CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative Temporary Workspace
Proposed Implementation Date:	Spring 2024
Proponent:	Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC)
Location:	T26N-R59E-Sec16
County:	Richland County

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC), heretofore referred to as proponent, has requested of the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation to issue a Land Use License for temporary additional workspace of 15 feet by approximately 3,780 feet on the north side of the existing Right of Way 13901/ Easement D-12065 on state owned tract T26N-R59E-Sec16 for the purpose an overhead powerline replacement.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

The proponent has requested that the DNRC allow temporary additional workspace on this state-owned section. DNRC staff has evaluated this site, and due to the nature of this request, no public comment was sought.

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

None

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A- Grant request for the project.

Alternative B- No Action.

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.

Alternative A- Disturbance of the soil should be minimal. There may be minor compaction. There should be no lasting adverse effects to the soil quality, stability, or moisture. The soil structures are not fragile or unstable; soils are loam and clay types.

Alternative B-No Impact

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.

Alternative A- No Impacts expected.

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- Pollutants and Particulates may be increased during the project. After the completion of the project pollutant and particulate levels should return to normal preconstruction levels. Any increase in pollutants during construction should be negligible.

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- Where the activity takes place there may be disturbance to the vegetation cover. Potential disruption to the vegetative community within the area of construction could be expected. Some brush management might be required to perform the duties associated with the temporary workspace. Current plant species which occupy the construction area include Western Wheatgrass (Agropyron Smithii), Green Needlegrass (Stipa Viridula), Broom Snakeweed (Gutierrezia sarothrae), Smooth Brome (Bromus inermis), Bluegrass Species (Poa Spp.), Common Snowberry (Symphoricarpos albus), and Wood's Rose (Rosa woodsii). The disturbance of these plant species should be minimal, and the area should revegetate naturally within two years.

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- There should be very minimal effect on any animal habitats within the boundaries of the project construction area. Wildlife may be temporarily disturbed during the construction of the project. After completion of the project wildlife usage should return to pre-construction levels.

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Database showed that some species of concern could be present within the general project area. Any impact to these species from the use of the temporary workspace should be minimal.

Mammals - Eastern Red Bat (Lasiurus borealis) SOC
Mammals - Hoary Bat (Lasiurus cinereus) SOC
Mammals - Long-eared Myotis (Myotis evotis) SOC
Birds - American White Pelican (Pelecanus erythrorhynchos) SOC 4
Birds - Black-crowned Night-Heron (Nycticorax nycticorax) SOC
Birds - Black-necked Stilt (Himantopus mexicanus) SOC
Birds – Bobolink (Dolichonyx oryzivorus) SOC
Birds - Ferruginous Hawk (Buteo regalis) SOC
Birds - Franklin's Gull (Leucophaeus pipixcan) SOC
Birds - Golden Eagle (Aquila chrysaetos) SOC
Birds - Great Blue Heron (Ardea herodias) SOC
Birds - Horned Grebe (Podiceps auritus) SOC
Birds - Least Tern (Sternula antillarum) SOC
Birds - LeConte's Sparrow (Ammospiza leconteii) SOC
Birds - Loggerhead Shrike (Lanius ludovicianus) SOC
Birds - Nelson's Sparrow (Ammospiza nelsoni) SOC
Birds - Sedge Wren (Cistothorus stellaris) SOC
Birds - Sharp-tailed Grouse (Tympanuchus phasianellus) SOC
Birds - White-faced Ibis (Plegadis chihi) SOC
Birds - Whooping Crane (Grus americana) SOC
Reptiles - Snapping Turtle (Chelydra serpentina) SOC
Amphibians - Northern Leopard Frog (Lithobates pipiens) SOC

This temporary workspace is not located within Greater Sage Grouse Core Habitat, Core Connectivity, or General Habitat, and therefore was not submitted to the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program for review.

Alternative B- No Impact

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

Alternative A- A Class I (literature review) level review was conducted by the DNRC staff archaeologist for the area of potential effect (APE). This entailed inspection of project maps, DNRC's sites/site leads database, land use records, General Land Office Survey Plats, and control cards. The Class I search results revealed that no cultural or paleontological resources have been identified in the APE. While some of the APE has been inventoried to Class III standards, the majority has been disturbed with cultivation.

Because the extent of past ground disturbance suggests a low to moderate likelihood of the presence of cultural or paleontologic resources. Proposed activities are expected to have *No Effect* to *Antiquities*. No additional archaeological investigative work will be conducted in response to this proposed development. However, if previously unknown cultural or paleontological materials are identified during project related activities, all work will cease until a professional assessment of such resources can be made.

Alternative B- No Impact

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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.

Alternative A-No Impacts expected.
Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- No Impacts expected.

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

None

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.

Alternative A- There may be risks to human health and safety during the powerline replacement project, but this activity should be done by qualified professionals. Safety concerns should be minimized with proper safety protocol employed by the workers.

Alternative B- No impact

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

Alternative A- It should have a positive effect on the safety of this powerline replacement project.

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- No Impacts expected.

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- No Impacts expected.

Alternative B- No Impact

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

Alternative A- No Impacts expected.

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- No Impacts expected.

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- No Impacts expected.

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- No Impacts expected.

Alternative B- No Impact

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

Alternative A- No Impacts expected.

Alternative B- No Impact

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

Alternative A- No Impacts expected.

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- There will be a return to the trust in the form of a purchased Land Use License for the temporary workspace.

Alternative B- No Impact

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:** Randell Hopkins	**Date:** 2-8-2024
	Title: Land Use Specialist	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative A

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The granting of the requested action on state owned trust lands for the proposed additional workspace should not result in nor cause significant environmental impacts. The predicted impacts will be adequately mitigated through the construction and reclamation plans. The proposed action helps ensure the long-term productivity of the land. An environmental assessment checklist is the appropriate level of analysis for the proposed action.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

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

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:** Scott Aye	
	Title: ELO Land Program Manager	
Signature:		**Date:** 2-13-2024