Final Environmental Impact Statement

for the
Montana Alberta Tie Ltd. (MATL)
230-kV Transmission Line

VOLUME 2
COMMENT RESPONSE DOCUMENT

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**Title**: Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Montana Alberta Tie Ltd. (MATL) 230-kV Transmission Line (DOE/EIS-0399)

**Location**: Cascade, Teton, Chouteau, Pondera, Toole, and Glacier counties, Montana.

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**Abstract**: MATL proposes to construct and operate a merchant 230-kV transmission line between Great Falls, Montana, and Lethbridge, Alberta, that would cross the U.S.-Canada border north of Cut Bank, Montana. The transmission line would transmit 300 megawatts (MW) of electric power south and 300 MW north. In order to build and operate the line, MATL must first obtain a Presidential permit (Permit) from DOE to cross the U.S.-Canada border, a Certificate of Compliance (Certificate) from the Montana DEQ to construct the line in Montana, and a right-of-way grant from the BLM to cross any BLM-administered lands.

In March 2007 DOE and DEQ published a joint document (referred to herein as the March 2007 document) that was a Draft Environmental Assessment for DOE and a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for DEQ. Based largely on the public comments received on the March 2007 document, DOE determined that an EIS was the appropriate level of review. For the same reasons, DEQ decided to prepare a supplement to its Draft EIS. In February 2008 the agencies published a document (referred to herein as the Draft EIS) that was a Federal Draft EIS and a State of Montana Supplemental Draft EIS. A 45-day comment period began with publication of a Notice of Availability in the Federal Register on February 15, 2008 (73 FR 8869), and ended on March 31, 2008, during which the agencies held three public hearings to obtain comments. The Final EIS contains the agencies’ responses to comments and revisions to the Draft EIS. Text changes to this Final EIS from the Draft EIS are identified by underlining for corrected or added text and a mark along the left margin.

The EIS analyzes the “No Action” alternative and three alternative transmission line alignments with 11 Local Routing Options and other minor variations to the alternative alignments. The agencies will use the EIS to ensure that they have the environmental information needed to render informed decisions.

An accompanying compact disc contains electronic copies of the Final EIS, including the appendices, which are not included in the paper copy, along with Volume 2 from the Draft EIS, which provides responses to comments received on the March 2007 document. The EIS will be available on DOE’s NEPA website at www.gc.energy.gov/NEPA/DOE_NEPA_documents.htm and at DEQ’s website at http://deq.mt.gov/MFS/MATL.asp.
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All references are in the Reference section of Volume 1.
RESPONSES TO COMMENTS, INTRODUCTION

Volume 2 contains the comments received on the Federal Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and State of Montana Supplemental Draft EIS for the Montana Alberta Tie Ltd. (MATL) 230-kV Transmission Line issued in February 2008 (DOE/EIS-0399), referred to herein as the Draft EIS, and the agencies’ responses to those comments.

Three hundred fifty-two individuals and organizations submitted comments on the Draft EIS, either orally at public hearings or in writing. The agencies identified 931 individual comments in the hearing transcripts, comment letters, and e-mails received. The agencies read and considered each comment, whether submitted orally or in writing. Because large numbers of comments addressed similar topics or themes, the agencies developed consolidated responses to address many of those related comments in one place.

There are four parts in Volume 2: Consolidated Responses (Part 1), Responses to Individual Comments (Part 2), a List of Commenters (Part 3), and Duplicate Comments (Part 4). Part 1, Consolidated Responses, presents the agencies’ consolidated responses to address topics and themes that were raised in multiple individual comments. Part 2, Responses to Individual Comments, provides the scanned images of letters and other written comments submitted to the agencies, and transcripts of the public hearings in which comments were recorded. The agencies’ responses are shown beside each comment or on the following pages, with the responses numbered to match the comments. All comments received by the agencies are included. Part 2 presents comments in the order in which they were received and logged by the agencies. An alphabetical index to individual commenters is provided in Part 3.

Because some comments were submitted as letters and also read into the record at the public hearings, there are duplicates of some comments. In these instances, Part 2 contains the comments provided at the hearing, together with agency responses, and the original letters are in Part 4, Duplicate Comments.

Because many comments raised similar issues and concerns, and to present clear and consistent responses, the agencies grouped comments by major topic in Part 1, Consolidated Responses. The agencies prepared these consolidated responses for the convenience of the reader; to avoid repeating the same, often lengthy, responses for multiple comments on the same or similar issues; and to highlight the public’s principal issues. If an individual comment is grouped with one (or more) of these major topics, the response to that comment in Part 2 directs the reader to the relevant consolidated response topics. As needed, additional discussion of these major topics has also been provided in some of the individual comment responses.
The agencies wish to thank all those who submitted comments and testimony regarding this project. All comments received – whether a letter, email, or oral comment presented at the hearings are part of the administrative record for the EIS.

**Part 1. CONSOLIDATED RESPONSES**

**Introduction to Consolidated Responses**

Many comments on the Draft EIS raised similar issues and concerns. The agencies have grouped comments by major topic and provided consolidated responses to those topics. This part of the document presents these responses. If an individual comment is grouped with one (or more) of these major topics, the response to that comment in Part 2 directs the reader to the relevant consolidated response topics in this section.

The Consolidated Responses categories, arranged alphabetically for the convenience of the reader, are:

- Avian and Wildlife Issues
- Economic Issues
- Farming Issues
- Legal and Regulatory Issues
- Line Capacity Issues
- Line Issues
- Safety Issues
- Socioeconomic Issues
- Soils Issues
- Tax Issues
- Vegetation, Wetland and Weed Issues
- Visual Issues
- Wind Farm Issues
Avian and Wildlife Issues

A number of comments were related to impacts on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats. Specific topics included the quality of field surveys for wildlife, impacts on wildlife habitat, habitat fragmentation, possible collision mortality from the transmission line and potential future wind farms, and flyways.

Several commenters expressed concern that the field surveys for wildlife were not sufficient to verify the presence or absence of certain birds or other animals; one commenter suggested that one or two full years of data gathering would be needed. MATL has carried out field studies using censusing protocols including call back surveys. Call back surveys involve playing a recorded call of a selected species and recording the number of individuals that respond to the call. These are species specific surveys and can provide population estimates and indicate trends in the population. Field surveys for wildlife often identify suitable habitat for birds or other animals that are not actually observed during the survey period. Where potential habitat is present but uncertainty exists about whether the habitat is actually used, the EIS assessment of potential impacts conservatively assumes that wildlife is present and could be affected. Similarly, where uncertainty exists, appropriate mitigation would be implemented to avoid or reduce impacts to wildlife that might be present.

The discussion of impacts in the EIS, Section 3.8.3 acknowledges that there might be impacts on wildlife due to disturbance during construction, but that the impacts would be short-term and concentrated within the action area. Also, at crossings of the Marias and Teton rivers the transmission line would span the river, so the impact on bat habitat and bats at those river crossings would be minor.

Several commenters were concerned about the Project fragmenting wildlife habitats. Habitat fragmentation from wind farm development could be a concern if the wind farm were to be sited on undisturbed land, especially if the surrounding landscape had been altered by large-scale disturbances such as conversion to crop land. During operation, presence of a transmission line in grassland habitats could contribute to habitat fragmentation for those grassland species such as grouse that are reported to avoid areas where there are overhead objects that may serve as perches for raptors.

Potential bird and bat mortality from the Project were issues highlighted by several commenters. The analysis of potential bird and bat mortality from wind turbines in Section 4.9 is based on mortality data at wind farms that have modern wind turbine technology. Tables 4.9-1 and 4.9-2 indicate ranges of bird and bat mortalities at wind turbines. Section 4.9 has been revised in the EIS to include data on bird and bat mortality at the Judith Gap Energy Center in Montana. An estimated 100 million to over 1 billion birds are killed each year in the United States due to collisions with human-made structures, including vehicles, buildings and windows, transmission lines,
communication towers, and wind turbines (Erickson et al. 2001). Wind farm-related bird collisions are estimated to represent about 0.01% to 0.02% (i.e., 1 out of every 5,000 to 10,000 fatalities) of the annual bird collision deaths in the United States. While the rotation speed of newer model wind turbines is slower than older models, the blade tip speed is still 140 – 200 mph due to the longer blades on newer turbines (National Research Council 2007).

The map on the next page shows bird migration corridors through Montana. Exact migration routes vary from year to year depending on weather patterns and availability of habitat. Biologists from the local Fish Wildlife and Parks and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service who were contacted had no knowledge of fine scale flyway maps for the study area, and the agencies are not aware of any finer scale delineation of migration routes within the study area. Within the study area the transmission line would cross portions of the Central and Pacific flyways.

Migrating birds do not all fly at low elevations, and most birds will migrate at heights far above the transmission line (Bellrose 1971). Some birds will, however, migrate at much lower elevations within a zone where they may collide with the transmission line. Although a few passerines collide with transmission lines, researchers generally suggest that larger, less maneuverable birds that fly at low elevation are more likely than passerines to collide with transmission lines. In North America it has been estimated that collisions with transmission and distribution lines may kill anywhere from hundreds of thousands to 175 million birds annually (Manville 2005).

Within the study area more collisions would be expected where the line would cross streams, lakes, and wetlands and where higher densities of larger, less maneuverable transient birds such as pelicans, swans, geese, and ducks are expected. To a lesser extent mortality may also occur in upland areas where smaller more maneuverable passerines would be expected. To reduce avian mortality from collisions, MATL has proposed, and the agencies are likely to require, as appropriate (See Appendix A, Sensitive Areas for the MATL Transmission Line Project, in Appendix F of the EIS.), installation of line marking devices on overhead ground wires within ¼ mile of streams, lakes, and wetlands and within ½ mile of the Benton Lake National Wildlife Refuge boundary.

Following construction of Western Area Power Administration’s Great Falls to Conrad 230 kV transmission line, a study was undertaken to determine avian collision mortality from the line at the crossing of Lake Creek (4.85 miles of line about 4 miles west of Benton Lake National Wildlife Refuge), Bole Bench (5.6 miles of line not far from Freezefout Lake, an important waterfowl stopover during migrations), and the Teton River (roughly 1/3 mile of line). That study found an estimated 0.05 to 0.35 waterfowl collisions per 100 flights and concluded that there was no significant impact to waterfowl, shorebirds, or raptors. Authors of the study stated that the lack of
significant impact resulted from routing the line to avoid high collision areas, construction design, and the placement of orange globes on the line at the river crossing. The authors did note, however, that the loss of threatened, endangered, or rare species, if it were to occur, may be biologically significant (Hugie, et al. 1993).

As discussed Section 3.8.2.2, several waterfowl and shorebird species are known to occur in the analysis area. While most knowledge of these species’ nesting and foraging habitat is specific to the Benton Lake National Wildlife Refuge, additional use is known for several outlying water bodies including Hay Lake, Grassy Lake, several Waterfowl Production Areas, and a few of the larger, undisturbed prairie potholes. There are no available data on specific migratory pathways or low-level flight feeding pathways. Additional nesting and stopover habitat is likely provided by area wetlands, stock ponds, and the Marias and Teton rivers. This additional information and discussion, including the map above, have been added to Section 3.8.2.2 to further describe the
areas of potential impact associated with migration and daily feeding pathways in relation to area water bodies.

Economic Issues

Some comments addressed economic issues related to the MATL proposal. Commenters were concerned about the distribution of the benefits and costs of the line and the line’s effect on the cost of electric power.

The economic benefits and costs of the MATL line are discussed in Section 3.13. Some benefits from the MATL line would go to the owners of the line in the form of returns on investment, and some would go to stockholders in the company. There are some benefits that may be felt by a large number of Montana residents in the form of a possibly more robust transmission grid, and more opportunities for rerouting power during outages. These transmission-related benefits are discussed in Section 3.17. Small increases in tax revenues and worker income as a result of MATL could benefit residents of several Montana counties. Also, Section 1.2.1 states, “Additional expected benefits to Montana generators and consumers include: additional connection with markets that demand energy from sustainable sources, such as electricity generated from wind power; additional wholesale electricity purchasing options for Montana utilities, which could result in lower rates due to an increase in supplier competition; and increased opportunities for western grid system optimization during high Montana export and low Alberta-BC export scenarios.” Currently, generators in Montana export approximately 1,400 average MW of electricity. MATL applied to have the capacity to deliver up to 300 MW in each direction and has current contracts for 300 MW in each direction on the line related to new generation not yet built (also see Line Capacity Issues).

There is a possibility that the MATL line could increase electricity prices to Montanans, but there is no hard evidence to support this.

Laws governing siting are different on each side of the United States–Canada border. The benefits and costs to stakeholders will be taken in account when DEQ and DOE make their decisions.

Farming Issues

Numerous commenters were concerned with the issues farmers would face in having to farm around structures, the types of structures, their location, and how they would be compensated for their costs and inconvenience.

Potential impacts to farming and farmers are addressed in several areas of the EIS: Section 3.1 addresses impacts to land use, including farm uses. Table 3.1-4 has been revised to provide revised estimates of the amount of land that would be permanently
removed from production due to support structures under each alternative. Section 3.1 also discusses the short-term disruptions of farming and other land uses that could occur during construction. Potential economic impacts to farmers are presented in Section 3.13, and a detailed study of costs to farmers per transmission structure is provided in Appendix N. Sections 3.1 and 3.13 and Appendix N have been revised. Since the publication of the Draft EIS, MATL has revised its proposal regarding the type of structures that would be placed on diagonal crossings of cropland and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land and has proposed a new compensation plan for farmers. The EIS has been revised to reflect these changes and to include analysis of potential impacts of the revised MATL proposal. Additionally, because there were large changes in commodity prices and costs of fuel and fertilizer since development of the Draft EIS, the agencies updated the assessments of costs and benefits for farmers to reflect more current cost and price data.

MATL currently proposes to use monopoles wherever the transmission line crosses cropland or CRP land diagonally, totaling about 56 miles of the line for Alternative 2. The majority of the structures would not be guyed. Where stronger structures are required – for example, where the line takes a turn or a dead end structure is necessary – guy wires are proposed. MATL would work with landowners to develop a placement that minimizes the impact of the transmission line on their property and farming operations (MATL 2008). MATL proposes for Alternative 2 to use H-frame structures instead of monopoles on non-diagonal crossings of cropland and CRP land and in rangeland and pasture land. Only H-frame structures would be used under Alternative 3. Under Alternative 4, monopoles would be used for all crossings of cropland or CRP land.

Following completion of the transmission line, in most cases the right-of-way could be farmed (depending on the individual agreement with MATL), but the presence of structures in a cultivated field would take some land out of production. The presence of the MATL project may also make installation of large center-pivot irrigation systems impractical in some fields. The additional costs of farming around transmission line structures are discussed in Section 3.13. Additional details of the cost analysis were presented in Appendix N of the Draft EIS. That analysis has been updated in the Final EIS to reflect spring 2008 farming input costs and crop prices. The study of the costs of “farming around” includes consideration of the potential for reduced crop yields due to inadvertent over-application of agricultural chemicals.

MATL is a chartered entity in Montana and must abide by the same laws that regulate any corporation in Montana. In its Major Facility Siting Act (MFSA) application MATL has committed to an alternative dispute resolution process as a method to help resolve disagreements over the level of compensation for damages caused by line construction and line maintenance (Section 2.3 in the EIS). MATL has stated:
In the event that any damages are incurred in the process of regular or unscheduled maintenance, MATL will negotiate a settlement with landowners. MATL will compensate landowners for any crop loss, decrease in production, or any other damages to ensure that they are not adversely affected by MATL’s operations. In the unlikely event that there is a dispute regarding damages owing, MATL would seek the advice of a mutually agreed party, such as a crop appraiser, to provide a neutral third party calculation of the damages owing (MATL 2006b).

In addition, MATL has indicated that it would fully compensate for damages caused by MATL and its contractors and this compensation would be paid immediately. If the line is approved, this procedure would become a requirement in the certificate.

MATL has revised its proposal regarding right-of-way width. Owners of land crossed by the transmission line would be paid for a 105-foot easement or right-of-way. In addition, MATL has committed to paying landowners annual compensation to offset lost production and increased input cost resulting from the existence of its facilities. MATL is currently proposing that the annual payment would be reviewed and adjusted every five years to ensure that the payment adequately reflects current input costs, commodity prices, and yields. These payment adjustments would usually be negotiated one-on-one between landowners and MATL. If a dispute arises upon future review of the annual compensation as to the amount of adjustment that is merited, the landowner would again be made the offer to take advantage of the alternative dispute resolution process (MATL 2008b).

MATL has also increased its proposed annual farmer compensation payment. This is discussed in more detail in the revisions to Section 3.13 in the Final EIS. In the June 19, 2008, submittal MATL indicates that their annual payment would compensate the landowner for reasonable, direct, ongoing impacts to his farming and/or ranching operation that may result from the presence of the transmission line. In most instances, this impact involves the additional cost of farming around the poles or associated structures combined with the lost production from those areas in which the structures are located.

MATL would have to obtain easements for access across private lands outside the right-of-way. If access to private roads was required in order to construct the transmission line, landowners would be properly compensated for the use of their roads and any damages.

MATL’s revised compensation package proposal is in the EIS, Section 2.3. Additional discussion of costs to farmers is found in Section 3.13.3.2. DEQ could require that farmers receive compensation for any damages caused by transmission line construction, such as crop losses caused by construction during the growing season.
Legal and Regulatory Issues

A number of commenters raised legal and regulatory issues related to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), MFSA, and other state and Federal requirements related to transmission lines. Specific issues included adequacy of compliance with NEPA and MEPA, the extra-territorial application of NEPA, the consideration of whether wind farms are connected actions, DEQ’s authority to regulate the power lines that could connect wind farms to MATL, and use of eminent domain to acquire the right-of-way.

The EIS was prepared in accordance with NEPA and MEPA and their implementing regulations. The agencies determined which alternatives were analyzed in the EIS after receiving public input through the scoping process. MATL had no role in selection of which alternatives were analyzed.

In accordance with Executive Order 12114 (Environmental Effects Abroad of Major Federal Actions), the EIS does not assess impacts occurring in a foreign nation unless that foreign nation is not otherwise involved in the action. Because government authorities in Canada have regulatory involvement with the MATL proposal, impacts in Canada are not assessed in the EIS.

There are no connected actions associated with the MATL proposal. In compliance with NEPA, analysis of the potential cumulative impacts of reasonably foreseeable future actions, including wind farms that may use the transmission capacity of the proposed MATL line, is presented in Sections 4.1 to 4.16.

If the transmission lines built to connect individual wind farms to the proposed MATL line are large enough to fall under the definition of “facility” in MFSA (see 75-20-104(8), MCA) and are not exempted by statute, they would undergo a review process by DEQ. Regardless of whether they fall under MFSA, the companies proposing such lines would have the responsibility to negotiate easements with the landowners.

Montana Alberta Tie Ltd. is the chartered and recognized entity within the State of Montana under which name MATL would be conducting operations. It would be subject to applicable legislation within the State of Montana and the United States like any other United States corporation.

Section 3.18 lists the findings and determinations that DEQ must make under MFSA section 75-20-301, MCA, before the line can be approved. If DEQ cannot make the findings required in section 75-20-301, MCA, it is required to deny the certificate (75-20-301(4), MCA).
A landowner has the option of receiving a negotiated settlement for use of the land if and when the land is used for a facility by easement, right-of-way, or other legal conveyance in either a lump sum or in not more than five consecutive annual installments (75-20-409, MCA).

The standard easement agreement between MATL and the landowner contains terms that absolve the landowner of all liability for accidental damage to MATL’s facilities (Williams 2008a).

**Eminent Domain**

DEQ does not have the authority to dictate what MATL pays to landowners for easements. This would be determined between MATL and each individual landowner, ideally in a negotiated settlement. If a negotiated settlement could not be agreed upon, a condemnation proceeding under the laws of eminent domain might be used to obtain the easement. Eminent domain may only be exercised if the purpose for which it is being exercised is a public use. Those public uses are identified and listed by the Legislature in Section 70-30-102, MCA. Subsection 37 of that statute lists electrical power lines as a public use. Section 70-30-102, MCA, does not distinguish between electrical power lines built by private enterprise and a publicly owned utility. Before private property can be taken, Section 70-30-111, MCA, requires the condemnor to demonstrate that the public interest requires the taking based on the following findings:

1. the use to which the property is to be applied is a use authorized by law;
2. the taking is necessary to the use;
3. if already being used for a public use, that the public use for which the property is proposed to be used is a more necessary public use; and
4. an effort to obtain the property interest sought to be taken was made by submission of a written offer and the offer was rejected.

As indicated above, an electric transmission line is a use for which condemnation is authorized by law. In regard to whether the taking is necessary, Montana courts have determined that the necessity need not be absolute or indispensable. Rather, a taking is necessary if it “is reasonable, requisite, and proper for the accomplishment of the end in view, under the particular circumstances of the case.” As indicated in Section 3.18, DEQ has determined the need of the electric transmission line proposed by MATL.

As indicated in the handbook entitled “Eminent Domain in Montana” published by the Legislative Environmental Policy Office in May of 2001, “A public use does not have to be a project that directly benefits the entire public or even the landowner whose property is taken through eminent domain. It may be a project that benefits Montana
citizens as a whole through greater economic development or increased access to communications.” As stated by the Montana Supreme Court in Ellinghouse v. Taylor (1897), 19 Mont. 462, 48 P. 757, “Persons have been allowed the right of eminent domain on the theory of public use, in the construction of dams for the operation of grist and saw mills, in the reclamation of swamp lands, and in other similar instances that might be enumerated where the public had no direct interest in these operations, whose main end was mere private gain, and where the benefit to the people at large could result indirectly and incidentally only from the increase of wealth and development of natural resources.” More information on eminent domain proceedings and compensation for easements can be found on the Office’s website: (http://leg.mt.gov/content/publications/environmental/2001edhandbook.pdf).

Any Presidential permit that DOE may issue would not convey any rights of Federal eminent domain.

**Line Capacity Issues**

A number of comments question whether the capacity of the MATL line would be adequate to handle the potential power transmission increases in the future and the ability for power to be shipped past the termination points of the MATL line. Commenters asked about MATL’s responsibility for extending transmission capacity beyond Great Falls. They also expressed concern that the EIS does not analyze the impacts of constructing new transmission capacity beyond the proposed line’s termination point at Great Falls.

MATL indicated (MATLb) that:

a. MATL had applied and designed for a path rating of 300 MW in both directions.

b. The 1590 kcmil Falcon conductor selected for the project can carry up to 600 MW and ensures low line losses at the current applied for capacity of 300 MW.

c. MATL’s Board of directors has not approved an initiative to increase the capacity of the project beyond 300 MW. The capacity of this project could only be increased after the appropriate technical, economic and regulatory requirements have been met.

The line is rated at 300 MW of continuous load at the present time. Whether the line takes 300 MW from north to south, south to north or midpoint each direction, the line is still rated at 300 MW, not 450 or 600 MW. The mention of a 400 MW potential loading is explained in that if the MATL line would be loaded to the 300 MW, an extra contingency load of up to 100 MW must be carried by the line to support existing power facilities in the area in case of outages on other transmission lines.
Table 2.3-1 indicates the thermal capacity of the line rated at 625 MVA at 212° Fahrenheit which equates to 600 MW at a .96 power factor. The current flow at 600 MW would result in extremely high line losses that make that load economically infeasible. If this conductor were to carry 600 MW, roughly 20 percent of the energy (roughly 115 MW) would be lost in transport (MATL 2007b). MATL has made commitments to its customers who have signed contracts that line losses will not exceed 10 percent.

According to MATL (2007b):

To increase the capacity to 400 or 600 MW a second phase shifting transformer could theoretically be installed in parallel at the substation near Lethbridge, but engineering studies would be required to determine the practicality of installing this equipment and the limitations on incremental capacity that could be added this way. MATL estimates that the engineering studies and procurement and installation of a second phase shifting transformer would cost $15 to $20 million (USD).

In addition, the voltage level at the Marias substation is forecast to drop below Western Electricity Coordinating Council (WECC) standards when power transfers between the Great Falls and Lethbridge terminals are in the range of 390 to 450 MW, depending on system conditions. It may be possible to raise the “end-to-end” power transfer rate beyond this range. Engineering studies would be required to confirm the feasibility of this proposed solution. The estimated range of costs to conduct such studies, perform the detailed engineering, procure and construct the additional capacitors is $10 to $15 million (USD).

Lastly, the delivery and take-away capacity at Great Falls and Lethbridge would require upgrades to transfer more than 300 MW of power. MATL has not submitted interconnection requests to either NorthWestern Energy or the Alberta Electric System Operator for the upgrades required to transfer 400 or 600 MW into their respective systems, so the costs of these upgrades is not known. MATL is contributing approximately $5 million for network upgrades at NorthWestern Energy’s Great Falls substation as part of MATL’s existing 300 MW interconnection request.

The proposed MATL transmission line would be theoretically capable (based on its thermal rating) of transmitting up to 600 MW in each direction without any changes to the transmission line itself or to the rights-of-way. However, the amount of power that any transmission line may be able to transmit is usually limited not by its thermal rating but by the ability of the existing transmission system to accept the power from the line. In this case, MATL has prepared transmission studies that indicate that the existing transmission system at each end of the line (in Canada and the United States) would be capable of accepting up to 300 MW. MATL has entered into contracts for 300 MW of
transmission. Although the transmission capacity of the proposed line could be upgraded without changes to the poles or structures or easements, such an upgrade would require other modifications to the United States or Canadian transmission system, as well as extensive modifications to the facilities in substations along the line. Any increase in power on the MATL line beyond 300 MW could only happen after appropriate transmission studies were performed to identify the needed transmission system upgrades and then the implementation of those upgrades. Such an increase in power flows on the MATL line would require revised permits from Federal, State, and provincial regulators.

As part of its Presidential permit application, MATL has provided technical studies demonstrating the operation of the existing regional power system with 300 MW transmitted over the MATL line. If a Presidential permit is granted, there would be a condition in the permit limiting the operation of the MATL line to 300 MW in either the import or export mode. If MATL wanted to increase the amount of power transmitted over the line, it would need to apply to DOE for an amendment to the Presidential permit. System transmission studies would need to be performed in order to determine what, if any, enhancements to the United States and/or Canadian electrical system would need to be made in order to accommodate the increased power flow. In order to decide on any amendment, DOE would need to consider the environmental impacts of the proposed amendment, determine the impact of the amendment on electric reliability, and obtain favorable recommendations from the Departments of State and Defense.

Currently there are no permit applications to increase transmission capacity south or west from Great Falls, so the construction of additional transmission capacity beyond Great Falls is not within the scope of this EIS. Eventually, additional economically viable transmission lines are likely to be built as need for transmission service grows. DEQ is aware that transmission planners are examining options to accommodate additional generation in the vicinity of Great Falls.

**Line Issues**

Comments addressed construction of the line underground, use of monopoles instead of H-frames, easement widths, and substations connecting wind farms to MATL.

Some commenters suggested that the transmission line should be placed underground. Building the line underground was considered but dismissed from detailed study after considering costs and impacts, as discussed in Section 2.7 – Alternatives Considered but Dismissed. The discussion includes information on the additional costs and the potential impacts and benefits associated with this type of construction.
For its proposed alignment (Alternative 2), MATL has increased its commitment to use monopole structures from its original commitment of 25 miles to its current commitment to use them wherever cropland or CRP land is crossed diagonally (about 56 miles). H-frame structures would be used where the line crosses cropland or CRP land parallel or perpendicular to the crop pattern. MATL’s preferred route, Alternative 2, incorporates additional north/south and east/west routing adjustment as compared to Alternative 3. Alternative 3 would generally follow the NorthWestern Energy (NWE) 115-kV transmission line diagonally from Great Falls to Cut Bank and would be the shortest route of the three action alternatives. Alternative 4 includes additional routing modifications to reduce farmland impact and would require use of monopoles on all crossings of cultivated or CRP land.

Since the Draft EIS, MATL has increased its proposed right-of-way easement width from 45 feet to 105 feet (see Section 1.6 in the EIS).

MATL has successfully acquired portions of the proposed right-of-way or options in Montana. The company would continue to pursue negotiations with affected landowners along the route that is approved by the agencies.

Any substations required to interconnect with the MATL line would be constructed by MATL on behalf of and at the expense of the interconnecting party. This would be done in accordance with the Standard Large Generator Interconnection Procedures that form part of MATL’s tariff approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

Safety Issues

Comments addressed the adequacy of ground clearance under the proposed transmission line and the safety of working or farming under and around the proposed line.

MATL has changed its application relative to minimum ground clearance. The minimum ground clearance of MATL’s proposed line would comply with the requirements of the National Electrical Safety Code. On cultivated and CRP lands, expected heights of the tallest farming equipment (20 feet), including antenna heights, were used to determine the new minimum ground clearance of 27.2 feet for the safe operation of farm equipment under the line. Additionally, MATL has indicated it would work with farmers to alleviate the issue of tall radio antennas on farm equipment.
In all cases, ground clearances are calculated with the conductor temperature at 100 degrees Celsius (212 degrees Fahrenheit) and the ambient temperature at 32 degrees Celsius (90 degrees Fahrenheit). This is equivalent to a situation where the conductors are moving close to 600 MW of power (twice the rating of the line) on a warm summer day, excluding power factor effect.

**Socioeconomic Issues**

Some people expressed their expectations regarding the impacts of the Project and potential wind farms on local socioeconomic conditions, such as school enrollment, property values, employment, and property tax revenues. These topics are considered in Sections 3.13 (for the Project) and 4.14 (for cumulative impacts, including the impacts of potential wind farms).

Impacts from the transmission line on school enrollment were not examined in detail in the EIS. The relatively low number of employees expected during Project construction and the relatively short duration of activities occurring in a given locale make it unlikely that schools would incur any measurable direct impacts. Impacts to schools and taxation are discussed in Section 3.13.3.2. Cumulative impacts to schools are discussed in Section 4.14.

Potential impacts on local employment from the Project are discussed in the Section 3.13.3.2 in the EIS). Transmission line construction is estimated to employ about 55 people over a 6-month period, with average wages of $23 per hour, generating approximately $4.6 million in income over the construction period. The number of operations and maintenance workers is not known, but would be much smaller; these workers would be paid about $25 per hour.

Some commenters expressed concerns about how the Project may affect their property value. Potential effects on real estate values are discussed in Section 3.13.3.2. The analysis used the latest studies available on the effect on real estate values from transmission lines.

Estimated property tax revenues from the proposed transmission line are presented in Table 3.13-18).

**Soils Issues**

Commenters expressed concern about soil compaction and erosion from construction and maintenance vehicles traversing the fields and field roads.

Soil-related impacts associated with access road construction and vehicle movement are a potential problem with any linear facility and are discussed in Section 3.2. Table 2.3-4, MATL Proposed Environmental Protection Measures, lists actions MATL would
implement to either minimize or avoid soil impacts. It states, “At sites with soils that are sensitive to compaction, construction would be done with low bearing-pressure vehicles or compacted soil would be rehabilitated after construction by discing, plowing or other means.”

Appendix F, Revised Draft DEQ Environmental Specifications, includes several measures that deal with soils and access roads that are likely to become conditions to the Certificate of Compliance, if it is approved. Section 2.3.2 of Appendix F states, “In order to prevent rutting and excessive damage to vegetation, construction will not take place during periods of high soil moisture when construction vehicles will cause severe rutting.” Section 2.7 of Appendix F includes 12 separate specifications that would apply to soils and access roads. The DEQ specifications are intended to help minimize soil compaction, erosion, and sedimentation and ensure that the soils and roads are returned to a condition as good as or better than when construction began. Compliance with these standards should minimize destruction of soils.

Additional information on soil compaction from other than farm equipment has been added to Section 3.2.3.2 in the EIS.

Erosion

As described in Table 2.3-4, Section 3.2.3, and Appendix D, project specifications would include preparing an erosion control plan and implementing best management practices (e.g., water bars, drainage contours, straw bales, filter cloth) in areas with susceptible soils in order to minimize erosion impacts. Driving around coulees and steep draws, rather than through them, would minimize or avoid erosion. Appendix F, Section 2.11, includes 23 separate specifications that apply to erosion and sediment control that are likely to become conditions to the Certificate of Compliance, if it is approved. Compliance with these standards should minimize impacts from erosion.

Tax Issues

A number of comments asked questions or expressed opinions about the taxation status of the MATL line in Montana.

Additional information on the relevant tax laws has been added to Section 3.13.3.2. The revised analysis in that section is based on current laws, including the May 2007 tax rate reduction on certain transmission lines and other applicable tax abatements.

MATL would pay property taxes in five Montana counties as well as paying Montana income tax.
House Bill (HB) 3 from the 2007 May Special Legislative Session states that the 3% tax rate (down from 12%) will be allowed for “(p) all property of electric transmission lines, including substations, that originate at facilities specified in this subsection (1), with at least 90% of electricity carried by the line originating at facilities specified in this subsection (1) and terminating at an existing transmission line or substation that has commenced construction after June 1, 2007”.

The Act identifies a number of facilities that, if connected to the MATL line, may make MATL eligible for favorable tax treatment. Under Montana law (15-24-3111, MCA), MATL would be eligible for a tax abatement of 50% of its taxable value for a qualifying period, not to exceed 19 years, that would include the construction period and the first 15 years after the facility commences operation. Because the agencies do not know if MATL would receive such an abatement, tax revenue for each affected county has been estimated at the 3% level as specified in HB 3. If MATL were to receive an abatement, its tax liability would be about half of those values for up to 19 years.

**Vegetation, Wetland, and Weed Issues**

Commenters expressed concerns about spread of weeds and impacts to vegetation and wetlands. Weed control and disturbance of wetlands and riparian areas were the main areas addressed by the commenters.

**Vegetation**

There are very few sites with riparian vegetation in the study area. Generally these areas are located low in drainages adjacent to wetlands and streams. Because transmission line structures are usually located at high points or in uplands, water bodies are normally spanned, and it is unlikely that much riparian area would be affected. There is no tall riparian vegetation at the proposed Marias River crossing site.

At the Teton River crossing, Alternative 2 crosses land near the river that is currently enrolled in the CRP program. This crossing would avoid all tall cottonwood trees, while the few low-growing willows there could easily be spanned.

The Local Routing Option to the east of MATL’s proposed Teton River crossing might require removal or topping of several cottonwood trees on the south side of the river to allow for the sag of the conductors. This routing option was located to avoid placing structures in fields or in the inundation zone described in a firsthand account of the location of floodwaters from the 1964 flood (close to a 500-year flood event). (There are no 100-year flood maps available for this portion of the Teton River.) Under this Local Routing Option structures could be sited on high terraces outside the riparian zone. Although cottonwoods might be affected, willows could probably be spanned by this Local Routing Option.
Another Local Routing Option located farther west and upstream was suggested that would avoid most cropland. This upstream location would not be as high above the present river channel and is believed to be more vulnerable to flood damage. That area has younger riparian vegetation that is just becoming established and would probably grow up around the line over the project lifetime. This vegetation could later require clearing or topping so that it would not interfere with the sag of the line. It is more likely that structures would have to be located in this young riparian zone.

DEQ would hold restoration and revegetation bonds for a period of up to 5 years or until perennial vegetation exclusive of noxious weeds and tall growing trees, attains a 90 percent ground cover when compared to similar undisturbed vegetation outside the right of way.

Wetlands

MATL has stated that its goal is to avoid impacts to floodplains and wetlands by avoiding placement of any structure (or related construction impact) within a regulatory floodplain or jurisdictional wetland and using construction buffers to avoid impacts to wetlands or other waters of the United States. Therefore, the agencies currently expect that the project could be completed with little direct disturbances to streams and wetlands because most of these waters can be spanned. Thus, no compensatory mitigation should be needed. If, however, during construction, a site specific wetland-impact issue arises, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) would be contacted to ensure compliance with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and Section 318 of the Montana Water Quality Act. DEQ would be contacted for a 318 authorization if water were present. If work in streams or wetlands were necessary, the measures listed in sections 2.11.5, 2.11.6, and 2.11.9 of the revised Appendix F would likely apply as would any measures required by the USACE permits or DEQ 318 authorizations, and the agencies could require mitigation for lost wetland functions or values.

Possible impacts to wetlands are identified in EIS sections 3.6.2 and 3.6.3. The agencies are considering a revision to MATL’s proposal for an area north of Great Falls to remove an angle structure from the southern end of Black Horse Lake and place this structure on higher ground west of the highway. The values in the EIS for wetlands crossed include all wetlands within a 500-foot-wide corridor; these values overstate the potential impact because they include areas that would be completely avoided by the narrower 105-foot right-of-way. The most probable general short-term, indirect impacts to wetlands and waters of the United States would include additional noise and vehicle traffic, an increase or decrease in surface water runoff to an area due to an access road grade, and increased soil erosion and sedimentation resulting from any soil disturbances. Although Alternative 4 would cross the largest area of wetlands within the 500-foot-wide corridor, it would cross the least area of wetlands associated with lakes.
Under MFSA rules, applicants are required to identify wetlands greater than 20 acres in size (Circular MFSA-2, Section 3.4(1)(u)). This size was selected to recognize that smaller wetlands can usually be spanned. At this time it appears that all wetlands could be spanned or otherwise avoided through final routing, except for one angle structure in Black Horse Lake, but final design is not yet complete. The revised Draft DEQ Environmental Specifications in Appendix F would require MATL to delineate wetlands within 250 feet of the approved alignment and would not allow construction activities within a 50-foot buffer around wetlands, so that wetlands would not be affected by construction disturbance and maintenance access.

All of the proposed alternatives would cross Teton County in an area (approximately from the town of Brady south to just north of Benton Lake NWR) for which no National Wetland Inventory (NWI) maps were available for use during preparation of the Draft EIS. Thus, to ascertain the potential impact of the proposed action on wetlands in that area, the agencies reviewed 2005 aerial photographs and, as stated in the Draft EIS, determined that no large wetland or concentration of smaller wetlands would cover more than approximately 500-linear feet of any of the proposed alignments. Therefore, the agencies concluded that through engineering design and implementation of mitigation measures existing wetlands along the entire proposed line could be completely spanned by the typical ruling span of 800 feet (except for one angle structure in Black Horse Lake). NWI maps are now available for this area, and the agencies have revised Table 3.6-2 in the EIS to include the new information on wetlands in Teton County. The new information does not change the agencies’ earlier determination regarding the ability to span wetlands in Teton County.

The agencies would require installation and maintenance of line marking within ¼ mile of wetlands to reduce avian mortality from collisions.

Weeds

MATL would be responsible for weed control within the right-of-way for weeds due to its activities. MATL has prepared an integrated weed control program that includes spraying target weed species in coordination with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), state weed coordinator, and county weed boards and groups (see the EIS, Appendix C – MATL Noxious Weed Control Plan, and Appendix F – Revised Draft DEQ Environmental Specifications). Herbicides would be used in a safe manner in accordance with Federal label instructions and restrictions. Herbicides would not be used in certain areas identified by the landowners, DEQ, BLM, or the state and county weed boards. Section 4.4 in the revised Appendix F relates specifically to Herbicides and Weed Control measures and includes the requirements to employ Montana licensed applicators, use proper herbicide application methods, and inspect and monitor the right of way.
Visual Issues

Several commenters questioned the impact that the line or potential wind farms would have on the area viewshed and the possibility of requiring mitigation for wind farm impacts. Commenters were concerned about the intrusion of the line onto the landscape and locations from which the line would be visible. For wind farms, there were particular concerns about possible effects on views in and near Glacier National Park and the Rocky Mountain Front.

Table 3.15-1 notes that major visual effects would result from the proposed line for a distance of 1/2 mile from residences and primary travel routes, and minor effects would extend from 1/2 mile to one mile from the line.

Due to the distance from Glacier National Park to the proposed transmission line of 50 miles or more, the MATL line would not be visible from the park.

For a wind farm directly connecting to MATL to be economically viable, it would need to be no farther than 40 miles from the line. The park would be about 10 miles farther west from a wind farm located 40 miles west of the transmission line. At a distance of 10 miles, the visual impact to Glacier National Park visitors is likely to be low.

The Glacier Wind Project is a wind farm being developed by NaturEner approximately 10 miles southeast of Cut Bank (referred to as the McCormick Ranch wind farm in the Draft EIS). Other known areas of interest for potential wind farm development near Cut Bank, shown on Figure 4.1-2 are more than 50 miles to the east of the park.

DEQ has no legal authority to require mitigation for wind farm impacts.

Wind Farm Issues

A number of comments were concerned with siting of wind farms and impacts associated with the wind farms that are expected to connect to the MATL line. Commenters were concerned about the location of future wind farms and the lack of regulation of wind farms located on private property. Some comments were concerned with bird and bat mortality at wind farms; that topic is addressed in the Avian and Wildlife Issues section of the Consolidated Responses.

Neither DEQ nor DOE would have a regulatory role in siting future wind farms or have regulatory jurisdiction over wind farm development or operations. Specific proposals could, however, necessitate water quality permits under the Montana Water Quality Act (75-5-101 et seq., MCA). In compliance with NEPA, the potential future development of wind farms is considered in the EIS as a potential source of cumulative impacts. Assessment of potential cumulative impacts of reasonably foreseeable actions,
including wind farms that may use the transmission capacity of the proposed MATL line, is in Sections 4.1 to 4.16.

As a basis for assessing the impacts of potential wind farms, the agencies assumed that wind farms are most likely to be located in windy areas, within about 30 to 40 miles of an existing transmission line with available transmission capacity, and where agreements can be negotiated with affected landowners. Areas within 30 to 40 miles of the MATL line would have the highest probability for future wind farm development due to the cost of interconnecting power lines from the wind farms to the transmission line. Any substations necessary for connection to the MATL line would be built by MATL on behalf and at the expense of the interconnecting party in accordance with applicable FERC tariffs.

The agencies based their analysis of cumulative impacts from wind farm development on the best information available. Although the analysis does not include site-specific and design-specific impacts, it does provide comprehensive identification of the potential adverse impacts and possible mitigations of wind farm development and conservative estimates of the magnitude of those impacts. The assessment of the potential cumulative impacts of wind farms that may connect with the MATL line is based on realistic estimates of likely locations and conservative estimates of the number of wind turbines that could be built. More detailed assessment would require specific information on the locations and designs of wind turbines, associated transmission lines, and other associated facilities. That information either does not exist or is not available to the agencies. The agencies attempted to contact potential developers of wind farms that have contracts with MATL for information about their project locations. None of the developers that propose to connect to the MATL line has indicated a willingness to release detailed plans. Often projects are announced without details, and the announced projects may either change or not materialize.

The only wind farm known to the agencies is NaturEner’s Glacier Wind Farm, referred to as the McCormick Ranch Wind Park in the Draft EIS. USFWS provided the agencies with a map outlining the extent of this wind farm; it appears as Figure 4.1-2 in the EIS. NaturEner is proceeding with development with the intent of interconnecting to other transmission lines in the area. This wind farm, which would have up to about 140 turbines, is located north of the Marias River between the McCormick and Sullivan Bridge roads. NaturEner still has an agreement with MATL for 300 MW to be shipped to the north and eventually might choose to exercise some of its rights on the MATL line with power generated at the Glacier Wind Farm. NaturEner might also build another wind farm in the area or choose to otherwise exercise its rights to firm capacity if the MATL line is built.
New wind farms that use transmission capacity on the proposed MATL transmission line would require new power lines to connect them to the MATL transmission line. These lines would be built by the wind farm developers, and interconnections would be coordinated with MATL. It is unlikely that new lines would be built underground. Instead, it is most likely that these new lines would be overhead lines. However, landowners would negotiate details with the wind farm developers. The use of eminent domain is a possibility if agreements could not be reached with landowners (see Eminent Domain in Legal and Regulatory Issues). If the transmission lines are large enough to fall under the definition of “facility” in the Major Facility Siting Act (75-20-104(8), MCA) and not exempted by statute, they would undergo a review process by DEQ.

Details on other potential wind farm locations, number of turbines, and other project-specific information are not available. This information is not necessary for certification of the MATL transmission line. In the absence of information from prospective wind farm developers, it would be speculative to assume that one alignment of the MATL line would be better than another relative to the ability of wind farms to interconnect to the line.

It is not possible to accurately determine how many permanent workers would be employed by wind farms made possible by construction of the MATL line. Section 4.14 includes estimates of job creation for different levels of potential wind development in the study area.

Potential visual impacts associated with wind farm development are discussed in Section 4.16 (see Visual Issues in Consolidated Responses).
Response 1: Comment noted.

Response 2: The information in the comment is correct and was considered in the analysis presented in Section 3.13.

Response 3: Comment noted.

Response 4: See Tax Issues in the Consolidated Responses section for a discussion pertaining to tax revenue resulting from passage of House Bill 3.

Response 5: The economic impacts and benefits of wind farms are discussed in Section 4.14.

Response 6: Comment noted. See the discussion of Economic Issues in the Consolidated Responses section and the EIS for discussion of these revisions to MATL’s proposal.

Response 7: The analysis of potential bird and bat mortality from wind turbines in Chapter 4 of the EIS is based on mortality data at wind farms that have modern wind turbine technology. While the rotation speed of newer model wind turbines is slower than older models, the blade tip speed is still 140 – 200 mph due to the longer blades on newer turbines. (Manville 2005 and Danish Wind Industry Association undated). See the discussion of Avian and Wildlife Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 8: Comment noted.
Response 9: Your opinion is noted.

Response 10: Comment noted.
Response 11: Comment noted.
Response 12: Your opinion is noted. Adequate mitigation of significant impacts has been identified.

Response 13: DEQ must comply with MEPA “to the fullest extent possible” and “discuss the impacts of a proposed action in a level of detail that is proportionate to their significance.” Streams, wetlands, and aquatic resources would be spanned (except for one angle structure in Black Horse Lake) and would be minimally impacted. Floodplains would also be minimally impacted. Additional wetland impacts in Teton County are described in the Final EIS, Section 3.6. At this time it appears that all wetlands can be spanned, as noted above, or other wise avoided through design. DEQ would require a 50-foot buffer around wetlands (Appendix F). Also see the discussion in Vegetation, Wetlands and Weeds in the Consolidated Responses section. DEQ considered the level of information to be sufficient to make a decision because the detailed on-the-ground surveys to be completed during the construction phase will ensure effective mitigation.
Response 14: The EIS has been revised to include additional information pertaining to Teton County wetlands in Section 3.6.

Response 15 and 16: See the discussion of Legal and Regulatory Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 17: The information available and the surveys completed were adequate to complete successful impact analysis. See the discussions of Legal and Regulatory Issues and Avian and Wildlife Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 18: Unless the entire habitat area were disturbed, low levels of disturbance should not impact a species with limited habitat. The analysis in the EIS does not indicate that the entire habitat area for any species would be disturbed due to the Project. Therefore, there should not be substantial impacts to any species. The discussion of impacts in Section 3.8.3 acknowledges that there might be impacts to wildlife due to disturbance during construction, but that the impacts would be short-term and concentrated within the action area. Also, at crossings of the Marias and Teton rivers the transmission line would span the river, so the impact to bat habitat and bats at river crossings would be minor. A few riparian cottonwood trees may need to be cleared or topped along the south shore of the Teton River Crossing Local Routing Option. See the discussions of Legal and Regulatory Issues and Avian and Wildlife Issues in the Consolidated Responses section. The analyses of direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts were complete and adequate, and the determination that populations within the area would not be negatively impacted was supported within the analyses.
Response 19: Comment noted. Also see responses to comments 12 through 18. On April 30, 2008, an on-ground survey for sharp-tailed grouse leks was conducted by AMEC-Helena for MATL. On May 2, 2008, an aerial survey was conducted by AMEC. No sharp-tailed grouse were observed during the April 30th survey, but two sharp-tailed grouse were seen during the May 2nd survey. No leks were observed, and AMEC concluded that the sighting of the lone birds did not necessarily imply grouse lek activity. Other reasonably foreseeable energy projects in the regions are addressed in the cumulative impacts analysis in Section 4 of the EIS.
Response 20 and 21: Comment noted.

Response 22: Thank you for your comment

Response 23 to 25: See Socioeconomic Impact Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
We congratulate the Montana Alberta Tie Line group on their innovative and progressive approach and wish them every success with the construction and operation of the transmission line.

Sincerely,

Jason R. Bronce
General Manager

Response 26: Comment noted.

Response 27: Comment noted.
Response 28: Comment noted.

Hi there,

I am a businessman in Choteau. This project would be good for our area and Montana.

Jim Anderson
Choteau
Response 29: Your comment regarding economic stimulation is noted.

Hallsten, Greg

From: Lew and Christy Clark [cclark@3ivers.net]
Posted At: Monday, February 18, 2008 3:23 PM
Conversation: Let's make this work
Posted To: MATL
Subject: Let's make this work

To Whom it May Concern,
I am a fifth generation rancher from Choteau, and I have watched our agricultural communities dry up and blow away in the last 25 years. Part of the decline has been due to government programs such as CRP, part of it has just been a shift in the economy in our country, but regardless of the why, the fact is our rural communities desperately need economic stimulation.

Wind energy can be one way to stimulate the economy and respond to our world’s demand for cleaner energy. We need MATL to pass because we have no transmission left to move the energy created out of the area for sale. Please do what it takes to make this MATL work. We need the money in our counties to boost our dying economy.

Thank you,
Christy Clark
Box 423
Choteau, MT 59422

3/10/2008
Response 30: Information on the potential location of the line in Pondera County has been sent to the commenter.
Response 31: Your perspective on school enrollment trends has been noted.

Response 32: Socioeconomic impacts and benefits of the proposed MATL line are discussed in Section 3.13. Socioeconomic impacts of potential wind farms are discussed in Section 4.14. Also see the discussion of Socioeconomic Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 33: Your comments regarding start of construction and your regard for those who own the land are noted. Also see the discussion of Farming Issues and Visual Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 34 and 35: Your comments regarding area benefits, green energy resources, reliability of the transmission grid, and project schedule are noted.
Response 36: Your comment regarding no action is noted.

Response 37: See Section 3.13 and the discussion of Economic Impact Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 38 to 40: The need for the line is addressed in Sections 1.2 and 3.17. Also see the discussion of Economic Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 41: The U.S. power supply, including power supplied in Montana, already faces some international competition from those customers that live in Canada and Mexico that are on the U.S. Western grid. The MATL line could increase competition for Montana generated power up to the rated capacity of the line going south to north which is 300 MW and a portion of this space would likely be used by generation from new Montana sources. Currently, Montana generators export about 1,400 MW. See Section 3.17.1 in the EIS.

Response 42: See the discussion of Socioeconomic Impacts Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 43: See the discussion of Visual Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 44: Thank you for your comments pertaining to visual impacts.

Response 45: Comments pertaining to benefits of the project are noted.

THINKING SOUNDED LIKE A SALES PITCH. I BELIEVE IT IS NOT IN MONTANANS BEST INTEREST TO ALLOW THIS INTERNATIONAL LINE TO BE BUILT. WE HAVE ALREADY LOST MOST OF OUR JOBS, MANUFACTURING AND INDUSTRY TO OTHER COUNTRIES THANKS TO NAFTA. AND NOW DO YOU WANT TO SUBJECT OUR POWER SUPPLY TO INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION AS WELL?

THE EFFECTS ON WILDLIFE, FISH, AND THE ENVIRONMENT HAVE BEEN STUDIED AND ARE WITHIN REASON, BUT THE DETRIMENTAL EFFECT ON REAL ESTATE VALUES MAY BE GROSSLY UNDERESTIMATED. I AM QUITE FAMILIAR WITH THE REAL ESTATE MARKET AND I FEEL A POWER LINE OF THIS SIZE HAS A DEVASTATING EFFECT ON ONES LAND VALUE AS WELL AS A TOTAL NEGATIVE VISUAL EFFECT ON PROPERTY FOR MILES AROUND. IF YOU DONT BELIEVE IT HOW WOULD YOU LIKE THIS MONSTER IN YOUR BACK YARD? I WOULD GUESS THE ANSWER WOULD BE A RESOUNDING "NO" FROM NEARLY ANYONE WHO WAS NOT MONETARILY DIRECTLY BENEFITING BY OWNERSHIP IN THE LINE.

I URGE YOU TO ALLOW "NO ACTION" ON THIS PROJECT. IT PERHAPS ONLY BENEFITS A SMALL NUMBER OF PRIVATE INTERESTS. IF PUT TO A VOTE WITH THE FACTS AS PRESENTED IN THE EIS TO ALL THE CITIZENS OF MONTANA I BELIEVE THE RESULT WOULD ECHO "NO ACTION". HOW IS THE BENEFIT TO A FEW INDIVIDUALS IN ALL GOOD CONSCIENCE GOOD FOR MONTANA OR MONTANANS?

SINCERELY,

DAVID BAUMANN
Response 46: See the discussion of Socioeconomic Impact Issues in the Consolidated Responses section and the EIS, Section 3.13.3.2, “Effects on Property Values.”

Response 47: MATL has changed its proposal to include a 105-foot right-of-way. Appendix N, Figure 1, illustrates the typical amount of land taken out of production that could be more susceptible to weed infestation if control measures are not undertaken. Also, see the discussion of Farming Issues and Vegetation, Wetland and Weed Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 48: The need for the line is addressed in Sections 1.2 and 3.17.
Response 49: The agencies have noted your comment regarding the fate of the line should it not be a success. After the line is operational, it is expected to be an asset with value. In the hypothetical event that the project owners were to file for bankruptcy, the agencies expect that some other entity would acquire this asset and continue to operate it.

Response 50: See the discussion of Tax Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 51: Discussions of undergrounding the line are in Section 2.8. Also see Line Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 52: Comment noted.
Response 53 to 56: Your comments are noted.

Hallsten, Greg

From: Lorette Carter [shbcdc@3rivers.net]

Posted At: Tuesday, March 04, 2008 10:47 AM

Conversation: Support of the MATL line

Posted To: MATL

Subject: Support of the MATL line

Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of the community of Shelby and Office of Economic Development to support the efforts to construct the Montana Alberta Transmission Tie Line (MATL). Shelby, Toole County and Northern Montana are in a unique position of incredible economic benefit in the potential of the MATL line. With construction of the wind farms to begin soon, the approval of the line will create an invaluable source of electric transmission, incredible economic opportunity and reduction of taxes to those in the region.

Our rural Montana region continually struggles with decades of drought, a depressed oil and gas industry and other economic factors beyond our control. The key to sustainability and development of a solid economic base is diversity and access to our available resources. Wind generation is an abundant, renewable resource that can provide a tremendous economic boost to our area in job creation, additional business and secondary services, reduction in taxes and wealth within our communities.

MATL officials have been diligent in following all guidelines, garnering the commitment of landowners and assuring communities of their sincere commitment to the benefit and wellbeing of the community now and for generations to come. I sincerely hope you will consider the wishes of those who live, work and raise our families in our region. Outside interests have many voices, but the voice of those who live here need be heard loud and clear.

Please support the efforts to bring new, clean industry to rural Montana. Help us keep our communities alive for our children and those that will come after us.

Sincerely,

Lorette Carter
City of Shelby
112 1st St. So.
Shelby, MT 59474
(406) 424-8750
Fax: (406) 424-8413
shbcdc@3rivers.net

3/10/2008
Response 57 and 58: Thank you for your comment.

Response 59: Comment noted.

Response 60 and 61: Thank you for your comments.
Response 62 and 63: See Section 2.6.1 in the EIS. The Alternative 4 portion through the Diamond Valley did not meet with local acceptance and is no longer being carried forward as a viable option. See the revisions to the Diamond Valley local routing option in Section 2.6.1.

Response 64: Your comment is noted. In the Diamond Valley area several alternatives were identified that would limit the amount of farmland crossed on a diagonal. See Figure 2.6-2.

Response 65: The agencies acknowledge the increased cost to farm around structures. Farming cost estimates have been updated in Section 3.13.3.2.

Response 66: See Figure 2.6-2 of the Final EIS.

Response 67: The average per-structure payment has been updated to $33.90. Also see Section 2.3 concerning the alternative dispute resolution process.
March 4, 2008

Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Environmental Management Bureau
Attn: Tom Ring
P.O. Box 200601
Helena, MT 59620-0601

Committee Members

I am writing on behalf of the community of Shelby and Office of Economic Development to support the efforts to construct the Montana Alberta Transmission Tie Line (MATL). Shelby, Toole County and Northern Montana are in a unique position of incredible economic benefit in the potential of the MATL line. With construction of the wind farms to begin soon, the approval of the line will create an invaluable source of electric transmission, incredible economic opportunity and reduction of taxes to those in the region.

Our rural Montana region continually struggles with decades of drought, a depressed oil and gas industry and other economic factors beyond our control. The key to sustainability and development of a solid economic base is diversity and access to our available resources. Wind generation is an abundant, renewable resource that can provide a tremendous economic boost to our area in job creation, additional business and secondary services, reduction in taxes and wealth within our communities.

MATL officials have been diligent in following all guidelines, garnering the commitment of landowners and assuring communities of their sincere commitment to the benefit and wellbeing of the community now and for generations to come. I sincerely hope you will consider the wishes of those who live, work and raise our families in our region. Outside interests have many voices, but the voice of those who live here need be heard loud and clear.

Please support the efforts to bring new, clean industry to rural Montana. Help us keep our communities alive for our children and those that will come after us.

Sincerely,

Lorette Carter
City of Shelby
112 1st St. So.
Shelby, MT 59474
(406) 424-8799
Fax: (406) 424-8413
shcarter@shco.mt.gov

Cc: Larry Bonderud, Mayor
Shelby City Council

Response 68 to 71: Your comments are noted.
Response 72: Comment noted.

Response 73: Comment noted.

Response 74: Your comments reflect conclusions in the EIS, Section 3.16. Since publication of the Draft EIS, DEQ and MATL staffs have reviewed the Bullhead Coulee South local routing option. Both MATL’s proposed Alternative 2 and the Bullhead Coulee South local routing option pass near the cultural resource site mentioned in your comment. MATL has committed to avoid cultural resource sites. See Table 2.3-4 in the EIS.

Response 75: Both MATL’s proposed line and the local routing option would cross four landowners (Montana Cadastral project, March 2008). MATL would have to obtain right-of-way no matter which alternative is selected.

Response 76: Note that the location proposed by MATL would place the line on an adjacent landowner’s land in a manner that would prevent a wind turbine from being located on his property. Navitas Energy is considering a project in this vicinity (Davies 2008).

Response 77: Your comment regarding the Bullhead Coulee South Local Routing Option is noted.
Response 78: Thank you for your comment.

Response 79: Thank you for your comment. Employment and tax revenue impacts and impacts to local services are discussed in Section 3.13. Also see Socioeconomic Impact Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 80: Comment noted.
Response 81: Employment and tax revenue impacts and impacts to local services are discussed in Section 3.13.3.2. Also see Socioeconomic Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 82 to 84: Your comments are noted.
Response 85: All of these comments refer to the Diamond Valley South local routing option. If adjacent property owners cannot agree on a line location that would straddle the property line, the intent is that the line would be located far enough off the edge of any field road to allow passage of the largest expected piece of farm equipment in a folded position. For example, a combine with the header attached may be the widest piece of equipment expected.

Response 86: The aerial applicator may not be able to fly north and south unhindered if a power line is present. Likewise, an aerial applicator may not be able to fly the length of a field unhindered with a diagonal line crossing it.

Response 87: Comments as well as information in the Draft EIS will be weighed and balanced in making final location decision.
Response 88: Comment noted. Economic benefits are discussed in Section 3.13.3.2 and in Socioeconomic Impact Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 89 to 92: Comments noted.

Response 93: Routing down Highway 89 is outside the study area. Figure 2.3-2 shows the study area boundary.
March 8, 2008

Montana Department of Environment Quality
Environmental Management Bureau

Attn: Tom Ring
P.O. Box 200861
Helena MT 59620-0861

Dear Attn: Tom Ring,

I’m writing this letter as I support the MATL system that would be very good for the economy of Northern Montana and Toole County. As you probably know the wind in this part of Montana is very productive. Ecology is very important to this to this country, this is a clean source of energy. Remember, Montana needs these jobs.

Thank you

Dave Miller
Toole County Commissioner
226 1st St. So.
Shelby Mt. 59474
Response 95: Thank you for your comment.

Response 96: Thank you for your comment.

Response 97: Unemployment data and trends by county are presented in Table 3.13-3.

Response 98: The additional environmental review was prompted by extensive public comment on the March 2007 document. Federal agency decisions will be issued subsequent to this EIS in the form of a Record of Decision for each agency or as a letter of concurrence, no sooner than 30 days after this Final EIS is available. DEQ may not make a final decision sooner than 15 days after the final EIS is available and may time a decision on whether to issue a certificate to coincide with the decisions of the Federal agencies.

Response 99 to 101: Your comments are noted.
March 11, 2008

Tom Ring
Montana Department of Environmental Quality Mgmt Bureau
PO Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

RE: Support of MATL

Dear Mr. Ring:

I am writing in support of the MATL. I support the MATL because it benefits both consumers and generators through additional connection with markets in demand of energy. It also will allow additional purchasing options for Montana utilities resulting in lower rates for consumers. MATL is an economic opportunity for Montana by providing additional transmission capacity.

My name is Vanessa Bucklin, and I support MATL.

Sincerely,

Vanessa Y. Bucklin
The following responses are to comments received at the public hearing in Great Falls.

Response 103 to 104: Your comments have been noted.

Response 105: Comment noted.

Response 106: The information about your past work with MATL is noted.

My name is Katrina Martin. I live on a farm east
of Dutton. I would like to express my [Comment 103]
appreciation for the opportunity to participate in
this hearing process, and to acknowledge the hard
work done by the staffs of the US Department of
Energy and the Montana Department of Environmental
Quality in preparation of the joint EIR. Your
mandate under Federal and State law is a
complicated one, and I'm grateful for your
efforts.

I want to first emphasize: I do not
rise in opposition to the MATL project. Never
have I stood in support of the no-action [Comment 104]
alternative. I rely on electricity, and
acknowledge the need for more transmission
facilities. What I am not willing to support is
to have one company's short term economic gain
take precedence over long term negative impacts to
the farmers whose land is taken pursuant to the
construction of this line. [Comment 105]

More than two years ago, a group of the
affected landowners in Pondera and Teton Counties
met with MATL officials. These farmers were
unanimous in expressing to the company their
willingness to partner with MATL in this project

LAURIE CRUTCHER, RPR
406-442-8262
Response 107: Your comment is noted.

Response 108: See the discussion of Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section. Since publication of the Draft EIS MATL has proposed an alternative dispute resolution process to be used in conjunction with its compensation package to help alleviate the economic burden to farmers since publication of the Draft EIS. See Section 2.3 has been changed to reflect this revised proposal.

Response 109: Your comment is noted.

If the company were just willing to use a route which followed field lines and was built with monopole structures in crop land and CRP. This willingness was reiterated at every subsequent meeting or communication with the company. These farmers accepted that they need to cooperate in economic development for the region, even though it meant dealing with permanent structures placed in their crop land. 

Somehow these farmers, in standing up for themselves and their families, seem to have been painted as bad guys by the supporters of this project. Such a characterization is incredibly unfair and counter-productive. The requests of these farmers are not unreasonable.

Placing power poles on a diagonal running through crop land and CRP should be a thing of the past. New farming techniques and larger equipment make such transmission structures environmentally unsound, and too economically burdensome. I do not begrudge this company and its investors the chance to make a handsome profit from filling a well-recognized need for increased electric transmission. More power to them, no pun intended.

Laurie Crutcher, RPR
406-442-8262
Response110: Your opinion is noted.

Response 111: The economic development staff has been actively involved with the MATL project.

Response 112: See the discussion of Tax Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
tax break for property owners whose land is taken
amounts to $40,000.
With all this help from the government,
it seems impossible to view this company as
persecuted, because the farmers who will forever
bear the burden of the line are not willing to
just let the company build the line as cheaply as
possible. Over a fifty year life of this
facility, the property tax break dollars by
themselves will nearly pay for the construction of
the line in Montana, projected at approximately
$40 million. It is not unreasonable for farmers
to push for the option of Alternative 4 when that
agency alternative clearly recognizes the validity
of the producer's position, and mitigates serious
adverse affects on production agriculture.
But let's return for a moment to the
advantages accorded to this company by our state.
Looking over every affected property owner is the
knowledge that this Canadian company, building a
for-profit merchant line, has the power to condemn
the land it says it needs. This company, with its
billion dollar revenue projection, has the
authority to invoke eminent domain over property
owners. These farmers' private property rights

Laurie Crutcher, RPR
406-442-8262
Response 117: Comment noted.

Response 118: Comment noted. The policy statement appears in Section 90-4-1001, MCA, of the state energy policy goal statement.

Response 119: The Department must apply the criteria set forth in the Administrative Rules of Montana 17.20.1604 in determining whether a proposed facility serves the public convenience and necessity. In general terms, it requires the Department to determine that the benefits of the proposed facility are greater than any other reasonable alternative based on the following:

a. The Department’s determination as to the need for the facility discussed in Sections 1.2 and 3.17.

b. The cumulative environmental impacts of the facility discussed in Chapter 4.

c. The benefits to the applicant, the state of Montana, the applicant’s customers, and any other entities benefiting from the facility as discussed in Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

d. The effects of the economic activity resulting from the proposed facility as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

e. The costs of the facility including internal costs of construction and operation and mitigation costs, plus other external costs and unmitigated environmental costs as discussed in Chapter 3.

f. Any other relevant factors.
Response 120 to 121: Comments noted.

Response 122: Comments noted.

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Comment 120: I do not oppose this project, even though I can't say I look forward to having yet another large transmission line in my neighborhood. I do support the issuance of a permit based upon Alternative 4. This line, and the future lines which we know are coming, need to be built on an orientation with field lines, and the use of monopoles in crop land and CRP.

Comment 121: Farmers who have been stewards of these lands for generations should not have to bear the burden of unsafe, costly structures in their crop land and CRP simply because a company wants to keep a bit of extra money in its pocket. That should not be the way we do business in Montana. Good public policy prescribes the choice of Alternative 4 as the basis for the permits at issue here. Thank you for your consideration.

MR. COMO: The next person signed up is Allen Underdal.

Comment 122: MR. UNDERDAL: Hi. My name is Allen Underdal. I am a Commissioner with Toole County in north central Montana. And we would like to say as Commissioners that we do support this line. We feel that power lines obviously are important to economic development in our region, and we are
Response 123: The costs of farming around structures have been updated and changed in Section 3.13.3.2 of the EIS. The amount of cropland crossed is discussed in Section 3.1. Also see the discussion of ‘Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 124: Comments noted.

Response 125: Your comment regarding 600 MW of wind generation in the area is noted.

Response 126: Comments noted.

in support of it for that reason. There are impacts to consider, and I think that what we just listened to is one of the impacts, and I think we have to certainly do consider those, and how long term impacts from that will affect the land owner that has those power lines right near their land.

We do feel, though, that we, I guess as a county, that these power lines are necessary. Obviously there is more power needed throughout our United States, even though Montana is an exporter of power. You know, there is a vast quantity of power being consumed and needed to be consumed in the near future. So we realize that a power line like this is definitely necessary.

We know that there is proposed about 600 megawatts of power, wind power in our county and the neighboring counties that would be put on this line and sold both north and south. So that is a positive to our area, and I guess we would like to say that we do support this.

MR. COMO: Thank you. The next speaker is Mike Koepke.

MR. KOEPKE: I’m Mike Koepke from Cut Bank. I wear many different hats. I’m actually a producer in Glacier County. I’m in support of the
Response 127 to 129: Comments noted.

MATL line. It's going to be going through my property, but I feel it's my position or responsibility to help bring economic growth to Glacier County, and it's going to be an inconvenience, but it's something I'm willing to deal with in order to bring economic growth to Cut Bank.

I also manage another farm, my parents' farm, and the MATL line is going to go through that farm, too, about 12 miles away; and the farm has decided that they're in support of the MATL line also.

I'm also the Executive Director for Cut Bank Development Corporation, and we're in favor of the MATL line because of economic possibility of growth in Glacier County. We, the Cut Bank Development Corporation, basically asks that all of the farmers be treated fairly and just.

I'm also the Chairman of the School Board in Cut Bank, and we see this as an opportunity to help build the tax base for Glacier County, which will help kids in the long run.

Thank you.

MR. COMO: Thank you very much for your comments. Harold Olson.

LAURIE CRUTCHER, RPR
406-442-8262
Response 130 to 131: Comments noted.

MR. OLSON: Members of the committee,
I'm Harold Olson from Conrad, President of the
Pondera Economic Development Corporation, one of
the oldest economic development groups in the
state.

We have encountered lots of economic
development projects in the past, and as we see
the diminishing opportunities of coal, gas,
forestry, mining, and so many industries that
Montana has been dependent upon in the past, no
longer being available to us, this opens up an
opportunity for resources that have only begun to
be developed in our area. So our group is very
strongly in favor of the MATL line. We think that
it will be a spring board to greater opportunities
in the energy crisis that we sometimes see. Thank
you for your consideration.

MR. COMO: Thank you, Mr. Olson. We
have Gordon from Shelby. I can't read the last
name. Could you spell your last name.

MR. SMEDSRUD: Smedsrud,
S-M-E-D-S-M-E-D-S. My name is Gordon Smedsrud. I'm
partnership in an agency, insurance agency
involved in Conrad, Cut Bank, and Shelby, all of
the towns that are affected. We believe it is

LAURIE CRUTCHER, RFR
406-442-8262
Response 132: Comment noted.

very important for our community, in that it brings new jobs, and new jobs mean new customers for us. And that's real important in a community of -- real important to us. We have the gift. This is a green industry. You can't ask for more than that. I just don't believe that we can do any better than this. Thank you.

MR. COMO: Thanks so much for coming tonight. Jesse Parks.

MR. PARKS: My name is Jesse Parks. I'm a business man from Conrad. I've been there for 35 years. And a lot of my friends are farmers, and some are against, and some are for. But this is -- What we're talking about here is energy, which we're short of, and we'll get shorter of as the years go on. -- (inaudible) -- and the way we want to create more energy for our area, and it also is something that we can hook on this wind energy, which is a big thing in northern Montana. If this wind energy comes into our area, and we have this line, it is going to be a big plus for that company to want to come in here, and that creates more energy, again, and more jobs, and that's what we need in our country. So I speak for this MATL line, and thank you for your

LAURIE CRUTCHER, RPR
406-442-8262
Response 133: Comment noted.

Response 134: See Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 135: Comments noted. See Socioeconomic Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

consideration.

MR. COMO: Thank you very much. Joe Christiaens. I'll ask you to spell your name, too.

MR. CHRISTIAENS: It's Christiaens, like the Christians and the lions. My name is Joe Christiaens, and I'm a Pondera County Commissioner in Conrad.

And we support this very much because of the economic development, and also for tax purposes that we've got going on in our county. We're getting really close to being stretched clear to the end.

We also support the fact that we would like to see the company get along with the farmers. We understand what their condition that is going along, and it's getting the poles out there, too, and we want that to also be addressed.

But when you look around at all of the counties in this area and also here, what I heard on the radio this morning, Great Falls is losing 200 students every year. I think this is a bit of a problem, and we've got the same problem, too, but not in the large numbers.

But you look at that, when our equipment

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Response 136: Comment noted.

at the county level is stretching the limit, the
coat of fuel that we have coming up right now,
everybody knows where it's going to go. It's
going to limit a lot of the growth and work that
we're going to be able to do. And in our schools
also. Everybody throughout the country is talking
about schools, and more money, and that they're
going to be needing it, and go back again for the
legislation as it has been put, everybody is in
need of more money.

We need to have something to stabilize
where we're at, or we're just going to continue to
drop down.

I come from a family of ten. All ten of
us grew up on the farm. I was born and raised
right where the line is going to go through.
There is one left on the farm now. So it says
something that something is going to change
somehow. And we do support this very much, and
hope that it will do something for all the
communities. Thank you for your time.

MR. COMO: Thank you, Cheryl Curry.

MS. CURRY: I'm Cheryl Curry. I'm the
Executive Director for the Pondera Regional Port
Authority. And a port authority is defined in the

LAURIE CRUTCHER, RPR
406-442-8262
Response 137 to 138: Comments noted.

law, and is created by resolution and public vote
for the purpose to promote, stimulate, develop,
and advance the general welfare, commerce, and
economic development, and prosperity through its
jurisdiction, and of the state and its citizens.

A port authority also acts in
cooperation and in conjunction with other
organizations to develop industry, manufacturing,
natural resources, services, agriculture, health
care, and other economic activities.

Our goal is to help create a vital
community for future generations of rural
Montanans.

The Pondera Regional Port Authority
supports the Montana-Alberta Transmission Line.
The construction of this line will have strong,
positive economic impact in the area, and creates
the potential to develop wind power in the future.
The power lines and associated wind development
will add jobs and tax base to our struggling
economy. It is clean, and has low impact on the
environment.

I have read the Environmental Impact
Statement, and believe that economic benefits
outweigh the few minor environmental concerns.

LAURIE CRUTCHER, RPR
406-442-8262
Response 139 to 140: Comments noted.

There are inconveniences to affected farms and ranches, but they are compensated to a certain extent by -- (inaudible) -- and payments from MURL, as well as by tax reductions on the affected land.

Comment 140: As a nation, our energy demands are ever increasing, and our options for production unlimited. The development of clean wind power and the lines to transport it make sense for this area and for the nation. Please support the construction of the MURL transmission line. The environmental impacts are minor, and the economic benefits are great. Thank you for your consideration.

MR. COOM: This goes for anyone. If you're reading something that you're already prepared in addition to speaking, if you'd like to leave it with us, so that we make sure that we get every one of your words, that would be great also.

Lorette Carter.

MS. CARTER: Hello. My name is Lorette Carter, and I am the Economic Development Director for the City of Shelby. But I'm not here tonight as a city official, I'm here as a parent.

We are very fortunate here in Montana to
Response 141 to 143: Comments noted.

have exceptional colleges and universities for our
canada to receive a good post secondary
education. I have three sons, one who has
graduated, and two that are presently attending
Montana Tech. These boys are receiving an
incredible education, yet we are educating them to
leave the state.

In 2006, statistical information for
Montana Tech School of Mines and Engineering
graduates, 76 percent went to work out of state.
My son is an occupational safety and health
engineer in Paramus, New Jersey; and my second son
is now pursuing a second degree in the hopes to
remain in Montana after graduation.

Projects such as the Montana-Alberta
Transmission Line have the potential to create
opportunities and employment for all our children.
The project may have limited permanent employment
opportunity, but has tremendous potential to open
the doors to other clean viable industry in our
state. Projects of this magnitude require
numerous secondary services in project related
employment. It will generate tremendous tax
reductions and wealth within our communities that
may translate into new industry and new job

LAURIE CRUTCHER, RPR
406-442-8262
Response 144: Comments noted.

Response 145: Your comment regarding long-span monopoles is noted. Details of the types of poles proposed are in Figure 2.3-5.

Response 146: In Canada, monopoles are being used only in areas with center pivot irrigation, not along the entire line.
Response 147: Transmission lines do last a long time. Some of the oldest transmission lines in the state, 100kV lines from Great Falls and the powerhouse on Ennis Lake to Butte, are 100 years old this year. Monopoles are proposed for all diagonally crossed cropland and CRP land. See Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 148: A new analysis comparing the costs of farming around the transmission line under Alternative 2 to the costs of constructing the line to minimize farmer impacts (Alternative 4) has been added to the EIS. See Section 3.13.3.2. Different laws govern siting on each side of the border.

Response 149: In their decision documents, the agencies will indicate the alternative selected and the reasons for the selection.

Response 150: See the discussion of Tax Issues and Economic Issues in the Consolidated Responses section. The costs and benefits of the project will be weighed in the agencies’ decisions.

through farming lands. Is this true? 27

Although the initial costs might be
somewhat higher, these lines are built to last a
long time. We’ve been farming around existing
lines for over 70 years. Less land is removed
from production, and it’s much easier to maneuver
around a single pole than a double pole design.

Very serious consideration should be
given to weigh the difference in short term
up-front costs against the long term costs to the
farmer who will be living with these decisions for
generations. What justification could be used to
treat farmers differently on each side of the
border?

How will the alternate routes of MATL be
evaluated? Will there be a public open process?
How will the weighting of various factors be
decided? Who decides the weighting factors? Who
decides between the alternatives?

House Bill 3 of the May 2007 special
session permanently reduced property tax breaks
from 12 percent to 3 percent for new investments
in transmission lines that are constructed after
June 2007. For Alternative 4, this change has
reduced the total property tax income for the

Laurie Crutcher, RPR
406-442-8262
Response 151: MATL would compensate landowners for the acquisition of its easement in a manner that is consistent with normal industry practice in Montana and other North American locations. A unique component of the compensation structure that has not been used before in Montana is an annual payment. The differences in computation of payments to landowners between the MATL line and wind farms is that for wind farms the landowner is paid a royalty based on the amount of power generated while for MATL the proposal is to pay the landowner for costs incurred.

In a letter dated June 19, 2008, MATL proposed an alternative dispute resolution process that has a bearing on the issue of compensation. It is more fully described in the EIS, Section 2.3.

Response 152: Order No. 890 is administered by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and establishes the requirements for Open Access Transmission Tariffs that are filed by public utilities. The issues of whether or not this order applies to MATL and whether MATL has complied with the provisions of this order are issues that are out of scope for an EIS.

Response 153: Soon after repairs to the line are completed, MATL would contact landowners and payment for damages would be made. Alternatively landowners could contact MATL and a MATL land agent would respond, inspect the damage, and pay for damages. Also see revisions to Section 2.3 in the EIS regarding MATL’s compensation package.
Response 154: See Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section. In addition, Section 2.3 has been changed in the EIS to provide information regarding MATL’s compensation and alternative dispute resolution process.

Response 155: See the discussion in Legal and Regulatory Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 156: DEQ’s administrative rules, ARM 17.20.1902(10), allow the department to hold a bond and monitor reclamation for up to 5 years. Also see the response to comment 49.

Response 157: Yes. All commitments MATL makes to the agencies would transfer to any new owner of the line. The commitments made to landowners may transfer depending on the arrangement made between MATL and the landowner.

Response 158 and 159: Yes, MATL has changed its proposal to reflect comments about minimum ground clearance in cultivated areas. See the discussion of Safety Issues in the Consolidated Responses section. MATL’s current proposal for ground clearance is described in Section 2.3. The certificate would specify that MATL must comply with the National Electrical Safety Code.
Response 160: See the discussion of Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section; Section 3.13; and Appendix N.

Response 161: See Section 3.13.3.2 for a description of how farmers would be compensated over the life of the project. See Section 2.3 for a description of MATL’s revised compensation package and alternative dispute resolution process.

Response 162: Section 3.13.3.2 has been updated to include farming costs as of early 2008.

Response 163: Because the proposed MATL line would not depend on additional transmission capacity south or west out of Great Falls, and there are no proposals before the agencies to increase such transmission capacity, the construction of additional transmission capacity south or west of Great Falls is not within the scope of this EIS. However, the potential impacts of some of the activities mentioned in the comment are considered in the cumulative impacts analysis in Section 4.
Response 164: One possible result of poorly coordinated and sized projects might include building two undersized lines rather than a single line large enough to handle anticipated generation projects.

Response 165: MATL would not be responsible for determining how power would be moved out of Great Falls unless it chooses to consider another business venture to address such a need. Under FERC regulations, generators submit interconnection requests to the operators of transmission systems and then the transmission operator addresses these requests. NorthWestern Energy operates transmission lines southeast, south, and southwest out of Great Falls. Independent, non-utility transmission service providers also hold open seasons to solicit customers for new transmission projects.

Response 166: MATL justifies building the line down to Great Falls in several different ways— not just based on additional tariffs. With agreed upon upgrades, MATL’s shippers would be able to move some power south out of Great Falls, especially on a non-firm basis (where moving power is allowed during those times when there is room on the line). As stated in Section 1.2.1, “The purpose for the proposed MATL transmission line is to connect the Montana electrical transmission grid with the Alberta electrical transmission grid (no direct connection currently exists), provide access to potential markets for new and existing power generation facilities in the vicinity of the proposed transmission line, and improve transmission access to markets seeking new energy resources.” Great Falls is the most feasible connection point economically and from an engineering perspective. See Section 2.8 for a
more detailed discussion on why terminating the line at Shelby would not be feasible.

The system south and west-bound from Great Falls is contractually congested in that parties have pre-existing rights on the lines, but these parties do not necessarily use their full rights. When these rights are not fully used, the capacity could be used by other shippers.

Response 167: The need for the line is outlined in Chapter 1. The purpose of the line is to provide a path to transmit power between Lethbridge and Great Falls. Power can flow in either direction on the line. Although the purpose of this line is stated to increase transfer capacity and allow for new energy development, the line could be used by utilities and other entities to make purchases and sales on the spot market (short-term non-firm transactions might occur on the spot market when the wind is not blowing or when a wind farm holding a firm contract with MATL is not fully exercising its rights). Such transactions would be limited by the amount of firm and non-firm power left over on the line after the firm contract obligations are met.

The Mid Columbia trading hub (Mid-C) is a commonly used location where electricity prices in the Pacific Northwest are compared. Electricity prices are higher in Alberta than in Mid-C about 75 percent of the time, so it is possible that some monetary plays could be made on the spot market as a result of this line. This 75 percent figure comes from a paper entitled “Montana Alberta Tie-Line: What are the Economic Benefits to Alberta?” by Aidan Hollis, Department of Economics, University of Calgary, ahollis@ucalgary.ca. This paper states that “when there is a price difference between two markets, there is generally an economic inefficiency. It means that there are buyers in the lower priced market who would be willing to sell into the higher priced market just below the prevailing higher price, and buyers in the higher-priced market who would be willing to buy at that price. If they were to undertake such a transaction, both parties would benefit. The same applies in electricity markets, and the benefits accrue to parties in both jurisdictions, regardless of which one has the higher price” (p. 6). The paper also states on page 7 that “given, as discussed above, the likely increase in prices in Alberta in the near future, it appears that there will continue to be ample scope for imports of Mid-C priced electricity.” Page 8 states that “on days when prices are higher in Alberta, we would expect imports into Alberta from Montana, if the MATL tie-line were available.” The reason for this is that importing electricity from Montana could make Alberta electricity prices lower on certain days as Alberta could avoid using some of its highest cost generation. This same gain from lower prices could happen in Montana when Alberta prices are lower than Montana prices. However, the amount of Montana-generated electricity that could flow up to Alberta is limited by the relatively small size of the line (300 MW) and would be a small portion compared to the amount of electricity Montana generates each year (about 3,000 MW) and exports each year (over 1,000 MW). Much of the time, a large portion of MATL’s 300 MW would be used for firm commitments from generators rather than for trading opportunities. The paper also states that both Alberta and Montana could benefit from the MATL line since it would result in less of a chance of volatile spot market prices as well as less of a chance of electricity suppliers using their market share to increase prices. Also see the response to comment 166.
Response 168: The need for the line is outlined in Chapter 1. See the response to comments 166 and 167. The state has no legal control over where electricity produced in Montana goes. Also see Economic Issues in the Consolidated Response section.

Response 169: See the discussion in Legal and Regulatory Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 170: Currently there are 79 Presidential permits that have been granted for transmission lines that cross the U.S.-Canadian border.

Response 171: DOE has no information on the effect that international transmission lines have on local power prices. Local (retail) electricity rates are established and regulated at the state level.

Response 172: In the MFSA application, MATL documented a number of factors it considered in reaching the conclusion that it was not feasible to terminate its project at either the Glacier Electric substation near Cut Bank or the Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) substation near Shelby. These factors included:

(a) The addition of the WAPA tariff would almost double the total tariff paid by MATL shippers,

(b) The NorthWestern 115kV line from Cut Bank to Great Falls has a maximum capacity of 130 MW under the best conditions and already carries electricity for other customers,
The WAPA 230kV line from Shelby to Conrad and from Conrad to Great Falls has a capacity of 240 MW under the best conditions. Further, all of the WAPA lines in the region have firm commitments for available capacity.

Response 173: The DEQ Director will consider information in MATL’s application and the EIS, including public comment and agency responses, when making the findings required in 75-20-301, MCA, before the project could move forward. Section 3.18 describes the information considered by DEQ to approve a transmission line facility. The findings will be made in the record of decision.

Response 174a: See the discussion of eminent domain in Legal and Regulatory Issues of the Consolidated Responses. While the Major Facility Siting Act provides the procedure for obtaining approval to construct a major facility, including electric transmission lines, it does not provide a procedure for acquiring property on which to construct the facility. The property must be obtained through negotiations between a project sponsor and a landowner or if negotiations are not successful, a condemnation proceeding under the laws of eminent domain may be used.

Before private property can be taken, Section 70-30-111, MCA, requires the condemnor to demonstrate that the public interest requires the taking based on the following findings:

1. the use to which the property is to be applied is a use authorized by law;

2. the taking is necessary to the use;

3. if already being used for a public use, that the public use for which the property is proposed to be used is a more necessary public use; and

4. an effort to obtain the property interest sought to be taken was made by submission of a written offer and the offer was rejected.

As indicated above, an electric transmission line is a use for which condemnation is authorized by law. In regard to whether the taking is necessary, Montana courts have determined that the necessity need not be absolute or indispensable. Rather, a taking is necessary if it “is reasonable, requisite, and proper for the accomplishment of the end in view, under the particular circumstances of the case.” As indicated in Section 3.17, DEQ has determined the necessity of the electric transmission line proposed by MATL.

As indicated in the handbook entitled Eminent Domain in Montana published by the Legislative Environmental Policy Office in May of 2001, “[a] public use does not have to be a project that directly benefits the entire public or even the landowner whose property is taken through eminent domain. It may be a project that benefits Montana citizens as a whole through greater economic development or increased access to communications.” As stated by the
Montana Supreme Court in Ellinghouse v. Taylor (1897), 19 Mont. 462, 48 P. 757, “Persons have been allowed the right of eminent domain on the theory of public use, in the construction of dams for the operation of grist and saw mills, in the reclamation of swamp lands, and in other similar instances that might be enumerated where the public had no direct interest in these operations, whose main end was mere private gain, and where the benefit to the people at large could result indirectly and incidentally only from the increase of wealth and development of natural resources.

Response 174b: With agreed upon upgrades to the NorthWestern system, MATL's customers will be able to move some power south out of Great Falls, especially on a non-firm basis (where moving power is allowed during those times when there is room on the line).

Response 175: The MATL line is not proposed to connect to the Cut Bank substation. MATL is proposing to build a new substation. See Section 2.3.
Response 176: See the discussion of Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 177: See the discussion in Safety Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 178: A farmer may be liable if damage was caused by an intentional act of the farmer or by the farmer’s negligence in farming around the pole. The easement agreement between MATL and the landowner would have terms that would absolve the landowner of all liability for accidental damage to MATL’s facilities. A nick, scratch or dent caused by the farmer would be de minimis damage and not justify replacement of the pole.

Response 179: It depends where and how this force is applied. The transmission structures are designed to meet NESC Medium loading, NESC 50-year return period wind loading (144 km/hr), 50mm radial wet snow with 70 km/hr wind, rime (in-cloud) ice (40mm radial ice) loading, broken OPGW loading as well as construction loads. These are very strong structures that would require a lot of force to bring them down.

Response 180: See response to comment 178.

Response 181: See the discussion of Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section. MATL may be responsible for damages resulting from a fire if the fire was caused by MATL’s negligence in designing, constructing, operating or maintaining the transmission line.
Response 182: The agencies are considering the possibility of MATL building double circuit structures for about 4.2 miles north of the Great Falls switchyard. Lines for one circuit would be constructed now and used by MATL, and space on the structures would be available for a second circuit. The future circuit could be used by a firm other than MATL.

Response 183: See the discussion of Line Capacity Issues in the Consolidated Responses.

Response 184: The proposed line would be large enough for MATL’s current customers. If all the possible wind and other generation that might be built in the area were actually constructed, the proposed line would not be large enough. See the discussion of Line Capacity Issues in the Consolidated Responses.

Response 185: See the discussion of Line Capacity Issues in the Consolidated Responses.

Response 186: Transmission of up to 400 MW in each direction would not require any changes in the proposed easements.

Response 187: Compensation to landowners would be based on the physical size of the transmission line, not on the amount of electricity transmitted on the line. Similarly, compensation to landowners for construction of a highway is based on the acreage required for the highway, not on the traffic volume.
Response 188: MATL was not a party to the Northwest Wind Integration Plan. MATL is a party to the Montana Wind Working Group and has contributed funding towards wind modeling as directed by the working group. MATL decided to participate in the Montana Wind Working Group because that group is focused on Montana whereas the Northwest Wind Integrated Plan is focused on the Pacific Northwest.

Response 189: MATL’s transmission service request (TSR) contracts accommodate the current schedule for construction of the transmission line either explicitly or in side agreements. The MATL line would provide a conduit for power transmission between two points. It is the responsibility of the contracting shipper to make the necessary commercial arrangements and ensure the capacity exists to get power to the MATL line and to ship it from the line terminus to the intended customer.

Response 190: The bids submitted by prospective shippers did not include expiration dates. Bids were either accepted or rejected at the conclusion of the capacity auction process. Contracts were executed with the successful bidders (Williams 2008c)

Response 191: See response to comment 189.
Response 192: MATL has updated its proposal regarding compensation. It now includes an alternative dispute resolution process. See Section 2.3.

Response 193: No comprehensive transmission planning process exists in Montana. MATL complied with the FERC process. Individual processes include but are not limited to: the Northern Tier Transmission Group, Integrated Resource Plans required of NorthWestern Energy and Montana Dakota Utilities, and other independent multi-state efforts such as the Rocky Mountain Area Transmission Study. Montana law does not require a comprehensive plan for the grid. Projects, both generators and transmission lines, are built in response to growing demands. These patterns of growth vary geographically and over time. Transmission planners within and between these geographic areas propose new projects in response to these changing demands as needed. Thus, it is difficult to say what the transmission grid will look like in the future.
Response 194: The effect on property values from the MATL line is discussed in the EIS, Section 3.13.3.2. The effects are expected to be minimal based on available studies of actual property values near transmission lines.

Response 195: What landowners and MATL choose to do with their property tax incentive is beyond the scope of the EIS. The DEQ will balance costs and benefits of all parties in its decision.

Laurie Crutcher, NPR
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Response 196: The farming cost estimates have been revised to reflect recent costs of inputs and commodity prices. See Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section and revisions to Section 3.13 and Appendix N.

Response 197: MATL has revised its proposal to use a 105-foot easement.

Response 198: As discussed in Chapter 2 of the EIS, much of the construction equipment would move along the right-of-way as construction proceeds because so much of the project area consists of relatively level ground. Existing roads would be used to the extent practicable and in a few areas, such as on the south side valley wall of the Teton River, MATL proposes to construct a total of about 3.5 miles of new roads on Alternative 2 since the moderately steep side hill will not allow safe movement of construction vehicles. Alternative 3 would require about 3.8 miles of new roads and Alternative 4 about 7.6 miles of new roads.

MATL might also have to purchase some off-right-of-way access to avoid sensitive features. Typically equipment can move on side slopes up to about 5 to 7 percent. On very steep slopes such as the cliff on the north side of the Marias River and at the Teton River crossing there would be no through access. In these areas access to structures would be from each direction with a skip in the middle.

Temporary and permanent roads or trails might need to be used to allow for construction and maintenance of the transmission line. The location of these features can only be precisely determined after the centerline is selected and the siting of individual structures has been determined through detailed design including consultation with landowners to minimize impacts. Wherever temporary or permanent roads are constructed, the landowner would be fully compensated on the basis of loss of use, general disturbance, and adverse effect.
Response 199: See the discussion of Soils Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 200: Comment noted. MATL would have to obtain easements for use of off right-of-way field roads.

Response 201 and 202: MATL has changed its proposal regarding minimum ground clearance. For more information, see the discussion of Safety Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 203 and 204: Comments noted. MATL has updated its proposal regarding compensation. It now includes an alternative dispute resolution process. See the EIS, Sections 2.3 and 3.13.3.2.

Response 205: Comment noted. Economic impacts and benefits of the proposed transmission line and potential wind farms are discussed in the EIS, Sections 3.13 and 4.14. Also see the discussions of Economic Issues and Socioeconomic Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

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For all of you who are here to support the economic value associated with building this line, please understand that as a land owner, I can join with you in applauding economic progress in our state. You should know that MATL continues to propose paying the farmer a one time payment, once in my life, once in my farm's history, $500 per structure. That is the easement payment, $500 once. Then they're willing to pay the farmer $59.08 per structure on an annual basis to help us farm around the poles. The cost of going around the poles is at least $250. $59.08 doesn't cut it. This offer is just completely unacceptable.

MATL to present landowners with a realistic offer for the use of our land. Thank you.

MR. COMO: John Shevlin.

MR. SHEVLIN: John Shevlin,

S-W-E-V-L-I-N. I come before you tonight as the Mayor of Conrad, Montana, also a business man, owner in Conrad. I would like to thank you for the opportunity of speaking tonight.

As Mayor of Conrad, I strongly support

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the Montana-Alberta Transmission Line. The economic benefits to our community would be very substantial. Benefits from the line and resulting wind farms would go a long way in easing the tax burden on our county and city levels. An example would be the large infusion of tax money from the Judith Gap wind farm.

- **Comment 206**: Due to unemployment, permanent workers with families and children would relocate to our area. This would greatly help our school system.
- **Comment 207**: Currently the school system is looking at remodeling the local high school and elementary school. The additional tax money would ease the burden on existing taxpayers.
- **Comment 208**: In this area, we do not get a lot of opportunities for economic development. When the projects like the MATL line and wind farms come along, they should be embraced and supported by the whole community.
- **Comment 209**: I would like to take this opportunity to encourage both the land owners and MATL to come to some kind of a conclusion to make this work for everybody involved, and the DEQ and the DOE to give favorable status to this project. Thank you very much.

LAURIE CRUTCHER, RPR
406-442-8262
Response 209: Comment noted.

Response 210: The agencies are working as rapidly as possible under the circumstances.

Response 211: Comments noted.
Response 212 to 214: Comments noted.

for Wind Power in America, which is the Department
of Energy's program to promote wind in this
country, I know how important it is for these
projects to go forward.

We have in this country 17,000 megawatts
of wind installed. Last year 5,000 megawatts were
installed, making us the leading country in the
world for installing in one year wind energy. We
have only have 140 megawatts of wind in Montana.
And so I have seen, over the years being involved
in this program, other states with far less wind
resource than Montana expand its wind portfolio
much faster, and the reason is transmission.

I've been involved in the Rocky Mountain
Area Transmission Study, and I've been involved in
the government, the Western Government
Association Clean Energy Advisory Committee. In
both of those instances, I have learned how
important it is that transmission be sited so that
we can get these valuable wind resources to
market.

We have many compelling reasons in the
west to have wind energy, the environmental
reasons of saving water, of having no carbon
footprint, of having an economic benefit to

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Response 215: Comment noted.

communities. All of these things are important. And I'm afraid that drawn out processes are just going to keep Montana further and further behind in the amount of wind that we are contributing to the nation's energy portfolio. So I appreciate the work that you're doing, and I would just like to have the work done faster.

MR. COMO: Thank you, LeAnne Kavanagh.

LeAnne Kavanagh: Good evening. My name is LeAnne Kavanagh. I am the President of the Cut Bank Area Chamber of Commerce. My husband and I own newspapers in Cut Bank, Shelby, Browning, and Valier. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Montana-Alberta Tie Transmission Line.

The Cut Bank Area Chamber of Commerce would like to go on record once again offering its full support for the electric transmission line proposed by Montana-Alberta Tie, Limited. Our organization is approximately 140 members strong, and is dedicated to the promotion of the Cut Bank area. We firmly believe construction of this line will have a positive and lasting effect on not only our community, but the Golden Triangle area.

We applaud the steps taken by MATL.

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Response 216 to 218: Comments noted.

Response 219: See the discussion of Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section and information about MATL’s revised compensation package in the EIS, Sections 2.3 and 3.13.3.2.

Response 220: Construction of the NaturEner Glacier Wind Project (referred to in the Draft EIS as the McCormick Ranch project) is underway. However, only portions of the former project are being constructed. The agencies understand the project would initially use capacity of existing transmission lines. The agencies understand that additional transmission capacity may be necessary to fully complete the project. NaturEner still holds agreements with MATL for 300 MW of capacity to the north and may build additional wind farms or may market this 300 MW capacity.
Response 221 and 222: Comments noted. Also see the discussion of Socioeconomic Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 223: Comment noted.

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Comment 221: The development of wind power is a clean and green renewable energy source that will greatly enhance our stagnant tax base, potentially reducing property taxes for all our residents, whether they be farmers, ranchers, small business owners, or individuals struggling to make ends meet on a fixed income.

Comment 222: Due to the nature of this project, we are well aware the number of permanent jobs created will be limited, but any increase in job opportunities trickle down into our communities by way of increased school enrollment and additional consumer buying power.

Comment 223: Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for this project. We look forward to hearing very soon that a Presidential Permit has been issued for the project, and we urge the Montana DEQ and BLM to issue the needed certificates of compliance and right-of-ways.

MR. COMO: Thank you very much. By the way, what my colleague -- is not the people signing, so the poor penmanship is not the result of the people signing in, so I'm going to butcher this name, too. So it's Sandra B-R-O-S-B-D-E-R.

MS. BROESDER: Hi. My name is Randy.

LAURIE CRUTCHER, RPR
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Response 224: Comment noted.

Brewer. I'm a Fonda County Commissioner. I'm also an ag producer.

I have maintained from the first time I heard of this proposed package: This is a line that needs to be built; it's a line that needs to be built right. I think at this point I would probably echo the same issues, the economic potential, growth in our tax base, that my fellow commissioners have urged. I wasn't really planning on speaking tonight. I will have comments for you in Conrad. Thank you.

MR. COMO: Thank you very much.

Lewellen Jones.

MR. JONES: Good evening. My name is Lew Jones. I am a representative from House District 27, which is Cut Bank, Conrad, and Shelby.

I'm also a land owner. My family has been involved in agriculture since the 1890s. We have several thousand acres, and we have our share of power poles, and this is nothing new to us. Sometimes we farm in oil fields, and we have lots of power poles.

But that being said, I was also the person who carried the energy bill last session,

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and I do want to try to comment on a few items that haven't been touched tonight.

Discussion came along is the energy bill did drop the rate of the lines, new power lines, after June of 2007, from 12 to 3 percent. That leaves it about twice the rate of the surrounding states. 100 percent of zero was zero. And so our concern there was that we weren't having any lines built. In fact, the rate we dropped it to is currently the same rate that all of the co-ops in the state of Montana pay, and given that the co-ops represent about 50 percent of the lines in the state, it is not an unusual rate.

I also was a party to the -- (inaudible) -- where we made the quarter mile strip tax free property under the lines, and to be honest, our intent was in that case to recognize that the value, or the decrease in the value of the property associated with the lines upon that land.

Other items that haven't been touched on. Most folks touched on a lot of things I was going to say, and so I don't feel it necessary to repeat myself.

The greatest respect for the land owners -- obviously this is an ag state -- is the long

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Response 228: Comment noted.

Response 229: MATL’s proposed alternative would use H-frame structures on about 38.4 miles of cropland or CRP crossed parallel or perpendicular to the cropping pattern. See the discussion of Line Issues in the Consolidated Responses section and Sections 2.3 and 3.13.3.2 for information regarding MATL’s revised compensation package.

Response 230 and 231: MATL would pay about $700,000 per year in property taxes in Montana under the 3 percent tax rate.

Response 232: Projected employment from the MATL line is in Section 3.13.3.
Response 233: Comment noted.

Response 234: DEQ is aware of early planning efforts to add another 500MW or more of transmission capacity west out of Montana. Some of this capacity may come from improvements to existing lines rather than construction of new lines. No applications for new transmission lines to the Pacific Northwest have been received to date. NorthWestern Energy submitted an application for a new 500 kV line from the Townsend area south into south central Idaho.

The Western Governors Association is also beginning a new transmission planning effort to integrate new generation from renewable resources into the western grid.

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Response 235 to 238: Your comments regarding exports are noted, and the agencies recognize that transmission lines have been proposed infrequently.

1. Montana is breaking speed records with the creation of power lines. We tend to do stuff as slow as any other state out there.

   Comment 235: You know, exports always come up. I'm in the cattle business, the sheep business, the grain business. And we export grain on trucks, on trains. We -- (inaudible) -- to foreign markets.

2. Our Senators and Representatives, I read about it in Japan, I hear about -- (inaudible) -- actually there's a group in China, now that I think about it -- looking at it and surpassing our markets.

3. We do the same with cattle. We see export as a good thing.

4. Comment 236: Here there is an opportunity to be on line, to export clean, renewable energy, to help us become less dependent, to provide in part the potential and the structure, the tax paying structure in employment -- (inaudible) -- in Montana. I have a tough time wrapping my mind around that -- (inaudible) -- and I would say that's a good thing.

5. Comment 237: Yes, we do need to work towards a win-win, the long time stewards of the land, the long time taxpayers, those of us that have been in ag a long time. We don't need another negative to

   Comment 238: LAURIE CRUTCHER, RPR
   406-442-8262
Response 239 and 240: Comments noted.

Response 241: Comment noted.
But the one thing that we didn't have was electricity. And the power line went through, but until the electric cooperatives came through in 1952, we had no power.

As we look at this today, and see the greater that the population gets and everything else, it is only prevalent that we be on the winning end of producing this power for other people, and if exporting is part of it, so be it.

I would like to see the agricultural people be taken care of in the proper manner. I also feel as a local businessman that that cut in our tax structure by the additional taxes that will come from this will be a God send.

And as I listened to people like the gentleman from Dutton, as you go down their street, you can see what happens when that is gone and those buildings close. So to keep Montana the way that it should be, we support it in every manner. Thank you.

MR. COMO: Thank you, Mr. McCauley. We have a Jeff, the first initial of his last name is "K," and he's either from Laurel, Montana, or Laurel, Maryland. That's not even close. Does anybody have any idea? Which side are we talking

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Response 246: Comment noted.

about? Jeff K. from Laurel someplace.
The last name looks like K-N -- I'm
sorry.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Is there anybody here
this evening from Laurel who wishes to speak? No?
If not, we'll come back to this name at the end,
and we'll try to decipher it as we listen to
another speaker.

MR. COMO: We have only three more names
that are just signed up here. We have this room
at least until 9:00, so after these other three
people are given an opportunity, we'll take a five
or ten minute break or something like that, and we
can meet, chat, or whatever, and we can get back
on the record. Oh, I'm sorry. How about Conrad?
Jeff from Conrad? Does anybody from Conrad want
to speak?

MR. KRONEBUSH: My name is Ted
Kronebush, K-R-O-N-E-B-U-S-H.

MR. COMO: Okay. That works.

MR. KRONEBUSH: I'm a private electrical
contractor. I live in the Conrad area. Many of
the people that are here from the agricultural
side are long time customers of mine. It seems to
me that the problems that they need solved are

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Response 247 and 248: Comments noted.

Response 249 and 250: Comments noted.

Response 251: Comment noted. See the EIS, Sections 2.3 and 3.13 for a discussion of MATL’s proposed compensation package and alternative dispute resolution process.
Response 252 and 253: Comments noted.

Response 254: Comment noted.

farmers. It doesn't matter to farmers. It's the money, it's what everybody is talking about. But I can tell you the farmer is going to spend it all anyway, so it doesn't matter, because that's what farmers do, and they don't keep any for themselves. I would think there is way more benefits than there are -- I don't like farming around poles, but the technology is there.

And I just thought of something when I listened to everybody. There could be a whole business start, and it would be, "I'll farm your power lines," there would be somebody that would do it for you. So don't think it's impossible to get that done. Thank you.

MR. COMO: Thank you. Jerry Black.

MR. BLACK: For the record, my name is Jerry Black. I'm a member of the State Legislature representing Senate District 14. That includes Toole, Pondera, Glacier, Liberty, and Chouteau Counties. First I would like to thank the DEQ and the Department of Energy for the excellent job that you've done in preparing the preliminary Environmental Impact Study. I thought it was very well done, and certainly addresses and answers a lot of the issues.
To say that a majority of my constituents within the counties that I represent are in favor of the MATL power line is certainly a huge under statement. They enthusiastically for the most part support the MATL line. We're all concerned and want the farmers and landowners to be treated fairly and with respect.

The MATL line is the key to the development of a $1 billion wind energy project. It will be a huge economic benefit for north central Montana and the entire state. Our area, north central Montana, has suffered through extreme drought, declining enrollments in the schools, loss of tax base, and this would be one of the things that would help turn it around, and would certainly be beneficial. Sixty employees may not sound like a lot in a larger view, but it is a huge amount for our area, and the ripple effects are tremendous.

Wind is our natural resource in northern Montana, and as you noted, we have plenty of it, both outside and inside. Without transmission to move electric power, green and clean wind energy cannot be developed.

I believe that MATL, after a rather

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Response 259: See the discussion of Line Issues in the Consolidated Responses section and the response to comment 229.

Responses 260 to 262: See Socioeconomic Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Montana, and even more importantly, the badly needed local tax dollars for our schools, fire departments, law enforcement, county roads, parks, and other services that have suffered due to that declining population and loss of tax base.

Comment 264: It should be noted that MATL is the merchant's line, and in that a capital investment and risk is made by the banks and private investors rather than by local taxpayers in Montana and Alberta.

Comment 264: It is imperative that we develop all of our country's green energy resources for our generation and, of course, for future generations to come. There is already a great concern about brownouts throughout various parts of the United States. By working cooperatively with all stakeholders, including the landowners, state agencies such as DEQ, our county governments, and others, we can move forward without costly delays that could very well jeopardize the entire project.

Comment 265: We certainly urge your approval of the MATL line application that will benefit Montana and Alberta consumers and suppliers. It's much like connecting power cables to a huge battery.

LAURIE CRUTCHER, RPR 406-442-8262
that moves the economic engine of development.

We believe that in your decisions, there must be good balance in your decisions that are fair to all parties, that makes sense economically, and addresses the most sensitive issues in a reasonable and proper manner.

I'll be submitting a written statement of my remarks, along with the support of other state senators and state representatives in Montana, who strongly supported the clean and green energy bill, and support the MATE line in Montana. We feel it's absolutely essential for the development of clean energy.

I would like to thank you once again for providing this time for these remarks. I think the input has been extremely good, and I know you'll weigh those with good judgment and good balance. Thank you very much.

MR. OOMO: Thank you, Mr. Black. Doug Ray.

MR. RAY: My name is Doug Ray, and I'm here to represent Glacier Electric Board of Directors and management. Glacier Electric Cooperative, Incorporated would like to offer its unequivocal support to the Montana-Alberta Tie.
Response 270 to 274: Comments noted.

Line. In our opinion, it is one of the most promising and beneficial projects, not only for the local area, but for the state of Montana, that we have seen in many years.

Construction of the line and the associated wind generation facility will have a positive impact in our area in many ways. As a utility, we’re offered an opportunity to interconnect, if the necessity arises, to utilize the capacity of the transmission line. It will also provide an opportunity for us to participate in the maintenance of the system in the future.

Socially, it will create jobs both during the construction phases and after completion and maintenance and operation stages. The activity associated with construction itself will create additional businesses for local merchants and suppliers.

Economically, it will help our country, which has been suffering from a severe economic recession for many years, by improving the tax base, which will associate with all local revenues. Last but most significantly, it will benefit the entire state of Montana by providing a desperately needed transmission path to power.

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406-442-8262
Response 275: Comment noted.

We congratulate the Montana-Alberta Tie Line group on their innovative and progressive approach, and wish them success for construction and operation of the transmission line.

Sincerely, Jason R. Braunich [phonetic], general manager.

MR. COMO: Thank you. We’ve gone through our list of people that have already signed up. We’ll take about a ten minute break, and then we’ll reconvene, and give us a chance to meet some of you, and some of you might have some other thoughts that you want to throw on the record. So we’ll just take a pause in the proceedings for awhile.

(Recess taken)

MR. COMO: If you’ll take your seats, and we’ll get going just as soon as you can do that. We understand that some of you have some transportation that’s desperately wanting to leave. We don’t want that to happen. The next gentleman that’s signed up to speak is Tom Shock.

LAVRINE CRUTCHER, RPR
406-442-8262
Response 276 to 278: Comments noted.

1  MR. SHOCK: I'm Tom Shock of Cut Bank.
2  I'm a city council person. And I'm a person who
3  has studied this power requirement thing that we
4  have in this country for quite some time. I
5  believe that the population of our country is
6  growing bigger every day, and for whatever reason,
7  we're doing all sorts of things to reduce our
8  energy input, but our energy output requirements
9  continue to increase. And I personally am in
10  favor of nuclear power plants, but once you say
11  that word in one sentence, then everybody thinks
12  they're going to turn green and glow in the dark.
13  And so my family is mostly back east.
14  They talk about having clean water, clean fuel,
15  and clean energy. The other day on television --
16  which requires energy to view -- I looked at a map
17  of the wind areas in the United States.
18  Now, it turns out that from the northern
19  tip of the Rocky Mountains at the border of
20  Canada, to the southeast corner of the state of
21  Montana, and also to include North Dakota and
22  South Dakota, is one of the highest velocity wind
23  energy, the most constant velocity wind energy
24  areas in the United States. So I feel like the
25  wind farms that we have today are just the
Response 279: Comment noted. See the discussion of MATL’s revised compensation package in the EIS, Section 2.3, Rights-of-Way.

Response 280: In June 2008, after discussions between DEQ and MATL, MATL proposed an alternative dispute resolution package, as described in the EIS, Section 2.3, Rights-of-Way.

Response 281: Comment noted.

beginning of mega wind farms. We're probably going to be coming to Montana to see the wind farms before this is all over with.

Listening to what I have heard today, I really believe that since we have not gotten this project finished yet, or started really, that we need to put some time and effort into tuning up the contracts with all of the individuals involved, putting together safeguards for things like increased energy consumption. For instance, this one gentleman from Dutton I believe was talking about farming around things that he felt would cost $250 a year to do, so if it gets down to where it cost $350, then they should be adequately compensated for that.

So we have need to have what I would call living documents, something that is reviewed by a commission of all of these people together or their representatives, so that we can continue to feed these people and allow them to have their operations at the proper placements for poles, and various things like that. And we need to do this correctly this time, because I believe we're going to have a lot more of these, and there is no sense in creating a mess for ourselves the very first
Response 282: Comments noted.

Response 283: MATL has proposed to use monopoles on all diagonal crossings of cultivated and CRP land. See the discussion of Line Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 284: DEQ typically approves constructing a line within 250 feet on either side of a reference center line. Certificate holders then negotiate with landowners on exact structure placement.

Response 285: Comment noted.

Response 286: Comments noted. See the discussion of MATL’s revised compensation package in the EIS, Section 2.3, Rights-of-Way.

Response 287: Comment noted.
Response 288: Comment noted.

Response 289 and 290: See the discussion of Safety Issues in the Consolidated Responses section and the EIS, Section 2.3, and Table 2.3-1.

land, the cost of the transmission line would be
minuscule.

Regarding safety. I know there was a
little bit touched on this. Our farm equipment is
not getting any smaller, and in time will probably
continue to increase in height, width, weight, and
etc.

You read about the loss of birds, but
what about the increased risk of death or serious
injury for the humans that are driving this large
farm equipment? Would you like to send your
family members, younger nieces and nephews, into
potential harms way, especially at harvest time,
driving -- (inaudible) -- with lift augers or high
-- (inaudible) -- grain augers themselves. There
was an incident not too long ago just north of
Great Falls where a young man pulling a grain
auger got close enough to a power line, the
electricity arced, and this young man was
seriously injured.

Again, this is why it is absolutely
necessary to utilize the higher power pole
lines of the monopole design. We utilize aerial
spray. Have you taken into consideration the
increased risk to those -- (inaudible) -- I have

Laurie Crutcher, RPR
406-442-8262
Response 291: Your comment is noted.

Response 292: Comments noted.

Response 293: Comment noted.

MR. COMO: Thank you very much.

MR. McFARLAND: My name is John McFarland. I'm from Conrad. I was born and raised on a farm and ranch. I am a friend of agriculture for sure. I'm currently a small business owner in Conrad, past president of the Conrad Chamber of Commerce, and a board member on the Pondera Regional Port Authority.

Having said all of that, it is imperative that we move forward with the project. I am very much in support. But we also need to turn our attention to our friends in agriculture, make sure that MTXL is willing to shoulder the
Response 294: Comments noted.

Response 295 to 297: Your comments are noted.

Response 298: Comments noted. See the discussion of MATL’s revised compensation package in the EIS, Section 2.3, Rights-of-Way.
Response 299: Comment noted. See Legal and Regulatory Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 300 to 302: Thank you for your comments and the comments in the letter from Vanessa Buckland.

Response 303: Comment noted.

Response 300

Response 302
Response 304 and 305: Comments noted.

Response 306 to 308: Comments noted. See the discussion of Farming Issues and Line Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

privately, and I am part of the Conrad Area 70 Chamber of Commerce, among all of the other things stated, we are in support of MAFL. Thank you.

MR. COMO: Thank you.

MR. LEE: Good evening. My name is Robert Lee, and I'm a banker/lender, and very sympathetic to the issues of the power lines not being placed correctly. I circled them in my youth. And that being said, I am very much in favor of this proposal moving forward for the economic benefits that have been talked about before and the tax base situation. Thank you.

MR. COMO: Thank you.

MR. HARBUSH: I'm Ralph Harbush from the Conrad area. I farm in that area. I support the line because of the possible economic benefits to all of the communities in our area. We have the real possibility of a couple wind farms in our area, and that would be non-existent without a power line close by. I support the line if it is a safe line, and it addresses the property lines and single pole construction. So I would urge you to admit this facility if you address the concerns of those farmers that were presented to you tonight. Thank you.

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Response 309: See the discussion of Wind Farm Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 310: See the discussions of Line Issues and Wind Farm Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 311: See the discussion of Wind Farm Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 312: See the discussion of Wind Farm Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 313: Comment noted.
Response 314 and 315: Comments noted. MATL has updated the compensation package and proposed an alternative dispute resolution process. These are described in Sections 2.3 and 3.13.3.2 in the EIS. Your comment regarding negotiation is noted.

Response 316 and 317: See the discussion of Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
The following responses are to comments received at the public hearing in Cut Bank.

Response 318: Comment noted.

in two weeks late, are we going to throw it away?
Of course not. If you send it in a month late,
yes, we'll probably still be able to -- if you
hand it in like three months late when we've got
the final document on the press, we're probably
not going to be able to do anything about it. So
yes, it's not a hard and fast legal deadline, but
the closer you get your comments in to that, the
better chance we can guarantee that we'll be able
to consider them in our final document. Thanks.

Joe Christiaens.

MR. CHRISTIAENS: Thank you very much.
My name is Joe Christiaens. I'm a Pondera County
Commissioner, Conrad, Montana, and I represent the
western district.

We commented about a lot of things, and
one of the things that -- the schools bothers me
considerably. We lost a school here about three
or four years ago. We were able to get it back
open a little, not a lot; but we were able to get
it up some. We are going to lose the Brady School
next year because of the lack of students and a
lack of money. The money is just not there to
keep that little school open, and that creates a
real problem for us, too.

Laurie Crutcher, APR
406-442-8262
Response 319: Your comments regarding farming around poles are noted.

Response 320: Comment noted.

Response 321: Comment noted.

Again, I want to echo the thought that we are really sympathetic with the farm problem, too. We do want the people that they're working with, the line is working with, that they keep those people first in mind of everything that they're going to do, and work on.

So we've let a lot of things go by us in the past, and I think we need to make sure that we don't let something like this go past us again, because I think it's going to be of utmost importance to all of the counties in this area really. I think it will help them considerably with road maintenance, equipment, anything that is out there in the field. So again, thank you very much. I appreciate the time.

MR. COMO: Thank you. Roy Hollansworth.

MR. HOLLANSWORTH: I'm Roy Hollansworth. I was in Great Falls last night, and I've got to say the bus load of people coming down was great. Numbers do matter, and it was really quite supportive, because the meeting turned out well in Great Falls.

But I farm by Brady, and I have no power lines on my place, but I'm here to support it from

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406-442-8262
Response 322 and 324: Comments noted.

Response 325: Comment noted.

the economic development end. And we can't let
this go by this time. And we talked earlier. The
wind turbine thing may not be part of this, but
Freelander [phonetic] isn't building in Butte to
not use turbines. We have wind blow every day.
This line might not be used 100 percent for
turbines, but if this goes through smoothly, other
lines will develop in different places.

[Comment 322] Wind turbine energy is, I think, another
crop that we can harvest, and we need it, and we
want to really turn around the down slide in all
of our communities. Brady is one. Conrad, you
could shoot a rifle or race a car down the street
most days, and you wouldn't even know anybody is
around. And Conrad used to be a going concern.
[Comment 324] So I'm glad everybody is here, and I
hope everybody is behind it, and I want to show my
support. Thank you.

MR. COMO: Johnel Barcus.

[Comment 325] MS. BARCUS: Mr. Chairman. Browning
Area Chamber of Commerce, although it's roughly on
the Blackfeet Reservation, and we're not touched
by this, this affects our whole area. A lot of
the potential that we have in our area this close
to Glacier National Park are tourism; and on the
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reservation, unlike a lot of rural Montana, like
they mentioned with Brady and lack of enrollment,
we have a large growing population on the
reservation, which is pretty particular of all
Indian communities in the state. So the potential
is here, and this is only going to further it.
Along with that, economic development,
jobs, and our transmission system throughout this
area, throughout our state, is very -- It's going
down. It needs this upgrade, and we need this
line in.

And yes, you're right. That Butte
center, they're not going to be building them that
close in North Dakota, they're not building them
that close unless they have some projects moving
there. Thank you.

MR. COMO: Thank you. By the way, if
any of you have anything that you're reading from,
it would help us if you left it with us.

Dave Brownell.

MR. BRONNELL: I'm from Conrad, and
unlike Roy, we won't see any poles on our place.
I've farmed around oil wells, power poles; I've
worked for Custom Crop Care in Conrad running a
big ninety foot boom sprayer, and I've worked --

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Response 329: Comment noted. Also see Socioeconomic Impact Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 330: Taxes are discussed in Sections 3.13 and 4.14 of the EIS.

Response 331 and 332: See Socioeconomic Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

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I've gone around H-frames, and single poles, and yes, they are a bugger. But my concern is -- and I've had people I've talked to -- and I said, "You've got to look at the tax base for one thing it is going to bring to us." And they said, "But they'll raise the taxes anyway," and I said, "Property taxes, well maybe they won't raise them quite so much." I think a million dollar tax base to start with in Pondera County just off the line -- and that's not counting any wind turbine farms that go in Pondera, Teton. Tooole is already going to get one started, Tooole and Glacier. It's going to make a lot of difference.

You've got people that will be coming in working on those jobs. It's going to help the economy. You're going to have certain many guys that have got to be around to maintain them towers. And it's like it said, that turbine that's going to be built in Butte, they're going to go somewheres, and you know that they're already planning down there at Judith Gap to expand that wind system down there.

But I still think you've got to consider the tax base that's going to happen. We lost our

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Response 333 to 335: Thank you for bringing comments from people who were unable to attend the meeting.

missiles out of Pondera County, Teton, Glacier, and Toole, I think, and a little bit out of Lewis & Clark, but I think Pondera County was hit the hardest. My family farms both in Teton and Pondera County. Our biggest mostly is in Teton. But anything that can help our tax base, I think we should look at. Thank you.

MR. COMO: Thank you, Mike Koepke.

MR. KOEPE: I'm Mike Koepke of Cut Bank Development Corporation. I have four letters that were sent to me. These individuals were not able to show up. The first was from Triangle Land and Livestock Company.

"We are sorry we are not able to attend the hearing in person, but we are in the midst of calving. We would like to express our strong support for the Montana-Alberta Tie Line. It is imperative that this region develops infrastructure and business opportunities to bolster the economy and expand the tax base. It is increasingly difficult for the existing small business owners to bear the burden of business and rural property taxes.

"This is a tremendous opportunity to

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Response 336: Comment noted.

Response 337 and 338: Comments noted. Also see Socioeconomic Impact Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 339 and 340: Comments noted.

required. Sincerely, Valerie Vermohlen

(phonetic), President, Billman's Home Decor."

"Thank you for the opportunity to
comment on the draft Environmental Impact
Statement for the Montana-Alberta Tie Transmission
Line. Billman's, Incorporated would like to go on
record offering its full support for the electric
transmission line proposed by Montana-Alberta Tie,
Limited.

"Our business is located in Cut Bank,
and it is dedicated to the promotion and growth of
the Cut Bank area. We firmly believe construction
of this line will have a positive and lasting
effect on not only our community, but the Golden
Triangle area.

"Thank you for the opportunity to
express our support for this project. We look
forward to hearing very soon that a Presidential
Permit has been issued for the project, and we
urge that the Montana DEQ and BLM issue the needed
certificates of compliance and rights-of-way as
required. Sincerely, Rick Billman, President of
Billman's, Inc."

"Thanks for the opportunity to comment
on the draft Environmental Impact Statement for

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Response 341 and 342: Comments noted.

the Montana-Alberta Tie Transmission Line. We would like to offer our full support for the electric transmission line proposed by Montana-Alberta Tie, Limited. Our family owns several rental businesses in Cut Bank, making us dedicated to the continued growth of the area. We firmly believe construction of this line will have a positive and lasting effect on not only our community, but the entire Golden Triangle area.

"Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for this project. We look forward to hearing very soon that a Presidential Permit has been issued for the project, and we urge the Montana DEQ and BLM to issue the needed certificates of compliance and right-of-ways.

Sincerely Rick Billman, Jeff Billman, Valerie Vernohlen of R&G Rentals, J&C Rentals, B&V Rentals."

And I'd just like to reiterate for Cut Bank Billman Corporation that we're in support of the MATL line project. And as a producer, I farm in Glacier County and Toole County, and I would like to be on record as in support again for the MATL line.

And also as Chairman of the school

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Response 343: See Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 344: See Socioeconomic Issues and Tax Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 345: Comment noted.

board, I would like to show support for the MATL line, and the increase in tax base is going to help kids. Thank you.

MR. COMO: Bill McCauley.

Mr. McCauley: As a local business person, and City Council person, I wish to go on record as supporting the project, but would request that the farmers and ranchers that the line crosses are taken care of both financially and by future agreements in writing for all parties.

Comment 344: This project is a great boost to our overburdened tax base. I have heard the argument that we are allowing the line owners too much short term tax break, but I ask you: What is 100 percent of nothing? And that's what we have at this time.

Comment 346: Our local cooperatives, rural cooperatives, are the backbone of the electrical rural America, and that they feel that this is a good deal, which they have. Once again, on behalf of myself as a taxpayer for many phases, I fully support this project. Thank you.

MR. COMO: Thank you. Joni Stewart.

Ms. Stewart: My name is Joni Stewart.

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406-442-8262
and I'm the Mayor of the city of Cut Bank. And on behalf of the City Council, I'd like to read this letter.

"The purpose of this letter is to indicate the City of Cut Bank's full support for the electric transmission line proposed by MATL. We have reviewed the draft Environmental Impact Statement, and find this project to be of great benefit to Glacier County and the surrounding areas.

"We believe that MATL's response to the current concerns raised in previous public meetings have been thoroughly addressed, and commend MATL officials on their efforts to create a positive situation for all involved."

"Wind energy projects are one of the most viable answers to developing clean and green industry for northern Montana. On behalf of the City of Cut Bank, we urge DEQ and BLM to issue the required permits, and look forward to hearing that a Presidential Permit has been issued. Thanks."

MR. COMO: Roxy Gillespie, you had down maybe.

MS. GILLESPIE: I just wanted to say for my husband and I, Rimrock Cattle Company, that we

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support this, especially in view of the number of
drought years that our counties have had. Just
having a better tax base would improve everything
agriculturally and also in the urban communities.

MR. COMO: Thank you. We've got a whole
another page and a half of people who have given
us their names and their addresses, but haven't
checked that they want to speak. So if it's okay,
I'll just go down -- who are you?

MS. COOLIDGE: Jackie Coolidge. I'm
from Sunburst, Montana, and I'm on the council
there. But I came to speak from my heart.

Comment 350: We're trying to bring our community back
to life, and this is an opportunity that will help
our community get on its feet again. We have
several things that are happening there, and it's
exciting for us.

Comment 354: We have lost quite a bit of our
population, our schools, our student population,
and we would like to get that back again; and the
way to get that back again is to attract people to
our town and have them stay there. And if this
program comes in, there might be jobs. They would
boost our school system, which is very important.

Comment 353: Also we have a lot of small businesses,

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Response 350 to 352: See Socioeconomic Issues in the
Consolidated Responses section.
like everyone else in every other community; and
with the workers that come in, they support the
restaurants, they support the schools, they
support the person that sells groceries, whatever.
Every little bit helps the population and the tax
base, of course.

Another thing is: When this comes in,
our youth don't know anything about the wind, the
turbines, everything like that. This is another
career opportunity that they would have or be
exposed to. They may get into it. If it grows
here, maybe our children won't have to leave
Montana to make a living. Maybe they won't have
to leave this area. They might want to stay here
and raise their families here. We need to look at
that. We don't want to have to have our children
leaving, and having a dead Montana. Nothing left.
The land is great, but it's not worth anything if
we're not on it. So that's an important thing to
me.

And also we're in the construction
business. This is an opportunity for my husband's
and my company to maybe work here, instead of
having to travel 100 miles each direction from our
home. So this is really important to me, and

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406-442-8262
these are just comments from my heart. 21

MR. COMO: Thank you.

Comment 350  MR. IVESON: I'm Gary Iverson. I'm the
Mayor of the town of Sunburst, and I wanted to be
here tonight to show the support of the City
Council -- of course, Cathy is one of our council
members -- the people of the town of Sunburst, the
businesses of the town of Sunburst, the schools of
the town of Sunburst, and the whole area; the
support for business because we need industry, we
need business.

Comment 351  This wind farm that's going to come in
on top of this power line is a tremendous asset to
our community. And we need the tax base. And I
understand the problems with the power lines
crossing land, and those type of things; and those
need to be worked out, and they need to be worked
out fairly. But we do not want to miss an
opportunity like this to have this power line and
to have the things that will come along with it.
And that's all I've got.

MR. COMO: Thank you. Yes, sir.

MR. SITZMAN: My name is Tony Sitzman,
and I represent the Glacier County Regional Port
Authority as Chairman. I just want to read our

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mission statement.

"The mission of Regional Port Authority is to promote, stimulate, and advance the general welfare, commerce, and economic development, and prosperity of our region."

Our region is Glacier County, the majority of which lies on the Blackfeet Indian reservation. The MATL will have a tremendous impact on the region, and will assist in potential wind development projects. The MATL will pump needed revenue into the tax base of our region, and will assist in our struggling economy.

The Glacier County Regional Port Authority supports the Montana-Alberta Transmission Line, and views it as a means of reaching our vision, which is to have a quality rural community with living experiences, opportunities, and amenities of urban living.

We are encouraging you to support the line, which has little environmental impact, but large economic benefits. We appreciate the attention you have given our request.

And along with this, I just want to thank everybody for coming. We were at the meeting last night, and in comparison, this is a
that 30 day cooling off period -- that's what we
call it -- after we publish the final. So thanks.
I'm sorry.

MS. CAVETT (phonic): My name is Becky
Cavett, and I'm on the Board of Directors of the
Northern Rockies Medical Center here in Cut Bank.
And as a member of the Board of Directors, we
would like to pledge our full support to this
economic opportunity for our area, so that we can
of course increase our economic base, and provide
jobs, and also improve any services that we can
provide for the community and the area. Thank
you.

MR. COMO: Thank you. Anybody else?

Mr. Jones.

MR. JONES: I was wondering when the
politicians are going to get going.

I guess I would share that I'm pleased.
First of all, I want to thank MATH for addressing
a whole bunch of the issues that they had earlier,
including per pole payments, trying to work with
their landowners, squaring up their lines, and
trying to deal with a bunch of the land issues.

And there is a couple of things I always
like bringing up. I always hear employment is
Response 365: Comment noted. See the discussion of Avian and Wildlife Issues in the Consolidated Responses section and the revisions to Section 4.9 in the EIS.

limited. And I guess in our rural areas, given
that this system, when the windmills were fully
in, employ potentially 60 to 100 people. That's
not limited for us. That's probably a huge
employer in a rural area. And when you consider
the spin associated with it, the multiplier
effect, it's even more than that.

And I guess a couple other items. I was
asked today about the number of birds that would
be damaged in the area, and I guess I wanted point
out -- and as has been in your statements before
-- the new wind mills turn very, very slow, and
the number of bird deaths associated with it are
entirely limited. I've heard folks say that it's
less than when driving a car. So in fact I see
numbers of 1.5 to two, and that's a good thing.
And so I don't think for those folks concerned
with the sports issue, this is a problem.

Another comment that came up after last
night's hearing that I didn't mention -- and I'm
trying to skip stuff that we've mentioned before
so you don't have to go through it over and over
again.

MR. COMO: We normally do this. The
issue of bird strikes, that was come up from the

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Response 366: See the discussion of Avian and Wildlife Issues in the Consolidated Responses section and the response to comment 7.

Response 367: Comment noted. MATL does not propose to interconnect to the two substations south of Conrad and has indicated to DEQ that there will be one point of interconnection at the Marias substation. DEQ is aware of an anemometer on Sam George Hill but is not aware of a planned wind farm there that would connect to the MATL line. Numerous parties are considering wind farms in the area, and it is difficult for the agencies to ascertain which wind farm is proposing to connect to which transmission line. MATL’s customers include NaturEner, Wind Hunter, and Invenergy. NaturEner is beginning to construct initial phases of a wind farm southeast of Cut Bank but may have options in other areas. Invenergy has announced plans for a wind farm or wind farms north of Conrad and in the Cut Bank area. It is unclear where Wind Hunter may be proposing a wind farm or wind farms. See the discussion of Line Issues and Wind Farm Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 368 and 369: Comments noted.
Response 370: Comment noted. See the response to comment 367. Last year, DEQ noted the anemometer on Sam George Hill, and it is shown on Figure 4.1-2.

Response 371: Comments noted.
of a lull in the action, we said we could take a
little break and wander around.

WOMAN SPEAKER: I actually have a
question, and Lew Jones asked me to ask this
question. But he would like to know where the
cookies are.

MR. BLACK: For the record, my name is
Jerry Black. I represent Senate District 14,
which includes most of Glacier County, Pondera
County, Toole County, Liberty County, and Chouteau
County.

This wind project is extremely important
to all of the area, not just in Glacier County and
Toole, but the entire area. I think this is
probably one of the greatest economic development
opportunities since the discovery of oil in
northern Montana, since the building of the
Burlington Northern Railroad. There are so many
spin offs. When you talk about over $1 billion in
investment, that is a huge amount of money.
That's going to have a great impact on the total
area.

You've all heard everybody testify why
we need it: Declining school enrollments, loss of
tax base, loss of jobs, devaluations of land.
Response 374 and 375: Comments noted. See the discussion of MATL’s revised compensation package and alternative dispute resolution process in the EIS, Sections 2.3 and 3.13.3.

Response 376: That may be true, but it would depend on the transmission line owners and other external factors. Potential impacts of the proposed line on electrical transmission system operation are discussed in Section 3.17.

Well, this could very well turn that all around, and I think it will.

MATL is demonstrating a willingness to work with the landowners to address concerns regarding the routing of transmission lines and placement of poles that would be potentially disruptive to their agricultural operations. It kind of got off, if you will remember, to a rough start at the very beginning; but since that time, they have changed their attitude. They're willing to work with people, address those concerns.

Now, you are never going to make everybody happy. I don't care what you do, somebody is not going to be happy with it, whether it's MATL or whether it's some landowners. We know that. But this line will improve the reliability of electric transmission system in both Montana and Alberta by making these regions less vulnerable to outages, creating a greater opportunity to import and export electricity, all of which can benefit consumers and suppliers.

The MATL line could very well provide another opportunity for some of our energy companies in Montana, electric co-ops, to find another bidder for electricity when they need one.

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Response 377 and 378: Comments noted. See Section 3.13 and Economic Issues, Tax Issues, and Socioeconomic Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 379: One objective of the proposed action is to support development of wind power, which is a green energy source.

Response 380: Comment noted.
Response 381: Comment noted.

Response 382: Comments noted.

MATL outlined its concerns regarding Alternative 4 in its letter to the DEQ of March 28, 2008, and summarized those concerns as follows: “Of the route options proposed, Alternative 4 is materially longer in length. As a consequence: it impacts more landowners; has a larger footprint; may span more unstable soils; may have a greater potential of encountering archaeological and heritage resources; and has higher energy losses.”

Response 383: See Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section as well as the discussion of MATL’s revised compensation package and alternative dispute resolution process in Sections 2.3 and 3.13.3.

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406-442-8282
Response 384: Comments noted. Your comments and those of the other legislators in the letter are noted.

Response 385 and 386: Comments noted.
Response 387: Comment noted.

Response 388: The letters were accepted as individual letters, entered into the record, and responded to along with all other letters received.

Electric Cooperative; and through board discussions, we would like to confirm our support for the MATL line. Thank you.

MS. KAVANAGH: I'm LeAnne Kavanagh. I'm President of the Cut Bank Area Chamber of Commerce. I was one of the ones who went to Great Falls last night. I read the letter of support from the chamber at that meeting, so I won't go over it again tonight, but it was a pretty good letter. What I do have here, though, is approximately 20 letters of support from various chamber members, retired citizens of our community, local small business owners, and some ag producers who would offer their support to the MATL project. I'm not going to read them all. I'm just going to enter them into the record.

Thank you.

MR. COMO: By the way, everybody, if some of you represent like a lot of developers and large groups of people, if you want to help us get a decision out quicker, okay, a letter -- getting a single letter with 200, 300 people signing it, that's the most efficient way, assuming everybody wants to say the same thing. I'm not telling you what to do. But like if everybody is going to

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that's not how this country was meant to work. And you folks are here, and you're doing a great thing, and I just want to send my appreciation to you for that fact.

It's been reinvigorating a little bit for me to be here and see some of this, and not just go, "Well, I don't know if I'll have any impact, so I might as well not be here." The fact that you're here tonight is doing great things, not only for yourself, but for the future generations of us up here in north central Montana.

So I just wanted to say thanks to everybody in the audience tonight, and if there is anything I can do for you, catch me at the end. I'll be floating around. So thank you.

MR. COMO: Thank you.

Anybody else? Yes, sir.

MS. HARRISON: I'm Shannon Harrison with Sweetgrass Development, I'm the Executive Director there. And I won't bore you by repeating all of the wonderful positive things I've heard tonight, but I do want to offer Sweetgrass Development's full support on this project.

MR. COMO: Would anybody else like to --

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Response 389: Comment noted.
Response 390: Comment noted.

Response 391: At their closest, Alternatives 2 and 4 are about 3.5 and 7.6 miles, respectively, from the anemometer location on Sam George Hill. See the response to comment 367 for more information and the discussion of Line Issues and Wind Farm Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 392: See the responses to comments 367 and 391. Also see the discussion of Line Issues and Wind Farm Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 393: See the discussion of MATL’s revised compensation package and alternative dispute resolution process in Sections 2.3 and 3.13.3.
yourselves -- if you want to leave, fine. If you

don't, we'd rather have you stay -- and then open
the record again, and if there are any additional
questions --

MR. COMO: We could take a 15 minute
break, at a quarter after seven we'll reconvene.
You can leave if you want before then, and if not,
then we'll just close it up then. Thanks.

(Recess taken)

MR. RING: For those of who came in a
little bit late, the purpose of the meeting is to
take comments on the Environmental Impact
Statement that's being circulated. We're going to
ask -- there is a general guideline that comments
be submitted to us by March 31st, and we can
assure you those that get in by that date are
going to get the most attention.

So I believe we had one gentleman during
the break indicated he wanted to speak, so if you
could take the floor. And if there is anybody
else, we'll take you one at a time, and after
these are done, we'll close out the hearing for
tonight.

MR. PEARSON: Hi. My name is Gabriel
Pearson and I'm from Oilmont, Montana. Forty

years ago, I was in a little country called
Vietnam. I had two real close friends that were
killed right next to me. And you know who was
taking all our draft dodgers at that time was
Canada.

Now, a few questions I want to come up
with. I understood by the news last night Ronald
Ontario, Canada will be in charge of this project.
Where is our side of the story in the United
States? I think it should be equal and fair. I'm
all for making money, but I'm not for making money
over Veterans that have spilled their blood. And
we have what -- the position in our country right
now, we can't drill it, we can't mine it, we can't
log it, but we'll let her burn, and we've got to
put a stop to this sometime.

I know everybody is for this project.
I'm for making money, but not on the backs of
people that give their life for this country. I'm
one of them. I'm a totally disabled American
Veteran. It's not too fun to go through cancer or
heart ailments. It's very important for me to
stand up for those Veterans that died. They says,
"If you ever make it back to the United States,
you let those people know what we went through in
Response 394: Comments noted.

1. Vietnam. I'm letting you know.

2. I grew up with the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, her name was Beverly McLaughlin, her maiden name was Beverly Yeats (phonetic) out of Benger Creek (phonetic), Alberta, Canada.

3. They have a very liberal government up in Canada. Alberta, the crown lands, support most of Canada. If we get tied in with them, we're going to support the same government which I'm definitely against: Gays, homosexuals, lesbians.

4. Money is good to be made; but on the wrong reason, wrong objective, and wrong motive, we'd better watch what we're doing. I'm just -- There is always opposition to things, as Jerry Black said, but what the deal is, what is our end goal.

5. Now, I understand this transmission line will take all of the electricity and stuff that people put into it, but there is a lot of other things that can be developed in eastern Montana.

6. We have oil wells that are making millions of dollars a day. My Grampa is from Lake Night, North Dakota, which is Burke County, and what the deal is, we have the same position here.

7. We have the environmentalists that --

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1. It's too pretty to drill, and there is one little problem. We already drilled it. If you look at Dupuyer, they have all these pump jacks that go up and down, and they're not pumping air. The other place we drilled was at Black Leaf Canyon. In the news the other day, it says, "This mountain front has not been touched." Well, if you check the geological records and the drilling permits, you will find that Pearson No. 1 Texaco was drilled right in the Black Leaf Canyon, and there is a lot of gas there. But we won't develop this because it gets too pretty to drill.

2. We have coal plants that can't be put in because they're creating emissions. And when I was a kid, I rubbed dimes and stuff with the mercury that we had as kids. And what the deal is, the mercury that comes out of this coal plant is less than what we are accustomed to, what we grew up with, but it doesn't get both sides of the story.

3. And what I'm standing up for is: Let's make certain we get our fair share, instead of giving the control to Canada. Thank you.

4. Mr. Krombush, My name is Ted Krombush. I'm from Pondera County. As a private

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Response 395: Comment noted.

Response 396: As the agencies understand Mr. Sitzman's suggestion, it is to place the structures on section lines rather than in the interior of fields because the landowner would typically farm around only one side of the structure when placed on section lines. MATL is prepared to work with landowners to achieve a similar benefit by placing interior structures along field strip boundaries where the landowner farms that land in strips that are narrower than a full quarter section (Williams 2008d).
around it. It wouldn't be going around it, it
would just be pulling into the field away.

I'm no engineer or anything else, but it
just seems to me that if you stayed away from the
center of the property, and stayed to the property
lines, it would make a lot more sense.

FEMALE SPEAKER: I'd like to ask one
more question for those of you who are left.

Based on what everyone has heard tonight about
Alternative 4, could we have a show of hands of
the people that are here tonight, that understood
those four alternatives, that would be against
Alternative 4?

MALE SPEAKER: Against Alternative 4?

FEMALE SPEAKER: Against Alternative 4.

Six people.

MALE SPEAKER: How many people do you
think we lost?

FEMALE SPEAKER: A lot. At least 16.

MALE SPEAKER: How many people would be
undecided?

FEMALE SPEAKER: Undecided, would you
like to raise your hands? There is one undecided.
And those who didn't raise their hands, does that
mean you're for it? Do a count down.
MALE SPEAKER: You know, another problem we could solve is had we just divided US and Canada on the Mississippi River, we wouldn't be having all these problems. Tony, you wouldn't be here. We'd just have the DEQ. You'd be lonesome, Tom.

MR. RING: Well, I could get along.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Do you have to address that comment? You don't do that.

MR. COMO: Probably not. The way we -- "Commented noted."

MR. RING: Are there any other comments on the Environmental Impact Statement?

MR. COMO: I'd like to -- we'll probably just close the record now. This is not -- FEMALE SPEAKER: I should have clarified this. They don't have to go with just one alternative, right? You can use a combination of the four alternatives. So just for clarification for the audience, you can say you're against Alternative 4, but they still may use one, two, or three, and a little bit of four. So am I correct in that, Tom?

MR. RING: Well, I believe one is the no-action alternative, so we probably wouldn't use that in combination with the others. But Alternatives 2, 3, and 4, and the local routing options that we've identified in the document, more or less bracket the range of possibilities. If in your comments you come up with a new idea, an adjustment in alignment, submit that, and we'll try to take care of it.

Under the State process, if there is something new that is not proposed by MATL, we have to notify the affected owners of that property, so we'll be making those contacts if any such suggestions do come in. But yes, what's laid out there brackets a fairly large range of possibilities of segments connecting each other, interconnecting one to another, and there is all sorts of permutations that could occur. We'll try to pick the alignment that minimizes adverse effect, while still keeping cognizant of the costs involved both to the landowner and to MATL.

MR. COMO: That was a good point. And from the federal point of view, anything, any decision that's made, we are probably going to be looking primarily towards the State. Okay? In every one of these things, the State, they're sort of where the rubber meets the road. They know the
Response 399: The agencies could combine elements of Alternatives 2 through 4 or the local routing options. Alternative 1 is the No-Action alternative, so the agencies could not use that alternative in combination with elements of other alternatives.
So then we'll start calling people. Roy Hollandsworth. I've butchered his name all week long.

Mr. Hollandsworth: Thanks, Tony. The reason you got it right, I printed it this time, so that makes a difference.

I've been to all three of these, and this is round three. I'm going to give you an overview of what I've seen. In Great Falls, there was -- there is almost as many here as we had in Great Falls. But the meeting was mixed, I thought. It could have went either way. There was some grumbling from the farmers that the poles weren't in the right place, and they wanted money, and that seems that will be addressed in this thing.

But what really turned the meeting around in my mind was the bus that came from Cut Bank, Shelby, and Conrad, and went down there. Everybody was positive, and you could see the meeting turn around. And the best one liner at Great Falls was the guy from Cut Bank, an elderly gentleman, that says that says, "I'm a Native American of Irish descent."

So then we went from there, and last

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The following responses are to comments received at the public hearing in Conrad.

Response 400: Comment noted.
night was Cut Bank. And I have to tell you, I've never seen a community -- I'm proud to be part of the Highline. That whole community, 100 percent, wants this project. They know what it means to the town. The farmers said, "I know it's -- I've got a farm under those power lines, but we're doing it for the community," they know what it's going to do.

So keep all this in mind, because the benefits far outweigh -- and I don't like farming around poles, and I have none of them on my place. I wish the line was going out there, because then I could put a wind farm in, and that's going to be the spin-off. But you guys are going to have your work cut out here to make it as positive as Cut Bank did. They were really good. So more power to you guys. Thank you.

MR. COMO: The next one that is signed up -- By the way, we're calling up people who have checked that they want to speak. We'll go through those checks, and then that doesn't mean that that's not your only bite at the apple. So as we go through the evening, you change your mind, and you want to say something, just come on up, tell Ellen, tell myself, just step up to the microphone.

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Responses 402 and 403: Your comments are noted.

when everybody is done. And just because you've
spoken once doesn't mean you can't speak again.
So this is pretty informal. All right?
    Brett Doney.

Mr. Doney: I'm Brett Doney with the
Great Falls Development Authority. We're a
regional economic development group based in Great
Falls, but we provide services in the entire
eleven county central Montana region.
    We're very much in support of this
project. We have a couple of concerns. First of
all, with regard to the draft EIS, a very thorough
job, took longer than any of us wanted, but we
think it covered all of the issues. We do believe
that the process has gone on much too slowly.

In terms of the need from an economic
development standpoint, energy is a target
industry of ours. We think there are tremendous
opportunities here in central Montana. You can't
have wind energy development without transmission,
just like you can't have agriculture without
highways and railroads to export the product. We
think energy can be a wonderful export product.

There does need to be a balance between
property owners and the transmission, and we think

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Response 404: In both states businesses that use, manufacture, or install wind energy generators can receive franchise tax deductions and/or exemptions. There are also property tax exemptions involving wind energy generation for business installation or for the construction of such systems.

Probably the largest differences in wind development between Montana and Texas are in the states’ respective populations, renewable portfolio standards, and prices paid for electricity. Montana has a population of about 950,000 and consumes about 28,000,000 MWh/year while Texas has a population of about 24,000,000 and consumes about 400,000,000 MWh/year. Montana has a renewable energy portfolio requirement of 15% or about 450 average MW applied to its utilities in the year 2015. In 2005 Texas passed a renewable energy portfolio requirement of 2,000 MW by 2009. This has been expanded to 5,580 MW by 2015.

Lastly, the price paid for electricity is higher in Texas than it is in Montana as shown below. Higher prices could make it easier to attract investors in Texas than Montana.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Retail Prices (cents/KWh)</th>
<th>Texas¹</th>
<th>Montana²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>12.86</td>
<td>8.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>9.85</td>
<td>7.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>7.82</td>
<td>5.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>8.42</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Sectors</td>
<td>10.34</td>
<td>6.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source:
¹http://www.eia.doe.gov/cneaf/electricity/st_profiles/sept08tx.xls
²http://www.eia.doe.gov/cneaf/electricity/st_profiles/sept08mt.xls

Responses 405 and 406: Comments noted.
Response 407: Comment noted.

Response 408: NorthWestern has announced plans to construct a new gas fired generation plant near Anaconda, MT to satisfy its load balancing challenges. While the MATL line would certainly open new possibilities for load balancing for NorthWestern, NorthWestern may have other options available for load balancing. Also see Line Capacity Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
that NorthWestern has had problems. They are out of balance a number of times, and there is a safety margin, and they have dipped below the margin. So having this opportunity to share power with our neighbors in Alberta will strengthen our overall regional grid, which is important to all of us.

So just I want to close. Thank you for the opportunity, but please expedite the process, issue a decision. We like what we've seen in Alberta. They've issued a decision with conditions, and MATL is now working to meet those conditions up in Alberta, and take care of the property owners. We think the same could be done here.

MR. COMO: The next person is Ted Crawford.

MR. CRAWFORD: I just wanted to say that I'm not against the line, but I would like to see where the -- [inaudible] -- power goes. I would like to have it go straight down the fence line, single pole, and that would be fine, because my son and grandson are here, and they farm to the farmer, and we have all big equipment, and we can't be turning around and missing the ground.

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Response 409: Comment noted.

Response 410: Also see Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 411: Comment noted.

Response 412: Because the capacity rights are a commodity that may be resold or traded, the original purchasers may not be the power suppliers that use the line. MATL has indicated that capacity rights contracts do not require the use of any particular form of power generation (Williams 2008b).
Response 413 and 414: Comments noted.

As Commissioners, we are responsible for the fiscal operations of Pondera County. We look to the construction of this line and the associated wind generation facilities as a way to broaden the tax base, or simultaneously alleviate the tax burdens on our existing taxpayers. The approximately $260,000 in property taxes that would come directly from the line would be a more than welcome addition.

The transmission line would also be catalyst for wind farm developments such as that in Judith Gap. MATL project pays approximately $1.2 million in taxes to the county in which it is located. To put that into perspective, Pondera County’s entire budget for fiscal year 2008 was right at $7 million. This is a big impact, folks. From an economic point of view, factoring in additional people, businesses, and support services, both for line itself and for accompanying wind towers, the positive fiscal impact of this project could be critical for the sustainability of our communities.

As Commissioners, we also have a duty of

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Response 415: Comment noted.

Response 416: MATL has proposed a revised compensation package and an alternative dispute resolution process. They are described in Sections 2.3 and 3.13.2.
Response 417: Comments noted.

Response 418: Comment noted.

Response 419: Your comment is noted. See the discussion of Visual Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 420 and 421: Comment noted.

very minimal impact on the -- [inaudible] --
environment of both farm. Several designs and
construction methods have been incorporated into
the project to minimize the environmental impact
at the cost of MATL. I believe MATL has gone to
great lengths to meet the concerns of persons and
entities at the top of the line, including changes
in pole types, and monetary compensation for those
affected.

Comment 420: MATL's project is good for the state and
local economies of Montana. Rural communities
will benefit from the construction, future
maintenance, and tax revenues paid by MATL, which
could be critically important for rural areas of
Montana now and in the future.

Comment 421: This project will enable several wind
turbine farms to operate in north central Montana.
Wind energy is a very environmentally friendly
electrical generation resource that without this
line would not be possible. This project, in
combination with wind generation, will be seen by
other investors, and will help Montana become
recognized as a place to develop renewable energy
resources.

In the end, I do believe there is some

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sacrifice by those who farm lands or are crossed
by those lines. However, many of those concerns
have been met. This line is critically important
for Montana and its rural communities, including
Conrad.

Furthermore, I'm extremely disappointed
that I was not contacted by MATL as a land owner
whose land would be bordered by the line. Just
this evening looking at the new map, I made this
discovery. I believe it's due process that I be
contacted as part of the process. The new
alternative is an alternative to Alternative 2
northwest of Conrad, and I was not aware it may
cross or border my property.

I am, however, still in favor of the
line, but I would like to be better informed.
Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

MR. CUMGO: Harold Olson, please.

MR. OLSON: Tom, Tony, and the rest of
the committee here, we thank you for giving us
this opportunity to tell you our feelings about
the MATL line. I am Harold Olson of Conrad, and I
represent the Pondera Economic Development
Corporation, and the corporation has been in the
economic development business for over 30 years.

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Response 422: Comments noted.

Response 423: See the revision in Section 2.6.5.

Response 424: Comment noted.
This is one of the greatest economic development possibilities that we have. We have seen the demise of lumbering in Montana, mining in Montana, the demise of many energy sources; and with that, we need alternate energy transmission lines, so that development of wind power becomes more feasible. So I speak on behalf of the Board in favor of this project. Thank you.

MR. COMO: Chris Stephens.

MR. STEPHENS: Hello. My name is Chris Stephens, and my family farms in the county where this line is being built. We will have at least a mile to a mile and a half of this line, depending upon the route.

I myself was personally disappointed in all the County Commissioners and local businesses, who are more concerned with the needs of MALT than they are of long time faithful taxpayers. We aren't asking for much. We are asking only for a design of this line in a manner that the local cooperatives have long recognized as the proper design for the power infrastructure. It is not a coincidence that the resistance of this line begins with the start of the diagonal at Conrad, and continues south to Great Falls, and sets the

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Response 426: The agencies realize that an existing 115 kV transmission line already crosses fields on a diagonal.

Response 427: Comment noted.

Response 428: Comment noted.

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diagonal.

Comment 426: One has to remember that along this portion of line, we aren’t talking about one diagonal line, we are talking about two diagonal lines. There is already a diagonal line that we have had to live with for thirty years.

Comment 427: The northern portion of this line has all of the benefits, the north/south orientation and the wind development; the southern all of the impacts, the diagonal, and no wind development.

Since I have owned my farm east of town here, I have had two power lines, a gas line with a pumping station, and a fiber optic line cross this farm, and none of them provide service to my farm. I did not oppose them. I am not against progress.

Comment 428: We talk about the tax base and the economic development MATL brings to these communities. Let me share the tax base and the economic benefits my family provides. We pay $26,539 in taxes in Pondera County; $64,210 in Teton County; $39,896 in Cascade County; $2,783 in Choteau County; for a total of over $133,000 annually property taxes.

By -- [inaudible] -- to have a line

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Response 429: See Tax Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 430: MATL has changed its proposal and would purchase the 105-foot easement. See Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 431: See the discussions of Wind Farm Issues and Legal and Regulatory Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 432: See the discussion of Legal and Regulatory Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 433: Under DEQ administrative rules, MATL could contract with landowners for reclamation and weed control; however, this is not a requirement and certain landowners might wish to have MATL or its contractors perform weed control.
Response 434 and 435: Comments noted.

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Response 436: In response to this and similar comments, DEQ has learned that the Dolans and Andersons have purchased shares in the Pondera County Canal and Reservoir Company for water to be used to irrigate the affected parcel of land. Thus, the local routing option designed to move the line farther away from two houses is not workable.

DEQ, MATL representatives and engineers, and an independent transmission design engineer under contract to DEQ reevaluated local routing options in the Belgian Hill Road area. A local routing option previously dismissed was revisited when it was learned that an existing side roll irrigation system could be spanned. This would enable the line to be located along the western edge of property owned by the Dolan family, as indicated on Figure 2.6-7 in the Final EIS. This alignment would allow for one or two center pivots to be constructed on this parcel of land. This alignment also remains about 0.5 mile from houses along Belgian Hill Road. However, it would increase the amount of cropland crossed by approximately 0.42 mile and adds 0.35 mile of total line length to the previous Belgian Hill local routing option.

Response 437: Comment noted.
Response 438: Comment noted. See the discussion of Legal and Regulatory Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 439: MATL has revised its application indicating that it would purchase an easement for a 105-foot-wide right-of-way.

Response 440: Comment noted.
Response 441: In addition to determining impacts to the environment, MEPA requires the regulatory restrictions analysis to disclose the economic impact on the applicant of additional requirements imposed by the agency that are not absolutely required by law. The legal requirement to disclose the regulatory impact on the applicant’s private property rights applies only to the applicant and not to other people who might be affected by the permitting action. This is a matter of law, not DEQ’s choice. See the discussion of Legal and Regulatory Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 442: See the discussion of Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 443: Comment noted.
Response 444 and 445: The agencies have revised their evaluation of the Belgian Hill local routing option. See the response to comment 436 and Sections 2.6 and 3.16.

They just offered us an option at this point. So I would say their private property rights are probably a little shaky at this point, and that the preparers should probably focus on the land owners' rights, as well as MATL's rights, and balance out that perspective. It did seem to be a little one-sided on that.

Regarding the routes through our property on Belgian Hill, we'd certainly be willing to talk to MATL about it if they want to make some changes to the design, but like the fellow said before, it goes section line, field line, don't cross diagonally, make square corners, and we'll deal with some guy wires, but we don't want you crossing diagonally or gutting the field. Our field is an irrigated half-section of land in that particular area, and it's going to be real hard to predict where we'll put our irrigation system in if we put those poles there. We would prefer to have an amount of poles along the section line or along the road line.

If MATL does decide to go with their alternative Belgian Hill option through the center of our field, our family has already decided we are going to file a lawsuit because it will in

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Response 446: An EIS is not an engineering design document requiring approval by a professional engineer. MATL and the agencies are currently in a planning and permitting process. If agency approval is granted, MATL would proceed with final design before constructing the line. If the project is approved, one of the conditions of approval could be a requirement that final design plans be reviewed and approved by an engineer registered in Montana.

Response 447: See the discussion of Safety Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 448: Thank you for your research.

Response 449: See the discussion of Safety Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
and it talks specifically about that. One of the things that I found in reading MATL's comments, they said, "Well, we had three different engineers look at it. They all came up with different numbers. We're going to use our minimum, bare bones, because we don't know what type of vehicle is going to go across that."

If you read through the code, the term that they're trying to rely on, it says, "Vehicles under 14 feet in height." I called John Deere and said, "Send me an email with a diagram showing the height of your equipment, your combines," so they sent me the 9000 series combine envelope drawings, and they put some engines on it, plus the original printout that I got from John Deere, and down-the-road height of their combine is fourteen feet six inches in operation with no modifications to the combine, with the hopper out, sixteen feet seven inches, above the fourteen foot mark.

Now, there's one modification that most farmers make to their combine, and I've dealt with a lot of farmers through my transmission line construction and acquisition. I've -- (inaudible) -- their farmers. They usually add a two-way radio to their combine, or a CB. Right? Where do

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Response 450 to 452: See the discussion of Safety Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
they put the antenna? On the cab. So if you look
at that 9000 Series combine whose cab height is
twelve feet four inches, when you add a standard
180 inch CB with antenna to the top of the cab,
the height of that vehicle when it's operating in
the field is 21 feet four inches. Guess what?
That's right at the conductor level.
What's going to happen to you if you run
into a 230 KV line with your CB antennas on top of
your combine? You're going to be dead.

Comment 453: Now, every three years I take an update
on the National Electric Safety Code from the
fellow that used to be the Chairman of the NESC
code committee, that was Mr. Allen -- (inaudible)
-- and this last fall, I took my update, and I sat
with Allen after the class, and had a beer, and
kind of explained why, and his response to me was,
"The first farmer that hits it, the plaintiff's
attorney will have no problem getting a
multi-million dollar lawsuit, and they will own
that transmission line company, because there is
no defense for that."

Comment 454: His exact words that he's fond of saying
is, "That's socially unacceptable behavior to put
a 230 KV line at that level above worked

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Response 455: Comment noted. Under DEQ regulations, MATL must comply with the National Electrical Safety Code.

agricultural ground." Above grazing ground where you don't expect a combine, it's fine to go down that low; but above agriculture ground, there's stuff that's perceived -- (inaudible) -- area is criminal.

Comment 455: Now, I did some quick calculations. MATL used Rule 232(d) out of the National Electric Safety Code to calculate their height, which is a reduced clearance based on switching surge factors of the transmission line. In that rule, there is an exception, or kind of a stop gap, and it says, "Minimum height shall be based on Rule 232(c) for at least 98 KV." It means you can't go below that calculated level.

Which points you back to Rule 232(c), and you go look at that, Column 4, and there's a Footnote 26. If you have the latest edition, it's in there. If you have an earlier edition, there is an errata sheet saying that Footnote should be Footnote 26, says if it's anticipated over height equipment, you have to add the difference of the height between that equipment and the 14 feet that's in the code.

And if you have a combine that's running down the field with a CB antenna that's at 21 feet.

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Response 456 and 457: Comments noted.

four inches, subtract that 14 feet, add that
difference to the covered value, that line
clearance ends up closer to 29 feet you have to
meet, substantially higher than MATL is quoting.
I'll turn in my notes for you to look through.

MR. CMM: Gary Iverson, please.

MR. IVERSON: Hi. I'm Gary Iverson.
I'm the Mayor of the town of Sunburst, and I'm
here representing the City Council, the businesses
of Sunburst, the school system in Sunburst, and
all of the citizens of Sunburst, and their support
for the line and the potential industry that it
can bring into Montana.

We do understand those concerns with
where the line goes, and we understand the people
who live around it and work under it, and the line
has to take care of those problems. But this
opportunity to have this line and to have the wind
farms and the industry that go along with this
line are very incremental to this area, and keep
our populations, our schools, and keep some of our
kids home.

We had an interesting comment in Out
Bank last night that Roy brought up, and he asked
the people how many people in the crowd have

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Response 458: The study of the costs of farming around structures that is included in the EIS includes consideration of the potential for reduced crop yields due to inadvertent over-application of herbicides and fertilizers. Effects of over-application of chemicals on groundwater would depend on the nature of the chemicals used. Selection of pesticide chemicals that degrade rapidly would minimize the potential for pesticide contamination of groundwater. Excess fertilizer application could be a problem in high groundwater areas. Fertilizer nutrients and long-lived pesticides have the potential to infiltrate to the underlying groundwater, but on dryland farms the potential for adverse effects would be low because little moisture infiltrates to the water table. With or without a transmission line, farmers should monitor their fertilizer and pesticide use to avoid overloading. Also see the discussion of Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 459: See the response to comment 85 regarding pole placement.

Response 460: MATL’s revised compensation package is described in Section 2.3.

but I would like to speak about this in detail. Much of the cost is incurred by the extra chemical and fertilizer used. 134 foot sprayers are not designed to turn sharply, and when you go around the pole, you lay down extra spray. It’s inevitable.

This is a concern for the farmer because extra chemical can burn the crop, and it can cause production loss. It should also be a concern to everyone because extra chemical has potential to be very dangerous to our -- (inaudible) -- If you look toward the future, in fifty years the cumulative effect of this chemical could be even worse, and in areas like Valier, where the ground water is very high, you can expect that people may even start to feel these effects.

The best solution would be to keep the poles out of the fields, but the next best solution would be to minimize the number of poles in the fields, keep them to the edges whenever possible, and make sure they are monopoles.

We also would appreciate financial incentive to help us make sure that we farm the poles carefully, that we limit the damage we do. We are given incentives by the government to help

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Response 461: Comment noted.

Response 462: Alternative 4 lies within the project study area. See the discussion of Legal and Regulatory Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 463: Comment noted. There is no evidence on the record that a wind farm west of Conrad would interconnect to the MATL line. Other possible interconnections should a wind farm be proposed in the area include the NorthWestern Energy 115-kV line and the Western Area Power Administration 230-kV line. Both have substations just south of Conrad. Figure 4.1-2 sets out the locations of potential wind farms, based on field observations of anemometers. One anemometer location was found west of Conrad and west of Alternative 2.

Response 464 and 465: Comments noted.

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Response 466: Comment noted.

Response 467: Any approved alternative alignment would generally be 500-feet wide and would allow for adjustments to better align with property lines, field edges, and strip-cropping boundaries. Also see the response to comment 85.
so following property lines, section lines, township lines, etc.

We also respect the fact that the agricultural community is the greatest contributor to wealth in our area, but we would also like to see the additional impact created -- (inaudible) -- by the MATL line. Thank you.

MR. COMO: Thank you. Of all of the people that have just signed our list just indicated that they wanted copies of the document. We've sort of run out of the names of people who said that they wanted to say something. So I'm sure everybody is sitting there -- we have plenty more names. Great. Well, some.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Wendy Judisch.

MS. JUDISCH: Thank you, Mr. Como. My name is Wendy Judisch. I am a resident of the city of Conrad, and a member of the Conrad City Council.

I welcome the opportunity for our area to use our natural resources. One of these natural resources is our wind, a great source of renewable energy. A transmission line through our area will not only help encourage the development of wind energy, but also help to spread the tax

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burden throughout our area. The economic boost
d and its inevitable spin-off will help benefit our
area schools, our city, and our county.

I encourage you to help the proposed
MATL line become a reality as efficiently and
expeditiously as possible. The economic pros far
outweigh any environmental cons. Thank you.

MR. COMO: Thank you. We seem to have
run out of names again. No. She's waving me off.

Sir,

MR. STROM: So I want to thank you for
this opportunity to appear before you. My name is
Eric Strom. I live in Conrad. I was born and
raised in Pondera County. I've farmed for 43
years, and just retired from that farming. And
you can take the farmer off the farm, but you
can't take the farmer out of the farmer.

So what I do, once I'm retired, I'm not
retired. I run sprayers, 36 foot header combines.
My biggest problem is going down the road, and
hitting mail boxes.

But here is my comment. And I'm in
support of the MATL line. I think it's a great
idea. I know there is some problems that need to
be resolved. But one thing I think is positive is

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Response 470 and 471: Comment noted.
Response 472: Comment noted.

That if we had a wind farm out this side of town
would keep my plastic garbage cans from rolling
down the street, because I know it reduces the
velocity of wind. But thank you.

MR. COMO: We seem to have run out of
names again. Good.

MR. DULLEM: Thank you, Tom and Tony. I
will face you. I marked out -- First let me say
that my name is John Dullem, I live in Valier, and
I'm presently the Superintendent of Schools. I'm
not sure how long that will last. -- (inaudible)
-- items as they were stated, and I'd like to
thank you, Tom.

There is one issue that I think that has
not been mentioned, and I did talk to Tom on the
phone -- and I just met Tony -- asked him to send
me the document. It's over 600 pages. I can't
remember if it was Page 491 or Page 2 that I fell
asleep.

This is my second time through this. We
moved from Oregon, and had the opportunity to
represent a county that was very similar to this
situation, to Pondera County, and all of the good
impacts that come with wind farms have been
stated, and there is only one that I would add

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Response 473 to 475: See Sections 3.13 and 3.17 for benefits from the MATL line, including some benefits that would extend beyond Montana’s borders.

that seems to have been missed, and this is all mixed up. I don’t want to take your time.

And I did not see it in the executive summary either, Tom. And that is the value that this project has to our nation. Our utilities face some very complex decisions, one requiring trying to acquire power. Utilities are looking for a number of different sources and strategies.

We’re going to be facing a serious power shortage, and the gross load that is coming will only intensify that shortage.

So I say to you: Besides the good that will come to my county, Ponders County, besides the tax base increase that will come to my state, it’s my nation that will benefit from this. This program helps satisfy our need for power, and the plan meets the environmental tests. Of course, we have to realize those issues that impact our friends and neighbors. The plan moves this region and this nation forward.

So I say to you three gentlemen:

Implement this plan and implement it promptly.

Thank you very much for the opportunity.

Mr. Com: Thank you.

Mr. Reis: I’m Ronald Reis, and I’m from

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Conrad, and I'm a small business owner in town. And we've heard about all of the positive things that this project can bring to our community, and communities which this line travels through. I am in support of this project, providing that it passes the two "E" word rules, and then words are, "farmer friendly." If this project is not farmer friendly, and meets the needs and the operations of the farmers that this project goes through, then MATL has more work to do. Thank you.

MR. COMO: Anybody else?

Mr. PIGGER (phonetic): My name is Patrick Pigger, and I was born and raised in this country. And I can remember no electricity, no running water, no phones, not many paved roads. I don't want that again.

I remember when one -- (inaudible) -- REA came in, and no one was against that. Many people who had no electricity prior to that also got phones, or had no phones but no electricity. We have had boom and bust building, and drought, and flood, since the advent of power on demand. We have had creature comforts. We as an area affected by this transmission line may have a

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future of steady growth. With power available, we are in a good area. We are on the transportation corridor with I-15, we would be on power corridor. We would be on -- With a water project in the works, the area is going to be looked at by other entities.

The inconvenience of the power poles affects everyone involved, the farming, and whoever has to move or build. I myself would not want a pole or structure on my property. That would be inconvenient for me, but I would not say no if it made sense.

I would hope that the changes made by the power line would help my children, grandchildren, and others stay in the area, so that they might have the opportunity to live and work in Montana as I have. Thank you.

MR. CONNO: Thank you, sir.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Good to see you guys again tonight. I think we have got a bigger crowd than we had last night in Cut Bank. So far I as I know, -- (inaudible) -- Pondera County, both Pondera and Teton Counties. And I am in favor of this, but I think NARL has to work with the farmers, because it's no fun farming around oil.

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Response 482: Comment noted.

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1 wells, power poles. I have worked -- (inaudible)
2 -- where I had -- (inaudible) -- poles, some
3 monopoles in fields, and stuff, and I had to drive
4 100 foot sprayer again. So 134 foot sprayer --
5 (inaudible) -- to work around these -- spray
6 around these poles.
7 The only comment that I've got to say,
8 and that's to you, very few, that you alone with
9 our combine any more proceedings. And probably
10 your average -- (inaudible) -- would be between
11 24 and 30 inches -- (inaudible) -- but that's the
12 only thing I can disagree with. But I am in
13 favor, and I think that -- (inaudible) -- MATL can
14 do a better job with the landowners. I think
15 they've got to get up and do a better job of
16 working with the landowners. Thank you.
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17 [Comment 482] MALE SPEAKER: I don't know you guys. I
18 do know -- (inaudible) -- My name is George Tsonga
19 (phonetic), and I'm the manager of the local --
20 (inaudible) -- theater here in town. I'm one of
21 those people from the state of Montana that we're
22 losing each and every day. We've got lots and
23 lots of assets in this beautiful state of Montana.
24 We have more resources than any other state in the
25 nation. We're No. 6 in production. But we're
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losing our young people.
I was gone for 35 years. I came back
only because I have elderly relatives here, and I
came back to care for them. But in that process,
I got reacquainted again with why I was here in
the first place. I love this state. I asked for
and received the brand that my grandfather had
when he homesteaded in this country. I still own
that, and I'll pass it on to my children. I want
them to have a piece of Montana.
But if we do not start to utilize these
resources to create opportunities for our young
people to come back and live in this state, and
become active and vital members, we're losing one
of the best raw resources that we have.
Comment 483: I'm not a farmer. I did, however, --
(inaudible) -- been able to catch a fence corner
or two, because I was hired by local farmers when
you guys could still go out and hire young men
that wanted to work. We're getting rid of these
people, and we need them around here. I did learn
from those experiences, though. If you rebuild
enough the fence corners, you can start missing
them pretty quick.

So I only want to say that anytime that

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we can create opportunities for our young people to come back into this wonderful state -- I not only love the mountains, and the trees, and the animals that are there, but I'm a prairie boy. I love fields, I love grass, I love the Big Sky Country. I've lived in about 13 other states in the 35 years I was gone from here, and there is nothing like the Big Sky of Montana.

Rich Branning, and I think I know 90 percent of the people in here. I've got offices -- that's the reason why -- I have offices in Cut Bank, Conrad, Valier, and Browning. I'm also a small farmer, for those of you who didn't know that little tidbit. So I'm kind of nervous about it. I don't farm the land, but listening to the gentlemen over here, I think they made some valid points, and I hope that MATL and the farmers can get together and work out those points.

But on another aspect, I'm also a business person, and I see the importance of this project, and I think all of the people that have spoken have spoke towards the progress of this project, other than there needs to be some more discussions.

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The gentleman from Idaho, being a professional, very good. I appreciate that. But we're in Montana here, and I hope that things can be worked out in the long run.

I also have four children, and I really don't want to ship my commodities out. So I am very much in support of this, and I know a lot of other people that are in this room, too. So thank you.

FEMALE SPEAKER: My name is Jackie -- (inaudible) -- and I'm from Sunburst, Montana. I don't farm, and I understand that there is problems with farming. My husband is in the oil fields, and you know, things are inconvenient. If we go across someone's field, we compensate them for going across their field. When a line is laid -- my husband is on the board for more telephones -- when there is line laid, they're compensated.

I hear all about the taxes you're paying, and that's -- you know, we're all paying taxes, and golly, it's a lot. It's a lot today, especially if you have kids and everything else. The tennis shoes alone will break you by the time they're out of high school. But they're compensated.
Response 490: The agencies recognize the controversy over this project and the disagreement among people who might be affected. See Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

There is a lot of breaks that you get from the government that we don't get. And I'm very resentful to you for saying, "We will sue."

Sue? You're from Idaho. We're from Montana.

Okay. Sue -- (inaudible) -- No. I'm upset with you. These people are trying to work things out, and we're running up -- sue. Yes, you said you wouldn't.

But what I'm saying is: This is a business that's coming in here. They're getting money. Every one of you that went into business or are farming, you're there to make money. And if you do really well, you can hire someone.

That's great. They can draw from that. That's what business is. You go into business to make money for yourself, and these people are, but they do have a responsibility. I'd love to see them buy the land from you to run that thing through, so you wouldn't have to farm it, so you wouldn't have to go around it. That would be great. They need to work with the farmer.

This is your land. This is your heart.

And they have a responsibility to work with you, but you also have a responsibility to work with them, so that all of us can benefit. And that's

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What I think we need to think about, not just ourselves. We all can benefit from this. But let's not -- (inaudible) -- and close our eyes, and say, "We won't talk about it unless it's 100 percent our way." We all have to compromise. Golly, how many people are married here? How many people have to compromise? How many people have to compromise?

Things are really, really, really important to us, like our land, like our jobs, like our families. We all have to compromise. And I guess what I'm trying to say is this: Please, please. Sit down at the table; don't threaten each other; compromise; work this out so that everybody can benefit. Thank you.

MR. ANDERSON: I'm Ray Anderson, and I take offense to that. Shawn Dolan here is a very bright man, well educated, and he knows what he's talking about. But I'll tell you what. It's MALT plan that they compensated to the people to the north of us, and they compensated to the people to the south of us, and they want to go directly up the middle of our full half-section, right up the middle of it.

How many of you people would like to have a power line go right up the middle of your place? It's irrigated property, and it would eliminate the chance of a center pivot system, it eliminates the possibility of a side roll, and it would be value -- (inaudible) --

I think that when they make compensations to the north, they make compensations to the south -- and Randy Rummell, who was the land man that talked to us, I said, "My go, Randy. You're beating us to death."

Well, he said, "Yes, kind of." And that's just terrible. And that's why Shawn said that we're not going to stand still for that. We absolutely aren't.

FEMALE SPEAKER: But don't walk away either.

MR. ANDERSON: We're not. Believe me, I'm as much for progress for the state of Montana as anybody, I absolutely am, except that it absolutely has to be done right. But lots of times on school boards, and soil conservation districts, and stuff, and one of the things -- The last thing I said when I left the school board, I said, "You know, put off the project as long as you can; but when you do, do it as possibly as

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beat as you can. State of the art." That's what
-- (inaudible) -- They weren't using state of
art. I mean do it first class when you do
something, and don't cut any corners.

And I said this to WMT1 before at about
four of these meetings that we have had here.
They said, well, they can't afford to go to the
single poles because of the fact that it was more
expensive, but their capacity has been sold out.
Now, that's a no-brainer, because if their
capacity has been sold out, and yet they can't do
it right for the farmers, they sold out too cheap,
didn't they? They missing -- (inaudible) --
missing in the process.

MALE SPEAKER: -- (inaudible) -- Is he
from Idaho, and Shawn Dolen, and he's from Idaho.
And I was born and raised in Montana, educated in
Montana, and left because --

FEMALE SPEAKER: His kids aren't going
to school here, are they?

MALE SPEAKER: No, they're not.

FEMALE SPEAKER: And this will help our
kids.

MALE SPEAKER: I said we're not opposed
to the line.

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ruin the value of the property, we're going to
look at a lawsuit. If they work the edges,
section lines, fence lines, we can work with that.
That's what I said.

FEMALE SPEAKER: -- (inaudible) --
MALE SPEAKER: Yes, but sometimes you
have to use legal process, and that's part of the
legal process.

MALE SPEAKER: -- (inaudible) --
FEMALE SPEAKER: I'm -- (inaudible) --
and I represent House District 28. It's an honor
to be here and support this project for economic
reasons for this area, for adding a piece of the
puzzle for clean energy.

But what I really would like to do is
compliment all of you. It's been a long, hard
process. You've put many hours of work and
thought into this project. This is international.
It can happen. I would urge MALT to make things
right with the people that work the land, and
let's keep working together. Let's make this a
pattern for our future. Thank you.

MR. JONES (phonetic): My name is Lew
Jones, and tonight I want to talk to you -- I've
talked with the state rep a number of times today.

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We'll talk about the farm boy. I guess I'll start with: I believe they can be -- (inaudible) -- work, and LeeAnne Kavanaugh, and so I won't take credit for it. She said there can be win-win here. There can be a way to settle these issues, and I kind of like that word, so I've kind of stolen it.

As a farmer, I'd like to share some names with you, and there is the Knowles, the Lewises, the Smiths, the Rowhers, the Thomases, those are all places that the Jones Ranch now farms. What's happening is we are fairly large operators even in today's world, and unfortunately each time one of those families leaves, our school system shrinks, because there is huge equipment now. Everything is big now. What's happened with ag, it takes less and less numbers. With less and less numbers to control more and more land, Class B schools becomes Class C's, Class C schools go away.

You know, Conrad could become Valier, Valier could become Brady, and Brady could become Gallop City. Do you guys remember Gallop City? It's on the Jones Ranch as well. I don't advocate -- we all know the oilfields are out there. Jerry
Response 493 to 495: Comments noted.

Christian -- I see him standing in the back of the room. I can tell you about power poles, too. I've spun a swather around, and unhooked a guy wire on a stupid corner pole on Sunday, and it cost me $5,000, because Jerry showed up on a Sunday, and -- (inaudible) -- Next time I'm going to leave the pole stay there until Monday. But they are a pain in the ass. There is no question about it.

As a business man in this town, I certainly do not advocate that the farmers and ranchers not be compensated. They remain here. They will be always be a significant part of the tax paying economy. Hopefully we'll be here. I have several sons. I'm hoping they can come home here. That's why I work on this.

We have to broaden our economic base. To do so, we have to achieve a win-win. We have to work this thing out. When the fighting gets nasty, and then it doesn't work out, then we lose. This is possible. There are no enemies here. We appreciate you shopping at Front Line -- (inaudible) -- I kind of like that. I do. And therefore I hope you continue to farm. That's a huge part of what we do.

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Response 496: Comment noted.

Responses 497 and 498: See the description of MATL’s compensation package in Sections 2.3 and 3.13.2. DEQ is not aware of any other Montana utilities or electric cooperatives that are making annual per pole payments to farmers. Also see Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
and we will achieve what Montana can successfully do itself a number of times. If we delay this long enough, it will go away. Then two years from now, we'll say, "How come we didn't get that? Why didn't we get it done?"

You know, I look out on this crowd, and there's a number of you that I pester mercilessly to show up at these meetings, because you've got to. If you don't become informed and participate, it goes away. And we need that.

You know, I know why folks don't talk.

I heard it here tonight from -- (inaudible) -- We don't talk because we're afraid. We don't want to lose your business. But by the same token, if we don't talk, we lose everything. We have to find a way to work this out.

You know, I want the Jones Ranch to survive. I want the sheep on it to survive. I want this to be a Class B school. Let's find a way to win. Let's quit fighting and get it done.

MR. BLACK: For the record, my name is Jerry Black. I represent Senate District 14, that includes Glacier, Toole, Pondera, Liberty, and Choteau Counties. I want to thank all of the people who got up and spoke. I think this is what

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we need to hear, this is what MATL needs to hear. To say that the vast majority of the people in my district support MATL is really an under statement. They would like to see this project go forward. They realize there are great concerns by many landowners, and that these issues have to be resolved. I think it was very unfortunate that MATL got off to such a rough start due to the agents that represented them initially, and they realize that, too. They got started on the wrong foot. They seem to me to be very eager to now meet with farmers and landowners, and try to resolve those issues.

I think Johan said today that he was going out this afternoon to meet with several landowners in regards to their issues, and they want to work together with northern Montana and with the landowners to make this project work, and hopefully they'll be able to get that done.

I think, you know, we've got to realize that not everybody is going to be completely satisfied, landowners, and neither will MATL. They're going to have to make concessions that they really didn't want to do to or live with, and I think some landowners might be in that same

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Response 502: Comment noted.

Response 503: See Socioeconomic Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 504: Comments noted.

position. It's kind of a give and take situation. I think this is the largest economic development opportunity that this area has had since oil was discovered in northern Montana, and since all of the railroads were built across Montana, and to Great Falls, and interconnecting. This is an opportunity that we can't afford to miss. We've talked about what it would do for the schools, the declining enrollments, the tax base. These are all things that we need to do, and work with, and improve upon, and MATL is certainly one of the answers to that.

As far as the need for MATL, it's predicted that the United States is going to have an energy crisis in the next few years, and already roughly sixty coal fired generation plants across the US have been cancelled due to environmental concerns. It's predicted that the price of energy is going to go sky high, and that will affect every one of us. Wind energy is a clean and affordable energy that we must develop, and we have the best wind energy, one of the best on the North American continent. We have to develop that resource and

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Response 505 and 506: Comments noted.

make it work.

And yes, there will be some sacrifices. Some landowners might be taking a hit for the team, as Johan said earlier today. But the direction this is going right now I think is in the right direction. I think MATL is listening very seriously to your concerns, they want to address those, and want to work with you, and they want to make this whole project work.

You know, somebody said at one of the other hearings that I was at, you know, the wind is blowing as strong outside -- or inside as it is outside, and I think he was referring to Lew at the time.

By the way, if you do have any problems, I refer them all over to Representative Lew Jones. He said he would take those calls.

So it's my hope and wish that we work this out. If we can move forward -- and I think we can, if we're really willing to work together. It is an important project that must be done.

Thank you.

MR. AIKEN: I'll speak up, get along with MATL quite well, which listening here I have a little advantage --

Laurie Crutcher, APR
406-442-8262
Response 507: Comment noted.

Response 508: Since publication of the Draft EIS, MATL representatives and their engineers, a DEQ representative, and an independent transmission engineer under contract to DEQ reviewed the Bullhead Coulee South Local Routing Option. The steepest slopes crossed could be spanned by the transmission line and access for construction and maintenance equipment could avoid the steepest slopes for this local routing option. On the east side of this local routing option, access would be on relatively flat ground at the top of the hill where a structure would be located. Separate access to the base of the hill would be from the old county road. The line could be strung by hand or helicopter minimizing impacts to the steep slope.

The hill on the west end of the local routing option is much gentler but again access could be restricted in the span where the steepest terrain is crossed.

MATL would be required to implement a noxious weed control plan to reduce the spread of weeds regardless of the alternative alignment selected. Likewise, MATL would be required to implement Best Management Practices to control erosion caused by construction and maintenance activities regardless of the alignment selected.’

See the discussion of Vegetation, Wetland and Weed Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 509: The cultural resource would be avoided by both MATL’s proposed alignment and the Bullhead Coulee South local routing option. See the response to comment 74.
Response 510 to 512: Comments noted.

project, and we think that this will be very positive, not only for Toole County, but for Glacier and Pondera County as well, and others.

I was very fortunate today to be standing, just kind of doing some things out in the area where the first wind farm will go in just a few weeks. That isn't dependent upon the MATL line. But we don't want to be the only one that has a wind farm. We see so much potential in this area. There won't be a second wind farm in this area, I don't believe, without MATL. You have to have some way of getting that power to market.

And certainly this is very, very worthwhile. As Jerry said, I think power is at a premium, and certainly it's not going to get any better as time goes on. So we would continue to say that we support this.

I guess one of the things I was thinking about was that when you get up in the morning, usually you get the wind blowing outside, and you don't think something positive; but maybe if you have a wind generator out there, you'll think differently about that, if we could make something negative into a positive, and that's what we'd like to do. Thank you.

LAURIE CRUTCHER, RPR
406-442-8262
March 10, 2008

Mr. Tom Ring
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Environmental Management Bureau
P.O. Box 200001
Helena, MT 59620-0001

Dear Mr. Ring:

I'm a producer in Glacier County. The MATL line will be going through my property. I want to be on record that I'm in support of the MATL line and wind generation in Glacier County.

This is an opportunity for me personally to help the economy of Glacier County and for myself. I have no mineral rights to the land that I bought in 1987. This will give me the chance to have an additional income source for my farm. Glacier County has been suffering through a drought.

Change is hard to deal with but this is an opportunity for our area to bring in a new business that is clean and friendly for the environment. I'm willing to deal with some inconvenience to do my part to help bring new business to Glacier County.

The MATL line and wind generation will increase the tax base for the County. This will help our tax bills, provide more for our schools, and help build our infrastructure.

I support the MATL line.

Thank you.

Mike Koepke

Response 513 to 515: Comments noted.
March 11, 2008

Mr. Tom Ring
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Environmental Management Bureau
P.O. Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

Dear Mr. Ring:

[Comment 516] The MATL line is scheduled to pass through Koepke Farms property. Koepke Farms is in support of the MATL line.

[Comment 517] Tonbridge has been accommodating and has listened to the concerns that we may have had.

[Comment 518] We believe that we need to be supportive of new industries that want to come to our counties. The increase in tax base will benefit all taxpayers. This is a rare opportunity for this area to have a clean industry come to our counties. We need to be supportive and take advantage of this opportunity.

[Comment 519] Koepke Farms wants to be on record in support for the MATL line.

Thank you.

Koepke Farms
by Michael J. Koepke, President
March 11, 2008

Mr. Tom Ring
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Environmental Management Bureau
P.O. Box 20981
Helena, MT 59620-0981

Dear Mr. Ring:

I’m chairman for the Cut Bank Public Schools. I believe that the building of the MATL transmissions line will benefit the children of School District 15, the taxpayers, businesses in the area, and help the overall economy of Glacier County.

I wish to be on record in support for the MATL line.

Thank you.

Michael J. Keopke
Response 521 to 524: Comments noted.

Mr. Tom Ring  
Montana Department of Environmental Quality  
Environmental Management Bureau  
P.O. Box 200901  
Helena, MT 59620-0901

Dear Mr. Ring:

We would like to send this letter to you in support of the Montana Alberta Tie Line project.

This project would be an economic boost to the City of Cut Bank, to Cut Bank Public Schools, and to Glacier County. The increase in tax base would be a benefit to all taxpayers in the county.

The Montana Alberta Tie Line would be a positive, clean industry that this area should welcome. We all need to realize that there is a limited timetable and this opportunity may not always be here. We need to be supportive now for this project.

Cut Bank Development Corporation is in support of this project. We ask that all landowners be treated fairly and equitable.

If we can be of assistance to you with this project please contact us.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Mike Koepke, Executive Director  
Cut Bank Development Corporation  
P.O. Box 1359  
4 N Central  
Cut Bank, Mt. 59427  
(406) 873-2337
February 28, 2008

Mr. Jerry McRae
Mc’s Farm
1810 19th Lane NE
Dutton, Montana 59433

Re: MATL Agricultural Impact Cost Estimate

Dear Mr. McRae:

Introduction

This report was prepared by Fehringer Agricultural Consulting, Inc. (Fehringer) in conjunction with HydroSolutions Inc (HydroSolutions) to update cost estimates for the agricultural impact due to the proposed Montana-Alberta Tie Ltd. (MATL) power poles installation on your farm.

Analysis

Attached please find our estimated costs of farming around MATL’s proposed power poles. The attached sheets, DL-4 and DL-8, are for long span interior monopole (Layout D) and interior H-pole (Layout H) placements in a crop-fallow rotation, respectively. Layout D and H are the only placements that are projected to be on your property. These sheets were initially prepared by HydroSolutions and Fehringer for a Montana Department of Environmental Quality (Montana DEQ) study dated July 12, 2007. This study evaluated anticipated costs to farmers as a result of the MATL power poles. The original report’s designated table names were retained so that these updated pages may be compared with the corresponding sheets in the original report. The footprint diagram, Figure 1, is attached as well. All eight the original poles layouts are shown on this page.

Table 1, listing your specific machinery size used for tillage, spraying, seeding, and harvesting, is also attached. “Footprint” amounts remain the same for these layouts as in the July 12, 2007 report. However, overlap areas increased for spraying and seeding since your sprayer is 134 feet instead of the 120 feet for the typical Conrad farmer. In the study, seeder width was 60 feet, whereas yours is 70 feet. Since the herbicide Maverick is applied for cheatgrass control and wild oat suppression, the “Fargo” application column was deleted in Table 1.

In addition to modifying implement widths, prices for inputs have significantly changed since the July 2007 report, and therefore have been modified as well. For example, RT3 (6 pound per gallon Roundup) is now $2.2 per gallon instead of $11.50. Price for phosphate fertilizer (11-52-0 or 18-46-0) has increased from $450 per ton to $800 per ton. It is projected that by the end of March, phosphate fertilizer will be $1,000 per ton. Urea nitrogen is now $600 per ton whereas it was also $450 per ton in June 2007.

Another modification to the cost analysis was to change the input to reflect your use of Maverick instead of Fargo herbicide. Cost per acre for Maverick is $10.01 instead of $15.00 for Fargo. Application expense was increased to $10.00 for spraying since you have to reduce your speed from 8 miles per hour to 4 miles per hour to go around the pole(s) with the 134 foot sprayer. This practice is currently used by you for spraying around power poles already in your fields. The speed reduction results in a 50% reduction in your acres per hour, thus doubling application cost. By not figuring a reduction in speed, even for a 120 foot sprayer in the July 2007 study, was an oversight.

Estimated harvesting expense increased due to projected diesel fuel prices of $3.50 to $4.00 per gallon by harvest time. In addition, combining expense was figured based on a 50 bushel per acre yield. Your long-term yield history for summer fallow winter wheat was estimated to be 60 bushels per acre. Harvesting cost is based on a base per acre fee plus a per bushel charge. The more the crop yields, the higher the combining expense. You stated that you paid $23 per acre in 2007; therefore $25 per acre is reasonable.

For crop loss, wheat value was modified to reflect increase in winter wheat prices, which is currently over $10 per bushel. In summer 2007, spring wheat price used for the original study was $6.00 per bushel. Winter wheat at that time was $5.00 to $5.50 per bushel. With increases in yield and price, the value of your crop in the footprint area is now estimated to be $600 per acre versus $300 in the 2007 study. The value increase also impacts the loss due to overlap. In the original study, overlap damage was projected at 20% of the crop value per acre.

The last modification to the cost of farming around MATL poles was in the cost of weed control. Currently, you have employees apply all the herbicides around current poles, and do not feel comfortable having them apply a residual herbicide that may result in damage outside of the poles’ projected five foot buffer. As you stated, you now have your employees apply RT3 three times during the fallow season, and then apply Maverick and the “In Crop Spraying” mixture during the creeping year. This represents five applications of herbicides in two years.

HydroSolutions Inc
Conclusion

In summary, the annual cost of farming around Layout D and Layout H were $107.98 and $120.57 per acre in the original 2007 study, respectively. With the revisions outlined above, your annual cost is now estimated at $225.50 per acre for long span mono-pole interior field placement (Layout D). For H-pole interior placement (Layout H), your annual cost is estimated at $255.12 per acre. Please refer to Attachments DL-4 and DL-8 for the derivation of costs as summarized in Table 2. The above referenced modifications reflect your current cost of farming around poles. These costs have substantially increased in comparison to the original 2007 study. The basis and foundations for the modifications to the estimating procedure have been outlined above.

Standard of Care

Services performed by HSI personnel for this project have been conducted with that level of care and skill ordinarily exercised by members of the profession currently practicing in this area under similar budget and time restraints. No warranty, expressed or implied, is made. Since this evaluation was developed specifically for your operation, none of the information contained in this revised report and attachments may be used against Montana DEQ.

HSI appreciates this opportunity to provide our services to Jerry McRae. If you have any questions regarding the content of this report, or if I can be of further assistance, please contact Neal Fehringer at 373-5983 or Shane Bolto at 655-9555.

Sincerely,

Neal E. Fehringer
Certified Professional Agronomist, C.C.A.
Fehringer Agricultural Consulting, Inc.

Shane A. Bolto
Senior Environmental Engineer
HydroSolutions Inc

Attachments:
Figure 1 – Pole Configuration Footprint
Table 1 – McRae Footprint Overlap
Table 2 – McRae Dryland Cost of Farming Around Pole(s)
Attachment DL-4
Attachment DL-8

HydroSolutions Inc
### Table 1. McRae Footprint and Overlap

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Layout</th>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Pole Diam. (ft)</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Minimum Buffer Distance From Center of Pole (ft)</th>
<th>Footprint (square feet)</th>
<th>McRae Implement Width (ft)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Mono-pole</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>Interior</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>21,511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>H-pole</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Interior</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>21,511</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
- Mono-pole: Long span is 6.5-ft diameter.
- H-Pole: 3-ft diameter each, 20-ft separation center to center, 23-ft from outside pole to outside pole.
- 5-ft safety buffer

---

### Table 2. McRae Dryland Costs of Farming Around Pole(s).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Layout</th>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Pole Diam. (ft)</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Information Source</th>
<th>Annual Cost (per acre)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Mono-pole</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>Interior</td>
<td>Attachment 4-4</td>
<td>$327.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>H-pole</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Interior</td>
<td>Attachment 0-8</td>
<td>$292.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
- From Figure 1.
- Mono-pole: Long span is 6.5-ft diameter.
- H-Pole: 3-ft diameter each, 20-ft separation center to center, 23-ft from outside pole to outside pole.
- Safety buffer: 5-ft.
Dryland Wheat-Fallow Rotation
Long Span Mono-Pole in Field Interior (Layout D)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operation</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Rate/$</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>No. of Acres</th>
<th>Overlap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post Harvest:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy Harrow</td>
<td>$7.00</td>
<td>acre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemical Fallow:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roundup (RT3)</td>
<td>$52.00</td>
<td>gallon</td>
<td>10 ounce</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$28.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dicamba</td>
<td>$71.00</td>
<td>gallon</td>
<td>4 ounce</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ammonium sulfate</td>
<td>$6.00</td>
<td>gallon</td>
<td>10 ounce</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
<td>acre</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>71.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildfire/Chemtrax Control:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>63.365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maverick</td>
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<td>0.667 pound</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$10.01</td>
<td>1.454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>20.01</td>
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<td>63.365</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phosphate1</td>
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<td>ton</td>
<td>60 pound</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$24.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nitrogen2 (46-0-0)</td>
<td>$600</td>
<td>ton</td>
<td>210 pound</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>63.00</td>
<td>87.00</td>
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<td>Planting:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>19.022</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seed</td>
<td>$30.00</td>
<td>cwt</td>
<td>60 pound</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$18.00</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Seeding</td>
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<td>acre</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>13.00</td>
<td>31.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>In Crop Spraying:</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Affinity Broad Spectrum</td>
<td>$9.25</td>
<td>ounce</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$5.55</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>LV-6 (2-4-0)</td>
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<td>gallon</td>
<td>6 ounce</td>
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<td>0.94</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Surfactant</td>
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<td>1 ounce</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>63.365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combine</td>
<td>$25.00</td>
<td>acre</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>26.00</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.937</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality/Quantity in Overlap</td>
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<td>bushel</td>
<td>60 bushel</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>$120.00</td>
<td>1.136</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pole Footprint</td>
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<td>bushel</td>
<td>60 bushel</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>$600.00</td>
<td>1.454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weed Control Around Pole:</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roundup (RT3)</td>
<td>$52</td>
<td>acre</td>
<td>16 ounce</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>$19.50</td>
<td>120.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maverick</td>
<td>$15.00</td>
<td>ounce</td>
<td>0.067 pound</td>
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<td>10.01</td>
<td>130.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>In Crop Herbicide Mix (application figured below)</td>
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<td>hour</td>
<td>0.25 hour</td>
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<td>$31.25</td>
<td>62.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Labor &amp; Equipment</td>
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<td>hour</td>
<td>0.33 hour</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$82.50</td>
<td>62.50</td>
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</table>

TOTAL COST PER POLE DURING 2 YEAR ROTATION $455.00

ANNUAL COST OF FARMING AROUND LONG SPAN MONO-POLE IN FIELD INTERIOR $237.50

Estimated Winter Wheat Yield: 60 bu/ac

1Band 11-52-0 or 18-46-0 with seed.
2Applying a total of 100 actual units of nitrogen per acre.

Compiled by Neal E. Fehringer, Certified Professional Agronomist, C.C.A. on 2/25/08.

Dryland Wheat-Fallow Rotation
H-Pole in Field Interior (Layout H)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operation</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Rate/$</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>No. of Acres</th>
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<tr>
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<td>acre</td>
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<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemical Fallow:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>gallon</td>
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<td>16 ounce</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
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<tr>
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<td>ounce</td>
<td>0.687 pound</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$10.01</td>
<td>1.454</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>ton</td>
<td>210 pound</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>63.00</td>
<td>87.00</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>$18.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeding</td>
<td>$13.00</td>
<td>acre</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13.00</td>
<td>31.00</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>gallon</td>
<td>1 ounce</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
<td>acre</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>16.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvesting:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>63.365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combine</td>
<td>$25.00</td>
<td>acre</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>7.237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality/Quantity in Overlap</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
<td>bushel</td>
<td>60 bushel</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>$120.00</td>
<td>1.166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pole Footprint</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
<td>bushel</td>
<td>60 bushel</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>$600.00</td>
<td>1.454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weed Control Around Pole:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roundup (RT3)</td>
<td>$52</td>
<td>acre</td>
<td>16 ounce</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>$19.50</td>
<td>120.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maverick</td>
<td>$15.00</td>
<td>ounce</td>
<td>0.667 pound</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.01</td>
<td>130.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Crop Herbicide Mix (application figured below)</td>
<td>$6.62</td>
<td>hour</td>
<td>0.33 hour</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$33.00</td>
<td>66.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor &amp; Equipment</td>
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<td>hour</td>
<td>0.33 hour</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$82.50</td>
<td>66.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL COST PER POLE DURING 2 YEAR ROTATION $510.24

ANNUAL COST OF FARMING AROUND LONG SPAN MONO-POLE IN FIELD INTERIOR $295.12

Estimated Winter Wheat Yield: 60 bu/ac

1Band 11-52-0 or 18-46-0 with seed.
2Applying a total of 100 actual units of nitrogen per acre.

Compiled by Neal E. Fehringer, Certified Professional Agronomist, C.C.A. on 2/25/08.
Response 525: Because the costs and prices used previously have increased substantially, the farmer economics were recalculated and are shown in Section 3.13 using updated 2008 numbers.
Dear Johan van't Hof,

I visited with you on the phone a week or so ago about the MATL power line that is proposed through my farm. We seemed to have a couple of issues regarding the EIS statement about the prices associated with farming around the proposed line. First of all I think all of this will be fruitless as the main desire is to have the line go in a straight line format instead of the diagonal format. The use of single poles instead of the H structures. I have 8 separate transmission and distribution lines now on the farm. The H structure is the most difficult to go around and the most costly to operate around. I presently have an H structure on the farm. It presents the most wood issues and the most varmint issues of any other structure.

However, with that stated, the costs in the EIS are not accurate and alchemy at best.

For instance. The price of Roundup RT3 is not 21.50 per gallon but closer to 55.00 per gallon. Monsanto has informed us that we should expect a 3 dollar per month increase in the price. Monsanto has increased in Feb. 2008 the price of RT3 18.00 alone. That was with the base price of 32 to 36 dollars per gallon.

The price of Topdress N is not 450 per ton but 550 per ton.

The price of Phosphate fert is not 450 per ton but 850 per ton. The fertilizer dealer expects the price to exceed 1000 per ton within months.

The EIS statement implies that there is 60 lbs of fertilizer banded with the seed. However in my area the number is closer to 75 lbs. 60 lbs of fert @450 per ton is 13.50, 75 lbs @ 850 per ton is 31.88 per acre.

Seed cost is not 16.00 per cwt but closer to 20.00 - 24.00 per bushel. The price will depend on the availability and quality of the seed being planted. The certified, registered etc. Treating the grain is to be added to that number. Treating can vary from 1.50 to 3.00 per bushel and higher.

The harvest costs are not 20.00 per acre but close to the 2007 numbers of 27.00 and higher. I was quoted 27.00 by the custom harvesters in this area. I am sure the price will not be lower for 2008

In the past couple of years the cost of farming an acre of ground has held steady at 110.00 - 130.00 per acre. However in the 2008 season the cost will be over double those figures. In operating around an H structure it takes me approximately 2.4 acres of area. That figure is used from the GPS in my sprayer.

A large issue that still is on the horizon is the aggressive tactics used by your agents in the earlier attempts of easement signings. That has created a very disturbing issue for many people. VERY DISTURBING.

I do have many documents supporting my numbers above. If you would like to see them please advise. As the EIS statement quotes, farmers will profit from having poles on their farm. I can assure you that I will NEVER profit from this line having poles in the middle of my fields. A straight line format with single poles is the direction of least impact for me and the least costly to farm around.

3/11/2008

Douglas Banka
688 Business 16
Conrad, Montana
59425

One last issue is the creation of a fire by the power poles. I have had fires from power lines that have created sparks from arcing wires and shorted insulators etc. One as recently as 3 weeks ago. Who is the agency responsible for damages from such actions.

Thank you for your time.

Douglas C. Banka
588 Business 15
Conrad, Montana
59425
Response 526: Because the costs and prices used previously have increased substantially, the farmer economics were recalculated and are shown in Section 3.13 using updated 2008 numbers.
Response 527: Comment noted.
March 11, 2008

Tom Ring
Montana Department of Environmental Quality Mgmt Bureau
PO Box 209901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

RE: Support of MATL

Dear Mr. Ring:

I am writing in support of the MATL. I support the MATL because it benefits both consumers and generators through additional connection with markets in demand of energy. It also will allow additional purchasing options for Montana utilities resulting in lower rates for consumers. MATL is an economic opportunity for Montana by providing additional transmission capacity.

My name is Vanessa Bucklin, and I support MATL.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Vanessa Y. Bucklin
Response 529 and 530: Comments noted.

Buck Teixla
Development Organization
8 March 08
Box 964, 59425

Tom Ring
Montana DEQ
Box 2841, Helena 59602

Dear Mr. Ring,

I would like to state that I favor the proposed MATE transmission line between Great Falls and Butte.

The potential for renewable energy development throughout the entire area is enormous. However, without the transmission line renewable wind energy becomes a moot point and north-central Montana remains in economic despair.

I truly believe the line will be a vital cog in funding for schools and businesses, not to mention tax help for infrastructure of the entire area.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Buck Teixla

RECEIVED
MAR 1 1 2008

Dept. Environmental Quality
Env. Management Bureau
March 10, 2008

Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Environmental Management Bureau
Attn: Tom Ring
P.O. Box 200901
Helena, Mt. 59620-0901

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in support of the MATL line to be constructed in Northern Montana. It would be a great economical benefit to all the citizens of the area either by economical value or reducing taxes within the area.

I do not feel that there are any negatives to this project and it is a win win deal.

Again, I am writing to inform you of my full support of the project.

Sincerely,

Ben Ober
Toole County Commissioner

RECEIVED
MARCH 1 2008

Vol. 2 – Comment Response Document

Response 531: Comment noted.
United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Benton Lake National Wildlife Refuge
922 Bootlegger Trail
Great Falls, Montana 59404-6133

March 10, 2008

Mr. Tom Ring
Environmental Sciences Specialist
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
P.O. Box 200901
Helena, Montana 59620-0901

Mr. Ring:

This correspondence is in response to the receipt of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Montana Alberta Tie Ltd. 230-kV Transmission Line Summary, Benton Lake National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) is nationally recognized as a migratory bird area and on March 17, 2002, the Refuge was designated a Globally Important Bird Area by the American Bird Conservancy. In addition, the Refuge is also recognized as a regional site by the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network.

In a correspondence dated November 29, 2006, from the Service to Mr. Patrick Mullen of AMEC Earth and Environmental, we discussed the proposed transmission line and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s suggestion on modifications that can minimize the impact to wildlife resources.

Specifically, the Service stated that our preferred placement of the transmission lines would be ALT 4_SEGMENTC_BRADYFRONTAGE with slight modification. We recommended that the route be located within 150 feet east and north of the current line, starting 5 miles north of the Refuge (Section 4, T32N, R3E) and ending 3 miles south of the Refuge. As an alternative, the Service also recommended utilizing ALT4_SEGMENTA_WESTGREATFALLS which is routed west and south of the Refuge. These modifications will decrease the likelihood of bird strikes and increase visibility to migratory birds.

Our review of the Summary Draft EIS indicates that these modifications were not incorporated into the Preferred Alternative. We would like to reiterate that we suggest these modifications are made to minimize the impact of the transmission line to wildlife resources. If you have any questions, please contact Refuge Biologist Vanessa Fields at (406)727-7400 Extension 219.

Sincerely,

Kathleen A. Burchett
Refuge Manager

Enclosure

cc:
P. Mullen, AMEC Earth and Environmental, 21 North Last Chance Gulch, Ste 208, Helena, Montana 59601
Response 532: The proposed action and all alternatives avoid refuge lands. Overhead ground wires on alternatives east of the refuge could be marked to reduce avian mortality from line collisions. Also see Section 3.8.3.2, which has been revised. Alternative 4 uses about 30 miles of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s preferred placement.
Response 533 and 534: Comments noted.

March 12, 2008
Mr. Chairman:

**Comment 533**
Browning Area Chamber of Commerce serves the Blackfeet Reservation businesses and is in support of the Montana Alberta Transmission Line. The environmental impact is little compared to the economic impact it will have on our Reservation. Unlike many rural communities, this Reservation does not have to worry about out migration of its population. The population is increasing, indicating not only a large workforce, but a large consuming force, with a need for more local services & goods. The reservation borders Glacier Park this coupled with our unique Blackfeet Culture indicates enormous potential for tourism services. MATL will assist in realizing the potential of our area.

**Comment 534**
As a nation, our energy demands are ever increasing and our options for production are limited. The development of clean wind power and the lines to transport it makes sense. Please support the construction of the MATL Transmission Line. The environmental impacts are minor and the economic benefits are great. We appreciate the time and attention you have given our request.

Sincerely,

John H. Barcus, Member
PO Box 469
Browning, MT 59417
406 338-4015
Response 535: Comment noted.

Montana-Alberta Tie Ltd. 230-kV Transmission Line Project

Name: Daniel Jackson
Address: 400 6th Ave. S.E.
City: Cut Bank
State: MT
Zip: 59427

Comments may be submitted orally or in writing at the public hearing.

Please consider these written comments on the Environmental Impact Statement:

THE MATL PROJECT IS ESSENTIAL TO THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH CENTRAL MONTANA. THE INCURSION IS A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF FARMS AND FARMERS SHOULD BE ACCEPTABLE. MATL HAS BEEN GOOD AT ADDRESSING THEIR NEEDS AND CONCERNS. WITHOUT MATL THE DEVELOPMENT OF WIND ENERGY WILL BE MINIMAL. MATL CAN PROVIDE THE INDUSTRY JOBS AND TAX SUPPORT THE "HIGHS" NEEDED TO GROW AND SURVIVE WITHOUT ANY ADVERSE AFFECT TO THE ENVIRONMENT.

COMMENT DEADLINE March 31, 2008

HOW TO COMMENT AND PARTICIPATE AFTER THE HEARING:

VIEW THE EIS ONLINE AT www.deq.mt.gov/MF/MATL.asp

SUBMIT WRITTEN COMMENTS TO: Mr. Greg Hallsten
Director's Office
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
PO Box 203001
Helena, MT 59620-0901

SUBMIT COMMENTS, QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS VIA EMAIL TO MATL@mt.gov

PROJECT CONTACTS:

Tom Ring, MFSA Coordinator 406-444-6785
Greg Hallsten, MEPA Coordinator 406-444-3276

Individuals needing an alternatively accessible form of information should contact Mr. Hallsten at the address above.
Response 536: Comment noted.

Montana-Alberta Tie Ltd. 230-kV Transmission Line Project

Name: [Name]
Address: [Address]
City: [City] State: [State] Zip: [Zip]

Comments may be submitted orally or in writing at the public hearing.
Please consider these written comments on the Environmental Impact Statement:

I do support the construction of the Montana-Alberta Tie Line near Cut Bank.
& surrounding communities

Comment 536

COMMERC DEADLINE March 31, 2008

HOW TO COMMENT AND PARTICIPATE AFTER THE HEARING:

VIEW THE EIS ONLINE AT www.deq.mt.gov/MFS/MATL.asp

SUBMIT WRITTEN COMMENTS TO: Mr. Greg Hallsten
Director's Office
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
PO Box 20901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

SUBMIT COMMENTS, QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS VIA EMAIL TO MATL@mt.gov

PROJECT CONTACTS:
Tom Ring, MF/SA Coordinator 406-444-6785
Greg Hallsten, MEPA Coordinator 406-444-3278

Individuals needing an alternatively accessible form of information should contact Mr. Hallsten at the address above.
Response 537: Comments noted.
Response 538: Comment noted.

Montana-Alberta Tie Ltd. 230-kV Transmission Line Project

Name: CLINTON J. ANDERSON
Address: 442 Highway 213 N
City: CUT BANK State: MT zip 59427

Comments may be submitted orally or in writing at the public hearing.

Please consider these written comments on the Environmental Impact Statement:

I think it’s very important for the development of the community.

[Signature]

COMMENT DEADLINE March 31, 2008

HOW TO COMMENT AND PARTICIPATE AFTER THE HEARING:

VIEW THE EIS ONLINE AT www.deq.mt.gov/MFS/MATL.asp

SUBMIT WRITTEN COMMENTS TO: Mr. Greg Hallsten
Director’s Office
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
PO Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

SUBMIT COMMENTS, QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS VIA EMAIL TO MATL@mt.gov

PROJECT CONTACTS:
Tom Ring, MFSA Coordinator 406-444-5785
Greg Hallsten, MEPA Coordinator 406-444-3276

Individuals needing an alternatively accessible form of information should contact Mr. Hallsten at the address above.
Response 539: Comment noted.
Response 540: Comment noted.
Response 541: Thank you for your comment
Response 542: Comment noted.
Response 543: Comment noted.

Montana-Alberta Tie Ltd. 230-kV Transmission Line Project

Name

Address

City

Comments may be submitted orally or in writing at the public hearing.

Please consider these written comments on the Environmental Impact Statement:

The one constant in our area is the wind, and anything we can do to use it is needed.

With declining finances in our schools, this project is a huge benefit with the increase in taxable values alone.

The ability to use clean energy is also a major factor: this is definitely a win-win situation for everyone.

COMMENT DEADLINE March 31, 2008

HOW TO COMMENT AND PARTICIPATE AFTER THE HEARING:

VIEW THE BIS ONLINE AT www.doe.mt.gov/MFS/MATL.asp

SUBMIT WRITTEN COMMENTS TO: Mr. Greg Hallsten
Director's Office
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
PO Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

SUBMIT COMMENTS, QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS VIA EMAIL TO MATL@mt.gov

PROJECT CONTACTS:

Tom Ring, MFSA Coordinator
406-444-0700

Ellen Russell, US Department of Energy
202-586-6924

Greg Hallsten, MEPA Coordinator
406-444-3276

Individuals needing an alternatively accessible form of information should contact Mr. Hallsten at the address above.
Response 544: Comment noted.

Montana-Alberta Tie Ltd. 230-kV Transmission Line Project

Name: [Redacted]
Address: 421 3rd St NE
City: Cut Bank State: MT Zip: 59427

Comments may be submitted orally or in writing at the public hearing.

Please consider these written comments on the Environmental Impact Statement:

I would like to express my support of the upcoming MATL project. I feel it is necessary for North Central Montana to continue to grow in the energy world. Without proper transmission we cannot support the growth of the new wind energy. Please consider our concern in your consideration for this project.

COMMENT DEADLINE March 31, 2008

HOW TO COMMENT AND PARTICIPATE AFTER THE HEARING:

VIEW THE EIS ONLINE AT www.deq.mt.gov/MFS/MATL.asp

SUBMIT WRITTEN COMMENTS TO: Mr. Greg Hallsten
Director's Office
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
PO Box 220901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

SUBMIT COMMENTS, QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS VIA EMAIL TO MATL@mt.gov

PROJECT CONTACTS:
Tom Ring, MFSA Coordinator 406-444-5785
Greg Hallsten, MEPA Coordinator 406-444-3276

Individuals needing an alternatively accessible form of information should contact Mr. Hallsten at the address above.
Response 545: Comment noted.
Montana-Alberta Tie Ltd. 230-kV Transmission Line Project

Name: Wade Johnson
Address: 436 Circle Drive
City: Cut Bank
State: MT
Zip: 59427

Comments may be submitted orally or in writing at the public hearing.

Response 546: Comment noted.

Please consider these written comments on the Environmental Impact Statement:

The state of Montana is in need of economic development as well as development of green, renewable energy sources. The MATL project is a positive step in solving both of these problems.

I strongly recommend the approval and construction of the MATL project.

Sincerely,

Wade Johnson

COMMENT DEADLINE March 31, 2008

HOW TO COMMENT AND PARTICIPATE AFTER THE HEARING:

VIEW THE EIS ONLINE AT www.deq.mt.gov/MFS/MATL.asp

SUBMIT WRITTEN COMMENTS TO: Mr. Greg Hallsten
Director’s Office
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
PO Box 220901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

SUBMIT COMMENTS, QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS VIA EMAIL TO MATL@mt.gov

PROJECT CONTACTS:

Tom Ring, MFSA Coordinator 406-444-6785
Greg Hallsten, MEPA Coordinator 406-444-3278

Individuals needing an alternatively accessible form of information should contact Mr. Hallsten at the address above.
March 11, 2008

Mr. Tom Ring
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Environmental Management Bureau
P.O. Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

Dear Mr. Ring:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Montana Alberta Ti Transmission Line. Billman’s Home Decor LLP would like to go on record offering its full support for the electric transmission line proposed by Montana Alberta Tie, Ltd. (MATL). Our business is located in Cut Bank Montana and is dedicated to the promotion and growth of the Cut Bank area. We firmly believe construction of this line will have a positive and lasting effect on not only our community, but the Golden Triangle area.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for this project. We look forward to hearing very soon that a Presidential Permit has been issued for the project and we urge the Montana DEQ and BLM issue the needed certificates of compliance and right-of-ways as required.

Sincerely

Valerie Vermulm, President
Billman’s Home Decor

March 11, 2008

Mr. Tom Ring
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Environmental Management Bureau
P.O. Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

Dear Mr. Ring:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Montana Alberta Ti Transmission Line. We would like to offer our full support for the electric transmission line proposed by Montana Alberta Tie, Ltd. (MATL). Our family owns several rental businesses in Cut Bank making us dedicated to the continued growth of the area. We firmly believe construction of this line will have a positive and lasting effect on not only our community, but the entire Golden Triangle area.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for this project. We look forward to hearing very soon that a Presidential Permit has been issued for the project and we urge the Montana DEQ and BLM issue the needed certificates of compliance and right-of-ways as required.

Sincerely

Rick Billman, Jeff Billman, Valerie Vermulm
R&G Rentals, J&C Rentals, D&V Rentals
March 11, 2008

Mr. Tom Ring
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Environmental Management Bureau
P.O. Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

Dear Mr. Ring:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Montana Alberta Tie Transmission Line. Billman’s Inc would like to go on record offering its full support for the electric transmission line proposed by Montana Alberta Tie, Ltd. (MATL). Our business is located in Cut Bank Montana and is dedicated to the promotion and growth of the Cut Bank area. We firmly believe construction of this line will have a positive and lasting effect on not only our community, but the Golden Triangle area.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for this project. We look forward to hearing very soon that a Presidential Permit has been issued for the project and we urge the Montana DEQ and BLM issue the needed certificates of compliance and right-of-ways as required.

Sincerely,

Rick Billman, President
Billman’s Inc
March 13, 2008

TOM RING, ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES SPECIALIST, MT DEQ

I am a life long resident of Teton County and operate the family farm with my husband in the Pendroy Community. I am also the County Sanitarian for both Teton and Pondera Counties. I am supporting the construction of the MATL line.

I believe that the technology is available that will allow us to develop our natural resources, which will help to meet our energy needs, while maintaining our clean and heathful environment. I also believe that this can be accomplished while recognizing private property rights.

This has the potential to bring much needed economic development to our area which will benefit our local business and our tax base.

Sincerely,

Corrine A Rose

Response 549: Comment noted.
Responses 550a through 550e. See responses to comments 436 and 441 through 443.

Response 550f: Chapter 512, Montana Session Laws 2007, revised Montana’s urban renewal laws. It precludes a city or town from using its power of eminent domain to obtain property with the intent to sell, lease, or provide the property to a private entity. This law does not apply to MATL because it is not a city or town exercising eminent domain authority under the urban renewal laws.

Shawn and Lori Dolan
12418 N. Diamond Dr.
Hayden, ID 83835
March 12, 2008

Mr. Tom Ring
Environmental Sciences Specialist
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
PO Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

Re: MATL EIS Comments

Dear Mr. Ring:

I would like to submit my comments on the Federal Draft of the Environmental Impact Statement for the Montana Alberta Tie Ltd. 230 kV Transmission Line. In general we felt that the document was fairly well done and we appreciate the revised economic impact projections and believe the new projections are more realistic than MATL was feeding to the press. The $240,000 annual tax impact to Pondora County may still be a little optimistic though. We are not opposed to the lines construction; however, we do have a few concerns with some of the material presented in the EIS document. I should point out that I am a registered professional engineer in the State of Montana and have been involved in power line design and construction for over 20 years.

Under the Regulatory Restrictions Analysis Section 5.7 the preparers seem to be more concerned with the potential property rights impact to MATL than the property rights impact to the various US citizens and land owners along the proposed transmission line route. The various agencies should be more concerned with the impact of MATL’s activities on the various land owner’s property rights. Land owners that I might add vote, unlike MATL which is a Canadian based firm. I would like to point out that MATL’s right-of-way agents have been securing “options” at very nominal rates not actively purchasing right-of-way. At least the preliminary documents sent to us were option documents that stated should MATL choose to exercise the option the land owners would be paid their token right-of-way fee. So the impact to MATL’s property rights by requiring them to follow the agency prepared route of Alternative 4 would be fairly minimal.

MATL has repeated stated that it has the ability to condemn property using eminent domain in the State of Montana. How does the recent Montana legislature action last summer limiting the use of eminent domain powers for private enterprise affect MATL’s ability to exercise eminent domain condemnations?
Response 551 and 552: See the response to comment 436.

Response 553: Comment noted.

Response 554a: Comment noted.

Response 554b and 554c: See responses to comments 446. See the discussion of Safety Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 555 to 558: See the discussion of Safety Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

MATL’s Response on page 235 of Volume 2 acknowledges the differing calculated clearance results, but instead of identifying why they received different values from three different engineers by looking at the different assumptions used, they chose to adopt the bare minimum clearance provided by their consultant. As I pointed out and Mr. Bauer of HDR, pointed out design clearances should be prudently greater than the absolute minimum code clearance. The minimum line clearance proposed by MATL is too low and poses a safety hazard to farmer operating equipment under their lines. MATL assumes equipment heights are limited to less than 14 feet in height. Modern farming equipment greatly exceeds this height and can directly contact the 230 kV conductors if constructed at the heights proposed by MATL and will result in a fatality.

To prove this point I contacted the John Deer Corporation and had them email me the dimensional details of their 9000 series combines. I have attached this information for your reference. The model 9870 combine from John Deer has an operational height of 16 feet 7 inches to the top of the combine’s chute. If a farmer were to attach at typical 108 inch (90) CB antenna at the top of the cab of the combine (which is a very common practice) the operational height of the combine jumps to 21 feet 4 inches. This is at or above the minimum clearance proposed by MATL resulting in one electrocuted farmer. As my friend Allen Clapp the former chairman of the National Electric Code Clearances Committee is fond of saying “this is socially unacceptable behavior on the part of the utility”.

The question at hand is whether or not MATL should design the line assuming that typical over height farm machinery such combines will be present. During my conversations with Mr. Clapp former NESC Clearances Committee Chairman last fall at a NESC code class, he indicated that in court a plaintiff’s attorney could easily make that argument and win a large verdict against MATL. If the line is designed at the proposed levels. Mr. Clapp indicated that jury awards for these kinds of cases runs at about $1 million dollars (US) per inch of perceived code violation. My experience has shown that Mr. Clapp’s numbers might be a little low. The power company I work for was involved in an electrical contact law suite a few of years ago and the plaintiff was awarded 10.5 million dollars even though the line was built to code. The plaintiff’s attorneys successfully argued that the utility should have foreseen that a billboard worker could come in contact with the power lines even though the lines met code.

The NESC requires power line conductors to be raised up to accommodate the operation of over height vehicles or machines and requires them to be raised is it is reasonable to assume that the area in question is being used by over height vehicles. I refer you to excerpts I’ve attached from the NESC Handbook, Sixth Edition. See pages 295 through 300. I’ve also attached excerpts from the 2007 version of the National Electric Safety Code covering NESC Rules 232C and 232D the governing rules of the code for this line. Since MATL has chosen to hang its hat on Rule 232D I refer you to 232D subpart 4, which states “The alternate clearance shall not be less than the clearance given in Table 232-1 or 232-2 computed for 98 kv ac to ground in accordance with 232C.” Column 4 pertaining to land traversed by vehicles, such as cultivated, grazing, forest, orchards etc.
Response 559: See the discussion of Safety Issues in the Consolidated Responses section. DEQ would require MATL to comply with the National Electrical Safety Code.

Base Clearance from Table 232-1 up to 22 kV

18.5 feet

Overheight vehicle clearance adder 21 ft 4 inches – 14 feet = 7.5 feet Note 26

Voltage Clearance Adder (98 kV – 22 kV)*.4 inches/kV = 232C.1.a

5.3 feet

Elevation Multiplier (4,500 ft – 3,300 ft)/1000 ft * .03 + 1 = 232C.1.b

x1.036

28.3 feet

29.3 feet

If the combine didn’t have a CB antenna the clearance calculated above would drop to 24.4 feet assuming a maximum operating height of 16 feet 7 inches as published by the John Deere Company. However, my experience in dealing with farmers is that a lot of them do have CB or other radio antennas mounted to their combines. To allow for this fact, it is common utility practice to use minimum line to ground clearances above the bare minimums listed in the NESC tables when crossing farmland. As HDR indicated the Rural Utilities Services (RUS) Design Manual for High Voltage Lines (CFR 1724E-200) requires a minimum clearance of 24.9 feet for 230 kV lines, NSP uses 30 feet as does Grant County PUD. If the state accepts the low conductor levels proposed by MATL it could find itself a joint party in a lawsuit when a fatality occurs due to an electrical contact with the proposed line. I caution you to carefully consider this before you approve the MATL line as designed.

Respectfully Submitted,

Shawn Dolan, P.E.

Enclosures
March 13, 2008

To: Montana Department Environmental Quality
   Environmental Management Bureau
   ATTN: Tom Ring

My name is Everett Snortland. I reside at 207 South Colorado Street,

I was born and raised in Pondera County and I am a retired farmer. This
was my main occupation for forty-three years.

I thank you for this opportunity to present testimony to you and your
agency.

[Comment 560] We in agriculture in the Golden Triangle have for many years produced
wheat, barley, canola, hogs, cattle, lamb, wool and other products, most of
which is exported. Wind generated energy is an environmental friendly
product that has very good export potential.

[Comment 561] The building and use of the Montana-Alberta Transmission Line will
increase our tax base, improve our economy, create jobs and create a price
competitive energy source. It will also ensure an adequate energy supply
locally and statewide.

Your Agency’s consideration and approval of wind energy transmission in
this part of Montana will be greatly appreciated.

Respectfully submitted,

Everett M. Snortland
March 12, 2008

Tom Ring
Environmental Science Specialist
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
PO Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Tom:

Thank you for sending the executive summary for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) regarding the Montana Alberta Tie LTD (MATL). You and your agency have been most helpful with explaining the process and the function of these hearings.

For the record my name is John Dallum, I live in Valier and presently serve the Valier School District as their Superintendent of Schools.

As I read the summary, what was not said or maybe could not be said, struck me. Perhaps a benefit to the nation section could be added to the EIS.

Bonneville Power Administrator, Steve Wright, in remarks to the People Utility District in Oregon recently reviewed the power situation.

“Utilities face complex decisions when acquiring the power we need.”

“Utilities are looking at a number of different resource strategies…our situation will degrade further because of competing demand.”

“We are looking at a supply deficit by 2010. Growth loads will make that come quicker.” “We need an aggressive plan for providing power.”

This document is the first step in solving a desperate need. Your fine office has performed well implementing this plan.

On the MSU Green web site http://green.msu.com the question is asked “Why is it taking so long to develop more clean energy?”

Wind energy has the potential to become a major source of global electricity supply. But will politicians establish the policies required to make this potential a reality? The indefatigable conservationist David Brower would remind citizens, “Politicians are like weather vanes and our job is to make the wind blow.” Nothing could be truer in the case of ensuring politicians make judicious policy and regulatory decisions.

Response 562: See sections 3.13 and 3.17 for benefits from the MATL line, including some benefits that would extend beyond Montana’s borders.

Response 563: Comment noted.
that seize opportunities presented by economically attractive, ecologically sustainable wind power.

Tom in this case the politicians have made the wind blow. The policy is in place the plan has been written.

Tom implement the plan, it is a good one. Well written and thorough.

**Comment 564**
Finally, it is not what power line will do to impact the environment it is what other options will do to the environment.

The Department of Environmental Quality has written a plan:
1. That helps satisfy the need for power
2. A plan that meets environmental tests
3. A plan that moves this region and this nation forward

**Comment 566**
Gentlemen do your duty implement this plan.

John Dallum
Response 566: Thank you for combining your comments. Comments noted.

March 13, 2008
Dear Mr. Ring:

In an effort to show our support for the MATL Transmission Line, and to cut down on the number of responses you must make to our comments, we present this letter as a group of individuals. We support the line and believe that it is good for the area. The economic benefits of the line and the potential development of wind projects in the future will contribute in a positive way to our rural economy. We believe the environmental concerns are minor and we welcome the enhanced tax base and the jobs that will be created. We ask that you move the process forward in an expeditious manner with thought to fairness to the affected landowners.

[Signatures]

[Names of Signatories]
March 13, 2008
MATL EIS Hearing
Comments:

Totally Support

Signature

March 13, 2008
MATL EIS Hearing
Comments:

Strongly Support. Great for the economy in our area.

Signature

Response 567: Comment noted.
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Environmental Management Bureau
ATTN: Tom Ring
PO Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

March 10, 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in support of the Montana Alberta Tie Ltd. This electric transmission line is necessary to open up our area to Wind Energy.

We in Northern Montana are struggling with a dwindling economy and small towns like Sunburst are battling to keep our schools alive and well. This transmission line will make it possible for the planned Phase II Wind Farm to be built, resulting in numerous advantages to our local economy.

I feel that MATL will not negatively impact the environment. It will, however, have a huge positive impact on the area. Not only will we benefit directly from the jobs it creates and the tax base it will provide, but we will also see its benefits in our schools, and in our consumer spending.

Please record my support of this project.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Brian Roark

Response 568 and 569: Comments noted.
Letters with the same content as in Brian Roark’s letter on the preceding page (Comments 568 and 569) were also submitted by the signatories on this page.
To: Montana Department of Environmental Quality  
Attn: Tom Ring  
PO Box 200901  
Helena, Mt. 59620-0901

From: Conrad High School  
Ken Larson, Principal  
215 South Maryland Street  
Conrad, Montana, 59425

Dear Sirs:

I am writing in support of the MATL power line that is proposed for our area. As a school administrator I can assure you that the tax base of our county is in dire need of additional projects and businesses to help support the financial needs of our schools, county and small cities. It is particularly exciting when these projects can provide additional jobs for families in areas that have been suffering from declining population. The MATL project would also open the door to energy development of wind in our area. There is a nation wide shortage of energy and transmission lines. The ability to produce electrical power from the wind projects that are pollution free should be harnessed along and not allowed to be bogged down by the endless filing of court orders by those groups who wish not to prove any points but to win by making time lines of these projects so long that companies simply go else where to build. Coal development exemplifies this and this would be illustrated by the fact that Montana has twice the coal reserves of Wyoming but only 10% of the coal industry of Wyoming.

The MATL line has made many changes to help bring land owners on board. The routes have been changed, tax concessions made, and basic changes such as going to single poles and following property lines have been initiated. I suspect that after all is said in done, the biggest benefit for landowner maybe the reduction in their tax liability after the transmission lines and wind farms become reality.

Comments

Responses 570 to 575: Comments noted.
I would hope that we can reasonably pass “good” projects such as the MATL line through our maze of regulations without undue delays or hardships. I would believe that another “Berkley Pit” project could be recognized and stopped without years of study. Please note my support and the good that will come from allowing this project in our area in terms of economic development and growth in our community. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Amy J Kruse
Conrad Public Schools

Best regards,

Ken Larson, Principal
Conrad High School

Sincerely,

Phil Springer, Science teacher
Conrad Public Schools

Best regards,

Lynn Utterback
Lynn Utterback, Superintendent
Conrad Public Schools
Response 576: Comment noted.

Ring, Tom

From: mkegolf@infowest.com
Posted At: Saturday, March 15, 2008 7:01 AM
Conversation: MATL
Posted To: MATL
Subject: MATL

I am a homeowner in Shelby Montana. I feel that this project would help this small community greatly. I support the proposed Montana Alberta Transmission Line and look forward to hearing very soon that a Presidential Permit has been issued for the project. I urge the Montana Department of Environmental Quality and Bureau of Land Management to issue the need certificates of compliance and right-of-ways as required. Thank you for the opportunity to express my support of this project.

Sincerely
Michael P Smith
Shelby Montana
Response 577: See the discussion of Economic Issues and Line Issues in the Consolidated Responses section for related information.

Response 578: See the discussion of Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Sirs,

This is a follow up letter concerning the MATL (Montana Alberta Tie Ltd.) power line. Again I want to reiterate that this is not about the line itself but the proposed direction of the line (diagonal) and the use of H-structures instead of the preferred mono pole design.

In the Great Falls and Conrad meetings it was brought up several times that everyone should sacrifice and “take one for the team”. I do believe that with the total number of poles and power lines coupled with the pipelines etc. I have done my share of “Taking One for the Team”. Therefore if it is a team effort then EVERYONE should share in the costs and not just a few burden the entire costs of having to farm around a diagonal direction power line. In the next paragraph it will state as the number of issues that I have to deal with on a yearly basis. MATL needs to address the issue of a straight line format only. I should not be saddled with a diagonal direction because of the funding problems that MATL has with making the line a few miles longer. It has been brought to my attention that the Northern portion of the line is only on a straight line format. We are asking for the same consideration that our Northern neighbors have been afforded.

As in my previous letter I wish to state that I have an existing 230 kV line cross the property. It consists of 30 + mono poles and of those only 2 of the poles presents any type of issues. The only issues they present are because of the location in the middle of fields. To operate around one of these poles presents an additional 2.4 acres of added input costs. I have also a 115 KV line that cuts a diagonal across the property.
Response 579: Your comments regarding pole placement, weeds, gophers, and grasshoppers are noted. The agencies also note your comment indicating that pole placement at the edge of fields reduces interference with farming activities. Also see the discussions of Farming Issues and Legal and Regulatory Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 580: Thank you for submitting more information on farm input costs. The agencies updated the analysis of farming costs in Section 3.13.2. See the discussion of Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 581: Herbicides and other pesticides that deteriorate rapidly should not affect groundwater quality or grain germination and growth over time. As the commenter notes, most of the pesticides used by farmers are in this category. For more persistent pesticides and for fertilizer nutrients, the potential for effects would vary with the chemical and the farming method. Usually, soil moisture will soak only to about 4 feet in dryland and pivot and wheel line irrigated fields, and generally it will not reach more than about 6 feet even in flood irrigated fields. Thus, it is unlikely that any of these products would get into ground water. However, on either dryland or irrigated fields, excessive application of fertilizer could adversely affect surface water quality by increasing nutrient runoff that can promote excessive growth of algae and other aquatic plants. Excess fertilizer nutrients that reached groundwater below irrigated fields could discharge to springs or seeps that enter surface streams, also adversely affecting surface water. With or without a transmission line, farmers should monitor their fertilizer and pesticide use to avoid overloading (Technical memorandum from Shane A Bofto, Engineer, HydroSolutions, Inc. to Tom Ring, DEQ, dated July 17, 2008).

Response 582: Although MATL proposes to raise conductor height, farmers and aerial sprayers would have to exercise caution around the transmission line. Also see the discussion of Safety Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 583: Comment noted.
Response 584: Comment noted.

Response 585: A map of the area in question was sent to Mr. Majerus by e-mail on April 4, 2008. Alternative 3 does dissect the center pivot in that section. Also see the discussion of Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 586: See the discussion of Socioeconomic Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 587: The topic of property taxation for Native Americans living on the Blackfeet Reservation is beyond the scope of this EIS. Potential impacts of the proposed project on property tax revenues and other socioeconomic conditions are discussed in Section 3.13.

From: Mary Guse
To: Tom Ring
Subject: Support

As a past assessor of Glacier County I support the Montana Alberta Tie transmission line. During my tenure as assessor, I have seen Glacier County’s tax base decline because of the decreasing amount of oil and gas production. We need to increase our tax base and why not with renewable energy such as wind generators.

Glacier County especially needs industry because not all of the county residents pay county and state taxes. The burden is being passed on to those who are not Native American. I am not saying that all Native American do not pay taxes, but according to the laws of Montana those who are enrolled members of the Blackfeet Reservation living on the reservation are exempt from county and state taxes. This creates an unfair burden on those that do pay. Industry would contribute to relieving some of that inequity.

Thank you

Mary Guse
18 7th Ave SE
Cut Bank, MT  59427
Response 588: Thank you for pointing out the error. The correction is included in Section 3.6.1 in the EIS.
Response 589: Your comments are noted.

Response 590: Local, sustainable energy technologies can still be developed in this part of the state. However, their development would not satisfy the project need.

Response 591 and 592: Comments noted.
Response 593: Representatives of DEQ and MATL met with the Koenigs to discuss the possibility of a new local routing option to address the concerns raised in this comment. The Koenigs indicated they did not want the line crossing their property and did not want the agencies to consider additional alignments on their property.
Response 594: Your comment on Alternative 4 is noted, however, the agencies note that the reference to R5W may be in error.

March 13, 2008

Montana Department of Environmental Quality
P.O. Box 200901
Helena, Montana 59620-0901
c/o: Tori Ring

Dear Mr. Ring,

Regarding the routing on the proposed 230KV transmission line, I would request (alternative 4) R5W be utilized. This routing is more of a direct approach with a straight line to the final required destination. At this time I would not desire the lines to cross my property due to the impact of wildlife in the area. I purchased the property as an investment with the intent to preserve the raw natural beauty of the land. I would rather the proposed placement not cross my property line.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Kathy Cummings
KMC INC
March 12, 2008

Mr. Tom King
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
P.O. Box 200901
Helena, Montana
59620-0901

Dear Mr. King,

I am writing in response to the invitation to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Montana/Alberta Tie Transmission Line. I am chairperson of the Northern Rockies Medical Center in Cut Bank.

As a small rural medical facility, NRMC is impacted by the shift in population up or down and the economies of the area. We struggle to bring adequate health care to the citizens in our service area. I view the proposed electric transmission line as a positive step in bolstering the economy, which in turn will make it easier to provide better healthcare. Wind energy in my opinion is a “clean” industry that will not impact the environment negatively. I am in favor of the proposed project by Montana/Alberta Tie, Ltd.

I appreciate the opportunity to express my opinion and speak in favor the transmission line. I look forward to hearing of the progress being made in obtaining the necessary permits and right-of-ways to complete the project.

Sincerely yours,

Rev. Gerald Ebel
Response 596: See the discussion in the EIS, Section 3.4.2. Although no federal or state regulations are in effect specifying environmental limits on the strengths of magnetic fields from power lines, the agencies have worked to site the line so that it would not be in close proximity to residences. The agencies acknowledge that those people working in close proximity to the line would be exposed to elevated electromagnetic fields. In addition, MATL’s policy is to minimize EMF exposure levels to the extent practicable. MATL would use a vertical optimized phasing orientation for the proposed line, where phases of the single circuit are offset to minimize the line’s EMF strength. While additional research has occurred since 1999, the cover letter transmitting an exhaustive report about potential health implications of exposure to EMF still summarizes the state of science on this topic. (NIEHS REPORT 1992). An excerpt from this cover letter follows:

“The scientific evidence used in preparation of this report has undergone extensive scientific and public review. The entire process was open and transparent. Anyone who wanted “to have a say” was provided the opportunity.

“The scientific evidence suggesting that ELF-EMF exposures pose any health risk is weak. The strongest evidence for health effects comes from associations observed in human populations with two forms of cancer: childhood leukemia and chronic lymphocytic leukemia in occupationally exposed adults. While the support from individual studies is weak, the epidemiological studies demonstrate, for some methods of measuring exposure, a fairly consistent pattern of a small, increased risk with increasing exposure that is somewhat weaker for chronic lymphocytic leukemia than for childhood leukemia. In contrast, the mechanistic studies and the animal toxicology literature fail to demonstrate any consistent pattern across studies although sporadic findings of biological
effects have been reported. No indication of increased leukemias in experimental animals has been observed.

“The lack of connection between the human data and the experimental data (animal and mechanistic) severely complicates the interpretation of these results. The human data are in the "right" species, are tied to "real life" exposures and show some consistency that is difficult to ignore. This assessment is tempered by the observation that given the weak magnitude of these increased risks, some other factor or common source of error could explain these findings. However, no consistent explanation other than exposure to ELF-EMF has been identified.

“Epidemiological studies have serious limitations in their ability to demonstrate a cause and effect relationship whereas laboratory studies, by design, can clearly show that cause and effect are possible. Virtually all of the laboratory evidence in animals and humans and most of the mechanistic work done in cells fail to support a causal relationship between exposure to ELF-EMF at environmental levels and changes in biological function or disease status. The lack of consistent, positive findings in animal or mechanistic studies weakens the belief that this association is actually due to ELF-EMF, but it cannot completely discount the epidemiological findings.

“The NIEHS concludes that ELF-EMF exposure cannot be recognized at this time as entirely safe because of weak scientific evidence that exposure may pose a leukemia hazard. In my opinion, the conclusion of this report is insufficient to warrant aggressive regulatory concern. However, because virtually everyone in the United States uses electricity and therefore is routinely exposed to ELF-EMF, passive regulatory action is warranted such as a continued emphasis on educating both the public and the regulated community on means aimed at reducing exposures. The NIEHS does not believe that other cancers or noncancer health outcomes provide sufficient evidence of a risk to currently warrant concern.

“The interaction of humans with ELF-EMF is complicated and will undoubtedly continue to be an area of public concern. The EMF-RAPID Program successfully contributed to the scientific knowledge on ELF-EMF through its support of high quality, hypothesis-based research. While some questions were answered, others remain. Building upon the knowledge base developed under the EMF-RAPID Program, meritorious research on ELF-EMF through carefully designed, hypothesis-driven studies should continue for areas warranting fundamental study including leukemia. Recent research in two areas, neurodegenerative diseases and cardiac diseases associated with heart rate variability, have identified some interesting and novel findings for which further study is ongoing. Advocacy groups have opposing views concerning the health effects of ELF-EMF. Some advocacy groups want complete exoneration and others want a more serious indictment. Our conclusions are prudent and consistent with the scientific data. I am satisfied with the report and believe it provides a pragmatic, scientifically-driven basis for any further regulatory review.”

The alternatives developed by the agencies have avoided siting the line in close proximity to areas of concentrated human use such as homes, schools, and businesses, where humans would be exposed to EMF from the transmission line over prolonged periods. This approach has been termed “prudent avoidance”. The agencies recognize that persons working in agricultural operations and travelers will be exposed to elevated EMF for short periods as they work and travel under and near the lines.
Response 597 and 598: Comments noted. The agencies do not have the authority to reserve transmission capacity for a particular use. Under regulations of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, MATL is required to provide open access to generators without special treatment for anyone. The benefits of the MATL line are discussed in Sections 3.13 and 3.17. Where the power flowing over MATL would be used is the decision of power generators, utilities, and other electricity buyers.

Response 599: Comment noted.
Response 600: Comment noted. While the line could facilitate the development of wind resources and other generation facilities, it would be a merchant line and provide another transmission path to and from Montana. When the wind is not blowing or when wind generators are not fully exercising their agreements to transmit power over MATL’s line, the proposed line could be available to other generators and power users on a short-term, non-firm basis.

Response 601: Comments are noted.
Response 602 to 604: Comments noted. See the discussion of Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 605: Comment noted.

Good Morning,

I am in favor of the Xcel line coming thru Teton County. The tax revenue is greatly needed. Any wind generation in this area could tap into this line.

Thank you.

Jim Anderson
Wings and Wild Things
Choteau, MT
Response 606 to 609: Comments noted.

From: Sean Pahut [sme.pahut@hrvers.net]
To: Power Line

To whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter of support for the Montana-Alberta Tie Power Line. The Montana Hi-Line has long been economically barren with the persistent drought and the continued migration of people out of our communities. This power line gives our area an economic opportunity that has not been seen for a long time. I agree with the people who are concerned about the land owners and their interests should be addressed as much as possible, however, nothing is 100% perfect and I believe that the company has attempted to rectify any concerns that have been brought to its attention.

A few days ago I saw a picture of Governor Schweitzer in Butte welcoming a German company who will be building windmills in Butte. I would hope to see our state government turn away an opportunity that will kickstart wind generation along the Rocky Mountain Front considering our State is portraying itself as a leader in green energy.

Please approve this powerline and its current route so that the project can start immediately without any additional cost to the company. I believe that the long term benefits outweigh any short term pains that some people may/may not experience.

Sincerely,

Sean Pahut
past president Shelby Chamber of Commerce
Shelby, MT
Response 610 to 612: Comments noted.
Response 613: Comment noted.

MATIL Project:
MT. Dept. Environmental Quality
Management Bureau

To Whom It May Concern:

The Glacier County Commissioners would like to be on the record as in support of the
MATIL line being proposed for construction in our county. We have previously, in
meetings with MATIL personnel and publicly shown our support for the MATIL line.
We want to continue to show our support for this project and any others that may offer
opportunities for economic growth in our area. Thank you for your public comment
presentations in our area.

Glacier County Commissioners;
John W. Ray
Michael DesRosier
Ron Rides At The Door
Response 614: Comment noted.

Hi there,

I am in favor of the MATL line coming thru Teton County. I believe this is good for our local economy and for the state.

Thank you,

Mary Anderson
Choteau, MT
Response 615: Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks did not express any concerns regarding the Land & Water Conservation Fund program in its review of the EIS. Further review found that none of these sites would be crossed.
Response 616: Thank you for pointing out the error. The correction is included in Section 3.6.1.

Ms. Ellen Russell

If you have any questions regarding the L&WCF projects that could be impacted, please contact Terrie Klauecky, Outdoor Recreation Planner, in the National Park Service Midwest Regional Office at 402.221.1556.

In addition, under separate cover the U.S. Geological Survey has provided a typographical correction to their Internet link on page 3-66.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Robert F. Stewart
Regional Environmental Officer

cc: Tom Ring, Montana DEQ
Response 617: The EIS analyzes effects of the proposed line and several alternatives. Length of the proposed line in the United States is approximately 130 miles. All alternative alignments would extend from the Cut Bank area to Great Falls, and would cross but not parallel I-15. See Figures 2.3-1, 2.4-1, and 2.5-1 for locations of these alternatives.

Assessment of cumulative effects of potential wind farm development, including location, size and number of turbines, was based on the best available information. The agencies do not know at this time where turbines would be located. The agencies judged it unduly speculative to assume that feeder lines more than 40 miles in length would be built to serve a single moderate sized wind farm outside of Glacier National Park or the Rocky Mountain Front. Also see the discussion of Visual Issues and Wind Farm Issues in the Consolidated Responses section and the discussion of wind farms in Chapter 4.
Response 618: Comment noted.
Response 619: Comment noted. See the discussion of Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 620: See the discussion of Safety Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 621: Comments noted.

Montana-Alberta Tie Ltd. 230-kV Transmission Line Project

Response 621: Comments noted.

Name: Mike Haden
Address: 115411 8th St SW
City: Everett WA State: WA Zip: 62347

Comments may be submitted orally or in writing at the public hearing.

Please consider these written comments on the Environmental Impact Statement:
I support the proposed Montana-Alberta Transmission line and look forward to hearing very soon that a Presidential permit has been issued for the project. I urge the Montana Dept of Environmental Quality and Bureau of Land Management to issue the needed certificates of compliance and right-of-ways as required. Thank you for the opportunity to express my support of this project.

Comment Deadline March 31, 2008

How to Comment and Participate After the Hearing:

View the EIS online at www.deq.mt.gov/MFS/MATL.asp

Submit written comments to: Mr. Greg Hallsten
Director's Office
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
PO Box 200601
Helena, MT 59620-0601

Submit Comments, Questions or Concerns via email to MATL@mt.gov

Project contacts:

Tom Ring, MFSA Coordinator 406-444-9765
Greg Hallsten, MEPA Coordinator 406-444-3276

Individuals needing an alternatively accessible form of information should contact Mr. Hallsten at the address above.
Montana-Alberta Tie Ltd. 230-kV Transmission Line Project

Name: Geni Laben
Address: 118 4th St. SW
City: Cut Bank, State: MT, Zip 59427

Comments may be submitted orally or in writing at the public hearing.

Please consider these written comments on the Environmental Impact Statement:

Excessive noise and lost farming is being
very soon that a Presidential Permit has been
secured for the project. I urge the Montana Dept
of Environmental Quality and Bureau of Land
Management to review the noise certificates of
compliance and right-of-way as required. Thank
you for the opportunity to express my support
of this project.

COMMENT DEADLINE March 31, 2008

HOW TO COMMENT AND PARTICIPATE AFTER THE HEARING:

VIEW THE EIS ONLINE AT www.deq.mt.gov/MFSI/MATL.asp

SUBMIT WRITTEN COMMENTS TO:
Mr. Greg Hallsten
Director's Office
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
PO Box 200601
Helena, MT 59620-0901

SUBMIT COMMENTS, QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS VIA EMAIL TO MATL@mt.gov

PROJECT CONTACTS:
Tom Ring, MFSI Coordinator 406-444-4785
Greg Halsten, MEPA Coordinator 406-444-3276

Individuals needing an alternatively accessible form of information should contact Mr. Hallsten at the address above.

Montana-Alberta Tie Ltd. 230-kV Transmission Line Project

Name: Scott Loden
Address: 118 4th St. SW
City: Cut Bank, State: MT, Zip 59427

Comments may be submitted orally or in writing at the public hearing.

Please consider these written comments on the Environmental Impact Statement:

I support the proposed Montana Albertas
Transmission line and look forward to
hearing very soon that a Presidential Permit
has been issued for the project. I urge
the Montana Dept of Environmental
Quality and Bureau of Land Management
to issue the needed certificates of
compliance and right-of-ways as required. Thank
you for the opportunity to express my support
of this project.

COMMENT DEADLINE March 31, 2008

HOW TO COMMENT AND PARTICIPATE AFTER THE HEARING:

VIEW THE EIS ONLINE AT www.deq.mt.gov/MFSI/MATL.asp

SUBMIT WRITTEN COMMENTS TO:
Mr. Greg Hallsten
Director's Office
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
PO Box 200601
Helena, MT 59620-0901

SUBMIT COMMENTS, QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS VIA EMAIL TO MATL@mt.gov

PROJECT CONTACTS:
Tom Ring, MFSI Coordinator 406-444-6785
Greg Hallsten, MEPA Coordinator 406-444-3276

Individuals needing an alternatively accessible form of information should contact Mr. Hallsten at the address above.
Response 622: The potential cumulative impacts of wind farms that may connect with the MATL line, assessed in Sections 4.1 to 4.16, are based on realistic estimates of likely locations and conservative estimates of the number of wind turbines that could be built. Specific details are not yet available, and neither DOE nor DEQ would have regulatory authority over the siting of wind farms unless specific locations required a water quality permit under the Montana Water Quality Act. Because mortality data from areas with high bird migration are included in the data used as a basis for analyzing potential mortality of birds and bats, the analysis should bound the potential impact on migratory birds. The EIS discusses the potential for adverse effects on birds from facilities near Benton Lake National Wildlife Refuge. Freezeout Lake is about 40 miles west of Great Falls, so it should not be affected by the wind farms sited to connect directly to the transmission line. Also see the discussion of Avian and Wildlife Issues in the Consolidated Responses section and sections 3.8.3 and 4.9.
Response 623: Assessment of cumulative effects of potential wind farm development, including location, size and number of turbines, was based on the best available information. The agencies do not know at this time where turbines would be located. MATL has not proposed to upgrade the line (see the discussion in response to comment 183). DOE would require a new NEPA review if capacity increase were proposed for the MATL transmission line. The agencies judged it unduly speculative to assume that feeder lines more than 40 miles in length would be built to serve a single moderate sized wind farm outside of Glacier National Park or the Rocky Mountain Front. Therefore, this situation is not reasonably foreseeable. Also see the discussion of Visual Issues and Wind Farm Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 624: Since 1995 Montana’s legislature has decreased the amount of regulatory control over generation facilities under the Montana Major Facility Siting Act. In 2001 the legislature removed the DEQ’s authority to regulate the location of most types of generation facilities. DEQ does not have the authority to regulate the location of wind farms under other statutes it administers. Without statutory authority, DEQ cannot guarantee that the public would have a voice in determining where future wind farm developments should or should not be located. The agencies understand that the wind farms would be located on privately owned land. See the discussion of Wind Farm Issues in the Consolidated Responses section and sections 4.1 through 4.16.

Response 625: Comment noted.
Response 626 to 629: See the discussion of Wind Farm Issues in the Consolidated Responses section. In compliance with NEPA, analysis of the potential cumulative impacts of reasonably foreseeable actions, including wind farms that may use the transmission capacity of the proposed MATL line, is in Sections 4.1 to 4.16. The cumulative impacts analysis considers the impacts of wind farm developments that might be built to use the full potential transmission capacity of the MATL line. The analysis is based on the best available information respecting the potential sizes, designs, and locations of reasonably foreseeable future wind farms.
be the best chance – possibly the only chance – that the public will ever have to consider and comment on such impacts to this region of Montana.

Finally: PLEASE, NO WIND FARMS NEAR THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN FRONT! [Comment 630]

Respectfully,

Gene Sentz
PO Box 763
Choteau, Montana 59422
friends@3rivers.net

NEPA Requirements to be studied in an EIS:

Sec. 1508.7 Cumulative impact.

"Cumulative impact" is the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time.

Sec. 1508.8 Effects.

"Effects" include:

(a) Direct effects, which are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place.

(b) Indirect effects, which are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable. Indirect effects may include growth inducing effects and other effects related to induced changes in the pattern of land use, population density or growth rate, and related effects on air and water and other natural systems, including ecosystems.

Effects and impacts as used in these regulations are synonymous. Effects includes ecological (such as the effects on natural resources and on the components, structures, and functioning of affected ecosystems), aesthetic, historic, cultural, economic, social, or health, whether direct, indirect, or cumulative. Effects may also include those resulting from actions which may have both beneficial and detrimental effects, even if on balance the
Response 631: Comment noted.

Response 632: See the discussion of Visual Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 633: The topic of legal mechanisms to prevent industrial encroachment on the Rocky Mountain Front is outside the scope of this EIS.
Response 634 to 635: Comments noted.

Response 636: The Rocky Mountain Front is more than 50 miles away from the proposed MATL line and more than 10 miles away from the nearest potential wind farm that might use the MATL line. See the discussion of Visual Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 637 and 638: Comments noted.
expediant development of more economically efficient and ecologically sound energy technologies and natural resource usage. However, I cannot support decisions which would threaten the ecological sanctity of a region considered to be one of the most biologically diverse, historically intact, and therefore significant regions of the planet. Additionally, I will stand and speak in opposition to any decisions with threaten to carry on the tradition of culturally detrimental economic practices which have faced Montanans since long before its statehood. The integrity of the place and its people, ecologically, culturally, and then economically \textit{must} become a principle factor in all decisions made by the governments affecting this state.

I thank you sincerely for your attention to the concerns and very real needs of the state of Montana.

Sincerely,
Bethann Garramon

Never miss a thing. Make Yahoo your homepage.
March 20, 2008

To: Montana Department of Environmental Quality
From: Fredrick C. Trafelet, Valier, MT
Re: MATL

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a teacher in the Valier Public School system. I would like to go on record supporting the Montana Alberta Transmission Line. After reading comments in regards to MATL, I feel the benefits completely outweigh any negative effects felt by the construction of the power line.

The figures I’ve seen appear to indicate the potential to have strong economic impact in the area. The creation of employment possibilities with the addition of families to our local area would be of great interest to all local schools.

Landowners are fairly compensated for lines passing across the underlying land. Tax paying farms also benefit from having the tax base expanded.

The power line and associated wind development will add jobs and tax base to our economy.

Again, I would go on record supporting the Montana Alberta Transmission Line.

Respectfully submitted,

Fredrick C. Trafelet
PO Box 211
Valier, MT 59486

Response 639 to 641: Comments noted.
Response 642 and 643: Comments noted.

Response 644: Comment noted. The agencies acknowledge that, visually, different viewpoints provide different perspectives. See the discussion of Visual Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 645 and 646: Comments noted.
Response 647: The agencies do not know at this time where turbines would be located. The agencies judged it unduly speculative to assume that feeder lines more than 40 miles in length would be built to serve a single moderate sized wind farm outside of Glacier National Park or the Rocky Mountain Front. Also see the discussions of Visual Issues and Wind Farm Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 648: DEQ staff contacted Mr. Carney for permission to walk on his property to inspect the landslide adjacent to MATL’s proposed alignment. Mr. Carney granted his permission. A neighbor gave a DEQ staff member a ride to the State Trust Land section at the Teton River crossing, and the DEQ staffer proceeded on foot on the Carney property. DEQ staff did not cut Mr. Carney’s gate.

Response 649: Comment noted.

Response 650: Comment noted.

Response 651: Comment noted. The commenter is correct in observing that when Western Area Power Administration built the Great Falls to Conrad and later the Conrad to Shelby 230 kV transmission lines, it sited the lines on rangeland and pasture where it was available. Elsewhere, those lines generally used field boundaries in most but not all areas.

Response 652: Federal regulations prevent the line from sharing the right-of-way of the interstate system. Locating the line off the interstate right-of-way would still place structures in farm fields and would also place the line near homes.
Response 653 and 654: See the discussion of Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 655: Under Montana law the use of eminent domain is not limited to a governmental entity and may be exercised by a private company as long as it is for a public use listed in Section 70-30-102, MCA. Also see the discussion of Legal and Regulatory Issues in the Consolidated Responses section for related information.

Response 656: Comment noted.

Response 657: Comment noted.
March 28, 2008

Tom Ring, Environmental Sciences Specialist
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
PO Box 200901
Helena, MT 59602

Dear Tom:

We are writing to express our enthusiastic support of the proposed MATL Line from Lethbridge to Great Falls. This is a very important project for Northern Montana and Toole County in particular. This power line will generate over one billion dollars of investment in Toole, Pondera, and Glacier Counties. It will also be positive for power consumers in Montana, as the byproduct, wind energy, will add 600 Megawatts to the total generation capacity in the grid. Other positive byproducts will be construction and permanent jobs, tax base increase, and stimulation of our local economies.

We believe that there are legitimate concerns from landowners and that they should be worked out as best they can be, but we feel very strongly that there be no further delays to the project. Again, we strongly support the project and hope that you will grant them the permitting needed as soon as possible. Thanks for listening.

Respectfully,

Ben Ober
Chairman

Allan Underdal
Commissioner

Dave Miller
Commissioner

Response 658 and 659: Comment noted. See the discussion of Socioeconomic Impact Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
TO: THE MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

We the undersigned strongly endorse approval of the Montana-Alberta Tie Line (MATL) from Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada to Great Falls, Montana.

MATL is the key to development of up to $1 billion in wind energy projects that will be an enormous economic benefit for north central Montana, the State of Montana, and the nation’s energy supply. The increased tax base, construction jobs, royalty payments from wind generators, and the permanent monitoring and maintenance jobs will provide badly needed tax dollars for Montana, local schools, law enforcement, fire departments, county roads, parks, and other services.

Wind is one natural resource northern Montana has plenty of and, in fact, it is rated one of the best and most reliable wind resources on the North American continent. Without transmission lines to move electric power, wind cannot be developed.

After a rather rough start, MATL is demonstrating an eager willingness to work with affected landowners to address concerns regarding routing of transmission lines and placement of poles that would be potentially disruptive to agriculture operations. This includes the use of monopoles rather than “3T” poles, wherever it is practical. MATL has entered into multiple landowner agreements should this project receive final approval and concurs with recommendations in the DEQ report. Landowners must be fairly compensated and treated with the upmost dignity...

The MATL line will improve the reliability of the electric transmission system in both Montana and Alberta by making these regions less vulnerable to outages, brownouts, and creating a greater opportunity to import and export electricity, all of which is of benefit to consumers and suppliers. It’s predicted the United States within a few years will experience an energy shortage due to increased demand and the cancellation of approximately 60 coal fired generation projects in the U.S. because of environmental concerns. It’s absolutely imperative we develop this country’s green and clean energy resources for our generation and future generations to come.

It is important to note that MATL is a “merchant line” and the large capital investment and risk is made by the banks and private investors rather than by local taxpayers in Montana and Alberta.

We urge your approval of the MATL application without costly delays that could very well jeopardize the entire project. Your final routing decision should be fair to all parties, MATL and landowners, striking a good balance between what makes sense economically and addresses the most sensitive issues in a responsible and proper manner.

A good analogy is, “it’s would be like connecting power cables to a huge battery that moves the economic engine of development”. Let’s move forward and approve the MATL Montana.

L/80

Response 660 to 666: Comments noted.
Responses 667 and 668: See the discussion in the response to comment 436.

Response 669: Unguyed single poles at angle structures would reduce impacts by removing guy wires that may interfere with farming practices. Unguyed single pole structures would add costs as indicated below. In addition, the agencies recognize that some agricultural producers would choose to sterilize the soil between the poles of an H-frame structure or between the structure and the guy wire anchors to control weeds. Others would choose to establish a more permanent perennial grass cover that would compete with weedy species.

Both the single pole and three pole structures would be classified into three types: small angle, medium angle, and deadend. The unguyed structures would require large foundations with anchor bolts and much larger steel poles to hold the conductor loads. This results in higher costs for unguyed structures as compared to guyed structures. The following estimates are labor and material cost comparisons per structure for the three types:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Guyed</th>
<th>Unguyed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Pole Structure</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Small Angle</td>
<td>$15,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medium Angle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deadend</td>
<td>$30,000.00</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Guyed</th>
<th>Unguyed</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Three Pole Structure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Angle</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Angle</td>
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<td>$70,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deadend</td>
<td>$50,000.00</td>
<td>$120,000.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: HDR 2007. Also see the discussion of Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 670 and 671: Comments noted.
27 March 2008

Mr. Tom Ring
Department of Environmental Quality
PO Box 206901
Helena, MT 59602

Subject: MATL

Dear Mr. Ring,

First, we would like to thank you again for your support with our ongoing difficulty with MATL. We appreciated the time you took to support an alternate route away from our home and off our property.

Second, it needs to be stated at no time have we had a positive or “good neighbor” contact from MATL as consistently declared at the meeting in Cut Bank. Every phone call from them was hostile, aggressive and demanding. We were clearly told lies such as, “all of the meetings were over, all the permits have been issued, we have to sign what ever they send us, they will put the power lines anywhere they want, condemn any part of our property they want, and we have nothing to say about this.” We disagree with them

and will continue to fight for our rights. At the meeting the concern about the additional financial burden for MATL for alternate routes was discussed. How can you equate what is simply pennies on the dollar for a large foreign corporation as compared to the potential billions of profit versus the negative impact on the quality of life on a family and community. We believe it will “cost” us more than MATL if they do not follow an alternate route.

Thirdly, we feel that this is a lose-lose situation for the United States of America, the state of Montana and Glacier county. All of the true benefits go to Canada. They are willing to give some token monetary benefits. But, as a whole it doesn’t do anything to decrease our foreign energy dependence. It simply trades one country for another. Would we let Venezuela or Iran run a project like this in the United States of America?

Lastly, the only support we can give this project as we wrote before is to keep it off of our property.

Sincerely,

Joseph J. Karcher Jr. & Diane C. Karcher
PO Box 354
Cut Bank, MT 59427
Response 678 to 681: Comments noted.

Ring, Tom

From: Brett Doney (BDoney@gtdevelopment.org)
Posted At: Monday, March 31, 2008 5:22 PM
Posted To: MATL EIS Comment
Subject: MATL EIS Comment

Tom Ring
Montana DEQ

Ellen Russell
US Dept. of Energy

Tom and Ellen,

On behalf of the Great Falls Development Authority, I am writing to provide further comment on the draft EIS for the Montana Alberta Tie Line project.

We believe that the draft EIS provides a thorough and comprehensive review of the environmental issues raised by the project. We commend everyone who has been involved in preparing the draft.

We urge DEQ and the US Department of Energy to move expeditiously to complete the EIS process and to issue the required permits and approvals to allow the project to be constructed as soon as possible.

The development of renewable energy sources such as wind power cannot take place without the development of transmission capacity to carry power to where it is needed. Transmission lines are difficult to develop because they cross many parcels of land in different ownership. Satisfying every property owner while keeping a proposed line financially viable is not always possible, however, in this case we believe the alternative proposed by the applicant comes very close.

In our verbal testimony, we made the following points demonstrating how this project is in the public interest:

1) This project is needed to stabilize and strengthen the existing electricity grids in the region.

2) This project is needed to allow for much needed economic development in the primarily rural counties of north central Montana. Energy development, particularly utilization of our natural wind resource, is an industry we have targeted to diversify our regional economy, create higher wage jobs, and strengthen the tax base recently weakened by the loss of one of Malmstrom Air Force Base’s missile squadrons.
Response 682a: Comment noted.

Response 682b: Land that is within 660 feet on either side of the midpoint of right-of-way or easement for a transmission line with a design capacity of 30 megavolt-amperes or greater and constructed after January 1, 2007, is exempt from property taxes under Section 15-6-229, MCA. The exemption does not apply within the boundaries of an incorporated or unincorporated city or town; to a platted and filed subdivision; or to land used for residential, commercial or industrial purposes. Also see the discussion of Tax Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 683: Comment noted.
Response 684 and 685: In compliance with NEPA, analysis of the potential cumulative impacts of reasonably foreseeable actions, including wind farms that may use the transmission capacity of the proposed MATL line, is presented in the EIS (see Sections 4.1 to 4.16). Also see the discussion of Wind Farm Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 686: See the discussion of Wind Farm Issues in the Consolidated Responses section. Additional information on bird and bat mortality from the Judith Gap Energy Center wind farm is included in the discussion of Avian and Wildlife Issues in the Consolidated Responses section and in the EIS, Section 4.9.

Response 687 and 688: In compliance with NEPA, analysis of the potential cumulative impacts of reasonably foreseeable actions, including wind farms that may use the transmission capacity of the proposed MATL line, is in Sections 4.1 to 4.16. The cumulative impacts analysis considers the impacts of wind farm developments that might be built to use the full potential transmission capacity of the MATL line. The analysis is based on the best available information respecting the potential sizes, designs, and locations of reasonably foreseeable future wind farms. See the discussions of Wind Farm Issues and Legal and Regulatory Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 689: Comment noted.

Wind power has the potential to make a remarkable contribution to Montana's economy and to provide a wonderful, carbon-free source of energy. However, it must be done right, so that the environmental, aesthetic, and social costs do not outweigh the many potential benefits. There are some places where industrial wind farms simply do not belong. The Rocky Mountain Front is one of those places.

Sincerely,

Zack Winestone
92 Horatio St.
New York, NY 10114
PO Box 351
Augusta, MT 59410

NEPA Requirements to be studied in an EIS:

Sec. 1508.7 Cumulative impact.
"Cumulative impact" is the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time.

Sec. 1508.8 Effects.
*Effects* include:
(a) Direct effects, which are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place.
(b) Indirect effects, which are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable.
Indirect effects may include growth inducing effects and other effects related to induced changes in the pattern of land use, population density or growth rate, and related effects on air and water and other natural systems, including ecosystems.
Effects and impacts as used in these regulations are synonymous. Effects includes ecological (such as the effects on natural resources and on the component, structures, and functioning of affected ecosystems), aesthetic, historic, cultural, economic, social, or health, whether direct, indirect, or cumulative. Effects may also include those resulting from actions which may have both beneficial and detrimental effects, even if on balance the agency believes that the effect will be beneficial.
Response 690: See the discussion of Socioeconomic Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 691: Comment noted.
Response 692 to 694: Comments noted.

Ring, Tom

From: Shane Brosder [sbroder@yahoo.com]
Posted At: Monday, March 31, 2008 8:50 AM
Conversation: MATL Comments
Posted To: MATL
Subject: MATL Comments

Mr. Tom Ring,

I would like to state that I am in favor of the Montana Alberta Transmission Line. The line will provide a positive environmental and economic impact to the areas surrounding the line. In my opinion, the potential for wind-farms adding onto the line would more than make up for any environmental issues presented by the line itself. More wind-farms should be installed to lessen the demand for fossil fuel powered electrical plants. The wind-farms could also serve as a small economic boost to open minded land-owners along the line. I also feel more tax-break incentives should be considered for those with renewable energy generation facilities on their property.

Shane Brosder, P.E.
8840 Douglas Circle
Helena, MT 59602

Like movies? Here's a limited-time offer: Blockbuster Total Access for one month at no cost.
http://to.deals.yahoo.com/to/blockbuster/text4.com
Response 695 and 696: Comments noted.

Ring, Tom

From: Vernon Berger [iceberg@northernmt.net]
Posted At: Sunday, March 30, 2008 9:35 PM
Conversation: MATL LINE
Posted To: MATL
Subject: MATL LINE

Tom Ring
Environmental Sciences Specialist
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Helena MT 59602

I strongly support the proposed MATL line. All 2 runs through two miles of my farmland and I believe it will be a great asset to myself and the complete area.

The poles will be a nuisance to farm around but not any more than the gas wells and pipes we now have to farm around.

Vernon C. Berger
258 Berger RD
P. O. Box 457
Cut Bank, MT 59427
Response 697: As the comment indicates, wind farms that may use the transmission capacity of the proposed MATL line are considered to be reasonably foreseeable actions that may result in cumulative impacts. Analysis of potential cumulative impacts is presented in Sections 4.1 to 4.16. See the discussion of Wind Farm Issues and Legal and Regulatory Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 698: See the discussion of the analysis of impacts in Chapters 3 and 4.

Response 699 and 700: Neither DEQ nor DOE has a regulatory role in siting wind farms nor do the agencies have regulatory jurisdiction over wind farm development or operation. The agencies were aware of the 2007 draft California guidelines while preparing the Draft EIS. These guidelines are now finalized in California.

Response 701: The detailed information requested in the comment would require specific knowledge of the locations of proposed wind farms. This information is not available. See the discussion of Wind Farm Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 702: See the discussion of Economic Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 703: See the discussion of Line Issues and Economic Issues in the Consolidated Responses section and the responses to comments 166, 167, and 168.
Response 704: In compliance with NEPA, analysis of the potential cumulative impacts of reasonably foreseeable actions, including wind farms that may use the transmission capacity of the proposed MATL line, is in Sections 4.1 to 4.16. The cumulative impacts analysis considers the impacts of wind farm developments that might be built to use the full potential transmission capacity of the MATL line. See the discussion of Wind Farm Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 705: See the discussion of Wind Farm Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 706: Comment noted.

Response 707: See the discussion in Chapter 4 and the discussion of Wind Farm Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 708: Location of structures on property lines would help reduce interference to farming activities so long as there is not an existing road located along a property line. Movement of farm equipment along a road may be impeded by siting on a property line. Also see the response to comment 85.

Response 709: The optimum placement for a single pole would be along a property line if there is no road present. Locating a single pole or H-frame structure inside a field but less than the toolbar or sprayer width from the edge of a field could cause a larger area to be taken out of production than moving the single pole or H-frame structure farther away from the field edge and allowing farming equipment to work around a structure (de Waal Malefyt 1979). This principle would apply whether a single pole or an H-frame structure would be used.

Response 710: Comment noted. Today’s line clearances may not be adequate in the future as the size of equipment increases.

Response 711 and 712: See the discussions of Safety Issues in the Consolidated Responses section and Section 3.4.

Response 713: Potential impacts on aerial spraying are discussed in Section 3.1 and were a consideration in developing local routing options (See the discussion in Section 2.6).

Response 714: Comment noted.
Response 715 and 716: Comments noted.

To whom this may concern:

I am writing in support of the MATL power line. Because I am involved in our farming operation, I feel the construction of this power line should follow the boundaries of the land and the single pole construction would be beneficial to any farmers whose land will be used for this project.

We need this line for wind power projects.

I appreciate your consideration about this issue.

Sincerely, Bonnie J. Kronebusch; 8206 Old Shelby Rd., Conrad, MT 59425.
Response 717: See the discussions of Wind Farm Issues and Visual Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Ring, Tom

From: dimenchyphoto@axl.com
Posted At: Thursday, March 27, 2008 9:45 AM
Conversation: MATL proposal
Posted To: MATL
Subject: MATL proposal

I want to go on record, please, with my feelings about the MATL proposal. Montana's Rocky Mountain Front is one of the most special undeveloped and uncluttered landscapes in North America. A lot of people have fought long and hard to keep it that way. And, while I support alternative energy, I would rather not see big wind farms built anywhere near The Front.

Thank you so much.

Sincerely,

Ruth Rudner
Harrison, Montana & Corrales, New Mexico

Planning your summer road trip? Check out AOL Travel Guides.
Response 718: See the discussion of Wind Farm Issues in the Consolidated Responses section and Chapter 4 for a discussion of the cumulative impacts.

Responses 719 and 720: In compliance with NEPA, analysis of the potential cumulative impacts of reasonably foreseeable actions, including wind farms that may use the transmission capacity of the proposed MATL line, is in Sections 4.1 to 4.16. The cumulative impacts analysis considers the impacts of wind farm developments that might be built to use the full potential transmission capacity of the MATL line. The analysis is based on the best available information respecting the potential sizes, designs, and locations of reasonably foreseeable future wind farms. See the discussions of Wind Farm Issues and Visual Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Dan Bennett
2410 5th Avenue South
Great Falls, MT 59405

March 28, 2008

VIA EMAIL: MATL@mt.gov

Montana DEQ
Environmental Management Bureau
ATTN: Tom Ring
P.O. Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Mr. Ring:

I believe the DEIS is fatally flawed due to its failure to consider the cumulative impacts – specifically the impacts of wind farms on the Rocky Mountain Front and on migratory birds that use the Front – of the tie line. The NEPA requires agencies to consider foreseeable impacts “regardless of what agency or person” undertakes the action. This would include wind farms on private lands along the Front that would not be economically feasible without the MATL. The MATL may very well be separate and independent from the wind farms. This does not absolve agencies from complying with their duty to consider the cumulative effects of their proposal. The NEPA specifically identifies natural resources, the functioning of ecosystems, and aesthetic, historical and cultural resources as effects that must be considered in the DEIS.

The time to address these issues is now. It is much more economical to prepare a supplement to the DEIS than to charge forward into a morass of litigation.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this issue.

Sincerely,

Dan Bennett
Response 721: Comment noted. However, it is premature to conclude that a decision has been made by the DEQ that would allow the project to proceed. Such a decision cannot be made by DEQ for at least 15 days following publication of the EIS and by DOE for at least 30 days following publication of EPA’s notice of availability of the Final EIS in the Federal Register.

Response 722 to 725: Comments noted.
Response 726: Impacts on farming and visual resources are discussed in Sections 3.1 and 3.15, respectively. Although structures with guy wires would increase the size of the footprint compared to non-guyed structures, the guy wires do not substantially contribute to increased visual impact due to their small diameter and inconspicuous nature compared to the structures and conductors. The agencies used proximity of the line (its structures and conductors) to residences, recreation areas, and roads as the key factor influencing magnitude of visual impact.

Response 727: Comment noted. DEQ will weigh costs and benefits of all parties in the EIS and in its siting determination.

Response 728: Comment noted. All alternatives identified in the EIS fall within the study area identified by MATL. See the discussion of Legal and Regulatory Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 729: MATL has changed its proposal and now would use monopoles on about 56 miles of line crossing cropland or CRP on the diagonal. See the discussion in Section 1.3.1.

Response 730: MATL has changed its proposed compensation package. See the discussion in Sections 2.3 and 3.13.2. DEQ is not aware of any other Montana utilities or electric cooperatives that are making annual per pole payments to farmers.

Response 731: Comment noted. See the discussion of Tax Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 732: The EIS has been revised to reflect the changes to MATL’s MFSA application. See the revised discussion in Section 2.3, and the discussion of Safety Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 733: The proposed right-of-way is now 105 feet wide.

Response 734 and 735: Comments noted.
Response 736: Section 202(e) of the Federal Power Act requires that no person shall transmit electric energy from the United States to a foreign country without first obtaining authority from DOE. The Act specifies that DOE shall issue an export order upon application unless, after opportunity for hearing, it finds that the proposed export would impair the sufficiency of electric supply within the United States or would impede the coordination in the public interest of facilities subject to the jurisdiction of DOE. Each export application is evaluated on its own merits and it is neither possible nor appropriate to speculate on the likelihood of issuing an export authorization to an entity that has not yet applied to DOE.

Response 737: While not challenging, an export authorization applicant must comply with the evidentiary requirements of the program regulations contained at 10 CFR 205.300 et seq. DOE has been able to respond to export requests within 60 days of receipt of an uncontested application.

Response 738: No. DOE will not accept an application to transmit electric energy to a foreign country using facilities that have not yet been authorized by issuance of a Presidential permit.

Response 739: DOE and DEQ cannot speculate on the factors which may affect the viability of the MATL line.

Response 740: MATL has indicated it would pay for a 105-foot easement. See the discussion in Section 1.6.
Response 741: Although the decision regarding interconnection of the Glacier Wind Farm (formerly the McCormick Wind Farm) changes some details presented in the EIS, it does not change the need to consider the project as part of the cumulative impact assessment in the EIS. The Marias Substation is still being proposed by MATL regardless of the Glacier Wind Farm because an intermediate substation is needed to house switching equipment and series capacitors. Since MATL does not intend to change its plans for the Marias Substation, the discussion in the EIS has not been revised.

Response 742: Yes. See Appendix M in the Final EIS.

Response 743: Comment noted. Impacts to farming land use are discussed in Section 3.1.
Response 744: There would be a slight increase in carbon dioxide emissions resulting from additional equipment usage in order to farm around structures. Activities and variable factors involved in farming around are discussed in Section 3.1. The increase would be very small relative to total emissions of greenhouse gases in the region, which are discussed in Section 4.12.

Response 745: Any driving over fields with equipment will cause compaction. This includes concrete trucks and cranes. It would be worse when the soil is wet. Trucks and equipment should be kept in one track to minimize impacts. Additional compaction would be expected with more trips across an area such as when farming around poles. However, the 20% yield reduction listed on the farming costs in Section 3.13 takes this into account. Although soil compaction from agricultural equipment may have detrimental effects on crop yields, soil bulk density, and soil water processes, any effect on carbon storage in soil would be inconsequential. Carbon in the plow layer actively cycles between soil, plants, and atmosphere. Carbon sequestration is accomplished by farming practices that add large amounts of crop residues and other stable biomass to the soil and increase the soil’s organic content. Continuous no-till crop production is one of the best examples of a farming practice that can increase soil organic matter and thus help sequester carbon from the atmosphere into soil (Bofto 2008). In response to this comment, information about compaction has been added to Section 3.2.3.2.
Response 746: Alternative 4 would result in the shortest distance of transmission line crossing cropland at a diagonal (See Table 3.1-3). Section 3.1.3 discusses the additional impact from diagonal crossings. Routine maintenance can often be scheduled to occur following the completion of harvest thereby reducing crop damages.

Diamond Valley South would be adjacent to about 1 mile of field road in T24N R1E between sections 3 and 10. Diamond Valley Middle would be adjacent to about 2.5 miles of field road in between T25N, R1E and T25N, R2E, and T25N R2E and T24N R2E. Diamond Valley North would be adjacent to field roads in T25N R2E between sections 31 and 32, 30 and 29, and 19 and 20. The estimated maximum number of miles of trails needed by alternative is: Alternative 2 – Dryland = 81.71 miles, Irrigated = 0.3 mile, Range = 27.55 miles; Alternative 3 – Dryland = 87.84 miles, Irrigated = 3.31 miles, Range = 17.91 miles: Alternative 4 – Dryland = 72.45 miles, Irrigated = 0 mile, Range = 40.96 miles.

Response 747: DEQ could require that construction not take place in cultivated areas during spring and summer. DEQ could also require that farmers receive compensation for damages caused by transmission line construction, such as crop losses caused by construction during the growing season.

Response 748: Alternative 2 would not cross cottonwood stands on the Marias or Teton River. See the discussion of Vegetation, Wetland and Weed Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 749: See the discussion of Tax Issues in the Consolidated Responses section. The assessment assumed that MATL would be taxed at 3 percent because the agencies did not know whether the additional 50 percent tax abatement would be issued by local governments.

Response 750: The correction you stated for Table 3.18-1 has been made. The analysis presented in Section 3.13 indicates that Alternative 2 would cost more to farmers than Alternative 4.

Response 751: The agencies do not regulate MATL’s choice to make particular easement payments. MATL is not prohibited from seeking easements in advance of obtaining approval from DEQ. The regulatory restrictions analysis is required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act. Also see the discussion of Legal and Regulatory Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 752: Legal notices of the meeting dates and locations were printed in the following newspapers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Publication Dates</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Valierian</td>
<td>Valier</td>
<td>Feb. 21 &amp; Feb 28, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Shelby Promoter</td>
<td>Shelby</td>
<td>Feb. 21 &amp; Feb 28, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choteau Acantha</td>
<td>Choteau</td>
<td>Feb. 20 &amp; Feb 27, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Falls Tribune</td>
<td>Great Falls</td>
<td>Feb. 17 &amp; Feb 24, 2008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A press release was issued, but not all the newspapers picked up the story. DEQ is aware that the following newspapers ran articles about the meetings – Acantha, Promoter, Pioneer Press, and Valierian.

Response 753: Comment noted.
Response 754: The property tax changes made in 2007, including those made in HB 3 of the 2007 Special Legislative Session, did not change the tax rate on wind farms. In other words, wind farms did not get an additional incentive under HB 3. The tax rate on wind farms was dropped to 3% in the 2005 Legislative Session. The tax information presented in the EIS is correct for wind farms. Also see the discussion of Tax Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 755: Section 3.4 contains the discussion of the potential impacts associated with electric and magnetic fields that would be produced by the MATL line. Also see the response to comment 596.

Response 756: Your corrections are noted. Also see the discussion of Tax Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 757: See the discussion of Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section. The tax advantage information has been changed accordingly to address your comment. The property tax relief to farmers is no longer included in the numerical comparison between costs and benefits, although it is mentioned separately.

Katrina Wilson Martin
1720 24th Ln NE
Dutton, MT 59433
406-463-2337
Response 758: Comment noted.

Response 759 and 760: Comments noted. See the discussion of Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 761: See the discussion of Eminent Domain in the Legal and Regulatory Issues of the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 762: Comment noted. Also see the revised discussion in Section 3.13.

Response 763 to 765: Invitations were mailed to the owners of property in the Diamond Valley area. Mr. Goodmundson’s address was obtained from the database of property owners used in assessing state property taxes. DEQ has no record of the letter sent to that address being returned with an incorrect address. See the discussion in response to comment 746 for miles of field roads affected.

Mr. Goodmundson’s concern about interference with use of a field road is noted and will be taken into consideration when making a decision.

DEQ must make the findings required by the Major Facility Siting Act and associated administrative rules before approving the project. Your comments will be taken into consideration when making a decision. Also see the discussion in the responses to comments 708 and 709.
March 31, 2008

Ms. Ellen Russell, Project Manager
Office of Electric Delivery and Energy Reliability
U.S. Department of Energy
Washington, D.C.

Dear Ms. Russell:

The Department of the Interior submitted comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Montana Alberta Tie Ltd. 230-kV Transmission Line, Montana, on March 21, 2008. The following additional comments were received from the National Park Service too late for inclusion in that letter. Please accept our apologies for any inconvenience this may cause.

Comment 766: The National Park Service understands that one of the benefits of the MATL could be alternative energy production by developed wind farms on lands east of Glacier National Park’s boundary. They are supportive of alternative energy development, including wind energy, as a national goal, but are concerned that this type of development could adversely affect the park’s views, skies, and raptor populations during migration.

Comment 767: Glacier, along with Waterton Lakes National Park in Canada, is the world’s first International Peace Park and also a World Heritage Site and a Biosphere Reserve. Glacier National Park has raised concerns about impacts to the viewsheild from development on the east side in the 1999 General Management Plan, in 2001 when the Park submitted comments to Bonneville Power Administration for the proposed Blackfeet Wind Project near Browning, and during scoping for this project in 2007.

Comment 768: In its scoping comments to US DOE, Glacier National Park asked that potential impacts to the Park be analyzed under cumulative impacts, but upon review of the DEIS, they did not find potential impacts to the Park acknowledged, disclosed or analyzed in the Cumulative Impact Section. Impacts to views were discussed only in a general sense.

Response 766 to 768: See the discussions of Visual Issues and Wind Farm Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 769: See the discussion of Avian and Wildlife Issues in the Consolidated Responses section. Note that the cumulative effects analysis analyzed impacts on all potentially impacted migratory birds. Birds were not grouped based on their destination as there is no advantage to this approach.

Response 770: See the discussion of Visual Issues and Wind Farm Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 771: DOE and the state will attempt to honor the National Park Service request for information when the agencies are involved with proposals for wind farms within 15 miles of the park boundary. However, the agencies are not likely to have any role in future wind farm projects in that area.

Ms. Ellen Russell

Comment 769
Cumulative impacts to bird species that frequent Glacier National Park were also not analyzed, although the document did analyze impacts to birds and raptors from these kinds of facilities. Impacts to night skies in Glacier National Park from future wind farm development were also not analyzed. While we understand and acknowledge safety concerns, lights on the wind turbines and associated development could have significant impacts on Glacier’s night skies that are valued by park visitors and necessary for the health and survival of some wildlife species.

Comment 770
The mitigation measures described in Appendix O to reduce impacts to visual resources, raptors and night skies were well developed and appear to be complete given available technology and knowledge. However, we urge you to address ways to require implementation of these measures for any subsequent wind farm development, particularly farms that are adjacent to the park boundary or within view of Glacier National Park.

Comment 771
Wind farm development on public lands would be subject to further analysis and public involvement; however wind farm development on private lands would not be, unless state or local permits are required. All of the land adjacent to Glacier National Park on the east side is within the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. We anticipate working with the tribe to mitigate impacts from future wind farms, but in the event that DOE or the State are involved, Glacier National Park would like to be notified of any future wind farm proposals within 15 miles of the park boundary.

If you have any questions regarding these comments, please contact Mary Riddle, Environmental Protection Specialist, Planning and Compliance Coordinator Glacier National Park at (406) 888-7698.

Sincerely,

Robert F. Stewart
Regional Environmental Officer

cc: Tom Ring, Montana DEQ
March 31, 2008

Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Environmental Management Bureau
ATTN: Tom Ring
PO Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

Re: the Montana Alberta Tie Line (MATL)

The Montana Farmers Union (MFU) would like to comment about potential benefits and/or impacts the Montana Alberta Tie Line (MATL) design may have on local area landowners and agriculture producers.

Montana Farmers Union policy has strongly supported development of alternative energy options within our state. We recognize the benefits that can be gleaned from wind energy development projects as well as other alternatives such as the planting, crushing and production of fuel from oil seed crops. As always, Montana farmers stand ready to help our state and our country move toward energy independence.

We do not support renewable energy developments at all costs however. We believe that development should be done smartly and with a critical eye toward the impacts or benefits to rural landowners. We think that it is in our state’s economic development interests that such developments be locally owned and operated whenever possible – thus keeping revenues working in the state and in the supporting communities.
Response 774 and 775: Comments noted.

In the case of the Montana Alberta Tie Line, where local impact — not ownership — is the central issue of our concern, we support development if it can be accomplished with as little impact to the affected landowners as possible. The negative impact of the diagonal lines being proposed from approximately Conrad south is significant. They pose unnecessary burdens on the farmers whose property the lines cross.

MFU believes that the best way to minimize impact while still ensuring that the development moves forward is by building power lines along field lines, section lines and with the use of monopoles in CRP and cropland.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments.

Sincerely,

Alan Merrill, President
Response 776: Comment noted.

Response 777: Comments noted.

Response 778 to 779: Comments noted. See the discussion of Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 780: Comment noted.

Response 781: Comment noted.
Response 782: See the discussion of Wind Farm Issues and Legal and Regulatory Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 783: See the discussion of Wind Farm Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Volume 2 – Comment Response Document

Response 784: See the discussion of Tax Issues, Legal and Regulatory Issues, and Wind Farm Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 785: See the discussion of Wind Farm Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 786: See the revisions to Section 4.9, which includes information from a recent study of bird mortality estimated at Montana’s largest operating wind farm near Judith Gap.

Response 787: See the discussion of Wind Farm Issues in the Consolidated Responses section. DNRC has no power line easement applications in the area of the proposed MATL line (Sullivan 2008).

Response 788: Kevin Rim is discussed in Sections 3.7, 3.8, and 3.10. The easternmost alternative route for the transmission line (Alternatives 2 and 4) is approximately 7 miles due west of the Kevin Rim Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The other routes are further west. Additionally, the agencies note that one anemometer is located near Kevin Rim. Although the presence of an anemometer does not equate to a wind farm, the presence of an anemometer does indicate interest in wind resources.
Response 789: Regarding wildlife surveys, see the discussion of Avian and Wildlife Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

As stated in Table 2.3-4, “Raptor safe power line construction practices (Edison Electric Institute, Avian Power Line Interaction Committee) would be employed during transmission line construction.” Additionally, in Table 2.3-4, it states “Approved line marking devices would be installed at appropriate intervals and appropriately staggered on each overhead ground wire across stream crossings and migratory bird flyways (for example wetlands) within the Right-of-Way.” These areas would be finalized during design.

Section 3.8.3.2 contains a discussion of potential collision impacts as well as environmental protection measures that would be implemented.

As stated in Appendix F, environmental specifications under consideration by DEQ would include the requirement that “Overhead ground wires within 1/4 mile of wetlands will be marked to reduce the potential for collisions after inspection and a determination of the need for marking in consultation with FWP and FWS biologists.”

Response 790: The easternmost route (Alternatives 2 and 4) is approximately 7 miles due west of the Kevin Rim area ACEC and about 3 miles west of the rims northwest and southwest of Kevin. Alternative 3 is farther west.

MATL has carried out field studies using censusing protocols, including call back surveys, to determine the presence of listed species. Few areas of concern have been identified. See Section 4.9.

Response 791: MATL has agreed to use perch guards where, in collaboration with regulatory authorities, it is determined that they are required. The MATL transmission line is located about 3 miles from the rims northwest and southwest of Kevin. Regarding wildlife surveys, see the discussion of Avian and Wildlife Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 792: Comment noted.

Response 793: The alignments cross land to the east (Alternatives 2 and 3) or south and west (Alternative 4) of Benton Lake NWR. Alternative 2 and 3 routes are approximately 0.8 to 0.9 mile away from Benton Lake, but much closer to the eastern boundary of the NWR, while Alternative 4 is more than 2 miles from the nearest NWR boundary. This information has been included in Section 3.8.3.2.

Response 794: See the discussion in the responses to comments 789 and 791.

Response 795: Comments noted. See the discussion of Legal and Regulatory Issues and Vegetation, Wetlands and Weed Issues in the Consolidated Responses section. Aloe Lake is 10-12 miles from the transmission line alternatives. North of Cut Bank, Alternatives 2 and 4 pass near Hay and Grassy lakes, while Alternative 3 passes near or crosses several unnamed ponds and intermittent lakes.

Response 796: As the comment notes, little native grassland habitat remains in the area, and the habitat that remains is fragmented. Transmission line development should not contribute to substantial fragmentation of grassland habitats because any permanent disturbance of grassland vegetation would be spatially discontinuous; only the sites of transmission line support structures would be permanently disturbed for construction. Alternative 4 would cross the greatest amount of grassland but Alternative 2, which best avoids grasslands, conflicts with your preference to remain as far away from the refuge as possible.

Response 797: Comment noted.
Response 798: Farming and other development in the area has already fragmented the natural grassland habitat. Transmission line development could contribute to additional fragmentation of grassland habitats, especially along the Dry Fork Marias River on Alternative 4.

Response 799: Comment noted.
Response 800: Until the project is completely planned and engineered, it is not possible to determine the location and length of access roads. The project would employ environmental protection measures to minimize the area disturbed due to access roads and the impacts from erosion, soil compaction, and noxious weeds. See Table 2.3-2 in the EIS and Section 2.7 of Appendix F.

Response 801: As discussed in Section 3.8.3.2, transmission line design standards provide adequate spacing to prevent raptor electrocution.

Response 802: Section 3.8.2.2 has been updated to reflect the latest surveys. Lek surveys were conducted on April 30 (ground) and May 2 (aerial), 2008. Although some isolated sharp-tailed grouse were seen, no leks were observed. Wind breaks and shrubby areas are generally avoided. See the discussion of Avian and Wildlife Issues in the Consolidated Responses section. It is possible that sharp-tailed grouse may collide with the line.

Response 803: The majority of impacts to winter range would be short term due to construction activities. The DOE and DEQ did not find the long-term impacts to be at a level to warrant mitigation as long-term impacts would consist of a minimal amount of habitat loss.

Response 804: Comments noted. Road length and impacts would be minimized as outlined in the DEIS. The contradiction between the Chapter 2 summary “requiring” a clean vehicle policy and Chapter 3 and Appendix C “recommending” clean vehicle mitigation has been corrected. The requirement is for vehicles to be thoroughly washed. See Appendix F, item 2.8.6.
During the preparation of the Major Facility Siting Act application (MFSA) and the Draft EIS, MATL communicated with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks relative to known locations, population status, and habitat use of sharp-tailed grouse in the project area. MATL also conducted lek surveys in areas of suitable habitat within the project area (MATL 2006b, as referenced in the EIS). Field surveys undertaken by MATL in 2005 resulted in the verification of seven sharp-tailed grouse leks, three observed and four heard.

MATL’s MFSA application (MATL 2006b), page 83 provides the following discussion on grouse winter range: “Gary Olson, Region 4 biologist for Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MFWP) in Conrad identified shelterbelts and riparian areas as areas where Sharp-tailed grouse concentrate during severe winters (Olson 2006). MT Natural Heritage Program cited the MFWP Bird Coordinator, Rick Northrup, as also identifying riparian and brush-covered areas as important to sharp-tailed grouse during severe winters (Maxwell 2006). MFWP has not developed this information into a GIS layer that could be used to make a map. But, Olson reiterated that sharp-tailed grouse are widely distributed within the Project Study Area from the Canadian Border south to Great Falls. He said that field and homestead shelterbelts as well as native riparian areas, including brush coulee bottoms, are where sharp-tailed grouse concentrate during severe winters.”

During a subsequent conversation with Gary Olson on May 6, 2008, he reiterated that there were no available data on sharp-tailed grouse movement patterns relative to winter habitat use for the Project Area, and that given the wide and diverse distribution of potential severe winter habitat, additional detail could not be expected or provided. He did indicate that some 2008 data recently collected for areas north of Cut Bank would provide additional information on spring distribution and habitat use (including lek attendance).
Response 805: Your comment is noted. Section 3.7.3.2 discusses revegetation with the appropriate seed mixtures. For CRP land those seed mixtures would be determined by the requirements of the CRP program.

Response 806: Your comment is noted. Additional information pertaining to wetlands in Teton County is presented in Section 3.6. The delineation of all wetlands along the selected alignment where it traverses Teton County is primarily to assist with the engineering design and pole placement, so that all wetlands can be spanned. DEQ has draft Environmental Specifications (Appendix F, revised in the Final EIS) that are essentially mitigation measures that apply to many environmental aspects of the project to ensure that the disturbed areas are returned to conditions as good as or better than before construction. Additional mitigation measures specific to wetlands and Waters of the United States may be required by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers under a Nationwide #12 Permit (Utilities Line Activities), if any construction, maintenance, or repair of utility lines and associated facilities is required within a jurisdictional wetland and Waters of the U.S. DOE has completed consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for this project. The inventorying of wetland plant species of concern could be included as an ecological component of the delineation of wetlands along the selected alignment.

Response 807: DEQ’s administrative rules allow the department to hold a bond and monitor reclamation.

Response 808: Comment noted.
Response 809 to 811: Comments noted.

Response 812 and 813: See the discussion of Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 814 to 818: Comments noted.
A good analogy is, “it would be like connecting power cables to a huge battery that moves the economic engine of development”. Let’s move forward and approve the MATL project for Montana. We respectfully ask for your positive and thoughtful far-reaching decision for our great state.

Senator Jerry Black
Senator Roy Brown
Senator John Braunigman
Senator Aubyn Curtis
Senator Jeff Essmann
Senator Kelly Gebhardt
Senator Kim Gillian
Senator Ken Hanson
Senator Rick Laibbe
Senator Lane Larson
Senator Jesse Laskovich
Senator Dave Lewis
Senator Jim Peterson
Senator Trudi Schmidt
Senator Frank Smith
Senator Don Ryan
Senator Joe Tropila
Senator Don Steinbeisser
Senator Keith Bales
Representative Llew Jones
Representative Tim Callahan
Representative Edith Clark
Representative Sue Dickenson
Representative Julie French
Representative Ralph Heinert
Representative Gordon Hendrick
Representative Pat Ingraham
Representative Harry Kloch
Representative Bob Lake
Representative Scotti Mendenhall
Representative Bill Nooney
Representative Jesse O’Hara
Representative Alan Olson
Representative Mike Phillips
Representative Rick Ripley
Representative Jon Sesso
Representative Wayne Stahl
Representative John Ward
Representative Bill Wilson
Representative Jonathan Windy Boy
Representative Ken Peterson
Representative Gary MacLaren
Representative John Parker
Representative Bill Beck
Representative Mike Milburn
Representative Duane Ankney

Response 819: Comments noted.
Response 820 to 822: Comments noted. See Farming Issues and Socioeconomic Issues in the Consolidated Responses section. Additional signatures to this letter are on the next page.
Response 823 and 824: Comments noted.

March 31, 2008

Tom Ring
Environmental Sciences Specialist
Montana DEQ
P.O. Box 20901
Helena, MT 59602

Dear Mr. Ring:

We are writing to express our support of the MATL electric transmission line proposed to be built between Lethbridge, Alberta and Great Falls, Montana.

We believe that is an important energy and economic project for the people of our state and even the country.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Robert Newkirk  Ali Newkirk

Dr. Robert and Ali Newkirk
P.O. Box 110
Dupuyer, MT 59432
(406) 472-3388
Response 825 and 826: See revised Appendix F, Sections 2.6.1 and 2.7.1.
Response 827: Comments noted. See Visual Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

To: Montana Department of Environmental Quality  
Environmental Management Bureau  
ATTN: Tom Rink  
PO Box 200901  
Helena, MT 59620-0901  
DEADLINE: MARCH 31, 2008

We, the undersigned, oppose the development of industrial wind complexes and associated transmission corridors within the viewshed of Glacier National Park and the Rocky Mountain Front.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>ADDRESS</th>
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</table>
| KEBEKAH A. WEBER | 3/ROY | 1.
| HEATHER WILLIAMS | 6555 W MOUNTAIN VIEW AVE | 2.
| JAMIE WILSON | 1234 E GOVERNOR ST | 3.
| PAUL VANN | 567 E MAIN ST | 4.
| CAROLYN SIMPSON | 890 E JOHNSTON NO 1 | 5.
| KARETTA VITTEN | 543 E RIVER RD | 6.
| JULIE WATSON | 123 E MAIN ST | 7.
| GREG STRAT | 123 E GLACIER PKWY | 8.

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Response 828: Comment noted. See Visual Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Greg Hallsten, MEPA Coordinator
Director’s Office
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
PO Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

Re: MATL Draft EIS

Dear Mr. Hallsten,

In my initial letter to you, regarding the Montana Alberta Tie Ltd. and dated April 26, 2007, my comments ran to more than 1000 words. Today, I will be brief.

In responding to my concern about the visual impact of giant industrial wind farms on Montana’s landscapes, the staff response was, in part, as follows: “Both the transmission line and wind turbines would introduce linear elements into viewed landscapes. It is unlikely these structures would conceal or hide surrounding mountain ranges. Whether this constitutes industrial development that degrades scenic vistas is a value judgment.” [Response 297, MATL Draft EIS]

I can only say, in reaction to this kind of reassurance, that it offers me little in the way of comfort. However, it does help to explain the thought process behind the making of these remarkable, often environment-altering decisions, on behalf of the citizens of Montana.

Sincerely yours,

Philip Pensey
620 Evans
Missoula, MT 59801

March 31, 2008
Response 829 to 832: Figure 2.6-2 has been updated to include the house that was inadvertently omitted. Also see the responses to comments 708 and 709.

Response 833: Hunt Coulee is located on private land and does not have a road that crosses the draw at the Diamond Valley South crossing of the draw. A small pond is located near the crossing and the area is indicated as winter range in MATL’s application. Where possible, such coulees are typically spanned. If this alignment were selected, design of the line and final structure location would occur after the agencies reach their decisions. If the goal is to avoid constructing new roads on the steep erosion prone slopes, access would likely be from each side of the coulee, and construction and maintenance traffic would have to drive out and around to access each side of the coulee rather than directly across the coulee. Alternative 2 is located near a private road that crosses the coulee. However, this road is located off the right-of-way and additional easements would be necessary to use it for construction.

Response 834: Comment noted.

Response 835: In discussions during the development of the local routing option for the original March 2007 document, DEQ staff was led to believe that there was consensus among the landowners in the Diamond Valley area to move the line farther away from two homes and parallel to an existing transmission line. As indicated by the Draft EIS comment you cited, there was not consensus among area landowners. Therefore, DEQ determined there was a need to examine other possible alternatives in this area. A mailing list of landowners in the area was developed from the Department of Revenue database of property owners and a letter was
sent inviting them to a meeting to discuss other alignment options.

The agencies received two letters of comment opposing the Diamond Valley South local routing option because it would be located along a field road. The agencies received no letters or testimony supporting this local routing option. When making their decision, the agencies will consider this input indicating there is no local support for the Diamond Valley South local routing option.

Response 836 and 837: Comments noted. Also see Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 838: DEQ is looking for the lowest impact alignment while considering the nature and economics of the various alternatives and will make its finding independent of which private landowners’ lands would be crossed. In the Diamond Valley area Alternative 2 does not closely parallel an existing line where maneuvering equipment between two sets of poles may prove difficult or impossible depending on final line location. Alternative 2 is shorter than the now dropped Diamond Valley portion of Alternative 4 in the March 2007 document and therefore is likely to have fewer structures located in fields. Alternative 2 also has fewer guyed angles than would the other now dropped alternative. Alternative 2 is not located adjacent to any field roads and therefore would have a lower overall number of structures in mid-field locations. However, as indicated in response to comment 835, Alternative 2 is located much closer to two houses, resulting in greater visual impacts.

Responses 839 to 844: Comments noted.

Response 845: The agencies are considering the route submitted by Mr. McRae, as well as the compensation amounts.
Response 846: MATL has revised its proposal to increase the easement width to 105 feet. See Section 2.3.

Response 847: MATL’s compensation package is part of the overall project. MATL has revised its proposed compensation package. See Sections 2.3 and 3.13.2, and Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 848: The Revised Draft DEQ Environmental Specifications include correction of problems of interference with GPS by the MATL line.

Response 849: MATL has revised the minimum ground clearance for the conductor to 27.2 feet where the line would cross cultivated and CRP land. Also see Safety Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 850: DEQ will not become involved in the compensation negotiations. Also see the response to comment 847 and Legal and Regulatory Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 851: Comment noted.
Response 852: Comment noted.

Response 853: Comment noted.

Response 854: The tentative identification of a preferred alternative in the EIS is based on many factors, not just economics. DEQ’s ultimate decision will be disclosed when it determines whether to issue a Certificate of Compliance.

Response 855: See Tax Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 856: The $9.38 was the original figure MATL calculated for farmer cost. It was neither a DEQ-generated figure nor did it reflect DEQ conclusions. MATL has since generated a new average figure of $33.90 per pole per year. See Section 3.13.3.2.

Response 857: Comment noted.

Response 858: The EIS, as an impact disclosure document, can identify mitigation measures, such as compensation, but cannot require them. Any mitigation measures DEQ imposes on MATL must be within the authority of the Major Facility Siting Act to impose or must be attached to the Certificate at MATL’s request. Any conditions on the Certificate are enforceable. If the project is approved, DEQ would mandate payments for damages during construction. See the discussions of Legal and Regulatory Issues and Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section. Also see Sections 2.3 and 3.13.3.2.
Response 859: The analysis and tables referred to in the comment have been revised. See Section 3.13. The information provided in those tables is for a general comparison of alternatives across all landowners and not for individual farmers. Individual costs could vary based on individual farming practices.

Response 860: See the discussion of Tax Issues in the Consolidated Responses section. The tax incentive to farmers is no longer included in the tables that balance benefits and costs to farmers. It is included as a separate item. The lower tax rate to MATL is also included in revised Section 3.13.
Response 861: The Major Facility Siting Act requires DEQ to make findings that the facility minimizes adverse environmental impact, considering the state of available technology and the nature and economics of the various alternatives, and that the facility will serve the public interest, convenience, and necessity. Decision makers will weigh many aspects of project viability in making this finding and before making their decisions.

Response 862: The agencies contracted with an independent consulting firm, HDR in Billings, MT, to review MATL’s costs. HDR compared the MATL costs to similar projects they have completed or have estimated and agree with the MATL costs at this time. HDR noted that labor and material prices are currently very volatile and cost estimates are subject to change in short periods of time.

Response 863: See the discussion of Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section. MATL has revised its proposal to obtain a 105-foot-wide easement.

Response 864: See the discussion of Safety Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 865: See the discussion of Farming Issues in Consolidated Responses and the response to comment 861. Appendix N indicates that most farmers would farm closer than 5 feet. This does not indicate that all farmers would farm this close, but, for purposes of study, a safety buffer of 5 feet was used. The document indicates that the safety buffer is generally dependent on the specific field, equipment, and operator experience, but in this case a 5-foot safety buffer should be adequate to safely clear the pole(s) using typical equipment while still optimizing farmed area. Conservative assumptions were used in the farming cost study in order to
avoid underestimating costs for farmers. However, individual operators will have their own preferences on factors such as equipment speed and how close to a structure to farm.

Response 866: See the discussion of Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 867: Comment noted. See the discussion of Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 868: If MATL already paid for right-of-way access, and that alternative is not permitted, MATL may lose the money it already spent. To seek easements and pay for routes that have not been permitted by DEQ is a business decision MATL made.

Response 869: See the response to Comment 868. The Montana Environmental Policy Act requires that an EIS disclose the impacts of regulations on an applicant (75-1-201(b)(iv)(D), MCA). Easement payments made on MATL’s proposed route would be an adverse economic impact of regulation if another alternative is selected.

Response 870: See the response to comment 862 and the discussion of Farming Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 871: Comment noted.
Responses 872 to 874: Comments noted.

I am amazed by this company. I know that time is of the essence. We told MATL two years ago that if they would abandon the diagonal and h-frames in CRP and cropland that we would support this line. Some even offered to forgo easement payments and to help get the easements from their neighbors. This line could have been built and drawing revenue if these changes had been agreed upon then. How short sighted was this.

If MATL wants to go forward smoothly with future projects it should weight carefully the harm in its reputation when it has to use eminent domain to force the diagonal across cropland from Conrad to Great Falls.

This also a political process, although it claims to be above this. This was proven to my satisfaction by when Mr. Oppenheimer dismissed the work product of his own employees in the DEQ, the Agency designated Alternative A. Governor Schweitzer may be surprised who will join the outcry on the farmer's side for personal property rights when this Canadian company starts using eminent domain to get its cheaper, but impact laden diagonal. This will be a big news and political story not just a legal fight. MATL may win their diagonal for this line, but squander any goodwill and future projects to achieve this.

These comments are respectfully submitted:

Chris Stephens
PO Box 94
Dutton, Montana 59433
Response 875: In assembling the alternatives presented in the EIS, the agencies have attempted to present a full range of reasonable alternatives that optimize the social, economic, and environmental trade-offs associated with the proposed project. Several of the desirable features of a new modified alternative suggested by EPA are included in each of the alternatives analyzed in detail in the EIS, including the applicant's proposed route, Alternative 2. The alternative alignments considered in the EIS provide options to minimize impacts, consistent with the siting criteria suggested in the comment. The agencies will examine the alternatives and consider environmental impacts in making their decisions. The DEQ decision will be based on the findings required by the Major Facility Siting Act. This includes consideration of cost and economics of the various alternatives, in addition to minimization of environmental impacts. Likewise, DOE must consider environmental impact, impact on electric reliability, and any other factors that DOE may consider relevant to the public interest.
Response 876: Note that some of the values in the comparison tables have changed since the Draft EIS, primarily due to the incorporation of new information on wetlands in Teton County. While some of the numerical values in comparison tables suggest that Alternative 3 may have fewer impacts to natural resources, a crude comparison of these numbers is not sufficient by itself to determine the lowest impact alternative. Numerical values for crossings of streams, lakes, and wetlands indicate the potential for impacts, but because surface waters and wetlands would be spanned or otherwise avoided under all alternatives (except for one angle structure in Black Horse Lake under Alternative 2), most potential impacts of surface water and wetland crossings would be avoided. Thus, after the application of this mitigating measure, there is little or no difference between alternatives with respect to the environmental impacts on surface water and wetland crossings. Similarly, because potential impacts to surface water quality due to construction disturbance would be minimized through mitigation measures, impacts would be minor under all action alternatives, in spite of the differences in land areas disturbed. Additionally, not all of the potential environmental impacts of this project are easily correlated with numerical measures. For example, Alternative 4 would reduce potential impacts to birds by avoiding Benton Lake National Wildlife Refuge, but the tables do not include a numerical indicator of this difference between the alternatives. Finally, because of the preponderance of agricultural land uses in the region and the long-term nature of impacts to farming practices, the agencies must give significant weight to impacts to farming practices when comparing the overall impacts of the alternatives.

Response 877: See the response to comment 875.
Response 878: Consistent with the requirements of CEQ’s NEPA regulations, the final EIS identifies the agencies’ preferred alternatives, and the agencies’ Records of Decision will identify the environmentally preferable alternative and present the agencies’ decisions and the basis for those decisions.

Response 879: If DEQ decides to issue a certificate for the proposed Project, all of the environmental protection measures identified in MATL’s application would be incorporated into the DEQ certificate as requirements. Appendix F is a draft of the additional environmental specifications that DEQ could include as conditions.

Response 880: As stated in Section 3.5.3, the implementation of a storm water pollution prevention plan, avoidance of activities in flowing or standing water, and other measures to reduce sediment delivery to surface waters would effectively reduce short- and long-term risk of sedimentation from transmission line and access road construction to a minor adverse impact.

Response 881: The DEQ Watershed Protection staff and TMDL staff are aware of the proposed project.

Response 882: The commenter addressed this topic in greater detail in comments 896 to 904. See the responses to those comments and Vegetation, Wetland and Weed Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.

Response 883: See the discussion of Avian and Wildlife Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 884: In accordance with Executive Order 12114, the EIS does not assess impacts occurring in a foreign nation unless that foreign nation is not otherwise involved in the action. The portions discussing the Canadian part of the project were included for information only.

Response 885: The comment and rating have been noted.
Response 886: Note that the first document published by DEQ and DOE for the MATL project (in March 2007) was a DEQ Draft EIS under the Montana Environmental Policy Act and a DOE Draft EA under NEPA. The second document, published in February 2008, was a supplement to the DEQ Draft EIS and a DOE Draft EIS. See page 1-1 of the EIS.

Response 887: There may be non-firm space available to prospective shippers south of Great Falls without additional upgrades. If the permitted and queued generation plants are not all constructed in the Great Falls area, non-firm space may be available south or west out of Great Falls. If all the planned and permitted generation in the Great Falls area and north of Great Falls was constructed and prospective shippers sought firm transmission rights, existing lines might have to be upgraded or additional lines might be required. Also see the discussion of Line Capacity Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 888: While it is correct that NorthWestern Energy would have an opportunity to obtain regulating reserves through the MATL line, there is no guarantee that it would use the line for this purpose. NorthWestern recently announced plans to construct a gas-fired generation plant near Anaconda to help satisfy its need for regulating reserves.
Response 889: Comments noted.

Response 890: Note that Appendix F has been revised to include additional environmental protection measures that DEQ could require.

Response 891 to 893: It is the opinion of the agencies that a full spectrum of reasonable alternatives was considered, including Alternative 4, which attempted to accommodate both the transmission line and existing land uses. Also see the response to comment 875.
Response 894: Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 together with local routing options bracket the range of possible agency actions. Portions of these alternatives may be combined in the agencies’ decisions. Since the publication of the Draft EIS, MATL has revised its application to include additional provisions to reduce some potential impacts. Also, MATL and DEQ worked with local land owners to modify some local routing options to reduce potential adverse effects on farming activities. The Final EIS presents the impacts of these revisions to the proposal and the modified local routing options.

Response 895: See the response to comment 876. Alternative 3 crosses more land diagonally than any other alternative alignment, so it would have the greatest potential for interference with farming activities. Also, because of its location adjacent to NorthWestern’s Great Falls to Cut Bank line, it could place two sets of structures near each other, which would further complicate farming operations.

Comment 894

We note of course that the MDEQ and DOE will need to evaluate and analyze the impacts of any new modified alternative, and display those impacts in the FEIS.

Comment 895

We also want to state that Alternative 3 appears to have the shortest transmission line alignment (121.6 miles) with the fewest stream and lake crossings (12), fewest acres of wetlands within the 500 foot alignment (62.3 acres), and least amount of construction ground disturbance (206 acres); while Alternative 4 has the longest transmission line (139.6 miles) with greatest number of stream and lake crossings (19), greatest potential wetland impact (76.4 acres), and greatest ground disturbance (240 acres), although Alternative 4 would reduce impacts to farm operations. Alternative 2 would be 129.9 miles long with 14 stream and lake crossings (Table 3.5-1, page 3-63), and 76.4 acres of potential wetlands impacts, and 214 acres of ground disturbance (page 3-90). It appears to us that Alternative 3 would have fewer environmental impacts than the other action alternatives.
Response 896 and 897: Comments noted.

Responses 898 to 901: Only minimum development of new access roads is anticipated for any of the alternative alignments. Few graded surface access roads are planned or anticipated, and no new culverts, bridges, or other constructed stream crossings are expected to be needed. The majority of the right-of-way for the alternative transmission line alignments can be easily accessed from public roads, existing two track roads, and farm fields allowing truck and equipment travel. The study area is relatively flat, and most construction equipment for a line of this size can move cross country on side slopes of up to about 5 percent.

MFSA rules define a road as “... a way or course that is constructed or formed by substantial recontouring of land, clearing, or other action designed to be permanent or intended to permit passage by most four-wheeled vehicles for a significant period of time.” MATL’s application identifies several areas where road construction could be necessary. Specifically, the application identifies sites north and south of the proposed transmission line’s crossings of the Teton and Marias rivers as places where grading and recontouring might be required to provide access to the reinforced structures needed to span these valleys. (All alternative alignments would cross both of these rivers.) Prior to construction these areas would be reviewed in the field to assure that there would be no unnecessary disturbance. There are other areas where there would be cross country travel with no road blading.

Sites of structures and roads would be chosen to avoid surface streams and 100-year floodplains. Areas judged to have significant constraints on effective reclamation would also be avoided to the extent possible.
Additionally, DEQ’s draft environmental specifications (Appendix F) would require (if adopted) that roads be designed to prevent channeling of runoff. Areas of new road construction would be reviewed and inspected in the field prior to construction to assure that there would be no unnecessary disturbance. State inspections would also take place during construction of new roads. Any construction on the bed and banks of a perennial stream would require state inspection.

Following construction, MATL would retain some key access roads to maintain access to the right-of-way for routine operations and maintenance activities, but most access roads would be restored to pre-existing conditions. Reclamation of temporary roads built for use during project construction would be done in coordination with landowners and appropriate agencies. Long-term road maintenance would be minimal.

Response 902: MATL was provided a copy of your letter so that company personnel might see your suggestions.
Response 903: Comment noted.

Response 904: Because sites of structures and roads would be chosen to avoid surface streams and because Best Management Practices would be used to minimize construction site erosion and sedimentation, impacts to surface streams are expected to be negligible. Erosion Control Plans and Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plans would be developed and implemented, as recommended. The DEQ Watershed Protection staff and TMDL staff are aware of the proposed project. Additional measures aimed at reducing sediment from other sources are voluntary actions MATL may undertake if these measures cannot be required in another water quality permit. At this time it appears that the line could be constructed without any specific permits. Also see Legal and Regulatory Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
We believe the FEIS should identify and discuss watershed restoration activities to control other existing sediment sources in order to provide compensation for the sediment production and transport associated with transmission line and road construction activities for 303(d) listed streams (e.g., stabilize existing eroding banks, improve/installs BMPs on additional existing roads perhaps in cooperation with local governments to reduce existing road sediment sources). Activities to control and reduce existing sediment sources are needed to provide full assurance that no further degradation occurs to 303(d) listed streams during transmission line and road construction, since a small amount of sediment transport is still likely to occur even with use of BMPs during transmission line and road construction. Unless existing sediment sources are reduced, 303(d) listed streams will be further degraded by transmission line and road construction.

We also encourage the DOE and MDEQ Major Facility Siting Act staff to contact MDEQ’s TMDL Program staff to assure that the MDEQ Watershed Protection and TMDL staff consider the proposed project to be consistent with MDEQ’s development TMDLs and Water Quality Plans for the applicable TMDL Planning Areas (contact Robert Ray of the MDEQ in Helena at 444-5319).

6. EPA considers the protection, improvement, and restoration of riparian areas and wetlands to be a high priority. Wetlands and riparian areas increase landscape and species diversity, support many species of western wildlife, and are critical to the protection of water quality and designated beneficial uses. Potential impacts on riparian areas and wetlands include: water quality, habitat for aquatic and terrestrial life, flood storage, groundwater recharge and discharge, sources of primary production, and recreation and aesthetics.

Executive Order 11990 requires that Federal Agencies “take action to minimize the destruction, loss or degradation of wetlands, and to preserve and enhance the natural and beneficial values of wetlands in carrying out the agency’s responsibilities,” and agencies are further directed to “avoid undertaking or providing assistance for new construction located in wetlands unless the head of the agency finds (1) that there is no practicable alternative to such construction, and (2) that the proposed action includes all practicable measures to minimize harm to wetlands which may result from such use...”

In addition national wetlands policy has established an interim goal of No Overall Net Loss of the Nation’s remaining wetlands, and a long-term goal of increasing quantity and quality of the Nation’s wetlands resource base.

We are pleased that impacts to wetlands, riparian areas and floodplains are discussed (Section 3.6), and that wherever possible placement of new structures constructed and associated construction activities would occur outside wetland areas (pages 2-23, 3-8). Although we would rather see a strict prohibition on placing new structures and access roads in wetland areas, rather than just doing this “wherever possible.” We would like to see wetland and riparian areas fully spanned to avoid any direct impacts. We also support the MDEQ environmental specification to delineate wetlands along the selected alignment (page 3-81), and further recommend that wetland areas along the ROW be

Response 905 to 913: The agencies agree that the protection, improvement, and restoration of riparian areas and wetlands are high priorities.

MATL has stated that its goal is to avoid impacts to wetlands by avoiding placement of any structure within a jurisdictional wetland. MATL would use construction buffers to eliminate any and all, including inadvertent, impacts to wetlands or other waters of the United States. It is currently expected that the project could be completed without any direct disturbances to streams and wetlands. Thus, no compensatory mitigation would be needed. If, however, any disturbance were found to be unavoidable, the applicant would be required to comply with all applicable regulatory requirements. If, during construction, a site specific wetland impact issue arises, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers would be contacted to assure compliance with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Additional mitigation measures to help minimize the potential unavoidable construction-related impacts to wetlands would then be required for MATL and their construction contractors under the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Nationwide #12 Permit (Utilities Line Activities).

If work in streams or wetlands is necessary, the measures listed in sections 2.11.5, 2.11.6, and 2.11.9 of the revised draft Environmental Specifications in Appendix F would become conditions to the Certificate of Compliance if it is approved. In addition, if DOE grants the Presidential permit, it may place any conditions in the permit that it deems necessary and appropriate to protect the public interest. DOE has typically placed conditions in Presidential permits that require the permittee to employ the mitigation measures identified in the NEPA document and that formed the basis of any impact analysis.
Under MFSA rules applicants are required to identify wetlands greater than 20 acres in size (Circular MFSA-2, Section 3.4(1)(u)). This size was selected to recognize that smaller wetlands can usually be spanned. Under MFSA no other local permits are required after a certificate has been issued. Therefore, DEQ’s Environmental Specifications would require on-site inspections of perennial stream crossings prior to the start of construction. If no in-stream activities would be required, then no 310 permit is necessary.

The numerical values in the EIS for areas of wetlands crossed include all wetlands within a 500-ft-wide corridor. These numbers overstate the potential impact because they include areas that would not be included in the narrower 105-foot right-of-way in which the project would be built. Although Alternative 4 would cross the largest area of wetlands, it would cross the least area of wetlands associated with lakes.

The very few sites with riparian vegetation in the study area are located low in drainages adjacent to wetlands and streams. Transmission line structures are usually located at high points or in uplands making it possible to span wetlands and riparian areas. If a wetland could not be spanned by the transmission line, compensation or other mitigation would be required. It is, however, unlikely that any wetlands or riparian areas could not be spanned, except for one angle structure in Black Horse Lake under Alternative 2.

The draft Environmental Specifications (Appendix F) have been revised; they would (if adopted), require delineation of wetlands within 250 feet of the approved location, prohibit access through wetlands, and require that all wetlands be spanned. Additionally, the agencies are considering requiring a 50-foot buffer zone around wetlands within which no disturbance would be allowed, and the draft Environmental Specifications have been revised to include this possible requirement.
flagged on the ground to facilitate wetland avoidance and “inadvertent” impacts by the contractor during construction.

It will be important to obtain appropriate State, local and Federal permits and authorizations for conduct of construction work in or near streams and wetlands (e.g., Section 318 short term turbidity exceedance authorization, 310 or 124 permits, MPESES Stormwater permits, Corps of Engineers 404 permit, etc.). As you know discharges of fill material into wetlands and other waters of the United States are regulated by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. 1344, which is administered jointly by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and EPA. It is important that MATL and the DOE and MDEQ consult with the Corps of Engineers in regard to 404 permit requirements for construction activities in or near streams or wetlands, (e.g., contact Mr. Allan Steisie of Corps of Engineers Montana Office in Helena at 406-441-1375). The 404(0)(1) Guidelines (found at 40 CFR Part 230) provide the environmental criteria by which 404 permits are evaluated. See Corps of Engineers Montana Regulatory Office website for further information, https://www.usace.mont.mil/MTReg/mtreghome.htm.

The DEIS states that there could be alteration to wetland hydrology, wetland plant communities and filling of wetlands or sedimentation of wetlands (page 3-74), although no direct filling of wetlands is intended. The DEIS suggests that wetland impacts would be minor and of short duration (page 3-76). Presently the DEIS identifies wetland acreage within the 500 foot ROW, but the estimated acreage of wetlands to be filled or altered is not clearly identified. It is stated that construction activities adjacent to wetlands could inadvertently result in disturbance to wetlands. We recommend that a wetland buffer zone be applied to avoid even inadvertent construction impacts to wetlands (e.g., 50 foot wetland buffer zone).

If construction buffer zones that avoid even inadvertent impacts to wetlands are not used the impacts to wetlands should be quantified as much as possible. The DEIS should either include a requirement for wetland buffers to achieve no impacts, or clearer identification and quantification of the “inadvertent” impacts to wetlands should be provided. We suggest that a table be provided in the DEIS showing the acreage of wetlands likely to be impacted by the project alternatives, along with a discussion of the associated wetland functions and values that may be impacted.

If it appears that wetland impacts are more significant, and particularly if there are significant wetland and/or river and stream dredge and fill impacts, we generally recommend that a 404(0)(1) analysis be included as an Appendix to the DEIS, since inclusion of a draft 404(0)(1) analysis helps assure that 404 permit requirements are properly integrated into the NEPA process in accordance with 40 CFR 150.2(c).

Section 404 Dredge and Fill Permit rules/policies require that adverse impacts to aquatic resources be avoided and minimized as much as possible, and that unavoidable impacts to wetlands be compensated for. If there will be impacts to wetlands including “inadvertent filling” these impacts should be mitigated via wetlands restoration/creatin/enhancement to compensate for wetlands impacted by transmission line and/or road construction to assure that there will be no net loss of wetlands as a result of the proposed project. The goal of wetland mitigation should be to replace the functions and values of impacted wetlands in areas adjacent to or as close as possible to the area of wetlands loss. Wetland restoration is preferred to wetland creation or enhancement because restoration has a higher rate of success.

EPA/Corps policy has accepted acre-for-crease replacement of wetlands as a surrogate for replacement of functions and values when there is a lack of definitive information on functions and values, although adjustments may be necessary to reflect the expected degree of success of mitigation, and provide an adequate margin of safety to reflect anticipated success (i.e., greater than acre-for-crease replacement is suggested when impacted wetlands have high function & value and likelihood of replacement of functions is low). Traditional mitigation is often not successful in fully restoring wetland function, and 2:1 or higher mitigation ratios are sometimes required to mitigate wetlands impacts. Construction/enhancement of wetlands to compensate for impacted wetlands should occur in advance or concurrent with activities causing wetlands impacts to reduce temporal losses of wetland functions.

If a project has significant wetland impacts we also generally recommend that a Wetland Mitigation Plan be prepared to assure that adequate replacement of lost wetland functions and values occurs. This mitigation plan should include consideration of direct, indirect, and cumulative effects. It should contain a statement of goals, a monitoring plan, long-term management/creation objectives and a contingency plan (a commitment to conduct additional work if required to meet the goals of the plan). The mitigation plan should also include best management practices and mitigation measures that will manage stormwater runoff from roadsides before it reaches wetlands, streams and other aquatic habitats. In general, wetlands, including mitigation wetlands, should not be used for treatment of stormwater. This Plan should be approved by the appropriate agencies before implementation of the proposed project.

The final EIS should more clearly identify and disclose probable wetland impacts, as well as the mitigation activities that would compensate for unavoidable impacts to wetlands. This information could be provided in the narrative of the EIS or in the 404(0)(1) analysis appended to the EIS. This may be necessary for Alternative 4 that is stated to have the highest potential for wetland impacts (page 3-77).

7. As you know construction activities that involve soil disturbance create conditions favoring the spread of noxious weeds. We support use of noxious weed mitigation and control methods during transmission line construction, since many noxious weeds can out-compete native plants and produce a monoculture that has little or no plant species diversity or benefit to wildlife. We are pleased that the MATL and MDESQ environmental measures include measures to limit and control weeds along the transmission line ROW, and that a MATL integrated weed control plan would be prepared, and that MATL would report annually on the condition and progress of weed control activities.
Responses 914 to 922: Within the right-of-way MATL would be responsible for controlling weeds due to the company’s activities. The provisions of MATL’s proposed integrated weed control program, which is mentioned in the comment, would be incorporated into the DEQ certificate. MATL’s proposed weed control plan includes the suggested practice of requiring washing of vehicles and construction equipment before entering the right-of-way area to reduce the spread of noxious weeds.

The agencies have considered the recommendation for use of gates on access roads. However, much of the land that would be traversed by the proposed line is flat and unfenced. Adding a gate across a road where there is no fence would have little mitigation value. Where fences exist, MATL would be required to consult with the landowner and where requested by the landowner, all fences crossed by permanent access roads would be provided with a gate (Appendix F, Section 2.5.7). Where gates are not requested, the existing fence would be replaced to prevent unauthorized access (Appendix F, Section 2.5.4).

Spraying of target weed species would be done in coordination with the BLM, state weed coordinator, and county weed boards and groups (see Appendix C – MATL Noxious Weed Control Plan, and Appendix F – Revised draft DEQ Environmental Specifications). As noted in the comment, MATL would be required to use Montana licensed applicators. All use of herbicides, pesticides, or other toxicants would be required to be done in accordance with Federal label instructions and restrictions. Adherence to label requirements against using certain herbicides near surface waters should make it unnecessary to require a 50-foot buffer around streams and wetlands within which no spraying would be allowed.

The recommendations provided in the comments regarding picloram (Tordon), including application rate, number of applications per year, and restrictions on application around roadside drainage areas leading to intermittent and perennial streams are noted.

Also see Vegetation, Wetland and Weed Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
We note that while the MDEQ measures generally appear to be more detailed and comprehensive than the MATL measures (Table 2-3.4), the MATL measures identify the need to wash vehicles and construction equipment before entering the transmission line ROW to reduce spread of weed seeds. We support this measure did not see it in the MDEQ environmental specifications. We recommend careful review of the MDEQ measures in comparison to the MDEQ measure to assure that the most comprehensive and effective set of environmental protection measures are used.

Weed prevention is the most cost-effective way to manage and control weeds by avoiding new infestations and spread of weeds, and thus, avoiding the need for subsequent weed treatments (e.g., weed prevention practices such as minimizing ground disturbance, revegetating disturbed areas, use of weed free seed, cleaning vehicles and equipment, and other practices that prevent infestation and spread of weeds). Early recognition and control of new infestations avoids future use of herbicides and other control methods. We also support use of gates on access roads to discourage ATV/recreational vehicle travel on these roads, since such motorized uses disturb soil, create weed seedbeds, and disperse weed seeds.

We appreciate the recognition in the MDEQ environmental specifications of the need to use certified herbicide applicators, and to use herbicides in accordance with label specifications, and to be cautious in spraying near streams and wetlands with use of no spray buffer zones along streams and wetlands. Herbicide drift into streams and wetlands could adversely affect aquatic life and wetland functions such as food chain support and habitat for wetland species.

We recommend use of 50 feet no spray buffer zones adjacent to streams and wetlands, and mechanical weed removal or hand-pulling of weeds adjacent to aquatic areas. Hand-pulling can be effective for weeds that do not contain extensive root systems near surface waters. It may be helpful to add a list of those weed species which can be effectively hand-pulled (i.e., those without large tap roots and spreading rhizomous root systems). The herbicide application technique of hand or manual wipe-on (especially applicable for contact systemic herbicides such as glyphosate) is an option to control individual weed plants up to the existing water level adjacent to streams or sensitive aquatic sites.

Herbicides should be applied at the lowest rate effective in meeting weed control objectives and according to guidelines for protecting public health and the environment. All efforts should be made to avoid movement or transport of herbicides into surface waters that could adversely affect public health, fisheries or other water uses. The Montana Water Quality Standards include a general narrative standard requiring surface waters to be free from substances that create concentrations which are toxic or harmful to aquatic life.

It is important that the water contamination concerns of herbicide usage be fully evaluated and mitigated. All efforts should be made to avoid movement or transport of herbicides into surface waters that could adversely affect fisheries or other water uses. Herbicides, pesticides, and other toxicants and chemicals must be used in a safe manner in accordance with Federal label instructions and restrictions that allow protection and maintenance of water quality standards and ecological integrity, and avoid public health and safety problems.

Herbicide applicators should be advised of the potential for runoff of herbicides at toxic concentrations into the streams. The applicator should take precautions during spraying (e.g., applying herbicide only after careful review of weather reports to ensure minimal likelihood of rainfall within 24 hours of spraying; special precautions adjacent to the stream to reduce runoff potential, etc.). It should be unequivocally stated that no herbicide spraying will occur in streams and wetlands or other aquatic areas (seeps, springs, etc.). Streams and wetlands in any area to be sprayed be identified and flagged on the ground to assure that herbicide applicators are aware of the location of wetlands, and thus, can avoid spraying in or near wetlands.

We are particularly concerned about potential use of more toxic and persistent herbicides such as picolarm (Tordon), since they have higher potential for more serious stream and/or groundwater contamination. We recommend that roadside drainage areas leading to intermittent and perennial streams be flagged as no-spray zones and not sprayed with picolarm based herbicides. We also recommend that picolarm not be used at rates greater than 0.25 lb/acre, and suggest that MATL and the agencies consider applications of persistent herbicides such as picolarm only once per year to reduce potential for accumulation in soil. Potential for persistent herbicides to accumulate in soil in harmful amounts are reduced if sites are treated only once per year (twice being the limit). Trade-offs between effective weed control and effects on soil productivity and leaching concerns may need to be considered. A second treatment application if needed should only occur after 30 days (or according to label directions).

For your information, Dow AgroSciences, the manufacturer of Tordon 22K, has recently developed supplemental labeling for Tordon 22K for areas west of the Mississippi River. They have directions for wick or carpet roller applications. Tordon 22K herbicide can be applied using wick or carpet roller equipment where drift presents a hazard to susceptible crops, surface waters, and other sensitive areas. One part Tordon 22K is mixed with 2 parts water to prepare a 33% solution. The wick method of application is more labor intensive but very effective at targeting particular noxious weeds adjacent to surface waters, wetlands, or protected plants.

Most picloram products, including Tordon 22K, are Restricted Use Pesticides (RUPs) requiring pesticide applicator certification to purchase and apply. It is important that herbicide applicators be certified throughout the duration of the project. If commercial applicators will be contracted for RUP applications, we recommend checking to make sure their MT commercial RUP license is current. Please contact Montana Dept. of
Response 923: See Avian and Wildlife Issues in the Consolidated Responses section. A map of flyways has been added to Section 4.9, but fine scale flyway maps for the area traversed by the proposed transmission line are not available.

Response 924: See Avian and Wildlife Issues in the Consolidated Responses section for additional discussion of measures to prevent avian collisions.

Response 925: Comment noted
Response 926: The agencies will consider the recommendation regarding the use of ultra-low sulfur diesel and reduced vehicle idling time. Rock crushing operations would have to comply with Montana air quality regulations.

Response 927: Comment noted.

Response 928 to 930: Cumulative impacts of reasonably foreseeable future actions, including those named in the comment are presented in sections 4.1 to 4.16. Your concerns about cumulative impacts of future power plant and wind farm development are noted. Note that future privately funded wind generation projects located on private land would not be subject to site-specific NEPA review. Also see Avian and Wildlife Issues in the Consolidated Responses section.
Response 931: See response to comment 884.

12. The DEIS states that the proposed transmission line would extend north in Alberta, Canada to a new substation to be constructed northeast of Lethbridge, Alberta (page 1-1). The proposed line would be part of the Western Interconnection, and a phase shifting transformer would be installed at the substation near Lethbridge to control the direction of power flows on the line. The DEIS does not provide much information about the 77 construction of the transmission line and new substation in Alberta, Canada or the proposed 77 mile route of the Canadian transmission line.

We recommend that the FEIS identify the agency responsible for construction of the transmission line in Canada, and a contact person with that agency, and provide a discussion of the applicability of Executive Order 12114 Environmental Effects Ahead of Major Federal Actions and CEQ’s Guidance on NEPA Analyses for Transboundary Effects, July 1, 1997 in regard to the proposed MATL transmission line (http://www.epa.gov/epa/guidance/). We recommend that additional information about project implementation in Canada and any significant environmental effects that may occur as a result should be provided in the FEIS.
### PART 3. LIST OF COMMENTERS

C = Conrad Public Hearing; CB = Cut Bank Public Hearing; GF = Great Falls Public Hearing

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<td>Woman Speaker</td>
<td></td>
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PART 4. ATTACHMENT

The following letters were read at the public hearings and comments are addressed above. The letters were submitted at a later date and are included in this attachment.
on a diagonal running through cropland and CRP should be a thing of the past. New farming techniques and larger equipment make such transmission structures environmentally unsound and too economically burdensome.

I do not begrudge this company and its investors the chance to make a handsome profit from filling a well recognized need for increased electric transmission – more power to them (no pun intended). To see the extent of that profit, simply visit the Tenbridge website where it is reported the company projects revenues of nearly a billion dollars from the twenty-five year contracts now in place. It thus defies the imagination to take as credible, the company's current claim it cannot possibly be expected to spend around $5 million extra dollars to implement the alternative (Alternative 4) which the agencies have analyzed as being "...the most protective alternative for the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity of the environment while benefiting socioeconomic resources." Our state has accorded MATL many advantages since its application was filed. From the outset, the economic development staff in the Governor’s Office has worked closely with the company to help it achieve its goals. The 2007 Legislature created an energy infrastructure promotion office with a $330,000 annual budget whose sole mission includes ensuring the MATL project gets built. The Legislature also enacted a 75% property tax cut for the company from which it will reap nearly $800,000 each year (a tax break for property owners whose land is taken amounts to $40,000).

With all this help from the government, it seems impossible to view this company as persecuted because the farmers who will forever bear the burden of the line are not willing to just

\[4.19, \text{Draft EIS}\]

let the company build the line as cheaply as possible. Over a 30-year life of the facility, the property tax break dollars by themselves will nearly pay for the construction of the line in Montana, projected at approximately $40 million. It is not unreasonable for farmers to push for adoption of Alternative 4 when that agency alternative clearly recognizes the validity of the producers' position and mitigates serious adverse effects on production agriculture.

But let's return for a moment to the advantages accorded to this company by our state. Looming over every affected property owner is the knowledge that this Canadian company, building a for-profit merchant line, has the power to condemn the land it says it needs. This company (with its billion dollar revenue projection) has the authority to invoke eminent domain over property owners. These farmers' private property rights can be extinguished to make way for this merchant line, a line which is not regulated by the PSC because under the law it does not constitute a "public utility" from which Montana consumers are guaranteed to benefit. Is it any wonder these landowners hope the regulators will at least insure that the chosen alternative reduces negative environmental and economic impacts to those owners?

Not long ago I came across a clear policy statement issued by the Montana Legislature that seems relevant to the current permit application:

It is the policy of the state of Montana to promote energy conservation, production, and consumption of a reliable mix of energy sources that represent the least social, environmental, and economic costs and the greatest long-term benefits to Montana citizens." Alternative 2 does not represent the least environmental and economic costs to Montana citizens; instead, it represents the least cost to the company. Alternative 4, the agencies' alternative, does

\[90-4-1001, \text{MCA}\]
represent the least social, environmental, and economic costs and the greatest long-term benefits to Montana citizens.

I do not oppose this project, even though I can’t say I look forward to having yet another large transmission line in my neighborhood. I do support the issuance of a permit based upon Alternative 4. This line, and the future lines which we know are coming, need to be built on an orientation with field lines and the use of monopoles in cropland and CRP. Farmers who have been stewards of these lands for generations should not have to bear the burden of unsafe, costly structures in their cropland and CRP simply because a company wants to keep a bit of extra money in its pocket. That should not be the way we do business in Montana; good public policy prescribes the choice of Alternative 4 as the basis for the permits at issue here.

Thank you for your consideration.

Katrina Wilson Martin
1720 24th Ln. NE
Drummond, MT 59833
406-463-2337

March 10, 2008
Mr. Tom Ring
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Environmental Management Bureau
P.O. Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

Dear Mr. Ring:

I am a producer in Glacier County. The MATL line will be going through my property. I want to be on record that I’m in support of the MATL line and wind generation in Glacier County.

This is an opportunity for me personally to help the economy of Glacier County and for myself. I have no mineral rights to the land that I bought in 1987. This will give me the chance to have an additional income source for my farm. Glacier County has been suffering through a drought.

Change is hard to deal with but this is an opportunity for our area to bring in a new business that is clean and friendly for the environment. I’m willing to deal with some inconvenience to do my part to help bring new business to Glacier County.

The MATL line and wind generation will increase the tax base for the County. This will help our tax bills, provide more for our schools, and help build our infrastructure.

I support the MATL line.

Thank you.

Mike Koepke
March 11, 2008

Mr. Chairman:

I am Cheryl Curry, Executive Director for the Pondera Regional Port Authority.

A Port Authority is defined in Montana law and is created by resolution and public vote with our purpose: to promote, stimulate, develop and advance the general welfare, commerce, economic development and prosperity of its jurisdiction and of the state and its citizens. A Port Authority also is to act in cooperation and in conjunction with other organizations to develop industry, manufacturing, natural resources, services, agriculture, health care, and other economic activity.

Our goal is to help create a vital community for future generations of rural Montanans.

The Pondera Regional Port Authority supports the Montana Alberta Transmission Line. The construction of this line will have strong positive economic impact in the area and creates the potential to develop wind power in the future. The power line and associated wind development will add jobs and tax base to our struggling economy. It is clean and has low impact on the environment. I have read the environmental impact statement and believe the economic benefits outweigh the few minor environmental concerns. There are inconveniences to affected farmers and ranchers, but they are compensated to a certain extent by annual and one-time payments from MATL, as well as by tax reductions on the affected land.

As a nation, our energy demands are ever increasing and our options for production are limited. The development of clean wind power and the lines to transport it makes sense.

Please support the construction of the MATL Transmission Line. The environmental impacts are minor and the economic benefits are great.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Curry
Executive Director
Pondera Regional Port Authority
311 South Main, Suite D
Conrad, MT 59435
406 271-7237
pc@3rivers.net

Lorette Carter

March 11, 2008

Good evening, my name is Lorette Carter, Economic Development Director for the City of Shelby. I am not here tonight to speak as city government but as a parent.

We are very fortunate here in Montana to have exceptional colleges and universities for our children to receive a post-secondary education. I have three sons, one who has graduated and 2 that presently attend Montana Tech. These boys are receiving an incredible education, yet we are educating them to leave the state. In 2006 statistical information for Montana Tech School of Mines & Engineering graduates, 76% went to work out of state. My son is an Occupational Safety & Health Engineer in Pequannock, New Jersey and my second son is now pursuing a second degree in the hopes to remain in Montana after graduation.

Projects such as the Montana Alberta Transmission Line have the potential to create opportunity and employment for our children. This project may have limited implementation employment opportunity but has tremendous potential to open the doors to other clean viable industry in our state. Projects of this magnitude require numerous secondary services and project related employment. It will generate tremendous tax reductions and wealth within our communities that may translate into new industry and job creation. Ultimately, it announces to all that Montana welcomes clean viable industry and that our best and brightest need not leave the state to find good jobs. Outside interests have many voices, but I hope you will consider the voices of those who live, work and raise our families here. Help us keep our small rural communities alive for our children to return and to benefit generations to come.

Sincerely,

Lorette Carter
112 1st St So
Shelby, MT 59474
(406) 424-8799

P.O. Box 777
Conrad, MT 59435
1-406-271-4010
1-406-278-2352
pcoco@3rivers.net

Local Economic Development Solutions
Mr. Tom Ring
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
P. O. Box 200991
Helena, MT 59620-0901


Dear Mr. Ring:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the subject documents. As you know, we farm near the south terminus of this line just north of Great Falls. We have several concerns that were not addressed by the draft proposal and new concerns that have arisen since our last opportunity to comment.

Some of the concerns that we feel need to be addressed are as follows:

- Long-span monopoles with 6.5 foot-wide concrete foundations should be required for any portion of the transmission line that crosses or border farm fields. It has been reported that the Alberta portion of the proposed Montana Alberta Tie Line is being required to use single poles through farming lands. Is this true? Although the initial cost might be somewhat higher, these lines are built to last a long time. We have been farming around existing lines for over 70 years. Less land is removed from production and it is much easier to maneuver around a single pole than a double pole design. Very serious consideration should be given to weigh the difference in short-term, up-front costs against the long-term costs to the farmer who will be living with these decisions for generations. What justification could be used to treat farmers differently on each side of the border?

- How will the alternate routes of the MATL be evaluated? Will there be a public, open process? How will the weighing of the various factors be decided? Who decides the weighing factors? Who decides between the alternatives?

- House Bill 3 of the May 2007 Special Session permanently reduces the property tax rate from 12% to 3% for new investments in transmission lines that are constructed after June 2007. For alternative 4, this change has reduced the total property tax income from $3,157,952 to $789,488. Cascade County's income is reduced from $435,360 to $108,840. How does this new rate affect the approval process of the MATL line? What, if any, taxes will MATL be paying to the state of Montana for the revenue they receive from doing business in the state (above and beyond property taxes)?

- Landowners of wind towers are being compensated ~$2,500 per tower per year. How does this compare with what is being proposed for transmission line easement owners? It seems that wind tower owners are receiving much more. Both project types are being funded by private investment. Both project types impact the landowner in similar ways. Why isn't MATL required to pay market rates for land use like the wind tower project owners are?

- Does MATL comply with Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Order 890? If not, why not? What changes occurred or would be required for compliance? Will the EIS be updated to reflect these changes/requirements?

- MATL claims in the EIS that they will be responsible for damages to land and crops from emergency repair operations. What will the process be for making such claims? If there is a dispute, what recourse will the landowner have? What will be the differences in dealing with a Canadian corporation vs. a US corporation? Should some sort of a bond be required of a foreign corporation to guarantee their obligations?

- What will happen if MATL goes out of business? Who will own the line? Will all of the obligations that MATL is entering into upon building the line transfer to whoever buys it?

- MATL has received numerous comments suggesting farm machinery can reach 25 feet in height. Has MATL changed their plans to account for this information? What is MATL doing differently? (It is reasonable to expect that farm equipment will be used under the line that will require 20-25 feet of clearance. Current air drills have a travel height of 19 feet. The current models are not large enough to be of economic use on our property. We expect that larger equipment will be available in the future and that we will use it.) If further restrictions (i.e. limiting equipment height under the line) on our land use are required, will there be additional compensation?

- Market forces have significantly changed the cost of inputs described in Attachment DL-xx. Here are some examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Input</th>
<th>EIS cost</th>
<th>Current cost</th>
<th>Units</th>
<th>% Change</th>
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<tr>
<td>Roundup (RT3)</td>
<td>$21.50</td>
<td>$37.00**</td>
<td>Gallon</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crop</td>
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<td>$12.50</td>
<td>Bushel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seed</td>
<td>$16.00</td>
<td>$28.00</td>
<td>Bushel</td>
<td>75%</td>
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** RT3 over $50/gal in some areas today. **

RT3 @ $50/gal is a 133% increase over the original EIS. Dramatic changes in costs can occur in relatively short time frames. Our family has been farming our land for over 90 years. How will farmers be compensated for changing costs over the life of the power line? Will the EIS be updated to reflect current costs? What changes will result in MATL planning/policy as a result of this new information? Will annual per-pole compensation be adjusted?

- There are a number of planned projects bringing power to the Great Falls area:
  - Rainbow dam upgrade - 25MW (increase)
  - MATL line - 300MW
  - Highwood generating station - 250MW
  - Cutbank wind farm - 210MW (total – some portion to come to Great Falls)

Where is the EIS/analysis of the construction needed to move this power out of the Great Falls area? These projects alone would cause an 80% increase in power exported out of Montana. What is the environmental/economic impact of not having a process for planning changes to power infrastructure? With the withdrawal of federal funding from the Highwood generating station, will MATL be responsible for determining the impact of transmission lines required to move power from Great Falls? If not MATL, who?

- Why bring the MATL line to Great Falls? With the projects noted above, there will be little or no capacity to transfer the power south of Great Falls (already noted as constrained by the EIS).

- Where is the benefit to Montanans? As noted above, the power is likely to flow from Montana to Alberta a vast majority of the time. Is the purpose of the line to export power, why not say so? Is it in the best interests of Montanans to ship our clean, renewable hydro and wind power to Canada? If the purpose of the line is to make money for MATL (which it should be) why shouldn’t MATL be paying market rates for their easements like wind farm owners? Are there other power line connections between the US and Canada? How did local power prices change after the connection?

- How can MATL justify building ~100 miles of transmission line just to avoid tariffs at the Cutbank or Shelby substations? Do MATL’s profits weigh higher with regulatory authorities than all of the impacted landowners to the south? The attitude seems to be, “If the project is described correctly, eminent domain can be used to ‘take’ the required right-of-way to maximize profits for the corporation.”

- With the Cutbank wind farm, there probably won’t be any capacity to move power from the Cutbank substation to the south. However, that is true for Great Falls as well. With the new wind farm, is there enough capacity at the Cutbank station to supply MATL with 300MW into Alberta? If MATL connected near Cutbank, would there be enough capacity for the Cutbank wind farm to complete their Phase 3 plans?

- Power poles on farmland will be hit by farm equipment. (Farmers are expected to maneuver their 30-130 foot-wide implements around these poles 5-10 times per year for decades. Getting too close to poles risks impact. Being too far away takes land out of production and invites weeds.) What plans are being implemented to ensure the safety of farmers, their equipment, their crops, and power consumers? At what point do farmers become liable for hitting power poles? (A nick, a scratch, a dent, damage that requires replacement of a pole?) How much force would damage each of the proposed pole designs? If a farmer lost control of his tractor (heart attack or stroke) and it took down a pole, how much liability could the farmer have?

- Poorly maintained power lines have been known to cause fires. Will MATL be liable for any damage caused by their line? What limits will there be?

- Should portions of the line near the terminations be constructed to enable additional capacity or multiple lines? We are interested in encouraging some intelligent design and future planning with regards to the clutter now existing around substations.

- The line itself should be designed for increased capacity to avoid the necessity of adding new poles in the future. Is the provision for 230KV enough? MATL suggests that the capacity can be increased to 400MW in each direction. What changes need to be made to increase this capacity? Will easements need to change? How will landowners be compensated?

- Was MATL a party to The Northwest Wind Integration Action Plan? If not, why not? Who was MATL’s representative? What, if any, actions does MATL plan with regards to The Northwest Wind Integration Action Plan?

- As the MATL line is behind schedule, what is the current state of the TSAs that have been awarded thus far? When do the bids expire? How is it that MATL has accepted bids for 300MW north to south when there is not capacity to move this power from Great Falls?

We are sure that the average person does not understand just how difficult it is to farm around obstacles such as power poles. We will probably always object to having them forced upon us. That said our objections would be reduced significantly by receiving fair, annual, cost-adjusted compensation and by having a reasonable plan for future development that optimized the impact to our land, the state, and our community.
We are extremely concerned that there is not a plan, nor does there seem to be a planning process for transmission line development. We currently have four lines running across our property. The MATL transmission line would be the fifth. Without a comprehensive plan, it is difficult to know how many there may be in the future. Given this lack of planning, and given the lack of capacity out of Great Falls, we believe that Alternative 1, or the status quo, is the right alternative for now.

Thank you,

Sheffels Farms, Inc.

Jim Sheffels
John Sheffels
Steve Sheffels

March 10, 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

As Mayor of Conrad I strongly support the Montana Alberta Transmission Line (MATL). The economic benefits to our community would be very substantial. The benefits from the line and the resulting wind farms would go a long way in easing the tax burden on the county level. An example would be the large infusion of tax money from the Judith Gap wind farm.

Due to low unemployment, permanent workers with families and children would relocate to our area. This would greatly help our school systems. Currently the school system is looking at remodeling the local high school and elementary school. The additional tax money would ease the burden on existing tax payers.

In this area we do not get a lot of opportunities for economic development. When projects like the MATL line and wind farms come along they should be embraced and supported by the whole community.

I would like to take this opportunity to encourage the D.E.O. and the O.E.D. to give favorable status to this project.

Sincerely,

John P. Shevlin
Mayor
City of Conrad
March 10, 2008

Mr. Tom Ring
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Environmental Management Bureau
P.O. Box 208901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

Dear Mr. Ring:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Montana Alberta Tie Transmission Line. The Cut Bank Area Chamber of Commerce would like to go on record, once again, offering its full support for the electric transmission line proposed by Montana Alberta Tie, Ltd. (MATL). Our organization is approximately 140 members strong and is dedicated to the promotion of the Cut Bank area. We firmly believe construction of this line will have a positive and lasting effect on not only our community, but the Golden Triangle area.

We applaud the steps taken by MATL officials to respond to the concerns raised by landowners whose property would be affected by the line. We support the new law which provides a property tax break to landowners whose land is crossed by the line and transfers the responsibility for the tax on the affected land to MATL. The Chamber supports MATL's decision to use monopoles instead of "H frame" structures along the 53 miles of cultivated land where the line crosses fields diagonally, thereby lessening the impact of the line on farm and ranch operations. The Cut Bank Area Chamber of Commerce is not insensitive to the ag producers whose operations are affected by this project or to those who have expressed concern over the project's impact on the environmental and historic and/or culturally significant areas. We are hopeful charges proposed by MATL officials will result in a "win-win" situation for all parties involved.

The Cut Bank Chamber believes the transmission line holds the key to the development of a number of wind park projects in this area, most notably the McCormick Ranch Wind Park, which will be located in both Glacier and Toole Counties. The development of wind power as a clean and green, renewable energy source will greatly enhance our stagnant tax base, potentially reducing property taxes for all our residents—whether they be farmers, ranchers, small business owners or individuals struggling to make ends meet on a fixed income.

Due to the nature of this project, we are well aware the number of permanent jobs created will be limited, but any increase in job opportunities trickles down into our communities by way of increased school enrollment and additional consumer buying power.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for this project. We look forward to hearing very soon that a Presidential Permit has been issued for the project and we urge the Montana DEQ and BLM issue the needed certificates of compliance and right-of-ways as required.

LaVerne Jones, President
Cut Bank Area Chamber of Commerce

February 14, 2008

Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Environmental Management Bureau
Mr. Tom Ring, Environmental Science Specialist
P.O. Box 208901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

Dear Mr. Ring:

Glacier Electric Cooperative, Inc. would like to offer its unequivocal support for the Montana Alberta Tie Line. In our opinion, it is one of the most promising and beneficial projects, not only for the local area, but for the State of Montana, that we have seen in many years.

Construction of the tie line, and the associated wind generation facility, will create a positive impact on our area in many ways.

As a utility, it will offer an opportunity to interconnect, if the necessity arises, to utilize the capacity of the transmission line. It will also provide an opportunity for us to participate in the maintenance of the system in the future.

Socially, it will create jobs both during the construction phases and after completion in the maintenance and operations stages. The activity associated with the construction itself will create additional business for local merchants and suppliers.

Economically, it will help our county, which has been suffering from a severe economic recession for many years, by improving the tax base which will assist all local residents.

Last, but most significantly, it will benefit the entire state of Montana by providing a desperately needed transmission path for power created by new generation facilities that will develop in the vicinity of the new line, and elsewhere in Montana and in Alberta.
Mr. Tom Ring
February 14, 2008

We congratulate the Montana Alberta Tie Line group on their innovative and progressive approach and wish them every success with the construction and operation of the transmission line.

Sincerely,

Jasen R. Bronec
General Manager

Triangle Land & Livestock Co., Inc.
Barr & Colleen Gustafson
P.O. Box 568
Browning, MT 59417
Ph: (406) 338-5228  FAX: (406) 338-5220
e-mail: devbarr@montana.net

March 12, 2008

To: Montana Department of Environmental Quality
From: Colleen Gustafson

To Whom It May Concern:

We are sorry we are not able to attend the hearing in person, but we are in the midst of calving.

We would like to express our strong support for the Montana Alberta Tie Line. It is imperative that this region develops infrastructure and business opportunities to bolster the economy and expand the tax base. It is increasingly difficult for the existing small business owners to bear the burden of business and real property taxes.

This is a tremendous opportunity to open the doors to new and responsible development. We encourage all parties to work together to mitigate any problems with the placement of this line, and offer our strong support for proceeding with the Montana Alberta Tie Line.

Sincerely,

Colleen Gustafson
March 12, 2008

Tom Ring
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Environmental Management Bureau
P.O. Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

Dear Mr. Ring:

The purpose of this letter is to indicate the City of Cut Bank’s full support for the electric transmission line proposed by Montana Alberta Tie Ltd. (MATL). We have reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and find this project to be of great benefit to Glacier County and the surrounding area.

We believe MATL response to the concerns raised in previous public meetings have been thoroughly addressed and commend MATL officials on their efforts to create a positive situation for all involved. Wind energy projects are one of the most viable answers in developing clean and green industries for Northern Montana.

On behalf of the City of Cut Bank, we urge MDEQ and BLM to issue the certificates required for compliance and right-of-ways and look forward to hearing a Presidential Permit has been issued.

Should you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact me at 406-873-5526 or at the above address.

Sincerely,

Joni Stewart, Mayor
March 11, 2008

Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Environmental Management Bureau
ATTN: Tom Ring
PO Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

Re: MATL Transmission Line

The Pondera County Board of Commissioners strongly supports the construction of the Montana Alberta Tie LTD 240/230 kV merchant transmission line.

There are a plethora of reasons to support the construction. If environmental concerns were your only criteria, the minimal trade-offs imposed by this new construction would be well worth the value to our society and to the environment simply for the capability to transmit clean, green power. Given the fact that most of the carrying capacity of the line has already been obligated to wind developers, transmission of renewable energy seems assured.

As Commissioners, we are responsible for the fiscal operations of Pondera County. We look to the construction of this line and associated wind generation facilities as a way to broaden the tax base, while simultaneously alleviating the tax burden on our existing taxpayers. The approximately $260,000 dollars in property taxes directly from the line would be a more than welcome addition. The transmission line would also be the catalyst for wind farm developments such as that in Judith Gap, MT, where that wind project pays approximately $1.2 million in taxes to the county it is located in. To put that into perspective, the entire budget for Pondera County in fiscal 2008 was $7 million dollars. From an economic viewpoint, factoring in additional people, businesses and support services both for the line itself and accompanying wind towers, the positive fiscal impact of this project could be critical for the sustainability of our communities.

As Commissioners, we also have a duty of care towards all the residents in the county which includes a variety of businesses as well as agriculture. With all three Commissioners involved in businesses and two of our three commissioners actively involved in production agriculture, it is a duty that we take very seriously. There is no denying that farming around power poles is costly, inefficient and whole variety of politically incorrect adjectives can describe the time and effort
involved. It logically follows that it is much simpler to farm around single pole structures that are located on section lines as opposed to the double pole structures that were initially proposed in diagonal field crossings. To the extent practical, monopoles should be utilized. This line needs to be built right, but it must be built. All stakeholders need to recognize that both MATL and farmers face serious financial consequences based on the placement decisions. An equitable balance has to be achieved.

Many of the concerns that we have heard regarding compensation for pole placement should be business negotiations between MATL and private landowners. To that end, we would urge both the DOE and the DEQ to issue any and all necessary permits as expeditiously as possible so that MATL, Ltd. may finalize those negotiations and begin construction.

On behalf of the entire Board of Pondera County Commissioners,

Sandra J. Broeder, Vice-Chair

March 13, 2008

Chris Stephens
PO Box 94
Dutton, MT 59433
406-463-2433, 406-788-0498

Comments for MATL EIS—Conrad hearing

My name is Chris Stephens and my family farms in the counties where this line is being built. We will have at least a mile to a mile and half of this line depending upon the route.

I am disappointed that all the county commissioners and local businesses are more concerned with the needs of the MATL than they are of us longtime faithful taxpayers. We aren’t asking for much. We are asking only for a design of this line in a manner that the local cooperatives have long recognized as the proper design for the power infrastructure. It is not a coincidence that the resistance of this line begins with the start of the diagonal portion of this line at Conrad and continues south to Great Falls as does the diagonal. One has to remember that along this portion of line we aren’t talking about one diagonal line we are talking about two as there is already a diagonal line that we have had to live with for 30 years.

The northern portion of the line has all the benefits. The north-south orientation and the wind development. The southern all the impacts. The diagonal and no wind development.

Since I have owned my farm east of town here, I have had two power lines, a gas line with a pumping station and a fiber optic line cross this farm and none of them provide service to my farm. I did not oppose them. I am not against progress.

We talk about the tax base and economic development MATL brings to these communities. Let me share the tax base and economic benefits my family provide. We pay $26539 dollars property tax in Pondera county, $64210 dollars in Teton; $39896 dollars in Cascade and $2783 in Choteau county for a total of over $133,000 dollars annually. My older brother and his family, who will have line build on his property in Teton county, spent
$315,000 at Frontline Ag over the last three years for an average of almost $79,000 dollars a year. I myself have spent over $80,000 dollars in the last two months at Frontline Ag. This is just one business. We support many other businesses in Conrad. I am disappointed and angered by the lack of support of Conrad community. We are asking, only for this line to be built so that it doesn’t negatively impact the people who have supported your schools and businesses before MATL arrived and will be here long after MATL leaves.

The State of Montana, thru its generosity of its tax policy, has given MATL a tax break of between 2.1-2.3 million annually or over 100 million dollars for the projected 50 year lifetime of this project. It’s time MATL shows its generosity and agree to spend the 4-7 seven million dollars to build alternative 4 with monopoles. After all, they are actually using our money to build it with. MATL could also show its generosity by purchasing the entire 105 foot easement that they will exercise complete control over, not just the 45 ft. The Alberta Utilities Board is requiring this in Canada, why not here in Montana?

The economic benefits of the wind farms are documented in the EIS, but the impact never mentioned is that these projects do not stand alone. There has to be a network of additional power lines to connect to this merchant line. Are these lines going to be allowed to take off any direction cross country to get to MATL and possibly use eminent domain against those who oppose these additional power lines. MATL is more than willing to use eminent domain to get where it’s going. In fact, there are people in this room who have already received such letters telling them this. If you live between a windy ridge and this line you too may share in the unpleasant impacts of power development, with none of the money from the towers. The profits are not shared; only the problems.

I, for one, am not interested in maintaining around these poles for MATL. That responsibility lies solely with MATL and the EIS states this; but this company is trying to pass this duty off to the farmers with a pittance of a payment included in the farming impact payments. If MATL thinks that it is possible to do this for the small amount being offered, let them hire a independent contractor do this job. I do not want to be an employee of MATL in any capacity.

In closing, I have been a member of a group of landowners who have been meeting with MATL for over two years. We have never said that we didn’t want this built. We have chanted the mantra, field lines, section lines, monopoles, field lines, section lines, monopoles. MATL has not listened. They have always said too much money, too much money, too much money!

I have to wonder how much money is enough for these people. Is the 100 million dollar tax relief that the taxpayers of Montana will have to replace enough? Is the projected revenues of over a billion dollars in the first 10 years of operations enough? Will the profits from the next 5 lines that President Johann promises his stockholders enough?

I want to than the DEQ for designing the Agency Alternate, Alternative 4 and the work they have done. And I want to than Ellen Russell and her coworkers to be curious and concerned enough to actually to ride on a 120 foot sprayer and experience first hand the difficulty these structures are to production agriculture. This same invitation was extended to MATL officials two years ago, but they didn’t find interest in it until they saw your example.

Thank you

Chris Stephens
March 13, 2008

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The State of Montana, thru its generosity of its tax policy, has given MATL a tax break of between 2.1-2.5 million annually or over 100 million dollars for the projected 50 year lifetime of this project. It’s time MATL shows its generosity and agree to spend the 4-7 seven million dollars to build alternative 4 with monopoles. After all, they are actually using our money to build it with. MATL could also show its generosity by purchasing the entire 105 foot easement that they will exercise complete control over, not just the 45 ft. The Alberta Utilities Board is requiring this in Canada, why not here in Montana?

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Shawn and Lori Dolan  
12418 N. Diamond Dr.  
Hayden, ID 83835  
March 12, 2008

Mr. Tom Ring  
Environmental Sciences Specialist  
Montana Department of Environmental Quality  
PO Box 200901  
Helena, MT 59620-0901

Re: MATL EIS Comments

Dear Mr. Ring:

I would like to submit my comments on the Federal Draft of the Environmental Impact Statement for the Montana Alberta Tie Ltd. 230 kV Transmission Line. In general we felt that the document was fairly well done and we appreciate the revised economic impact projections and believe the new projections are more realistic than MATL was feeding to the press. The $240,000 annual tax impact to Pondara County may still be a little optimistic though. We are not opposed to the lines construction; however, we do have a few concerns with some of the material presented in the EIS document. I should point out that I am a registered professional engineer in the State of Montana and have been involved in power line design and construction for over 20 years.

Under the Regulatory Restrictions Analysis Section S.7 the preparers seem to be more concerned with the potential property rights impact than the property rights impact to the various US citizens and land owners along the proposed transmission line route. The various agencies should be more concerned with the impact of MATL’s activities on the various land owner's property rights. Land owners that I might add vote, whereas MATL is a Canadian based firm. I would like to point out that MATL's right-of-way agents have been securing "options" at very nominal rates not actively purchasing right-of-way. At least the preliminary documents sent to us were option documents that stated should MATL choose to exercise the option the land owners would be paid their token right-of-way fee. So the impact to MATL’s property rights by requiring them to follow the agency prepared route of Alternative 4 would be fairly minimal.

MATL has repeated stated that it has the ability to condemn property using eminent domain in the State of Montana. How does the recent Montana legislature action last summer limiting the use of eminent domain powers for private enterprise affect MATL’s ability to exercise eminent domain condemnations?

Our family owns 400 acres in the Belgian Hill area near Valier. In Figure 2.6.7-2.0 of the EIS, three of the routing options are depicted crossing our property. The Old Belgian Hill reroute, the current Belgian Hill local routing option and the Alt 2 Proposed alignment. The current Belgian Hill local routing option goes right through the middle of our irrigated field longitudinally. If the line was located in this manner it would make our property pretty much impossible to irrigate and would drastically affect the properties value and use as irrigated farmland. We strongly oppose this option and will file a law suit if this option is chosen. This route would inflict the maximum harm and damage to our property and would be in direct conflict with statements on page 1-16 pertaining to right-of-ways providing the greatest public benefit and the least private harm. The Old Belgian Hill reroute follows the field line at the edge of our property to the west and the Alt 2 Proposed alignment cuts diagonally across our property then generally parallels the road. By adding a couple goyled 90 degree corner structures or better yet, a couple unguyed self supported structures to MATL’s design in this area to eliminate the running angles in the line, the impact to our property could be minimized and crossing the roll irrigated field to the south at a diagonal could be avoided. As our property is presently in CRIP and will be returning to crop production shortly, we strongly advocate the use of monopole structures across our property. We would prefer Alternative 4 be selected as it has the minimum impact on our property. It runs across the northern edge.

In reading through the EIS I noticed that the only PE stamp I saw in the document was from an engineer from California. Montana law requires that transmission lines and other utility projects constructed in the state be designed under the responsible charge of a PE licensed in the State of Montana. Subsequently, documents covering the Montana portion of this line should be sealed or stamped by a Montana PE. California PE’s are not recognized by the Montana Board of Engineers and it should be noted that California does not follow the NESC.

And finally I would like to further address the minimum line clearance issue. The EIS lists the minimum line to ground clearance design criteria of the line to be 21.2 feet. In Volume 2 of the EIS entitled response to comments, two additional minimum clearance calculations are shown, one by Mr. Wayne Baxter of HDR in Billings, the other by Mr. Dave Marne of Marne Associates of Missoula Montana. Both of these calculations were performed in response to my earlier comments regarding the line being designed with insufficient line to ground clearance to meet the requirements of the NESC. HDR calculated the minimum clearance using NESC rule 232C and MATL and Marne Associates used the alternate method provided under NESC rule 232D, which allows for reduced clearances for circuits with known switching-surge factors. The HDR minimum clearance was 22.6 feet, slightly more than I calculated due to their assuming an elevation of 4,500 feet versus the 3,300 foot elevation assumed by my calculation. The approach used by the MATL consultant resulted in a clearance of 21.8 feet.
March 13, 2008

Dear Sir:

I am again standing in support of the construction of the proposed MATL line. At the Great Falls hearing it was mentioned that the proposed Alternative #4 would be a preferred alternative. I am standing to oppose this selection. The Studies have been completed on the MATL proposal. The Alternative #4 moves the line significantly away from the already studied area and also makes less sense. The #4 Alternative places the line west of Conrad a greater distance from the proposed wind development and further from the already existing substations. In consideration of future environmental impacts this is not a good choice. Lines from potential wind development areas and from substations that may eventually connect would be longer and more obstacles would be encountered.

I support the project and urge the DEQ to move this project forward quickly in order that this area may see the benefits in our economy, rather than see another project go away.

Thank you sincerely,

Cheryl Curry
Fondra Regional Port Authority
311 South Main, Suite D
Conrad, MT 59425
406.271.7237
pocconrad@3rivers.net

For the record, my name is Melissa McRae, and I am the fourth generation of a farm near Dutton. I am also graduating as a bocat this spring with a biology degree. This is an environmental impact hearing, yet we have spoken very little about the actual environmental effects of these proposed transmission lines. Many of us understand that farming around poles is inconvenient and financially burdensome, but I would like to speak about this in detail. Much of the cost is accrued by the extra chemical and fertilizer used. 134 ft. sprayers are not designed to turn sharply, and going around a pole causes extra spray to be put down. This is a concern for the farmer, because too much chemical or fertilizer can burn the crop and result in production loss. It should also be a concern to everyone, because extra chemical is potentially hazardous to the environment. If we look towards the future, the accumulated effect of fifty years of extra chemical will be even more damaging, and in areas with ground water near the surface, everyone may feel these effects. The best solution would be to keep all poles on field edges. A more realistic solution would be to minimize the number of poles in fields and also make sure the farmer has the financial wherewithal to farm the poles carefully. We are given incentives by the government to help pay for the extra costs of GPS and other systems that make precision spraying possible, lessening the amount of chemical used. Shouldn’t we also receive help for the burden of farming around poles?

I know that everyone is very excited about the economic boost these poles may bring, and I hope along with you that more business ventures like this will help keep towns together and schools like the one I graduated from open. But we need to keep in mind that the ones set to profit the most from this transmission line is MATL, and they need to negotiate with landowners to make the burden of their for-profit merchant line
March 13, 2008

Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Environmental Management Bureau
ATTN: Tom Ring
PO Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

To whom it may concern:

My name is Wendy Judisch, a resident of the City of Conrad and a member of the Conrad City Council.

I welcome the opportunity for our area to use our natural resources. One of these natural resources is our wind, a great source of renewable energy. A transmission line through our area will not only help encourage the development of wind energy but also help to spread the tax burden throughout our area. The economic boost and its inevitable spin-off will help benefit our area schools, our city, and our county.

I encourage you to help the proposed MATL line become a reality as efficiently and expeditiously as possible. The economic pros far outweigh any environmental cons.

Sincerely,

Wendy Judisch
616 S. Maryland
Conrad, MT 59425
Glacier County Regional Port Authority
PO Box 469
Browning, MT 59417
(406) 338-4015

March 12, 2008

Mr. Tom Ring
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Environmental Management Bureau
P.O. Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

Dear Mr. Ring,

The mission of our regional port authority is to promote, stimulate and advance the general welfare, commerce, economic development and prosperity of our region. Our region is Glacier County, and a majority of our rural county lies within the Blackfeet Reservation. The MATL will have a tremendous economic impact on our region and will assist in potential wind development projects. The MATL will pump needed revenue into the tax base of our region and will assist with our struggling economy.

The Glacier County Regional Port Authority supports the Montana Alberta Transmission Line and views it as a means to reach our vision; which is to have a quality rural community with living experiences, opportunities and the amenities of urban living. We are encouraging you to support the line, which has little environmental impact, but large economic benefits. We appreciate the attention you have given our request.

Sincerely,

Tony Sitzmann, Chair
Glacier County Regional Port Authority
PO Box 469
Browning, MT 59417
406 338-4015
3) Our region has one of the best wind power resources in the nation, yet has seen little wind power development because of the lack of transmission capacity. We believe that the way you approve this project should set the standard for future transmission line projects that can allow for the development of this national resource while protecting the rights of property owners.

4) The State of Montana has recognized the importance of projects such as this to the state’s economy and the nation’s energy supply by creating a one-quarter mile wide property tax free zone for property owners along new transmission line routes.

5) Timing of this project is critical to attract investment in wind power development.

Thank you for supporting renewable energy development in central Montana.

Brett Darby
President
Great Falls Development Authority
bdarby@greatfallsdevelopment.org
1 (406) 771-9030
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Great Falls, MT 59404
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