

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	MDU Rosebud County Transmission Line Phase 2
Proposed Implementation Date:	2019
Proponent:	Montana Dakota Utilities
Location:	T6N-R41E-Sec 29
County:	Rosebud County

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Montana Dakota Utilities Co. (Henceforth referred to as Proponent) has contacted the DNRC Eastern Land Office with a request for a right of way easement for a proposed 60kV transmission line across the above-mentioned tract of trust land. The purpose of this line is to create redundancy between two substations in the event of a power outage or maintenance. The proponent has submitted a DS-406 Application for Right of Way for Utilities form to the DNRC Eastern Land Office. The proposed powerline right of way is expected to be 50 feet in width and 5163 feet in length, encompassing approximately 5.93 acres. The pole count in the proposed right of way easement on this tract is expected to be 18 pole structures.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

The proponent has submitted a form DS-406 application for utility easement to the ELO. The proponent has requested right of way easement for a 60 KV transmission line. Single pole ground structures would be used for the line. A field review of this project was conducted by ELO field staff on October 26th, 2018.

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

None

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A- Grant the proponent a right of way easement for the proposed transmission 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- Some soil disturbance would occur through placement of single pole structures on for the line. This disturbance should be minimal. There are no fragile compactable or unstable soils within the scope of the project. Soils are mostly silty and shallow with gravel.

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 impact 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 particulate levels 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.

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- Minimal impact to the vegetative cover may take place during the construction of the project. Current plant community is comprised of Western Wheatgrass (*Agropyron smithii*), Blue Grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), Green Needlegrass (*Stipa viridula*) Needle and Thread (*Stipa comata*), Prairie Junegrass (*Koeleria pyramidata*), Bluebunch Wheatgrass (*Agropyron spicata*), Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) Prairie Sandreed (*Calamovilfa longifolia*), Sandberg Bluegrass (*Poa secunda*), and Threadleaf Sedge (*Carex Filifolia*). Impact to these species should be minimal in nature and should recover within 1-2 growing seasons.

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-Due to the small scope of the project any disturbance to wildlife should be minimal.

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 Program Database showed no threatened, endangered or species of concern within the general project area. The portion of the project located on State Trust Land is not within Greater Sage Grouse Core, Connectivity or General Habitat. However, the proponent did seek and received consultation for the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program.

Alternative B- No Impact

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

Alternative A- A Class III inventory was conducted by the DNRC staff archaeologist for the areas of potential effect (APE) on section 29, T6N R41E and Section 36, T6N R41E. This entailed inspection of project maps, DNRC's sites/site leads database, land use records, General Land Office Survey Plats, and control cards followed by a pedestrian traverse along proposed easement corridors. No cultural or paleontological resources have been identified in the APE, and a 1990 Class III inventory partially covered areas of telecommunications line route in Section 29, T6N R41E. The proposed development should result in No effect to state owned Heritage Properties. 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.

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- The aesthetics of the site would be slightly altered with the addition of a powerline. This is a remote area that is not located on a prominent topographic feature or near a populated area. Effects to aesthetics should be minimal.

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 Impact 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

<p style="text-align: center;">IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.</i>• <i>Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.</i>• <i>Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.</i>
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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 in the construction of the project, this project would be constructed by trained professionals which should limit health and safety concerns.

Alternative B- No Impact

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

Alternative A- This project should have a positive effect on Industrial, Commercial, and Agricultural Activities and Production in this area. This effect would come from additional redundancy for electrical distribution in the area in the event of a planned or unplanned outage of electricity on the line.

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.

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- This project should have a positive impact on local and state taxes. The amount of which is unknown at this time.

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 Impact 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 Impact 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 Impact Expected

Alternative B- No Impact

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Alternative A- No Impact Expected

Alternative B- No Impact

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

Alternative A- No Impact 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 will provide income for the trust in the form of the purchase of a permanent easement. The per acre price of the easement would be set at a price of \$500.00 per acre. The total revenue to the trust from the issuance of an easement should be approximately \$2965.00

Alternative B- No Impact

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Scott Aye	Date: 11-23-2018
	Title: Land Program Manager	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative A

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The granting of the requested right of way easement across state owned trust lands for the proposed MDU Rosebud Transmission Line Phase 2 should not result in nor cause significant environmental impacts. 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

No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Chris Pileski
	Title: ELO Area Manager
Signature: 	Date: 11/25/18