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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BLM ISSUES GRASSLANDS PIPELINE RECORD OF DECISION

MILES CITY, Mont. – The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Miles City Field Office has issued a Record of Decision for the Grasslands Pipeline Project Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) prepared the FEIS in cooperation with the BLM, the U.S. Forest Service and the State of Montana.

The Williston Basin Interstate Pipeline Company (WBI) proposes construction of approximately 253 miles of new and looped 16-inch diameter pipeline from Recluse, Wyo., about 30 miles north of Gillette, to Manning, N.D., about 25 miles north of Dickinson, where it would join the Northern Border Pipeline.

Nearly two thirds of the new pipeline would run in existing utility corridors. The pipeline would cross about 25 miles of BLM land, 26 miles of other federal, state and county land, and about 200 miles of private land. The project would also include about 5,380 horsepower of additional compression at one new station and one existing station, and associated auxiliary facilities in Wyoming, Montana, and North Dakota.

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The pipeline would provide an additional outlet for the increased production of natural gas in the Powder River Basin including access to WBI storage facilities for delivery to national markets. It could transport about 80 million cubic feet of natural gas per day, roughly enough gas to meet the needs of all current residential gas customers in Montana and Wyoming.

The Grasslands Pipeline Project FEIS was prepared in compliance with requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act. The Notice of Availability for the FEIS was published in the *Federal Register* May 14, 2003, by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. FERC issued a Final Order for issuance of a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity June 2, 2003.

The FEIS evaluated alternatives to the proposed pipeline, including system and route alternatives and route variations.

Specific mitigation measures were developed as part of the analysis and determined to be reasonably appropriate for construction and operation of the proposed project. These include such things as requiring WBI to install erosion control measures and monitor them on a daily basis in construction areas, to monitor and correct any drainage or irrigation system problems stemming from construction, and to monitor revegetation progress along the pipeline route for two years. The final decision was based on comprehensive environmental analysis that included substantial public input. In the next few days, BLM plans to issue a Notice to Proceed that will allow WBI to begin construction.

FERC, through its certificate, the BLM and USFS, concluded that approval of the project and its recommended mitigating measures would reduce environmental impacts, the most significant of which would be during construction.

Natural gas and its production are a cornerstone of President Bush's National Energy Policy due to the abundant deposits of natural gas that exist in the United States and because of its efficient and clean-burning properties.

Copies of the Record of Decision are available on BLM's Miles City Field Office website at: www.mt.blm.gov/mcfo/ or from the BLM Miles City Field Office. Related documents can be reached through www.blm.gov. For additional information, contact Dalice Landers at (406) 233-2836 at the Miles City Field Office, Miles City, Mont., or Tina Thornton at (701) 225-5151 at the Medora Ranger District, Dickinson, N.D.