

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT	
Project Name: Installation of an underground power line.	Proposed Implementation Date: Fall 2018
Proponent: NorVal Electric Cooperative Inc., PO Box 951, 54091 US Hwy. 2, Glasgow, MT 59230	
Type and Purpose of Action: The applicant proposes to install an underground power line within a right-of-way 20' wide (10' on either side of a centerline) across School Trust land in Valley County. This line will be "knifed in" (entrenched using machinery that requires very little digging, usually a line about 12" wide at most) adjacent to a right-of-way granted to Daniels County for a county road. The line will allow for improved electric power distribution in this rural area and the surrounding communities.	
Location: SE4SW4 Section 33, Township 34N, Range 35E	County: Valley

I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT	
1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED: Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.	NorVal Electric Cooperative submitted the ROW application to the Glasgow Unit Office (GUO).
2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:	No other governmental agencies have jurisdiction over this project as it pertains to School Trust lands. Montana DNRC, Real Estate Management Bureau has jurisdiction over the project.
3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:	Action Alternative: Grant permission to the proponent to install the underground power line on School Trust land.  No Action Alternative: Deny permission to the proponent to install the underground power line on School Trust land.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE: Are fragile, compatible or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?

The area of impact consists of a Phillips-Kevin complex of soils with 2-8% slopes. This soil is not fragile or unstable, and no unusual geologic features are present.

Action Alternative: There will be some soil disturbance due to the digging (knifing) required to install the line underground. Slight soil compaction would occur due to temporarily increased vehicle use.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no changes to soils on the School Trust land.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality?

There are no important water resources present within the area of impact. There is no potential for impact on drinking water in the area.

Action Alternative: The proposed cable installation would not negatively impact the quality, quantity and distribution of water.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative, there will be no impacts to water quality, quantity and distribution.

6. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?

This project is not influenced by any air quality regulations or zones. A short-term increase in vehicle traffic will result in a slight increase in dust. No pollutants will be produced.

Action Alternative: This type of project on the School Trust land will have minimal impact to the air quality. Some dust may occur due to vehicle use.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

	to air quality.
<p>7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?</p>	<p>The current vegetative community consists of non-native grasses and shrubs, seeded artificially. No rare plants or cover types are present.</p> <p>Action Alternative: This non-native grass/alfalfa mix was recently seeded in the spring of 2017 and is still becoming established. Any ground disturbed due to installation of the line will be quickly overtaken by the increasing grass/alfalfa vegetation and no impacts to vegetation will occur.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to the plant communities on the School Trust land.</p>
<p>8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?</p>	<p>The area of impact may see occasional use by antelope, deer and upland/grassland birds.</p> <p>Action Alternative: Any disturbed ground would be quickly overtaken and covered by the current non-native grass/shrub mix and impacts to habitat quality would be temporary.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to the possible use of the School Trust land as wildlife habitat.</p>
<p>9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Sensitive Species or Species of special concern?</p>	<p>The area of impact is artificially seeded non-native grass/shrub land managed for haying and grazing, and is, at best, fair habitat for important species. No wetlands are within the area of impact. The area of impact is classified as General Greater Sage-grouse Habitat by Executive Order 10-2014, but the nearest lek is well over 4 miles away and the actual impacted acreage is not suitable sage-grouse habitat. The following species of concern are listed as being at least seasonally</p>

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

present within the area of impact: Sprague's Pipit, Golden Eagle, Great Blue Heron, Burrowing Owl, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Greater Sage-Grouse, Baird's Sparrow, Bobolink, Loggerhead Shrike, Long-billed Curlew and McCown's Longspur.

Action Alternative: Installation of the line on School Trust land will have no impacts on wildlife habitat.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to the environmental resources.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?

The area of impact contains no historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

Action Alternative: The proposed line will have no impact on historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

No Action Alternative: There will be no impact to historical or archaeological sites under this alternative.

11. AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light?

The area of impact is near a county road and visible to the public. However, the proposed power line would be buried underground and not visible upon installation.

Action Alternative: No impacts to the aesthetics of the School Trust land are expected.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to aesthetics associated with the School Trust land.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will

Environmental resources in the area are not specifically limited and are not affected by the proposed project. No nearby activities will affect the project.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
affect the project?	<p>Action Alternative: The proposed project will place no additional demands on any environmental resources in the area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no demands placed on environmental resources of land, water, air or energy.</p>
13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?	<p>There are currently no other studies, plans or projects on this tract.</p> <p>Action Alternative: This project will not impact any other plans or studies that Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation has on the School Trust land.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to the plans or studies that Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation has on the School Trust land.</p>

III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION	
RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?	<p>The operation and movement of heavy equipment and vehicles has inherent risks that are not impacted by access across the School Trust land.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The installation of the line would require the use of heavy equipment.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to human health or safety.</p>
15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add	<p>The area of impact is classified as grazing acreage and is currently managed for livestock grazing, with the intent of being converted to</p>

<p>to or alter these activities?</p>	<p>hayland in the near future.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The proposed project will have no economic impact on the agricultural activities on this tract.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to agricultural activities on the School Trust land.</p>
<p>16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will not create nor impact any jobs in the area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to quantity and distribution of employment under this alternative.</p>
<p>17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will have no impacts on the local and state tax base and tax revenues.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the local and state tax base under this alternative.</p>
<p>18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will increase traffic along the nearby county road during installation. There would be no additional demand for governmental services.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no additional demand for government services.</p>
<p>19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?</p>	<p>There are no special management plans in effect on the School Trust land. It is managed for typical agricultural activities (grazing and haying).</p> <p>Action Alternative: The project has cleared State (DNRC) management plans.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to locally adopted environmental plans and goals.</p>

<p>20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?</p>	<p>The area of impact is near a county road and easily accessible to the public. However, it has little recreational value due to the proximity of the road and lack of quality habitat. This tract provides public walk-in access to an adjacent 160-acre State land tract.</p> <p>Action Alternative: No changes to public land access or recreational potential would occur.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the recreational values associated with the School Trust land under this alternative.</p>
<p>21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will not impact the density and distribution of population and housing.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the density and distribution of population and housing.</p>
<p>22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will not disrupt the traditional lifestyles of the local community.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the social structures under this alternative.</p>
<p>23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will not impact the cultural uniqueness and diversity of this rural area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the cultural uniqueness and diversity under this alternative.</p>
<p>24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:</p>	<p>This power line is intended to provide power to a cellular tower site being installed by Nemont Telephone Cooperative Inc. to service the surrounding area/communities.</p> <p>Action Alternative: Allowing</p>

