessary as a private entity that BPA
16 didn't have to go into.

17 Since that time, the people who use that
18 line pay a beneficial use tax to the local
19 counties that that line passes through. The total
20 valuation is \$65 million. I think it's really
21 important, while it may not be important to you
22 people doing the EIS, it is really important to
23 people who have to live under the darn thing. I'm
24 not opposed to building power lines, but I think
25 there's a bunch of these things that you have to

1 take into consideration, or should. I think you'd
2 be derelict not to.

3 I hope that during the rest of the
4 afternoon, people can give some more specific
5 location opportunities, so we can comment on them;
6 but so far today I see nothing we can comment on
7 meaningful, other than we have a cup of coffee.
8 Thank you.

9 MR. POWERS: Thank you very much. Also
10 I want to acknowledge that Charlene Snoddy
11 (phonetic) representing Senator Burns is here. I
12 appreciate your attendance. I understand you
13 don't wish to make a statement at this time.

14 Is there anyone else that would like to
15 make a statement?

16 (No response)

17 MR. POWERS: One thing, Mr. Marks, when
18 the draft of the Environmental Impact Statement
19 will have a whole variety of alternatives and
20 proposed locations, that will ask people to
21 provide comment on it in the 90 day comment period
22 and when the final decisions are made, it can be
23 all or any combination of any of those
24 alternatives that were considered in the EIS
25 process, so they will have an opportunity to make

1 adjustments based on the public feedback.

2 Anybody else want to make public
3 comment? Let's turn that off, and then we'll see
4 if there's some questions.

MT06

5 (Off the record briefly)

6 MR. MELTON: I'm Jim Melton. I'm an
7 environmental consultant. I work for a company
8 called Maxim Technologies. We have five offices
9 here in Helena, and seven offices within the 13
10 states that are being considered for this study.
11 I assume it's 13 states. I don't apologize for
12 being a consultant. I worked for BLM for almost
13 20 years in land use planning and analysis, and
14 DOE for about five and a half with Western Area
15 Power Administration.

16 I guess the comments I wanted to make I
17 think is just to share, for everyone's
18 information. I've worked on and seen a number of
19 Programmatic EIS's, and maybe the gentleman's
20 concern about the generic type of study is an
21 important one. But I guess I don't see much
22 relief in the guidelines, or NEPA policies, or
23 CEQ, because you're doing a Programmatic EIS in
24 terms of level of detail.

25 But I do think it's important, and it's