MONTANA ALBERTA TIE LTD. (MATL)
CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE
AMENDMENT for the Great Falls Switchyard Modification and Southeast of Conrad – Banka Modification

DRAFT

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Montana Department of Environmental Quality

Facility Siting Program

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Montana Alberta Tie Ltd. and MATL LLP (MATL) propose to amend the Certificate of Compliance (Certificate) for the construction, operation, and maintenance of an international 230-kV (kilovolt) alternating current merchant transmission line. The Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) issued the Certificate for the MATL project on October 22, 2008.

The transmission line is approved to originate at the existing NorthWestern Energy (NWE) 230-kV Switchyard near Great Falls, Montana, and extend north to a new substation to be constructed northeast of Lethbridge, Alberta, crossing the U.S.-Canada international border north of Cut Bank, Montana. In Montana, the length of the line is approximately 130 miles. The transmission line will be part of the Western Interconnection (Western grid).

MATL's proposed amendment would change the language in the Certificate and Environmental Specifications to allow the relocation of two segments of the approved facility location to address concerns raised after the Certificate had been issued. The first would shift the approach to NorthWestern Energy's Great Falls Switchyard to avoid several existing and planned power lines coming into the switchyard , allowing about two to three structures to be located outside the current approved location in rangeland. The second would address a landowner's concerns to reduce the number of structures within cultivated fields and move the approved location away from a number of cultural resource features. The proposed amendment would also reduce the number of railroad crossings.

The Proposed Action (Certificate Amendment) and No Action Alternative are analyzed in this under the Proposed Action, DEQ would modify the location of two segments of the approved transmission line location as depicted in Figures 1 and 2.

Under the No Action Alternative, no changes to the current Certificate would be made.

1.0 Introduction

This Environmental Assessment (EA) provides supplemental analysis of impacts examined in the draft, supplemental draft, and final environmental impact statement for the Montana Alberta Tie Ltd. (MATL) 230-kV Transmission line (DOE and DEQ, 2007, 2008, and 2008a). It also contains the information to support DEQ's determination to grant, deny, or modify the proposed amendment. The DEQ is using the environmental assessment format because the short timeframe required by statute for the determination does not allow sufficient time for preparation of a full or supplemental environmental impact statement and an EA is an appropriate level of environmental review for the proposed amendment. This approach is provided for in ARM 17.4.607(2)(e).

1.1 Project Background

The Montana Alberta Tie transmission line project is jointly owned by Montana Alberta Tie Ltd. and MATL LLP. The 230-kV transmission line is permitted to originate at the existing NorthWestern Energy (NWE) 230-kV Switchyard near Great Falls, Montana, and extend north to a new substation to be constructed northeast of Lethbridge, Alberta, crossing the U.S.-Canada international border north of Cut Bank, Montana. In Montana the length of the line is

approximately 130 miles. The transmission line would be part of the Western Interconnection (Western grid).

Following publication of a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) (DEQ and DOE, March 2007), a supplemental draft EIS (February 2008), and a final EIS (September 2008), DEQ issued a Certificate of Compliance (Certificate) for the 230-kV transmission line on October 22, 2008. Descriptions of the transmission line and associated facilities are given in detail in the final EIS (DEQ and DOE September 2008) and are incorporated by reference.

On August 11, 2010, MATL filed a notice of amendment with DEQ to allow construction in and near wetlands (Montana Alberta Tie Ltd. and MATL LLP, 2010). Following publication of an environmental assessment, DEQ issued an amendment with conditions on September 22, 2010 (DEQ 2010) that allowed MATL to conduct temporary construction activities in and near wetlands.

On June 16, 2011, MATL filed a notice of amendment with DEQ to allow changes to the approved location in two areas – Diamond Valley South and Bullhead Coulee North. Following publication of an environmental assessment, DEQ issued an amendment with conditions on July 22, 2011 (DEQ 2011) that allowed MATL to relocate the project in these areas.

On June 29, 2011, MATL filed a notice of amendment with DEQ to allow changes to the approved location in one area south of Cut Bank - the Salois amendment. Following publication of an environmental assessment, DEQ issued an amendment with conditions on August 4, 2011 (DEQ 2011a) that allowed MATL to relocate the project in this area.

2.0 Nature of the Proposed Amendment

On April 2, 2012 Montana Alberta Tie Ltd. and MATL LLP, co-permittees for the Montana Alberta Tie Transmission Line, submitted an application to DEQ for an amendment to the Certificate. MATL requests the following amendment to the Certificate:

A. *Great Falls Switchyard Modification:*

Based on landowner coordination and the identification of design constraints at the NorthWestern Energy switchyard at the MATL project terminus at Great Falls, the transmission line corridor would be modified from approximately milepost 0/1 to 0/4. This proposed alignment modification shifts the north/south tangent run of the MATL transmission line west of and away from a number of existing and planned power lines coming into the same switchyard. While modified from the original design, the alignment would still fall within the approved 500-foot corridor from approximately milepost 0/4 to 0/8. It is anticipated that only two to three structures would lie outside the currently-approved corridor.

The amended location would be in T21N, R4E, Section 28 north of Great Falls near Rainbow Dam (Figure 1).

B. *Banka Modification:*

At Mr. Banka's request, the transmission line corridor would be modified from approximately milepost 58/4 to 61/2. [...]. This proposed alignment modification shifts the transmission line away from a number of cultural features, and provides better opportunity for structure placement outside of cultivated fields. This proposed alignment modification also reduces the number of railroad crossings required in this segment.

The amended location would be in T27N, R3W, sections 2, 11, 12 and 18, about 3 miles south of Conrad (Figure 2).

2.1 Decisions to Be Made

Based on the information submitted by MATL in its notice to amend the Certificate, information presented in the final EIS and additional information presented in this EA, DEQ will determine, pursuant to Section 75-20-219, MCA, whether the proposed amendment:

- would result in a material increase in any environmental impact of the transmission line, or

- would result in a substantial change in the location of all or a portion of the transmission line.

If DEQ finds that the proposed amendment would not result in a material increase in any environmental impact or a substantial change in the location of the transmission line, DEQ is required to automatically grant the amendment either as applied for or upon terms or conditions that the department considers appropriate. If DEQ determines the proposed amendment would result in a material increase in any environmental impact or a substantial change in the location of the transmission line, DEQ is required to grant, deny or modify the amendment with conditions it considers appropriate.

In order for DEQ to determine that an amendment to a certificate should be granted or modified, DEQ must find that the amendment would not materially alter the findings that were the basis for granting the certificate. DEQ's determination is limited to consideration of effects that the proposed change or addition to the facility may produce.

These determinations must be made within 30 days following notice by MATL of an application to amend a Certificate. MATL filed its notice with DEQ on April 2, 2012.

A person aggrieved by a final decision by DEQ on an application for amendment to a certificate may within 15 days appeal the decision to the Board of Environmental Review.

2.2 Other Agencies

A decision to amend the Certificate may alter the location of the transmission line and may establish a right-of-way within the northern edge of the Lewis and Clark Heritage Greenway Conservation Easement held by Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP) on the north shore of the Missouri River near Rainbow Dam (Figure 1). No other known state or federal lands would be affected by the proposed amendment.

2.3 Public Involvement

This EA was posted to DEQ's website and released for public comment. It may be revised based on public comment. Comments may be mailed to:

Tom Ring
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Facility Siting Program
PO Box 200901
Helena, MT 59602-0901
or emailed to tring@mt.gov

Comments will be accepted no later than April 18, 2012. Due to statutory timelines this deadline cannot be extended.

3.0 Alternatives Considered

This section describes the alternatives that DEQ has considered during its review of the proposed amendment. MATL's proposed action and a No Action Alternative are considered. The Department may require additional mitigating measures described in the checklist below should it select MATL's proposed action.

3.1 Proposed Action

The amendment proposed by MATL described in Section 2.0 would be granted.

3.2 No Action

The No Action Alternative would mean that the approved location in the Certificate would remain unchanged.

4.0 Existing Environment

Existing environmental conditions were described in the final EIS for the project (DEQ and DOE 2008a). DEQ staff conducted a field review in April 2012 of the two areas proposed for amendment, and found existing conditions described in the final EIS are still considered valid and are incorporated herein by reference. The final EIS may be viewed in DEQ's office at 1520 East Sixth Avenue, Helena, Montana during regular business hours not including holidays. The final EIS, Certificate of Compliance, and this proposed amendment also may be viewed at the following web site:

http://deq.mt.gov/MFS/MATL.mcpx.

5.0 EA Checklist

Resource	No Action	Proposed Action
1. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE: Are soils present which are fragile, erosive, susceptible to compaction, or unstable? Are there unusual or unstable geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?	As described in the final EIS, soil disturbance and soil mixing resulting from construction of crane pads, soil compaction and rutting could occur during construction. With implementation of storm water controls, soil erosion is expected to be minor in these areas.	The areas of the proposed relocation of the transmission line at the Great Falls Switchyard and Banka property both contain gentle to moderately steep slopes. If structures are located on the moderately steep slopes, access road construction may be necessary to move construction equipment to structure locations and crane pads may have to be excavated to safely operate cranes or other large equipment. This additional ground disturbance could result in the need for more storm water controls and for additional site reclamation. The Banka modification is slightly shorter but crosses slightly steeper terrain than the currently approved location. The presence of cultural features relative to structure locations and topography and the desire to avoid these features may result in greater access and crane pad disturbance than on the currently approved location.
2. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality?	As described in the final EIS and the EA for the amendment allowing construction in wetlands, streams and water quality could be affected by streambank alteration and sediment entering streams. Required mitigation would likely reduce the potential for sediment reaching a stream. No mapped intermittent streams are indicated in the currently approved location near	The proposed Great Falls Switchyard modification area is wide enough to allow (but does not require) placement of structures along the length of a steep intermittent drainage, crossing the stream up to eight times, or on more gentle slopes on either side of the drainage and avoiding it altogether or crossing it only once. If construction crews were to drive along an existing two track trail near the bottom of the drainage, one intermittent stream would be crossed several times. This two track trail along the bottom of the

Resource	No Action	Proposed Action
	the Great Falls Switchyard. Three to four intermittent streams would be crossed by the reference centerline for the portion of the currently approved location that could be replaced by the Banka modification. Because of the span lengths, it is likely that the conductors would span stream crossings on the currently approved location but equipment may have to cross the stream channels.	drainage is too narrow and steep for large cranes without substantial road rebuilding. In order to reduce soil erosion and sedimentation, DEQ encourages MATL to use the existing crossing of the drainage west of the substation or cross the drainage near the head of the drainage just south of the railroad tracks where more gentle topography exists. DEQ recommends that structures be located upslope from the intermittent stream course on more moderate slopes to better avoid blading for roads and crane pads. The Banka modification could result in three intermittent stream crossings. It might be necessary for equipment access to cross several intermittent streams on either alignment. For both proposed modifications, implementation of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan and conditions described in the previously approved amendment for wetlands is likely to reduce sedimentation and wetlands impacts.
3. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I air shed)?	Few air quality impacts are expected.	Additional air quality impacts are not expected.
4. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be significantly impacted? Are any rare plants or cover types present?	Potential impacts to vegetative species are described in the Final EIS and the EA for construction in wetlands. Table 1 indicates the amount of rangeland,	Table 1 indicates the amount of rangeland, riparian area, and cropland crossed in each of the areas where the modifications are requested. On rangeland, mostly common species would be affected along the proposed modifications.

Resource	No Action	Proposed Action
	riparian vegetation, and cropland crossed. Tall growing (tall enough to require removal to satisfy conductor clearance requirements) willow or cottonwood stands are generally not found along the currently approved location in either area under consideration with one exception. A few trees grow in a cut along the northern railroad track crossing on the portion of the currently approved location that could be replaced by the Banka modification. National Wetland Inventory maps do not indicate wetlands in either area but required wetland surveys may detect wetlands near the intermittent stream channel and railroad ditches in a portion of the currently approved location that could be replaced by the Banka modification. MATL has completed additional wetland survey on this segment of the currently approved location and this survey indicates that a narrow wetland is present in a ditch adjacent to the railroad track. No construction traffic work-around has yet been identified.	Tall growing (tall enough to require removal to satisfy conductor clearance requirements) willow or cottonwood stands are generally not found along proposed modifications in either area under consideration. National Wetland Inventory maps do not indicate wetlands in the Great Falls Switchyard area while one wetland is mapped within 250 feet of the reference centerline for the Banka modification but would not be crossed by the reference centerline. It could be avoided by construction access. Required wetland surveys may detect wetlands near the intermittent stream channel and railroad ditches on the southern end of the Banka modification area and along the intermittent drainage located in the Great Falls Switchyard modification area. Implementation of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan and conditions described in the previously approved amendment for wetlands is likely to reduce sedimentation and wetland impacts. For the Banka modification area, the presence of cultural features relative to structures and topography and the desire to avoid these features may result in greater access and crane pad disturbance than on the currently approved location. For the Great Falls Switchyard area the proposed widened location contains steeper terrain than does the currently approved location. The need to provide construction access and relatively flat areas for cranes may necessitate additional

Resource	No Action	Proposed Action
		vegetation disturbance within the new location. MATL would be required to reclaim disturbed areas as described in the Final EIS.
5. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?	The EIS describes the common game species in the area and potential impacts to these species. Sediment production could affect aquatic life despite implementation of Best Management Practices to control storm water runoff. Existing Certificate conditions require the installation of line marking devices to reduce the potential for bird collision within ¼ mile of a wetland. MATL has mapped one wetland on the north end of the portion of the currently approved location that could be replaced by the Banka modification adjacent to the railroad track.	The same common game species are found in the Banka and Great Falls Switchyard modification areas as the currently approved location and impacts would be similar to those described in the final EIS. For both modifications, sediment production may affect aquatic life despite implementation of Best Management Practices to control storm water runoff. The Great Falls Switchyard modification could result in an intermittent stream being crossed several times. Therefore, more stream sedimentation may occur as a result of construction related disturbances than on the currently approved location. MATL could use the existing crossing of the drainage west of the substation and locate structures and access on the gentler slopes above the channel. Alternatively, a better crossing might be found just south of the railroad track. The Banka modification could result in one less intermittent stream crossing. Because of the span lengths, it is likely that the conductors would span the streams. It might be necessary for access to cross several intermittent streams. Additional wetland surveys would be required prior to construction of the line in this area. Implementation of a Storm Water

Resource	No Action	Proposed Action
		Pollution Prevention Plan and conditions described in the previously approved amendment for wetlands are likely to reduce sedimentation and wetland habitat impacts. Required reclamation and revegetation are likely to reduce impacts to upland habitats.
6. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Species of special concern?	Potential impacts to these species are described in the Final EIS. There are no recorded threatened or endangered species on the currently approved locations that could be replaced by the modifications. Five Species of Concern have been recorded in the vicinity of the currently approved location near the Great Falls Switchyard and none has been recorded in the vicinity of the currently approved location that could be replaced by the Banka modification.	Potential impacts to these species would be the same as under the No Action Alternative.
7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	A Class III cultural resource inventory was conducted in 2007 (GCM 2010). On the currently approved location that could be replaced by the Banka modification, three prehistoric cultural resource sites were identified: 24PN148, 24PN158 and 24PN159. With proper avoidance, the project should have no adverse effect on sites 24PN158 and 24PN159. There remains a potential for an adverse effect to 24PN148, which is on a	Site 24PN148 could still be crossed by the Banka modification. During a March 28, 2012 site visit to the Banka modification area, it was determined that the site boundaries should be extended to the west along the valley ridge line. Due to this site boundary extension, the Banka modification may cross more of the site boundary than the No Action Alternative, and possibly adversely affect more cultural features than the No Action Alternative. Pole locations, work areas, and access routes are not known at this time; therefore an adverse effect to the site may occur. Potential adverse effects may be

Resource	No Action	Proposed Action
	portion of the currently approved location that could be replaced by the Banka modification. On March 28, 2012, DEQ, DOE, MATL and Blackfeet THPO representatives visited the site. Adverse effects may be avoided by moving the access road to the edge of an existing plowed field, and placement of structures outside of the site boundaries. Should adverse effects become unavoidable, a Programmatic Agreement (PA) is being drafted to address mitigation for adverse effects to cultural resources. No sites have been found in the vicinity of the Great Falls Switchyard modification. No paleontological resources were observed along the currently approved location in either area.	avoided if construction access utilizes the edge of agricultural fields to the south and/or north along the valley ridge bottoms, rather than attempting to access construction locations from the upper ridge. Should adverse effects become unavoidable, a Programmatic Agreement (PA) is being drafted to address mitigation for adverse effects to cultural resources from the Project. No sites have been found in the vicinity of the Great Falls Switchyard modification. No paleontological resources were observed.
8. AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light?	The currently approved location at the Great Falls Switchyard is located immediately adjacent to and north of the switchyard. Numerous existing transmission lines in this area, including several 230-kV and 100-kV transmission lines, contribute to a developed setting surrounding the switchyard. This area is visible from the area surrounding Giant Springs State Park, including	The Great Falls Switchyard modification would be located immediately adjacent to the switchyard at its northwest corner. The shift of approximately 1700 feet of line and three to four structures approximately 500 feet to the west of the approved location would result in a very minor to imperceptible change. Visibility of the line is not likely to change. Excessive noise or light would not be present. The Banka modification could move the alignment onto steeper terrain

Resource	No Action	Proposed Action
	River's Edge Trail and the Rainbow Overlook on the south side of the Missouri River. Excessive noise or light would not be present. The currently approved location that could be replaced by the Banka modification crosses rangeland bordering a coulee and several fields. A railroad is present in the coulee and follows the contour of the coulee. The setting is rural. The nearest residence Is located approximately 3/8 mile from the approved location.	within the coulee and onto corners of cultivated fields. The nearest residence would be located approximately 1/4 mile away. Visual impacts are likely to be minor. Two tall structures that may be needed to span the Western Area Power Administration transmission line may be visible from secondary roads in the area.
9. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area?	Impacts on land, water, air, and energy are described in the final EIS and EA prepared for the amendment addressing construction activities in wetlands for MATL's approved location.	The proposed Great Falls Switchyard modification would be slightly wider and longer than the currently approved location. Information provided by NWE which is on file with DEQ, indicates that the new location would provide a better approach to a vacant bay in the switchyard and could facilitate future expansion of the switchyard. Impacts on land, water, air, and energy from the Banka modification would be similar to the No Action Alternative.
10. IMPACTS ON OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?	The impacts to other environmental resources are described in the final EIS and EA prepared for the amendment addressing construction activities in wetlands for MATL's approved location.	The impacts to other environmental resources would be similar to the No Action Alternative.
11. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project	The impacts to health and safety are described in the	The impacts would be similar to those described for the No Action

Resource	No Action	Proposed Action
add to health and safety risks in the area?	final EIS and EA prepared for the amendment addressing construction activities in wetlands for MATL's approved location.	Alternative .
12. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	The impacts on these activities are described in the final EIS and EA prepared for the amendment addressing construction activities in wetlands for MATL's approved location.	The proposed expanded corridor MATL has applied for near the Great Falls Switchyard would be located entirely on rangeland and would increase the amount of rangeland crossed compared to the approved location as shown on Table 1. This proposed expanded corridor encompasses approximately 9.8 acres of the Lewis and Clark Heritage Greenway Conservation Easement held by FWP. A map provided by NorthWestern Energy which is on file with DEQ depicts how MATL could enter the Great Falls Switchyard. Structures could be placed on the conservation easement within the permanent right-of-way for operation of the project. Temporary construction workspace within the conservation easement also may be necessary. The Banka modification is mostly located on a combination of non-irrigated cropland or Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land and rangeland. The modification would use more rangeland and cross less non-irrigated croplands or CRP lands than the No Action Alternative. Also the modification would have one crossing of an active railroad instead of three crossings on the No Action Alternative (Table 1).
13. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.	The impacts on employment are described in the final EIS and EA prepared for the amendment addressing construction activities in	The impacts would be the same as the No Action Alternative.

Resource	No Action	Proposed Action
	wetlands for MATL's approved location.	
14. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?	Impacts to tax base and tax revenues are described in the final EIS and EA prepared for the amendment addressing construction activities in wetlands for MATL's approved location.	No substantial change is expected in the tax base or tax revenue from that described in the Final EIS.
15. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc.) be needed?	Impacts to government services are the same as those described in the final EIS and EA prepared for the amendment addressing construction activities in wetlands for MATL's approved location.	There would be no substantial change in the need for government services for fire, police, or schools from those described in the final EIS and the EA prepared for the amendment addressing construction activities in wetlands.
16. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	Impacts to locally adopted environmental plans and goals are the same as those described in the final EIS and EA prepared for the amendment addressing construction activities in wetlands for MATL's approved location.	The proposed Great Falls Switchyard modification would enlarge the approved location, potentially allowing construction of the line within a conservation easement held by FWP adjacent to the Missouri River. The impacts of the Banka modification would be the same as the No Action Alternative.
17. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?	Impacts to access to and quality of recreational and wilderness activities are the same as those described in the final EIS and EA prepared for the amendment addressing construction activities in wetlands for MATL's approved location.	No substantial change to recreation access and quality of recreation activities is expected from the proposed Great Falls Switchyard modification. No substantial change to recreation access and quality of recreation activities is expected from the proposed Banka modification.
18. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?	Impacts to density and distribution of population and housing are the same as those described in the final EIS and EA prepared for the amendment addressing construction activities in wetlands for	The impacts would be the same as the No Action Alternative.

Resource	No Action	Proposed Action
	MATL's approved location.	
19. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	Impacts to social structures and mores are the same as those described in the final EIS and EA prepared for the amendment addressing construction activities in wetlands for MATL's approved location.	The impacts would be the same as the No Action Alternative.
20. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	Impacts to cultural uniqueness and diversity are the same as those described in the final EIS and EA prepared for the amendment addressing construction activities in wetlands for MATL's approved location.	The impacts would be the same as the No Action Alternative.
21. PRIVATE PROPERTY IMPACTS: Are we regulating the use of private property under a regulatory statute adopted pursuant to the police power of the state? (Property management, grants of financial assistance, and the exercise of the power of eminent domain are not within this category.) If not, no further analysis is required.		On those areas where MATL has obtained easements, the proposed amendment could affect MATL's property rights.
22. PRIVATE PROPERTY IMPACTS: Does the proposed regulatory action restrict the use of the regulated person's private property? If not, no further analysis is required.		Selection of the Proposed Action would not restrict the use of MATL's private property.

Resource	No Action	Proposed Action
23. PRIVATE PROPERTY IMPACTS: Does the agency have legal discretion to impose or not impose the proposed restriction or discretion as to how the restriction will be imposed? If not, no further analysis is required. If so, the agency must determine if there are alternatives that would reduce, minimize or eliminate the restriction on the use of private property, and analyze such alternatives.	Not applicable.	No further analysis is required.
24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:	The Banka modification has been proposed after MATL had extensive discussions with the landowner. While final design information is not available, adoption of the modification may result in fewer structures being placed in cultivated areas. This is due to less cultivated land being crossed and potentially shorter spans of these areas, thereby allowing structures to be placed in uncultivated areas. However, complete avoidance of cultivated lands is unlikely.	

5.1 Additional Measures to Reduce Impacts

The proposed Great Falls Switchyard modification area overlaps with a conservation easement held by FWP (Figure 3). DEQ is considering modifying the proposed Great Falls Switchyard modification by narrowing the amended corridor southwest of the switchyard as shown on Figure 3 to minimize encroachment on the conservation easement.

Table 1. Land Use as Calculated by DEQ

Types of Land Use Crossed by Alternatives Calculated by DEQ in 2012 (Approximate Miles)					
	Existing Corridor	Great Falls Switchyard		Existing Corridor	Banka
Irrigated cropland	0.00	0.00		0.00	0.00
Non-irrigated cropland/CRP	0.00	0.00		1.45	1.04
Rangeland	0.35	0.40		1.14	1.51
Riparian	0.00	0.00		0.03	0.03
Road/ROW	0.00	0.00		0.03	0.01
Water	0.00	0.00		0.00	0.00
Total Miles	0.35	0.40		2.65	2.59

Source: 2011 NAIP Imagery, 2012 field checking.

Table 2. Land Use provided by MATL in its MFSA application (MATL 2006).

Types of Land Use Crossed by Alternatives Using Data from MATL's MFSA Application (Approximate Miles)					
	Existing Corridor	Great Falls Switchyard		Existing Corridor	Banka
Irrigated cropland	0.00	0.00		0.00	0.00
Non-irrigated cropland/CRP	0.35	0.40		2.65	2.59
Rangeland	0.00	0.00		0.00	0.00
Riparian	0.00	0.00		0.00	0.00
Road/ROW	0.00	0.00		0.00	0.00
Water	0.00	0.00		0.00	0.00
Total Miles	0.35	0.40		2.65	2.59

Source: MATL's MFSA Application, 2006.

6.0 Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts would be similar to those described in the final EIS.

6.1 Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

Except for the changes indicated in the EA checklist and Table 1, unavoidable adverse impacts would be similar to those described in the final EIS. There would be no change in unavoidable adverse impacts under the No Action Alternative.

6.2 Irreversible and Irretrievable Impacts

Except for the changes indicated in the EA checklist and Table 1, irreversible and irretrievable impacts would be similar to those described in the final EIS. There would be no change in irreversible and irretrievable impacts under the No Action Alternative.

7.0 List of Preparers

Tom Ring - Environmental Science Specialist
Nancy Johnson – Environmental Science Specialist
Craig Jones – Environmental Science Specialist
James Strait - Environmental Science Specialist

Reviewers:
Warren McCullough – Bureau Chief
Ed Hayes – Attorney

8.0 REFERENCES

Montana Alberta Tie Ltd. and MATL LLP. 2012. Application to Amend Certificate of Compliance for the Montana Alberta Tie 230-kV International Transmission Line. Lethbridge, Alberta – Great Falls, Montana.

Montana Major Facility Siting Act (MFSA) Application Revised August 2006. Montana Alberta Tie Ltd. Project 230-kV AC Power Transmission Line. Lethbridge, Alberta – Great Falls, Montana.

Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and United States Department of Energy (DOE). 2007. Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Montana-Alberta Tie Ltd. (MATL) 230-kV Transmission Line.

Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and United States Department of Energy (DOE). 2008. Federal Draft Environmental Impact Statement and State of Montana Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Montana-Alberta Tie Ltd. (MATL) 230-kV Transmission Line.

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Figure 1

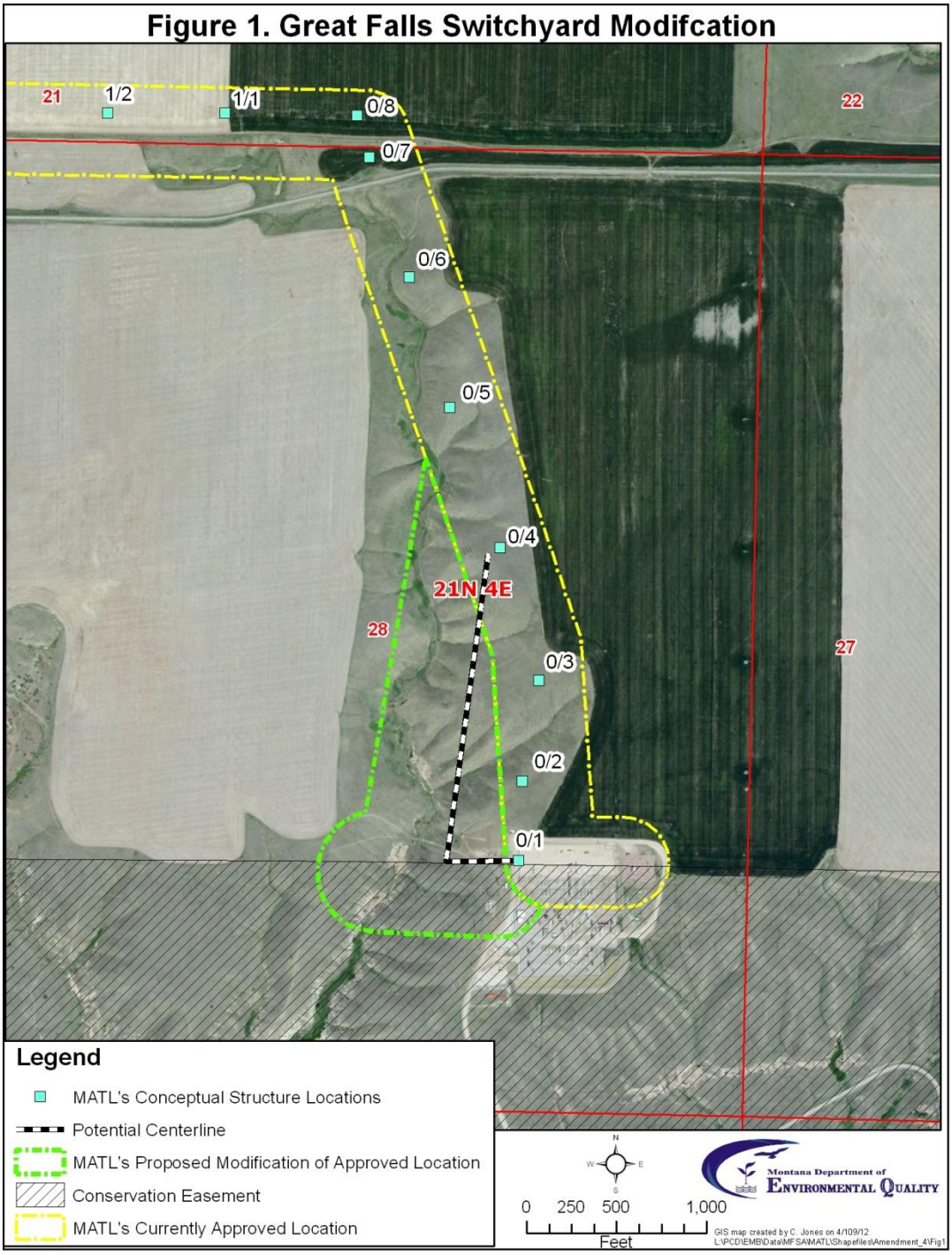
Figure 1. Great Falls Switchyard Modifcation
21
22
27
28
21N 4E
1/2
1/1
0/8
0/7
0/6
0/5
0/4
0/3
0/2
0/1
Legend
MATL's Conceptual Structure Locations
Potential Centerline
MATL's Proposed Modification of Approved Location
Conservation Easement
MATL's Currently Approved Location
N
W
E
S
0 250 500 1,000
Feet
Montana Department of
Environmental Quality
GIS map created by C. Jones on 4/109/12
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Figure 2

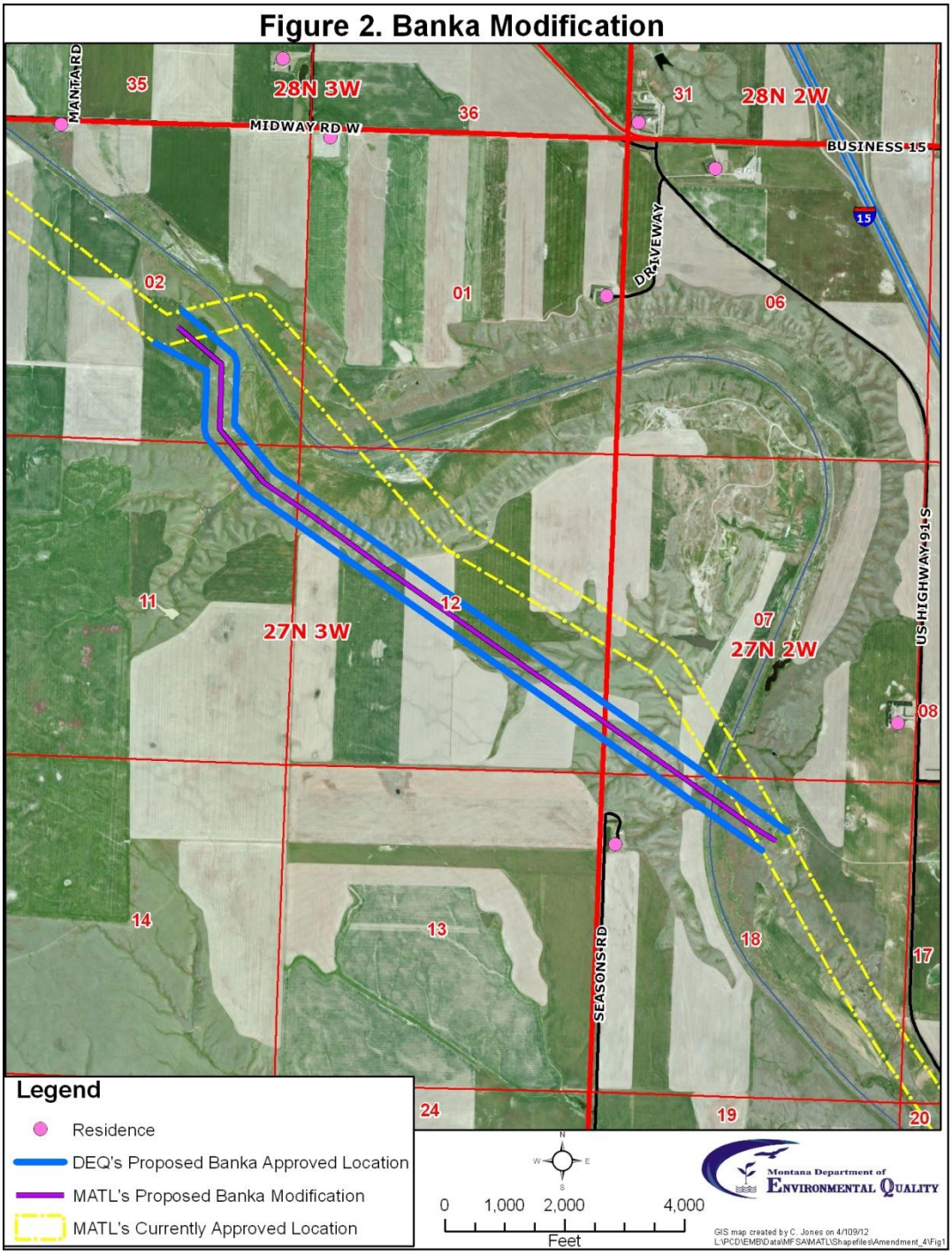
Figure 2. Banka Modification
MANTA RD
35
28N 3W
36
31
28N 2W
MIDWAY RD W
BUSINESS 15
15
DRIVEWAY
02
01
06
11
12
27N 3W
07
27N 2W
US HIGHWAY 91 S
08
14
13
18
17
SEASONS RD
24
19
20
Legend
Residence
DEQ's Proposed Banka Approved Location
MATL's Proposed Banka Modification
MATL's Currently Approved Location
N
W
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Feet
Montana Department of
Environmental Quality
GIS map created by C. Jones on 4/109/12
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Figure 3

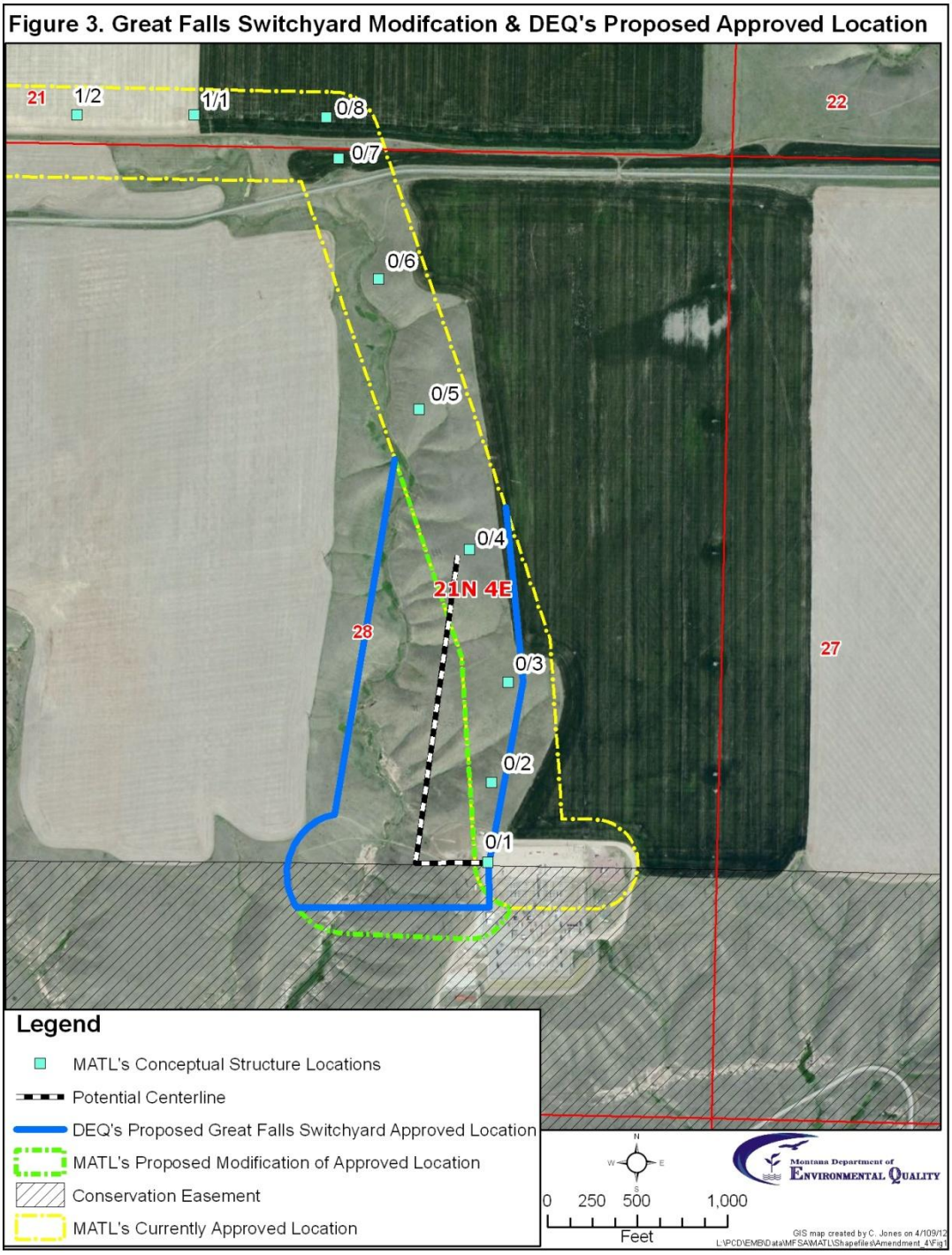
Figure 3. Great Falls Switchyard Modifcation & DEQ's Proposed Approved Location
21
22
27
28
21N 4E
1/2
1/1
0/8
0/7
0/6
0/5
0/4
0/3
0/2
0/1
Legend
MATL's Conceptual Structure Locations
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0 250 500 1,000
Feet
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
GIS map created by C. Jones on 4/109/12