CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Range Telephone emergency line replacement
Proposed Implementation Date:	2018
Proponent:	Range Telephone Coop
Location:	T1N-R54E-Sec 16
County:	Custer County

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Range Telephone has requested a land use license from the DNRC Eastern Land Office. This LUL is for the purpose HDD boring of a replacement fiber optic line. This line will provide for a communications link to rural areas of Custer, Carter and Powder River Counties. The existing aerial line has fallen down due to high water on the Powder River. Range will be required to file for a historic right of way easement for utilities within 60 days of the issuance of this license.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

Range Telephone has requested that the DNRC Eastern Land Office issue an emergency LUL for the replacement of an aerial phone line which has fallen down across the Powder River. This LUL will be for the removal of the fallen down line and the temporary replacement with an HDD bored line. Range will be required to file for a historic right of way for utilities within 60 days of the issuance of this license

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

None

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A- Allow the proponent an emergency LUL to replace the line.
Alternative B- No Action.

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.

Alternative A- Soil disturbance should be minimal since the line would be HDD bored in. The only disturbance should be a small area at the entry and exit points of the line. This area would be recontoured and reseeded once project completion is done. Minimal Impact expected.

Alternative B-No Impact

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.

Alternative A- No Impacts expected

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- Pollutants and Particulates may be increased during the construction of the project. After the completion of the project pollutant and particulate levels should return to normal. Increase in pollutants during construction should be almost negligible. Minimal impacts expected.

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- Where the construction takes place there may be disturbance to the vegetation cover. This impact should be minimal and the vegetation make-up should recover quickly. The primary plant species are Western Wheatgrass (Agropyron smithii), Green Needle Grass (Stipa viridula), Blue Grama (Bouteloua gracilis) , Needle and Thread Grass (Stipa comata), and Prairie Junegrass (Koleria pyramidata) . Due to the small scope of disturbance the native grass species on the site should naturally recover within 2 growing seasons. Disturbance areas would be reseeded to a native grass mixture upon completion of the project.
Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A-There should be very minimal effect on any animal habitats within the boundaries of the project construction. Wildlife may be temporarily disturbed during the construction of the project. After completion of the project there should be no impact to these species.

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Database shows that several species of concern have been noted in the general project area.

Centrocercus urophasianus	Greater Sage-Grouse
Chelydra serpentina	Snapping Turtle
Heterodon nasicus	Plains Hog-nosed Snake

Phrynosoma hernandesi	Greater Short-horned Lizard
Spea bombifrons	Plains Spadefoot
Cycleptus elongatus	Blue Sucker
Macrhybopsis gelida	Sturgeon Chub
Sander canadensis	Sauger
Scaphirhynchus albus	Pallid Sturgeon

While these species may be present in the general project area minimal impact is expected due to the practice of the line being HDD bored under the Powder River. The site is located within Greater Sage Grouse General Habitat but is exempted under emergency response and maintenance.

Alternative B- No Impact

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

Alternative A- A search of the TLMS Database shows no noted historical, archeological or paleontolocical resources on the tract. A survey of the site by the Eastern Land Office field staff notes no historical or archeological sites in the proposed project area.
Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- Due to this being a proposed bored line any aesthetic degradation will only be temporary until construction is complete and the site recovers. Noise levels may be increased during the construction phase of the project. Construction of the project should last less than one week.

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- No Impacts expected

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

None

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.

Alternative A- There may be risks to human health and safety during the construction of the project. Project would be constructed by professional employees following standard safety protocols.

Alternative B- No impacts expected

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

Alternative A- No impacts expected
Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- This project has the potential to create jobs with further development possibilities. Minimal impacts expected

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- No Impacts expected

Alternative B- No Impact

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

Alternative A- No Impact expected

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- No Impacts expected

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- No Impacts expected

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- No Impacts expected

Alternative B- No Impact

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

Alternative A- No Impacts expected

Alternative B- No Impact

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

Alternative A- No Impacts expected

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- This may provide income for the trust in the form of the purchase of a temporary 1-year land use license. The fee for this license will be set at $200.00.

Alternative B- No Impact

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:**	Scott Aye	**Date:**	5-15-2018
	Title:	Land Program Manager		

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative A

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The granting of the requested land use license upon state owned trust lands for the proposed emergency phone line replacement should not result in nor cause significant environmental impacts. The predicted environmental impacts have been identified and mitigation measures addressed in the environmental assessment checklist. The predicted impacts will be adequately mitigated through the construction and reclamation plans. The proposed action satisfies the trusts fiduciary mandate and ensures the long-term productivity of the land. An environmental assessment checklist is the appropriate level of analysis for the proposed action

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

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

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:**	Chris Pileski
	Title:	ELO Area Manager
Signature:	Chris Pileski	**Date:** 5/15/18