

PUBLIC NOTICE OF INTENT TO PREPARE A PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (PEA)

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is providing notice of its intent to prepare a Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) to evaluate utility projects in the State of Montana. We provide this notice to advise other Federal and State agencies, Native American tribes, non-governmental organizations, and the public of our intention as well as to obtain suggestions and information on the scope of issues to consider during the PEA planning process. These actions are part of our effort to comply with the general provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); NEPA regulations; other Federal laws, regulations, and Executive Orders; and our policies for compliance with those laws and regulations including 44 C.F.R. Parts 9 and FEMA Directive 108-1 & Instruction 108-1-1.

Our PEA will focus on a variety of utilities located in Montana that require repair, replacement, restoration, or relocation as a result of damages sustained during disaster events, or as proposed mitigation projects funded through FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance grant programs. Other Federal agencies may adopt the PEA under their own authorities in accordance with the Unified Federal Review (UFR) process.

A “utility” supplies a community with electricity, gas, water, or sewage services. In an effort to restore these utilities or mitigate from future events, FEMA (and other agencies such as the US Economic Development Administration (EDA), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and US Department of Agriculture (USDA) may provide funds for expansion, enlargement, and other upgrades along with replacement, relocation, or changes in materials. The purpose of the PEA is to provide an assessment of the expected environmental impacts associated with implementing these projects. More specifically, it will address the purpose and need of the proposed projects, project alternatives considered, affected environment, environmental consequences, and impact of mitigation measures. The PEA would not address site-specific impacts, which would be evaluated on a project-specific basis.

All Federally funded projects will be completed in compliance with applicable Federal, tribal, state and local laws, regulations, Executive Orders, etc. Some specific items of work may include, but are limited to:

- Placement of temporary crossings, utilities, staging areas, access, and safety features.
- Repair, replacement, and relocation of production, transmission, and treatment facilities in order to provide communities with utility services.
- Construction, excavation, trenching, and directional boring to allow repair, replacement, and relocation of utilities and ancillary facilities.
- Upsizing, encasing, armoring, and upgrading utilities to improve function and protect from future events.
- Repair and reconstruction of adjacent roadway and other connected infrastructure necessary to restore function.

- Operating equipment within waterways to allow repair, replacement, and relocation of utilities.

The comment period for the proposed PEA will remain open for fifteen days following publication of this notice. After gathering public comments, FEMA will develop a draft PEA that will be available for public review and comment according to FEMA Directive 108-1 & Instruction 108-1-1, FEMA's implementing procedures for NEPA.

You can provide comments or obtain more detailed information about the proposed PEA by contacting Richard Myers, FEMA Region VIII, Deputy Regional Environmental Officer at richard.myers2@fema.gov.