

## **ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONNAIRE**

### **MSUN's Environmental Analysis**

#### **Objective of the Proposed Action**

The objective of the proposed project is to provide an education center for the central Montana community, which includes the town of Lewistown and smaller communities in a surrounding six-county area. This education center will help enable Montana State University – Northern (MSUN) in cooperation with EOCM (Educational Opportunities for Central Montana), a community-based non-profit corporation, to continue to provide post-secondary course work to approximately 1,000 full and part-time students each year.

Rural people deserve opportunities to participate in America's prosperity, but much of central Montana is threatened by a cycle of economic decline. Job loss has led to population loss and our young people are leaving home after high school due to lack of job opportunities. Geographic isolation, lack of resources, and culture shock all contribute to a lack of success in higher education by rural youth.

MSUN and ECOM have developed a community-based strategy that overcomes the complex barriers to higher education for rural youth and non-traditional students. Since 1997, MSUN has offered a nursing program that addresses a critical nursing shortage in Montana health care. MSUN currently holds classes at night in the high school and in the basement of the Central Montana Medical center. MSUN and EOCM have significantly improved the success of rural youth and non-traditional students obtaining a post-secondary degree despite the challenge of not having a facility.

The project would involve an interior remodel of the recently vacated BLM facility at 80 Airport Road, Lewistown. The estimated duration of the remodel period is eighteen months; the estimated cost for the remodel is \$1,000,000.

#### **Description of the Environment to be Affected**

The geography of the area is gently rolling grasslands and valleys with trees, brush and streams; interspersed with crop land that is utilized for the production of wheat, barley and hay. Wildlife in the area include upland game birds, a variety of song birds, waterfowl, birds of prey, whitetail deer, mule deer, and small predator populations of raccoon, fox and coyote.

Streams are spring fed; the water and air quality are considered excellent. Since this project involves the remodel of an established building, there will be no additional or changed impact on the environment in terms of land, plant, water or wildlife.

Population of the six-county area is approximately 18,000 with about 6,800 in Lewistown and the immediate vicinity. The economy of the area is based on agricultural production, small manufacturing, education, medical care, and government staff in the regional BLM headquarters.

**The following narrative explanation of the probable environmental effects addresses the 42 areas of importance listed in the Environmental Questionnaire.**

This property is the recently vacated BLM (Bureau of Land Management) field office, located at 80 Airport Road, Lewistown, Fergus County, Montana. The property consists of a 15, 232 square foot office building, a warehouse, a vehicle parking shed, garage with eight individual bays and a fuel storage shed situated on 3.6562 acres of land. The property is within the city limits of Lewistown in a suburban, non-residential area which is predominantly government office, shop and warehouse buildings. There will be no new construction, only a remodel of the existing office building described above. Paved parking lots surround the office building on three sides.

The area has not been zoned for specific uses. In addition to the government office and warehouse buildings described above, the immediate area is agricultural grazing land and crop production fields. The Lewistown airport and a softball field complex are across the road (Airport Road) from the property. The property is in the center of Section 23, Township 15 N, Range 18 E. There will be no construction or remodeling in a flood plain, wetland area, desert, tundra or other type of unique geological/meteorological interest.

No alterations will need to occur to existing underground service systems. The facility will continue to obtain water from the Lewistown city water system. The existing office building is two stories high, approximately 24 feet in total height, excluding the HVAC units which are roof mounted. Although it is located adjacent to the airport, there are no aircraft approach patterns that are directly over the facility. The most active runway is approximately 1/4 to 3/8 miles north of the building. The only radio transmission facility in Lewistown is about 2 1/2 miles east (across town) from the facility.

There will be no new air pollution sources that will be introduced as part of the facility. Daily traffic in the area will not increase over past traffic levels when the facility operated as a BLM headquarters office. At peak usage times, approximately 60 vehicles will come and go from the area on a daily basis. No additional water will be diverted into natural water systems. Interior remodeling will not result in any identifiable increase in sedimentation in any natural water system. The drainage pattern from the parking lot area utilizes a natural pasture that is about 300 yards wide and a natural filter strip.

Since the facility use will be educational for post-secondary classes and curriculum, the sound that is created will be that associated with the normal functioning of a human population in an educational environment. No new electromagnetic wave sources will

be used; no external light sources will be introduced other than parking lot and external building lighting. Since there will be no new construction, existing wind patterns will not be altered.

During operation of the facility, recycled items will include cardboard, paper and soft drink/juice containers. No contaminants will be stored in the facility other than the very small amounts of chemicals and re-agents needed for biology and chemistry classes within the nursing curriculum. Proper laboratory storage, a part of the remodel plan, will be constructed and maintained.

Although there is only one residential home in the immediate area of the facility, approximately 30 people live within ½ mile of the facility. In the immediate area of the facility, there will be no temporary residents associated with the remodel or the operation of the facility. Approximately ten to twenty transient students will be introduced into the greater Lewistown area on a daily basis during the normal academic year (fall and spring semesters).

The project will use no agricultural land, parks, woods, forests or prairies. Natural wildlife and domestic animal environments will not be disrupted. During remodeling, there will be no interruption of services to a human population for more than 24 hours. Electrical energy for the facility is provided by NorthWestern Energy, 40 East Broadway, Butte, MT 59701. At peak load, electrical energy usage is expected to be 170 Kw. Water use in a normal day is approximately 2,200 gallons. Water is made available by the Lewistown Public Works Department, 308 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue So., Lewistown, MT 59457. Sewage that is generated by the facility is handled by a septic tank and drainfield system that is adequate for an office building occupied by 75 (average) full time employees, 8 hours per day, five days a week.

Solid waste that is generated by the facility will be handled by Lewistown Disposal, Corbley Road, Lewistown, MT 59457. Ultimate disposal is landfill or incineration or recycle, depending on the specific waste. On a weekly basis, approximately 8-10 cubic yards of solid waste will be generated.

No residences, hotels, rooming houses, etc., will be destroyed or temporarily vacated as a result of this project. No existing services in terms of mentally or physically disabled, educational or day care will be altered. The new facility will contain services for the handicapped and since it will be utilized as an educational facility, education will be the primary focus. Since the previous use of the facility was as an office headquarters for the BLM, there will be no increased traffic on existing streets over what was previously experienced. No transportation system will be directly affected by the operation of this facility.

Since the Lewistown airport was a training base during World War II, there are two airport sites which are listed on the National Register of Historic places. The sites have

been in existence for several years and are located approximately ½ mile from the proposed educational facility. No historic activity or significance that has occurred on the site will be altered or destroyed. Since all remodeling activities will be interior, there will be no destruction or decreased access to any known archaeological sites. There are no endangered species in the immediate area.

Facility remodel will not violate or require a variance from any federal, state or local laws pertaining to the visual environment, odors, noise, water pollution or land use. Likewise, facility remodel will not disrupt the cultural harmony of the community or neighborhood.

The existing facility that will be remodeled is a 15, 232 square foot, two-story, concrete twin tee tilt up construction building that has approximately 14,092 square feet net usable square footage. Outside dimensions are 56' x 136'. Since current educational activities are being conducted in existing school buildings and the Central Montana Medical Center, no existing facilities will be demolished, abandoned or renovated for other public use. Those existing facilities will be returned to more routine schedules without the extra, after-hour use for post-secondary education classes.