

## CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

<b>Project Name:</b>	Land Use License/Access Road/South Peak Wind LLC
<b>Proposed Implementation Date:</b>	June 1, 2018
<b>Proponent:</b>	Allete Clean Energy-30 West Superior St. Suite 200, Duluth, Mn. 55802
<b>Location:</b>	W1/2, Sec. 16, T18N, R9E
<b>County:</b>	Judith Basin

### I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

A 30-foot-wide access road is needed to accommodate large trucks and equipment for construction of and maintenance of the proposed South Peak Wind Farm. The area of the Access Land Use License on State of Montana land is the most reasonable and likely place for ingress to the wind farm.

### II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

- Allete Clean Energy—30 West Superior Stree., Suite 200, Duluth, Mn. 55802
- South Peak Wind Farm LLC
- Arrow Creek Survey Company
- Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation-NELO, TLMD & REMB

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

- Montana Department of Transportation.
- Montana Department of Environmental Quality
- Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks

**3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:**

The "No Action" Alternative. —Alternative A

The alternative "to issue a Land Use License" for access into the South Peak Wind Farm. -Alternative B.

### 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.*

There are no unusual geological features present. Shallow, silty soils are present. These are glacialfluvial deposits from the slopes of the Highwood Mountains. Some surface rock is present, but has been picked up and stacked in small piles around the existing agricultural fields. Mostly 2% to 6% slopes.

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**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.*

There is a very low probability of any water degradation from this project. No cumulative effects are anticipated.

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**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.*

Minimal windblown pollutants or particulates will be produced during truck traffic. No cumulative effects are expected.

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**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 area to be disturbed is primarily an existing trail. There rest is permanent cover of hay land. Mostly alfalfa and tame cultivar grasses. These are not rare plant species. No cumulative effects are expected.

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**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.*

Aquatic life will not be affected. There is no aquatic habitat available. There should be no adverse effect to any wildlife in the area.

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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.*

Now, no known unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources have been identified within the proposed land use license area. 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 types.

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**10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:**

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

Patrick Rennie, DNRC's Archaeologist reviewed this proposal. He States: "A Class 1 (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 1 search revealed that no cultural or paleontological resources have been identified in the APE. Because the area of potential effect on state land was once cultivated, because the Holocene age soils in the APE are relatively thin, and because the local geology is not likely to produce caves, rock shelters, or sources of tool stone, 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 proposed access road Land Use License project is not visible from any populated areas. There will be no excessive noise or light associated with the access road. No accumulative effects are anticipated with this license.

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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.*

There are no other activities planned for this access road. There should be no accumulative effects.

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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 planned for this tract.

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<b>IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.</i></li><li>• <i>Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.</i></li><li>• <i>Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.</i></li></ul>



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**14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:**

*Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.*

Human health and safety will be enhanced by this project by providing a smoother access road and less slopes to negotiate.

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

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

Agricultural activities will remain the same. Industrial and commercial activities will greatly increase while construction of the wind farm takes place. Wind farm maintenance will mean more activity on area roads and the Land Use Licensed access.

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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.*

New jobs may be created for construction of the access road. There are no expected direct or cumulative effects to the job market for this access road project.

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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.*

The tax base will not be affected. There are no direct or cumulative effects to taxes for this 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*

Additional services will not be required. No cumulative effects are expected.

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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 Montana DNRC will require that the licensee fulfill the requirements of the Land Use License Agreement and any special conditions stated therein.

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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.*

Wilderness or recreational areas are not accessed through this tract. There is minimal recreational potential within the state land around the access road area.

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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.*

Additional housing will not be a requirement of this project. No direct or cumulative effects are anticipated.

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**22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:**

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

Disruption is not likely. There are no native, unique or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity that would be impacted by the proposal.

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**23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:**

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

There should be no shift in the quality of the area.

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**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.*

This EA Checklist for the proposed Land Use License for access into the South Peak Wind Farm is also valid for an Easement Right-of-Way if it becomes necessary later.

<b>EA Checklist Prepared By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Barny D. Smith, Lewistown Unit Manager, DNRC-TLMD
	<b>Signature</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Date</b> May 14, 2018</span>

**V. FINDING**

**25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:**

Alternative B- "To issue a Land Use License for access to the South Peak Wind Farm."

**26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:**

Minimal negative impacts are expected with this Land Use License project. Most impacts will be to surrounding deeded properties.

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

EIS     
  More Detailed EA     
  No Further Analysis

<b>EA Checklist Approved By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Clive Rooney
	<b>Title:</b> Area Manager, DNRC-TLMD
<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>