

From: Helen S Gould [jhranch@juno.com]
Sent: Tuesday, June 24, 2008 9:15 AM
To: Johnson, Nancy; tomring@mt.gov
Subject: BPA transmission line from Libby to Troy in the BIG HORN SHEEP PRESERVE. (2 letters)

06-22-08

LIBBY MONTANAYELLOWSTONE IN PERIL

The Bonneville Power Administration has proposed building a new transmission line and approximately three miles of it is purported to go through the Big Horn Sheep area managed by the Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks. Bighorn sheep have been transported to the area from Wild Horse Island on Flathead lake. The area is on the North side of the Kootenai River seven miles downstream (West) from Libby, Montana. The owner/rancher, who by request is buried thereon, gave the land to the Fish and Game with the understanding that it would be kept pristine.

Comment 1

Presently there is a walking path on this land where one walks next to cliffs which are usually occupied by Big Horns. If one wants to continue walking he/she can walk all the way to the Kootenai Falls.

Comment 2

BPA sent its surveyors in last year to see about moving the present transmission line river crossing three quarters of a mile upstream and apparently they caused some ruts. Get this - BPA sent in 500, 10 yard truck loads of gravel, allegedly to fill the surveyor ruts. This sounds more like road building than filling ruts. In any event that area is obviously changed forever.

Comment 3

I am going to quote from their own Final Environmental Impact statement about what they purport to do to Libby's pristine Big Horn Sheep area - "The proposed transmission line rebuild would require ... widening existing roads ... constructing an access road for bridge approaches to China creek ... widen Sheep Range Road along the face of Black Eagle Rock...by constructing retaining walls at the road/river edge to allow safe passage of large construction equipment past a series of narrow turns. ". There is even a possibility of putting "... a welded wire face ... 1200 feet west of the gate at the end of the Kootenai Road ... for safe passage of large construction equipment...". Make no mistake about it - these are going to be big roads for large transmission line structures. They state they need 15,000 yards of special rock embankment material and 25,000 yards of crushed rock. The natural look of the Big Horn sheep area will be changed forever if the proposed action or Alternative action is ordained.

Comment 4

Response 1: BPA is proposing to re-build an existing transmission line through the Kootenai Falls Wildlife Management Area. The existing line predates establishment of the wildlife management area. See Section 4.10.3 on the FEIS for a discussion of the Kootenai Falls Wildlife Management Area.

Response 2: The walking path exists on the access trail that is used to service the existing transmission line. Non-administrative vehicle use of this road is prohibited all year long. The existing transmission line predates establishment of this wildlife management area.

Response 3: Surveyors under contract to BPA did cause rutting on about 2 miles of the road/trail in the fall of 2006. BPA subsequently repaired the trail at the request of MFWP by bringing in gravel fill.

Response 4: As indicated in Table 2-1a on page 2-10 of the Final EIS, about 14 miles of existing access roads would be improved for the proposed project, and about 4.5 miles of new access roads would be constructed. An estimated 15,000 cubic yards of special rock embankment material and 25,000 cubic yards of crushed rock would be needed for improvement of the 18.5 miles of existing and new roads. Of this total project road length, about 3.5 miles of existing access road and 0.36 mile of new road would occur on the wildlife management area from line segments 21 to 24. Travel surface of roads would typically be 14 feet in width, with an 18- to 20-foot-wide travel surface on curves. Rather than trimming and removing a portion of Black Eagle Rock, a culturally sensitive feature, to allow for passage of large construction equipment, BPA is proposing to widen the road by adding a set of retaining walls on the river side of the road and placing fill behind the retaining walls.

THERE IS A BETTER ROUTE

I suggested crossing upstream from the Big Horn Sheep land and then coming down the Burlington Northern Railway at their final meeting with property owners. One of the BPA representatives immediately stood up and said we cannot be within 150 feet of the highway right of way. First of all one can find thousands of areas where a transmission line is within 150 feet of a road right of way and I revealed one already on Highway 2 in a previous article. On page S-10 of the EIS BPA states "... Moving the transmission line to the south side of Kootenai River ... near the City of Libby ... has been eliminated from ... evaluation... because it would be economically infeasible to relocate the commercial and private developments located along this realignment option." On page S-9 of the EIS, BPA proposes crossing the river ¼ of a mile upstream (east) of where they cross now and than going west for ¾ of a mile until they rejoin the line. THEN THEY STATE "...THIS REALIGNMENT WOULD BE LOCATED... WITHIN THE BNSF RAILROAD RIGHT-OF-WAY AND THE MONTANA DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION RIGHT-OF-WAY.

Comment 5

THE POINT IS - BPA DOES NOT HAVE TO MOVE ANY DEVELOPMENTS IF THEY CROSS CLOSE TO THE HIGHWAY 37 BRIDGE AND THEN JUST STAY IN THE RAILROAD ROW UNTIL THEY REJOIN THEIR LINE WHERE IT NOW CROSSES THE KOOTENAI RIVER. THEY STATE THEY WILL BE IN THESE ROWS WEST OF LIBBY ANYWAY. THERE ARE THREE TRANSMISSION LINES CROSSING WEST OF THE BRIDGE ALREADY. What is more is that it would be cheaper in that if the right of way is already cleared. If they can get these easements west of Libby they can get them from Libby to the proposed rejoin structure.

Comment 6

I would further suggest they go underground since it would be easy to run excavation equipment down an already cleared path.

Comment 7

I am not an adversary of BPA. I have given them an easement across part of my land and I don't care what they do as long as they restore my road when they leave. So this is not self serving. I don't live in a pristine area enjoyed by all the residents of Libby and beyond.

Comment 8

Response 5: This realignment option has been considered and was not carried forward for detailed analysis for the reasons described under 'Crossing near the City of Libby' in Section 2.6.3 of the final EIS. The Agencies have studied this option on several occasions in the last four years and decided that the route was not feasible. BPA has studied this realignment option on several occasions and determined that there simply isn't room enough in places between Highway 2 and the BNSF railroad track for even single pole construction. Please see also response 15.

Response 6: BPA conducted engineering assessments of your described realignment over the last four years and identified several constricted areas that make this option infeasible. In several locations insufficient room is present between the highway and railroad rights of-way to allow for even single pole construction. In locations where the railroad would not allow structures to be placed near the track, the line would have to cross the highway. Acquisition of new right-of-way for the suggested alignment would involve additional expense.

Response 7: The reasons for not burying the transmission line under ground are addressed in Section 2.6.4 on page 2-24 of the Final EIS.

Response 8: Comment noted.

Comment 9

I used the Yellowstone analogy because if this line had to go through a Big Horn Sheep area in Yellowstone park and there was a railroad nearby does anyone doubt that the line would go down the railroad rather than constructing industrial size roads and transmission towers right through a walking path where one can observe Big Horn Sheep in their natural habitat on cliffs.

Therefore I would urge the citizens of Libby to contact their County Commissioners, the local Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks representative (Jerry Brown, Wildlife Biologist), the Montana Department of Transportation (Jean Riley at mdt.mt.gov), The Montana Department of Environmental Quality (Warren McCullough or Tom ring at mt.gov), The United States Environmental Protection Agency (John F. Wardell - Montana Representative at potts.stephen @ epa.gov , Senator Baucus, Senator Tester, and Congressman Denny Rehberg to get together with Project Manager Kirk Robinson of BPA at kmrobinson@bpa.gov to get this transmission line put down the railroad right-of-way or some other re-route away from the Big horn Sheep area where it belongs .

Jerry R. Gould at jhranch@juno.com

Comment 10

06-05-08
 TO: PARTIES INTERESTED IN BPA REBUILD OF LIBBY TO TROY 115-KILOVOLT TRANS. LINE
 FROM: Jerry R. Gould - owner of parcels in Big Horn Terrace RE. A PROPOSED ROUTE WHICH APPEARS TO ME TO BE THE SOLUTION TO ALL THE CONCERNS OF SAID REBUILD OF SAID TRANSMISSION LINE
 When we had our final 08-15-07 meeting with BPA, Bob Pival, a long time resident of Big Horn Terrace, addressed the desire of the overwhelming majority of us to have the Quartz Creek Realignment. We were told by BPA that they had decided against the realignment. I felt I could offer no more to Bob's dissertation so I suggested that the transmission line cross the Kootenai River before it got to any of us and then simply go down the Railroad right-of-way until it re-connected with their existing line on the South side of the river which is about one mile East of Kootenai Falls. I was told by a BPA employee that they could not put the transmission line within 150 feet highway 2. I doubted this but let the matter drop since it appeared from what was stated at the meeting was that BPA was simply going to rebuild the 115 line with wood poles on Big Horn Terrace as we presently have on our properties and we would not be any worse off than when we bought our parcels.

However, the way the Final EIS is written it appears to me that rather than the " Proposed Action 115-kV single-circuit rebuild" BPA could easily adopt the "Alternative 1 - 230-kV double-circuit rebuild".

Comment 11

The Quartz Creek Realignment, though discussed in the final EIS, does not appear to ever be a future option should BPA decide to move up to the 230kV line.

Comment 12

Response 9: Your opinion is noted.

Response 10: Comment noted, thank you for the information.

Response 11: Comment noted. No need has been identified that would justify the investment required to construct a 230-kV line at this time.

Response 12: Your opinion is noted.

REASONS FOR CROSSING THE KOOTENAI RIVER EAST OF ALL OF OUR PROPERTIES AND THAN CONTINUING WEST CONTIGUOUS TO THE RAILWAY UNTIL IT CONNECTS WITH THE EXISTING TRANSMISSION LINE

There is already a transmission line on the same Highway 2 not more than 3 miles North of the BPA building in Kalispell, Montana, and, there is a railway between the transmission line and Highway 2. I went and measured the line. The centerline of the railway is 32 feet from the bottom of the ditch which is the East edge of the highway right of way. The transmission line is 40 feet East of that point. Therefore, there is already a Transmission line 72 feet from the highway 2 ROW. Therefore :

1 It does not appear that there is a metes and bounds or legal obstacle to building the line between Highway 2 and the railroad.

Comment 13

2 2-22 paragraph two of the final EIS states construction problems. That may be true if BPA attempted to put in double poles. However, BPA could put in the single pole option described as the alternative 1 steel pole.

This would give BPA the option of putting in the 115-kV line now and than if BPA needed the 230 kV double-circuit rebuild in the future the poles would already be in place.

Comment 14

Further, the upkeep would be negligible as compared to the wood poles so it would be a one time cost as opposed to continuing maintenance. I drive down the South side of the rails occasionally to take pictures of the Kootenai Falls. It certainly appears to me that there is adequate room for single poles. Also, if some of this is in rock can't the poles be erected by core drilling the rock and than installing guy cables.

Comment 15

3 Eminent Domain When I called BPA about going down the railway I was told that sometimes they will let you do it and sometimes they balk. If the are hesitant would it not be easier to achieve condemnation proceedings on one party rather than dozens of households.

Comment 16

4 BPA is going to have to go to the expense of crossing the river anyway - why not do it before incurring all the problems associated with going close to residences.

Comment 17

5 This could be done by dealing with only one land owner rather than dozens or, perhaps, it could be crossed on an existing right of way or public property.

Comment 18

5 BPA would not have to concern themselves with the aesthetic concerns of some people as it is common to see transmission lines contiguous to railways. It is already an industrial area.

Comment 19

Response 13: See response to comment 5 above.

Response 14: On the Libby – Troy project no need has been identified that would justify the investment required to construct a 230-kV line at this time; other alternative locations may be available in the future to handle the need for additional transfer capacity out of Libby Dam. Making the speculative investment now to overbuild a line without reasonable assurance that it would be used in the future is not a wise use of public or ratepayer dollars.

Response 15: See response to comment 6. Core drilling in rock is not an insurmountable problem. However, BPA has indicated that on the south side of the river there simply isn't room enough in places between the highway ROW and the railroad track and ROW for even single pole construction. The railroad would not allow BPA to get too close to their track and the MDOT wouldn't allow BPA to get too close to their highway. There are pinch points along the route west of Libby. The line would have to cross the highway several times due to constrictions and parts of the route are just plain unbuildable. BPA has looked at this same possibility on numerous occasions in the last four years and decided early on that the route was not doable. Even if BPA used double circuit steel poles (Alternative 1), the idea of rebuilding to 230 kV is not an option that BPA is looking to in the future along the line that goes to Bonners Ferry.

Response 16: BPA has never initiated condemnation proceedings against a railroad to utilize their right-of-way for a transmission line. Condemnation is never an easy process. It is BPA's policy to make every effort to avoid condemnation proceedings, and pursue it only after all good-faith efforts to cooperatively resolve a land easement negotiation have failed. Condemnation involving a railroad would likely be a very complex and lengthy proceeding with an uncertain outcome in this case. The existing line needs to be rebuilt soon to help prevent failures and fires similar to those mentioned in comment 24.

Response 17: A realignment that would be contiguous to the railway would pass through a constricted commercially developed area, resulting in other new land use impacts. In addition other constraints exist further west of Libby on this suggested realignment indicated in the response to comment 15. This realignment was evaluated by the agencies and eliminated from further study.

Response 18: See response 16.

Response 19: If a realignment were located contiguous to the railway, west of Libby the highway and railroad enter a less developed area along the Kootenai River. Here aesthetic concerns would focus on highway travelers who would have direct views of a transmission line located along the railroad. The proposed rebuild north of the Kootenai River would be partially screened by existing vegetation on the river's north side.

CONSEQUENTLY I THINK THIS WOULD ALLEVIATE THE CONCERNS OF ALL PARTIES REFERRED TO ON THE FINAL EIS, TO WIT:

1 Paul Leimbach is concerned that moving the existing crossing three fourths of a mile upstream would destroy the view from Highway 2 while the Salish and Kootenai tribes want the crossing moved. Moving the crossing miles East of these scenic areas should alleviate both concerns.

Comment 20

The existing line would be removed.

2 The Montana Dept. of Highways is concerned that the line crosses MDH roadways in 5 locations and is also concerned about the impact from crossing 24 watersheds. Moving the crossing East of all our properties will alleviate most of these impacts.

Comment 21

3 The U S Dept. of the Interior, Office of Environmental Policy is concerned about the effects on Grizzly Bears, etc. (I assume they are referring to the re-route). Going adjacent to the railroad does not exacerbate this concern.

Comment 22

4 Rich Young does not want the re-alignment visible from his home. Since there are lines running next to almost every railway in the country the line will not look out of place next to the railway.

Comment 23

5 More importantly - Paul Mammano states that a line broke, fell, and stated a fire on his property. Also, the Lincoln County Rural Fire District #1 “ ... requests you place the lines away from homes, so we have safer access ... for fire fighting purposes”.

6 John Smith points out that the line could have fallen on a person and electrocuted him or on a home with the possibility of burning it down .

Comment 24

John has also raised the concern of the health effects of Electro-magnetic fields being close to six homes, and has substantiated his concerns by quoting many studies . If BPA eventually boosts the line from a 115kV to the Alternative 1 - 230kV double-circuit rebuild it would appear to me that the health issues are quadrupled.

Comment 25

7 The area (trail) between the Fish and Game boat dock to, and including, Kootenai Falls is one of the most beautiful areas in the State. It is enjoyed by many people, (bikes, hikers, etc.), beyond those of us that have property in Big Horn Terrace and even beyond Libby. This is why the Fish and Game bought the property, closed it as to motorized vehicles, and put Big Horn Sheep thereon. If the transmission line crossed the Kootenai river before it got to the Fish and Game land the area would be greatly improved over how it looks today.

Comment 26

Response 20: Comment noted

Response 21: It is unclear what 24 watersheds you are referring to since the comment letter submitted by DOT does not reference them. A new alignment would have to cross other streams and watersheds.

Response 22: Comment noted.

Response 23: While some homeowners have the existing line and would have the proposed rebuilt line visible from their residences, moving the line to a different location would result in visibility from other viewpoints and residences. A new alignment contiguous to the railway would create a new visual element and would be viewed by many.

Response 24: Infrequently a line could fail no matter where it is located. If it were to fall on a railroad track, rail workers could be injured or killed due to shock and electrocution.

See page 9-51 of the Final EIS for information pertaining to safety risks associated with firefighting equipment. The need to rebuild the existing aging line so it doesn't fail so often is documented on page 1-1 of the Final EIS.

Response 25: See response to comment 33 for a discussion of electromagnetic fields. Tables 3 and Table 4 of Appendix H in the Final EIS (page H-37) show that calculated peak electric and magnetic fields and calculated fields at the edge of the right-of-way would decrease for a 230-kV double circuit line operated at 115-kV compared to a rebuilt 115-kV line with H-frame structures.

Response 26: Your opinions are noted.

THE BOTTOM LINE IS THAT EVERY ONE OF THE CONCERNS ADDRESSED BY ALL THESE INDIVIDUALS AND ENTITIES WOULD BE ALLEVIATED IF BPA COULD FIND A WAY TO CROSS THE KOOTENAI RIVER BEFORE IT REACHED ANY OF OUR PROPERTIES AND THEN FOLLOWED THE RAILWAY UNTIL IT CONNECTED WITH BPA'S EXISTING LINE.

It appears to me that this option was not fully explored because everyone was focused on the Quartz Creek Realignment. I am not opposed to any realignment plan but if they are off the table this should be on. Only one paragraph was devoted to it on the final EIS. I think it should be fully explored before construction begins. As I eluded to earlier - my own concern is not with the 115 kV line but rather, with the way the EIS is written, that there is a real possibility that we could soon be confronting a 230 kV line. Jerry R. Gould
jhranch@juno.com

Comment 26

Response 26: Your opinions are noted.

Via telephone request from Anthony Kimberlin 6-25-08:

Please provide a summary of effects of the Quartz Creek realignment.

Comment 27

Response 27: Following is a brief summary of potential effects from construction of a new line using the Quartz Creek realignment compared to rebuilding on the existing corridor. Please refer to Table S-2 and Appendix L in the Final EIS for more detail. Construction of the Quartz Creek realignment rather than rebuilding on the existing corridor through Big Horn Terrace would have greater impacts on the following resources (at either voltage): soils, land use on Kootenai NF lands, vegetation (old growth and weeds), wildlife, visual resources for Highway 2 travelers, and meeting visual quality objectives on Kootenai NF lands. Rebuilding on the existing corridor would have greater impacts than the Quartz Creek realignment on visual resources for residents of Big Horn Terrace and on public safety. Similar impacts would occur on both the existing corridor and the Quartz Creek realignment option to water resources, wetlands and floodplains, fish, amphibians, and reptiles, cultural resources, recreation resources, social and economic resources, transportation, and air quality.

June 26, 2008

Montana Department of Environmental Quality
P.O. Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

RE: Comment on DEQ's Draft Conclusions and Determination

Dear Ms. Nancy Johnson,

I write to comment on the DEQ draft mailed to me just days ago. Allowing commentary only until the 27th of June gives one an absurdly short period to digest your department's findings. If the intent is to minimize reaction of any kind, I believe you have accomplished this goal.

Comment 28

I will concentrate my initial comment to page five, paragraph three of your draft. On page five you cite: "Where there is greatest potential for general local acceptance of the facility; and To allow for selection of a location in nonresidential areas..." While BPA has "allowed", via the stated Quartz Creek and Pipe Creek realignment options, there has never been general acceptance of the facility from residents along Kootenai River Road. DEQ states: "...some residents adjacent to the existing line prefer the line be moved." In fact, those neighbors that have been contacted door-to-door have chosen in overwhelming numbers to voice opposition via postcards of protest mailed to Senators Baucus and Tester. "Some" vs. wholesale opposition highlights DEQ's lack of awareness.

Comment 29

My second comment is in reference to page six, paragraph five of the DEQ Draft. DEQ states: "In addition, an average magnetic field exposure between 3 and 4 milligauss for some residences along the existing right-of-way (4 houses in the Big Horn Terrace area have average magnetic fields above 4 milligauss) would be compatible with current conclusions of independent scientific panels that have provided summaries of the current state of knowledge on electromagnetic and health research....." The above cited levels of milligauss exposure were: "Based on the average magnetic fields expected along the line, aerial photographs from 2005, and an engineering drawing of properties along Kootenai River Road near Pipe and Bobtail creeks, the number of houses with average fields above 3 and 4 mG were estimated under existing conditions (i.e., with the existing transmission line), as well as for all proposed configurations." (BPA FEIS, page 3-191)

Comment 30

Response 28: Procedural timeframes in 75-20-301, MCA, indicate the department should issue a decision within 30 days after issuance of a report on a proposed facility. Notice of availability of the Final EIS for the Libby-Troy Rebuild Project was published in the Federal Register on June 6, 2008. Although recent court rulings on permitting timelines for other programs in the department have highlighted the importance of meeting statutory requirements, DEQ did extend the comment period for the draft conclusions to July 5, 2008.

Response 29: Comment noted. The word 'some' has been changed to 'many' in the referenced sentence to indicate that many residents adjacent to the existing line prefer the line be moved.

Response 30: Comment noted.

Comment 31

"Estimates" of existing and proposed levels of milligauss exposure is comforting, I'm sure, to the affected residences that are not named and have not been alerted to what they're being exposed to?

Response 31: Opinion noted. Persons living near the line who are interested in knowing which homes have average magnetic fields above 4 milligauss can call Kirk Robinson, Project Manager, via a BPA toll free number 1-800-282-3713.

DEQ is assured that "estimates" based on aerial photographs is conducive to ensure the long term health of children living in said residences?

Comment 32

Response 32: BPA used a currently accepted methodology when computing estimated electric and magnetic field strength at the edge of the right-of-way for the proposed rebuild. Please see Appendices H and J in the Final EIS.

On page J-8 of BPA's FEIS, paragraph three contains this statement: "Pooling these data results in a statistical association with leukemia for exposures greater than 3-4mG." This statement is in regards to the analysis of the Ahlbom et al., 2000; Greenland et al., 2000 childhood leukemia studies. How is this statement, in relation to the estimated mG levels of residences in Big Horn Terrace, **compatible** with current conclusions of independent scientific panels?

Comment 33

Response 33: While the epidemiological studies by Ahlbom et al. (2000) and Greenland et al. (2000) indicate a statistical increase in childhood leukemia cases for exposure above 3-4 mG, the mechanism for this increase is not understood. Further, other studies such as those by the United Kingdom Childhood Cancer Studies (UKCCS 1999 and UKCCS 2000), Draper 2005, Savitz et al. (1988) did not find such a relationship (Appendix J of Final EIS). Other explanations for the relationship are possible. Currently, science does not offer a definitive answer to the question of whether exposure to magnetic fields results in increase in certain types of cancers or if they do occur, the mechanisms at work.

How can the Montana DEQ rubber-stamp BPA's FEIS in so callous a manner?

Comment 34

If your state agencies mission is, in part, to ensure the environmental health of Montana citizens you have failed miserably.

Comment 35

Those affected residents have no concrete evidence of the **actual** levels of mG exposure they are being subjected to or will continue to endure.

Comment 36

Response 34: The department carefully evaluated the information in the Final EIS when making its draft conclusions for the proposed project. Although not necessary in making a department decision for the proposed project, the department elected to issue its draft conclusions for public comment. The department has considered the comments received in making its final conclusions and determination.

Comment 37

On page 6, paragraph five, DEQ quotes alleged location criteria: "A safe distance from residences and other areas of human concentration." In lieu of the aforementioned statistical association with childhood leukemia and the unascertained levels of mG exposure to residences, I wonder how DEQ can consider itself in compliance with a literal interpretation of the word "safe."

Response 35: Opinion noted.

I can only conclude that the Montana DEQ thinks that compatibility with BPA is more important than the health and safety of its citizens!

Comment 38

Response 36: Persons living near the line who are interested in knowing which homes have average magnetic fields above 4 milligauss can call a BPA toll free number, 1-800-282-3713, and request on-site measurements of field strength.

Response 37: Please see response 33.

Response 38: Opinion noted.

I have limited my comments, due to the DEQ's time constraints. DEQ's wanton disregard for its own mandated location criteria speaks volumes about the apparent "culture of insensitivity" pervading the agency.

Sincerely,

Dale E. Swapinski
6027 Kootenai River Road
Libby, MT 59923
dswapinski@yahoo.com

Comment 39

Response 39: Comment noted.

27 June, 2008.

DEQ's Draft Conclusions and Determination Comments

The following are our preliminary comments and questions relative to DEQ's Draft Report on BPA's Proposed Rebuild of The Libby (FEC) to Troy Power line are as follows:

Given the many factors involved and their importance to many residents, the four day period to make our response is insufficient, and known to be insufficient. Why wasn't more time allowed?

Comment 40

We are grateful, however, Mr. McCullough, due to the many disregarded issues in the Draft, to be allowed to make rushed input on our behalf to you.

Comment 41

Page 2, para. 2. Referenced environmental impacts excluded mitigation of 3-4 mG and above 3-4 mG EMF levels. These levels, especially the later, have been frequently linked to cancer even though a cause has not been scientifically proven. My 22 June letter to Senator Baucus, Senator Tester and BPA addresses this issue.

Comment 42

Another major concern is the restriction on fire fighting due to safety regulations. Essential fast response and suppression can be precluded. BPA's wires started fires in the neighborhood two years ago. The mountain slope to the rear of homes and the lack of access roads leaves homes pinned between the mountain and power lines.

Comment 43

Also not addressed, is the potential for electrocution and fire caused by falling wires. Wires do fall and in populated areas the consequences can be disastrous. Should BPA's Proposed Alternative without realignments around PC and BHT neighborhoods be implemented, wires would continue to be overhead or adjacent to roads threatening both driver safety and essential neighborhood ingress and egress. It is regrettable these issues, given their obvious importance, were not presented in your Draft.

Comment 44

Response 40: DEQ extended the comment period to July 5th to allow more time for comments to be submitted. Please see response 28.

Response 41: Your opinions are noted. Please see response 28.

Response 42: Text in the department conclusions notes that the proposed rebuild would meet the state standard for electric field strength in residential areas, and that below and adjacent to the line, calculated peak magnetic field strength would increase by one milligauss. Current literature on EMF is not in agreement regarding a link between EMF exposure and an increased risk of childhood leukemia. As such, the department did not include additional mitigation to address EMF concerns. See also response 122.

Response 43: The Final EIS recognizes that safety and placement of firefighting equipment near powerlines is a primary concern. The Quartz Creek realignment would reduce these safety risks. Please see the response to the Libby Fire Department on page 9-51 of the Final EIS.

Response 44: The No Action Alternative on page 2-20 of the Final EIS describes the increased risk of fire if the existing line is not rebuilt, and notes that a 2003 fire was caused by a conductor that fell due to a failed fitting. A falling line could cause electrocution. Please see also Appendix I Living and Working Safety Around High-Voltage Power Lines.

Neither BPA's FEIS or DEQ's Draft adequately dealt with resident health and safety issues. Why?

Comment 45

Was a detailed on site study of the neighborhoods and the conditions that exist here performed by the DEQ prior to arriving at conclusions? Residents do not recall seeing DEQ staff except at two BPA meetings; one of which addressed electrical and EMF issues.

Comment 46

The Draft, in its present state, provides BPA a green light to disregard neighborhood health and safety for many years in the future.

Comment 47

Page 4, para.3. If resident health and safety is factored in, this paragraph is simply not true. Please see the above comments and questions. It must also be noted that the Proposed Alternative would not mitigate existing long term EMF levels experienced by a half dozen households. Fire fighting would continue to be restricted and, for many, insurance coverage will likely be hard to obtain or very expensive.

Comment 48

Additionally, if the lines continue to run through populated segments, many homes would continue to have land use restrictions and safety concerns.

Comment 49

When the 230 kV capability is implemented to meet increased demand, homeowners would lose more land to wider easements.

Comment 50

Neither BPA nor DEQ has acknowledged that two homes that would be rendered virtually non-livable by widening the existing easement (5770 and 3652 Kootenai River Rd.). If your home was to be wiped out, wouldn't you want to at least have it acknowledged...

Comment 51

Response 45: Additional information has been added to the department's final conclusions for the proposed project to address health and safety issues. Please see also pages 9-49 through 9-57 of the Final EIS addressing comments on noise, public health and safety.

Response 46: DEQ staff does not have the technical training or equipment to perform detailed site-specific analyses regarding health and safety effects. As such, DEQ reviews information provided by technical experts in the field, such as that in Appendix J of the Final EIS. For the Draft EIS, DEQ staff commented on the Ahlbom and Greenland studies (Ahlborn et. al., 2000 and Greenland et al., 2000) and requested information on the number of homes along the proposed line and alternative where magnetic field strength would exceed 3-4 mG.

Response 47: Comment noted.

Response 48: Additional clarification has been added to the DEQ conclusions. The proposed action would not increase existing electric field strength but would increase calculated peak magnetic field strengths by 1 milligauss (see Appendix H Table 4 and Figure 3). The line is located in subdivided areas and adjacent to a local road (see Figure 3-18a and 3-18b of the Final EIS). While rebuilding the line would decrease the risk of line failure, there is no guarantee that it will not fail at some time in the future and cause another fire as reported in comment 24. Fire fighting would be restricted no matter where the line is located should a line failure occur that starts a fire. The Quartz Creek and Pipe Creek realignments would locate the line farther from houses. At the same time the line, if located on these alignments, would be further removed from human observers and a fire may grow in size before it is detected.

Big Horn Terrace subdivision is accessed by a single road which terminates at the trailhead for the wildlife management area. A fire along either the existing alignment or the Quartz Creek reroute may restrict access to the subdivision. It is not known what effect either alignment would have on insurance coverage.

Response 49: The department concurs that where transmission lines are routed through developed areas, property owners will have some restrictions on use of the easements. Please see Appendix I of the Final EIS.

Response 50: No need has been identified that would justify the investment required to construct a 230-kV line at this time. Other routing options for lines from Libby Dam are possible should generation capacity be added to the dam.

Response 51: The agencies have studied proposed line location for the two mentioned residences. At 3652 Kootenai Road, the centerline for the transmission line may be moved north approximately 2 feet to accommodate future road widening by Lincoln County or MDOT. This line relocation would not render the residence unlivable. At 5770 Kootenai River Road the existing 80-foot-wide corridor would remain unchanged. This residence was recently rebuilt.

even though you apparently believe, or have decided, protecting large trees is more important.

Comment 52

Neither BPA nor the DEQ has provided a count of the homes pinned between the mountain slope and the wires; naturally, mitigation, in these cases, was not mentioned, perhaps because fire fighting implications were ignored or suppressed (BPA had received a letter on this from the Libby Fire Chief a year ago) in the FEIS and not thought of during DEQ Draft preparation.

Comment 53

Was the DEQ being duped by a very deficient and biased FEIS? Hopefully, more resident conditions will be acknowledged in the final report and used as a basis for any conclusions.

Comment 54

Page 5, first para. This paragraph must certainly be rewritten to acknowledge neighborhood health and safety issues. In reference to the statement: "...achieves the best balance of preferred location criteria where there is the greatest potential for general local acceptance of the facility; and to allow for selection of a location in nonresidential areas", how is the "best balance" achieved if residential health and safety issues are not factored in and prioritized?

Comment 55

Did the FEIS's biased content and omitted facts, in the absence of prudent information collection and verification, mislead staff?

Comment 56

It must be acknowledged, as stated, that both the PC and BHT realignments would locate the line away from residential areas.

Comment 57

Page 5, para. 2. FEIS Table S-1 was referenced. Should that have included Table S-2?

Comment 58

Response 52: The department has considered all comments received on the EIS and draft conclusions. The draft conclusions have been revised in response to some but not all comments.

Response 53: See pages 9-50 and 9-51 of the Final EIS for information pertaining to safety risks associated with firefighting equipment, and a response to Thomas Wood, Chief of the Libby Fire Department. There are approximately three structures (houses and outbuildings) west of Quartz Creek and between the line and the hillside.

Response 54: The department carefully evaluated the information in the Final EIS when making its conclusions for the proposed project. The department has considered comments received and information in the final EIS in making its final conclusions and determination.

Response 55: The department further addresses health and safety issues in the final conclusions. The department considered public comments received on this issue and information in the Final EIS as well in making its final conclusions and determination.

Response 56: See response 54.

Response 57: The department concurs that both the Pipe Creek and Quartz Creek realignment would locate the line further from residences.

Response 58: Text found in page 5, paragraph 2 of the draft conclusions references Table S-1 and Appendix L. Table S-2 does not need to be referenced.

And what criteria and variables were used in the statement “overall and across resources” when saying “the Quartz Creek and Pipe Creek realignments were not compatible with a finding of minimum adverse impact (FEIS, Table S-1 and appendix L)”? Literally, this statement, in DEQ’s opinion and words, would and should preclude both realignments. Was this intended?

Comment 59

What happens to neighborhood health and safety considerations (should DEQ chose to acknowledge them)? The number of Montana households disregarded in the conclusion was not even listed. As the Draft now stands, routing options away from neighborhoods would not be possible regardless of the magnitude of disregarded safety or health issues...which were, sadly, neither determined nor addressed prior to making conclusions or shown to be used in conclusions.

Comment 60

The first sentence in the paragraph: “This location (the existing and Proposed easement) does not have local acceptance, as some residents adjacent to the existing line prefer the line be removed” ignores truth. All residents want the line removed because of concern for severe health and safety issues that were ignored in the FEIS and now, regrettably, in the Montana DEQ Draft.

Comment 61

Senator Baucus’ office states they have received over 70 cards from homeowners stating their concerns...”some residents”? And why weren’t the nature of their concerns acknowledged?

Comment 62

The reference to “undisturbed forest” denies the reality. Certain areas in the Quartz Creek realignment are being, or have been, thinned for health and fuel removal (please call the USFS, Ms. Rainey at 283-7592). Such efforts may be scheduled for the Pipe Creek realignment area as well. Shouldn’t DEQ verify the misleading information prior to using it to the detriment of Montana residents? Should the statement “overall, the existing right-of-way better avoids undisturbed forest” be deleted or qualified?

Comment 63

Response 59: This comment misquotes and takes out of context the draft conclusion. Exact wording is reproduced here with the omitted word underlined. “Approximately 5.6 miles of the proposed rebuild would occur on existing right-of-way through residential areas on the west side of Libby. This location does not have general local acceptance, as some residents adjacent to the existing line prefer the line be moved. The Department compared potential effects of rebuilding the line in the existing right-of-way to potential effects of the Quartz Creek and Pipe Creek realignments that would move the line from residential areas. Although the Quartz Creek realignment would locate the line in a nonresidential area and restore full use of the existing corridor to landowners of the Big Horn Terrace subdivision, overall and across other resources, the Quartz Creek and Pipe Creek realignments were not compatible with a finding of minimum adverse impact (FEIS, Table S-1 and Appendix L).”

Response 60: The conclusions have been revised to incorporate the number of homes close enough to the line to have average calculated field strength greater than 3 mG. Also see the response to comment 55.

Response 61: Please see response 29.

Response 62: The department has not received comments via Senator Baucus’ office.

Response 63: The reference to ‘undisturbed forest’ comes from wording in administrative rule, and is used to guide department evaluation for this location criterion for transmission lines. Text in the draft conclusions does refer to a previously logged area along the Quartz Creek realignment, as well as stands of designated old growth. The department is aware of the Kootenai River North Fuels Reduction Project, as described on page 3-233 of the Final EIS. The statement that overall, the existing right-of-way better avoids undisturbed forest, is correct as written.

Again, trusting only information in the FEIS can be very risky to decision makers and residents. The failure to honestly acknowledge the important distinction between bear habitat and where bears have been known to exist would be advised to avoid biased and harmful decisions.

Comment 64

Response 64: Comment noted. Your opinion is noted.

The FEIS, in Appendix L, page L-4 and L-5 states Kootenai tribes are concerned about realignments using culturally sensitive land. This statement is misleading in that tribes used the entire area for hunting and fishing, especially including the land the power line easement is currently on. This concern should not be used in trading off public land and private land use. The tribes likely had far more activities in areas adjacent to Kootenai River Rd. closer to the river.

Comment 65

Response 65: Comment noted. Your opinion is noted.

Response 66: DEQ did consider exposure of homes to varying EMF levels from the line and the conclusion has been revised to reflect this consideration. DEQ recognizes that values for EMF are calculated using a one meter height above ground with maximum current and minimum conductor clearance (Final EIS, Appendix H, page H-13). Actual magnetic field levels would vary from calculated values as current on the line changes and as ambient temperature changes. Average current over a year is expected to be about 43 percent of the maximum value.

Page 6, last para. This paragraph ignores the health concerns regarding BPA's disclosure that six homes are either in or above the 3-4 mG EMF levels. Regarding the "above" 3-4 mG level, did DEQ determine how much above that level the four reported homes were?

Comment 66

Response 67: DEQ asked that the analysis be included in the Final EIS.

Why wouldn't a prudent person check this and state the answer rather than blithely say there wouldn't be increased risk.

Comment 67

Response 68: Yes.

Does DEQ possess the expertise or authority to say "Based on this information, the Department believes that the proposed rebuild in the existing right-of-way would not substantially increase safety hazards"?

Comment 68

Response 69: Text has been added to department conclusions stating that the rebuilt line would not change existing levels of electric fields and calculated peak magnetic fields would increase by 1 milligauss below and adjacent to the line.

First, the word "increase" should correctly be "continue".

Comment 69

Response 70: Residents living next to the existing line chose to purchase property next to the line. Information pertaining to health and safety is described in Appendix H of the Final EIS.

Secondly, residents are exposed to serious safety and health risks now.

Comment 70

The unidentified households would go on adding many more years of exposure to the already many years of exposure they have undergone to date.

Comment 71

What is, or what should be, DEQ's policy of notifying households found to be in the "above" 4 mG EMF level?

Comment 72

Why would a Montana Department condemn Montana households knowing so little? Are Montana households placed at risk so BPA won't have to make an ugly decision by themselves?

Comment 73

Why, Mr. McCullough, should the separate and occasionally conflicting worlds of pure science (where causation must be rigorously defined and validated) be totally favored over the epidemiological and Meta analysis world (which also has high ranking health and medical scientists) that continually finds statistical correlations between EMF exposure and serious health problems?

Comment 74

BPA seems clearly compelled to base their project policies on hard science/proof of causation, but even they acknowledge a "possible health risk". Not DEQ (or Mr. McCullough), however; they just "believe" the proposed rebuild would not "substantially" increase safety hazards and ignore epidemiology studies. Without batting an eye, Mr. McCullough puts the state of Montana's stamp on condemning four households. Apparently, the mounting concerns of health scientists and published health studies mean nothing to him and the DEQ.

Comment 75

Page 7, para. 4. b. States "The proposed rebuild is consistent with regional plans for expansion of the BPA transmission system serving N.W. Montana". It must be noted that this would also be true if the QC and PC realignments were used and that follow-on voltage increases to meet growth would not involve the human health or safety concerns ignored in the Draft.

Comment 76

Response 71: DEQ concurs that exposure to magnetic fields would continue. Persons living near the line who are interested in knowing which homes have average magnetic fields above 4 milligauss can call Kirk Robinson, Project Manager, via a BPA toll free number 1-800-282-3713.

Response 72: DEQ has no policy related to magnetic fields. DEQ policy related to electric fields is embodied in administrative rule in ARM 17.20.1607(2)(d).

Response 73: Appendix J of the Final EIS summarizes studies and reports relating to known health effects of EMF and also provides pertinent references. The department is a cooperating agency on this project, and in that role has assisted BPA in the identification of applicable state environmental protection standards to ensure that these standards are met (page 1-3 of Final EIS).

Response 74: Both fields are weighed in the Department's decision. Mr. Smith is referring to a single study that gives precautionary recommendations when routing new transmission lines. BPA is proposing to rebuild an existing line.

Response 75: The department evaluated current information regarding potential health effects associated with EMF. See Appendix J of the Final EIS.

Response 76: The department concurs that a proposed rebuild using the Pipe Creek realignment or the Quartz Creek realignment would also be consistent with regional plans for expansion of the BPA transmission system serving northwest Montana.

Page 8, para. 8. "The Department evaluated the use of public land for siting portionsof the line and determined the use of public land was not as economically practicable as the private land overall. The use of public land for siting of portions of the line was not compatible with a finding of minimum adverse environmental impact for the proposed project. Section 75-20-301(1)(h), MCA." These words were copied out of subparagraph (h) in the of the cited Section!

Comment 77

The basis for the copied sentences and the process used for arriving at the statement is not included. What are they? What variables were used? How were the variables weighted? How were the various tradeoffs made? The basis for the mysterious determination that resulted in DEQ's removal of QC and PC realignments from further consideration is totally missing, Mr. McCullough. What is the basis and criteria for the statement "not as economically practicable"? For example, should a house or several houses be lost due to fire fighting restrictions, how is this be traded off with such things as a certain number of board feet from renewable large trees? Should potential injury or loss of life be considered, how is that to be factored in? Has BPA provided valid comparative cost data to Mr. McCullough that was not included in the FEIS or made public? It appears the conclusions and determinations cited in the DEQ Draft did not include such factors. Why, given the inherent risks imposed by the "determination"?

How is "economically practicable" defined by DEQ? Were health and safety issues used? Where is essential cost data? How, specifically, was "the use of public land for siting realignments not compatible with a finding of minimum adverse environmental impact for the proposed project? Was human health and safety factored in even though it was not acknowledged as an existing factor in the Draft. If so, how?

Comment 78

Response 77: The department follows the intent and text of existing law in making its conclusions.

Response 78: In Webster's II New College Dictionary (2001), the term "economic" is defined to mean "of or relating to matters of finance." The term "practicable" is defined as "capable of being done." Thus, under Section 76-20-301(1)(h), MCA, public lands are to be used for location of a transmission line whenever the use of the public land is as financially capable of being done as the use of private lands. As indicated in Table 2-2 of the Final EIS, if the transmission line were relocated on more public land under the Pipe Creek realignment, an additional cost of \$221,000 (115-kV) or \$420,000 (230-kV) would be incurred as compared to rebuilding the transmission line in its current location. If the transmission line were relocated on more public land under the Quartz Creek realignment, an additional cost of \$366,000 (115-kV) or \$1 million (230-kV) would be incurred as compared to rebuilding the transmission line in its current location. Thus, the use of primarily public land under the Pipe Creek and Quartz Creek realignments is not as financially capable of being done as using the mix of public and private land crossed by the transmission line in its current location.

Pursuant to Section 75-20-301(2)(d), MCA, human health and safety is considered by the DEQ in determining whether rebuilding the transmission line in its current location will serve the public interest, convenience, and necessity under Section 76-20-301(1)(f), MCA.

The increased environmental impacts that would be associated with selecting the Pipe Creek or Quartz Creek Alternatives are set forth in Table S-2 of the Final EIS.

Mr. McCullough, thank you for accepting our comments and questions. More will follow as soon as possible.

Comment 79

Was the EPA listed on Draft's distribution list?

Comment 80

John D. Smith
6909 Kootenai River Rd.
Libby, MT 59923
406 293-4065
mjsmith@kvis.net

cc: Local, state and federal elected officials
Local press
The United States Environmental Protection Agency

Response 79: Comment noted.

Response 80: The department used a list of current landowners along the existing right-of-way and proposed realignments when seeking landowner comment on the proposed project. The EPA was included on the larger mailing list for the proposed project.

From: Helen S Gould [jhranch@juno.com]
Sent: Friday, June 27, 2008 9:25 PM
To: Riley, Jean; Johnson, Nancy; potts.stephen@epa.gov;
kmrobinson@bpa.gov
Subject: BPA Libby to Troy transmission line through BIG HORN SHEEP
PRESERVE.

Re: Rebuild of BPA 115 kilovolt line from Libby to Troy MT, via the Big Horn Sheep Preserve
Jerry Brown - Wildlife Biologist for the Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks Libby Field Office 406 293-4161 fax 406 293-2235
Jean A. Riley, P.E. Montana Department of Transportation
406 444-9456 email jriley@mt.gov
Nancy Johnson - Montana Department of Environmental Quality (Ms. Johnson-please forward a copy to Tom Ring & Bureau Chief Warren McCullough
406 444-6797 email najohnson@mt.gov
Stephen Potts - The United States Environmental Protection Agency (Mr. Potts - please forward a copy to John F. Wardell, Director of Montana Office)
406 457-5022 email potts.stephen@epa.gov
The United States Forest Service - Libby office at Canoe Gulch, Highway 37, Libby, Montana
406 293-7773 Fax 406 283-7531
The Lincoln County Commissioners
406 297-3139 Fax 406 293-7057
Ms. Marcia Pablo - Tribal Preservation Officer Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
406 675-2700 Ext1075 Fax 406 675-2629
Senator Max Baucus
Kalispell Office 406 756-1150
Senator Jon Tester
Kalispell Office 406 257-3360 Kalispell Fax 406 257-3974
Congressman Denny Rehberg
Helena Office 406 443-7878
Kirk Robinson - Bonneville Power Administration Project Manager Email kmrobinson@bpa.gov

This is written in response to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality Conclusions for the above said BPA proposed rebuild. I received said conclusions today, 06-27-08, and said Conclusions states comments will not be accepted after today so I will try to get to the gist of my comments in the short time allotted.

Comment 81

Response 81: DEQ did extend the comment period for the draft conclusions to July 5, 2008.

At issue is whether to put the new transmission line through an area that a deceased rancher gave to the Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks to be preserved as a pristine area with wildlife such as the Big Horn Sheep placed thereon from Wildhorse Island on Flathead Lake.

Comment 82

Response 82: Please see response to comment #1.

Comment 83

Presently there is a walking path through this area where Montana residents and out of state people hike and look up the cliffs at the Big Horn heap and other wildlife.

Response 83: Please see response to comment #2.

The line will also pass through an area that is culturally significant to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Native Americans. But there is more - said Montana DEQ Conclusion states that " The proposed realignment would cross the Kootenai River...[and]... The Kootenai River through this reach is a candidate for listing as a WILD, SCENIC, or RECREATION RIVER."

Comment 84

Response 84: Comment noted.

Said Montana DEQ Conclusion also states the rebuild would be "...within 50-foot-wide easements for new access roads, and within 20-foot-wide easements for existing access roads." Further, in BPA's Final Environmental Impact Statement they say they will have to widen the Big Horn Sheep road along the face of Black Eagle Rock to allow "...safe passage of large construction equipment past a series of narrow turns..." and this is exactly the location where most people come to view Big Horn Sheep. They say they will need 35,000 more yards of gravel. They have already brought in 500 loads of gravel to fill in the ruts made by the surveyors. Surely no one doubts that the trail in the wildlife preservation area will turn into a large construction road and will look like an industrial area if the rebuild takes this route. Can you imagine what a 20 to 50 foot wide gravel road is going to look like in a wildlife habitat protection area.

Comment 85

Response 85: Please see response to comment # 4.

This could all be justified as the price of progress and I would not have entered this if there was not another route which does not affect the Salish Kootenai cultural area, does not interfere with the view from Highway 2, does not affect the nature of a Wild and Scenic river, and does not go through an area set aside for a wildlife habitat protection area, etc. I have read every comment and objection to this rebuild and the only way to satisfy everyone is to cross the Kootenai river immediately West of the highway 37 bridge. There are already three transmission lines crossing at this point so it has an industrial look anyway. On the other (South) side there is a large ball park so there are no structures to be concerned with on the South side. Then the line could go West down the BNSF railroad right-of-way until it connects with BPA's existing line already on the South side of the Kootenai River.

Comment 86

Response 86: Please see response to comment #5 and 6.

I called Kirk Robinson, Project Manager for BPA, about getting an easement from BNSF to go West down the Railway row after crossing East of all the residents on Kootenai Road when it appeared the Quartz Creek re-alignment was doubtful. This was late in the process. I simply was told that sometimes they will let you have a right-of-way and sometimes they won't. I called and left a message for the Rail Master in this area but the call was never returned.

Comment 87

Response 87: Comment noted.

Comment 88

I brought this proposal up again at the final meeting and was told by someone on the BPA staff that the line could not be within 150 feet of the highway right-of-way. This simply is not true. On page S-9 of the final EIS, BPA clearly states the proposed new realignment which would go for 3/4 of a mile down the railroad tracts to connect with their existing line "...WOULD BE LOCATED ... WITHIN THE BNSF RAILROAD RIGHT-OF-WAY and THE MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION RIGHT-OF-WAY. BPA WILL ALREADY BE IN THESE ROWS, ALL THEY HAVE TO DO IS CONTINUE IN THESE ROWS UNTIL THEY REACH THE LIBBY BRIDGE AND EVERYONE WILL BE HAPPY, ESPECIALLY IF THEY GO UNDERGROUND."

Response 88: Please see response to comment #5. Undergrounding the line is addressed in Section 2.6.4 of the Final EIS.

The Montana DEQ conclusion states"... the cost of underground construction can exceed the cost of overhead ...". I operate Backhoes and Bull Dozers. I live in the mountains about one mile from my closest neighbor out of Kila, Montana. I backhoed in a one mile line 30 years ago and simply buried it in sand as they did not require conduit at that time. I have never had a problem but the neighbors down the road with the overhead lines have had many problems Trees interfering with lines, snow buildup, rotting poles, lighting strikes, lines coming down and causing fires, etc. It is certainly probable that the underground transmission line is the cheapest and safest in the long run. Besides that, it's a piece of cake to run excavation equipment down an already cleared right-of-way compared to doing it through the mountains.

Comment 89

Response 89: Please see response #7. Cost of undergrounding transmission lines exceeds cost of undergrounding distribution lines. See Section 2.6.4 of the Final EIS.

Most of the people I am addressing this to are public servants of one form or another. This is your chance to have everyone in Lincoln County pleased with you rather than disgusted when they see the wildlife area turned into an industrial area. You could certainly find a way to go down these rights-of-ways if this was next to Yellowstone so when you say this area is being considered as a "Wild and Scenic Area" this is certainly a close second. All your addresses and phone numbers are listed hereinabove. Certainly some of you can see the merits of preserving this area. Please get together and have this transmission line go down these rights-of-ways where it belongs. You hardly need an EIS as it is already a cleared industrial area. Its also cheaper to go this way.

Comment 90

Response 90: Comments noted.

I am asking that the Montana DEQ conclusion is not forthcoming in its present state until the road and railroad right-of-way option is fully considered.

Comment 91

Response 91: Please see response #5 and 6.

Frankly, It appears to me that this route could be achieved sooner than the contemplated one given all the obstacles stated in the "proposed rebuild".

Comment 92

Response 92: Opinion noted.

Do you even need an EIS to go down a railroad right-of-way when they give you an easement.

Comment 93

Response 93: An environmental impact statement or supplement would be needed for BPA to propose a rebuild of the transmission line that would follow the BNSF railroad right-of-way.

Jerry R. Gould 406 755-3838 Fax 406 7553838 email jhranch@juno.com

From: Dave & Sandi Larson [riverrat01@frontiernet.net]
Sent: Sunday, June 29, 2008 6:18 PM
To: Johnson, Nancy
Subject: DEQ letter Opper

June 29, 2008

Nancy Johnson
Mr. Richard H. Opper, Director
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
P.O. Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

Re: MT DEQ's Draft Conclusions for BPA's Proposed Rebuild of the Libby (FEC) to Troy 115 kV transmission line

Dear Mr. Opper:

Comment 94

I am unhappy and disappointed in your approval of the BPA's rebuild of its 115 kV power line through my neighborhood west of Libby.

I have property under this line and would feel safer and would be less health risk if it was to take the Quartz Creek reroute.

The BPA's final EIS seems to be biased and doesn't address the safety and health of the residents of our area.

Please contact me if you would like more information or would like to discuss this matter.

Comment 95

Sincerely,

David and Sandra Larson
5943 Kootenai River Rd.
Libby, MT 59923
406-293-5674
riverrat01@frontiernet.net

cc: The Honorable Max Baucus, Kalispell Field Office
The Honorable Jon Tester, Kalispell Field Office
Governor Brian Schweitzer
State Legislator Chas Vincent
Mr. Steven Potts, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 8 Montana Office
Lincoln County Commissioners Rita Windom and John Konzen

Response 94: Opinion noted. The department issued its draft conclusions for public comment on June 20, 2008. The department will issue its final conclusions and determination in July.

Response 95: Comments noted.

From: Kevin and Mary Christensen [kkc@libby.org]
Sent: Monday, June 30, 2008 9:11 AM
To: Johnson, Nancy
Subject: BPA lines concerns

To: Nancy Johnson, DEQ

Comment 96

My name is Mary Christensen and my husband Kevin and I have 3 children, 6, 8, and 9 years old. BPA power lines cross our back yard. We have a nice view of triple poles with guy wires that anchor outside of the BPA easement by my flower beds. This is where our children play - its our yard.

Response 96: Comment noted.

My husband bought an EMF level reader. Inside our home the levels are 2 to 2 1/2. Our garden is in the 6-7 range. At our children's sand box and swimming pool the levels are 6-7. Should we stay inside or have the children play by the road instead?

Comment 97

Response 97: You will have to make your own decision where your children are allowed to play. Appendices H, I, and J summarize information that may prove helpful in making an informed decision.

Several of our neighbors have the same situation. There are homes closer to the wires than ours as well as gardens and yards.

Comment 98

Response 98: Comment noted. The existing line predates many residences in west Libby.

BPA has said it will move the lines by the Kootenai River Falls out of concern for Native American sacred sights. Their Draft EIS is full of concerns for Native Americans as well as salamanders and every kind of wildlife. But the rest of us common, ordinary, unspecial people who live under these lines every day don't count for anything.

Comment 99

Response 99: Please see pages 3-20 through 3-27 where potential land use effects, including residential effects, of the proposed rebuild and alternatives are described. These potential effects to land uses are summarized in Tables S-1 and S-2.

When BPA originally built these lines, this was miles of unpopulated land, but now it is a residential community. Would BPA put these lines through the middle of a town? No. Then why, when they are going to be rebuilt anyway, can't they be moved out of our residential areas. We ask everyone to look at this again and think about the people who live here.

Comment 100

Response 100: The department concurs that residential growth has occurred on the west side of Libby since the line was constructed in the mid-1950s. The department has considered public comments received on the DEQ draft conclusions when making the final conclusions and determination.

Thank you for your time and attention to this.
Mary and Kevin Christensen
PO Box 874
6268 Kootenai River Rd.
Libby, MT 59923
(406) 847-2249

Mr. Miller
Comments via telephone 6-30-08

Mr. Miller resides near Libby and felt that there was no way to get comments to DEQ by July 5th.

Mr. Miller offered his comments in a telephone call to DEQ staff. His "two cents worth" included the recommendation to relocate the line to Quartz Creek and Pipe Creek reroutes. He believes it is the moral thing to do when the public has health and safety concerns. He indicated that the line should go up on FS property rather than crossing developed private property.

He had concerns over the health of those living near the line where several residents are exposed to magnetic fields greater than 3-4 mG.

He also described fire safety concerns with the line and those fighting fires close to the line as well as residences that may be at risk due to fires.

He owns 680 feet of right-of-way and was concerned about the road on his property. He indicated that BPA doesn't respond to his questions.

He observed that old growth, grizzly bears and bald eagles are not more important than people.

Comment 101

Response 101: Comments noted.

From: wdearth@juno.com
Sent: Monday, June 30, 2008 4:47 PM
To: Johnson, Nancy
Subject: BPA Libby, MT Power Line!

Dear Nancy Johnson,

Comment 102

When I built our home here on Cliffside Drive I was assured by the Power Company that they were going to move the power line behind our home and go up over the mountain to eliminate any hazard to the home owner.

Comment 103

I am of the opinion BPA has not taken into the consideration the health problems such as Cancer, Leukemia and many other health issues not only to the young children but to the adults as well.

Comment 104

BPA also is not taking into consideration the hardships these additional easements are causing to the home owner now and down the road if they were to sell their property. The property value is sure to decrease. This to me is very catastrophic to the home owner.

How would you feel if a big Company like BPA came in and began to throw its weight around and did not consider the land owners or there needs.

Comment 105

What is more important, the well being of an Eagle and a Bear or the health of the people living around and under this line.

Comment 106

This is another case of giving the people of Libby and the surrounding area the shaft. To me I put you people into the same category as the WR Grace Corporation by not telling the people all the facts. Especially when you have another alternative. Why don't you stick up for the little guy or is that too much to expect from a company who in my opinion has no compassion for the people. Another big company pushing there weight around.

Comment 107

Response 102: The existing line was built by Pacific Power & Light in the mid-1950s, and was acquired by Flathead Electric Cooperative in 1998. BPA acquired the line in 2003. Assurances that the line would be moved may have been made by a previous owner.

Response 103: Your opinion is noted.

Response 104: Please see pages 3-124 and 3-125 of the Final EIS for a discussion of property value impacts.

Response 105: Your rhetorical question is noted.

Response 106: The department has evaluated all comments received as well as information in the Final EIS when making its decision on the proposed project. DEQ's decision is based on substantive findings required by the Major Facility Siting Act.

Response 107: Your opinions are noted. The department thoroughly evaluated the two realignments that would move the line out of more populated areas.

Comment 108

I went to one of the first meetings at the 1st National Bank here in Libby, Montana. I asked one of the representative there what health hazards this is going to cause the people. His remark was we have made many studies of this problem and it is not a concern. He said he would send me a copy of the reports and studies, I have yet to receive personally this information. To me this is still another snow job as to what this could cause to the people affected.

Comment 109

Look at what a fire hazard this could cause to the forest above us and the homes involved. The fire department will not cross the line if there are wires down. What protection do we have for this problem?

In my opinion as a home owner you are not taking into consideration our well being and safety.

Comment 110

Just how are you going to get into this area to work on the lines without using helicopters? That in itself is going to cause another problem, safety for the people and there homes.

Comment 111

Sincerely, Alfred J. Dearth, 26 Cliffside Drive, Libby Mt.

Response 108: Your information is noted. Please see Appendix J of the Final EIS for an assessment of current research regarding EMF and health and environmental effects.

Response 109: Please see page 9-51 of the Final EIS for information on firefighting near transmission lines, and a response to Thomas Wood, Chief of the Libby Fire Department.

Response 110: Your opinion is noted.

Response 111: In response to concerns regarding helicopter operation in residential areas (pages 9-52 through 9-57 of the Final EIS), BPA has elected to detour around the Big Horn Terrace and Pipe Creek areas during helicopter inspections of the line and will instead use ground inspections. In the Final EIS, BPA stated it was considering stringing the portion of the sock-line in these areas from the ground due to concerns of local residents (see page 3-188 of the Final EIS). DEQ in its final conclusions has required amendment of the mitigation measures set forth in the Final EIS to prohibit the use of helicopters while stringing sock lines where a crash may affect a residential property. This portion of the line is accessible from the ground.

From: Marsh, David
Sent: Monday, June 30, 2008 5:23 PM
To: Johnson, Nancy
Cc: Kuennen, Norman
Subject: Comment - Regarding BPA's Libby to Troy Transmission Line Re-build
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Attn: Nancy Johnson
PO Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

Dear Nancy,

As per request for comment from the June 27th, 2008 letter from the DEQ, and regarding the Bonneville Power Administration's Rebuild of the Libby (FEC)-to-Troy Section of BPA's Libby-to-Bonner's Ferry 115-kilovolt Transmission Line, please accept the following comment from the Libby Unit of the Montana DNRC :

1.) The BPA will need an easement(s) to cross Montana state land, including the Kootenai River.

Comment 112

Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Dave Marsh,
dmarsh@mt.gov
Forest Management Supervisor,
Libby Unit

Response 112: BPA is currently working with the Kalispell office of DNRC to obtain an easement to cross Montana state land, including the Kootenai River. BPA will also contact the Libby office of DNRC.

From: Ljhightower44@aol.com
Sent: Monday, June 30, 2008 6:26 PM
To: Johnson, Nancy
Subject: BPA

Dear Nancy,

Comment 113

I am so disappointed in your decision to let the BPA replace lines close to our homes, when they have an alternative route that would take the lines away from our homes.

Comment 114

I strongly disapprove.

Linda & John Hightower
5276 Kootenai Rv. Rd
Libby, Mt. 59923
.

Response 113: Please note that DEQ issued its draft conclusions for public comment on June 20 and will review all comments received when preparing the final conclusions and decision.

Response 114: Your opinion is noted.

From: Ralph & Rita Heinert [rheinert@lclink.com]
Sent: Tuesday, July 01, 2008 7:17 AM
To: Opper, Richard; kmrobinson@bpa.gov; gkkuntz@bpa.gov; Johnson, Nancy
Cc: John & Margaret Smith
Subject: BPA High Voltage Line Re-build, Libby

Attachments: BPA Line Rebuild 28jun08rev.1.doc

Please accept the attached letter with comments with respect to the above subject as my input into the DEQ decision re: this rebuild and the soon to be released Record of Decision. A hard copy of my letter will follow this e-mail.

Thank you for your consideration.

Ralph Heinert
State Representative, House District #1

June 29, 2008

Ms. Nancy Johnson
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
PO Box 200901
1520 E. 6th Avenue
Helena, MT 59620-0901

Subject: DEQ's Draft Conclusions and Determination regarding BPA's Rebuild of the Libby (FEC) to Troy 115kV Rebuild.

Dear Ms. Johnson:

This letter is written to express my concerns with respect to the above DEQ Draft Determination regarding the power line that runs over roads and very near to many of the residences in the region west of Libby.

Comment 115

Response 115: Comment noted.

I realize that there is a power line that presently exists in the area in question and that it will be less expensive to rebuild the same or larger capacity line within the existing right-of-way.

Comment 116

Response 116: Comment noted.

However, the rebuild also provides BPA with an opportunity to relocate the line around the many residences in the area and remove the many risks the line may represent to these families that live in the line's path.

Comment 117

Response 117: As part of the EIS process, participating agencies evaluated in detail three realignments – Pipe Creek, Quartz Creek, and Kootenai River Crossing - that would move the rebuilt line out of the existing right-of-way.

That being said, in my mind the EIS appears to fall short of addressing some of the real concerns that the residents share regarding the rebuild. Clearly, the report does not address their concerns regarding the admitted 3-4 mG and above 4 mG EMF levels in the vicinity of the power line.

Comment 118

Response 118: The department has added information to the final conclusions regarding EMF levels in the vicinity of the transmission line.

I simply ask that all concerns that have been brought to the attention of DEQ be addressed. For example: What is the scientific and epidemiological evidence relating to expected EMF and the potential health impacts? If there are none, it should be so stated with reference to the supporting evidence that substantiates that there are no known or possible health effects and that the statistical studies suggesting that there are health effects related to elevated EMF levels are unsubstantiated.

Comment 119

Response 119: These matters are described in Appendices H and J of the Final EIS.

Another concern deals with the ability to get to and fight fires in the area of the line. As the DEQ is aware, a fire occurred in this area a few years ago because of downed line and only because of luck were some of the area residents not injured or killed. In addition, under the right conditions, serious fire could have resulted because the local fire departments could not respond until they were able to confirm that the line had been de-energized.

Comment 120

Response 120: DEQ understands that placement of firefighting equipment near transmission lines is a real safety concern for fire departments. Appropriate training for working in and around electrical transmission facilities would aid firefighters. BPA has a safety office in Vancouver, WA that can be contacted (360-418-2397) for additional information. Moving the line on the Pipe Creek and Quartz Creek realignments would reduce hazards associated with fighting fires in residential areas near the line and could reduce the response time while firefighters confirm that the line is de-energized before continuing suppression efforts in these areas.

Comment 121

It is unfortunate the Montana DEQ also failed to address these issues in their findings in support for using the existing right-of-way. I would think that after DEQ's failures with respect to the asbestos problems at Libby, that they would have been more focused on the potential health and safety issues.

Response 121: DEQ did consider health and safety issues in its draft conclusions, and has reevaluated existing information on health and safety in its final conclusions. In comments submitted on the Draft EIS, the department requested BPA to identify how many homes along the proposed line and alternatives would be within a zone where magnetic field strength would exceed 3-4 milligauss as a result of the line (page 9-49 of the Final EIS). Your comments on asbestos problems at Libby are noted.

Comment 122

Folks in the neighborhood simply want to know that the rebuild will be safe and does not place them at a higher statistical probability of health risk than those living away from power line easements.

Response 122: The department wishes that the science relating to the health effects of magnetic fields from transmission lines was far enough along to provide concrete answers, but it is not. The following information comes from Appendix J of the final EIS. Two studies (Ahlbom et al. 2000 and Greenland et al. 2000) have combined past studies in meta-analyses of leukemia related to magnetic field strength and found a statistical association with leukemia for exposures greater than 3-4 mG. The largest childhood cancer study of magnetic fields to date was completed in the United Kingdom in 2000 (UKCCS 2000). The UKCCS study showed no evidence for an association with leukemia for magnetic fields calculated to be between 1 mG – 2 mG, 2 mG – 4 mG, or 4 mG or greater at the residence of children. Children with leukemia were not more likely to live near distribution, higher voltage power lines or substations than control children in this study. A more recent study of distance from transmission lines reported a weak association with childhood leukemia but not tumors of other tissues. However the association was present at distances where no magnetic fields could be measured (Draper et al. 2005). In addition you should review the conclusions of Large Multidisciplinary Review Groups Assembled by Health Agencies and Scientific Organizations in Appendix J, Table 1 of the final EIS. From this discussion one can discern that there is not even agreement among researchers that an increase risk of childhood leukemia exists. The department cannot offer assurances when the science offers conflicting answers.

Comment 123

I should also point out that one of the reasons given by BPA to not reroute around the residential areas was that it would create too much of a disturbance to the forested land to the north. However, with the emphasis shifting to fuel reduction in the area and the activities now being implemented in much of that area to reduce the potential for catastrophic fire and a threat to Libby, the reroute could serve as somewhat of a fire line and certainly for the short period of time taken for the rebuild it would not cause any undue hardships for wildlife in the area. At least not any more than the thinning, fuel load reduction and removal activities will have for a brief period of time.

Comment 124

It just seems to me that the right thing to do in DEQ's Final Determination is to address all concerns of residents in the area which in my mind has not been done satisfactorily.

The appearance to someone outside of the issue is that BPA had concluded early on to use the existing right-of-way and proceeded to generate an EIS to justify that position. Accordingly, I believe citizens concerns would have been more suitably addressed and their comments given stronger consideration when making conclusions and the Determination as prepared by the DEQ.

Comment 125

Having come from an industry background, I truly understand that cost is an important factor with any project. However, I also know that where health & safety are concerned, no state or federal agency would ever allow costs to trump out in private industry and it should not with any governmental project either where resident health and safety is at issue. I would hope that these concerns will be satisfactorily addressed before the BPA issues its Record of Decision for the project

Comment 126

Please keep me informed of any additional correspondence that the DEQ may issue with respect to comments received regarding your determination.

Comment 127

Sincerely,

Ralph Heinert
State Representative, House District 1
PO Box 577
Libby, MT 59923-0577

cc. Richard Opper, Director, MT DEQ
Kirk Robinson, Project Director, BPA
Gail Kuntz, Constituent Account Executive, BPA

Response 123: The assumption that a transmission line corridor on a forested landscape could serve as a "fireline" is somewhat correct. The assumption must also include that the fire behavior is a low to moderate intensity surface fire, absent characteristics such as spotting, torching, and crown fire runs. To be considered a fireline, a transmission corridor must have a road located inside the right-of-way clearing. The road, to mineral soil and without vegetation, is technically the "fireline" which restricts the spread of a surface fire. A road provides fire personnel and equipment access and could also serve as an anchor point to construct new fireline.

On forested landscape, a transmission line corridor without a continuous road in the right-of-way is actually a "fuel break", and a surface fire would move across the right-of-way clearing.

Lastly, any fire operations under or near any power line has increased safety issues with aircraft (helicopter bucket and airtanker retardant drops), tree falling, dense smoke discharge, downed lines, etc.

Response 124: Concerns of residents have been addressed in the department's final conclusions and determination to the extent that the department can do so.

Response 125: Comment noted.

Response 126: The department must make the substantive findings in 75-20-301, MCA, before approving the project or an alternative to it.

Response 127: Comment noted.

From: Tom Wenke [wenke@libby.org]
Sent: Wednesday, July 02, 2008 9:45 AM
To: Johnson, Nancy
Subject: Proposed rebuild of Libby to Troy transmission line
Nancy:

Comment 128

I live in the Bighorn Terrace area not far from the transmission line. I am far enough away from the proposed rebuilt tine so I will not be affected. However, six households in this area ARE vulnerable to EMF exposure if the line is rebuilt as proposed.

Response 128: Information on magnetic fields under and next to the transmission line has been revised in the department's final conclusions.

Comment 129

I am writing to simply say that this problem should be corrected before any rebuild is approved.

Response 129: Comment noted.

Thank you.
Thomas L. Wenke
6727 Kootenai River Road

From: John & Margaret Smith [mjsmith@kvis.net]
Sent: Wednesday, July 02, 2008 10:39 AM
To: Ring, Tom; Johnson, Nancy; Opper, Richard
Subject: MT DEQ/BPA proposed rebuild of 115kV line

Comment 130A-E

Attachments: PA080026.JPG

The attached picture shows BPA power lines running alongside of and over the north edge of Kootenai River Road at approximately 3700 Kootenai River Rd. The structures, whose roofs are shining through the trees, are located on a one acre parcel that is a long rectangle running along the road. If BPA is allowed to rebuild these transmission lines, they will move them slightly north taking more of the acre and the garage which sits in front of this house. **130A.** The owner will be left with “one acre” of land, half of which he cannot ever use but pays taxes on, **130B.** probably can never sell (who’d buy), **130C.** with transmission lines emitting high EMF levels **130D.** under which he and his two children must drive and walk every day and **130E.** under which fire fighting equipment is not allowed to pass in the event of a structural or wild fire.

I believe it is a gross miscarriage of justice for MT DEQ to permit BPA to do to families along the current easement what they are planning to do. I believe the rebuild and current existing easement should not be permitted so that this family and other families along the easement can live safely on their acre of land.

Comment 131

Would you want your family living under or near these lines? Would you buy one of these homes from the current landowners?

Comment 132

Respectfully

Margaret Smith
7031 Kootenai River Rd
Libby, MT 59923
mjsmith@kvis.net
You have been sent 1 picture.

PA080026.JPG

Response 130: The information is noted. See response 51 for specific references to residences along Kootenai Road and Kootenai River Road. 130A: the department recognizes that property owners with transmission lines easements will have some restrictions on use of the easements. Please see Appendix I of the Final EIS for more information. 130B: See pages 3-124 and 3-125 of the Final EIS for a discussion of property value impacts. 130C: EMF levels in proximity to the line are reported on page 3-191 and Appendix H of the Final EIS. Scientific literature pertaining to possible health risks are indicated in Appendix J of the Final EIS. 130D: and 130E: Other public health and safety considerations are discussed in Sections 3.10.2, including those mentioned.

Response 131: Your opinions are noted.

Response 132: Your rhetorical questions are noted.



From: John & Margaret Smith [mjsmith@kvis.net]
Sent: Wednesday, July 02, 2008 10:11 AM
To: Ring, Tom; Johnson, Nancy; Opper, Richard
Subject: MT DEQ/BPA 115kV line rebuild
WHY?

Comment 133

I would like to know WHY, when Lincoln County is 78% public land and 22% private land, the MT Department of Environmental Quality determines that BPA, a division of the US Department of Energy, can run 115kV transmission lines through a very narrow strip of private land along the north bank of the Kootenai River stretching 7 miles west from Hwy 37 to the Big Horn Wildlife Preserve unnecessarily creating health and safety hazards which decrease the value of the private land, create areas of privately “owned” land which owners cannot ever use but nonetheless are required to pay taxes on, when there are thousands of acres of public land bordering the private land that could and should be used instead?

Comment 134

I would like to know WHY BPA customers in the Pacific Northwest who use the electricity transmitted over these lines, and who pay millions of dollars to BPA for salmon recovery, cannot, through their rates, pay a few more cents to move these lines off private land when it is found that EMF levels are linked to cancer?

Comment 135

Since when do salmon, bears, undisturbed soil(of which we have thousands of acres), big trees (which grow prolifically in this area) override the health and safety of people?

Comment 136

I think the MT Department of Environmental Quality should be concerned with protecting and improving the quality of the environment for its citizens, not acting as a determining factor in make it unsafe and unhealthy.

Respectfully,

Margaret Smith
7031 Kootenai River Rd
Libby, MT 59923
mjsmith@kvis.net

Response 133: The department notes that of the total 164.5 acres within the existing transmission line corridor, approximately 65 percent is in public ownership and 35 percent in private ownership (Table 3-9 of Final EIS). Realignment options were identified and studied in the Quartz Creek and Pipe Creek areas on the west side of Libby to decrease impacts to private properties. See also response to comments 78 and 130.

Response 134: Comment noted. This comment is beyond the scope of this EIS.

Response 135: Before the Department can make its determination, it must make the substantive findings required under 75-20-301, MCA. These findings include more factors than listed in the comment.

Response 136: Comment noted.

From: wdearth@juno.com
Sent: Wednesday, July 02, 2008 11:42 AM
To: Johnson, Nancy
Subject: Libby to Troy Transmission Line

July 2, 2008

Dear Reader,

Comment 137

I feel I am wasting my time as I sit here and write yet another letter to you. I doubt you read them but someone said you do count the letters you receive. I would certainly like to be counted.

Comment 138

I am not naive enough to believe that after you repair the line on River Road that this will be the end of it. I am sure that it will be necessary to increase the voltage on these lines in the too soon future.

Comment 139

Where you finally did admit the lines do present a health hazard, what will a higher voltage do to the innocent people who live along it's lines?

Comment 140

You have not, to my knowledge, even deemed it necessary to inform the home owners if they are among the ones in the higher electric and magnetic fields.

Comment 141

Again, just as you admitted a health hazard you did finally admit a fire hazard could exist. This is a real concern to us who live near the wires.

We understand that you do not allow the fire department to fight the fires if the wires are alive.

Comment 142

I understand you have heard from our fire chief who has voiced his concerns to you. You did not bother to tell anyone about his concerns to you until recently. Are we to stand by and watch our homes burn?

Comment 143

We have been lied to from day one. How can we begin to put our trust in you! I am not in the habit of dealing with deceitful people. At first I was hurt and concerned for my health and home. Now I am hurt, concerned and angry! What next must our little community suffer at the expense of the dollar.

Comment 144

Very Sincerely,

Wilberta Dearth
26 Cliffside Drive
Libby, Montana 59923

Response 137: Be assured that the department reads and considers all public comments submitted.

Response 138: Comment noted. No need has been identified that would justify construction of a 230-kV line at this time.

Response 139: Table 3 and Table 4 of Appendix H in the Final EIS (page H-37) show that calculated peak electric and magnetic fields and calculated fields at the edge of the right-of-way would decrease for a 230-kV double circuit line operated at 115-kV compared to a rebuilt 115-kV line with H-frame structures.

Response 140: Persons living near the line who are interested in knowing which homes have average magnetic fields above 4 milligauss can call a BPA toll free number 1-800-282-3713.

Response 141: Response 141: See page 9-51 of the Final EIS for discussion of safety concerns related to firefighting. Text on page 3-187 of the Final EIS notes that a rebuild of the existing transmission line in its existing corridor in the Big Horn Terrace and Pipe Creek residential areas would not change the existing potential safety risks associated with fires and placement of firefighting equipment under or near the transmission line. The No Action alternative in the Final EIS in text on page 3-28 recognized the fire hazard associated with the existing line.

Response 142: Standard fire fighting protocol is to avoid working near lines until they are de-energizing. DEQ does not control or direct fire departments.

Response 143: A response was made to Thomas Wood, chief of the Libby Fire Department in the Final EIS (see page 9-51).

Response 144: Your opinions are noted.

From: Nancy Moorhead [ezescapes@msn.com]
Sent: Friday, July 04, 2008 11:40 AM
To: kirby_campbell-rierson@baucus.senate.gov
Cc: Opper, Richard; Johnson, Nancy; Ring, Tom; virginia_sloan@tester.senate.gov; kmrobinson@bpa.gov; potts.stephen@epa.gov; westnews@libby.org; kvrecord@gmail.com; letters@montanian.com; news@montanian.com; sjwright@bpa.gov; cvvincent@hotmail.com; rheinert@clink.com; rwindom@libby.org
July 4, 2008

The Honorable Max Baucus
Kalispell Field Office
8 Third Street East
Kalispell, MT59901
kirby_campbell-rierson@baucus.senate.gov

Comment 145

Response 145: The comment letter to congressional staff has been added as part of the project record.

Copies to: Mr. Richard Opper, Director, Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality (ropper@mt.gov).

Representative Ches Vincent at cvvincent@hotmail.com
Kirk Robinson, Sr. Project Manager, BPA, kmrobinson@bpa.gov
John Smith, concerned property owner, njsmith@kvis.net

RE: BPA's Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) on the Libby (FEC) to Troy 115k V Rebuild.

Dear Senator Baucus:

We have read the FEIS as referenced above and are very concerned about the safety and environmental impact on our position as homeowners at 6654 Kootenai River Road.

We would like to register an opposition to the newly considered power lines that will be built at the rear of our property. We protest due to the lack of consideration of health and safety issues by the BPA's FEIS and the DEQ's Draft Report on BPA's proposed rebuild of the Libby (FEC) to Troy power line. Our preference is that the lines be removed completely and repositioned to a safer environment.

We are concerned about the large number of EMF health concerns specifically related to childhood leukemia. There will be a 3-year old at our property at least for two years or possibly more. In addition to the obvious EMF health concerns, the rebuild also creates an unfenced "danger zone" for small children to wander in.

We are also concerned about the increased fire danger associated with falling wires and lack of access by the fire department prior to them being notified that the power lines are shut down. This was a previous problem near our property a few years ago when

Comment 145 continued

lightning struck behind our house and caused an extensive grass and forest fire. The fire department was unable to react quickly because of the power line question.

We would like to know if we are one of the properties that will receive the excess mG level which may lead to increased health concerns. We have not been notified of such.

An additional concern is losing more of our land to wider easements. As an immediate result, we would like to rescind our permission to access our property before, after, or during a rebuild.

Our desired position is that the rebuild takes place in the area over the mountain immediately behind our property. We have no problem with helicopters being used in such case as long as they create no noise pollution in the proximity of our property. It would use a very small portion of government land and would provide less of environmental and health risks than the currently proposed location.

With proper positioning of the line to not infringe on current property values, the existing property taxes will increase more than enough in our beautiful Libby area to compensate for the increased cost of an environmentally safe relocation.

Respectfully,

John and Nancy Moorhead
6654 Kootenai River Road
Libby, Montana 59923
210-684-5456

From: AFPOPAUL@aol.com
Sent: Friday, July 04, 2008 8:10 PM
To: Johnson, Nancy
Subject: Libby-Troy rebuild of power lines by BPA

Comment 146

Please do what you can to move power lines to the other side of the mountain in the Pipe Creek area along Kootenai River Road. We will build on lot #53 there soon. Perhaps the potential harm of the electro-magnetic emissions will not effect us. Perhaps they will. The Quartz Creek realignment option will eliminate any doubt. Thanks. Paul Mammano

Response 146: Comment Noted.

From: Helen S Gould [jhranch@juno.com]
Sent: Saturday, July 05, 2008 12:05 AM
To: Johnson, Nancy
Subject: Fw: Letter from Jerry Brown, Wildlife Biologist MFWP

Attachments: scan0001.jpg

Dear Ms Johnson,

Comment 147

I am sending you a letter from Jerry Brown, the Wildlife Biologist for MFWP as an attachment. I think I finally figured out how to do it. Jerry Brown said to send this to whoever might be of help.

Thanks

Jerry Gould

Response 147: The letter dated June 8, 2005 from Jerry Brown, MFWP, was submitted as a scoping comment for the proposed project. It is already part of the project record.

Region One
490 North Meridian Road
Kalispell, MT 59901
(406) 752-5501
FAX: (406) 257-0349
Ref: T/Ditt2
Date: June 8, 2005

Comment 147 continued

BPA:

In reference to your proposed rebuild of the Libby to Troy Section of the 115-kilovolt Transmission Line, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks forwards the following comments for your consideration:

1. Approximately three miles of the existing transmission line occupies an easement across the Kootenai Falls Wildlife Management Area (WMA), owned and managed by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP). This area is managed for bighorn sheep and other wildlife inhabiting the area. The transmission line through our WMA is inconsistent with management of the area for wildlife. An alternative that needs to be addressed in your proposed actions is to relocate the line across the Kootenai River to the south side of State Highway 2. There are other compelling reasons to consider moving the line to the south side of the river (Visual Resource, Cultural Resource, access for maintenance).
2. Maintenance of the existing line across the WMA requires continual clearing of vegetation along the transmission corridor, with resultant ground disturbance leading to weed infestations. FWP is required to manage weeds on our WMAs, which we do annually on the Kootenai Falls WMA. To my knowledge, none of the previous Transmission Line operators (PPL, FEC) ever controlled weeds along this corridor. If the Transmission Line remains on the WMA, the weed issue must be addressed.
3. The Kootenai Falls WMA is closed to motorized access except for administrative use. This is for the express purpose of providing wildlife habitat security. Rebuild or upgrade of the transmission line across the WMA would create a wildlife disturbance factor that will need to be mitigated through scheduling of construction activities. Long-term maintenance activities would also require some scheduling constraints.

The above comments are just a few that come to mind at this time (turn-around time for this review was short). I hope you will give due consideration to these issues in your analysis.

Jerry Brown *
Wildlife Biologist
MFWP
475 Fish Hatchery Road
Libby, MT 59923
406-293-4161
jerryb@mt.gov

Lincoln County Rural Fire Dist. #1 (Libby Rural)
P.O. Box 796
Libby, MT 59923

Senator Max Baucus
Senator Jon Tester
Representative Denny Rehberg

6/20/08

Comment 148

RE: Electric Transmission Line in Bighorn Terrace Area of Libby, MT

Dear Senator/Representative:

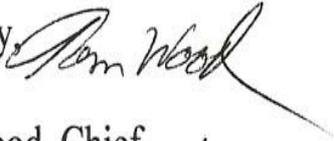
On 12/20/06 I submitted a letter expressing my concerns as a fire chief to BPA regarding the proposed electric transmission line in the Bighorn Terrace Area of Libby. (Copy attached) To date, I have had no response from BPA regarding my concerns. I understand that the final EIS has been produced and I am upset that I was not consulted prior to its publication.

My concerns are regarding the fire suppression efforts in that area. For example, we had a fire call in the exact area, we responded, as well as the USFS. We began an initial attack on the fire but had to stop our operations as there was a 115,000 volt (BPA) power line on the ground. We had 911 dispatch try to find out if the line was active or not, as we could not put firefighters in jeopardy, but we were not able to get that information from BPA on a timely basis. Luckily no homes were lost, but many were in harms way.

The area is not currently in the Lincoln County Rural Fire District; however we do have a written mutual aid agreement with the USFS that states we will protect structures in the area. In the event of a fire in that area, we may have to stage our equipment under the power line which would not be an acceptable fire fighting practice and could put our people and equipment in jeopardy. (In the very near future the area will be brought into the fire district, if all standards are met. My concern is that the trustees of the district may not want to take the area in because of this major issue. If the area is not accepted into the district, this could leave several homes (approx 60) not having the fire protection they desire and deserve.)

Response 148: The comment letter to congressional staff has been added as part of the project record.

If you have any questions of me, please feel free to contact me via mail, or e-mail lvfd1@hotmail.com or phone 406-293-2200. Please forward my concerns to the BPA and keep me posted as to the outcome.

Sincerely, 

Tom Wood, Chief
Libby Fire Department (Lincoln Co. Rural Fire Dist. #1 and City of Libby)

LTD-0008
Rec: 9/13/07

Lincoln County Rural Fire Dist. #1 (Libby Rural)
P.O. Box 796
Libby, MT 59923

Comment 148 continued

12/20/06

RE: Electric Transmission Line in the Bighorn Terrace Area of Libby, MT

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my understanding that you are in the process of planning to replace the transmission line through the Bighorn Terrace area. I would like to go on record requesting that you place the line away from the homes, so we can have safer access to them for fire fighting purposes. Power lines are always a major concern for fire fighters and if we can be proactive and avoid problems with them in a planning stage like this, it is very important that we be involved. Placement of fire fighting equipment is very important to us in making the fire attack more favorable, and if we have to worry about overhead lines in the area it makes it more difficult for our operations. We do have ladder and boom trucks that may be used on a residential fire and as you know that type equipment requires very special placement in and around power lines. If you would care to visit with me or inform me of any meetings you may have regarding this issue, you can reach me at 293-0248 or 293-7618 anytime. Thanks for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,



Thomas J. Wood, Chief
Libby Fire Department (Lincoln Co. Rural FD#1 and City of Libby)

Rec'd
DK
2/15/07

From: ray eanes [raybeanes@hotmail.com]
Sent: Monday, July 07, 2008 6:04 PM
To: Johnson, Nancy
Subject: Libby/ electric lines

Dear Miss Johnson,

Comment 149

I did phone your office and left a message regarding the renewing of the BPA electric lines in Libby. I am not sure how your office and people go about deciding on where the lines should go,

however we here under the lines feel that this would be the time to go over the mountain, rather than have them in the same place. Since they were put in many years ago there were not a lot of families living near the lines however there are now lots of dwellings and in danger of fires, health issues, etc.....

Comment 150

Going over the mountain you may encounter a couple of bears who will use the poles to scratch their backs so please do not tell us that it will endanger the bears.....

Comment 151

I have talked to Kirk Robinson about this and to all of us living with this danger it seems a "no brainer" your company will have to spend the money anyway so why not do the right and moral thing and take this dangerous situation OVER THE MOUNTAIN....

Comment 152

We had a wee fire here a couple of years ago fortunately it was in the winter and the lines fell on the snow so no one was hurt but!!!! what if.....

Comment 153

Thank you Maria B Eanes
5626 Kootenai River Road
Libby Montana 59923

ray

Response 149: The rationale for the department decision on the proposed project is provided within the conclusions and determination.

Response 150: Comment noted.

Response 151: Effects on habitat effectiveness for grizzly bears during project construction, and the addition of new access roads within bear management units were identified in the EIS.

Response 152: Your opinion is noted.

Response 153: Comment noted.