

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Project Spokane - Navigable Water Easement
Proposed Implementation Date:	Summer/Fall 2016
Proponent:	Project Spokane LLC
Location:	Sections 21, T13N – R18W
County:	Missoula

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Project Spokane is proposing the construction and use of an overhead power distribution line spanning the Blackfoot River at the old Bonner Mill Site in Bonner, Montana. The power line is proposed to serve a new "Project Spokane Data Center" to be located on a portion of the old Bonner sawmill site. The project's electrical requirements exceed the current electrical service available onsite. The project is located in the NE4NE4 of Section 21, T13N-R18W as shown on the attached map.

Montana Code (MCA 70-16-201) provides for state ownership from the low water mark to the low water mark on navigable water bodies. Based on historical evidence, the Blackfoot River is commercially navigable from Lincoln, Montana (at bridge in SESW Sec. 24, T14N – R9W) to its confluence with the Clark Fork River. Therefore, the state claims ownership of the riverbed below the low water mark between these two points. DNRC has received an application for a 30 foot wide easement spanning 81 feet of the Blackfoot River from Project Spokane LLC for this project involving 0.056 acres of State-owned property below the low water mark of the river.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

Adjacent landowners have been contacted for (permission) authorization to site portions of the powerline on their property. DNRC contacted the Montana Department of Justice (NRDP) regarding the status of superfund cleanup activities on this site.

A "Joint Application for Proposed Work in Montana's Streams, Wetlands, Floodplains and Other Bodies of Water" has been submitted to the Missoula County Floodplain Administrator.

DNRC has received an easement application from Project Spokane. HDR Engineering has been hired to assist Project Spokane with the easement application.

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

Missoula County Planning Department - Floodplain Permit

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Project Spokane considered four alternatives before submitting their application for an easement to DNRC including; 1) Use Existing Electric Facilities on Site, 2) Install an Underground Distribution Line beneath the Blackfoot River, 3) Site the Business at a different Location, and 4) Construct an overhead power distribution line over the Blackfoot River as proposed in the easement application.

DNRC has the option to either recommend approval or denial of the easement application. As such there are two alternatives "Action" and "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.

Existing Condition: The project is located on an old sawmill site that has experienced a great deal of past soil disturbance. Portions of the area have been cleaned up through use of Superfund monies by the Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP).

No Action: The powerline would not be installed across the Blackfoot River. There would likely be little change in the existing condition of the site.

Action: Initial construction would involve erection of power poles on higher terrace positions on the east side of the river. No activities are proposed within the 100 year floodplain. There would be minor areas of disturbance from installation of power-poles.

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.

Existing Condition: The project is located on an old sawmill site that has experienced a great deal of past disturbance. Portions of the area have been cleaned up through use of Superfund monies by the Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP). This segment of river had been much wider prior to the removal of a dam at the mill site which was done as a part of superfund cleanup operations to improve water quality. Riverbanks have had revegetation completed to reduce sedimentation.

No Action: The powerline would not be installed across the Blackfoot River. There would likely be little change in the existing condition of the site.

Action: This is an aerial powerline with the supports located above the floodplain. No impacts to water quality have occurred from the adjacent powerline. No activities are proposed within the Blackfoot River 100 year floodplain, therefore, no impacts to water quality, quantity and distribution are anticipated from implementation of the 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.

Existing Conditions: No concerns exist regarding the air quality within the immediate area of the proposed action.

No Action: The powerline would not be installed across the Blackfoot River. There would likely be little change in the existing condition of the site.

Action: The proposed project would be in compliance with the Clean Air Act. Some temporary emission releases are expected during construction activities; however air quality is not expected to be impacted to any measurable degree.

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.

Noxious Weeds: Existing Conditions: Noxious weed infestations (Spotted knapweed, Dalmatian toadflax, Leafy Spurge etc.) occur along portions of the project area. Infestations are located on upper riverbanks and outside the low water mark. No aquatic weeds were identified at the site.

No Action: Noxious weeds will continue to occur along the power line and levels of infestation will vary depending on level of control measures. No change in effects to DNRC ownership

Action: Ground-disturbing activities would be limited to a small excavation required to construct power poles on private land within the mill site. No ground disturbance would occur on DNRC ownership, therefore no changes to vegetation would be expected occur to State land.

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.

Existing Conditions: Limited habitats for terrestrial wildlife exist in the project area. Surrounding lands are an industrial site that has been in existence for more than 100 years. Numerous forms of human disturbance likely limits use of the vicinity by some wildlife species.

No-Action: No disturbance to terrestrial wildlife would occur. No changes to existing habitats would be anticipated. Collectively, no effects to terrestrial wildlife would be anticipated.

Action: Some short-duration disturbance to terrestrial wildlife could occur. No appreciable changes to existing habitats would be anticipated. Collectively, negligible effects to terrestrial wildlife would be anticipated.

Existing Conditions: Fisheries: The Blackfoot River supports a diverse fishery. Species present include bull-trout, westslope cutthroat trout (WCT), brown trout, rainbow trout, brook trout, and other minor species (MFISH 2016). Both westslope cutthroat trout and bull trout are considered sensitive species by DNRC. Bull trout is a federally threatened species and potential for impacts to this species are discussed in detail in Section 9 below.

No-Action: No changes to the crossing site within the riparian area, or existing fisheries would occur.

Action: This is an aerial powerline with the supports located above the floodplain. No changes to existing fish habitats would be expected and no in stream activities would occur. No impacts to fisheries are expected.

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.

Existing Conditions: Limited habitats for terrestrial wildlife exist in the project area. The project area is roughly 1.5 miles from the nearest bald eagle nest (Milltown pond on the Clark Fork River); some potential bald eagle foraging habitat exists in the project area. Otherwise, habitats for other threatened endangered, or sensitive terrestrial wildlife species does not exist in the project area. Proximity to Highway 200 and numerous other forms of human disturbance likely limits some wildlife use of the vicinity.

No-Action: No disturbance to terrestrial wildlife would occur. No changes to existing habitats would be anticipated. Collectively, no effects to terrestrial wildlife would be anticipated.

Action Alternative: Some short-duration disturbance to terrestrial wildlife could occur. No appreciable changes to existing habitats would be anticipated. In the event a closer bald eagle nest is identified prior to the proposed activities, additional mitigations may be incorporated. Efforts to complete proposed activities prior to the commencement of the bald eagle nesting period (February 1) would reduce potential for effects to bald eagles in the vicinity. Collectively, negligible effects to terrestrial threatened, endangered, or sensitive wildlife species would be anticipated.

Bull Trout Existing Conditions: Bull trout is a federally threatened species with critical habitat in the vicinity of the project area. The entire main stem of the Blackfoot River, including the project area is identified by Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MFWP) and USFWS as nodal habitat (MBTRT 2000). Nodal habitat includes those areas which provide or have the potential to provide a migratory corridor for bull trout.

Bull Trout- No Action: No changes to the crossing or existing fisheries would occur, as this is an aerial crossing and the support towers are above the floodplain and there is no impacts to sediment or fisheries habitat.

Bull Trout - Action: No changes to the crossing or existing fisheries would occur, as this is an aerial crossing and the support towers are above the floodplain and there are no expected impacts to sediment or fisheries habitat.

Wetlands: No wetlands have been identified in the project area; therefore no impacts would be anticipated from selection of either alternative.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

DNRC Archaeologist Patrick Rennie was consulted regarding this project. Because only the bed of the Blackfoot River is state-owned land in the project's area of potential effect, there are no cultural resource concerns.

No Action: The powerline would not be installed across the Blackfoot River. There would likely be little change in the existing condition of the site.

Action: Issuance of an easement would have no effect to state owned heritage properties as defined in the State Antiquities Act.

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.

Existing Conditions: The project is located on an old abandoned sawmill site. The area is actively being promoted as a commercial/industrial site for re-development. There is an existing powerline adjacent (downstream of the proposed powerline) and a power substation located on the northwest bank of the river at this location.

No Action: The powerline would not be installed across the Blackfoot River. There would likely be little change in the existing condition of the site.

Action: Due to the presence of other electric powerlines and a substation immediately adjacent to the proposed powerline, minimal impacts to aesthetics would be 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 Action/Action: This area is zoned as a commercial/industrial site and has been in use in a similar capacity for over 100 years. Minimal impacts to environmental resources of land, water, air or energy are anticipated with selection of either alternative.

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.

This area is zoned as a commercial/industrial site. The proposed use is consistent with this use.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.</i>• <i>Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.</i>• <i>Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.</i> |
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14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

No Action: The powerline would not be installed across the Blackfoot River. There would likely be little change in the existing condition of the site.

Action: The proposed project would clear span the channel. The powerline clearance has been designed to be 26 feet above the 100-year flood water elevation (base flood elevation) and would not pose an impediment to navigability or a safety hazard to boating or floating on the river.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

No Action: No change from the current situation

Action: The proposed project would allow additional commercial/industrial re-development of the abandoned Bonner sawmill site to 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.

No Action: No change from the current situation

Action: The proposed project would provide additional long term employment opportunities.

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 Action: No change from the current situation

Action: The proposed project would allow for development of a new commercial business enterprise. A corresponding increase in the tax base and tax revenues would be anticipated.

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 Action/Action: No impacts.

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 Action: No change from the current situation

Action: The proposed project would accommodate additional commercial/industrial development of the site.

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 Action/Action: No impacts. The proposed project would clear span the Blackfoot River channel. The powerline clearance has been designed to be 26 feet above the 100-year flood water elevation (base flood elevation) and would not pose an impediment to navigability or a safety hazard to boating or floating on the river. The proposed powerline would be immediately adjacent to an existing powerline spanning the river and is located on a site that is being promoted for commercial/industrial development.

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 Action/Action: No change to a very minor increase in the density and distribution of population and housing would be anticipated with selection of either alternative.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

No Action/Action: No change would be anticipated from implementation of either alternative.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

No Action/Action: No change would be anticipated from implementation of 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 change from the current situation.

Action: Granting an easement involving 0.056 acres would result in a small financial return to the Public Land- Navigable Rivers Trust.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Robert H. Storer	Date: 6/20/2016
	Title: Trust Lands Program Manager – Southwest Land Office	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

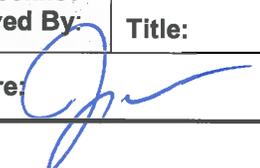
I select the action alternative; granting an easement involving 0.056 acres of State-owned property below the low water mark of the Blackfoot River, thereby accommodating construction and use of an aerial power distribution line to be used to supply power to Project Spokane’s proposed bit-coin processing center.

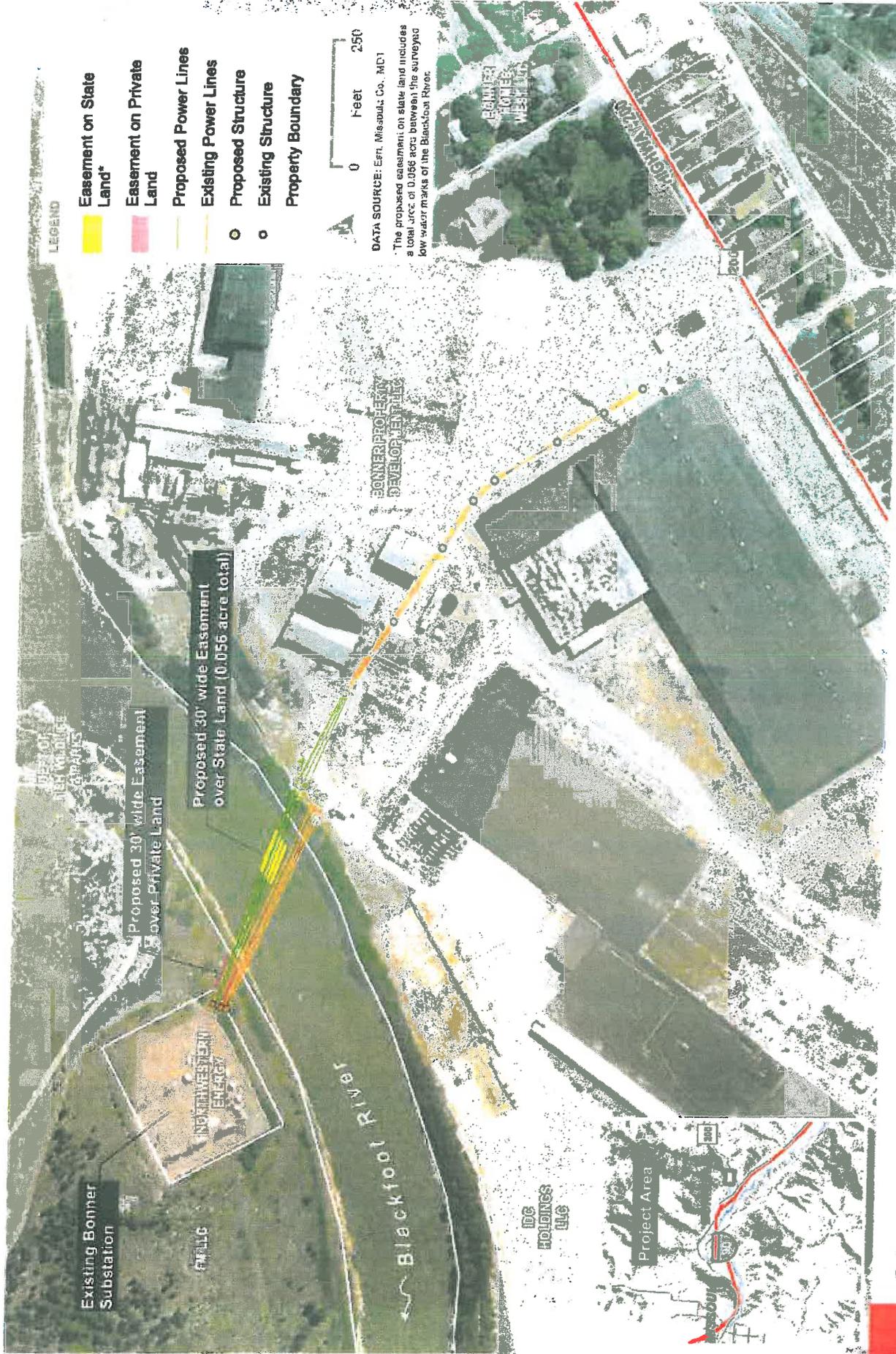
26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The action alternative will not result in significant environmental impacts.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS More Detailed EA No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Jonathan Hansen
	Title: Missoula Unit Manager – SW Land Office
Signature: 	Date: 6-23-16



LEGEND

- Easement on State Land
- Easement on Private Land
- Proposed Power Lines
- Existing Power Lines
- Proposed Structure
- Existing Structure
- Property Boundary



DATA SOURCE: Esri, Microsoft Co., MDI

The proposed easement on state land includes a total area of 0.056 acres between the surveyed low water marks of the Blackfoot River



**PROJECT SPOKANE DATA CENTER PROJECT
PROPOSED EASEMENTS AND PROJECT AREA OVERVIEW**

