

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Spectrum Pacific West, LLC - Havre to Malta Fiber
Proposed Implementation Date:	Early Spring/Summer of 2020
Proponent:	Spectrum Pacific West, LLC
Location:	Havre to Malta, Montana, USA
County:	Blaine

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Spectrum Pacific West LLC, is proposing to install an underground communications cable. The project extends from Havre to Malta, with areas crossing state land in Blaine and Phillips counties. The below listed locations fall in Blaine county, a separate EA has been done for the areas within Phillips county.

Multiple Application have been submitted for Blaine county, since all submitted application are close in proximity and for ease of processing we will include all submitted areas in one Environmental Assessment.

- NE ¼, SE ¼ & SE ¼, SE ¼ of Section 28, Township 33N, Range 18E
Twenty feet wide, ten feet on each side of the centerline. 1.226 Acres
- NE ¼, NE ¼ of Section 33, Township 33N, Range 18E
Twenty feet wide, ten feet on each side of the centerline. 0.179 Acres
- NE ¼, NE ¼, NW ¼ of Section 36, Township 33N, Range 18E
Twenty feet wide, ten feet on each side of the centerline. 1.311 Acres
- NW ¼, NW ¼ & NE ¼, NW ¼ of Section 34, Township 33N, Range 18E
Twenty feet wide, ten feet on each side of the centerline. 1.208 Acres
- SW ¼, SW ¼, & SE ¼, SW ¼, of Section 36, Township 33N, Range 21E
Twenty feet wide, ten feet on each side of the centerline. 0.661 Acres

Total approx. 4.585 Acres

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

Spectrum Pacific West, LLC
Heberly Associates – Brent Shipp, Chad Olsen (406) 945-1577
Montana DNRC, Havre Field Office, Ryan Call - Land Use specialist
Montana DNRC, Glasgow Unit Office

All lessees on state land have received a notice of settlement of damage.

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

There are no other licenses or government agencies with jurisdiction that I am aware of

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A: The alternative to allow for the use of the state land located in the described section for installing a new underground communications cable

Alternative B: The “No Action” alternative

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 – These soils within the proposed project area follow major highways and have overall high potential for restoration, their reclamation potential is low but the proximity to highways doesn't make them an area of high reclamation need. Overall ratings on erosion and compactability are good.

Site 1. Lihen loamy fine sand, 0-6% percent slopes. Slight erosion rating, poorly suited for reclamation
Low compactibility risk, High restoration potential

Site 2. Lihen loamy fine sand with same classifications as site 1. Also contains Williams-Vida loams with 2-8% slopes, moderate erosion rating, well suited for reclamation, medium compactibility risk, High restoration potential

Site 3 and 4. Lihen loams and Williams-Vida loams with the same classification as listed above

Site 5. Harlem variant-Lardell silty clay loams. Slight erosion rating, Moderately suited for reclamation, Medium compactibility risk, and Moderate restoration potential

Alternative B- The "No Action" alternative

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. Due to the short duration in which soil piles will exist and the proposed, there would be little risk of soils running off into the nearby waterways and causing an exceedance of water quality standards.

Alternative B- The "No Action" alternative

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- No significant impact expected.

Alternative B- The "No Action" alternative

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- There is no evidence of rare plants or cover types in the scope of the project. The proximity to the road means there are some invasive species, primarily Crested Wheatgrass (*Agropyrum cristatum*) and Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), the potential for these species to spread is always a concern. The disturbance to the ground and proximity to US Highway 2 could potentially cause an influx of invasive grasses and precautions should be taken to avoid an influx of such grasses.

Alternative B- The "No Action" alternative

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 are several species of concern in this area (Section 9). Under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 it is unlawful to remove or disturb an active nest even if it is in an inconvenient location. The timeframe of this project creates the potential for the projected to be stopped due to nesting birds.

There are no other impacts to other wildlife species anticipated

Alternative B- The "No Action" alternative

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 many species of concern in this area. The Hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*), Eastern Red Bat (*Lasiurus borealis*), Little Brown Myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*), Swift Fox (*Vulpes velox*), Sprague's Pipit (*Anthus spragueii*), Great Blue Heron (*Ardea Herodias*), Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*), Greater Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*), Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*), and the Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*). No perceived issues will occur with habitat destruction on any of the listed species.

Slight disturbance could occur to sage-grouse habitat although unlikely as the work is being conducted next to existing roads and there are no Leks within 2 miles of the proposed area. There has been a consultation done by the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program and the findings are enclosed.

Alternative B- The "No Action" alternative

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

Alternative A- There are no documented Stone Circles, Teepee rings, or other cultural sites documented within the proposed area. Since this project is located next to existing roadways there should be minimal contact and or disturbance to any area of historical importance.

Alternative B- The "No Action" alternative

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- Very little impact should be felt aesthetically in the scope of this project. There should be minimal lasting impacts on the landscape from this project.

Alternative B- The "No Action" alternative

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 significant impact expected.

Alternative B- The "No Action" alternative

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.

Alternative A- No significant impact expected.

Alternative B- The "No Action" alternative

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION
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| <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- No significant impact expected.

Alternative B- The "No Action" alternative

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

Alternative A- No significant impact expected.

Alternative B- The "No Action" alternative

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- No significant impact expected.

Alternative B- The "No Action" alternative

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 significant impact expected.

Alternative B- The "No Action" alternative

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 significant impact expected.

Alternative B- The “No Action” alternative

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 significant impact expected.

Alternative B- The “No Action” alternative

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 significant impact expected.

Alternative B- The “No Action” alternative

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 significant impact expected.

Alternative B- The “No Action” alternative

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Alternative A- No significant impact expected.

Alternative B- The “No Action” alternative

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

Alternative A- No significant impact expected.


Alternative B- The “No Action” alternative

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- The proposed project will utilize approximately 4.585 acres. The project in its entirety excluding state land will span from Rural to more remote locations. On state land the proposed project should only go through more remote locations. Based on a standard fee schedule this project is estimated to be around \$300/acre. The total estimated cost of the project on state land would be around \$1375.50, of which will benefit our School Trusts.

Alternative B- The "No Action" alternative

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Ryan Call
	Title: Havre- Land Use Specialist
Signature 	Date April 29, 2020

V. FINDING


25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED: Alternative A

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The granting of the requested RoW on these tracts of state-owned trust lands should not result in nor cause significant negative 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: Jocee Hedrick Title: Lewistown Unit Manager
Signature	
Date	4/30/2020