

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT	
Project Name: Installation of an underground fiber optic cable.	Proposed Implementation Date: Summer 2018
Proponent: Nemont Telephone Cooperative, Inc. PO Box 600, Scobey, MT 59263	
Type and Purpose of Action: The proponent proposes to install an underground fiber optic line within a right-of-way 20' wide (10' on either side of a centerline) across School Trust lands 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). The line will allow for improved telecommunication capabilities in this rural area and surrounding communities.	
Location: NE4NE4 of Sec. 30, Twp. 30N, Rge. 40E; SE4NE4 of Sec. 19, Twp. 30N, Rge. 40E; E2E2 of Sec. 6, Twp. 30N, Rge. 40E; Lot 7 of Sec. 31, Twp. 31N, Rge. 40E; Lots 1, 2, 3, 4 & NE4SE4 of Sec. 32, Twp. 31N, Rge. 40E	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.	Tara Hicks, Right-of-Way Agent for Nemont, informed staff at the Glasgow Unit Office(GUO) of plans for this project, and shortly thereafter submitted the Right-of-Way applications. GUO staff reviewed the application and discussed the project with Mrs. Hicks.
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 Nemont Telephone Cooperative, Inc. to install the fiber optic line on School Trust lands. No Action Alternative: Deny permission to Nemont Telephone Cooperative, Inc. to install the fiber optic line on School Trust lands.

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II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS
<p>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?</p>	<p>The area of impact consists of a variety of soil types that are common in the general area, none of which are fragile or unstable, and no unusual geologic features are present.</p> <p>Action Alternative: There will be temporary soil disturbance due to the digging (knifing) required to install the line underground. This disturbance is relatively shallow and does not remove/displace any soil. Slight soil compaction would occur due to temporarily increased vehicle use.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no changes to soils on the School Trust land.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>There are no important water resources present within the area of impact. There is no potential for impact on drinking water in the area.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The proposed project would not negatively impact the quality, quantity and distribution of water.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative, there will be no impacts to water quality, quantity and distribution.</p>
<p>6. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Action Alternative: This type of project on the School Trust land will have minimal impact to the air</p>

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

quality. Some dust may occur due to vehicle use.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to air quality.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?

The acreage within the area of impact consists of cropland, native rangeland and non-native rangeland, managed for typical agricultural activities such as livestock grazing and dryland farming. No rare plants or cover types are present.

Action Alternative: The fiber optic line would have no impact on the vegetative community due to the knifing process used to install the line.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to the plant communities on the School Trust land.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?

The School Trust land provides habitat for upland birds, antelope and deer. There is good potential for recreation on these tracts, due to ease of access and the proximity of Highway 24.

Action Alternative: Any impacts due to installation of the line will be small and will be mitigated quickly with the return to normal grazing/management practices.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to the possible use of the School Trust land as wildlife habitat.

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?

The area of impact is classified as General Sage-Grouse habitat, with a small part of the project falling within Core habitat. The Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team (MSGOT) was notified of the project, and the project has been sent to their office for review prior to implementation.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The specific acreage impacted by the project does not consist of practical sage-grouse habitat (cropland, non-native grasses, lack of sagebrush). No wetlands are within the area of impact. The following species of concern are listed as being at least seasonally present within the area of impact: Baird's Sparrow, Sprague's Pipit, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Greater Sage-Grouse, Loggerhead Shrike, McCown's Longspur, Long-billed Curlew and Little Brown Myotis.

Action Alternative: MSGOT guidelines/recommendations will be followed during installation to mitigate impacts to Greater Sage-Grouse habitat. Any impacts due to installation of the line will be small and will be mitigated quickly with the return to normal agricultural management practices.

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?

According to field evaluations carried out by GUO staff, the area of impact contains no historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

Action Alternative: The proposed project 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 proposed project is directly adjacent to MT Highway 24, and will be readily visible to the public during installation. Following a short period of regrowth after installation, there will be little to no visible evidence of the line.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
	<p>Action Alternative: An underground line in this area will not alter the aesthetics at all after installation activities have ceased.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to aesthetics associated with the School Trust land.</p>
<p>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 affect the project?</p>	<p>Environmental resources in the area are not specifically limited and are not affected by the proposed project. No nearby activities will affect the project.</p> <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>
<p>13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?</p>	<p>There are currently no other studies, plans or projects on these tracts.</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
<p>14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and</p>	<p>The operation and movement of heavy equipment and vehicles has inherent</p>

<p>safety risks in the area?</p>	<p>risks that are not impacted by access across the School Trust land.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The installation of the line will not add to safety risks in the area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to human health or safety.</p>
<p>15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?</p>	<p>The area of impact is managed for typical agricultural activities such as livestock grazing and dryland farming.</p> <p>Action Alternative: Any short-term disturbance to vegetation would be too small to have a measurable economic impact on the agricultural activities on these tracts.</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 vehicle traffic in the area 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</p>

	services.
19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	<p>There are no special management plans in effect on the School Trust lands. They are managed for typical agricultural activities.</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>
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>These tracts are directly adjacent to, and accessible from a public highway, and this project would have no impact on that access.</p> <p>Action Alternative: No changes to public land access or recreational potential will 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>
21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?	<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>
22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	<p>Action Alternative: The project will enhance telecommunications capabilities for residents in the surrounding area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the social structures under this alternative.</p>
23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	<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</p>

	no impacts to the cultural uniqueness and diversity under this alternative.
24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:	<p>This project is intended to provide greater telecommunication capabilities in the surrounding area/communities. This is a rural area with limited capabilities currently.</p> <p>Action Alternative: Allowing installation of the line across School Trust lands would have relatively little economic impact to the School Trust, but would provide surrounding communities with increased telecommunications capabilities.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the social and economic circumstances under this alternative.</p>

EA Checklist Prepared By: s/Jack Medicott Date: 5/31/18
Jack Medicott Land Use Specialist

IV. FINDING	
25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:	Action Alternative
26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:	No significant impacts expected.
27. Need for Further Environmental Analysis: <input type="checkbox"/> EIS <input type="checkbox"/> More Detailed EA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Further Analysis	

EA Checklist Approved By: Matthew Poole Glasgow Unit Manager
Name Title

s/Matthew Poole\s Date: May 31, 2018
Signature