



DECISION NOTICE

General Exclusion from Environmental Review and Project Approval Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology Montana Regional Seismic Network

July 12, 2024

ACTION

Decision Notice (DN). Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) shall prepare a DN for the proposed action. The DN must identify the agency decision, the reasons for the decision, and any special conditions surrounding the decision or its implementation.

AUTHORITY: MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

According to the applicable requirements of MEPA and its implementing rules and regulations, before a proposed action may be approved, environmental review must be conducted to identify, consider, and disclose any potential impacts of the proposed action on the affected human environment. The level of environmental review will vary with the complexity and seriousness of environmental issues associated with a proposed action. The level of public interest will also vary. The agency is responsible for adjusting public review to match these factors. *Title 75, Chapter 1, Parts 1 through 3, Montana Code Annotated (MCA)*.

The proposed new seismic station to be operated and maintained by the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology (MBMG) and located on land administered by FWP constitutes research and data collection for the purposes of public safety. Therefore, pursuant to *ARM 12.2.432(5)*, the proposed action(s) does not require the preparation of an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement pursuant to MEPA. For additional information related to authority, as it relates to the proposed action, see *Background and Description of Proposed Action*, below.

BACKGROUND AND DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

The Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology (MBMG; (<https://www.mbmг.mtech.edu/>)) operates the Montana Regional Seismic Network, composed of 40 seismograph stations operating in Western Montana. Most of these seismographs utilize outdated analog instrumentation that has been operating for at least 30 years. In 2022, the MBMG received Reclamation and Development Grant funding administered through the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) to upgrade several existing analog seismograph stations with modern digital seismograph instrumentation and add other digital stations where existing seismic monitoring coverage is inadequate.

The project area is located at the SW1/4 of the SE1/4 of Section 8, T15N, R11W (47.0640°N, 113.0164°W). The affected property is north of the town of Ovando and represents an excellent location for a new seismograph

station because there is only one antiquated station operating in this seismically active area and a potentially active fault extends along the southeast edge of the Swan Range. Also, the FWP-administered land north of Ovando is a secure, road-accessible site with cell phone coverage, which is the preferred method of streaming continuous data back to the Earthquake Studies Office in Butte.

This station will become a part of the Montana Regional Seismic Network. It would consist of a 6-foot-high, 4 ½ inch steel king post concreted into the ground. On this post would be 2 solar panels and a locking aluminum box (approximately 3x3x2 feet) which houses a data logger, cell modem, and batteries. The actual seismic sensor is a 16-inch cylinder, 4 inches in diameter that would be buried in a post hole a few feet from the king post. The cable running from the sensor to the king post would be buried underground. Excavations for the king post and the seismic sensor would be done by hand. Metal T-posts and wire mesh panels would be used to build an 8x8-foot enclosure surrounding the equipment to protect it from livestock and wildlife in the affected area.

Construction and installation of the seismic station would be accomplished in a single day using hand tools. Because the station sends a continuous data stream via cell modem, site visits would occur only for station maintenance and repairs in the event of equipment malfunction. MBMG anticipates needing access to the site every 3 to 5 years for routine inspection, maintenance, and battery replacement. Installation of the equipment would ideally occur in late summer or fall 2024, or failing that, during the 2025 field season.

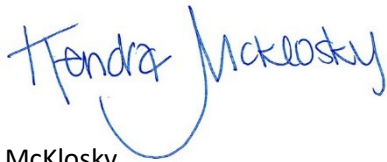
PURPOSE AND NEED

Technological updates to western Montana's Regional Seismic Network. Data collection and public safety related to seismic activity in the affected area.

DECISION

Pursuant to the applicable requirements of MEPA, and its implementing rules at *ARM 12.2.430(5)(d)*, approval of the proposed action is excluded from environmental review. Therefore, with this DN, FWP hereby approves the proposed action.

Sincerely,



Kendra McKlosky
Region 2 Supervisor
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks