

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Range Telephone Tongue River Road Fiber Optic Line
Proposed Implementation Date:	2020
Proponent:	Range Telephone Coop
Location:	T1S-R44E-Sec 16
County:	Rosebud County

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Range Telephone has requested a right of way easement, for placement of a fiber optic communication line, from the DNRC. This ROW easement is for the purpose of placing an underground communication line across the mentioned tracts of Trust Land This line would be slightly offset but within the previously granted easement corridor. This line will provide for a communications link between the outlying areas of Custer, Rosebud and Powder River Counties.

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 allow the passage of the telecommunication line upgrade mentioned above across this state-owned section. The total acreage encompassed by this project will be 2.24 acres. Said easement will be 16 feet wide with 8 feet on each side of the centerline.

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

None

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A- Allow the proponent an easement to upgrade buried telephone communication line requested
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- Disturbance of the soil will occur through the trenching and burying of this line, but effects will be minimal. The line will be installed using the static plow method. There should be no lasting adverse effects to the soil quality, stability or moisture. Most of the soil structures are not fragile or unstable. 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, Green Needle Grass, Bluebunch Wheatgrass, Blue Grama, Prairie Sandreed, Sideoats Grama Needle and Thread Grass, Little Bluestem, Threadleaf Sedge and Smooth Brome. This will be mitigated by use of the static plow installation method in which the sod will stay intact. Minimal impacts expected.

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 Program Database shows observations for the following sensitive species in the general area of this project.

-Great Blue Heron - Ardea Herodias

Black-tailed Prairie Dog - Cynomys ludovicianus

Due to the small scope and impact of the project there should be minimal or no impact to these species.

Alternative B- No Impact

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

Alternative A- A Class I cultural and paleontological resources inventory was conducted of the area of potential effect on state land. Despite a detailed examination, no cultural or fossil resources were identified in the easement corridor. No additional archaeological or paleontological investigative work is recommended. The proposed project will have *No Effect to Antiquities* as defined under the Montana State Antiquities Act.

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-Range Telephone will need to be able to perform maintenance on the communication line from time to time. This should not be a significant impact. Any aesthetic degradation will only be temporary until the site recovers.

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

<p style="text-align: center;">IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION</p>

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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- There may be risks to human health and safety in the construction of the project, but this should be done by qualified professionals. Safety concerns become minimal for work done in this fashion. Minimal impacts expected.

Alternative B- There may be less communication availability in the remote rural area. This could lead to safety and emergency problems.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

Alternative A- It should have a positive effect on Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural Activities and Production. Minimal 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 project would provide income for the trust in the form of the purchase of a permanent right of way easement. The amount is \$1344.00 or \$600.00 per acre.

Alternative B- No Impact

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Scott Aye	Date: 7-15-2020
	Title: Land Program Manager	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative A

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The granting of the requested easements upon state owned trust lands for the proposed fiber optic phone line upgrade 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
 No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Chris Pileski
	Title: ELO Area Manager
Signature:	Date: