

30. NorthWestern thus has legal obligations to reliably and affordably supply electricity to our customers in Montana and to do so cost-effectively while seeking to reduce adverse environmental impacts. In addition to those legal obligations, NorthWestern recognizes that as a practical matter its customers count on NorthWestern to provide the cost effective electricity used to power their homes and businesses and the critical infrastructure upon which they rely.

31. Under Montana law, NorthWestern, as a regulated public utility, is required to prepare and file a plan every three years for meeting the requirements of its customers in the most cost-effective manner consistent with its obligation to serve under the law. Mont. Code Ann. § 69-3-1204(1)(a).

32. The plan must include:

- a. an evaluation of the full range of cost-effective means for the public utility to meet the service requirements of its Montana customers, including conservation or similar improvements in the efficiency by which services are used and including demand-side management programs in accordance with 69-3-1209;
- b. an annual electric demand and energy forecast developed pursuant to commission rules that includes energy and demand forecasts for each year within the planning period and historical data, as required by commission rule;
- c. assessment of planning reserve margins and contingency plans for the acquisition of additional resources developed pursuant to commission rules;
- d. an assessment of the need for additional resources and the utility's plan for acquiring resources;