

# CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

<b>Project Name:</b>	Southern Montana Telephone Company Wisdom/Squaw Creek Exchange
<b>Proposed Implementation Date</b>	May 2016
<b>Proponent:</b>	Southern Montana Telephone Co., Wisdom, MT 59701 (406) 689-3333
<b>Location:</b>	Section 2, T2S-R15W; Section 15, T1S-R15W; Section 16, T1S – R15W, Section 34, T1S – R -15W, and Section 35, T1S – R15W,
<b>County:</b>	Beaverhead

## I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The proponent, Southern Montana Telephone has applied to the DNRC, Dillon Unit for six utility easements to provide a 20-foot wide corridor, 10 feet each side of center line, for the installation of underground telecommunications cable in the Big Hole Valley near Wisdom Montana described as the Wisdom Squaw Creek exchange. There are two navigable river crossing applications, and four state land crossings.

In Section 35, T1S – R15W there is a 20 foot wide by 254.93 foot of Big Hole River crossing, 0.117 acres, and a second navigable river crossing in Section 34, T1S – R15W of 0.008 acres.

The four state land crossing are in Section 15, T1S – R15W, 20 feet wide and 1,956.35 feet long, 0.898 acres, Section 16, T1S – R15W, 20 feet wide and 2,297.39 feet long, 1.055 acres, Section 35, T1S - R15W, 20 feet wide and 3,114.6 feet long, 1.451 acres, and Section 2, T2S – R15W, 20 feet wide by 1,049.74 feet long, 0.482 acres. All sections are on Common Schools State Trust lands except for Section 15, T1S – R15W which is Capital Building Trust.

The proposed easement is for the installation and maintenance of an underground telecommunication cable to upgrade current facilities and services, and allow for future growth capabilities. The upgrade would provide state of the art telecommunications toll and distribution facilities, as well as future growth capabilities. (See Attachment C, Vicinity map, Attachment B Survey maps).

## II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

A field review was conducted in March 2016 by the Dillon Unit Manager

Scoping notices were sent to the following parties seeking comments for this proposed project:

Fish, Wildlife and Parks: Wildlife Biologist, Vanna Boccadori and Fisheries Management Biologist, Jim Olson

Others: Beaverhead County Planner, Big Hole Watershed Committee

DNRC: Archaeologist, P. Rennie

Montana Natural Heritage Program

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

The Beaverhead County Weed Board administers the State weed laws in Beaverhead County.

A 310 Permit from Beaverhead Conservation District will be needed for the two river crossings and has been secured by Southern Montana Telephone at the time of the writing of this document.

Floodplain permits from Beaverhead & Deerlodge counties. At the time of the writing of this document, the floodplain permit application was received by Beaverhead County. This permit cannot be awarded until all other required permits are issued

### 3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

**Alternative A:** Action Alternative - Grant Southern Montana Telephone a 20 foot wide by 254.93 foot long easement to cross the Beaverhead River in Section 35, T1S – R15W, 0.117 acres, and a second navigable river crossing easement 18 feet long by 20 feet wide in Section 34, T1S – R15W, 0.008 acres, and grant four additional underground utility easements in Section 15, T1S – R15W, 20 feet wide and 1,956.35 feet long, 0.898 acres, Section 16, T1S – R15W, 20 feet wide and 2,297.39 feet long, 1.055 acres, Section 35, T1S - R15W, 20 feet wide and 3,114.6 feet long, 1.451 acres, and Section 2, T2S – R15W, 20 feet wide by 1,049.74 feet long, 0.482 acres. These easements would be granted for the specific purpose of installation and maintenance of an underground telecommunication cable, and allow for future growth capabilities.

**Alternative B:** No Action Alternative – Deny Southern Montana Telephone a 20 foot wide by 254.93 foot long easement to cross the Beaverhead River in Section 35, T1S – R15W, 0.117 acres, and a second navigable river crossing easement 18 feet long by 20 feet wide in Section 34, T1S – R15W, 0.008 acres, and grant four additional underground utility easements in Section 15, T1S – R15W, 20 feet wide and 1,956.35 feet long, 0.898 acres, Section 16, T1S – R15W, 20 feet wide and 2297.39 feet long, 1.055 acres, Section 35, T1S - R15W, 20 feet wide and 3,114.6 feet long, 1.451 acres, and Section 2, T2S – R15W, 20 feet wide by 1,049.74 feet long, 0.482 acres. These easements would not be granted for the specific purpose of installation and maintenance of an underground telecommunication cable, and allow for future growth capabilities.

### 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.*

The proposed underground telecommunication cable routes follows gently rolling terrain. The telecommunication cable installation activities would require tracked-equipment and support vehicle making approximately two trips along the proposed routes. Most of the cable installation would be taking place within state or county roadway corridors, with the exception of 0.125 acres impacted near the Big Hole River.

The soils at the river crossings in the NW1/4 of Section 35 and the NE ¼ of Section 34 of Township 1S, Range 15W have the most potential for negative impacts from erosion. These soils are identified as Mooseflat-Eachuston-Copperbasin complex, 0-2 percent slopes. The parent material for this type of soil is fine-loamy over sandy and gravelly alluvium. These soils are poorly drained with occasional flooding and have a land capability classification of 5w.

**No Action Alternative:** No changes to the soil conditions will occur if this alternative is chosen.

**Action Alternative:** Some rutting and soil disturbance could occur if work is done during wet, saturated conditions. Should any sign of erosion occur upon any of the proposed routes, Southern Montana Telephone Co. would be required to install erosion control features where necessary. Minimal impacts 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.*

The installation route would cross the Big Hole River in Section 35, T1S – R15W in the NW1/4, NW1/4 and Section 34, T1S – R15W in the NE1/4, NE1/4. The proposed underground telecommunication cable route follows gently rolling terrain. Initial telecommunication cable installation activities would require tracked-equipment making two trips along the proposed route. Southern Montana Telephone Co. applied for and received the necessary permits for crossing or boring the two segments of the river.

**No Action Alternative:** No changes to water quality would occur under this alternative.

**Action Alternative:** Under this alternative erosion and damage to the riverbanks is not expected as boring will start and end above high water marks on both river segments. Should any sign of erosion occur upon the proposed route, Southern Montana Telephone Co. would be required to install erosion control features where necessary. Due to the gentle slope and minimal ground disturbance associated with the proposed boring method, minimal impacts 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.*

This proposed utility easement for an underground telecommunication cable is located in a sparsely populated area north of Wisdom in the Big Hole Valley. The area currently meets EPA ambient air quality standards and is not located in a class I air shed. The granting of this easement would not cause any long term or cumulative impacts to air quality in the surrounding area.

**No Action Alternative:** No changes to Air Quality standards would occur if this alternative is chosen.

**Action Alternative:** During the construction phase of the installation of the underground Communication cable could cause a small increase in dust particulates to occur for a short period of time. This change in air quality standards would be of short duration, and no long term or cumulative effects would be anticipated under this alternative.

#### 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.*

Some vegetative disturbance is expected. The disturbance would occur during installation phase of the project where they would use a vibrating plow method. Using tracked-equipment the plow excavates a trench of approximately 12 inches in width, installs the cable, backfills and compact the trench in one pass, resulting in minimal surface disturbance. The actual vegetative disturbance over the entire project area on state land would be approximately two acres in size. All disturbed areas would be seeded with a native grass seed mixture and erosion control features would be installed if necessary. Minimal impacts are anticipated.

**No Action Alternative:** No changes to the current vegetative cover type will occur under this alternative.

**Action Alternative:** Some vegetation disturbance will occur, mitigation measures would be taken as stated above.

**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.*

A variety of big game, small mammals, raptors, songbirds, grouse and fish may use this area. Installation of the underground telecommunication cables would be in the close proximity of other existing buried cables, overhead transmission lines and public road rights-of-way. Due to the relatively small disturbance area and brief installation period, minimal impacts are anticipated due to the underground telecommunication cable installation.

**No Action Alternative:** No changes in the current habitat would occur if this alternative is chosen for this proposal.

**Action Alternative:** The installation would cause short term disturbance to the birds and mammals in the area, however long term or cumulative effects are not 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.*

Vanna Boccadori, FWP Wildlife Biologist submitted comments for this project with the recommendation of disturbance occurring only after July 15 to avoid disturbing Sage Grouse and other ground nesting birds. She also recommends disturbed areas be treated for noxious weeds management for a minimum of three years after completion.

Jim Olsen, FWP Fisheries Biologist submitted comments for this project and had no concerns.

The Montana Natural Heritage Program identified the following list of eight vertebrate animal species of concern near the proposed project area.

**Greater Sage-Grouse** (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) are known to inhabit the proposed project area. This project was reviewed by the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program. The easements covered by this Environmental Assessment are within general sage grouse habitat and some are within two miles of the McVey lek. However, it has been determined that no stipulations are necessary for these segments as all of the activity would be taking place to the West of Highway 43 and the McVey lek sits 1.5 miles to the East of Highway 43.

Any disturbed areas within General Habitat should be reseeded with native grasses, forbs, and shrubs and must be managed for noxious weeds. Please see the Attachment 1 for the full review from the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program.

**No Action Alternative:** No changes in the current habitat would occur if this alternative is chosen for this proposal.

**Action Alternatives:** Some changes to current habitat would occur under this alternative; however, due to the relatively small disturbance area and brief installation period no impacts to Sage Grouse are anticipated.

**Pygmy Rabbit** (*Brachylagus idahoensis*) Pygmy Rabbits are a sagebrush obligate species that occurs regularly throughout the upper Big Hole valley. The last recorded observation near the proposed project area was in 1997. Pygmy Rabbit is a BLM and US Forest Service sensitive species. Because of the projects small footprint and the short duration of the proposal no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on this species are anticipated.

**No Action Alternative:** No changes in the current habitat would occur if this alternative is chosen for this proposal.

**Action Alternatives:** Some changes to current habitat would occur under this alternative; however, due to the relatively small disturbance area and brief installation period no impacts to Pygmy Rabbit are anticipated.

**Great Blue Heron** (*Ardea Herodias*) The Great Blue Heron is currently listed as a sensitive species by the State of Montana. According to the MNHP site, the blue heron primarily inhabits riparian areas and wetland habitats and has been observed as recently as 2010 in the proposed project area. These herons begin courtship in March, lay eggs from early April to early May, and typically hatch from early May to early June.

**No Action Alternative:** No changes in the current habitat would occur if this alternative is chosen for this proposal.

**Action Alternatives:** Some changes to current habitat would occur under this alternative; however, due to the relatively small disturbance area and brief installation period no impacts to Great Blue Heron are anticipated.

**Bald Eagle** (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) is listed as a sensitive species by the US Forest Service, and the state of Montana lists it as an S4 species. An S4 species is one that is "uncommon but not rare, and usually widespread". Bald eagles live along lakes and rivers where their main food source is fish, although they will also feed on carrion.

Neither **No Action**, nor **Action Alternatives** would have any short term, long term or cumulative impacts on Bald Eagle habitat.

**Arctic Grayling** (*Thymallus arcticus*) are listed as a sensitive species by the Forest Service and BLM and listed as a Critically Imperiled Species of Special Concern by the Fish & Wildlife Service. Grayling are currently living in the Big Hole River with the main concentration found in the upper Big Hole Valley.

Neither **No Action**, nor **Action Alternatives** would have any short term, long term or cumulative impacts on Arctic Grayling habitat.

**Little Brown Myotis** (*Myotis lucifugus*) Little Brown Bats are considered a species of concern. The species is a year round resident in Montana. Found over a variety of habitats across a large elevational gradient. The bats usually forage over water, eating mostly insects. These bats were observed in the project area in 2010. Due to the relatively small disturbance area and brief installation period no impacts to the Little Brown Myotis are anticipated.

Neither **No Action**, nor **Action Alternatives** would have any short term, long term or cumulative impacts on Little Brown Myotis habitat.

**Hoary Bat** (*Lasiurus cinereus*) the hoary bat is a state listed species of concern. According to the MNHP site, the species prefers coniferous and deciduous woodlands located in mountain settings or riparian areas along waterways. Due to the relatively small disturbance area and brief installation period no impacts to the Hoary Bat are anticipated.

Neither **No Action**, nor **Action Alternatives** would have any short term, long term or cumulative impacts on Hoary Bat habitat.

**Wolverine** (*Gulo gulo*) The BLM and US Forest Service list the wolverine as a sensitive species. Wolverines could and may pass through the state sections when moving between mountain ranges however the state sections do not provide the necessary habitat for sustained use by wolverines at this location. Because of this, this project would not cause direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on this species and the area of this proposal is not considered prime habitat for wolverines.

Neither **No Action**, nor **Action Alternatives** would have any short term, long term or cumulative impacts on Wolverine habitat.

**10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:**

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

Patrick Rennie, DNRC Archaeologist, was consulted regarding possible cultural resources inside the proposed project area.

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.*

The proposed project is located in a sparsely populated area. Due to the relative remoteness of the proposed project area and short initial underground telephone line installation period, aesthetics should not be adversely affected.

**No Action Alternative:** No changes to aesthetic values would occur if this alternative is chosen.

**Action Alternative:** Due to the relatively small disturbance area and brief installation period, no long term aesthetic changes are expected to occur under this alternative.

**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 for additional environmental resources are required for this project. No cumulative effects to Environmental Resources should result from either of the proposed alternatives.

**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.*

The DNRC Administrative Rules for State Land Leasing ARM 36.25.101 through 36.25.141, applicable to management activities on State lands.

No other studies, plans, or projects were identified in this particular area during the scoping for this proposal.

**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 health or safety risks are posed by either of the proposed alternatives.

**15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:**

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

**No Action Alternative:** No changes to industrial, commercial, or agricultural activities would occur if this alternative is chosen.

**Action Alternative:** No changes to industrial, commercial, or agricultural activities would occur if this alternative is chosen.

**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.*

Neither of the proposed alternatives will create nor eliminate permanent jobs in the area.

**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.*

Neither of the proposed alternatives will increase tax revenues nor result in an increase or decrease of the tax base.

**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 increased demand for government services are expected as a result of either of the proposed alternatives.

**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 known zoning laws or management plans are in place for any of these locations.

**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.*

Neither of the proposed alternatives will affect nor alter recreational activities in the area.

**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.*

Neither of the proposed alternatives will affect distribution of population or housing in Wisdom or surrounding areas.

**22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:**

*Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.*

Neither of the proposed alternatives will affect social structures or mores of the surrounding area.

**23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:**

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

Neither of the proposed alternatives will affect cultural uniqueness and diversity 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.*

**No Action Alternative:** No revenue for the trust would be generated from this alternative.

**Action Alternative:** If this alternative is chosen the estimated return to the Capital Building Trust would be \$898.00 (.898 acres x \$1000/acre) and \$2988 (2.988 acres x \$1000/acre) to the Common Schools State Trust at fair market value for the land associated with the easement. Return to the general fund would be \$125.00 (0.125 acres x 1000/acre) for navigable river crossing fees.

<b>EA Checklist Prepared By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Jessica Bryers-Holschbach	<b>Date:</b> March 17, 2016
	<b>Title:</b> Dillon Unit Senior Engine Boss	

**V. FINDING**

**25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:**

**Alternative A:** Action Alternative - Grant Southern Montana Telephone a 20 foot wide by 254.93 foot long easement to cross the Beaverhead River in Section 35, T1S – R15W, 0.117 acres, and a second navigable river crossing easement 18 feet long by 20 feet wide in Section 34, T1S – R15W, 0.008 acres, and grant four additional underground utility easements in Section 15, T1S – R15W, 20 feet wide and 1,956.35 feet long, 0.898 acres, Section 16, T1S – R15W, 20 feet wide and 2,297.39 feet long, 1.055 acres, Section 35, T1S - R15W, 20 feet wide and 3,114.6 feet long, 1.451 acres, and Section 2, T2S – R15W, 20 feet wide by 1,049.74 feet long, 0.482 acres. These easements would be granted for the specific purpose of installation and maintenance of an underground telecommunication cable, and allow for future growth capabilities.

**26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:**

MITIGATION MEASURES:

1. Limit equipment operations to periods when soils are dry, frozen or snow covered to minimize soil compaction, rutting and vegetative disturbance. Control erosion by installing adequate drainage and erosion control features where necessary. Provide effective sediment filtration along drainage features near wet/stream crossing sites.
2. Grass seed all disturbed areas with an appropriate native grass seed mixture. Require easement holder to spray for weeds the first three years after installation of communication cable.
3. Proponent would comply with all the requirements of the Natural Streambed and Conservation Act (310) permit.
4. Installation and subsequent routine maintenance of the underground telecommunication cable would be prohibited from March 25 through early June to minimize any potential impacts with grouse lek activities and nesting sites for Great Blue Heron.
5. Contact DNRC wildlife biologist should any threatened or endangered species be encountered within the proposed project area.
6. Contact DNRC Archeologist if archeological or paleontological artifacts are uncovered during the plowing of the telecommunication line.

**27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:**

EIS                     
 More Detailed EA                     
 No Further Analysis

<b>EA Checklist Approved By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Timothy Egan
	<b>Title:</b> Dillon Unit Manager
<b>Signature:</b> /S/ Timothy Egan	<b>Date:</b> March 17, 2016



**ATTACHMENTS**

A – Consultation Letter from the Montana Sage Grouse Conservation Program

**RECEIVED**  
MAR - 8 2016  
**DNRC**

**MONTANA SAGE GROUSE  
HABITAT CONSERVATION PROGRAM**



STEVE BULLOCK, GOVERNOR

**STATE OF MONTANA**

PHONE: (406) 444-8554  
FAX: (406) 444-6721

PO BOX 201601  
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-1601

Project No. 1454347514716  
Governor's Executive Orders 12-2015 and 21-2015  
Water and Environmental Technologies  
Southern MT Tele Company - FTTP 2016

Jay Slocum  
P.O. Box 665  
Anaconda, MT 59711

March 7, 2016

Dear Mr. Slocum,

The Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program received a request for consultation and review of your project or proposed activity on February 1, 2016. Based on the information provided, all or a portion of this project is located within General Habitat for sage grouse.

Executive Orders 12-2015 and 21-2015 set forth Montana's Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy. Montana's goal is to maintain viable sage grouse populations and conserve habitat so that Montana maintains flexibility to manage our own lands, our wildlife, and our economy and a listing under the federal Endangered Species Act is not warranted in the future.

This project involves the installation of approximately 26 miles fiber-optic cable on Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and private lands in Beaverhead and Deer Lodge counties. Eighteen of the 26 miles are within General Habitat for sage grouse. Installation is accomplished by utilizing the direct (vibrating) plow method. This method excavates a trench of approximately 12 inches in width, installs the cable, backfills and compacts the trench in one pass, resulting in minimal surface disturbance. Trenching will be within or adjacent to road ROWs.



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Director's Office: (406) 444-2074



The Program has completed its review, including:

**Project Description:**

**Project Disturbance:** ~5.4 acres; ~26 miles of fiber optic cable  
**Time Frame:** Summer, 2016

**Project Location:**

**Legal:** T. 1 N., R. 15 W., Sec. 32-32; T. 1 S., R. 15 W., Sec. 1-6, 9-10, 15-16, 27, 33-35;  
T. 2 S., R. 15 W., Sec. 2-3, 22, 28, 30, 33; T. 2 S., R. 16 W., Sec. 24-25, 34-35;  
T. 3 S., R. 15 W., Sec. 4-5, 8-9; T. 3 S., R. 16 W., Sec. 3-4, 9  
**County:** Beaverhead & Deer Lodge  
**Ownership:** Private, DNRC, BLM

**Executive Orders 12-2015 and 21-2015 Consistency:**

Based on the information provided, portions of your project are within two miles of four active sage grouse leks. All of these leks are located within General Habitat for sage grouse (See Map 1).

**Recommendations:**

Two of the four leks should not be impacted by your project as anthropogenic disturbances and natural features provide buffers for the leks. The Steel Creek lek is located east of Wisdom and across the Big Hole River and State Highway 43. The McVey lek is 1.5 miles from one of the fiber-optic segments. This lek is also east of State Highway 43 and the proposed development is located west of the highway.

Two segments of your project could impact two leks (See Maps 2-3). We recommend no installation occur between March 15 and July 15. If this is not possible, conduct all installation related activities between the hours of 8:00 A.M. and 7:00 P.M. The legal description of the lands in which this stipulation should be applied are:

Township 2 South, Range 15 West, Sections 22 (Map 2)  
Township 2 South, Range 16 West, Sections 24-25 (Map 3)

There is one DNRC tract which has a lek within two miles. However, this is one of the parcels where anthropogenic disturbances buffer the lek. As a result, no seasonal timing restrictions are recommended.

Any disturbed areas within General Habitat for sage grouse should be reseeded. We recommend using a seed mix to reestablish native grasses, forbs and shrubs. Landowners should be consulted on the desired seed mix on private lands. Weed management is required within General Habitat for sage-grouse.



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Reclamation of disturbed areas must include control of noxious weeds and invasive plant species, including cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) and Japanese brome (*Bromus japonicus*).

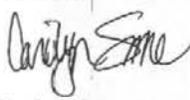
Your activities are consistent with the Montana Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy. Your proposed project or activity may need to obtain additional permits or authorization from other Montana state agencies or possibly federal agencies. They are very likely to request a copy of this consultation letter, so please retain it for your records.

Subject to any stipulations identified in this letter, your activities are consistent with the Montana Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy. Your proposed project or activity may need to obtain additional permits or authorization from other Montana state agencies or possibly federal agencies. They are very likely to request a copy of this consultation letter, so please retain it for your records.

Please be aware that if the location or boundaries of your proposed project or activity change in the future, or if new activities are proposed within one of the designated sage-grouse habitat areas, please visit <https://sagegrouse.mt.gov/projects/> and submit the new information.

Thanks for your interest in sage grouse and your commitment to taking the steps necessary to ensure Montana's Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy is successful.

Sincerely,



Carolyn Sime  
Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program Manager

cc: Shawn Thomas  
DNRC-Trust Land Management Administrator  
P.O. Box 201601  
Helena, MT 59620-1601



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Director's Office: (406) 444-2074



Map 3  
Southern MT Tele Company-FTTP 2016 – Project Area Boundary (Segment 2887)  
March 7, 2016



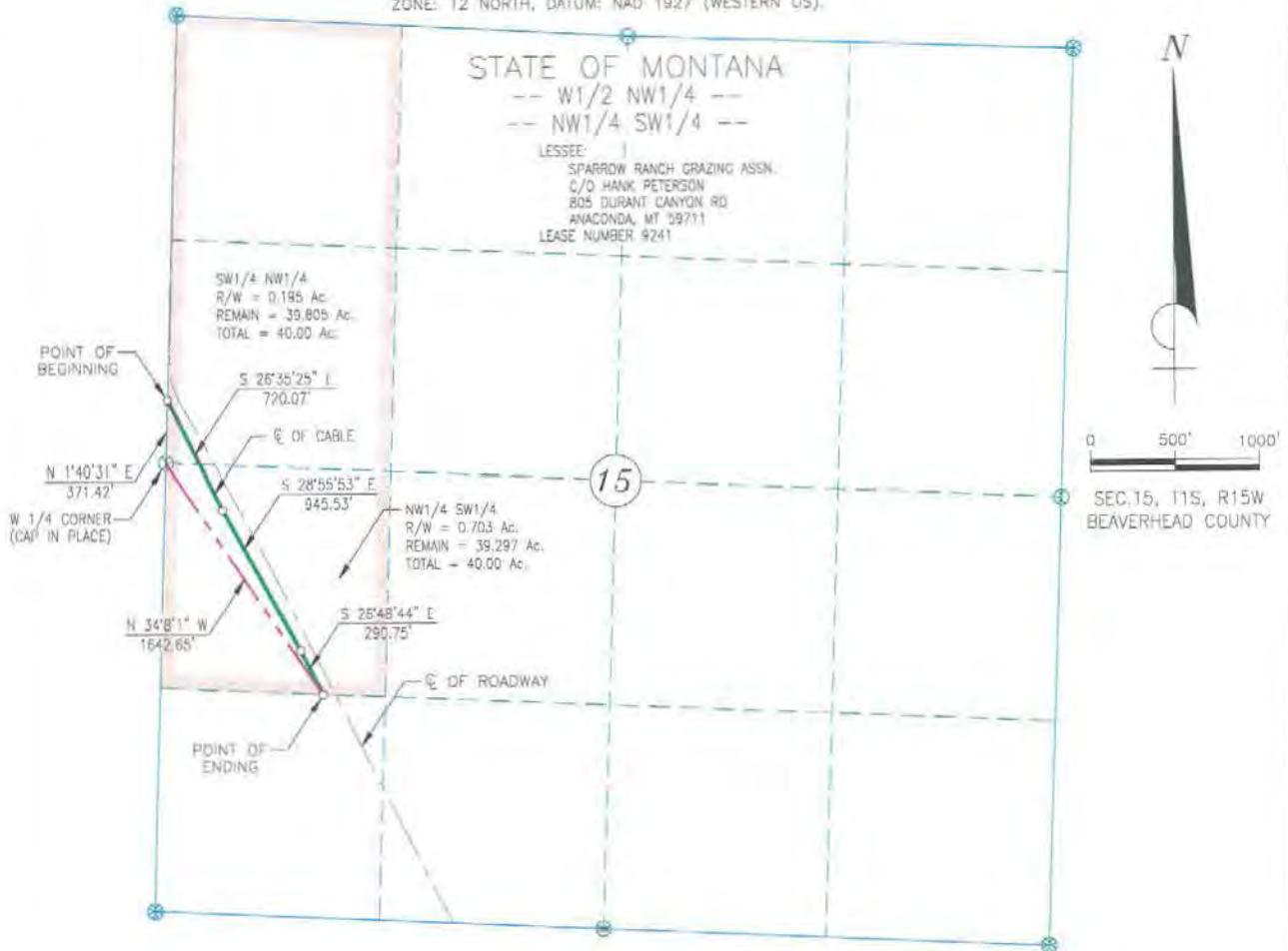
Light Green-General Habitat for Sage Grouse  
Orange Circles-Sage grouse leks  
Black line – Southern Telephone Segment #2887

No shading - Non Habitat

**ATTACHMENTS**

B – Survey Maps

NOTE: ALL BEARINGS AND DISTANCES ON SECTION ARE TAKEN FROM FIELD GPS SURVEY DATA CORRECTED IN SYSTEM: UTM, ZONE: 12 NORTH, DATUM: NAD: 1927 (WESTERN US).



DESCRIPTION

A RIGHT-OF-WAY FOR AN UNDERGROUND TELECOMMUNICATIONS CABLE EXTENDING TWENTY (20.0) FEET IN WIDTH WITH TEN (10.0) FEET ON EACH SIDE OF A CENTERLINE ALL WITHIN THE SW1/4 NW1/4 AND THE NW1/4 SW1/4 OF SECTION 15, TOWNSHIP 1 SOUTH, RANGE 15 WEST OF THE PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, MONTANA, AND MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS:

COMMENCING AT THE WEST QUARTER CORNER OF SAID SECTION 15; THENCE NORTH 1°40'31" EAST A DISTANCE OF 371.42 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING OF THE RIGHT-OF-WAY CENTERLINE AND WEST BOUNDARY OF THE SW1/4 NW1/4 OF SAID SECTION 15; THENCE ON AND ALONG THE RIGHT-OF-WAY CENTERLINE ON A BEARING OF SOUTH 26°35'25" EAST A DISTANCE OF 720.07 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 28°55'53" EAST A DISTANCE OF 945.53 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 26°48'44" EAST A DISTANCE OF 290.75 FEET TO THE POINT OF ENDING OF THE RIGHT-OF-WAY CENTERLINE AND SOUTH BOUNDARY OF THE NW1/4 SW1/4 OF SAID SECTION 15; THENCE NORTH 34°8'1" WEST A DISTANCE OF 1642.65 FEET TO THE WEST QUARTER CORNER OF SAID SECTION 15.

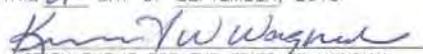
CONTAINED WITHIN THE ABOVE DESCRIBED NEW CONSTRUCTION RIGHT-OF-WAY IS 0.898 ACRES MORE OR LESS.

 **KENNETH W WAGNER**  
 NOTARY PUBLIC for the  
 State of Montana  
 Residing at Havre, Montana  
 My Commission Expires  
 January 12, 2016

AFFIDAVIT

STATE OF MONTANA }  
 COUNTY OF HILL } SS

DOUGLAS B. VANCE, BEING DULY SWORN, SAYS, THAT HE IS THE CONSULTING ENGINEER FOR SOUTHERN MONTANA TELEPHONE COMPANY WHOSE PRINCIPAL OFFICE IS LOCATED AT WISDOM, MONTANA; THAT THE ABOVE PLAT AND DESCRIPTION WAS PREPARED UNDER HIS SUPERVISION FROM AN ACCURATE SURVEY OF THE RIGHT-OF-WAY CENTERLINE BY SURVEY CREWS UNDER HIS SUPERVISION. THE ABOVE PLAT CORRECTLY SHOWS THE QUANTITY OF LAND REQUIRED FOR THE RIGHT-OF-WAY IN EACH FORTY-ACRE TRACT AND ALSO THE AMOUNT OF LAND REMAINING IN EACH PORTION OF SUCH FORTY-ACRE TRACT.

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN BEFORE ME  
 THIS 21<sup>st</sup> DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2015  
  
 NOTARY PUBLIC FOR THE STATE OF MONTANA  
 RESIDING AT HAVRE, MONTANA  
 MY COMMISSION EXPIRES JAN 12, 2016

 **DOUGLAS B. VANCE**  
 12611 PE  
 DOUGLAS B. VANCE, REGISTERED PROFESSIONAL  
 ENGINEER, LICENSE NO. 12611 PE  
 PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER

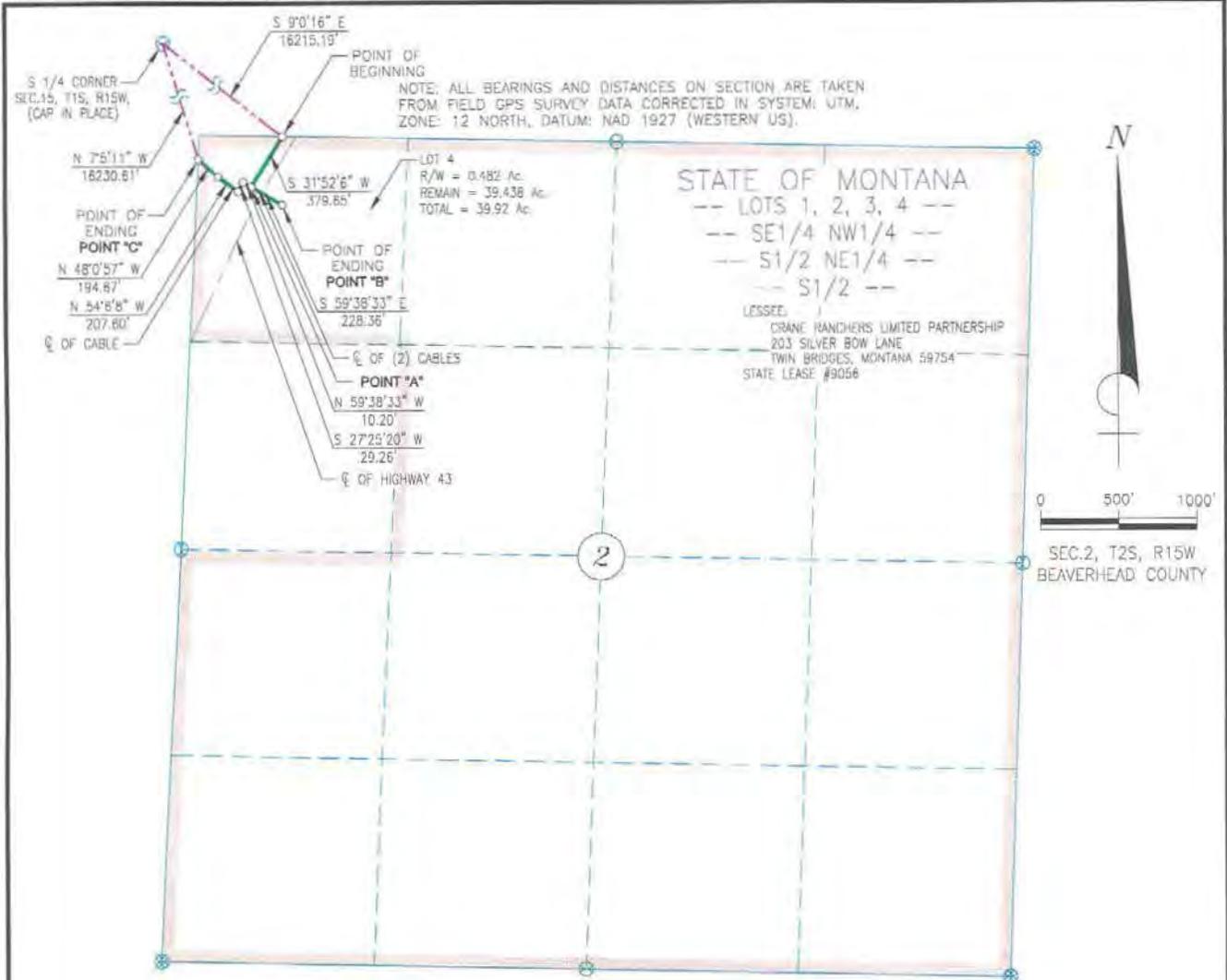
PLAT of RIGHT-OF-WAY on STATE LAND  
 Sec. 15, T 1 S, R 15 W, P.M.M.  
 BEAVERHEAD COUNTY

SOUTHERN MONTANA TELEPHONE COMPANY  
 WISDOM, MONTANA

SMT15115.DWG

HEBERLY and ASSOCIATES INC.

HAVRE, MONTANA



**DESCRIPTION**

A RIGHT-OF-WAY FOR AN UNDERGROUND TELECOMMUNICATIONS CABLE EXTENDING TWENTY (20.0) FEET IN WIDTH WITH TEN (10.0) FEET ON EACH SIDE OF A CENTERLINE AND A RIGHT-OF-WAY FOR THE PLACEMENT OF (2) TWO UNDERGROUND TELECOMMUNICATIONS CABLES OCCUPYING THE SAME TRENCH EXTENDING TWENTY (20.0) FEET IN WIDTH WITH TEN (10.0) FEET ON EACH SIDE OF A CENTERLINE FROM POINT "A" TO THE POINT OF ENDING POINT "B" ALL WITHIN LOT 4 OF SECTION 2, TOWNSHIP 2 SOUTH, RANGE 15 WEST OF THE PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, MONTANA, AND MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS:

COMMENCING AT THE SOUTH QUARTER CORNER OF SECTION 15, TOWNSHIP 1 SOUTH, RANGE 15 WEST; THENCE SOUTH 9°0'16" EAST A DISTANCE OF 16215.19 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING OF THE RIGHT-OF-WAY CENTERLINE AND NORTH BOUNDARY OF LOT 4 OF SAID SECTION 2; THENCE ON AND ALONG THE RIGHT-OF-WAY CENTERLINE ON A BEARING OF SOUTH 31°52'6" WEST A DISTANCE OF 379.65 FEET TO POINT "A"; THENCE SOUTH 59°38'33" EAST A DISTANCE OF 228.36 FEET TO THE POINT OF ENDING POINT "B" OF THE RIGHT-OF-WAY CENTERLINE; THENCE ON AND ALONG THE RIGHT-OF-WAY CENTERLINE FROM POINT "A" ON A BEARING OF NORTH 59°38'33" WEST A DISTANCE OF 10.20 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 27°25'20" WEST A DISTANCE OF 29.26 FEET; THENCE NORTH 54°6'8" WEST A DISTANCE OF 207.60 FEET; THENCE NORTH 48°0'57" WEST A DISTANCE OF 194.67 FEET TO THE POINT OF ENDING POINT "C" OF THE RIGHT-OF-WAY CENTERLINE AND WEST BOUNDARY OF LOT 4; THENCE NORTH 7°5'11" WEST A DISTANCE OF 16230.61 FEET TO THE SOUTH QUARTER CORNER OF SECTION 15, TOWNSHIP 1 SOUTH, RANGE 15 WEST.

CONTAINED WITHIN THE ABOVE DESCRIBED NEW CONSTRUCTION RIGHT-OF-WAY IS 0.482 ACRES MORE OR LESS.

**AFFIDAVIT**

**KENNETH W WAGNER**  
 NOTARY PUBLIC for the  
 State of Montana  
 Residing at Havre, Montana  
 My Commission Expires  
 January 12, 2016

Douglas B. VANCE, BEING DULY SWORN, SAYS, THAT HE IS THE CONSULTING ENGINEER FOR SOUTHERN MONTANA TELEPHONE COMPANY WHOSE PRINCIPAL OFFICE IS LOCATED AT WISDOM, MONTANA; THAT THE ABOVE PLAT AND DESCRIPTION WAS PREPARED UNDER HIS SUPERVISION FROM AN ACCURATE SURVEY OF THE RIGHT-OF-WAY CENTERLINE BY SURVEY CREWS UNDER HIS SUPERVISION. THE ABOVE PLAT CORRECTLY SHOWS THE QUANTITY OF LAND REQUIRED FOR THE RIGHT-OF-WAY IN EACH FORTY-ACRE TRACT AND ALSO THE AMOUNT OF LAND REMAINING IN EACH PORTION OF SUCH FORTY-ACRE TRACT.

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN BEFORE ME  
 THIS 21<sup>ST</sup> DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2015  
*Kenneth W Wagner*  
 NOTARY PUBLIC FOR THE STATE OF MONTANA  
 RESIDING AT HAVRE, MONTANA  
 MY COMMISSION EXPIRES JAN 12, 2016

**MONTANA**  
 DOUGLAS B. VANCE  
 12611 PE  
 REGISTERED PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER  
 MONTANA NO. 12611 PE  
 LICENSED PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER

PLAT of RIGHT-OF-WAY on STATE LAND  
 Sec. 2, T 2 S, R 15 W, P.M.M.  
 BEAVERHEAD COUNTY

SOUTHERN MONTANA TELEPHONE COMPANY  
 WISDOM, MONTANA

SMT2215.DWG

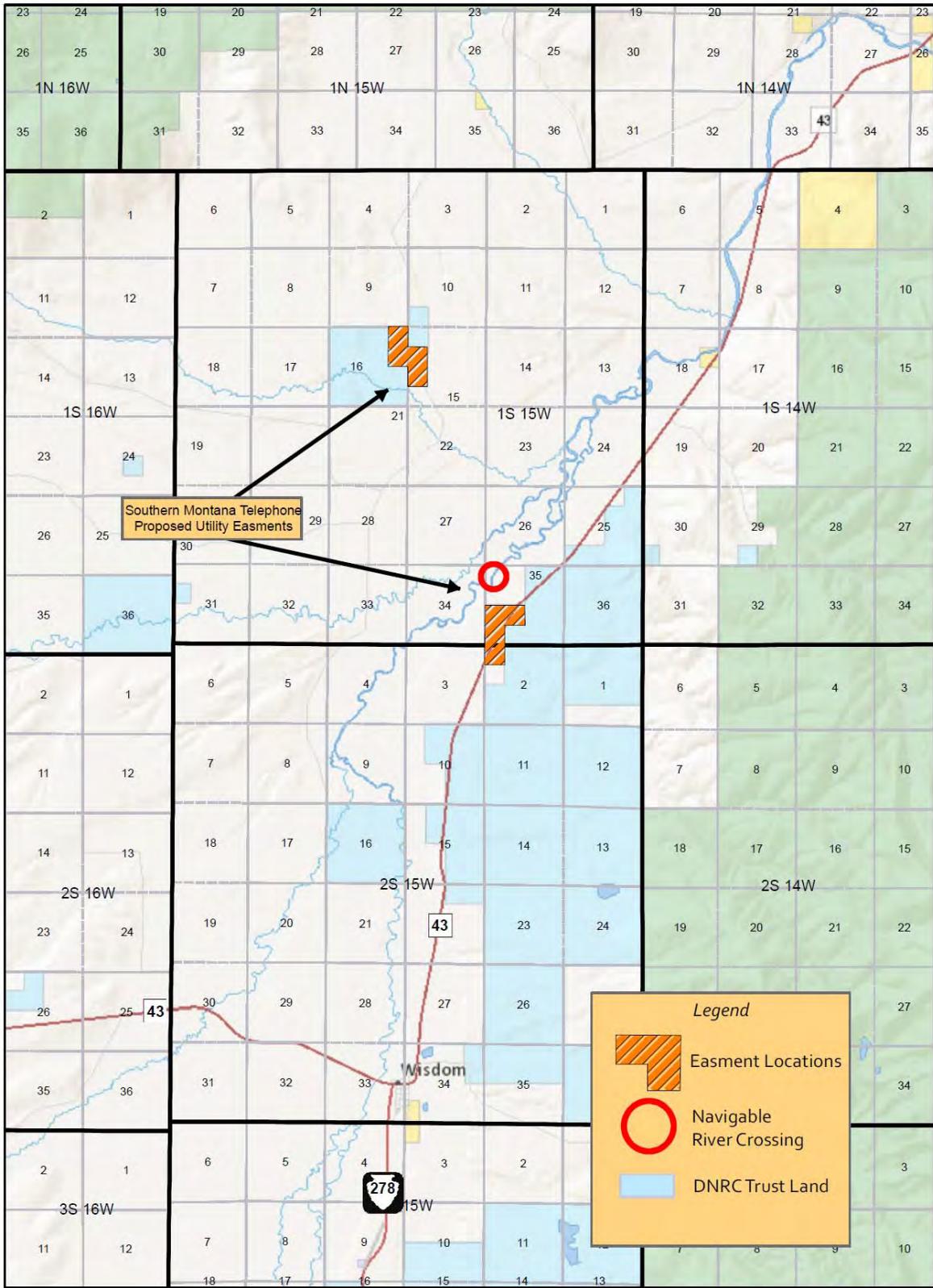
HEBERLY and ASSOCIATES INC.

HAVRE, MONTANA

**ATTACHMENTS**

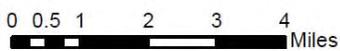
C – Vicinity Map

# Southern Montana Telephone Utility Easement



*Legend*

- Easement Locations
- Navigable River Crossing
- DNRC Trust Land



1:160,736



D. Copple March 2016