

# CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**Proposed Action:** Approve Drilling Permit (Form 22)

**Project/Well Name:** Lightning 2-3

**Operator:** NorthWestern Corporation

**State:** Montana

**Location:** NWNE T7S R21E Sec. 3

**County:** Carbon

**Field (or Wildcat):** Dry Creek

**Proposed Project Date:** TBD

## I. DESCRIPTION OF ACTION

NorthWestern Corporation plans to drill a horizontal well for gas storage in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Frontier to 10,284' MD/5,000' TVD.

## II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

### A. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS, OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED

Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology, GWIC website (Carbon County Wells).

US Fish and Wildlife, ENDANGERED, THREATENED, PROPOSED AND CANDIDATE SPECIES MONTANA COUNTIES, Carbon

Montana Natural Heritage Program Website (FWP)  
Heritage State Rank= S1, S2, S3, T7S R21E

Montana Cadastral Website  
Surface Ownership and surface use Section 3 T7S R21E

Montana Department of Natural Resources MEPA Submittal

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service-Soils Map

### B. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

**No Action Alternative:** Permit to drill the well would not be issued by BOGC.

**Action Alternative:** Referred to the BOGC for further environmental review.

## III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

## A. AIR QUALITY

**Long drilling time:** No, 3-4 days.

**Unusually deep drilling (high horsepower rig):** No

**Emission sources:** Vehicles traveling on county road to location, combustion engines on location during drilling operations. Fugitive dust from traveling operations and location during active drilling.

**Possible H2S gas production:** No.

**In/near Class I air quality area:** No.

**Air quality permit for flaring/venting (if productive):** N/A for a gas storage well.

**Comments:** No special concerns – using rig to drill well to 10,284' MD / 5,500' TVD.

## B. WATER QUALITY

**Salt/oil-based mud:** Freshwater mud will be used on all sections.

**High water table:** No.

**Surface drainage leads to live water:** No, the closest drainage is an unnamed ephemeral drainage located approximately 456' to the northeast. Another unnamed ephemeral drainage is located approximately ¼ mile to the southwest.

**Water well contamination:** There are six water wells withing a ½ mile radius. The closest well is approximately 1621' south and has no assigned use or test details assigned. Next is a stockwater well approximately 1715' north that has a total depth of 270' and static water level of 64'. Next is a domestic well approximately 2085' northwest with a total depth of 250' and static water level of 44'. Next is a well approximately 2202' northeast with no assigned use and no test data details available. Next is a well approximately 2316' southwest with no assigned use and no test data details available. Last is a domestic well approximately 2350' northwest that has a total depth of 165' and static water level of 155'. The surface hole will be drilled with freshwater and freshwater mud to 500' and steel surface casing will be run and cemented to surface to protect groundwater.

**Porous/permeable soils:** No, clay loam.

**Class I stream drainage:** None.

**Groundwater vulnerability area:** No.

**Mitigation:**

Lined reserve pit

Adequate surface casing

Berms/dykes, re-routed drainage

Closed mud system

Off-site disposal of solids/liquids (in approved facility)

Other:

**Comments:** Steel surface casing will be run to 500' and cemented back to surface to protect freshwater zones, Rule 36.22.1001.

## C. SOILS/VEGETATION/LAND USE

**Vegetation:** Grassland.

**Stream crossing:** None anticipated.

**Erosion potential:** Low, cut of up to 9.1' and fill of up to 3.6'.

**Loss of soil productivity:** No, location will be restored after drilling if unproductive.

**Unusually large wellsite (Describe dimensions):** A well site 300'X400' required for four-well pad.

**Damage to improvements:** Slight, to grazing land.

**Conflict with existing land use/values:** Slight.

**Mitigation:**

- Avoid improvements (topographic tolerance)
- Exception location requested
- Stockpile topsoil
- Stream Crossing Permit (other agency review)
- Reclaim unused part of wellsite if productive
- Special construction methods to enhance reclamation

**Access road:** Access will be off north Dry Creek Rd and Mpc Pump Station Rd to existing Corsair 2-3 pad.

**Drilling fluids/solids:** Cuttings will be dried and buried in a cuttings pit on location.

## D. HEALTH HAZARDS/NOISE

**Proximity to public facilities/residences:** No occupied residences within a ½ mile radius.

**In/near Class I air quality area:** No.

**Possibility of H2S:** No.

**Size of rig/length of drilling time:** 3-4 days.

**Mitigation:**

- Proper BOP equipment
- Topographic sound barriers
- H2S contingency and/or evacuation plan
- Special equipment/procedures requirements
- Other:

## E. WILDLIFE/RECREATION

**Sage Grouse:** In core area, program analysis received on

**Proximity to sensitive wildlife areas (DFWP identified):** Bobolink, Loggerhead Shrike, Greater Sage-Grouse, Golden Eagle, Pinyon Jay, Brewer’s Sparrow, Great Blue Heron, Sage Thrasher, Long-billed Curlew, Clark’s Nutcracker, Green-tailed Towhee, Great Blue Heron, Veery, Northern Hoary Bat, Black-tailed Prairie Dog, Grizzly Bear, Greater Short-horned Lizard, Western Milksnake, Danaus Plexippus, and Bombus accidentalis.

**Proximity to recreation sites:** None.

**Creation of new access to wildlife habitat:** No.

**Conflict with game range/refuge management:** No.

**Threatened or endangered species within 5 miles:** None.

**Mitigation:**

- Avoidance (topographic tolerance/exception)
- Other agency review (DFWP, federal agencies, DNRC Trust Lands)
- Screening/fencing of pits, drillsite
- Other:

**Comments** Private surface lands. There may be species of concern that may be impacted by this wellsite. We ask the operator to consult with the surface owner as to what he would like done if a species of concern is discovered at this location. The Board of Oil & Gas has no jurisdiction over private surface lands. No concerns.

## IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

### A. HISTORICAL/CULTURAL/PALEONTOLOGICAL

**Proximity to known sites:**

**Mitigation:**

- Avoidance (topographic tolerance, location exception)
- Other agency review (SHPO, DNRC Trust Lands, federal agencies)

**Other:** The Board of Oil & Gas has no jurisdiction over private surface lands.

**B. SOCIAL/ECONOMIC**

**Substantial effect on tax base:**

- Create demand for new governmental services
- Population increase or relocation

**Comments:** No concerns.

**IV. SUMMARY**

No long-term impacts expected. Some short-term impacts will occur but can be mitigated. I conclude that the approval of the subject Notice of Intent to Drill (does/**does not**) constitute a major action of state government significantly affecting the quality of the human environment, and (does/**does not**) require the preparation of an environmental impact statement.

<b>EA Checklist Prepared By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Allison YoungSwallow	<b>Date:</b> 4/13/2026
	<b>Title:</b> Compliance Technician	