

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

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| Project Name: | Underground Powerline Replacement |
| Proposed Implementation Date: | Spring 2020 |
| Proponent: | Hill County Electric Cooperative |
| Location: | 33N 9E S16 |
| County: | Hill |

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Right-of-way for replacing and maintaining an existing damaged underground power line extending twenty feet by ten feet on each side of a centerline all within S1/2 SE1/4 of Section 16, township 33 North, Range 9 East.

The application is that they have RoW/access on adjacent property and are trying to increase their efficiency to their Rudyard substation. In this case they want access closer to a road way and so they will be replacing a damaged cable to make it easier to access and better access for their substation in the long run.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

Hill County Electric – Michaela Boushey
Montana DNRC, Havre Field Office, Ryan Call - Land Use specialist

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

None at this time

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: The alternative to allow for the use of the state land located outside of the right of way for repair and maintenance of the Culvert

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: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: The soil at the site is made of a series of different loamy soils.

The risk of compaction is rated at medium

Medium - The potential for compaction is significant. The growth rate of seedlings may be reduced following compaction. After the initial compaction (i.e., the first equipment pass), the soil is able to support standard equipment with only minimal increases in soil density. The soil is intermediate between moisture insensitive and moisture sensitive.

The soil restoration potential is rated at a High Potential for restoration

The soil road erosion ratings are from slight to moderate

A rating of "slight" indicates that little or no erosion is likely; "moderate" indicates that some erosion is likely, that the roads or trails may require occasional maintenance

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: The "No Action" alternative

Alternative B: No Impacts expected

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: The "No Action" alternative

Alternative B: No Impacts expected

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: The "No Action" alternative

Alternative B: Current area is a cultivated agriculture field, during fallow year little to no disturbance on vegetation would be expected. Primary issue would be with bringing weeds into the farming practice. No rare or species of concern exist in this area.

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: The "No Action" alternative

Alternative B: There may be minimal disruption to the wildlife that inhabit the area. The entire project will affect less than 1.047 acres and initial installation should not last longer than a couple weeks. The extent of the project should not be enough to permanently disrupt the wildlife species. Species in the area include whitetail and mule deer, antelope, raptors and other birds, various rodents, rabbits, reptiles and others.

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: The "No Action" alternative

Alternative B: A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Database shows that there are two species of concern in the area. The species of concern are the Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo realis*) and the Plains Hog-nosed snake (*Heterodon nasicus*). Due to the length and scale of the project the cumulative long-term effect on either of these species is expected to be minimal.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

Alternative A: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: No Impacts expected

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 “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: Minimal cumulative effects to the land scape are anticipated as a result of the proposed project.

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: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: No Impacts expected

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: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: No Impacts expected

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.*
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14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

Alternative A: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: Typical safety risks for laborers working would be present, but the potential risk should be minimal with proper safety efforts.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

Alternative A: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: No impacts expected

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: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: No impacts expected

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: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: No impacts expected

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: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: Fixing a damaged powerline would be expected to increase the ability to provide power to rural areas.

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: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: No impacts expected

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: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: No impacts expected

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: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: No impacts expected

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Alternative A: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: No impacts expected

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

Alternative A: The “No Action” alternative


Alternative B: No impacts expected

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 “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: No impacts expected

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| EA Checklist Prepared By: | Name: Ryan Call Title: Havre- Land Use Specialist |
| Signature |  Date January 30, 2020 |

V. FINDING


25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED: Alternative B

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

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| EA Checklist Approved By: | Name: Jocee Hedrick Title: Lewistown Unit Manager |
| Signature |  Date January 31, 2020 |