



NorthWestern Corporation  
d/b/a NorthWestern Energy  
3010 W. 69<sup>th</sup> Street  
Sioux Falls, SD 57108  
[www.northwesternenergy.com](http://www.northwesternenergy.com)

NYSE: NWE

## News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Media Contact:

Claudia Rapkoch  
(866) 622-8081  
[claudia.rapkoch@northwestern.com](mailto:claudia.rapkoch@northwestern.com)

### Investor Relations Contact:

Dan Rausch  
(605) 978-2902  
[daniel.rausch@northwestern.com](mailto:daniel.rausch@northwestern.com)

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## **NorthWestern Energy Announces Open Season Informational Meetings *Mountain States Transmission Intertie and Montana Renewable Collector System***

**Butte, Mont. – February 25, 2010** - NorthWestern Energy (NYSE: NWE) will host informational meetings for potential bidders interested in participating in the upcoming Open Seasons on two proposed electric transmission projects. Both meetings will be held at the Best Western Great Northern Hotel in Helena, Montana, on March 25, 2010. The Mountain States Transmission Intertie (MSTI) informational meeting will be held from 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. followed by the informational meeting on the Montana Renewable Collector System (MT-RCS) from 1:15 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

The Information Meeting is open to those parties: who meet the definition of “Eligible Customer” set forth in NorthWestern’s FERC approved Open Access Transmission Tariff (“OATT”); those Eligible Customers who are capable of making Transmission Service or Interconnection requests in a manner consistent with and as defined in NorthWestern’s OATT; and those Eligible Customers that also meet other minimum credit and other criteria to be established by NorthWestern that are consistent with applicable regulation. Eligible Customers will have the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback to NorthWestern on the Open Season process.

Eligible customers must pre-register to participate in the informational meetings, and further information will be made available on Web sites dedicated to the Open Season process that will be operational on or about March 11, 2010.

Potential bidders on the MSTI project will need to pre-register on line at [www.msti500kvos.com](http://www.msti500kvos.com), while potential bidders on the MT-RCS projects should pre-register at [www.mt-rsos.com](http://www.mt-rsos.com). Potential bidders interested in both projects must pre-register for each meeting separately.

Those pre-registering must meet the Criteria for Registration in order to receive access to the information presented in these Web sites and at the meeting. Those who meet the criteria but who will not be attending the meeting in person will receive information about a telephone bridge that will be available during the meetings.

The MSTI project is a 500kV AC transmission line between Townsend, Montana and Midpoint, Idaho. The approximately 430 mile line proposal is currently undergoing

environmental review with the draft Environmental Impact Statement expected to be released in April 2010. MSTI is intended to facilitate the delivery of new sources of renewable energy, primarily wind energy, to customers in the West. Construction of MSTI is anticipated to begin in spring 2012 and placed into service in early spring 2015.

The proposed MT-RCS project is a series of up to five new 230kV generator lead lines that will originate in the high-quality wind regions of Montana that are currently under consideration for development, but the ultimate size and configuration will depend on the results of the Open Season. These lines would move energy from its origination to a new substation south of Townsend, Montana, where they would connect to both the existing 500kV Colstrip Transmission System and the proposed MSTI 500kV line.

Together and separately, the MSTI and MT-RCS projects will provide a key pathway for new regional generation opportunities, primarily from wind, to demand centers in the Pacific Northwest, the Desert Southwest and California.

Successful bidders in the Open Seasons will secure firm transmission rights and/or interconnection rights to deliver renewable energy to power markets in western states to comply with their Renewable Portfolio Standards.

NorthWestern Energy will conduct the Open Seasons in a transparent, non-discriminatory process. Any entity wishing to secure long-term, point-to-point transmission rights on MSTI and/or the interconnection rights on MT-RCS may submit proposals for consideration.

For those attending in person, the Great Northern Hotel has a block of rooms reserved. Please contact the hotel for additional information at (406) 457-5500. The hotel is located at 835 Great Northern Boulevard in Helena, Montana. Questions may be submitted anytime to Dan Rapkoch, Project Communications Manager, at (406) 490-1895 or via email [dan.rapkoch@northwestern.com](mailto:dan.rapkoch@northwestern.com).

### **About NorthWestern Energy**

NorthWestern Energy provides electricity and natural gas in the Upper Midwest and Northwest, serving approximately 661,000 customers in Montana, South Dakota and Nebraska. More information on NorthWestern Energy is available on the Company's Web site at [www.northwesternenergy.com](http://www.northwesternenergy.com).