

Regulatory Processes

What's the purpose of today's scoping meeting, and what happens next?

On October 25, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the North Plains Connector (NPC). To satisfy state-level regulatory requirements in Montana, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) will participate as a Joint Preparer of the EIS to ensure that the environmental review meets both Federal and state requirements. Please see the reverse side for an overview of the relevant Federal and state-level regulatory processes.

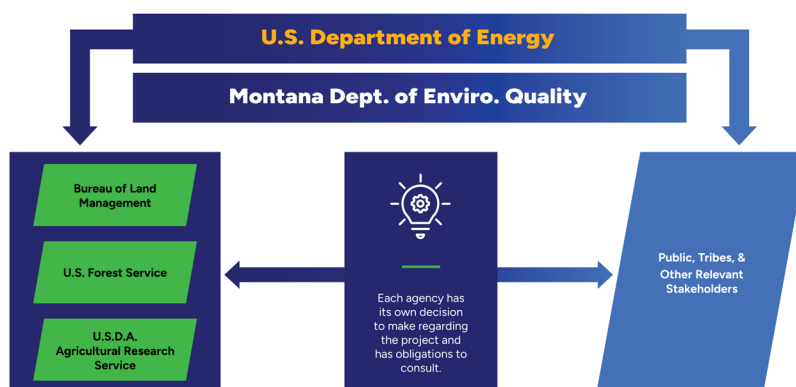
One of the first steps in the process of preparing an EIS is public scoping, during which DOE and MDEQ request that the public help identify the issues that should be addressed in the EIS. As part of the public scoping period for the NPC, DOE and MDEQ are hosting four in-person and one virtual scoping meetings, where the public can learn more about the project and submit written comments.

After the scoping period closes, DOE and MDEQ will review the comments and prepare and publish a Draft EIS for public review and comment.

After reviewing public comments received on the Draft EIS, DOE and MDEQ will publish the Final EIS, which will respond to all substantive comments received on the Draft EIS.

Federal and State Agency Coordination

Because the NPC would cross Federal lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), these agencies are participating in the NEPA process as cooperating agencies. Cooperating agencies will assist DOE by participating in the scoping process, providing staff support, and providing information and environmental analysis based on their special expertise. DOE, serving as the lead Federal agency, will jointly prepare an EIS with MDEQ and help coordinate communication between the cooperating agencies and stakeholders. At the conclusion of the environmental review, BLM, USFS, and ARS will rely on the findings in the Final EIS as a basis for issuing their respective decisions on the NPC (e.g., issuing or denying rights-of-way and other permits for the NPC to cross their managed lands).



To learn more about the NPC and the timeline for the environmental review, please visit: <https://www.energy.gov/nepa/doeis-0568-north-plains-connector-multiple-locations>.



Overview of Relevant Federal and State Regulatory Processes

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

NEPA is a Federal law that serves as the basic charter for environmental protection in the U.S. NEPA requires that all Federal agencies consider the potential impacts of their proposed actions on the human environment.

Levels of NEPA Environmental Review

There are three levels of environmental review under NEPA: a categorical exclusion, an environmental assessment (EA), and an environmental impact statement (EIS). DOE and MDEQ will prepare an EIS for the NPC.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

An EIS is a detailed analysis of reasonably foreseeable environmental impacts prepared for a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment, and includes a range of reasonable alternatives under the Federal action. Public participation is an important part of the EIS process.

Following a Federal agency's determination to prepare an EIS, the agency will publish a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register. The NOI serves as a formal announcement of intent to prepare an EIS.

The NOI also marks the start of the public scoping period, during which an agency conducts public scoping meetings (like this one) to help identify important issues and concerns regarding the project to be addressed in the Draft EIS.

More information on NEPA and how the public can participate in DOE's NEPA process is available here: www.energy.gov/node/257107.



Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA)

MEPA is a comprehensive environmental state law that applies to a wide range of activities and entities within the state of Montana and operates similar to NEPA at the state level. MEPA aims to ensure that state agencies consider the environmental consequences of their actions and promote informed decision-making and public participation in the process. More information on MEPA is available here: www.bit.ly/mepa-handbook.

Montana Major Facility Siting Act (MFSA)

The MFSA requires state agencies to consider the environmental and socioeconomic impacts of major projects like the NPC, allow opportunities for public participation in the state's siting decisions, and coordinate with relevant state and Federal agencies on the authorizations required for siting projects. More information on MFSA is available here: www.deq.mt.gov/energy/assistance.