



LEWIS & CLARK'S GREAT FALLS PORTAGE ROUTE THREATENED BY PROPOSED POWER PLANT

~ THE FACTS ~

Preservation Alert! Plans to build a coal-fired power facility on the edge of one of our nation's most prominent Lewis & Clark sites – the Great Falls Portage Route of 1805 – are moving ahead. Planned by the Southern Montana Electric Cooperative (SME) and the City of Great Falls, **the 250-megawatt electrical plant with its massive plant building, 400-foot smokestack, wind turbines, rail lines, transmission lines, roads, lights, steam, noise and mile-long coal trains would render Lewis & Clark's Great Falls Portage route unrecognizable.**

To finance the Highwood Station, SME has applied to the USDA Rural Utilities Services for a federal loan to subsidize roughly 75% of the \$515 million construction of the plant. The Final EIS names property along the Great Falls Portage corridor as the preferred location. Thus **the American taxpayers themselves are, in effect, being asked to finance the destruction of one of the country's historic treasures**, just a year after the celebration of the L&C Bicentennial drew to a close. Sacrifice of this site and the precedent set by using public funding to do it is unacceptable and sadly, avoidable.

Great Falls Portage Site is a National Historic Landmark, listed in 1966

- In many ways the arduous portage around the Great Falls of the Missouri River was Lewis & Clark's most remarkable physical triumph. The Corps set up camp here for nearly two weeks, constructed rough hewn timber carriages and moved tons of equipment 17 miles over extremely rough terrain. Not only has archeological evidence been recovered here that may mark their passage, Clark's portage route maps and their descriptions of the rigorous effort required to complete the portage leave no doubt that events here inspired the Corps to *Proceed On*.

The National Park Service L&C National Historic Trail office, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Montana Preservation Alliance and the Lewis & Clark Trail Heritage Foundation oppose this development within the Landmark or its viewshed.

- The Environmental Impact Statement issued for this project states that the Highwood Station power plant will have an "adverse and significant" impact on the Lewis & Clark landmark.
- Anticipated damage to the landmark is severe, and most of the impact is **not** mitigatable. Planting trees for screening and painting buildings green will not relieve the impact of a major power facility right on the boundary of the NHL.
- Instead of locating the plant elsewhere, the footprint of the plant was moved just off the boundary of the NHL and payments to offset the loss of this remarkable resource were offered to local Lewis & Clark chapters, a poor substitute.
- Due to the severe threat to the National Historic Landmark, these groups all asked that SME and Rural Utilities Services pursue alternative locations for this project.

Interested groups and individuals were not informed in a timely way.

- SME negotiated options to purchase property for the power plant in the Great Falls Portage in October 2004, yet the Great Falls/Cascade County Historic Preservation Office, MT State Historic Preservation Office, NPS Lewis & Clark Trail and National Historic Landmark programs were not fully informed of potential damage to the landmark until June 2006. Thus the opportunity to truly explore alternatives was missed, and interested parties were called to the table at a point where many considered the project a "done deal."
- Those never informed include: National Council on the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial, Montana Lewis & Clark Bicentennial, scholars, historians and Bicentennial participants.

Public notification of this project was confusing.

- The process was confusing. Two properties were proposed for the power plant along Salem Road east of Great Falls and both had the same name. Yet, one of the properties is half a mile from the NHL and one -- that was chosen -- is right on it.
- Proponents continually misrepresent the enormity of the impact to the L&C portage site, implying that the impacts from locating a power plant right on the NHL boundary, with huge buildings, railroad tracks and wind turbines within the NHL are “visual” and equivalent to impacts from other industrial sites and the city of Great Falls – which are 8 miles away.
- **The fact is the impacts are very physical.** Construction of a massive plant on the boundary of the portage site, with wind turbines, transmission and water lines built right on the landmark, railroad tracks and mile-long coal trains running through the site will decimate the NHL.
- **Proponents have not defined how many wind turbines could ultimately be erected on the Great Falls Portage NHL.** At a meeting on October 5 regarding impacts to the landmark, SME indicated that four wind turbines were currently planned for the Highwood Station, but that there could be more in the future.

Word is Out, Concern is Growing

- Cascade County was approached for a zoning change from agricultural to heavy industrial to allow construction of this facility. More than a thousand people registered opposition to the zoning change, but despite public concern the county commission approved an industrial zoning designation for the property.
- Surrounding landowners have filed suit against the County on the grounds that this change to heavy industrial zoning is “spot zoning” which is not allowed under law.
- Serious health and environmental concerns have been raised over mercury and carbon dioxide emissions from this plant. The EIS dismissed potential health and air quality effects of emissions as “non-significant.”
- Critics fear that the financial model for this plant would limit choice for electrical customers in Great Falls, and commit them to buying their power from this plant, even if in future that power was more expensive.

~ HOW YOU CAN HELP ~

URGENT: Letters & comments on the final EIS are due by March 12, 2007.

To register your opinion on destruction of the Great Falls Portage NHL, you may contact:

EIS Comments:

Mark Plank

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Letter to the Editor: The Great Falls Tribune

205 River Drive South
Great Falls, MT 59405

Letter to the Gov: Governor Brian Schweitzer

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Call & Write Our Congressmen:

Senator Max Baucus

511 Hart Senate Office Bldg
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(202) 224-2651
(800) 332-6106 (from MT)
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Senator Jon Tester

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Phone: (202) 224-2644
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Rep Denny Rehberg

Cannon House Office Bldg
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phone: (202) 225-3211
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Montana Preservation Alliance, 516 N Park, Suite A, Helena, Montana 59601

www.preservemontana.org/help.html

You Can't Mitigate History: PRESERVE the GREAT FALLS PORTAGE NHL