CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	LUL #3073346 – Emergency Pole Relocation / Temporary Road Use.
Proposed Implementation Date:	July – August 2018
Proponent:	Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), PO Box 145, Fort Peck, MT 59223
Location:	Section 36, T31N, R2W
County:	Pondera
Trust:	Common Schools (CS)

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The proponent has applied for a Land Use License to preform emergency construction work on the WAPA powerline. The Marias river bank has eroded and exposed pole 24-2. The proposed action consists of: 1) Relocating pole 24-2 150 feet to the east which is outside of the existing easement. 2) Moving pole 24-3 50' to the north within the existing easement, 3) Establish a 200-foot area around poles 24-2 and 24-3 for a temporary construction area, and 4) Temporary road use for construction purposes outside of the existing easement. Following pole relocations and construction, the application will apply for an easement amendment to include the new foot print of the powerline.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

DNRC-Surface Owner
Paul Johnson -Surface Lessee, Lease #5110, 5814, 7478
Tom Lewis -Surface Lessee, Lease #5199, 10330
WAPA-Proponent
Complete Contracting Solutions - Contractors

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

Construction in the Marias River may require 310 and 404 permits. DNRC is not aware of any other agencies with jurisdiction or other permits needed to complete this project

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action) – Deny the requested LUL.

Alternative B (the Proposed action) –Grant the proponent the requested LUL.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

Soils and geology in this area are generally suitable for construction and access road use. The proponent will be responsible for reclamation all disturbed areas.

No cumulative effects to the soils 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.

Pole 24-2 will be removed from the Marias river and relocated 150- feet to the east. This will require construction work in and around the Marias River. Surface water quality and turbulence will be slightly impacted by the proposed action. Common mitigation measure and best management practices will be implemented when working in and around the Marias River. Other ground water, water quantity and/or water distribution will not be impacted.

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.

The proposed LUL will create dust from road use and construction. No significant and/or cumulative impacts to air quality are anticipated.

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.

The vegetation within the proposed project area consists of species typical of area native rangelands and river bottoms. Small scale and temporary impacts to the vegetation is expected. Following construction, all disturbed areas will be recontoured and reseeded with native vegetation. Long-term impacts to the vegetation are not expected.

Noxious weeds (leafy Spurge, perennial pepper weed, and white top) are present in the project area. All access roads and construction areas will be pre-sprayed and the mowed. Follow up noxious weed spraying will also occur.

A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted and there were no plant species of concern noted or potential species of concern noted on the NRIS survey.

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.

The proposal does not include any land use change which would yield changes to existing wildlife habitat. The proposed action will not impact wildlife forage, cover, or traveling corridors. Nor will this action change the

juxtaposition of wildlife forage, water, or hiding and thermal cover. The proposed action will not have long-term negative effects on existing wildlife species and/or wildlife habitat.

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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.

There are no threatened or endangered species, sensitive habitat types, or other species of special concern associated with the proposed project area. At this time, no known unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources have been identified within the proposed project area.

A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted and there were six species of concern noted. Black Tailed Prairie Dog, Hoary Bat, Little Brown Myotis, Golden Eagle, Burrowing Owl, and Long Billed Curlew. This tract of land does not contain many, if any of these species. If any are present, they will be dispersed into the surrounding permanent cover and return to the project area once it is completed.

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

A Class I (literature review) level review was conducted by the DNRC staff archaeologist for the area of potential effect (APE). This entailed inspection of project maps, DNRC's sites/site leads database, land use records, General Land Office Survey Plats, and control cards. The Class I search revealed that no cultural or paleontological resources have been identified in the APE. No additional archaeological investigative work will be conducted in response to this proposed development. However, if previously unknown cultural or paleontological materials are identified during project related activities, all work will cease until a professional assessment of such resources can be made.

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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 state land does not provide any unique scenic qualities not also provided on adjacent private lands. The proposed LUL will movie the alignment of an existing powerline. There will be no change to the aesthetics in either alternative.

No direct or cumulative effects to aesthetics are anticipated.

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12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:
Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

The demand on environmental resources such as land, water, air, or energy will not be affected by the proposed action. The proposed action will not consume resources that are limited in the area. There are no other projects in the area that will affect the proposed action.

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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.

There are no other projects or plans being considered on the tract listed on this EA.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:
Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

The proposed action will improve powerline safety by moving an exposed and unstable pole to a stable location.

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

The existing access route covered under easement will be improved to allow heavy equipment to access the pole locations. The use of this access and/or the construction areas will not significantly impact agricultural activities or production on the lease.

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16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:
Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

The proposed action will create several temporary construction type jobs for contractors

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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.

There will be a slight increase in taxes from the proposed project.

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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

There will be no direct or cumulative effects on government services.

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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.

The proposed action is in compliance with State and County laws. No other management plans are in effect for the area.

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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.

This tract of state land has high recreational value for hunting and fishing. The tract is legally accessible to the public. The proposed action is not expected to impact general recreational activities on this state land.

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21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:
Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing

The proposal does not include any changes to housing or developments.

No direct or cumulative effects to population or housing are anticipated.

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

There are no native, unique or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity that would be impacted by the proposal.

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

The proposed action will not impact the cultural uniqueness or 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.

The LUL fee is expected to be a onetime fee of $600.00. The School trust will be compensated for the new footprint of the powerline easement based upon the fair market value of the acreage encumbered.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:**	ERIK ENEBOE	**Date:**	July 2, 2018
	Title:	Conrad Unit Manager, Conrad Unit, CLO, DRNC		

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative B (the Proposed action) –Grant the proponent the requested LUL.

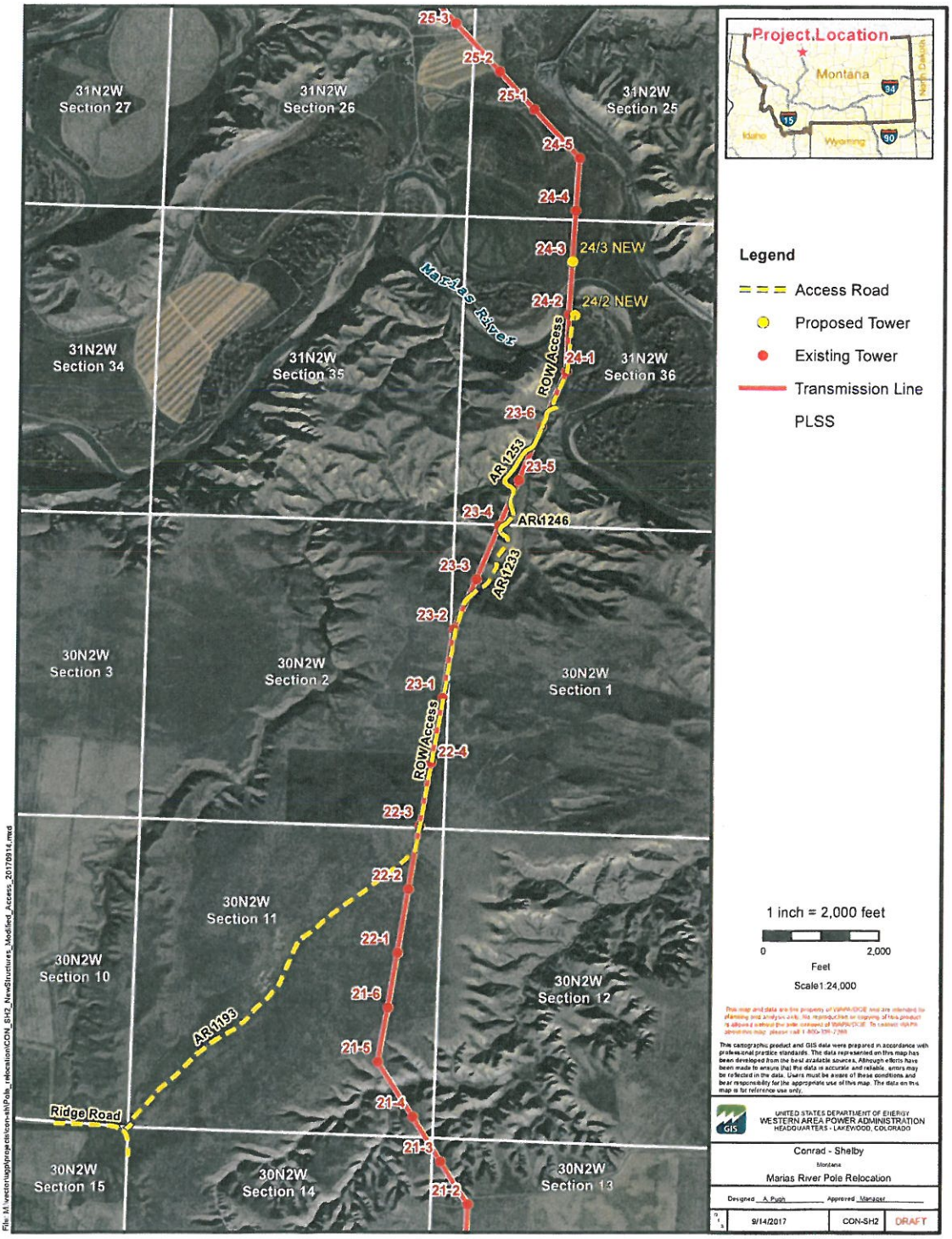
26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

No significant impacts anticipated

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

[ ] EIS [ ] More Detailed EA [X] No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:**	Martin Balukas
	Title:	Trust Lands Program Manager, CLO, DNRC
Signature:		**Date:** July 2, 2018



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