CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	3 Rivers Communications Lima Fiber to Home Project
Proposed Implementation Date:	May, 2016
Proponent:	Three Rivers Communications
Location:	T11S – R8W, Sections 23 & 26, (Common Schools Trust) T12S – R8W, Section 23, (Common School Trust) T12S – R9W, Section 36, (Common School Trust), T13S - R2W, Section 18, (Common School Trust) T13S – R3W, Section 24, (Common School Trust) T13S – R5W, Sections 14,15,21,22,24,25,& 36,(Common School Trust) T13S – R7W, Section 36, (Common School Trust) T13S – R9W, Section 15,16,(Pine Hills School Trust) T13S – R9W, Sections 21, & 30, (Common School Trust) T14S – R6W, 36, (Common School Trust) T14S – R7W Sections 20, & 36,(Common School Trust) T14S – R8W, Section 16, (Common School Trust) T14S – R8W, Section 30, (Pine Hills School Trust)
County:	Beaverhead

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

3 Rivers Communications has applied to the MT DNRC, Dillon Unit to upgrade existing telecommunication utility easements in 23 state sections in the Lima Exchange project in Southwest Montana.

The proposed upgrade involves the burying of a fiber-optic line, within 3-4 feet of an existing copper cable, using a vibratory plow drawn by a crawler tracker through a temporary surface opening of approximately 6 inch in width. The opening would be closed immediately behind the plow to eliminate any berms. The line would be placed a minimum of 42 inches deep in the shoulder of existing roads. Disturbance would be minimal, with the exception of placing hand holes at points along the road which would be placed within the existing ROW. Hand holes are a rectangular box approximately 20" tall by 25" wide by 32" long that the traditional phone pedestal sits on. They are buried flush to the ground and provide room under the pedestal to allow access to the fiber-optic cable for splicing or repairs.

The upgrade will allow for clearer communications and make available high speed internet and digital television service to customers in the area. The copper cables would be abandoned in place once the new network is up and running.

The width of the combined easement over the 23 state sections would be 20 feet wide, 10 feet each side of centerline and the length is approximately 76,562.6 feet long and would encompass approximately 35.15 acres of state land. See attached maps.

3 Rivers Communications plans to start construction on this project in May of 2016, and complete the construction of the project by the fall of 2016.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:
Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

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

Fish, Wildlife and Parks: Wildlife Biologists, Craig Fager and Dean Waltee

All DNRC State land lessees affected by this proposal were contacted by 3 Rivers Communications to sign settlement of damages forms.

Beaverhead County Commissioners,
DNRC: Archaeologist, Patrick Rennie
Montana Natural Heritage Program
Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program

Comments received from FWP biologists were:

Craig Fager: I have reviewed the Three Rivers project and I do not see much for impacts to sage grouse habitat on that portion of the project south and west of Interstate 15. Dean Waltee will provide comment for the area north and east of the Interstate. For the work south of Lima in the Birch Creek drainage (T14S, R8W S30) I would recommend waiting until after July 1 for the sake of potential sage grouse nesting habitat. The stock drive between Snowline and Monida is heavily infested with Spotted Knapweed. Some level of pre- treatment in this area would be highly beneficial to all parties involved as well as the wildlife habitat.

Dean Waltee: As long as sage-grouse associated timing restrictions are followed and efforts are made to ensure the line will not become a future weed source, I don't think there will be much negative impact of this project. Ultimately, this will have to be reviewed through Carolyn Sime's office within DNRC.

OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

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

310 Permits from Beaverhead Conservation District may be needed for all perennial stream crossings and have been applied for. 3 Rivers Communications plans on boring all stream crossings under this proposal meaning that there will be no encroachment within the high water marks of the streams.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A: **Action Alternative** Grant 3 Rivers Communications 23 utility easements over state land sections for the installation of fiber optic cable. These easements would be granted for the specific purpose of installation and maintenance of an underground telecommunication cable and to upgrade current facilities and services.

Alternative B: **No Action Alternative** – Deny 3 Rivers Communications 23 utility easements over state land sections for the installation of fiber optic cable.

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 follow existing state, county and private roads where disturbance has occurred in the past and the terrain is favorable. A vibratory plow drawn by a dozer will plow a temporary surface opening of approximately 6 inch in width. The opening would be closed immediately behind the plow to eliminate any berms. The line would be placed a minimum of 42 inches deep in the shoulder of existing roads. Disturbance would be minimal, with the exception of placing hand holes at points along the road which would be placed within the existing ROW. Soils identified on the tract within the route of the project are of varying soil types. The scope of this project will cause very little disturbance of soils with little chance of erosion occurring from the proposal.

Action Alternative: Minor soil disturbance will occur under this alternative. No long term or cumulative effects to soils are anticipated.

No Action Alternative: No impacts will 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.

Action Alternative: 3 Rivers Communications has applied for 310 permits for all perennial streams crossings associated with this proposal. At this time they have not received the permits to proceed with the stream crossings. All crossings will be bored beneath the streams outside of the high water marks where 310 permits are not required. They are waiting to hear back from the Beaverhead Conservation District for permission to proceed with the crossings. With all communication cable being bored beneath the streams no change in ambient water quality standards will occur. All construction methods will be done in a way to minimize impacts to both ground and surface water sources. No long term or cumulative effects are anticipated.

No Action Alternative: No impacts 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.

Action Alternative: during the installation phase of this proposal, a small increase in dust particulates in the air will occur. This change in air quality standards would only be short term, and no long term or cumulative effects would be anticipated. The area currently meets EPA ambient air quality standards and is not located in a class I air shed. Any impacts from construction would be temporary and should not result in significant impacts to air quality. No long term or cumulative effects would be anticipated from this alternative.

No Action Alternative: No impacts 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.

Action Alternative: Some minor vegetative disturbance is expected. The disturbance would occur during initial telecommunication cable installation activities that require tracked-equipment driving along the proposed route to bury the cable. It is not expected that the disturbed areas will need to be re-seeded with grass seed due to the small amount of disturbance that will occur. Any noxious weed infestations caused by construction on state land will be the responsibility of the proponent to control. All weed plans will be submitted to the Beaverhead County Weed Boards for approval. If a large area of surface disturbance to vegetation does occur 3 Rivers Communications will need to re vegetate this area by spreading grass seed on the disturbed area.

A Montana Natural Heritage search was done for this proposal and the report revealed that within the vicinity of this proposal near the 23 state sections that the proposal would cross there are 18 different plant species of concern that were identified. The majority of those plants are outside the boundaries of the project locations on state land however there are two state sections that have rare plants identified where disturbance of those plants could occur.

T14S - R8W, Sections 16 & 30, were identified as potential sites for Cryptantha humilis (Round headed Cryptantha) and Primula incana (Mealy Primrose). The location where ground disturbance will occur is outside of the identified locations of these rare plants on the NRIS map that was provided by Natural Heritage Program.

T14S – R7W Section 20, Carex idahoa (Idaho sedge) is possibly present on this section of state land and could be disturbed with under this alternative.

No Action Alternative: No impacts 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.

Action Alternative: A variety of big game, small mammals, raptors, songbirds, and grouse may use these areas. Installation of the underground telecommunication cable would be in 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. Short duration disturbance may occur to any number of these species however no long term change in habitat will occur and no long term or cumulative effects to these species are anticipated.

No Action Alternative: No impacts 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.

Action Alternative: The Montana Natural Heritage Program identified 5 mammals, 11 bird, and two fish species that are in the vicinity of the 23 state sections that fiber optic cable will be installed under this alternative. The bird species include Great Blue Heron, Trumpeter Swan, Ferruginous hawk, Golden Eagle, Greater Sage Grouse, Long-billed Curlew, Clark's Nutcracker, Veery, Sage Thrasher, Brewer's Sparrow, McCown's Longspur, fish species, West Slope Cutthroat Trout, Arctic Grayling, and mammals, Little Brown Myotis, Hoary Bat, Pygmy Rabbit, Great Basin Pocket Mouse, and Wolverine.

Greater sage-grouse (Centrocercus urophasianus) are known to inhabit the proposed project area. Fourteen of the 23 state sections that 3 Rivers Communications applied for easements across are located within Greater Sage Grouse Core Habitat, and seven of the sections are in Greater Sage Grouse General Habitat.

Under the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program requirements, 3 Rivers Communications submitted their Lima Exchange proposal to the Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program for review and approval. At this time 3 Rivers has received approval to proceed with the seven sections in sage grouse general habitat. None of the sections in general habitat are within two miles of an active sage grouse lek. Because no active leks are within two miles of segments within General Habitat for sage grouse no seasonal use and timing restrictions are necessary for this alternative.

Weed management is required within General Habitat for sage grouse. Reclamation of disturbed areas must include control of noxious weeds and invasive species, including cheat grass (Bromus tectorum) and Japanese brome (Bromus japonicas).

The 14 sections that are in Greater Sage Grouse Core Habitat are still being evaluated and no recommendations have yet been made. Once the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Program responds to 3 Rivers Communications request in the Core Habitat areas, those recommendations will be made part of the easement requirements that MT DNRC will grant to 3 Rivers Communications for this project.

Ferruginous Hawk (Buteo regalis) have been documented using the general area around the proposed project areas as nesting and hunting habitat. The state of Montana lists the bird as an S3B species meaning it's, at potential risk because of limited and potentially declining numbers, extent or habitat even though it may be abundant in some areas. The low surface impacts resulting from the project would not significantly alter vegetative composition or nesting habitat for the hawks. The primary vegetation on-site is native grass species and they would not be impacted if the project is approved. This proposal could cause disturbance to birds during this year's nesting season, however the project would not cause direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to this bird species.

Long-billed Curlew (Numenius americanus) – Long-billed curlews are known to nest and summer in and around some of the state sections in the project area. The birds are potentially at risk because of limited and/or declining numbers, range and/or habitat, even though it may be abundant in some areas. Nesting and summer habitat could be negatively affected by the proposal during the installation portion of the project, however no long term or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

Sage Thrasher (Oreoscoptes montanus) are potentially at risk because of limited and/or declining numbers, range and/or habitat, even though it may be abundant in some areas. The sage thrasher migrates into Montana to nest and summer on sagebrush sites in late April to mid-May. The birds may use the state sections in this proposal to nest in the spring. This year's nesting habitat for the sage thrasher could be affected by the proposed project, however no long term or cumulative impacts to the bird or its habitat are anticipated from this alternative.

Brewer's Sparrow (Spizella Breweri) is potentially at risk because of limited and/or declining numbers, range and/or habitat, even though it may be abundant in some areas. Brewer's sparrows migrate into Montana to nest and summer on sagebrush sites in mid to late May. This proposal could have minor impacts on nesting bird habitat this summer during the nesting season, however no long term or cumulative impacts are anticipated from this proposal.

Clark's Nutcracker (Nucifraga columbiana) is a state listed sensitive species. The Montana Natural Heritage Program site includes this excerpt regarding the species of concern status. This species is dependent on coniferous forest habitats and this proposal will not affect any coniferous forest habitats nor be near any conifer forest habitats. This project would not have any short term, long term, or cumulative effects on Clark's Nutcrackers.

Golden Eagle (Aquila chrysaetos) are a protected species under U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service regulations; it is also a BLM sensitive species and classified in the State of Montana as a species potentially at risk. The proposed project will not alter the existing vegetative community type and would not influence use of the area by

golden eagles. The project would not have cumulative effects on golden eagle habitat or species distribution in the area.

Great Blue Heron (Ardea herodias) – are the largest of the North American herons. Great Blue Herons have a global ranking of G5 meaning it is common, wide spread and abundant globally however it is in decline S3 ranking within the state of Montana. The bird's habitat is in freshwater habitats in sloughs, river and streambanks, lakes and ponds. They also forage in grasslands and agricultural fields. They eat nearly anything within striking distance, including fish, amphibians, reptiles, small mammals, insects, and other birds. They build their nests in colonies high off the ground. This proposal will not disturb great Blue Heron habitat although while installing the cable the birds could be disturbed from nesting or feeding sites. The sites in this project are mainly dry rangeland and would not impact blue heron habitat. No long term or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

McCown's Longspur (Rhynchophanes mccownii) has a natural heritage rank of G4, S3B meaning that the species is uncommon but not rare, and is usually widespread throughout its range. It's not vulnerable in most of its range, but possibly cause for long-term concern. Within Montana the bird is on the decline and potentially at risk because of limited and potentially declining numbers, extent and/or habitat. **State Rank Reason** - *"Species faces threats from cover-type conversion and altered grazing and fire regimes and although populations in the core of their breeding range in northeast Montana appear to be relatively stable, declines are occuring in much of the species global breeding range."*
These birds feed on seeds and insects with seeds making up more than half of the summer diet. Nesting season begins in early May and runs through July. The proposed project would include a buried communication cable which would not convert native grassland and would not affect habitat preference of McCown's longspur. No long term or cumulative effects are anticipated under this alternative.

Trumpeter Swan (Cygnus buccinators) are listed as an S3,G4 by the Natural Heritage Program meaning that they are potentially at risk because of limited and potentially declining numbers, extent and/or habitat, even though it may be abundant in some areas. G4 means the species is uncommon but not rare and usually widespread. Not vulnerable in most of its range, but possibly cause for long-term concern. The swans breed in relatively shallow undisturbed bodies of fresh water with abundant aquatic plants. Because of their heavy weight they needs at least 100 yards of open water to take off. They are mainly vegetarians but will eat aquatic insects. They build their nests on existing structures, muskrat's houses, beaver dens & dams, and floating vegetation. Swan pairs often use the same nest site year after year. This project will have no impacts on trumpeter swans.

Veery (Catharus fuscescens) is a small neo-tropical songbird with a global ranking of G5 meaning it is common, wide spread and abundant globally however it is in decline within the state. Its habitat is damp deciduous woods. It favors dense understory and leafy low growth trees near water. The surrounding habitat is usually deciduous forests. It also will be found in open country on the northern Great Plains. The bird's diet is mostly insects and berries during the breeding season. Nests are placed on the ground or near ground level in dense forests. This proposal could cause some short term movement of the bird during the construction phase of the project, however no long term or cumulative effects are anticipated.

Green Tailed Towhee (Pipilo chlorurus)) is a small neo-tropical songbird with a global ranking of G5 meaning it is common, wide spread and abundant globally however it is in decline within the state. It favors brushy mountain slopes open pines and sage brush. It breeds in semi-open habitats where there is dense low cover of sage brush. It migrates in the winter. Its diet is mainly insects and seeds. It forages mostly on the ground under thickets of brush. This proposal could cause some short term movement of the bird during the construction phase of the project, however no long term or cumulative effects are anticipated.

Hoary Bat (Lasiurus cinereus) – The hoary bat is potentially at risk because of limited and/or declining numbers, range and/or habitat, even though it may be abundant in some areas. The mammal lives in riparian and forest habitats. Hoary bats are thought to prefer trees at the edge of clearings, but have been found in trees in heavy forests, and open wooded glades. Hoary bats have an important ecosystem role as insect consumers. This proposal is not in prime hoary bat habitat; however there could be short term disturbance of the bats during the construction phase of this proposal. No long term or cumulative impacts are anticipated from this proposal.

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. The bats can live up to 30 years. There is not good roosting habitat near the proposal sites for this bat species. No long term or cumulative impacts area anticipated to this species under this alternative.

Wolverine (Gulo gulo) This project falls outside the wolverine's range by several miles. 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. 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 the species.

Pygmy Rabbit (Brachylagus idahoensis) have been observed within the proposed project area. The Pygmy Rabbit is a BLM and US Forest Service sensitive species. Because of the projects location near existing roads, state, county and private, and the small footprint of the proposal, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on this species are anticipated from this alternative.

Great Basin Pocket Mouse (Perognathus parvus) primarily inhabits sandy soil types with at least some sage brush cover. The proposed project will not affect the Great Basin pocket mouse habitat, however short term disturbance to the species could occur under this alternative. Because of the projects location near existing, state, county and private roads and the proposals small footprint no direct, indirect, or cumulative affects are anticipated.

Westslope cutthroat trout (Oncorhynchus clarkia lewis) has a state ranking of S2 meaning that it's at risk because of very limited and potentially declining numbers, extent and/or habitat, making it vulnerable to extirpation in the state. This is due to hybridization and habitat loss. The fish is common in headwater lakes and stream environments. This trout needs cold clear water to survive and like streams with more pool habitat and cover than uniform simple habitat. This project should not affect cutthroat habitat and no long term or cumulative effects should occur under this alternative.

Arctic Grayling - (Thymallus Arcticus) Grayling are currently living in Red Rock Lakes and the Red Rock River drainage and tributaries. In September, 2010 the Arctic grayling population in Red Rock River drainage were added to the candidate list for Threatened and Endangered Species. The fish is considered a Critically Imperiled (G1, S1) Species of Special Concern. Both the Red Rocks Lake NWR and MT FWP are concerned about any further degradation of streams in the Red Rock River Drainage. Because of the loss of the graylings spawning habitat in ten of the twelve historically used tributaries of the Red Rock River the continued viability of this remaining population is dependent upon protecting the remaining spawning habitat that is available near the Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. No long term or cumulative impacts are anticipated from this proposed alternative.

No Action Alternative: No impacts will occur.

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

Patrick Rennie, DNRC Archaeologist was consulted and is reviewing Class 1 and 3 cultural reviews of the project that were contracted out by 3 Rivers Communications for this proposed project. The contractor who did the work was Western Cultural Inc.out of Missoula, MT. The abstract of their report is provided in the next two paragraphs. (see below) Patrick will make recommendations for this project once he has had a chance to review the material that was provided to him by 3 Rivers Communications.

Western Cultural Abstract
Western Cultural, Inc. completed Class III Cultural Resource Survey along 270 miles of a proposed fiber optic exchange route in Beaverhead County for 3 Rivers Communications. Class III survey of the Lima exchange recorded a total of 22 new cultural resource sites and revisited 21 previously recorded sites. A single new cultural resource is recommended as *Eligible* to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The remainder of the newly recorded sites are either recommended as *Unevaluated* (n=15) or as *Not Eligible* (n=6). A single reroute of a fiber optic line recommends a finding of *No Effect* at the single site recommended as

Eligible among the newly recorded sites. The proposed undertaking will have *No Effect* at the other newly recorded sites.

Among the previously recorded sites, a total of nine are recommended as *Eligible* for listing on the NRHP. The remainder of the sites are either recommended as *Not Eligible* (n=5) or are Unevaluated (n=7) for listing on the NRHP. A total of 12 reroutes recommend a finding of No Effect at 12 of the sites. The proposed undertaking will have *No Effect* at the other previously recorded sites.

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.

Action Alternative: The proposed project is located in sparsely populated areas and will not impact aesthetics significantly. The new cable will be buried underground and will not be visible once it is installed. Due to the relative remoteness of the project area and short duration of the cable installation period, aesthetics should not be adversely affected. No long term or cumulative effects are anticipated from this alternative.

No Action Alternative: No impacts 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.

Action Alternative: No demands for additional environmental resources are required for this project. No short term, long term or cumulative effects to Environmental Resources should result from this proposed alternative.

No Action Alternative: No impacts 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.

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

No Action Alternative: No impacts 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.

Action Alternative: This proposal could cause some safety concerns during the installation phase of the project. Additional traffic on rural roads and heavy equipment could increase the possibility of a traffic accident.

Mitigation measures that could be incorporated into the easements would be to require 3 Rivers Communications to provide signage or flagman during the plowing of the cable.

No Action Alternative: No impacts will occur.

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

Action Alternative: No changes to agricultural activities would occur if this alternative is chosen.

No Action Alternative: No impacts will 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.

Action Alternative: The proposal will not create nor eliminate permanent jobs in the area under this alternative.

No Action Alternative: No impacts 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.

Action Alternative: This proposed alternative will not increase tax revenues or result in an increase or decrease of the tax base.

No Action Alternative: No impacts 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.

Action Alternative: will not increase demand for government services under this alternative.

No Action Alternative: No impacts 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.

Action Alternative: No known zoning laws or management plans are in place for any of the locations under this alternative.

No Action Alternative: No impacts 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.

Action Alternative: The proposed project would not affect recreational access. No impacts to recreational activities are anticipated under this alternative.

No Action Alternative: No impacts 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.

Action Alternative: this alternative will not affect distribution of population or housing in the Lima or surrounding areas of Southwestern Montana.

No Action Alternative: No impacts will occur.

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

Action Alternative: this proposed alternative will have no affect on social structures or mores of the surrounding area.

No Action Alternative: No impacts will occur.

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

Action Alternative: this proposed alternative will not affect cultural uniqueness and diversity of the area.

No Action Alternative: No impacts 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.

Action Alternative: The upgrade will allow for clearer communications and make available high speed internet and digital television service to customers in the area. It would also provide approximately $35,000 of revenue to the appropriate trusts.

No Action Alternative: No impacts or revenue will be generated under this alternative. There would not be an improvement to telecommunications, television, or internet access under this alternative.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Tim Egan	Date: March 17,2016
	Title: Dillon Unit Manger	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative A: **Action Alternative** Grant 3 Rivers Communications 23 utility easements over state land sections for the installation of fiber optic cable. These easements would be granted for the specific purpose of installation and maintenance of an underground telecommunication cable and to upgrade current facilities and services.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

MITIGATION MEASURES:

1. Limit equipment operations to periods when soils are dry, 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 May 7 to minimize any potential impacts with grouse lek activities and nesting sites for ferruginous hawks where appropriate.
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:

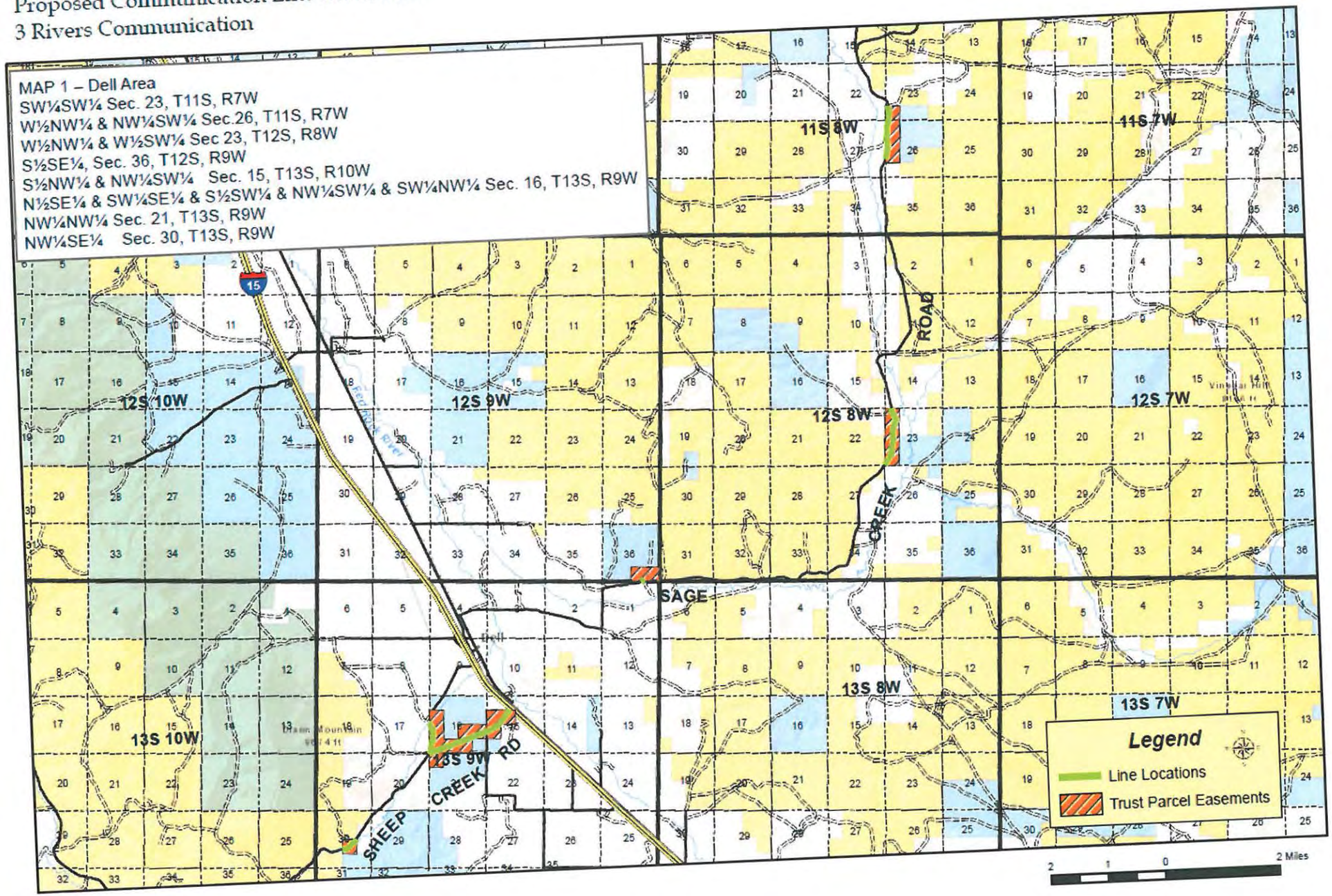
	EIS		More Detailed EA	X	No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Martin Balukas	
	Title: Central Land Office Trust Lands Program Manager	
Signature:		Date: 3/18/16

ATTACHMENTS

Vicinity Maps

Proposed Communication Line Easements
3 Rivers Communication



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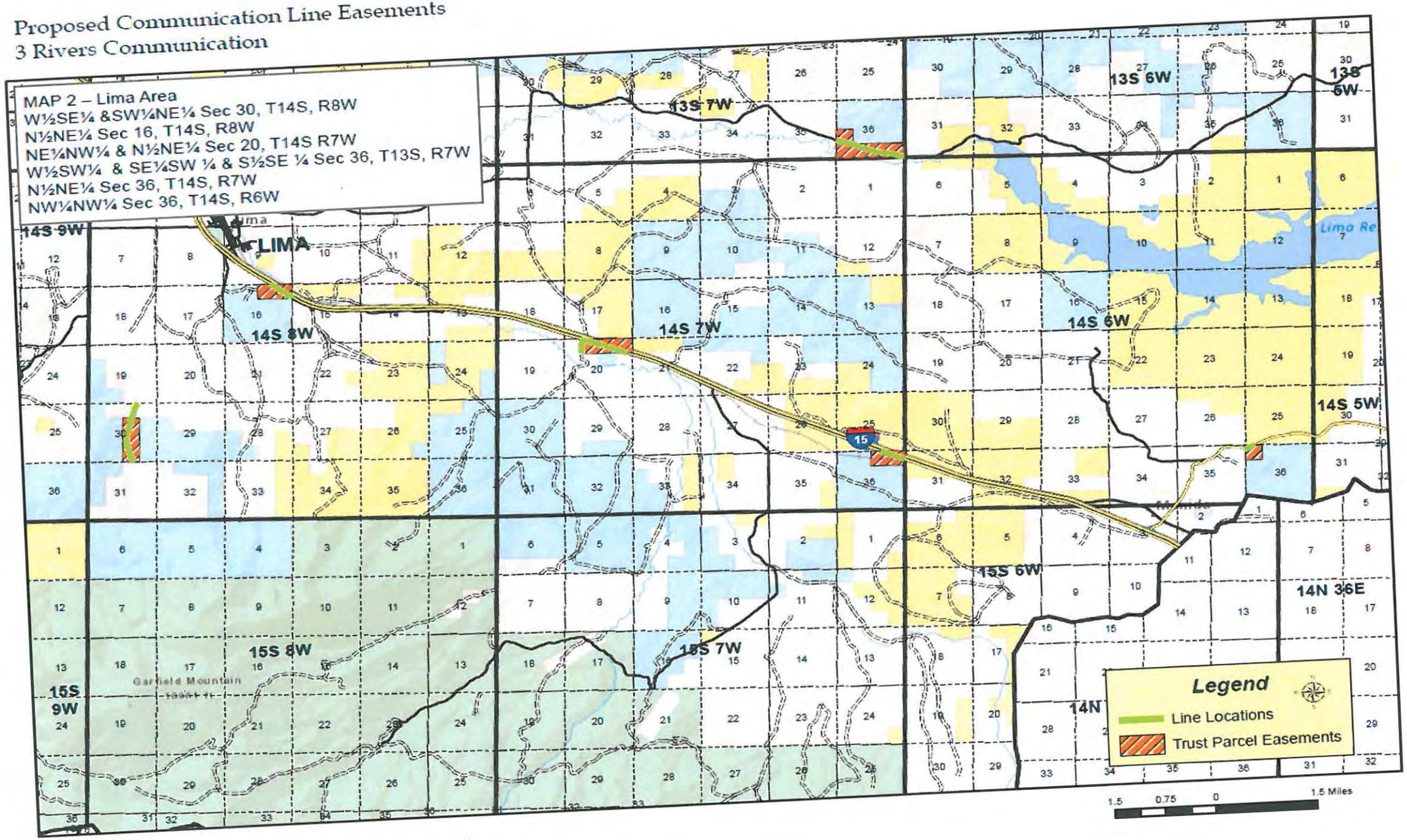
Proposed Communication Line Easements
3 Rivers Communication



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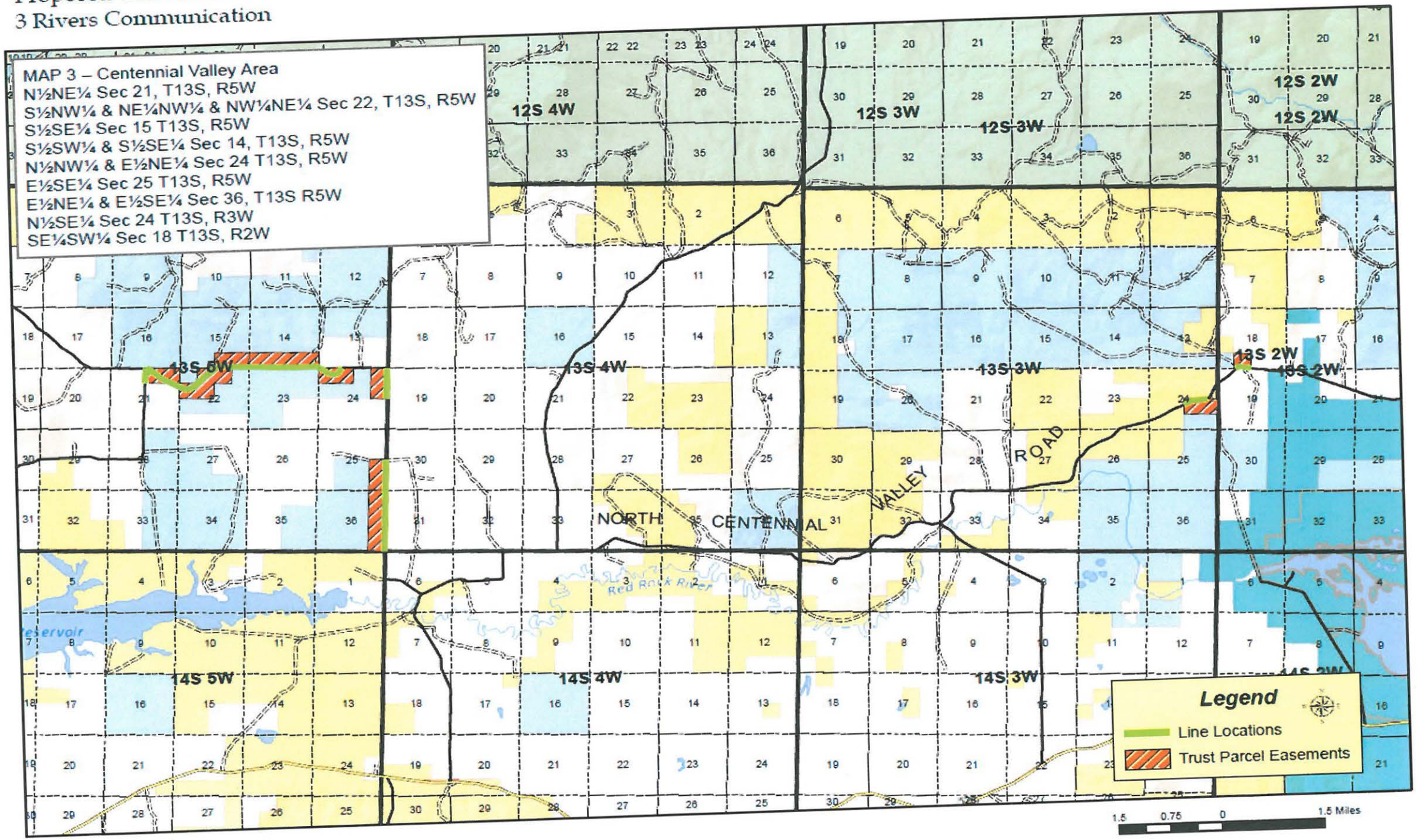

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