

2020 Cost-Share Proposal Form for NorthWestern Energy (NWE) Project 2188 TAC Funds

Project 2188 (Madison-Missouri River) License Protection, Mitigation and Enhancement (PM&E) projects are required to offset impacts to river resources from the continued operation of one or more of NWE's nine hydro developments (Hebgen, Madison, Hauser, Holter, Black Eagle, Rainbow, Cochrane, Ryan and Morony Dams). PM&E projects need to be prioritized toward in-river or on-the-ground measures that directly benefit fisheries and/or wildlife populations and their habitats:

Priority 1: 2188 License projects which meet License Article requirements and PM&E for fisheries or wildlife populations or their habitats within the main stem Madison River (Hebgen Reservoir to Three Forks) or Missouri River (Hauser Reservoir to Fort Peck Reservoir)

Priority 2: 2188 License projects which meet License Article requirements and PM&E for fisheries or wildlife populations or their habitats in primary tributaries or on adjacent lands and, in doing so, provide PM&E for Madison River (Hebgen Reservoir to Three Forks) or Missouri River (Hauser Reservoir to Fort Peck Reservoir) resources.

Priority 3: 2188 License PM&E projects which meet License Article requirements by providing scientific or other tangible PM&E benefits to Madison-Missouri River fisheries or wildlife populations or their habitats. These projects must be located in the greater Missouri River drainage upstream from Fort Peck Reservoir, but not necessarily located on the main stem Madison River or Missouri River or their adjacent lands or primary tributaries.

All TAC project proposals must include the following information:

Project Title: Whiskey Ridge Conservation Easement Habitat Management Infrastructure (Grazing System) - MFWP

Date: 11/10/2020

Explain how this Project addresses a specific Project 2188 License Article(s):

This proposed project meets Project 2188 License Article 423, specifically in "develop[ing] a vegetation and wildlife monitoring and enhancement plan that includes specific goals, objectives, and standards to enhance native plants and wildlife populations on the lands and waters associated with the project..." Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP) Conservation Easements (CEs) ensure protection of existing wildlife, upland, and water resources in perpetuity. Additionally, FWP CEs include a management plan that sets specific goals and objectives for perpetually maintaining and/or enhancing the wildlife/agricultural values. The Whiskey Ridge CE included a grazing plan designed to maintain and improve forage productivity for livestock and wildlife, maintain cover values (residual grass, shrubs) for a variety of wildlife species, and protect riparian/wetland areas by minimizing erosion. To ensure sound grazing practices for the long-term, rangeland infrastructure in the form of fences, pipelines, and water tanks are required to implement this system. Infrastructure would be constructed in a manner that does not degrade any of the resource values or inhibit movements and migration of wildlife. Highly erodible soils are a characteristic of this landscape. Through improved long-term vegetation management (ie grazing system), this CE will help minimize erosion and improve water quality where pastures overlap stream systems and tributaries of the Missouri River.

Provide justification for Priority 1, 2 or 3 (above) that you selected:

This project falls under both Priority 1 and Priority 2, as the Whiskey Ridge CE project area lies adjacent to and between the main-stem Missouri River and one of its primary tributaries, Dog Creek.

Project Sponsor (submitted by): Sonja Andersen (Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks)

Location of Proposed Project: ~9 miles north of Winifred, Fergus County
Narrative

Geocode (in decimal degrees ex 46.89743) Lat: 46.789109

Lon: -109.342947

Total Project Cost: \$66,787.50

TAC Funds (Cost-Share) Requested for Project: \$33,393.25

I. Introduction; brief statement of project to be completed with pertinent background information.

The Whiskey Ridge CE was approved at MFWP's Fish & Wildlife Commission meeting on October 22 of this year and is scheduled to close prior to January 1, 2021. The Whiskey Ridge CE will conserve and enhance 4,400 deeded acres of primarily sagebrush grassland and an additional 7,844 leased acres (BLM, DNRC) in the Missouri River Breaks. Species directly-benefitting from this grazing system and associated infrastructure improvements include bighorn sheep, elk, mule deer, pronghorn, Merriam's wild turkey, mountain lion, bobcat, Greater sage-grouse, sharptailed grouse, and a host of non-game species, including several Species of Concern listed under License Article 421: Long-billed Curlew, Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Ferruginous Hawk, Short-eared Owl, and others.

Attached with this proposal is Appendix B from the Whiskey Ridge CE Management Plan, which outlines the grazing system that will be adopted on this CE following rangeland infrastructure improvements.

II. Objectives; explicit statement(s) of what is intended to be accomplished.

MFWP will close on the Whiskey Ridge CE by the end of this year, combining PPL Wildlife TAC funds (2019) with its Habitat Montana program and other partners to complete the easement purchase. A grazing system has been designed to maintain and enhance native plant communities, protect and improve forage values for livestock and wildlife, maintain cover values for wildlife, and prevent erosion on both deeded and leased public lands.

In order to implement this grazing system, rangeland infrastructure improvements are required. This includes ~10,800 feet of new fence (constructed to wildlife-friendly standards), three 1000-gallon water tanks, and ~15,335 feet of pipeline. The new fence will separate two pastures in the summer grazing system while the new tanks and pipeline will assist in effectively-distributing cows, reducing overuse of some areas and underuse of others.

III. Methods; description of how Project objectives will be accomplished.

The landowner and MFWP will cost share 50:50 on the rangeland infrastructure improvements. Either the landowner will contract out all work, and MFWP will reimburse 50% of the total cost, or MFWP will buy materials and the landowner will do the labor himself. The total estimated costs of these improvements are \$66,787.50; MFWP's and the landowner's share would each be \$33,393.25. Implementation of the improvements will begin summer 2021 with full completion of work fall 2023.

IV. Schedule; when the Project work will begin and end.

To accommodate the landowner's financial needs and time constraints, the infrastructure improvements are staged over the next three years. All installation and construction is scheduled to be completed by 2023, when the grazing system will be fully incorporated.

V. Personnel; who will do the work? Identify Project leader or principal investigator.

The landowner, David Bergum, will be responsible for labor or contracting out the work.

VI. Project budget must include amounts for the following:

Direct Labor: n/a

Travel and Living: n/a

Materials: \$33,393.25

Other Direct Expenses: n/a

Direct Overhead: n/a

All cost-share sources and amounts, including estimation of "in-kind" contributions: \$33,393.25 (landowner's labor or 50:50 cost of contract work).

VII. Deliverables; describe work product (reports, habitat restoration, etc.) which will result from this Project. How will "success" for this project be monitored or demonstrated?

MFWP staff will conduct a site visit on the property and confirm infrastructure improvements are in place prior to reimbursing the landowner its share of the total cost. Annual monitoring of the CE will occur by MFWP and/or a contractor to ensure that CE terms, including the grazing plan, are being met. Success of the project will be long term positive effects of vegetation composition and phenology. Rest pastures will provide year round habitat needs for all wildlife, improved soil health and plant root reserve needs. After one complete grazing cycle the system will be assessed verifying if, or not, these implementations are proving successful related to goals and

objectives. Future adjustments to pasture sizes, cattle locations and timing, additional infrastructure needs will be assessed at this time. Again, the goal is long term vegetation management.

VIII. Cultural Resources. Cultural Resource Management (CRM) requirements for any activity related to this Project must be completed and documented to NWE as a condition of any TAC grant. TAC funds may not be used for any land-disturbing activity, or the modification, renovation, or removal of any buildings or structures until the CRM consultation process has been completed. Agency applicants must submit a copy of the proposed project to a designated Cultural Resource Specialist for their agency. Private parties or non-governmental organizations are encouraged to submit a copy of their proposed project to a CRM consultant they may have employed. Private parties and non-governmental organizations may also contact the NWE representative for further information or assistance. Applications submitted without this section completed, will be held by the TAC, without any action, until the information has been submitted.

Summarize here how you will complete requirements for Cultural Resource Management:

MFWP will consult with the MT SHPO Office on cultural resource inventories prior to any land-disturbing activity. Rangeland infrastructure associated with DNRC or BLM lands on this project area will be inventoried within those agencies.

IX. Water Rights. For projects that involve development, restoration or enhancement of wetlands, please describe how the project will comply with the Montana DNRC's "Guidance for Landowners and Practitioners Engaged in Stream and Wetland Restoration Activities", issued by the Water Resources Division on 9March2016.

Summarize here how you will comply with Montana water rights laws, policies and guidelines:

No wetlands occur on this property. At this time, water rights will not be affected by completion of a CE nor grazing system.

All TAC Project proposals should be 7 pages or less and emailed (as a WORD file) to each of:

- Andrew.Welch@Northwestern.com
- Jon.Hanson@Northwestern.com
- Grant.Grisak@Northwestern.com

Further questions about TAC proposals or Project 2188 license requirements or related issues may be addressed to: Andy Welch, Leader Hydro License Compliance, NorthWestern Energy, 1315 N Last Chance Gulch, Helena, MT 59601; 406-444-8115 (office); 406-565-7549 (cell); Andrew.Welch@northwestern.com.

Rangeland improvements proposed to implement the Whiskey Ridge CE grazing system. Purple = pasture boundaries.

