CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	**Dearborn River-3 Rivers Fiber Optic Utility ROW/Nav. Water**
Proposed Implementation Date:	Summer 2016
Proponent:	3 Rivers Communications, Inc.
Location:	NE4SE4, Section 27, T17N, R4W
County:	Lewis and Clark County
Trust:	Public Land Trust

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

3 Rivers Communications, Inc. has applied for Navigable Waterway/Utility ROW to install new fiber optic telephone cable 133 feet under the Dearborn River utilizing a directional bore machine along the old highway route. The ROW corridor would be 20 feet wide, and the encumbered area will total approximately 0.06 acres of the Dearborn River.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

Agencies, Groups or Individuals Scoped:	Response:
DNRC, Landowner	Neutral-Landowner (Navigable River)
3Rivers Communications, Inc.	Proponent is in favor of the project
Dearborn Ranch, Adjacent Landowner	Private Landowner-In favor of the project
Lewis and Clark Conservation District	Regulatory Agency-310 permit review

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

3 Rivers Communications, Inc.is addressing other possibly required permits regarding this project and are aware of other permits that may be required. DNRC is not aware of any other required permits for this specific project.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Proposed Action Alternative: To grant 3 Rivers Communications, Inc. a utility easement of approximately 133 feet long and 20ft wide for installation of fiber optic cable under/across the Dearborn River to update services in the area.

No Action Alternative: To deny 3 Rivers Communications, Inc. a utility easement of approximately 133 feet long and 20ft wide for installation of fiber optic cable across the Dearborn River to update services in the area.

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 in the project area include Aridic Ustifluvents (1B) and Fluvaquents and River Wash (600).

Proposed Action Alternative: No long-lasting impacts to fragile, compactable, or unstable soils or any unusual geologic features are anticipated. Mitigations regarding impacted soils may be addressed through other regulatory agencies and their permitting process.

No Action Alternative: No impacts to the geology or soil characteristics would occur.

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.

Impacts to the water quality, quantity and distribution would be minimal since the impact of facilitating fiber optic service through an underground line via a directional boring machine requires minimal or no disturbance to water resources.

Proposed Action Alternative: No direct or cumulative impacts to water quality are anticipated as a result of the proposed action.

No Action Alternative: No impacts to the water quality, quantity, and/or distribution will occur.

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.

In general, this area is considered to be of high quality air standards with good ventilation and would not be affected by the proposal.

Proposed Action Alternative: Temporary disturbances may occur during the construction phase. No direct or cumulative effects are expected to occur to air quality as a result of the proposed action.

No Action Alternative: No impacts to air quality will occur.

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 known rare plants or cover types present. The Montana Natural Heritage Program lists no plant species of concern, potential species of concern, or special status species within T17N R4W.

Proposed Action Alternative: Temporary disturbances to plant communities may occur on adjacent private land. Vegetative communities would not be permanently altered. No impacts to rare plants or cover types are anticipated within the prospective easement corridor.

No Action Alternative: No impacts to the vegetation cover, quantity, and/or quality will occur.

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.

This tract is used by a variety of wildlife, including large ungulates (elk, mule deer, whitetail deer, and pronghorn), small to large sized predators (weasels, skunks, red fox, and coyotes), numerous species of small

mammals (mice, voles, ground squirrels, rabbits, etc.), various raptors (red-tailed hawks, golden eagles, bald eagles, American kestrels, prairie falcons, etc.) upland game birds (Hungarian partridge, pheasant), waterfowl, and numerous non-game bird species (a wide variety of migrant and resident bird species associated with available habitats). The proposed project would temporarily displace these wildlife species.

Proposed Action Alternative: Habitats would be temporarily disturbed during the installation of the fiber optic line. No lasting impacts to terrestrial, avian, and/or aquatic life and/or habitats are anticipated.

No Action Alternative: No impacts to terrestrial, avian, and/or aquatic life and habitats will occur.

---

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.

The Montana Natural Heritage Program lists 4 animal *species of concern (Sprague's Pipit, Bobolink, Pinyon Jay, Long-billed Curlew)* 0 *potential species of concern*, and 1 *special status species* (*Bald Eagle*) within this township. The area wildlife would be affected by temporary displacement during installation and maintenance of the fiber optic line.

Proposed Action Alternative: Habitats would be temporarily disturbed during the installation of the fiber optic line. No lasting impacts to unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources are anticipated.

No Action Alternative: No impacts to unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources will occur.

---

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

The Department Archaeologist was consulted in regards to this project.

Proposed Action Alternative: No impacts to areas historical, archeological, and/or paleontological resources are anticipated due to the scope and nature of this project.

No Action Alternative: No impacts to historical, archeological, and/or paleontological resources will occur.

---

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 landscape consists of irrigated, agricultural river bottom used primarily for general farming and ranching operations. The fiber optic line would be a small underground addition of approximately 133 feet regarding impacts to the Dearborn River. It would have minimal impacts to the area's aesthetics. Noise increases would occur during construction; these impacts would cease as soon as the project is completed.

Proposed Action Alternative: No impacts to the aesthetics are anticipated.

No Action Alternative: No impacts to the aesthetics will occur.

---

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.

The area does not contain limited resources. Nearby activities consist mostly of farming and ranching operations.

Proposed Action Alternative No impacts to the demands of environmental resources such as land, water, air, and/or energy resources are anticipated.

No Action Alternative: No impacts to the demands of environmental resources such as land, water, air, and/or energy resources will occur.

---

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.

DNRC is not aware of other plans or projects in the area.

Proposed Action Alternative: No impacts to studies, plans, and/or projects pertinent to this area are anticipated to occur.

No Action Alternative: No impacts to studies, plans, and/or projects will occur.

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.

The proposed project would create human health and/or safety risks associated with the installation and maintenance of the fiber optic line.

Proposed Action Alternative: 3 Rivers Communications, Inc. will identify the risks associated with the installation of the line as an occupational hazard. The risk would only be present during installation and maintenance of the proposed line.

No Action Alternative: No impacts to human health and/or safety risks will occur.

---

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

Proposed Action Alternative: The proposed project would improve the 3 Rivers Communication, Inc. services in the project area.

No Action Alternative: No impacts to industrial, commercial, agricultural activities would occur.

---

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 would be completed in a relatively short time frame and it would not create permanent jobs.

Proposed Action Alternative: No lasting impacts to quantity and distribution of employment are anticipated.

No Action Alternative: No impacts to quantity and distribution of employment will occur.

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.

Proposed Action Alternative: The project would not have any measurable effects to local or state tax revenues.

No Action Alternative: No impacts to the state tax base and/or tax revenues will occur.

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

Proposed Action Alternative: The proposal would not have any impacts on traffic or government services.

No Action Alternative: No impacts to traffic, road uses, or government services will occur.

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.

DNRC is not aware of other plans or projects in the area.

Proposed Action Alternative: No impacts to local environmental plans and goals are anticipated occur as the construction is in remote, rural areas.

No Action Alternative: No impacts to local environmental plans and goals will occur.

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.

Floaters and fisherman utilize the Dearborn River for recreational purposes. Access to the adjacent private land for recreational activities is dependent on landowner permission.

Proposed Action Alternative: The proposed action is not expected to impact general recreational and wilderness activities on these state tracts.

No Action Alternative: No impacts to the quality of recreational and wilderness activities will occur.

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 proposal does not include any changes to additional housing, developments or population.

Proposed Action Alternative: The proposal does not include any changes to housing or developments. No direct or cumulative effects to population or housing are anticipated.

No Action Alternative: No impacts to the density and/or distribution of population and housing will occur.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Proposed Action Alternative: No impacts to the areas social structures, native/traditional lifestyles, or communities are anticipated to occur.

No Action Alternative: No impacts social structures, native/traditional lifestyles, or communities will occur.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

Proposed Action Alternative: No impacts to the areas cultural uniqueness and/or diversity are anticipated to occur.

No Action Alternative: No impacts to the areas cultural uniqueness and/or diversity will occur.

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.

Proposed Action Alternative: The proposed project would improve 3 Rivers Communication, Inc. services in the project area. Compensation to the trust beneficiary would involve the following values: the total length of the fiber optic line crossing state land in the Dearborn Riverbed is 133 feet long, 20 feet wide, and contains 0.06 acres more or less. DNRC valuation of the .06 acres is $1,400/acre for a total of $84.00. This is less than the minimum rate for this kind of easement. Total revenue for this ROW will be $100.00 the minimum amount required for a ROW across a navigable waterway.

No Action Alternative: No impacts to the social and economic circumstances will occur.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:**	Andy Burgoyne	**Date:**	March 8, 2015
	Title:	Helena Unit Manager		

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Proposed Alternative – Approve the project as proposed

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

This project should have no significant, detrimental impacts or cumulative effects regarding the project area.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

	EIS		More Detailed EA	X	No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:** Martin Balukas **Title:** Central Land Office Trust Lands Program Manager	
Signature:		**Date:** 6/17/16