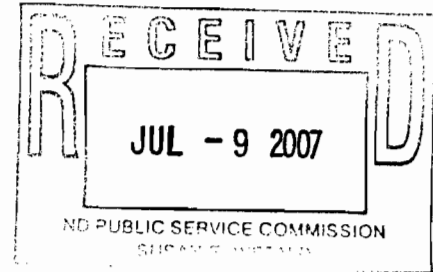




B0401.BL

**Department of Energy**  
Western Area Power Administration  
Upper Great Plains Region  
P.O. Box 35800  
Billings, MT 59107-5800



**JUL 05 2007**

**SUBJECT: Belfield-Rhame 230-kV Transmission Line Project, Bowman, Hettinger, Slope and Stark Counties, North Dakota**

Dear Interested Party:

Basin Electric Power Cooperative (Basin Electric) is proposing to construct a 230-kilovolt (kV) transmission line from Western Area Power Administration's (Western) Belfield Substation in Stark County, North Dakota, to the new Rhame Substation to be located along the existing Little Missouri-Bowman 230-kV Line in the vicinity of the town of Rhame, in Bowman County. The proposed project, known as the Belfield-Rhame 230-kV Transmission Line Project (Project), is needed to provide additional electric power to meet load growth in southwestern North Dakota and the region.

Basin Electric has requested an interconnection with Western's transmission system at Belfield Substation. This interconnection request triggers a Federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review. Before Western can agree to the construction and interconnection of the proposed Project, we must consider the Project's potential environmental impacts.

This letter serves as Western's notification of plans to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) in accordance with NEPA. The EA will provide Western with a framework to analyze and judge the magnitude of expected environmental impacts from the construction and operation of the proposed Project. If Western finds that there are no significant environmental impacts, we can issue a "finding of no significant impact" and move forward with the proposed Project. If the EA process identifies unmitigated significant impacts, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process will be initiated to take a more detailed look at the impacts and alternative approaches to the proposed Project.

The proposed Belfield-Rhame 230-kV Transmission Line corridor would begin at Western's Belfield Substation and proceed south and east, skirting the easternmost projection of the Little Missouri National Grassland administered by the U.S. Forest Service. From that point, the corridor would turn southwestward through Slope and into Bowman Counties to the site of the proposed Rhame Substation. The proposed transmission line would be approximately 70 miles long and is proposed to be constructed on steel H-frame structures. A fiber optic ground wire would be installed as one of two ground wires for Basin Electric's mobile radio communications in this remote area. Width of the right-of-way for the transmission line would be 125 feet.

At Belfield Substation, Basin Electric would construct a new 230-kV bay with typical electrical components such as circuit breakers, switches, and control equipment within the existing substation footprint. At Rhame, Basin Electric would construct a completely new 230/115-kV substation on 15 to 20 acres containing a 230/115-kV transformer, 230- and 115-kV bays, and associated circuit breakers and switching and control equipment. Basin Electric would also extend its existing microwave communications path as part of the proposed Project. The new transmission line and Rhame Substation would be constructed, owned, operated, and maintained by Basin Electric. Western's actions would be limited to approving or denying the interconnection request and allowing Basin Electric to construct modifications within its Belfield Substation to accommodate the interconnection.

Routing studies are being conducted to identify separate line routes or route segments within the identified general corridor. Routing criteria based on state requirements have been developed and would be used to identify potential line routes. Existing roads and trails would be used to the extent practicable so routing efforts are focused on section lines. Basin Electric proposes to use overland travel in lieu of new road construction where existing access is lacking.

Public involvement is an important and integral part of Western's NEPA process. Scoping involves actively acquiring input from interested Federal, State, tribal and local agencies, and the public. Information gained during scoping assists Western in identifying potential environmental issues, alternatives, and mitigation measures associated with constructing and operating the proposed Project. Scoping also helps narrow the scope of issues so the analysis of environmental impacts can focus on areas of highest interest and concern.

Western will hold a scoping period to ensure that interested members of the public; potentially affected landowners and lessees; and Federal, State, local, and tribal agencies have an opportunity to provide input on the scope of the EA and the alternatives that will be addressed in the EA. Western will also hold public open-house scoping meetings near the proposed Project area during the scoping period. At the scoping meetings, Western staff will provide information about the proposed Project, answer questions, and take verbal and written comments from interested parties. Western wants you to comment on the proposed Project, offer suggestions to improve the proposal, and even suggest alternative actions. Western is also asking you to identify any issues of concern about potential environmental impacts.

The open-house public scoping meetings will be held at the Belfield City Hall, 107 2nd Ave. N.E. in Belfield, North Dakota, on July 23, 2007, and at the Bowman City Hall, 101 1<sup>st</sup> Street N. E. in Bowman on July 24. You may attend any time between 4 and 7 p.m. You will have the opportunity to view proposed Project and NEPA process displays and other information. The open-house scoping meeting will be very informal, with

Western and Basin Electric representatives available for one-on-one discussions with attendees. Written comments may be left with one of Western's representatives at the scoping meeting; may be provided by fax, e-mail, or the U.S. Postal Service to Mr. Matt Marsh; or by mailing the enclosed addressed response sheet.

If you wish to be added to the Project mailing list and/or receive a copy of the Draft EA, please return the response sheet or contact Mr. Matt Marsh at the phone number or address listed below. Comments on the Project scope and alternatives should be received by August 24, 2007, to ensure consideration in defining the scope for the EA. Comments on other aspects of the proposed Project will be accepted and considered throughout the NEPA process.

If Western determines that an EIS is necessary at any time in the course of preparing the EA, Western will use the issues and alternatives identified during the EA scoping process in preparing the EIS, including input and comments received at any of the public meetings or workshops held for the proposed Project. Should Western decide that an EIS should be prepared, we will publish a Notice of Intent to Prepare an EIS in the *Federal Register* and invite further comments.

If you have any questions, concerns, or comments, please contact:

Matt Marsh, Environmental Protection Specialist  
Upper Great Plains Region  
Western Area Power Administration  
P.O. Box 35800  
Billings, MT 59107-5800  
Phone: 1-800-358-3415  
Fax: 406-247-7408  
E-mail: [mmarsh@wapa.gov](mailto:mmarsh@wapa.gov).

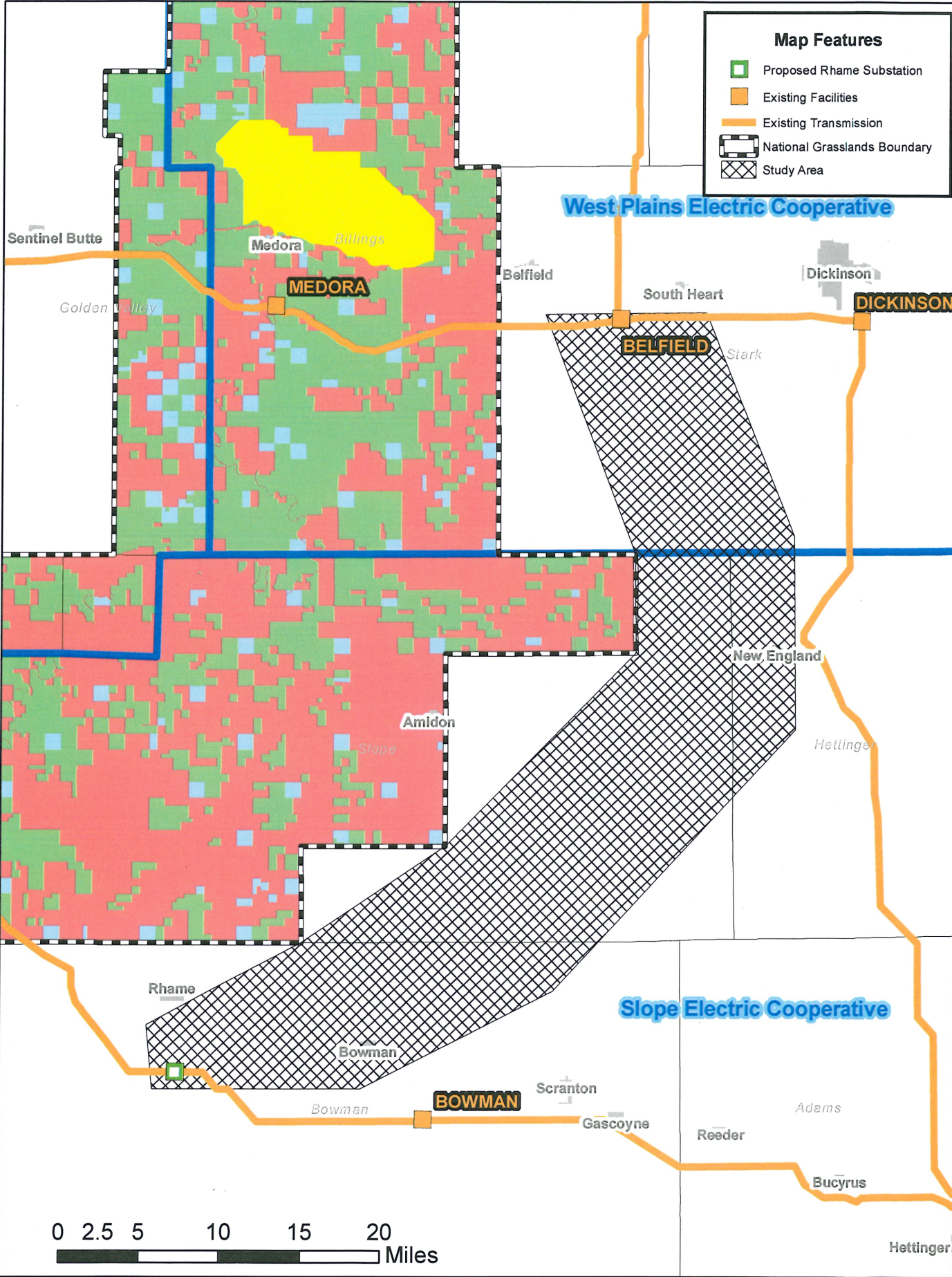
Sincerely,



Nicholas J. Stas  
Environmental Manager

### Map Features

- Proposed Rhame Substation
- Existing Facilities
- Existing Transmission
- National Grasslands Boundary
- Study Area



## Western needs your input to identify issues and concerns for the proposed Belfield-Rhame 230-kV Transmission Line Project EA

If you have any issues, concerns, or questions that you would like addressed in the Belfield-Rhame 230-kV Transmission Line Project Environmental Assessment, please complete this response sheet, put it in the enclosed stamped envelope, and drop it in the mail to us—no postage needed. If you prefer, give us a call at 1-800-358-3415.

Please tell us about the issues, concerns, or questions you want answered in the space provided below. Send additional concerns, issues, or questions to Matt Marsh, Environmental Protection Specialist, Upper Great Plains Region, Western Area Power Administration, P.O. Box 35800, Billings, Montana 59107-5800, Fax: (406) 247-7408, E-mail: [mmarsh@wapa.gov](mailto:mmarsh@wapa.gov)

**Share your issues, concerns, or questions with us (please use the back of this paper if you need additional space):**

### Our mailing list

To have your name added or removed from our mailing list for this project, please check the appropriate box and return this response sheet to us. If you do not ask us to remove your name from our mailing list, we'll send you future EA-related announcements.

Yes, add my name to the mailing list to receive future information

No, please remove my name from your mailing list

### Sign up to receive the EA for Review

Please also let us know if you would like to receive a copy of the Draft Environmental Assessment for Pre-Approval Review when it is available.

Send me the Draft EA for review

### Tell us how to reach you

Please give us your name, address, phone, fax, and e-mail, so we can keep you up-to-date about this project.

Name: Jerry Lein Title: ANALYST  
Mailing address: 600 East Blvd, Dept 408  
City, State, Zip: BISMARCK ND 58501  
Phone: 701-328-1035 Fax: 701-328-2410 E-mail: jlein@nd.gov

### Contact Us

For more information, contact Mr. Matt Marsh, Western Area Power Administration,  
Phone: 1-800-358-3415, E-mail: [mmarsh@wapa.gov](mailto:mmarsh@wapa.gov)