CHAPTER 5 CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The consultation and coordination process described in this section was developed primarily to ensure compliance with MFSA. The MFSA public and agency scoping process is described in Section 5.2 and in Volume IC, Appendix G. The process of coordinating with agencies regarding cultural and biological resources is described in Section 5.3. Tribal consultation efforts required by MFSA are described in Section 5.4.

5.2 PUBLIC AND AGENCY SCOPING PROCESS

MFSA Sections 3.3(2) and 3.7(6) a-d state that public attitudes and concerns will be assessed with regard to potential project-specific impacts and also outline more specific requirements regarding this assessment. A detailed public and agency scoping summary report with exhibits is included in Volume IC, Appendix G. The sections that follow (5.2.1 through 5.2.5) provide a synopsis of the information presented in Volume IC, Appendix G.

NorthWestern has conducted an extensive outreach and communication effort in 2007 and 2008. Activities include:

- Meetings held with federal, state, and local agencies; elected officials; and other stakeholders;
- Informal open houses allowing members of the public to meet with project team members one-on-one to discuss the latest project information;
- Posting project information on the Internet at www.msti500kv.com;
- Issuing press releases and legal notices; and
- Mailing a newsletter to individuals and other parties having an interest in the project.

The federal and state environmental review process under MEPA and NEPA will provide the public with additional opportunities for involvement and for submitting comments.

One of the initial tasks of the scoping process was NorthWestern's mailing of scoping letters to federal, state, and local agencies and elected officials in Montana in June and July 2007. Recipients included state and regional offices of the BLM, USFS, USACE, USFWS, DOE, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Montana Governor's Office and Congressional delegation, MDNRC, MFWP, MHS, Montana Department of Commerce, MDT, Montana Trust Land Management Division, and officials of potentially affected counties in Montana.

5.2.1 PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES

Public Open Houses were held in six Montana cities in 2007 and 2008 (Whitehall, Townsend, Ennis, Dillon, Anaconda, and Butte) (Table 5-1). A total of 141 people attended the meetings. Attendance lists are included in Volume IC, Appendix G.

Table 5-1 MSTI Public Open Houses in Montana

Location	Date	Attendance
Whitehall, Jefferson County	June 19, 2007	20
Townsend, Broadwater County	June 20, 2007	20
Ennis, Madison County	June 21, 2007	19
Dillon, Beaverhead County	June 26, 2007	17
Anaconda, Deer Lodge County	August 6, 2007	33
Butte, Silver Bow County	April 16, 2008	32
TOTAL		**141**

The Open House meeting format used for the MSTI project is a well established format for distributing information, discussing issues on a face-to-face basis, and soliciting comments and issues important to meeting attendees.

The Open Houses were announced in legal notices published in local newspapers and in additional advertisements in the same newspapers. Meeting places and dates were also posted on the project website.

Prior to each Open House, informational materials were developed for use as handouts (e.g., a project fact sheet), for conducting media briefings and for advertising.

The meetings were arranged in a walk-through presentation with stations located throughout the viewing corridor. Each station included one or more presentation boards as well as opportunities to give verbal comments, which were written on a flip chart by a team member. Comments could also be written on comment forms turned in at the meeting or mailed later. In addition, an interactive GIS was used that allowed attendees to view a detailed map or aerial photograph to determine the location of an alternative route link in relation to the location of a specific feature or parcel of concern. Verbal comments could then be incorporated into the GIS and referenced to a specific location on the project map.

The stations and presentation boards were arranged as follows:

Welcome

1. Welcome – Public Open House

Purpose and Need

2. Purpose, Need and Benefit
3. Project Description
4. How Electricity is Delivered
5. Project Timeline

Engineering

6. Construction Sequence
7. Typical Structure Type

8. 500kV Transmission Structures
9. What about EMF?
10. Right-of-Way Acquisition

Environment

11. Route Alternatives Development
12. Environmental Review Process
13. Environmental Studies
14. Preliminary Issues
15. Decision Factors for Evaluating Alternatives

Interactive GIS

16. Opportunities for Public Involvement

5.2.2 ELECTED OFFICIAL BRIEFINGS

Elected official (usually County Commission) briefings were held in each Montana county crossed by one or more alternative route links (Table 5-2). Briefings were also presented to elected officials in the cities of Anaconda, Deer Lodge and Lima. The first round of eight briefings was held in 2007, and a second round of seven briefings was completed in June 2008. The second round followed the identification of a Preferred Route by NorthWestern.

Table 5-2 Elected Official Briefings in Montana

Location	Round 1 Date	Round 2 Date
Broadwater County (Townsend)	June 11, 2007	June 9, 2008
Jefferson County (Boulder)	June 12, 2007	June 17, 2008
City of Butte-Silver Bow County	June 13, 2007	June 18, 2008
Madison County (Virginia City)	June 18, 2007	June 10, 2008
City of Anaconda-Deer Lodge County	June 22, 2007	June 10, 2008
Beaverhead County (Dillon)	June 26, 2007	June 16, 2008
City of Deer Lodge	June 28, 2007	--
City of Lima	November 26, 2007	June 9, 2008

The purpose of the briefings was to keep elected officials informed about the planning process (e.g., status, elements of the project, and steps in the process). The format for the briefings was for NorthWestern and its consultant, POWER, to give a 15-to-30-minute presentation during a regular session of a County Commission meeting. Prior to the briefings, a fact sheet was presented to each commissioner and to other interested parties at the meeting. A small-scale (1:400,000) map of the MSTI project area was used to illustrate possible route alternatives. Each briefing began with a brief presentation of the project's purpose and need, the project description, the MFSA process, and the MEPA/NEPA environmental review process, with time allowed afterwards for questions and answers.

5.2.3 OTHER PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Public communication tools were also used to elicit public comments, including:

- Media contacts
- A project website
- A project mailing list
- A newsletter

5.2.3.1 Media Contacts

A variety of press releases and public meeting notices with fact sheets were used to announce the MSTI project. Interviews were also conducted with the press.

One press release was made prior to each of the Public Open Houses. These were issued to local newspapers, television, and radio outlets in Montana. Public service announcements were also issued to air on local television and radio stations.

5.2.3.2 MSTI Website

NorthWestern established a project website (www.msti500kv.com) that contained information, maps, and other data specific to MSTI. Also, visitors to the website can complete on-line comment forms and e-mail them to NorthWestern. Information currently included on the website includes:

- About the Project
  - Project Overview
  - Benefits of MSTI
  - Options to Stay Informed
  - About NorthWestern Energy
- What's New
  - Current News
  - Open Season Information
  - Archived News by Data
- Routes/Maps
  - Alternative Routes
- Environmental Review
  - Review Process
  - EIS Process
  - Preliminary Issues
  - Environmental Studies
  - Open House Boards
- Project Design
  - Engineering Requirements
  - System Studies
  - Project Timeline
  - Open House Boards
- Public Outreach
  - Public Information

- Open Houses
- Elected Official Briefings
- Public Outreach Completed
- Open House Boards
- Public Outreach Documents
- Comment Form

The project website was launched in June 5, 2007 and its most recent redesign was on June 11, 2008. During the period from June 2007 through May 2008, there were a total of 2,004 sessions and 123,140 hits. The average was 154 sessions per month and 5.23 sessions per day. The average length of a session was 5.17 minutes. Of the 2,004 sessions, there were 1,116 unique visitors (i.e., some visitors visited the site more than once). A "session" is a series of hits to a site over a specific time period by a visitor. A "hit" is any successful request to a webserver from a visitor's browser. The number of sessions is a better measure of website traffic than the number of hits because a single session by one visitor may include numerous hits.

5.2.3.3 Newsletter

A project newsletter was developed and mailed or emailed to the public and agencies on April 29, 2008 using the project mailing list (see Section 5.2.3.4). The newsletter, *MSTI Project Update*, contained information on:

- A brief description of the project.
- Purpose of the project.
- Benefits of MSTI.
- 2008 MSTI milestones and activities, including a project timeline.
- Milestones that occurred in 2007.
- Acronyms

A total of 442 newsletters were mailed out to individuals and agencies and 52 newsletters were e-mailed. A copy of the newsletter can be seen in Volume IC, Appendix G.

5.2.3.4 Mailing List

A mailing list database was compiled to provide interested parties (via postal service and/or e-mail) information about the status of project planning, future meetings, and other project details. The mailing list has been updated regularly following Public Open Houses (Section 5.2.1), receipt of e-mailed comments from the project website (see Section 5.2.3.2), and other events at which individuals expressed interest in the project.

5.2.3.5 Other Comments Received

Apart from the comment forms and interactive GIS comments during open houses, elected official briefings, and agency meetings (see Section 5.2.4), a number of comments and issues were received in other ways:

- Website e-mails
- Mailed or faxed comment forms

- Mailed or faxed letters
- Mailed or faxed petitions
- Verbal comments recorded on flip charts during the open house meetings

5.2.4 AGENCY MEETINGS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Individual or, where possible, joint agency meetings were held with federal, state, and a few local agencies in Montana (Table 5-3). The format for agency meetings ranged from the briefing style used with elected officials to formal presentations following a pre-determined agenda. Meeting summaries were prepared following each meeting. In the first round, five agency meetings were held in Montana. In addition, individual NorthWestern and POWER staff met with agency resource specialists to discuss technical or resource-specific issues. These one-on-one meetings are not included in Table 5-3.

Table 5-3 Agency Meetings in Montana

Agency	Date
USFS, Helena National Forest	September 18, 2007
USFS, Helena National Forest	November 14, 2007
MFWP	September 17, 2007
Helena Interagency Meeting (BLM, Montana State Office; USFS, Northern Region; USFS, Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forest; MDEQ; MDNRC; and MFWP, Region 3)	March 22, 2007
Butte Interagency Meeting (BLM, Butte Field Office; USFS, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest; and MFWP)	September 17, 2007
Helena Interagency Meeting (USFS, Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forest; BLM, Montana State Office; MDEQ; MDNRC; and Trust Land Management Division)	November 14, 2007
Butte Interagency Meeting (BLM Montana State Office; BLM, Idaho Falls District; BLM, Butte Field Office; USFS, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest; and MDEQ)	June 5, 2008

In addition to formal agency meetings, there were other communications with various agencies, primarily letters that addressed issues raised during the meetings or comments on the MSTI proposal. Agency correspondence from Montana is listed in Table 5-4.

Table 5-4 Agency Communications from Montana

Agency	Date
FEDERAL AGENCIES	
BLM, Montana State Office	June 26, 2007
BLM, Butte Field Office	July, 2007
BLM, Dillon Field Office	July 9, 2007
BLM, Dillon Field Office	July 11, 2007
BLM, Dillon Field Office	February 19, 2008
BLM, Dillon Field Office	March 26, 2008
BLM, Dillon Field Office	March 27, 2008
BLM, Dillon Field Office	April 15, 2008
Reclamation, Montana Area Office	July 5, 2007
USFS, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest	July 5, 2007
USFS, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest	July 11, 2007
MONTANA STATE AGENCIES	
MFWP	July 9, 2007
Montana Public Service Commission (MPSC)	September 14, 2007
MONTANA LOCAL GOVERNMENTS	
Town of Lima	January 14, 2008
INTERAGENCY	
Sage Grouse Southwest Montana Local Working Group (BLM, USFS, NRCS, MFWP, and MDNRC)	September 14, 2007
BLM, Dillon Field Office; BLM, Butte Field Office; BLM, Upper Snake Field Office (Idaho); Western Montana Resource Advisory Council (BLM, Butte Field Office); USFS, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest; USFS, Caribou-Targhee National Forest (Idaho); USFWS, Montana Ecological Services Field Office; USFWS, Eastern Idaho Field Office; MFWP, Region 3; IDFG, Upper Snake Region (Idaho); and Beaverhead County Commission	December 10, 2007

5.2.5 SUMMARY OF COMMENTS AND ISSUES

Comments received during the six Public Open Meetings in Montana were submitted in writing on comment forms during or after the meetings, verbally at comment stations, digitally on interactive GIS forms, and by hand at the meetings (Table 5-5). A total of 105 comments were received during Open Houses in Montana.

In addition, 207 comments or questions were received from Montana residents via e-mail, fax, and through the mail. A large portion of these (166 out of 207) represent signatures on a petition opposing

one alternative route link in the Hadley Park area in Montana. This petition is available in Volume IC, Appendix G.

Table 5-5 Comments Received During Open Houses in Montana

Location	Date	Comment Forms	Verbal	Interactive GIS	Hand-Delivered	Total
Whitehall, Jefferson County	June 19, 2007	3	7	5	0	15
Townsend, Broadwater County	June 20, 2007	1	4	7	0	12
Ennis, Madison County	June 21, 2007	2	4	9	0	15
Dillon, Beaverhead County	June 26, 2007	1	13	11	0	25
Anaconda, Deer Lodge County	August 6, 2007	2	11	6	3	22
Butte, Silver Bow County	August 16, 2007	4	11	1	0	16
TOTAL		**13**	**50**	**39**	**3**	**105**

Comments received during and after Montana Open Houses are summarized below:

- Opposition to, or support for, specific alternative route links.
- Avoiding irrigation pivots.
- Concern about weeds.
- Concern about gates being left open.
- Wetlands.
- Proximity to Toston Dam.
- Proximity to the historic town of Radersburg.
- Proximity to subdivision developments.
- Protecting viewsheds.
- Protecting wildlife and preserving wildlife corridors.
- Elk, sage grouse, bald eagle, carnivores, golden eagle, falcon, sandhill crane, songbirds, bats, swans.
- A heron rookery.
- Native vegetation.
- Preserving open space, recreation resources, and private conservation easements.
- Parallel existing transmission lines.
- Protecting the local economy.
- Private airports.
- Need to review a revised Growth Management Plan.
- Property values.
- EMF.
- Acquisition and staging of fire equipment.

Elected officials in Montana had a total of 39 comments and questions during the elected official briefings held during the first round (a summary of comments is not yet available from the second round, completed in June 2008). The general topics of the comments received from Montana elected officials included:

- Location of the transmission line, connection points, substations and other project facilities.
- Whether a preferred route has been selected.
- Project timing.
- Relationship to other projects.
- Whether wind power will be able to tie in to the transmission line.
- The nature of wind in Montana.
- Financial impact to the county.
- Tax consequences.
- Effects on electric bills.
- Financial stability of NorthWestern.
- Source of funding.
- Stability and viability of the project.
- Mileage of transmission line within county.
- Interference with cell towers.
- Weed problems caused by access roads.
- Proximity of the project to subdivisions.
- EMF.
- Using garbage as a source of energy.

A public and agency scoping process will also be performed following the initiation of the NEPA process for the MSTI project.

5.3 AGENCY CONSULTATION

5.3.1 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

The MSTI project will be required to comply with the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the implementing regulations for Section 7 consultation. At the beginning of the NEPA process, the USFWS will be contacted to request species lists. Formal Section 7 consultation with the USFWS will begin with submittal of a biological assessment (BA) for appropriate species.

For the MFSA application, there have been meetings and other contacts by NorthWestern and POWER biologists with MFWP and other agency biologists regarding issues and concerns in the project area. This process was for information gathering and is not considered consultation.

5.3.2 CULTURAL RESOURCES

The MSTI project will be required to comply with Section 106 of the NHPA. At the beginning of the NEPA process, formal Section 106 consultation will be initiated and meetings will be held with the Montana State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) at the Montana Historical Society (MHS), BLM,

USFS, MDNRC, and other affected agencies to address the identification, evaluation, and protection of cultural resources. This process may include development of a Programmatic Agreement (PA) among the agencies, possibly the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), Northwestern, interested Native American groups, and other interested parties.

For the MFSA application, there have been meetings and other contacts by POWER archaeologists with staff of the MHS, MDEQ, MDNRC, MFWP, BLM, and USFS to obtain information on previously identified cultural resources, previous cultural resource surveys, areas considered sensitive for cultural resources, and appropriate procedures for documenting cultural resources in the study area. This process is considered consultation under MFSA (3.7(14)(d)), but does not qualify as consultation as required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).

5.3 TRIBAL CONSULTATION

Under MFSA and as outlined in Circular MFSA-2, NorthWestern is required to delineate:

> "sites that have or may have religious or heritage significance and value to Indians (3.4(1)(t));"

and to provide:

> "documentation that consultation has occurred with the SHPO, affected state and federal agencies, or tribes regarding any affected cultural sites, impacts, and mitigation (3.7(14)(d)."

In June 2008, NorthWestern sent letters to initiate MFSA consultation with several tribes in Montana. Letters were sent to tribal chairmen as well as Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPO). The tribes contacted included:

Blackfeet Tribe
Browning, Montana

Chippewa Cree Tribe
Box Elder, Montana

The Crow Tribe of Indians
Crow Agency, Montana

Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Tribes
Harlem, Montana

Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
Pablo, Montana

Responses received by NorthWestern from the tribes will be forwarded to MDEQ as part of the MFSA application.