CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	**Montana Alberta Tie LTD. (MATL LLP)** **Marias South (HL Litigation Tracts)– Transmission line Installation** **Land Use License / Easement**
Proposed Implementation Date:	July 17, 2012
Proponent:	MATL LLP 30 West 14th Street, Suite 207 Helena, MT 59601
Location:	Several - See the below list
County:	Teton

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

MATL has applied for a Land Use License to install an overhead 230 KV transmission line. This application is a part of proposed electrical transmission line between Great Falls Montana and Lethbridge Alberta. The applicant has applied to cross 3 parcels of state land with a total distance of 15,070 feet or 2.85 miles. The proponent will submit final easement applications and as-built surveys for all state lands crossed after the transmission line has been installed. The below table includes the legal descriptions of the 3 tracts proposed to be crossed, length, lease number and lessee of record.

Parcel	TWN	RGE	SEC	Qtr	Line Length	LEASE	LESSEE
020TE101	23N	2E	33	S2N2, NW4SE4	3180 ft	7117	Kyle Burgmaier
T23NR2ES16	23N	2E	16	W2W2	5320 ft	866	Wilma Wheeler
039TE045	25N	1E	16	All	6570 ft	4271	Robert Stephens

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was completed for this proposed project by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and US Department of Energy (DOE). The final EIS, Record of Decision (ROD), and other permit information can be found at the following websites:

http://deq.mt.gov/MFS/MATL.mcpx
www.gc.enerby.gov/NEPA
http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/

DNRC was a cooperating agency for the EIS process and will be tiering off the final EIS for MEPA compliance. DNRC is also providing additional site specific information in this EA checklist as it pertains to proposed State Land crossings.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:
Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)
Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
US Department of Energy (DOE)
AMEC Earth and Environmental
Flaherty Inc. – ROW

GCM Services Inc.
Ethnosceince Inc
Morrison Maierle Inc.
Surface Lessee's

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

Montana DEQ - Major Facilities Siting Act – Issued Oct 22, 2008

US Department of Energy – Presidential Permit issued –Docket no.pp-305 Federal Register Volume 73, No 222, November 17, 2008

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action) – DNRC does not issue the proposed Land Use License.

Alternative B (the Proposed action) – DNRC issues the proposed Land Use License.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:
Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

Soils are suitable for transmission line construction and installation. Soil textures vary from silty to clay within the project area. There are no fragile or unstable soils present in the area of the proposed area. A limited amount of physical soil disturbances will be required throughout the project area. Steep slopes will be avoided with equipment. MATL will have available tracked construction equipment (drills, cranes, transports) designed to minimize soil disturbances in low lying areas and/or wet areas. Erosion mitigation measures will be implemented throughout the project area. All disturbed areas will be re-contoured and returned to the appropriate land use (agriculture, CRP, or grazing land) following installation.

No long term or cumulative impacts to soil erosion and /or other soil resources are expected.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:
Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

No important surface or groundwater resources will be impacted by the proposed activity. No cumulative effects to the water resources are anticipated.

6. AIR QUALITY:
What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

No effects to air quality will occur. No cumulative effects to air quality are anticipated

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

There are no rare plants or cover types present in the project area. Current land use in the project area is a mixture of grazing land agricultural land and CRP (tame grass species). The tables below describe the existing vegetation (land use) on each tract, distance, and acres potentially impacted by the proposed transmission line.

Parcel	TWN	RGE	SEC	105 foot easement area (ac)	Additional construction area (ac)	LEASE	LAND USE
020TE101	23N	2E	33	8.2	.11	7117	Grazing Land
T23NR2ES16	23N	2E	16	8.54	0	866	Grazing Land
039TE045	25N	1E	16	16.86	3.78	4271	Grazing Land / CRP

Land Use	Distance (feet) Crossed	Acres (base on 105 feet wide plus additional construction area)
Grazing Land – Native	11,970	13.24
Ag Land (Crop Land)	0	0
CRP	3,100	7.4
TOTAL	15,070	20.64

Temporary disturbances along the transmission line route will occur from pole installation and the manipulation of vehicles and heavy equipment on the surface. All disturbed areas will be recontoured and reclaimed to pre-existing conditions following transmission line installation. Grazing land will be reseeded with noxious weed seed free native seed. CRP will be reseeded with the appropriate species according to FSA and NRCS specifications. Agricultural lands will be returned to production following line installation

Noxious weeds along the transmission line route will be the responsibility of MATL and they have a plan to impediment on the ground weed control along the route.

No long term impacts to the existing vegetation are expected.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

The tract proposed to cross are not considered critical wildlife habitat. However, these tracts provide habitat for a variety of big game species (mule deer, whitetail deer, pronghorn antelope), predators (coyote, fox, badger), upland game birds (sharp tail grouse, Hungarian partridge), other non-game mammals, raptors and various songbirds. Temporary displacement of wildlife during construction is likely to occur. However, the proposed action does not include any land use change which would yield significant changes to the wildlife habitat. The proposed action will not impact wildlife forage, cover, or traveling corridors. Nor will this action change the juxtaposition of wildlife forage, water, or hiding and thermal cover. There are no unique or critical wildlife habitats associated with the state tracts and do not expect direct or cumulative wildlife impacts would occur as a result of implementing the proposal. The proposed action will not have long-term negative effects on existing wildlife species and/or wildlife habitat because of its relatively small scale.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:
Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

No specific on-site observations of Threatened or Endangered species have been recorded and no important habitat has been identified on the state lands. The proposal does not include any activities which would alter any habitat, so no effects are expected. No threatened or endangered species are known to exist in this area. No wetlands or riparian areas will be impacted by pole or the transmission line in general.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:
Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

A class III Cultural Resource Inventory was completed for this project. Several archaeological sites were identified on state land in throughout the entire project area. All cultural sites will be avoided. Individual cultural features will be avoided along the entire length of the project by at least 100 feet. Sites will be marked with orange fencing and/or flagging prior to construction to ensure avoidance. Patrick Rennie, DNRC Archeologist, has been notified of the proposed project, and has a copy of the Cultural Resource Inventory.

No historical, cultural or paleontological artifacts or resources will be impacted as a result of this project.

11. AESTHETICS:
Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

The state land does not provide any unique scenic qualities not also provided on adjacent private lands. The transmission line will be above ground and will change the overall aesthetics character of the landscape.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:
Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

No demands on limited resources are required for this project.

No direct or cumulative effects to environmental resources are anticipated.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:
List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

The MATL transmission line project has had extensive environmental review (EIS) and public comment facilitated by the Montana DEQ and the United States DOE. The DOE record of decision (ROD) to issue a Presidential Permit is published in the federal register Volume 73, No. 222 Monday November 17, 2008 or at http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/. The DOE final EIS and the ROD is available at: www.gc.enerby.gov/NEPA . The DEQ ROD, Findings Necessary of Certification and Certification Determination for the Major Facility Siting Act, and final EIS are published at: http://deq.mt.gov/MFS/MATL.mcpx.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:
Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

No impacts on human health or safety are expected.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:
Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

The proposed project will provide an electric transmission line between Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada and Great Falls, Montana. This will allow for electricity generated from existing and proposed wind power generation to enter the grid. This will benefit area industry. The installation of the transmission line may cause small scale and temporary damage to grazing lands and CRP, but will not greatly impact surface use in the long term. The proponent has developed a surface damages payment process to compensate surface lessees and the DRNC for damages cause form line construction. The installation of MATL transmission line is expected to create indirect benefits to further industrial development in the area with regard to wind energy.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:
Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

Transmission line construction will be completed by private contractors, several of which are based in Montana. Cumulative effects to state and local employment are expected to be very positive.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:
Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

The proposed action will provide significant tax revenues to local counties and the State of Montana. Local communities will also see an economic benefit from construction activities in the area.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:
Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

There will be a temporary increase in traffic and traffic patterns on rural roads during construction. No long term or cumulative impacts on traffic is expected. Area fire protection or police services will not be changed as a result of this project.

There will be no direct or cumulative effects on government services.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:
List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

There are no zoning or other agency management plans affecting these lands.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:
Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

There is no wilderness or recreational areas or access to wilderness or recreational areas through these tracts. The proposed action is not expected to create conflict to any general recreational activities within the area.

There will be no direct or cumulative effects on recreational or wilderness activities.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:
Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.

Local communities are expected to welcome contractors. This project will benefit cities in the area from construction workers and contractors spending money in the community. The proposal does not include any changes to housing or developments. No direct or cumulative effects to population or housing are anticipated.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:
Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

There are no native, unique or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity that would be impacted by the proposal.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:
How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

The proposed project will have no effect on any unique quality of the area.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:
Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

The school trust will receive a one-time LUL installation fee of $1,000.00 plus a $25.00 application fee. After installation and as-built survey is provided to the DNRC, the school trust will receive a one-time easement fee based upon fair market value of the land crossed. The DNRC will also receive annual pole payments from MATL.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:**	Erik Eneboe
	Title:	Conrad Unit Manager, CLO
Signature:		**Date**: July 17, 2012

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Issue Land Use License authorizing initiation of power line construction

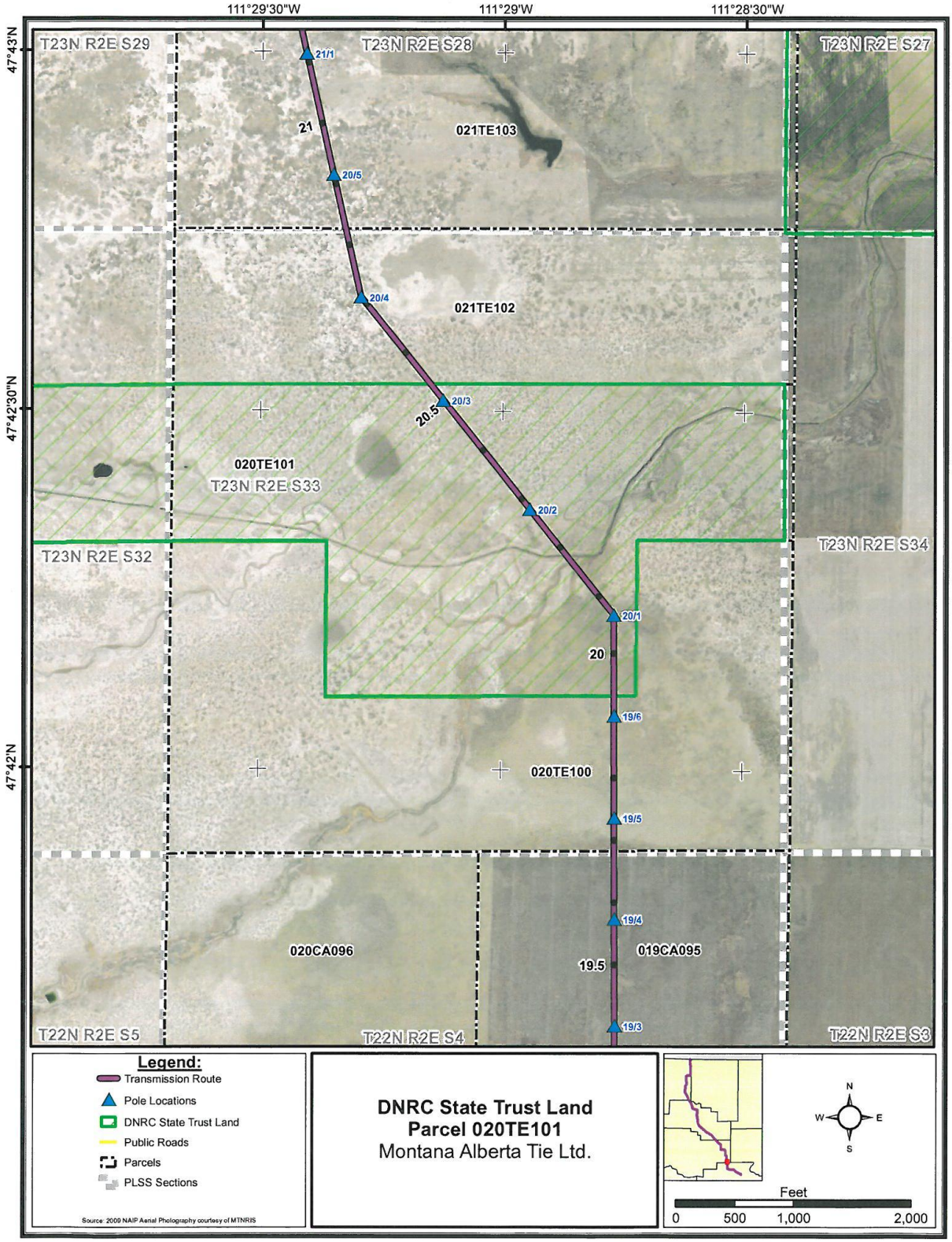
26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Significant impacts are not expected as a result of the proposed action on State land. The power line project was extensively evaluated under the joint DEQ and DOE Environmental Impact Statement. There are no unique conditions, resources or habitat on these state lands not discussed in the EIS.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

[ ] EIS	[ ] More Detailed EA	[X] No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:** Garry Williams **Title:** Area Manger, CLO	
Signature:		**Date**: July 18, 2012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Legend:
Transmission Route
Pole Locations
DNRC State Trust Land
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Source: 2009 NAIP Aerial Photography courtesy of MTNRIS
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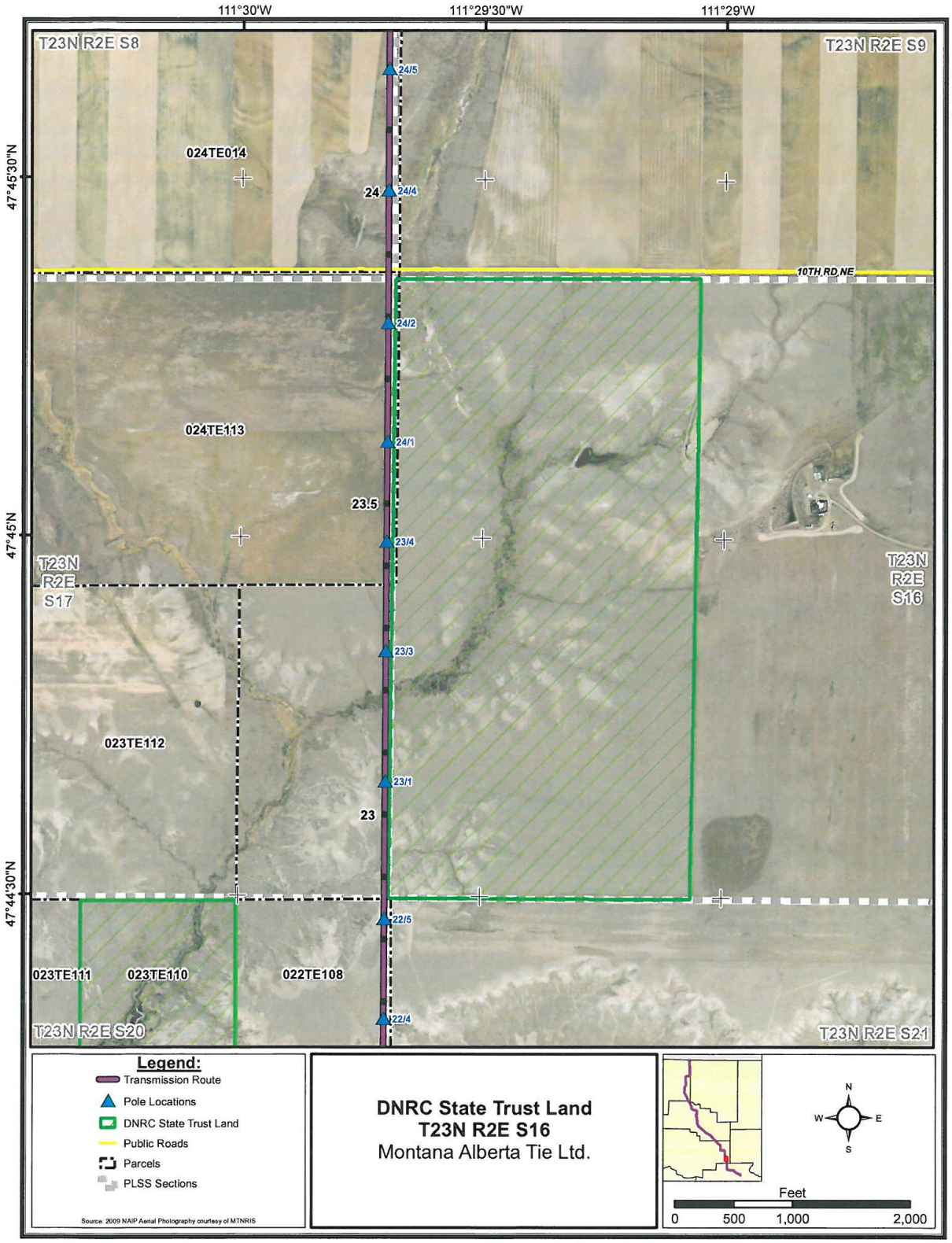
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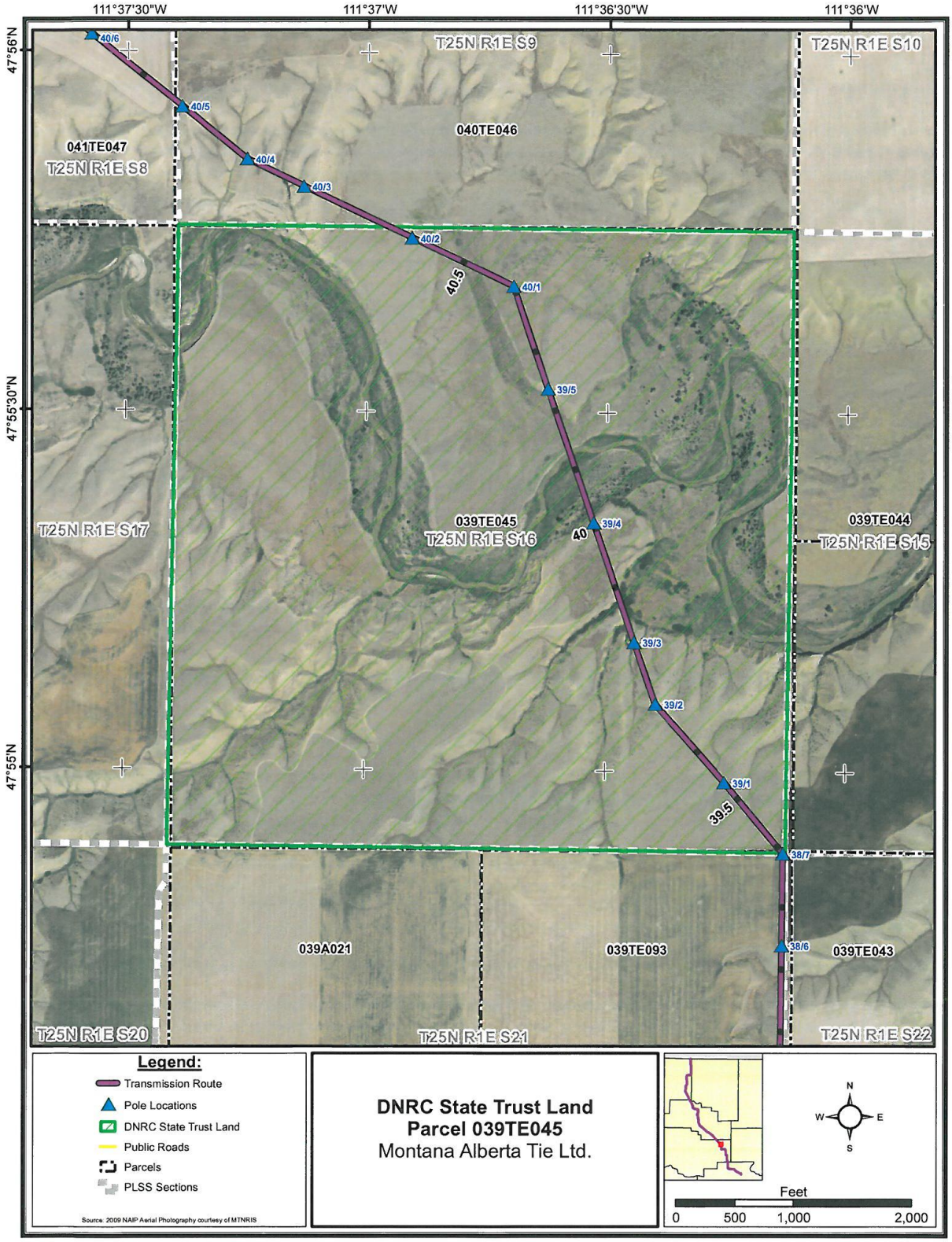
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