Cost-Share Proposal Form for NorthWestern Energy Project 2188 TAC Funds

Project 2188 (Madison-Missouri River) License proposed Protection, Mitigation and Enhancement (PM&E) projects should relate to an effect from the continued operation of one or more of NorthWestern Energy's (NorthWestern) nine hydro developments (Hebgen, Madison, Hauser, Holter, Black Eagle, Rainbow, Cochrane, Ryan and Morony Dams). PM&E projects are required to reduce or offset impacts to river resources from the continued operation of the hydro developments. PM&E projects need to be prioritized toward in-river or on-the-ground measures that directly benefit fisheries and/or wildlife populations and their habitats:

Priority 1: 2188 License projects which meet License Article requirements and PM&E for fisheries or wildlife populations or their habitats within the main stem Madison River (Hebgen Reservoir to Three Forks) or Missouri River (Hauser Reservoir to Fort Peck Reservoir)

Priority 2: 2188 License projects which meet License Article requirements and PM&E for fisheries or wildlife populations or their habitats in primary tributaries or on adjacent lands and, in doing so, provide PM&E for Madison River (Hebgen Reservoir to Three Forks) or Missouri River (Hauser Reservoir to Fort Peck Reservoir) resources.

Priority 3: 2188 License PM&E projects which meet License Article requirements by providing scientific or other tangible PM&E benefits to Madison-Missouri River fisheries or wildlife populations or their habitats. These projects must be located in the greater Missouri River drainage upstream from Fort Peck Reservoir, but not necessarily located on the main stem Madison River or Missouri River or their adjacent lands or primary tributaries.

All TAC project proposals must include the following information:

Project Title: **Hebgen and Earthquake Lake Bald Eagle Monitoring**

Date: **October 30, 2026**

Explain how this Project addresses a specific Project 2188 License Article(s):
Conditions filed by the U.S. Forest Service, pursuant to Section 4(e) of the Federal Power Act, for the new license for Project No. 2118 (Appendix B of License) require that the Licensee develop a comprehensive bald eagle habitat protection and enhancement plan. Condition 12 (Threatened and Endangered Species Plan) requires that the Licensee plan for monitoring of bald eagles throughout the term of the license. The plan shall include annual surveys to include incubation and activity/occupation associated with existing nest territories, productivity, distribution of nesting pairs, and annual count of breeding, wintering, and migrating bald eagles. In addition, under Article 421 of the Updated Five Year (2023-2027) Madison and Missouri River Wildlife and Terrestrial Habitat Plan the license holder committed to continuing to support monitoring of nesting and migrant bald eagles in cooperation with state and federal agencies. If effects become present, the license holder committed to focusing attention on these threats through adaptive management. The license holder and the Forest Service agreed to use Ecology and Management of Bald Eagles on Hebgen and Earthquake Lakes (Stangl 2000) to serve as the bald eagle habitat protection and enhancement plan required under Condition 12. The license holder has provided funding in previous years, including 2024. Because Northwestern Energy is obligated under Condition 12 to ensure monitoring over the term of the license, the Forest Service is again requesting assistance to fund this project.

Provide justification for Priority 1, 2 or 3 (above) that you selected:
Because this project meets a License Article requirement and benefits wildlife on the main stem Madison River, it is a Priority 1 project.

Project Sponsor (submitted by):

Randy Scarlett, West Zone Wildlife Biologist, USDA Forest Service, Hebgen Lake Ranger District, West Yellowstone, MT

Location of Proposed Project:
Hebgen Lake, Earthquake Lake, and the main stem Madison River between the lakes.

Narrative

Geocode (in decimal degrees ex 46.89743) Lat: 44.776° Long: 111.248°

Total Project Cost: $6,820

TAC Funds (Cost-Share) Requested for Project: $2,600

I. Introduction; brief statement of project to be completed with pertinent background information.
The bald eagle population around Hebgen Lake and Quake Lake is unique to the Gallatin National Forest; it represents the only breeding population of eagles on the Forest. Local residents and recreationists alike value this population and are concerned over its health and persistence. The long-term dataset recording occupancy and productivity of these eagles is invaluable to ongoing management and education efforts regarding bald eagles and their habitat. Monitoring data is the foundation for determining trends and informing management activities in this area. Without monitoring data, it would be impossible to evaluate the effects of human activities on wildlife and make informed decisions regarding conservation of the species.

II. Objectives; explicit statement(s) of what is intended to be accomplished.
Monitoring efforts would be focused on two specific objectives: 1) Determine productivity and distribution of bald eagle breeding territories on Hebgen Lake, Earthquake Lake, and the Madison River between the lakes; 2) Search for new bald eagle territories.

III. Methods; description of how Project objectives will be accomplished.
To monitor nest occupancy and productivity of bald eagles at known territories, eagles would be observed with a spotting scope from a remote vantage point. This would allow for clear and accurate data recording in which observer presence does not affect eagle behavior. If primary nests are found to be inactive, attempts would be made to observe all known historic nests and search for new nests within a territory. Each nest would be monitored during the four stages of the nesting period: Courtship and Occupancy (2/1 - 3/31), Activity (4/1 – 4/30), Nestling (5/1 – 5/31), and Fledgling (6/1 – 7/15). The goal would be to visit each nest at least once during each nesting stage, except if a nest was determined to have failed. To quantify productivity, the number of hatchlings and fledglings would be recorded during each observation from the first sign of being hatched to fledging. Hatching and fledging dates would be estimated based upon these observations.

New Nest Searches
Efforts to locate new nest territories would be focused on areas of suspected eagle nesting activity, as determined by observation of adult eagles or reports from the public. Ground observations of bald eagles would be performed with a spotting scope and binoculars. When located, observers would visually follow their travels to potential nest areas. Optics would also be used to conduct searches of suitable habitat for nest structures; these searches may occur from the ground or by boat.

IV. Schedule; when the Project work will begin and end.
Field work would be conducted during the bald eagle nesting season (approximately March 1-August 1).

V. Personnel who will do the work? Identify Project leader or principal investigator.
The Forest Service wildlife biologist (Randy Scarlett) will be the Project Leader. The FS biologist will supervise a permanent seasonal wildlife technician who will conduct most of the eagle monitoring. The FS

biologist would also coordinate volunteer labor to engage the community in monitoring the bald eagle population. The FS biologist and/or wildlife technician would prepare annual reports summarizing work accomplishments for the year.

VI. Project budget with line items including amounts for the following:

Category	Description	TAC	FS	In-Kind	Total
Direct Labor	FS Bio – 5 days	$0	$2,800	$0	$2,800
	Bio Tech – 10 days	$2,600	$0	$0	$2,600
Direct Overhead	2%	$0	$70	$0	$70
Travel and Living	FS vehicle	$0	$600	$0	$600
Materials	Misc. supplies	$0	$150	$0	$150
Other Direct Expenses	None	$0	$0	$0	$0
Volunteer Labor	Dep. on availability – est. 3 days	$0	$0	$600	$600
Total		**$2,600**	**$3,620**	**$600**	**$6,820**

***NorthWestern Energy TAC funds will not be used for agency overhead on projects that do not fund personnel. Applications for materials and equipment should not contain overhead.**

VII. Deliverables; describe work product (reports, habitat restoration, etc.) which will result from this Project. How will "success" for this project be monitored or demonstrated?
The results of each year's monitoring efforts would be summarized in an annual report to NorthWestern Energy. Success for this project will be demonstrated by determination of the nesting chronology of all known nests around Hebgen and Earthquake Lakes.

VIII. Cultural Resources. Cultural Resource Management (CRM) requirements for any activity related to this Project must be completed and documented to NorthWestern as a condition of any TAC grant. TAC funds may not be used for any land-disturbing activity, or the modification, renovation, or removal of any buildings or structures until the CRM consultation process has been completed. Agency applicants must submit a copy of the proposed project to a designated Cultural Resource Specialist for their agency. Private parties or non-governmental organizations are encouraged to submit a copy of their proposed project to a CRM consultant they may have employed. Private parties and non-governmental organizations may also contact the NorthWestern representative for further information or assistance from NorthWestern's staff archeologist. Applications submitted without this section completed, will be held by the TAC, without any action, until the information has been submitted.

Summarize here how you will complete requirements for Cultural Resource Management:
No ground disturbing activities are proposed; therefore, no coordination with cultural resource specialists is required.

IX. Water Rights. For projects that involve development, restoration or enhancement of streams or wetlands, please describe how the project will comply with the Montana DNRC's "Guidance for Landowners and Practitioners Engaged in Stream and Wetland Restoration Activities", issued by the Water Resources Division on 9 March 2016.

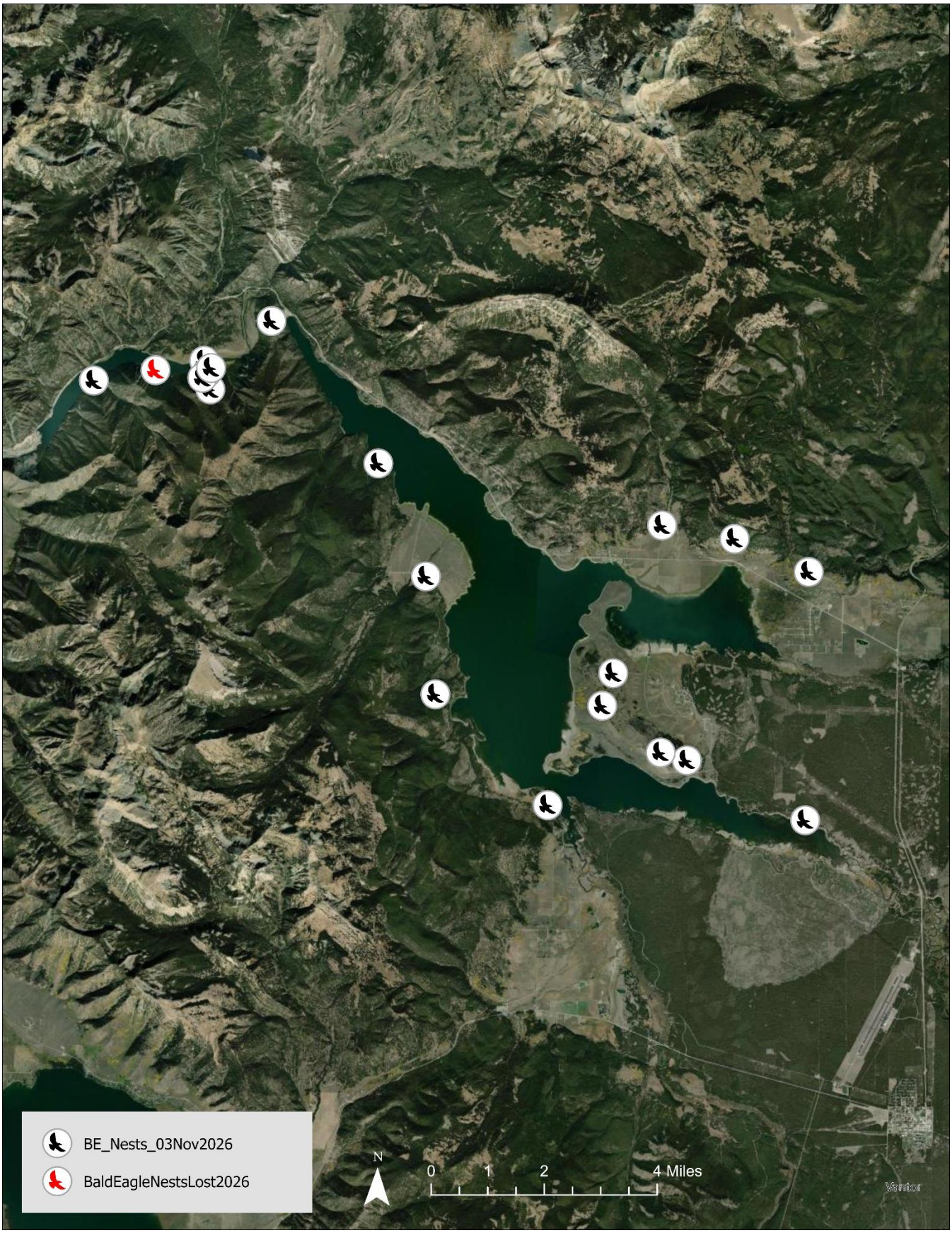
Summarize here how you will comply with Montana water rights laws, policies and guidelines:
Not applicable to this project.

All TAC Project proposals should be 7 pages or less and emailed (as a WORD file) to each of:

- Andrew.Welch@NorthWestern.com
- Jon.Hanson@Northwestern.com

Further questions about TAC proposals or Project 2188 license requirements or related issues may be addressed to:

Andy Welch
Manager, Hydro License Compliance
Andrew.Welch@NorthWestern.com
O 406-444-8115
C 406-565-7549



Hebgen Lake Ranger District Bald Eagle Nests 2026