

# Environmental Impact Statement For The Montanore Project

## Kootenai National Forest Lincoln County, MT

**Lead Agencies:** USDA Forest Service, Kootenai National Forest  
Montana Department of Environmental Quality

**Cooperating Agencies:** U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Bonneville Power Administration  
Lincoln County, Montana

**Responsible Officials:** Paul Bradford                      Richard Opper  
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**Abstract:** The Montanore Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) describes the land, people, and resources potentially affected by Montanore Minerals Corporation's (MMC) proposed copper and silver mine (Montanore Project). As proposed, the project would consist of eight primary components: the use of an existing evaluation adit, an underground mine, a mill, three additional adits and portals, a tailings impoundment, access roads, a transmission line, and a rail loadout. Three mine alternatives and a No Action Alternative (No Mine) and four transmission line alternatives, plus a No Action Alternative (no transmission line), are analyzed in detail.

The Kootenai National Forest (KNF) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) will use this information to determine whether to issue approvals necessary for construction and operation of the Montanore Project. The KNF's preferred mine alternative is Alternative 4, Agency Mitigated Little Cherry Creek Impoundment Alternative, provided it could be permitted by the Corps. The mine is currently covered by an existing state operating permit. Therefore, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) did not identify a preferred mine alternative. The DEQ will use this information to determine whether to revise the existing state operating permit for the mine and to authorize construction of the transmission line. DEQ selected Alternative D, Miller Creek Transmission Line Alternative as the preferred transmission line alternative. Public acceptance of a transmission line is one criterion used to locate a transmission line. Thus, identification of Alternative D is tentative, pending public comment. The Bonneville Power Administration will use the information to decide whether to build a new substation and loop line, and to provide power to its customer, Flathead Electric Cooperative, which would provide power to the mine.

Reviewers should provide the KNF and the DEQ with their comments during the review period of the Draft EIS. This will enable the KNF and the DEQ to analyze and respond to the comments at one time and to use the information acquired in the preparation of the final environmental impact statement (Final EIS), thus avoiding undue delay in the decision-making process. Reviewers have an obligation to structure their participation in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) process so that it is meaningful and alerts the agency to the reviewers' position and contentions [Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. Natural Resource Defense Council, 435 U.S. 519, 553 (1978)]. Environmental objections that could have been raised at the Draft EIS stage may be waived if not raised until after completion of the Final EIS. [City of Angoon v. Hodel (9<sup>th</sup> Circuit, 1986) and Wisconsin Heritages, Inc. v. Harris, 490 F. Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D. Wis. 1980)]. Comments on the Draft EIS should be specific and should address the adequacy of the statement and the merits of the alternatives discussed (40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1503.3).

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**Date Comments Must Be Received:** May 28, 2009