

PUBLIC NOTICE
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Notice of Availability of the Draft Environmental Assessment (DEA)
for Construction of the Antelope Butte 150 foot Communications Tower by
Interoperability Montana in Richland County, MT

Interested persons are hereby notified that the 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 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.

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. The Draft EA summarizes the purpose and need, alternatives, affected environmental, and potential environmental consequences for the proposed action. The Draft EA is available for comment and can be viewed and downloaded from FEMA's website at <http://www.fema.gov/plan/ehp/envdocuments/ea-region8.shtm>, and will be on file and available for public examination at **Location TBD**

The comment period will end 15 days from the date of the initial public notification. Written comments on the Draft EA can be mailed or faxed to the contact below. If no substantive comments are received, the Draft EA will become final and a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be issued for the project. Substantive comments will be addressed as appropriate in the final documents.

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