

**FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
DRAFT - FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

**Antelope Butte 150' Communications Tower
Interoperability Montana
HSGP- 2008-GE-T8-0023 (06):
Richland County, MT
May 6, 2011**

Interoperability Montana (IM) has applied to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for funding under the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP). When completed, it will be part of a system of approximately 140 sites providing a comprehensive emergency communications network across Montana. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), Executive Order 11988, Executive Order 11990, and the implementing regulations of FEMA, an Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared to assess the potential impacts of the Proposed Action on the human and natural environment, and is incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of the proposed project is to improve radio communications in northeast Montana for emergency services. The need results from isolation, topography, and great distances between communities and residences that limit communications in northeast Montana. Interoperability Montana is a state-wide, standards-based voice and data communications network providing service to federal, state, local and tribal public safety responders. The proposed Antelope Butte Communications site would provide radio coverage in the Fort Union area; microwave connectivity and radio coverage in both Richland and Roosevelt Counties; and line-of-sight telecommunications for various federal, state, and local disaster and emergency personnel. The Antelope Butte site would contribute to the overall statewide effort to implement the IM Communication Project as funded through FEMA and DHS, and meet the objectives of the Montana Homeland Security Strategic Plan (MHSSP).

DESCRIPTION

Interoperability Montana would construct a 150-foot self-supporting tower and associated equipment compound in Richland County, Montana. The proposed radio communications complex would include a 150' self-supporting tower, a propane tank to provide fuel for the internal emergency generator, and an equipment shelter on a concrete pad. The site is located in a rural area in the northeast portion of Richland County. The site is part of a larger 80-acre tract of land located approximately 20 miles north-northwest of Sidney, Montana, in Section 21, Township 26 north, Range 58 east, at N 47° 59' 44.3", W 104° 13' 42.5". The parent tract of land is classified as grazing land, and the surrounding area is rural in nature.

The Antelope Butte site was proposed after due diligence in locating a site in Northeast Montana that could provide the adequate radio coverage in that part of Richland and Roosevelt Counties. The Antelope Butte site would also provide future across-border coverage and connectivity into North Dakota.

MITIGATION AND STIPULATIONS

The following mitigation and stipulations upon which this finding is conditioned must be followed by the grant applicant and/or their contractors:

- Compliance with the FWS “Service Guidance on Siting, Construction, Operation and Decommissioning of Communication Towers (September 2000)” (www.fws.gov/habitatconservation/communicationtowers.html) thereby minimizing impacts to migratory birds as required under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) (16 U.S.C. §703)
- Any change to the approved scope of work will require re-evaluation for compliance with NEPA and other Laws and Executive Orders.
- This review does not address all federal, state and local requirements. Acceptance of federal funding requires recipient to comply with all federal, state and local laws. Failure to obtain all appropriate federal, state and local environmental permits and clearances may jeopardize federal funding.
- If ground disturbing activities occur during construction, applicant will monitor ground disturbance and if any potential archeological resources are discovered, will immediately cease construction in that area and notify the State and FEMA

FINDINGS

Based upon the information contained in the Final Environmental Assessment completed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, FEMA’s regulations (44 CFR Part 10) for environmental considerations, and Executive Orders (EO) addressing Floodplains (EO 11988), Wetlands (EO 11990), the Endangered Species Act, and Environmental Justice (EO 12898), it is found that the Proposed Action with the prescribed mitigation measures and stipulations will have no significant adverse impact on the human environment. **As a result in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)**, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared, and the Proposed Action with the associated mitigation measures and stipulations as described in the Environmental Assessment may proceed.

APPROVAL

Steven E. Hardegen
Region VIII Environmental Officer

Date