

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

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|--------------------------------------|---|
| Project Name: | Triangle Telecommunications Telecommunication Cable |
| Proposed Implementation Date: | Summer 2016 |
| Proponent: | Triangle Communications |
| Location: | 34 N 10 E Sec 16 31 N 10 E Sec 16 33 N 10 E Sec 5 |
| County: | Hill |
| Trust: | Common School |

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Triangle Communications has requested an easement strip twenty feet wide, 10 feet on each side of the centerline through above said tracts to install and maintain an underground telecommunication cable.

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 Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) Northeastern Land Office (NELO), 3 Rivers Communications Inc, and surface lessees Haas Farming, Boehm Land & Livestock, Greg Spinler and P & M Farms are all involved with this project.

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

The DNRC, and NELO have jurisdiction over this proposed project.

The proponent is responsible for acquiring all required permits for the proposed project. The proponent is responsible for settling all surface damages with the surface owners.

DNRC is not aware of any other agencies with jurisdiction or other permits needed to complete this project

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action) – Under this alternative, the Department does not grant an easement for an underground telecommunication cable.

Alternative B (the Proposed Action) – Under this alternative, the Department does grant an easement for an underground telecommunication cable.

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.

| Tables - Ecological Site ID: NRCS Rangeland Site - Summary By Map Unit | | | | | |
|--|--|-------------|--------------|----------------|--|
| Summary by Map Unit - Hill County, Montana (MT041) | | | | | |
| Map unit symbol | Map unit name | Rating | Acres in AOI | Percent of AOI | |
| 60A | Havre loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes | R052XN161MT | 0.1 | 1.7% | |
| 224D | Hillon-Joplin loams, 8 to 15 percent slopes | R052XN161MT | 0.3 | 3.5% | |
| 331B | Phillips-Elloam complex, 0 to 4 percent slopes | R052XN161MT | 0.0 | 0.0% | |
| 381A | Ethridge clay loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes | R052XN162MT | 0.3 | 3.9% | |
| 421C | Joplin-Hillon loams, 2 to 8 percent slopes | R052XA032MT | 1.9 | 24.0% | |
| 442C | Kevin-Elloam clay loams, 2 to 8 percent slopes | R052XN161MT | 0.2 | 2.9% | |
| 503B | Telstad-Joplin loams, 0 to 4 percent slopes | R052XA032MT | 5.1 | 64.0% | |
| Totals for Area of Interest | | | 7.9 | 100.0% | |

The easement will pass through soils that are determined as "prime farmland" and "farmland of statewide importance." The installation of an underground communication cable will not remove the land from production with it being installed below plow depth. See attached for farmland classification.

| Tables - Farmland Classification - Summary By Map Unit | | | | | |
|--|--|----------------------------------|--------------|----------------|--|
| Summary by Map Unit - Hill County, Montana (MT041) | | | | | |
| Map unit symbol | Map unit name | Rating | Acres in AOI | Percent of AOI | |
| 60A | Havre loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes | Prime farmland if irrigated | 0.1 | 1.7% | |
| 224D | Hillon-Joplin loams, 8 to 15 percent slopes | Not prime farmland | 0.3 | 3.5% | |
| 331B | Phillips-Elloam complex, 0 to 4 percent slopes | Not prime farmland | 0.0 | 0.0% | |
| 381A | Ethridge clay loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes | Prime farmland if irrigated | 0.3 | 3.9% | |
| 421C | Joplin-Hillon loams, 2 to 8 percent slopes | Farmland of statewide importance | 1.9 | 24.0% | |
| 442C | Kevin-Elloam clay loams, 2 to 8 percent slopes | Not prime farmland | 0.2 | 2.9% | |
| 503B | Telstad-Joplin loams, 0 to 4 percent slopes | Prime farmland if irrigated | 5.1 | 64.0% | |
| Totals for Area of Interest | | | 7.9 | 100.0% | |

No cumulative effects to geology and soil quality, stability and moisture are anticipated.

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.

None of the underground construction will take place in a perennial flowing stream or near a large body of water on state land.

No important ground or surface water will be impacted by the proposed project.

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.

The air quality in the area will not be affected.

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.

The proposed easement route would run through ag land and native rangeland. The disturbed area will be limited to the 20' easement area. Seeding and reclamation will be required to maintain grass cover on rangeland, if cover hasn't established in two growing seasons. The proponent will be responsible for reseeding.

If re-seeding is necessary the proponent will acquire certified, weed free seed and refer to the Plant Materials Tech Note No. MT-46 (Rev. 4) dated September 2013 for seeding rates.

Noxious weeds are known to be in the area from the previous lease evaluations and disturbed sites will be monitored for noxious weeds and treated until eradicated

No rare plants or cover types are present.
No long term cumulative effects to vegetation are anticipated.

http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/mt/plantsanimals/?cid=nrcs144p2_05773

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 area is not considered critical wildlife habitat. Most of the work is done by adjacent public roads where wildlife habitat quality has already been reduced.

No cumulative effects are anticipated.

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 Montana Natural Heritage Program for Species of Concern with a state rank of 2 or higher was conducted. (State rank of 2 means species at risk because of very limited and/or potentially declining population numbers, range and/or habitat, making it vulnerable to global extinction or extirpation in the state.)

| Species of Concern | | 1 Species | |
|--|-----------------------|------------|-----------|
| Filtered by the following criteria: | | | |
| State Rank = 1 or 2 | | | |
| Taxonomy = 23368106 (based on revised Biological Conservation) | | | |
| REPTILES (REPTILIA) | | FUNGI | |
| SCIENTIFIC NAME | COMMON NAME | STATE RANK | STATUS |
| SCIENTIFIC NAME | COMMON NAME | STATE RANK | STATUS |
| <i>Heterodon nasicus</i> | Plain Hog-nosed Snake | 2 | SENSITIVE |
| <i>Colubridae</i> | Colubrid Snakes | 2 | SENSITIVE |
| Species Occurrences verified in these Counties: Big Horn, Blaine, Carbon, Cascade, Chouteau, Custer, Daniels, DeWalt, Glacier, Hill, Judith, Lake, Liberty, Petroleum, Phillips, Powell, Rich, Rosebud, Stillwater, Toole, Treasure, Yellowstone | | | |

Temporary displacement or incidental take may occur with the Hog nosed snake may occur during construction but a population effect is not anticipated.

There are no wetlands in the project area.

There are no known unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources on this site.

No cumulative effects to habitat are anticipated.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

A Class III intensity level cultural and paleontological resources inventory was conducted of the area of potential effect on state land. Despite a detailed examination, no cultural or fossil resources were identified and no additional archaeological or paleontological investigative work is recommended. The proposed project will have

No Effect to Antiquities as defined under the Montana State Antiquities Act. A formal report of findings has been prepared and is on file with the DNRC and the Montana State Historic Preservation Officer.

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 direct or cumulative effects to aesthetics are anticipated.

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.

There are no other projects or plans being considered on the tracts listed in this EA Checklist.

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.

There will be some health and safety concerns associated with the operation of heavy equipment. The proponent and their employees are aware of any health and safety hazards and accept them as occupational hazards.

Once the installation has been completed, there will be no health and safety concerns associated with this project.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

This project will not add to or deter from other industrial, agricultural, or commercial activities in this area.

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.

The project will not create any new jobs. These positions are already held by employees of the proponent. No cumulative effects to the employment market are anticipated.

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.

There are no direct or cumulative effects to taxes or revenue for the proposed project.

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 not be any increases in traffic or traffic patterns if this project is approved.

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 this project.

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 will be no direct or cumulative effects on recreation 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

The proposed project does not include any changes to housing or developments. Population and housing will not be affected.

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 proposed project will not have any cumulative economic or social effect.

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| EA Checklist Prepared By: | Name: Brandon Sandau Title: Land Use Specialist |
| Signature:  | Date: 4/4/2016 |

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

I have selected the Proposed Alternative B, and recommend the proponent be granted an easement for a buried telecommunication cable in the above locations, as surveyed in the application.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

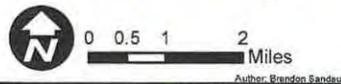
I have evaluated the potential environment effects and have determined that no negative long-term environmental impacts will result from the proposed activity.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

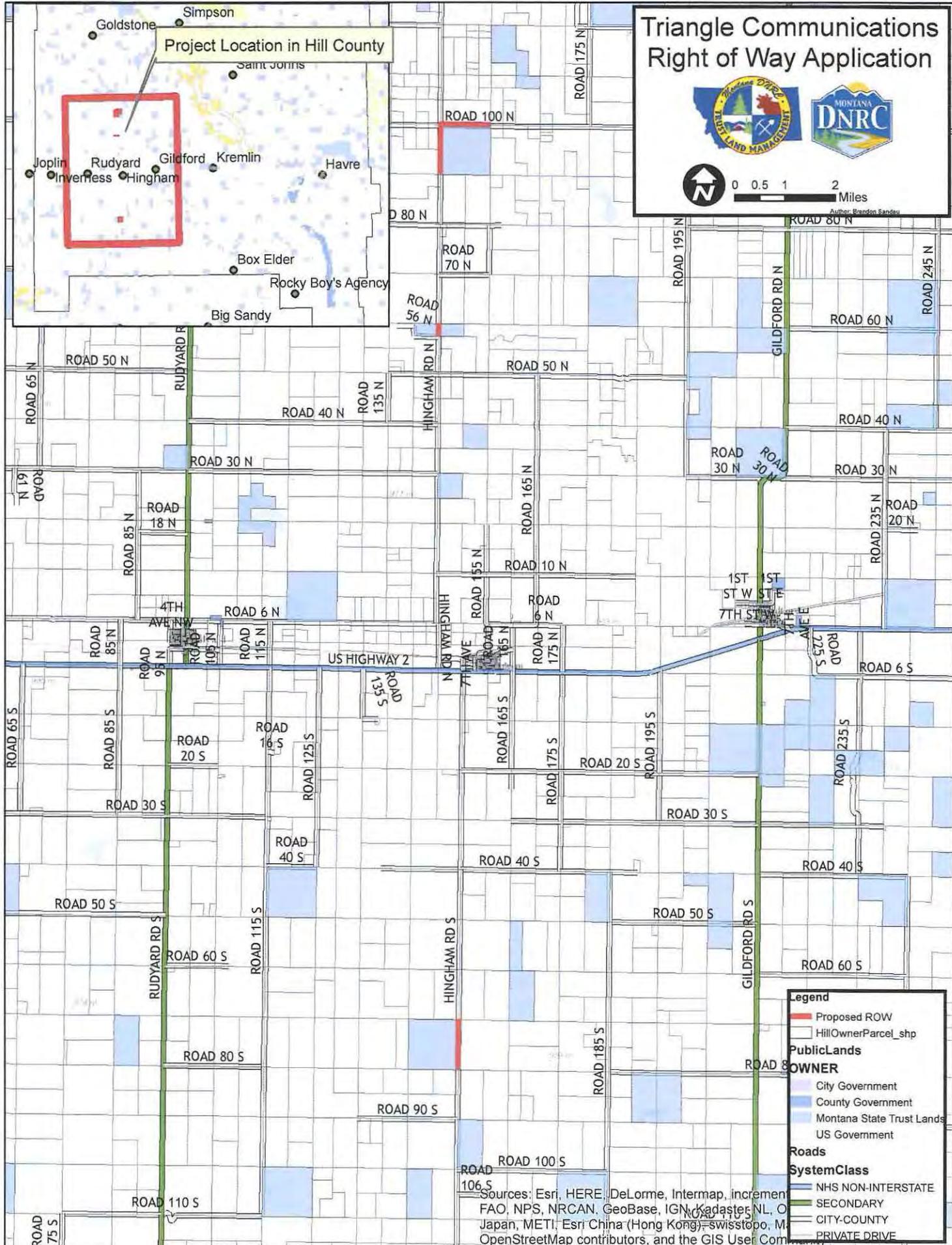
| | | |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> EIS | <input type="checkbox"/> More Detailed EA | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> XXX No Further Analysis |
|------------------------------|---|--|

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| EA Checklist Approved By: | Name: Barny D. Smith Title: Unit Manager, Northeastern Land Office |
| Signature:  | Date: 4/4/2016 |

Triangle Communications Right of Way Application



Project Location in Hill County



Legend

- Proposed ROW
- HillOwnerParcel_shp

Public Lands

OWNER

- City Government
- County Government
- Montana State Trust Lands
- US Government

Roads

SystemClass

- NHS NON-INTERSTATE
- SECONDARY
- CITY-COUNTY
- PRIVATE DRIVE

Sources: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, Intermap, increment
FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, O
Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), swisstopo, M
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