

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Project Name:	Sale of right of way easement for underground gas service line.
Proposed Implementation Date:	Summer 2011
Proponent:	Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS)
Location:	1.433 +/- acre easement in the NE1/4 Section 24, Township 5 North, Range 10 West. The easement area is and the south end of the Montana State Hospital (MSH) complex.
County:	Anaconda-Deer Lodge

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

DPHHS proposes to sell a right of way easement for an underground gas line to Northwestern Energy, Inc. The easement will include 1.433 acres in Section 24, Township 5 North, Range 10 West. The easement is 10 feet on either side of a centerline totaling 4735.37' linear feet.

The proposed action is requested by DPHHS to meet an order issued by the Public Service Commission (PSC) which requires that each building at MSH be individually metered. Separate metering requires that NW Energy extend the gas main closer to the campus across state land before branching to the individual buildings. Placement of a gas line on state land that is owned by NW Energy requires a gas line easement according to Title 77, Chapter 2, Part 1, Montana Code Annotated.

The campus buildings will be served with individual lines, and metered by NW Energy. Approximately 16 metered service lines are planned to-date.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

DPHHS will notice the availability of the Draft Environmental Assessment and conduct a 30-day public comment period.

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

Installation of the gas line requires crossing of Warm Springs Creek. One or more of the following permits may be required:

- a. Local Conservation District - 310 Permit.
- b. MT Dept of Fish, Wildlife and Parks - 124 Permit.
- c. MT Dept of Env. Quality - 318 Permit.
- d. Anaconda-Deer Lodge County - floodplain development permit/certificate.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

1. Action: DPHHS will sell the easement to NW Energy.
2. No Action: DPHHS will not sell the easement to NW Energy.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES* potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.
- Explain *POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS* following each resource heading.
- Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

Soils are composed primarily of silty clay loam. The landform comprises stream terraces and outwash plains, with slopes of 0 to 4 percent. No compactable or unstable soils are known to exist on the subject property.

The proposed sale of the easement will not directly affect soil quality or any unusual geologic features. Soil conditions will likely not impair use of the easement area for the proposed use.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

NW Energy proposed to drill a horizontal bore under Warm Springs Creek at one location shown on the attachment. Impacts to the stream will be low and temporary.

NW Energy must conduct all activities in full and complete compliance with all terms and conditions of any permit for this activity issued pursuant to the Montana Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act (310 Permit issued by the local Conservation District) or the Montana Stream Protection Act (124 Permit issued by MTFWP). In addition, any temporary impact to turbidity will require authorization (318 Permit) from the MTDEQ for a short-term water quality standard. NW Energy will also be required to obtain a floodplain development permit from Anaconda-Deer Lodge County floodplain administrator.

Construction activities in or near the creek are to be limited to the minimum area necessary, and conducted so as to minimize increases in suspended solids and turbidity which may degrade water quality and damage aquatic life outside the immediate area of operation.

The use of machinery in the watercourse shall be avoided unless absolutely necessary. All areas on the streambank and adjacent areas to be disturbed shall be protected with temporary erosion controls during construction activities. These areas shall be reclaimed with appropriate erosion control measures and revegetated to provide long-term erosion control. Clearing of streambank vegetation shall be limited to that which is absolutely necessary for construction of the project.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

The proposal will not result in any permanent affect to air quality. Any impacts to air quality will be temporary during construction activities, and will comprise localized increases in soil particulates in the air.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

The proposed action will cause temporary disturbance to vegetation cover during construction activities. NW Energy will be required to revegetate areas that are disturbed.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

The subject property is not considered to have any substantial habitat value for wildlife, birds, or fish species.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

A Natural Heritage Program query identified eight animal species of concern that occur in the Township occupied by the subject property. (The Natural Heritage Program report is available upon request from DNRC's Trust Land Management Office.) However, these species are not believed to occur at the subject property, and the property is not considered to have any value as habitat for such species.

A Natural Heritage Program query identified one plant species of concern occurring in the Township occupied by the subject property. Annual Indian paintbrush (*Castilleja exilis*) is considered "Limited, potentially Declining" in the State. This species occurs in riparian woodland/shrubland and has been identified at several riparian sites in Deer Lodge County. It may be disturbed during construction where it possibly occurs within the 20 foot wide easement area. (The Natural Heritage Program report is available upon request from DNRC's Trust Land Management Office).

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontologic resources.

It is unknown if Antiquities (as defined by the State Antiquities Act) are present on the subject property. DNRC has contacted the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). At SHPO's request, NW Energy and/or MSH will contact the SHPO immediately for a site investigation should cultural materials be discovered at any time during construction activities.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

The proposal will not result in any permanent impairment to aesthetics of the subject area. Disturbance of the soil and vegetation in the easement area will occur during construction. These minor impacts will be temporary.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

No additional demands on environmental resources of land, water, air or energy are anticipated.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

None.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES* potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.
- Explain **POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS** following each resource heading.
- Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

The sale of this easement will not pose a threat to human health and safety.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

No affects to industrial, commercial and agriculture activities and production are anticipated.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

No affects to quantity and distribution of employment are anticipated.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

No affects to tax base or tax revenues are anticipated.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

No affects to demand for governmental services are anticipated.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

Anaconda-Deer Lodge County has not adopted zoning for the subject area.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

The proposal will have no effect on recreational and wilderness activities. This subject area is not located near a wilderness or recreational area.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.

The proposal will not affect population distribution or density, or require additional housing.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

The proposal will have no effect on the social structures or mores.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

The proposal will have no effect on any unique cultural qualities or human diversity in the area.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the State. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

The proposed action will allow MSH to comply with the PSC order while maintaining continued natural gas service to the MSH complex. No social or economic impacts are expected to occur.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Ethan Stapp	Date: June 6, 2011
	Title: Planner, DNRC Real Estate Mgmt Bureau	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative No. 1 – Action: Dept of Public Health and Human Services will sell an easement to Northwestern Energy, Inc under provisions of MCA 77-2-101, et seq.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Not Applicable

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name:
	Title:
Signature:	Date: