CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Fiber Optic telephone cable installation
Proposed Implementation Date:	August/September 2013
Proponent:	Southern Montana Telephone Co. Montana 43 Wisdom Montana 59761
Location:	Section Sec. 16, T1N R9W
County:	Butte-Silver bow

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Southern Montana Telephone Co. proposes to install a new underground telecommunication cable and an additional vacant 2" duct to a new pedestal and cellular site on Fleecer Mountain. The cable would be placed using a static mounted cable plow on a track type crawler. A backhoe would also be used, when necessary to navigate obstacles. The underground cable and duct would be the only permanent material left on Trust Land.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

Southern Montana Telephone Co.
DNRC - Archeologist

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

None

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

No Action – An easement would not be issued to Southern Montana Telephone. This would prevent the cable from being installed, delaying fiber optic services to a cellular site.

Action – The easement would be issued authorizing Southern Montana Telephone (SMT) to install the lines and put it into service.

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.

There is one soil type identified within the project area by the NRCS soil survey, a Monaberg-Bridger complex. Some of the characteristics of this soil include;

- Surface area covered with cobbles, stones or boulders
- Depth to restrictive feature will usually be more than 80 inches
- Well drained
- Depth to water table more than 80 inches

The parent material for this soil unit is mixed volcanic or granite alluvium

No Action – Additional disturbance to the soils within this portion of the tract would not occur. There would not be an increase in potential erosion, displacement or compaction.

Action – Installation of the fiber optic line would involve a dozer mounted with a static cable plow to create a trench for the line. This would leave an unvegetated strip of ground 1' or less in width for the entire length of the line. Because of the narrow width of disturbed land no problem with erosion is anticipated. The license holder would be required to apply the following grass seed mixture to any areas which are disturbed by this action. All grass seed will be certified weed free.

Pubescent Wheat Grass	4# PLS/ac
Intermediate Wheat Grass	4# PLS/ac.
Slender Wheat Grass	4# PLS/ac
Streambank Wheat Grass	4# PLS/ac.
Alsike Clover	1# PLS/ac.
Total	17#PLS/ac.

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 Action – No change is anticipated from the existing condition

Action – There is an unnamed tributary of Divide Creek which flows in the vicinity of the proposed line location. The installation, as proposed, will not be in close proximity to the stream. Operations will not be allowed within 100' of the stream. No impacts to water quality or quantity are anticipated under either the action or no action alternative.

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 anticipated impacts from either alternative 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.

Range sites involved with this proposed project are in the 15-19 inch precipitation zone. Native vegetation is dominated by Bluebunch Wheat Grass (35%), Idaho Fescue (30%), Big Sage (10%). A search of the Natural Resource Information System (NRIS) identified no plant species of special concern.

No Action – No disturbance would occur to the existing vegetation consequently there would be little damage to existing vegetation.

Action – A trench less than 12" wide and 18 to 24 inches deep would be constructed to hold the fiber optic line and an additional conduit. There would be disturbance to the native vegetation caused by the creation of this trench. To mitigate for the disturbed area, the licensee would be required to grass seed all disturbed area's with the mixture identified in item 4 above. If weed infestations occur along the installation route, the licensee would be required to apply herbicides until the infestation is eradicated.

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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.

No Action – Little to no changes would occur from existing conditions.

Action - Because of the minimal amount of disturbance and the short time period involved to install this line, no impacts are anticipated under either alternative.

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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.

A search of the NRIS site identified 2 mammals, 3 birds and 2 fish which are species of concern possibly residing in the area of this project, Wolverine, Hoary Bat, Cassin's Finch, and Clarks Nutcracker prefer forested habitats which do not occur in the project area. The Westslope and Yellowstone Cutthroat requires water which is more then 100' away from the project location. No impacts are anticipated under either alternative to any of these species.

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

No impacts are anticipated under either alternative. If the action alternative were to be selected the permittee would be required to stop work if an archaeological site were to be discovered and notify DNRC's Anaconda Unit Manager.

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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.

No Action – No changes are anticipated to occur from existing conditions under this alternative.

Action – There would be a minor impact to the view shed from construction of a 1' wide trench. Over time this would heal over and revegetate, blending into the surrounding land scape

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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 impacts are anticipated under either the action or no-action alternatives.

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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.

No other projects are currently underway within this section. No impacts are anticipated associated with this plan under either alternative.

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 anticipated by either alternative

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

No Action – In order to provide communication services to the cellular site, an alternative route would have to be negotiated and then a new line installed. This would increase the proponent's costs along with delaying services to interested parties.

Action –The license would be issued granting the applicant authorization to proceed with installation and to provide services

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.

No Action – No additional employment would occur

Action – Short term employment for 4 individuals would be provided.

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.

No impacts anticipated by either alternative.

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

No impacts anticipated by either alternative.

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.

No impacts are anticipated under either alternative

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.

No Impacts anticipated under either alternative

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.

No impacts anticipated under either alternative

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

No impacts anticipated under either alternative

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

No impacts anticipated under either alternative

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.

No Action – No additional income would occur

Action – A minimum of $250 per year would be generated for the duration of this license.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Fred E. Staedler Jr.	Date: 8-30-13
	Title: Anaconda Unit Manager	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

The Action Alternative

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

No significant impact anticipated with the implementation of mitigation measures

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

☐ EIS ☐ More Detailed EA ☒ No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Dana M. Bovee
	Title: Right of Way Specialist
Signature: Dana M. Bovee	Date: 9/2/2013