CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Saco-Morgan Creek Milk River Bore (Navigable River)
Proposed Implementation Date:	Late Summer 2026
Location:	Lot 9 Section 22 Township 27N Range 42 E
County:	Valley

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

WBI Energy Transmission, Inc. (WBI Energy) is proposing to relocate an exposed section of natural gas pipeline by guided bore method under the Milk River in Valley County, MT. Approximately 1,520 feet of 8-inch-diameter natural gas pipeline is proposed to be bored beneath the Milk River. The proposed 1,520-foot pipeline will cross both tribal trust land within the Fort Peck Indian Reservation and State Trust lands managed by the DNRC.

DNRC owns approximately half of the stream bed and must decide whether to either allow the entire project, allow a temporary mitigation project, or not allow the project to proceed on State Trust Lands. Here we review the environmental risk associated with these alternatives with an EA that is tiered to the *BIA Final Environmental Assessment for the Saco-Morgan Creek Milk River Bore Project* (*Attachment A – BIA EA*). The BIA EA reviews and addresses a broad scope of issues. DNRC Trust Lands staff reviewed the *BIA EA* and found the analysis adequate. Therefore, this analysis tiers to the BIA EA and focuses instead on a more narrow scope of issues to be considered by DNRC Trust Lands as the landowner who will decide to approve no project, a temporary mitigation, or the entire project.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:
Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project. List number of individuals contacted, number of responses received, and newspapers in which notices were placed and for how long. Briefly summarize issues received from the public.

The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)
Northeastern Land Office (NELO) & Glasgow Unit Office
Bureau of Indian Affairs-Rocky Mountain Region
Proponent: WBI Energy Transmission, INC.
Surface Lessees: No surface lessee. This area is a navigable river streambed.

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:
Examples: cost-share agreement with U.S. Forest Service, 124 Permit, 3A Authorization, Air Quality Major Open Burning Permit.

Section 3.5 of the BIA EA lists other agencies with jurisdiction and permits needed for the project. As the project proponent, WBI would be responsible for obtaining and complying with agency authorizations for the project.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:
Describe alternatives considered and, if applicable, provide brief description of how the alternatives were developed. List alternatives that were considered but eliminated from further analysis and why.

No-Action Alternative A: DNRC would not participate in the WBI Project and no associated activities would occur on the DNRC Trust Lands listed in the BIA EA. See *No Action Alternative* in *Section 2.2 Alternatives Considered* in the *BIA EA* (Attachment A).

Temporary Pipe Stabilization Alternative B: DNRC would anticipate participating in the WBI Temporary Pipe Stabilization Project. See Temporary Pipe Stabilization *Alternative in Section 2.2 Alternatives Considered* in the *BIA EA* (Attachment A).

Action Alternative C: DNRC would grant WBI a right-of-way for a new pipeline. See *Section 2.2.1 Alternatives Conclusion* in the *BIA EA* (Attachment A).

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

A summary of the potential impacts of the WBI Project on the physical environment are described in Sections 3, 4, and 5 of the *BIA EA* (pages 4-20). No significant adverse impacts are anticipated. Impacts would be short- and long-term, minor to moderate, and beneficial to terrestrial, avian, and aquatic life and habitats; water quality, quantity, and distribution; soil quality, stability, and moisture; vegetation cover, quantity, and quality; aesthetics; and environmental resources. No significant adverse impacts to geology are anticipated. Adverse air quality impacts would be mitigated, short-term, and negligible.

No significant, adverse impacts are expected for historical and archeological resources in the project area. Per the *BIA EA*, Beaver Creek Archaeology completed a cultural resource inventory for the area. See Section 4.4 in the *BIA EA*. Per the *BIA EA*, the Fort Peck THPO determined that the Project would have "*no adverse effect*" to historical or cultural properties significant to the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes in an email dated March 24, 2026. Per the *BIA EA*, WBI would cease activities and consult the THPO of the BIA if cultural resources warranted for protection are discovered during project implementation.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

A summary of the potential impacts of the WBI Project on the human population are described in Section 3 and 4 of the BIA EA (pages 4-19). No significant adverse impacts to human health and safety, agricultural production, employment, tax base and revenues, demand for government resources, density and distribution of population and housing, access to recreational activities, social structures and mores, and cultural uniqueness and diversity.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Don Pyrah	Date: 5/4/2026
	Title: Glasgow Unit Manager	

V. FINDING

26. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Action Alternative C: DNRC would grant WBI a right-of-way for a new pipeline. See *Section 2.2.1 Alternatives Conclusion* in the *BIA EA* (Attachment A).

27. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

After a review of this Checklist EA, the project area, the *BIA EA* and *BIA FONSI* (Attachment B), and Department policies, standards, and guidelines, I find that all the identified resource management concerns have been fully addressed in this Checklist EA.

I find there will be no significant impacts to the human environments as a result of implementing Action Alternative C.

In summary, I find that the identified impacts will be controlled, mitigated, or avoided by the design of the project to the extent that the impacts are not significant.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

[ ] EIS [ ] More Detailed EA [x] No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Jocee Hedrick	
	Title: NELO Area Manager	
Signature: Jocee Hedrick		Date: 5/4/2026

SACO-MORGAN CREEK MILK RIVER BORE PROJECT

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Prepared for:

Bureau of Indian Affairs – Rocky Mountain Region

2021 Fourth Avenue North

Billings, MT 59101

Prepared by:

WBI Energy Transmission, Inc.

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Glendive, MT 59330

WBI ENERGY TRANSMISSION, INC

March 2026

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Privileged and Confidential

1.0 INTRODUCTION

WBI Energy Transmission, Inc. (WBI Energy) has prepared this Environmental Assessment (EA) to assist the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) review of WBI Energy's proposed Saco-Morgan Creek Milk River Bore Replacement Project (Project). BIA is in compliance with 516 DM 1 – U.S. Department of Interior Handbook of National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Procedures.

WBI Energy is proposing to relocate an exposed section of natural gas pipeline by guided bore method under the Milk River in Valley County, Montana. To prevent the exposed section of pipe in the riverbed from damage or a potential rupture, WBI Energy is proposing to relocate the pipeline north of the existing pipeline by boring approximately 1,520 feet of 8-inch-diameter pipe beneath the river. Upon installation of the new pipeline, the existing pipeline would either be abandoned in place or removed.

Approximately 1,134.8 feet of the proposed 1,520-foot pipeline and 4.4 acres of the estimated 17.6-acre Project area would cross tribal land within the Fort Peck Indian Reservation. Required workspaces located on tribal land would include a temporary staging area to position the guided bore rig on the east side of the Milk River and to store associated equipment and material. WBI Energy would utilize previously disturbed existing permanent pipeline right-of-way to complete pipe removal and abandonment-in-place activities. The Project area is depicted on location overview exhibits included in Appendices A-B.

1.1 Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

The purpose of the Project is to enhance the safety, integrity, and reliability of WBI Energy's existing natural gas pipeline system by relocating the pipeline facilities across the Milk River. The existing exposed pipeline is at risk of rupturing during a high flow event or ice jam. This pipeline serves natural gas to communities in the area, including the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, and WBI Energy has determined that relocating and boring a new section of pipeline across the Milk River is necessary to continue to provide safe and reliable natural gas service to its customers. WBI Energy has submitted a right-of-way application to the BIA for their review and approval as required by Title 25, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 169.

2.0 PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

2.1 Proposed Action

This document analyzes the potential impacts of the Proposed Action – the relocation of an exposed section of natural gas pipeline by guided bore across the Milk River in Valley County, Montana. Following the successful installation and commissioning of the relocated pipeline, WBI Energy would remove the existing pipeline (up to 1,787 feet). Pipe sections not removed would be abandoned in place.

The area of impact on tribal lands located within the Fort Peck Indian Reservation encompasses approximately 1,134.8 feet of new pipeline right-of-way (with a 50-foot-wide permanent pipeline right-of-way width), a temporary staging area to position the guided bore rig and to store associated equipment and materials, and temporary workspace within WBI Energy's existing permanent pipeline right-of-way to complete pipe removal or abandonment-in-place activities. WBI Energy is planning to utilize existing access roads and the existing permanent pipeline right-of-way to access the Project area. Construction procedures are further detailed in Section 3.0.

2.2 Alternatives Considered

Various options were considered to determine viable alternatives that meet the purpose and need of the proposed Project, including a no action alternative, replacement within WBI Energy's existing pipeline right-of-way, and temporary stabilization measures to support the existing exposed pipe within the river. The alternatives are detailed below.

No Action Alternative

Under the no action alternative, the exposed pipeline within the river would continue to remain vulnerable to damage and potential rupture. The pipeline would continue to operate until it becomes necessary to shut down operations to comply with Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) safety regulations or as a result of a rupture. A shutdown for any reason could adversely impact WBI Energy's transmission system, its shippers and their customers. The no action alternative does not enhance the safety, integrity and reliability of WBI Energy's pipeline system and thus does not satisfy the purpose and need of the Project.

Replacement within WBI Energy's Existing Pipeline Right-of-Way

WBI Energy considered pipeline replacement following the existing pipeline right-of-way across the river. This alternative would increase the length of the guided bore by approximately 167 feet (1,687 feet vs. 1,520 feet) and would require additional temporary

workspace to complete the bore. Additionally, WBI Energy determined that the existing right-of-way would result in increased risk of future exposure based on a scour analysis completed by WWC Engineering and included in Appendix N. The scour analysis indicated that the river is likely to meander to the southwest overtime, causing additional erosion of the outer bank.

Replacing the pipeline in the existing right-of-way would meet the Project's purpose and need; however, this alternative would add cost and result in greater environmental impact due to greater land requirements to complete. Additionally, a scour analysis performed for the existing right-of-way indicated a larger potential for scour to occur at this location. Therefore, this alternative was not selected as the preferred alternative.

Temporary Pipe Stabilization

WBI Energy considered compacting additional fill material and rip rap around the existing exposed pipe in the riverbed to provide temporary stabilization and protection. Under this alternative, the pipe would remain vulnerable to damage or rupture, and future high flow events or ice jams could create a need for frequent repairs. A pipeline shutdown would adversely impact WBI Energy's shippers and their end users of natural gas that this pipeline transports.

Temporary pipe stabilization would require fill materials to be placed within riverbed, having potential impacts to flow characteristics and aquatic species. Additionally, this alternative does not enhance the safety, integrity and reliability of the pipeline system and therefore does not satisfy the purpose and need of the Project.

2.2.1 Alternatives Conclusion

No action and temporary pipe stabilization alternatives do not enhance the safety, integrity and reliability of the pipeline system and do not satisfy the purpose and need of the Project. A pipeline replacement within WBI Energy's existing right-of-way is associated with higher risk of future erosion concerns compared to the proposed relocation of the pipeline and results in potentially higher environmental impact due to larger workspace requirements for pipeline installation. WBI Energy has determined that the preferred option is to install the new pipeline to the north of the existing pipeline and obtain a new right-of-way. Relocating the pipe to the north and boring to a sufficient depth would eliminate the risk of pipeline exposure in the riverbed due to scour and erosion. This option satisfies the purpose and need of the Project while limiting environmental impacts to the extent possible.

3.0 CONSTRUCTION PROCEDURES

WBI Energy is committed to constructing and operating the Project to minimize environmental impacts and comply with applicable permits and approvals. WBI Energy would adopt and implement the FERC's May 2013 versions of the *Upland Erosion Control, Revegetation, and Maintenance Plan* (Plan) and *Wetland and Waterbody Construction and Mitigation Procedures* (Procedures) included in Appendices D and E. Additionally, WBI Energy would implement Project-specific supplemental construction, restoration, and mitigation plans detailed below:

- *Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure Plan* (Appendix F)
- *Plan for Unanticipated Discovery of Historic Properties or Human Remains During Construction* (Appendix G)
- *Plan for Unanticipated Discovery of Paleontological Resources During Construction* (Appendix H)
- *Plan for Unanticipated Discovery of Contaminated Environmental Media* (Appendix I)
- *Fugitive Dust Control Plan* (Appendix J)
- *Guided Bore Fluid Monitoring and Operations Plan* (Appendix K)

3.1 Construction Schedule and Workforce

In general, construction activities would occur Monday through Saturday between the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. local time. However, certain activities could occur up to 24 hours per day, including Sunday for guided bore and critical tie-in activities. WBI Energy estimates construction would be completed within approximately six to nine weeks. WBI Energy would contract an environmental inspector (EI) to serve as the onsite lead for environmental compliance. WBI Energy anticipates no construction during winter conditions.

3.2 General Construction Sequence

3.2.1 Surveying and Staking

The first step of construction and abandonment activities would involve submitting one-call tickets to identify and mark utilities in the Project area. Steps following this would involve staking the limits of approved work areas, pipeline centerlines, and other special areas or features. WBI Energy would mark approved access roads and limits of approved disturbance areas using temporary signs or flagging. WBI Energy would mark avoidance

areas to ensure protective measures are implemented around sensitive features. WBI Energy would notify landowners in advance of initiating construction activities.

3.2.2 Clearing and Grading

Depending on timing of construction, clearing and grading may be required within approved workspaces to provide a level, safe construction surface and minimize fire risk due to pipe cutting, grinding, and welding activities. Where required, topsoil would be clearly segregated and stored in accordance with the FERC Plan and Procedures. In areas disturbed by grading, temporary erosion and sediment control devices (ECDs) may be installed and maintained throughout construction to minimize erosion. ECDs would be inspected and maintained throughout construction and restoration, as appropriate, and as required by the FERC Plan and Procedures.

3.2.3 Pipe Stringing /Welding/Testing

Pipe stringing operations involve lining pipe joints up end-to-end to allow for welding into a continuous length known as a string. Individual joints and the growing string would be placed on temporary supports or wooden skids and staggered to allow room for work on the exposed ends. Following stringing, the individual joints of pipe would be aligned and welded together. Welding would be conducted in compliance with 49 CFR Part 192, Transportation *of Natural and Other Gas by Pipeline: Minimum Federal Safety Standards* and American Petroleum Institute Standard 1104 *Welding of Pipelines and Related Facilities*. Completed welds would be visually and non-destructively inspected and coated in accordance with required specifications.

After testing welds and coating, the bore string would be hydrostatically tested for four hours to confirm the integrity of the bore pipe under pressure. Approximately 6,000 gallons of water would be required to complete hydrostatic testing. Water utilized for hydrostatic testing would be obtained from the Milk River or a municipal source and discharged at approved discharge locations in accordance with the Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (MPDES) Disinfected Water and Hydrostatic Testing General Permit (MTG770000). All appropriate permits would be obtained prior to discharge. Following hydrostatic testing, the pipeline would be dried using a compressor connected to a dryer to push air through the line.

3.2.4 Guided Bore Crossing Method

The guided bore method would allow for trenchless construction by drilling a hole beneath the river and pulling the prefabricated section of pipe through the borehole. The prefabricated bore string would then be tied into the existing pipeline at either end of the

bore. A boring contractor would be hired to complete the guided bore crossing. A bore profile of the Milk River crossing is included in Appendix C.

To begin the guided bore crossing, pits at either end of the bore path would be excavated within approved workspaces to allow for visual identification of the bore drill and string and to receive bore mud and cuttings. A drill rig would be placed within the temporary staging area on the east (entry) side of the river, and a small-diameter pilot hole would be drilled along a predetermined path beneath the crossing. For guided bore crossings, one method to steer the drill head is to hand-lay electric-grid guide wires along the pipeline centerline to create an electromagnetic sensor grid that would help the operator control the drill head. In thickly vegetated areas, a small pathway approximately 2 to 3 feet wide may be cut using hand tools to lay the electric-grid guide wires resulting in minimal ground and vegetation disturbance. Other steering techniques may be employed, pending the selection of the drilling contractors.

Once the pilot hole is completed, the sensor grid (if employed) would be removed, and the hole would be enlarged through a process called reaming. A reaming tool would be installed at one end of the drill string on the west (exit) side of the pilot hole and then pushed or drawn back to the drill rig to enlarge the hole to a sufficient diameter to accommodate the 8-inch-diameter pipeline. During this process, drilling fluid consisting primarily of water and bentonite (a naturally occurring clay) would be circulated within the hole to remove drill cuttings and to maintain the integrity of the hole.

Once the reaming process is complete, a prefabricated section of pipe would be attached to the drill string on the west (exit) side of the crossing and pulled back through the hole toward the drill rig. Once the pipe has been pulled through the borehole, the bore string would be hydrostatically tested again for eight hours.

3.2.5 Final Tie-In and Commissioning

Following successful hydrostatic testing, final pipeline tie-ins to the adjoining sections of pipe on either side of the crossing would be completed and the commissioning of the pipeline would commence. The pipeline would be cleaned, dried, and inspected. Further commissioning activities would include purging the line of air and filling the pipeline with natural gas.

3.2.6 Removal and Abandonment Activities

Once the new pipeline section is placed into service, all pre-existing pipeline currently within the riverbed would be removed and all pre-existing pipeline outside of the riverbed would either be removed or abandoned in place.

To remove the pipe from across the river, the existing pipe would be cut at the banks and heavy equipment (trackhoe/bulldozer/hoist truck) would be used to pull the pipe across and out of the river. WBI Energy is proposing to complete pipe removal in two phases, starting with the west-side removal and then moving to the east-side removal, as depicted on the pipe removal plan included in Appendix P.

Pipe outside the riverbed would be removed by excavation to expose the pipe, cutting manageable sections, and removing the pipe. Any sections of pipe not being removed would have open ends weld capped and would be abandoned in place. Following removal or abandonment activities, all open excavations would be backfilled, and all disturbed areas recontoured and restored. Removal and abandonment activities would primarily take place within WBI Energy's existing permanent pipeline right-of-way that has previously been disturbed.

3.3 Cleanup and Restoration

Restoration activities would begin as soon as possible following construction. All construction equipment and materials would be removed, original contours restored, and topsoil replaced. Seeding would be completed with approved seed mixes within recommended seeding windows. WBI Energy would monitor all disturbed areas until successful restoration has been achieved in accordance with the Project Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) and FERC Plan and Procedures.

3.4 Operations and Maintenance

The relocated pipeline would be designed, constructed, tested, operated, and maintained in accordance with the requirements of 49 CFR Part 192, *Transportation of Natural and Other Gas by Pipeline: Minimum Federal Safety Standards*, and with all other applicable local, state, and federal regulations and codes. The pipeline would be inspected periodically as required by applicable regulatory requirements to identify potential concerns that may affect the safety and operation of the pipeline. Pipeline markers and signs would be installed, inspected, and maintained or replaced as necessary to ensure that pipeline locations are clearly identified.

Inspections of Project construction and abandonment workspaces would be conducted in accordance with the Project SWPPP and the FERC Plan and Procedures until successful reclamation of disturbed areas has been completed.

3.5 Permits and Approvals

Table 3.5-1 below lists the environmental permits and approvals required for the Project, along with the status of each permit or approval. All appropriate approvals would be obtained prior to construction.

Table 3.5-1
Permits, Approvals, and Consultations Applicable to the Project

Permit/Approval/Consultation	Administering Agency	Status
Federal		
Endangered Species Act Section 7	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)	USFWS consultation submitted 9/15/25. Concurrence received 1/29/26 (see Appendix Q).
Clean Water Act Section 404 Permit – Coverage under Nationwide Permit 33	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Omaha District	Application submitted 11/5/25, pending approval.
National Historic Preservation Act Section 106	Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Fort Peck Assiniboine & Sioux Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO)	Class I and Class III Cultural Resource Inventory report submitted to BIA and THPO on 9/15/25. Concurrence received from Fort Peck THPO 3/24/26 (see Appendix R).
Right-of-Way Application	BIA	Application submitted 1/27/26, pending approval.
State of Montana		
National Historic Preservation Act Section 106	State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)	SHPO consultation (covering private lands) submitted 9/15/25. Concurrence received 10/9/25 (see Appendix R).
Clean Water Act Section 318 Authorization – Short Term Water Quality Turbidity Standard	MT Department of Environmental Quality (MT DEQ)	Application submitted 12/2/25. Approval received 12/22/25.
National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) • General Permit for Stormwater Discharges Associated with Construction Activities (MTR100000) • General Permit for Disinfected Water and Hydrostatic Testing (MTG770000)	MT DEQ	Notice of Intent (NOI) for Stormwater Discharges Associated with Construction Activities: Submitted 1/8/26. Approval received 1/20/26. NOI for coverage under the General Permit for Disinfected Water & Hydrostatic Testing: Submitted 1/13/26, pending approval.
Montana Land Use License (LUL) of Easement on Navigable Waters	MT Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)	Application submitted 11/10/25. DNRC LUL application anticipated submittal April 2026.
Temporary Lease of Appropriation Right (Form No. 650)	DNRC	Anticipated submittal May 2026.
Local		

Table 3.5-1 Permits, Approvals, and Consultations Applicable to the Project		
Permit/Approval/Consultation	**Administering Agency**	**Status**
Floodplain Development Permit	Valley County Floodplain Administrator	Application submitted 11/13/25, pending approval.
310 Permit Application	Valley County Conservation District	Application submitted 11/13/25. Approval received 1/14/26.

4.0 THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND POTENTIAL IMPACTS

WBI Energy's environmental impact analysis covers the following topics: water resources; wildlife and vegetation resources; cultural resources; socioeconomics; geologic resources; soil resources; land use, recreation, and aesthetics; and air noise and quality.

4.1 Water Resources

Water resources were evaluated through detailed aquatic resources delineation field surveys conducted by Beaver Creek Environmental (Beaver Creek). Beaver Creek conducted an aquatic resources delineation for the Project according to standards set forth in the *US Army Corps of Engineers 1987 Wetland Delineation Manual*, the *2012 Regional Supplement to the Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineation Manual: Great Plains Region*, and the *2005 US Army Corps of Engineers Regulatory Guidance Letter No. 05-05 Ordinary High Water Mark Identification*.

Seven aquatic features (Wetland 1, Other Water 1, Wetland 3, Wetland 4a, Wetland 4c, Wetland 5, and Wetland 6a) were identified within the defined Project area. Approximately 2.18 acres of delineated aquatic features are crossed within defined workspaces, with only approximately 1.52 acres temporarily impacted during construction, as detailed in Table 4.1-1. The *Saco Morgan Creek Milk River Bore Project Aquatic Resources Delineation Report* is included in Appendix L.

Table 4.1-1 **Aquatic Features Crossed by the Defined Project Area**				
Feature Name	Description	Acres Crossed	Acres Temporarily Impacted	Summary of Temporary Impacts
Wetland 1	Drainage	1.01	1.01	Wetland 1 crosses WBI Energy's existing permanent pipeline right-of-way. Temporary impacts may consist of equipment mats placed across the wetland to allow equipment/vehicular travel over the feature.

Table 4.1-1
Aquatic Features Crossed by the Defined Project Area

Feature Name	Description	Acres Crossed	Acres Temporarily Impacted	Summary of Temporary Impacts
Other Water 1	Perennial stream (Milk River)	0.62	0.26	Other Water 1 crosses the proposed bore path and WBI Energy's existing permanent pipeline right-of-way. Temporary impacts may result from pipe removal activities (excavating/exposing the pipe at the banks, walking into the river to cut the exposed pipe, and pulling pipe across the riverbed).
Wetland 3	Fringe wetland of Other Water 1	0.38	0.10	Wetland 3 crosses the proposed bore path and WBI Energy's existing permanent pipeline right-of-way. Temporary impacts may consist of equipment mats placed across the wetland to allow equipment/vehicular travel over the feature.
Wetland 4a	Irrigation canal	0.03	0.01	Wetland 4a crosses the proposed bore path and WBI Energy's existing permanent pipeline right-of-way. Temporary impacts may consist of equipment mats placed across the wetland to allow equipment/vehicular travel over the feature.
Wetland 4c	Irrigation canal	0.01	0.01	Wetland 4c crosses WBI Energy's existing permanent pipeline right-of-way. Temporary impacts may consist of equipment mats placed across the wetland to allow equipment/vehicular travel over the feature.
Wetland 5	Depressional wetland	0.12	0.12	Wetland 5 crosses WBI Energy's existing permanent pipeline right-of-way and the bore staging area extra workspace. Temporary impacts may consist of equipment mats placed across the wetland to allow equipment/vehicular travel over the feature.
Wetland 6a	Irrigation canal	0.01	0.01	Wetland 6a crosses WBI Energy's existing permanent pipeline right-of-way. Temporary impacts may consist of equipment mats placed across the wetland to allow equipment/vehicular travel over the feature.

(Beaver Creek 2025a)

4.1.1 Impacts and Mitigation

Temporary impacts to aquatic resources are associated with equipment/vehicular travel to access the Project area and pipe removal activities. Temporary equipment (timber) mats may be placed across delineated features to allow for equipment/vehicular travel and to avoid rutting/damage to sensitive resources. Pipe removal activities would require bank excavation on either side of the Milk River to expose and cut the pipe, walking into the river to cut the exposed pipe, and pulling the pipe up and out of the riverbed. Impacts to water resources would be minimized through implementation of the guided bore method to

install the new pipeline beneath the river, installation of ECDs, and compliance with Project-specific plans and the FERC Procedures. In-stream work would be completed as soon as possible, and disturbed riverbanks would be recontoured, seeded, and stabilized with ECDs (e.g., erosion control blankets) as necessary. Equipment would be inspected on a routine basis for leaks and spills to ensure that it is in good operating condition. All applicable permits would be obtained prior to construction.

Guided bore operations could potentially result in an inadvertent return (IR) of drilling fluid into the Milk River. In the event of an IR in the river, WBI Energy would shut down boring operations and proceed in accordance with the *Guided Bore Fluid Monitoring and Operations Plan* (Bore Plan) Condition 3: Drilling Fluid Release and Remediation. WBI Energy would make every effort to contain and remove the material. All drilling fluid and additives would be National Sanitation Foundation (NSF)/American National Standards Institute (ANSI) 60 Certified non-hazardous.

4.2 Wildlife Resources

WBI Energy contracted Beaver Creek to complete natural resource and botany surveys of the Project area. Results of surveys are detailed in Sections 4.2.1, 4.2.2, and 4.2.3 and the *Saco Morgan Creek Milk River Bore Project Biological Assessment* report included in Appendix M.

4.2.1 Endangered and Threatened Species

Two species, the endangered Northern long-eared bat and the endangered pallid sturgeon, have the potential to occur within the Project area and are further detailed below.

WBI Energy consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on September 15, 2025, receiving USFWS concurrence that the Project "*may affect but is not likely to adversely affect*" the endangered Northern long-eared bat and pallid sturgeon on January 29, 2026. USFWS consultation documents are included in Appendix Q.

Northern Long-eared Bat

Beaver Creek identified approximately 1.11 acres of Northern long-eared bat habitat within the defined Project area. Northern long-eared bats overwinter in hibernacula that includes caves and mines, but they may also use other types of habitats that have similar conditions to cave and mine hibernacula if caves and mines are not present. During the active season (April 15 – October 31), Northern long-eared bats primarily roost singly or in maternity colonies underneath bark or more often in cavities or crevices of both live trees and snags. Roost trees are generally greater than or equal to 3 inches diameter at breast height (DBH).

Where roost trees are lacking, Northern long-eared bats have also been found roosting in human-made structures (Beaver Creek 2025b).

Pallid Sturgeon

The pallid sturgeon is native to the Missouri and Mississippi rivers and is adapted to the pre-development habitat conditions that historically existed on these rivers. These conditions can be described as large, free-flowing, warm water, and turbid rivers with a diverse assemblage of dynamic physical habitats. Habitat within the survey area included the Milk River, which is a tributary to the Missouri River, a river known to harbor pallid sturgeon (Beaver Creek 2025b).

4.2.2 Migratory Birds

Migratory birds are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Executive Order 13186. In addition, the bald eagle and golden eagle are further protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. The generic raptor nest seasonal buffer in Montana is January 15 – August 15, while the generic raptor nest spatial buffer is one mile. The bald eagle nest seasonal buffer in Montana is January 15 – August 15, while the bald eagle nest spatial buffer is 660 feet.

Beaver Creek conducted nesting surveys and determined nesting habitat for migratory birds was present within the survey area. Four nests (N1, N2, N3, and N4) were documented during field surveys. No migratory individuals were observed during field surveys, and all documented nests were inactive at the time of field surveys, further detailed below:

- Nest 1 (N1): Inactive unknown raptor nest located on private land approximately 304 feet south of the Project area.
- Nest 2 (N2): Inactive unknown raptor nest located on private land approximately 1 mile north of the Project area.
- Nest 3 (N3): Inactive bald eagle nest located on tribal land approximately 697 feet north of the Project area.
- Nest 4 (N4): Inactive bald eagle nest located on tribal land approximately 500 feet north of the Project area.

4.2.3 Impacts and Mitigation

Direct impacts on wildlife may include potential mortality or injury during construction from destruction of ground nests or vehicle collisions. Indirect impacts to wildlife may include increased noise from construction equipment and increased human activity, which may lead to displacement and avoidance of the Project area. To minimize potential

impacts, WBI Energy would stay within approved workspace boundaries. Open excavations and idle equipment would be routinely checked for wildlife before initiating construction activities each day. Any wildlife that has entered the work area would be allowed to exit.

Northern long-eared bat suitable habitat is present within the Project area and boring operations are proposed to take place during the active season (April 15 – October 31). Noise from drilling operations could affect any roosting Northern long-eared bat individuals present within the survey area. To minimize potential impacts to the Northern long-eared bat, WBI Energy would avoid removal of trees greater than or equal to 3 inches DBH within the April 15 – September 30th summer occupancy season and would limit construction activities to daytime hours. With these mitigation measures in place, WBI Energy believes the Project *May Affect but is Not Likely to Adversely Affect* the Northern long-eared bat.

Potential impacts to pallid sturgeon could result from an IR of drilling fluid into the Milk River, IR cleanup, and pipe removal (excavating riverbanks to expose and cut pipe, walking into the river to cut exposed pipe, and pulling the pipe across the riverbed). WBI Energy would minimize potential impacts to pallid sturgeon by conducting in-stream construction activities outside the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) recommended avoidance window (April 15 – July 31) and completing a check-in with USFWS to confirm no pallid sturgeon presence (using telemetry data) prior to any in-stream activities. The 30 – 37' bore depth (over 4x the scour depth) would minimize the chances of bore drilling fluid ever reaching the Milk River. Drilling fluid and additives would be NSF/ANSI 60 certified non-hazardous. Boring operations would be closely monitored, and loss of circulation/possible release would be detected and addressed promptly. WBI Energy anticipates boring operations would be completed within one to two days, and pipe removal activities would be completed within one day. All disturbed areas would be restored to pre-disturbance conditions following construction and regularly inspected in accordance with applicable environmental permits and FERC requirements. With these mitigation measures in place, WBI Energy believes the Project *May Affect but is Not Likely to Adversely Affect* the pallid sturgeon.

To mitigate potential impacts to migratory birds, WBI Energy would survey the four recorded nests (N1, N2, N3, & N4) prior to construction to determine the status of the nests. If the nest is inactive, project-related activities would commence. If the nest is active, the USFWS would be notified, and through consultation with the USFWS, next steps to protect migratory birds would be determined. All applicable permits and approvals would be obtained prior to construction. With this mitigation measure in place, the Project would not impact migratory birds. Nest locations are detailed in the Biological Assessment Report included in Appendix M.

4.3 Vegetation Resources

The survey area contained distinct habitats based on vegetation communities and topography. These habitat types included (1) non-native, (2) hydrophytic, and (3) woody, further defined below:

Non-native: The dominant habitat within the survey area was non-native grassland. This habitat comprised approximately 82.2% of the survey area and consisted of a vegetation community typically dominated by crested wheatgrass (*Agropyron cristatum*). Other common species include smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*) and silver sagebrush (*Artemisia cana*).

Hydrophytic: Hydrophytic habitat comprised approximately 9.4% of the survey area and occurred within depressions and along the Milk River. This habitat consisted of a vegetation community typically dominated by reed canarygrass (*Phalaris arundinacea*). Other common species include prairie cordgrass (*Spartina pectinata*) and foxtail barley (*Hordeum jubatum*).

Woody: Woody habitat primarily occurred in the eastern portion of the survey area. This habitat comprised approximately 4.2% of the survey area and consisted of a vegetation community typically dominated by eastern cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*). Other common species include bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*) and green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*).

4.3.1 Impacts and Mitigation

Potential impacts to vegetation resources include disturbance of vegetation and soils during construction and abandonment activities. WBI Energy would minimize impacts by restoring all disturbed areas to pre-disturbance conditions. Restoration activities would begin as soon as possible following construction and abandonment activities. Seeding would be completed with approved seed mixes within recommended seeding windows. WBI Energy would monitor all disturbed areas until successful restoration has been achieved in accordance with the Project SWPPP and FERC Plan and Procedures.

4.4 Cultural Resources

Beaver Creek Archaeology (BCA) completed a Class I file search and Class III cultural resource inventory of the Project area, included in Appendix S. The Class I file search revealed four sites within a one-mile radius of the survey area: 24VL99, 24VL1709,

24VL1873, and 24VL2108. No new cultural resources were recorded during the current inventory. Site descriptions are further detailed below:

- Site 24VL99: Site 24VL99 was first recorded in 1992 and consists of the portions of the Great Northern Railroad located in Valley County. The site has previously been determined eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). During the current inventory, a small portion of a spur line built as part of the construction of the Fort Peck Dam was visited. Only the embankment the tracks were originally constructed on remains. WBI Energy plans to use the pre-existing road which crosses the embankment as an access road for the Project. As long as all vehicles remain on the existing access road, and all surface-disturbing activities continue to avoid the site, the site would not be affected by the Project, and no avoidance measures are recommended.

- *Site 24VL1709*: Site 24VL1709 was originally recorded in 2002 and consists of segments of the Fort Peck Irrigation Project. The site has previously been determined eligible for nomination to the NRHP. Two previously recorded canal segments were visited, and one new canal segment was recorded during the current inventory. The site is recommended to remain eligible for nomination to the NRHP. As currently planned, the Project would bore under the newly recorded canal segment and would not directly affect it. Therefore, the site would not be affected by the proposed Project, with no avoidance measures recommended.

- Site 24VL1873: Site 24VL1873 was first recorded in 2007 and consists of a historic homestead with 13 features. The site has previously been determined eligible for nomination to the NRHP. The site is recommended to remain eligible for nomination to the NRHP. WBI Energy plans to use the existing two-track road running through the site to access the Project area. The closest workspace is located approximately 30’ outside the site boundary. As long as vehicles remain on the pre-existing access road, and all surface-disturbing activities continue to avoid the site, the site would not be affected by the Project, and no avoidance measures are recommended.

- *Site 24VL2108*: Site 24VL2108 was recorded in 2010 and consists of a historic trash dump. No significant changes to the site were noted during the current inventory. The site was originally recommended as ineligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) but has not received a formal determination. BCA recommends the site as ineligible for nomination to the NRHP, with no avoidance measures recommended.

WBI Energy provided the Class I and Class III cultural resource inventory report and associated documentation to the BIA and Fort Peck Assiniboine/Sioux Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) on September 15, 2025. The Fort Peck THPO determined that the Project would have "*no adverse effect*" to historical or cultural properties significant to the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes in an email dated March 24, 2026. For the private lands portion of the Project area, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred with WBI Energy's "*No Historic Properties Affected*" determination in a letter dated October 9, 2025. Section 106 consultation documents are included in Appendix R.

4.4.1 Impacts and Mitigation

WBI Energy would follow BCA recommended avoidance measures and stay within approved workspace boundaries. WBI Energy would conduct construction activities in accordance with the *Plan for Unanticipated Discovery of Historic Properties or Human Remains During Construction* (Appendix G). In the event of an inadvertent discovery during Project activities, work in the area should halt immediately and the discovery secured. The THPO, BIA Branch of Environmental Planning and Cultural Resource Management Regional Archaeologist, and BIA Agency Superintendent should be contacted immediately to ensure the discovery is secured and protected. The BIA in consultation with the THPO would have the discovery evaluated by an archaeologist or historian meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards. Work may commence when the inadvertent discovery is properly cared for. No impacts to cultural resources are anticipated.

4.5 Socioeconomics

The Project would have negligible impacts on demographics, housing, employment, economics, and use of public roads. Construction and abandonment activities would last approximately six to nine weeks and would require a temporary construction workforce of up to 10 workers.

4.5.1 Impacts and Mitigation

Construction and abandonment impacts would be highly concentrated at the Project site. Due to the limited and temporary scope and the minimal workforce required, socioeconomic impacts are expected to be negligible.

4.6 Geologic Resources

Geologic resources within the Project area were assessed using Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology geologic maps and U.S. Geological Survey available online literature. The surficial geology of the Project area is characterized by Quaternary alluvium (MBMG 2007 &

1991). Quaternary alluvium of floodplains and adjacent terraces of the Milk River is underlain by older Quaternary glacial deposits and alluvium, which are underlain by the Upper Cretaceous Bearpaw Shale, Judith River Formation, or Claggett Shale (USGS 2000).

4.6.1 Impacts and Mitigation

Construction and abandonment activities may result in temporary impacts to geologic resources. To minimize impacts, ECDs would be installed in areas of increased runoff and maintained/inspected in accordance with the Project SWPPP and FERC Plan and Procedures. All disturbed areas would be restored to pre-disturbance conditions and seeded with an approved seed mix following construction. WBI Energy would work with local floodplain administrators to determine specific permitting requirements through floodplain regulated areas and all required permits would be obtained prior to construction.

4.7 Soil Resources

Soil resources were assessed using the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) Web Soil Survey website. The major soil map unit crossed by the defined Project area consists of Havre silty clay loam (soil map unit 25). Havre silty clay loams (0 to 2 percent slopes) are well-drained soils located on terraces and floodplains, characterized by a silty clay loam surface texture, clayey ecological site (R058AE002MT), and derived from loamy alluvium parent material (NRCS 2025).

4.7.1 Impacts and Mitigation

Construction and abandonment activities that have the potential to affect soils include clearing of vegetation, topsoil stripping, grading, excavating, backfilling, and restoration. Potential impacts include loss of soil due to erosion, reduction of soil quality by mixing topsoil and subsoil materials, soil compaction from construction equipment, rutting, and disruption of surface and subsurface drainage systems.

Impacts on soil resources would be minimized by limiting ground disturbance whenever possible and only utilizing the minimum workspace needed to complete construction and abandonment activities. Construction and abandonment activities would be stopped during heavy precipitation events until the EI has determined that site conditions are acceptable to proceed. The entire topsoil layer would be stripped and clearly separated from subsoil materials to ensure successful reclamation and maintain soil fertility. The soil surface would be de-compacted prior to seeding to break up the soil and improve water infiltration, aeration, nutrient accessibility, and root growth. WBI Energy would consult with the local Natural Resource Soil Conservation Service (NRCS) and landowners to determine a recommended native grass seed mix, and seeding would be completed within

recommended seeding windows. ECDs would be installed in areas of increased runoff and maintained/inspected in accordance with the Project SWPPP. WBI Energy would complete restoration as soon as possible following construction and abandonment activities, and restoration would be monitored during routine inspections in accordance with the Project SWPPP and the FERC Plan and Procedures. The Project would not meet final stabilization criteria until successful revegetation is achieved.

4.8 Land Use, Recreation, and Aesthetics

Land use within the Project area primarily consists of open land used primarily for grazing. Recreational opportunities are primarily centered around boating and fishing along the Milk River. The aesthetics of the Milk River are defined by its unique milky-white water, winding paths through vast, historic plains, the patchwork of the extensive Milk River Irrigation Project (canals, dams, and reservoirs), and the resilient small-town communities, creating a landscape of natural beauty, agricultural history, and enduring small-town character.

4.8.1 Impacts and Mitigation

Land use, recreation, and aesthetic impacts associated with the Project would be limited to the period of active construction. WBI Energy would notify landowners of the Project schedule and seeding timeframes, and reclamation would be monitored until final stabilization and desired vegetation establishment is achieved. The new pipeline would be bored underground, with aboveground features limited to marker posts installed along the pipeline centerline within WBI Energy's permanent pipeline right-of-way to clearly mark the pipeline location. Pipe removal activities are expected to be completed within one day (8 hours).

Based on the short duration and limited scope of the Project, no effects to the visual character of the existing landscape or recreation are anticipated. The existing pipeline that is proposed to be replaced would revert to the original land use and the proposed pipeline and 50-foot-wide permanent pipeline right-of-way would be maintained as an active natural gas pipeline.

4.9 Air and Noise Quality

4.9.1 Air Quality

The Clean Air Act of 1970 (CAA) requires the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to establish ambient air quality standards for pollutants considered harmful to human health and the environment. These standards are known as the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). The EPA establishes NAAQS for six pollutants, known as criteria air pollutants: sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter (sized 10

microns and smaller and 2.5 microns and smaller), lead, and ozone. The EPA also establishes primary and secondary standards for NAAQS. Primary standards protect public health and the health of sensitive populations, whereas secondary standards protect vegetation, wildlife, soils, and other aspects of public welfare (EPA 2025).

The EPA further classifies attainment areas as areas that meet the NAAQS for the criteria air pollutants and nonattainment areas that do not meet the NAAQS. The Project area is located within an attainment area, meeting the NAAQS for all six criteria air pollutants (EPA 2024 & DEQ 2023). Construction emissions calculations are detailed in Appendix O and summarized in Table 4.8.3-1 below.

4.9.2 Noise Quality

Construction and abandonment of the proposed Project would result in temporary noise impacts to the Project area. Construction noise would be variable depending on the type of equipment, specific activities being performed, and the duration of equipment use. The most substantial noise increase would result from boring operations, which are anticipated to be completed within one to two days.

4.9.3 Impacts and Mitigation

Construction and abandonment activities may temporarily result in air emissions from diesel/gasoline powered equipment or fugitive dust emissions from soil disturbance and vehicular traffic. Table 4.8.3-1 summarizes peak construction emissions from operation of fuel burning equipment and fugitive dust emissions from ground disturbing activities and vehicular traffic. Emissions from construction equipment would be temporary and limited to the immediate vicinity of the construction area. Impacts from construction equipment exhaust emissions would be mitigated through use of equipment that meets EPA design standards and use of fuel that meets federal and state fuel standards. Fugitive dust emissions from construction and vehicle travel on unpaved roads would be continuously monitored, water trucks would be available to minimize impacts, and construction would be completed in accordance with the Project *Fugitive Dust Control Plan*. Emission sources are not expected to have a significant impact on ambient air quality concentrations.

Table 4.8.3-1
Peak Construction Emissions (tons per construction duration)

	CO	NO_x	PM_{10}	$PM_{2.5}$	SO_2	GHG CO_2e	VOC	HAP
Off-Road Construction Equipment	1.27	2.36	0.01	0	0.003	480	0.19	0.01

Table 4.8.3-1
Peak Construction Emissions (tons per construction duration)

	CO	NO_x	PM_{10}	$PM_{2.5}$	SO_2	GHG CO_2e	VOC	HAP
On-Road Motor Vehicles	0.06	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.000	25	0.01	0
Construction Activities Fugitive Dust	0	0	0.18	0.04	0	0	0	0
Vehicle Travel Fugitive Dust	0	0	3.57	0.52	0	0	0	0
Total Construction Emissions	**1.33**	**2.38**	**3.76**	**0.57**	**0.003**	**504**	**0.20**	**0.01**

Acronyms:
PM_{10} particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter
$PM_{2.5}$ particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in diameter
NO_x nitrogen oxides
CO carbon monoxide
SO_2 sulfur dioxide
VOC volatile organic compound
GHG greenhouse gases
CO_2e carbon dioxide equivalents
HAP hazardous air pollutant

Construction and abandonment activities would generally occur during daytime hours and would not have an impact on night (10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.) sound levels. Noise sources would primarily result from construction equipment operations. Guided bore operations would involve noise-generating equipment such as the drilling rig, mud mixing system and generator, a small backhoe, and welding equipment. Project activities are temporary in nature, with no adverse or long-term impacts anticipated. Noise mitigation measures would include limiting construction to daytime hours to the extent possible, ensuring equipment is in good maintenance, and notifying adjacent landowners or stakeholders prior to construction. Noise impacts would be localized and temporary, with no long-term effects anticipated.

5.0 REASONABLY FORESEEABLE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The United States Council on Environmental Quality Guidance (CEQ) regulations define cumulative effects as “the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such actions” (40 CFR 1508.7).

The EA determined that there would be no or less than significant impacts on the environment with implementation of the Proposed Action’s construction and mitigation

procedures. No cumulative environmental impacts are expected from the construction and operation of the proposed Project. The proposed Project would improve the integrity and reliability of WBI Energy's Saco-Morgan Creek natural gas pipeline and allow continued uninterrupted natural gas supply to customers within the vicinity of the Project area.

6.0 REFERENCES

Beaver Creek. 2025a. *Saco Morgan Creek Milk River Bore Project Aquatic Resources Delineation Report*.

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United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
Fort Peck Agency, Bureau of Indian Affairs
500 Medicine Bear Road, Poplar, MT 59255

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

WBI Energy's Saco-Morgan Creek Milk River Bore Project

A final environmental assessment (EA) for the approval of pipeline right-of-way and associated temporary workspaces located on tribal land within the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in Valley County, Montana was developed by WBI Energy Transmission, Inc. (WBI Energy) for the proposed Saco-Morgan Creek Milk River Bore Project (Project). The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) has responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, to review proposals for the use of Indian trust lands, including the leasing of trust lands as required by Title 25, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 169. The authority of the Secretary of the Interior to lease trust lands is 25 United States Code (U.S.C.) §403.

I have determined that implementation of the agency's preferred alternative, the Proposed Action, in which the BIA would approve construction activities covering the pipeline right-of-way and associated temporary workspaces for an approximate 4.4-acre portion of tribal trust land in the NE quarter of Section 27, SE quarter of Section 22, and SW quarter of Section 23, Township 27 North (T27N), Range 42 East (R42E) Principal Meridian, Valley County, Montana, Fort Peck Indian Reservation, will have no significant impact on the quality of the human environment. In accordance with Section 102(2)(c) of NEPA, as amended, an environmental impact statement will not be required. Under this preferred alternative, approval of the pipeline right-of-way and associated temporary workspaces will allow WBI Energy and the BIA to use the land for the construction and operation of the Project.

BIA Finding of No Significant Impact:
Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts resulting from the construction and operation of the Project, the proposed project will not significantly affect the quality of the human or natural environment. No Environmental Impact Statement is required for any portion of the proposed activities.

This Finding of No Significant Impact is based on the following factors:

1. Protective and prudent measures identified in the EA will be followed to minimize impacts to soils, vegetation, and cultural resources. The remaining potential for impacts was disclosed for both the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative.
2. Guidance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been fully considered regarding wildlife impacts, particularly regarding threatened and endangered species. This guidance includes the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. 703 et seq.), NEPA (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 668-668d, 54 Stat. 250), Executive Order 13186 "Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds," and the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.).
3. The Proposed Action will avoid adverse effects to historic, archaeological, cultural, and traditional properties, sites, and practices.

4. In the event of an inadvertent discovery during construction of the Saco-Morgan Creek Milk River Bore Project, work in the area shall halt immediately and the discovery shall be secured. The Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO), Bureau of Indian Affairs Branch of Environmental Planning and Cultural Resource Management Regional Archaeologist, and BIA Agency Superintendent shall be contacted immediately to ensure the discovery is secured and protected. The BIA, in consultation with the THPO, will have the discovery evaluated by an archaeologist or historian meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards. Work may commence when the inadvertent discovery is properly cared for.
5. Cumulative effects to the environment are either mitigated or minimal.
6. No regulatory requirements have been waived or require compensatory mitigation measures.

Approved By: BRONSON STEELE Digitally signed by BRONSON STEELE Date: 2026.04.10 10:42:59 -06'00' Date: 04/10/26

Megan Gourneau, Acting Superintendent
Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs
Fort Peck Agency, Poplar, Montana

Reviewed By: MELISSA PASSES Digitally signed by MELISSA PASSES Date: 2026.04.07 16:02:55 -06'00' Date: 4/7/26

Melissa Passes, Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist
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Reviewed By: MELISSA PASSES Digitally signed by MELISSA PASSES Date: 2026.04.07 16:03:27 -06'00' Date: 4/7/26

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Reviewed By: FRANK ROLLEFSON Digitally signed by FRANK ROLLEFSON Date: 2026.04.08 12:06:46 -06'00' Date: 4.8.26

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