

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 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

1 required to really set some guides in this early
2 stage about the level of detail that's required,
3 how that detail relates to the responsibility for
4 addressing significant impacts, how it relates to
5 reasonable foreseeable development scenarios that
6 are also required, as well as cumulative impact
7 analysis, as most of the NEPA folks that have done
8 these kind of projects know.

9 So I think it's really important to try
10 to establish, and kind of set out, if you will,
11 some key guidelines as to how specific, and what
12 the level of detail would be, how it relates to
13 existing data bases.

14 If I've learned anything in my 35 years
15 of doing EIS's, it's that consistency in data and
16 data flow, in terms of how it's presented in the
17 EIS, is very critical. And I know that there is a
18 lot of good plans out there, a lot of great land
19 use plans. A lot of them at BLM and Western Area
20 Power, I've worked on, as well as consultants. We
21 should take advantage of that data, and not try to
22 duplicate it.

23 So establish very early what the level
24 of detail is, and how you can use that data,
25 that's already there, that's in existing land use

1 plans and EIS's, to record the information that
2 you need in order to make the decision among those
3 alternatives.

4 So I think there is a great deal of
5 detail out there. I know there is. I've already
6 worked on several plans myself.

7 There is an also an issue I have, and
8 that's that there's several ongoing management
9 plans. There's always going to be an ongoing land
10 use plan and EIS basically in any state. I find
11 the Bureau and the Forest Service perplexed -- and
12 I have found that in my own career, so I'm not
13 pointing any fingers.

14 As an employee, I can say that we always
15 had a great deal of difficulty establishing
16 uniformity with our corridors and right-of-ways as
17 they relate to individual neighboring field
18 offices, much less states. So I know that there's
19 a great deal of inconsistency, as the person from
20 Northwestern Energy has pointed out, just from the
21 private standpoint. There's a number of key
22 corridors, there's a number of new needs, but a
23 lot of the lines done in some of the current
24 plans, as well as past plans, do not line up.

25 So there is another level, if you will,

1 or cut, if you will, that needs to be made as to
2 what are we really searching for, what is the
3 requirement to address it, and how can we
4 establish a framework that could take advantage of
5 the existing data; align lines that don't match
6 that should; establish the key qualifier in terms
7 of the level of detail that's required and the
8 type of GIS meta data that is going to be needed
9 to verify accuracy; so that once you establish
10 these lines, they won't be found inaccurate when
11 they're checked on the ground.

12 And basically do a real extra effort
13 early on, now, to gather what information is out
14 there and what isn't, and what has to be
15 available, so that you can really have a good
16 study, so several alternatives aren't found to be
17 invalid, and you really get a good preferred
18 alternative to make a selection on.

19 So that's pretty much my comments. I
20 just wanted to say that this is a very timely
21 effort. The Governor and several other governors
22 just last week in Bozeman at the Energy Conference
23 talking about the need for a private and public
24 agencies to support energy development. And if
25 there is one thing that will do that, it would be

1 corridors that are accurate, that you can count
2 on, whether it's a private company or private land
3 owner. So thank you.

4 MR. POWERS: Thank you, Jim. Is there
5 anybody else that would like to make any
6 statements?

7 (No response)

8 MR. POWERS: This concludes our
9 recording of formal input, and now we're leave it
10 open to informal discussion. If you have any
11 questions, or if you don't want to ask questions
12 now, when we break, we can do it on a one on one
13 basis. There's some other BLM employees here as
14 well, and are there any questions?

15 Let me qualify. I didn't mean to imply
16 earlier that everything that is recorded is going
17 on the website. None of it is going on the web
18 site. What we're trying to do on the website is
19 to help people understand the process, and when we
20 get questions at these meetings, we're going to
21 start writing them down, so that we can put those
22 questions and answers on the web site, just as a
23 way of providing more information.

24 (The proceedings were concluded
25 at 2:56 p.m.)