

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT	
Project Name: NorVal buried powerline	Proposed Implementation Date: Summer 2020
Proponent: NorVal Electric Cooperative Inc., PO Box 951, 54091 US Hwy. 2, Glasgow, MT 59230	
Type and Purpose of Action: The applicant proposes to install an underground power line within a right-of-way 20' wide (10' on either side of a centerline) across School Trust land in Valley County. This line will be "knifed in" (entrenched using machinery that requires very little digging, usually a line about 12" wide at most) and will include both section 16 and 21. The line will allow for improved electric power distribution in this rural area and the surrounding communities.	
Location: W2SW4 & W2NW4 Section 16 and NW4SW4 Section 21, Township 32N, Range 37E	County: Valley

I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT	
1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED: Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.	<p>NorVal Electric Cooperative submitted the ROW application to the Glasgow Unit Office (GUO).</p> <p>NorVal also submitted the project plans to Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team for review prior to submitting application. MSGOT provided the input and recommendation to offset impacts to Sage grouse habitat.</p>
2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:	No other governmental agencies have jurisdiction over this project as it pertains to School Trust lands. Montana DNRC, Real Estate Management Bureau has jurisdiction over the project.
3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:	<p>Action Alternative: Grant permission to the proponent to install the underground power line on School Trust land.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Deny permission to the proponent to install the underground power line on School Trust land.</p>

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RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS
<p>4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE: Are fragile, compatible or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?</p>	<p>The area of impact consists of a Phillips-Kevin complex of soils with 2-8% slopes. This soil is not fragile or unstable, and no unusual geologic features are present.</p> <p>Action Alternative: There would be some soil disturbance due to the digging (knifing) required to install the line underground. Slight soil compaction would occur due to temporarily increased vehicle use.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no changes to soils on the School Trust land.</p>
<p>5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality?</p>	<p>There is no potential for significant impacts to surface or groundwater resources in the area.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The proposed cable installation would not negatively impact the quality, quantity and distribution of water.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative, there will be no impacts to water quality, quantity and distribution.</p>
<p>6. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?</p>	<p>This project is not influenced by any air quality regulations or zones. Short-term vehicle/machinery use would result in a slight increase in dust and pollutants from exhaust during installation.</p> <p>Action Alternative: This type of project on the School Trust land would have minimal impact to the air quality.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this</p>

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	alternative there will be no impacts to air quality.
7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?	<p>The current vegetative community consists of native grasses and shrubs. No rare plants or cover types are present.</p> <p>Action Alternative: Any ground disturbed due to installation of the line would quickly recover due to the minima disturbance. No long-term impacts anticipated.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to the plant communities on the School Trust land.</p>
8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?	<p>The area of impact may see occasional use by antelope, deer and upland/grassland birds.</p> <p>Action Alternative: Any disturbed ground would be restored quickly and impacts to habitat quality would be temporary.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to the possible use of the School Trust land as wildlife habitat.</p>
9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Sensitive Species or Species of special concern?	<p>The area of impact is native range land managed for grazing, and is, at best, fair habitat for important species. No wetlands are within the area of impact. The area of impact is classified as core in section 16 and connectivity in section 21 Greater Sage-grouse Habitat by Executive Order 10-2014. The proponent submitted the project to Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team for review prior to submitting application. MSGOT provided the input and recommendation to offset impacts to Sage grouse habitat. The following species of concern are listed as being at least seasonally present within the area of impact: Hoary Bat, Swift Fox, Sprague's Pipit,</p>

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Chestnut-collared Longspur, Greater Sage-Grouse, Baird's Sparrow, Long-billed Curlew, McCown's Longspur, and the Great Plains Toad.

Action Alternative: By following the recommendations made by MSGOT impacts to Sage grouse would be avoided/mitigated. Installation of the line on School Trust land would have minimal impacts on wildlife habitat.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to the environmental resources.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?

A Class I (literature review) level review was conducted by the DNRC archaeologist for the area of potential effect (APE). This entailed inspection of project maps, DNRC's sites/site leads database, land use records, General Land Office Survey Plats, and control cards. The Class I search revealed that no cultural or paleontological resources have been identified in the APE, and that much of the state parcel adjoining the APE has been inventoried for cultural resources. Additionally, DNRC Glasgow Unit staff walked the proposed powerline route and identified no cultural or paleontological resources. No additional archaeological investigative work will be conducted in response to this proposed development, and installation of the proposed powerline will result in No Effect to Antiquities as defined in the Montana State Antiquities Act. 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.

Action Alternative: The proposed line would have no impact on historical,

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archaeological or paleontological resources.

No Action Alternative: There will be no impact to historical or archaeological sites under this alternative.

11. AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light?

The area of impact is near a county road and visible to the public. However, the proposed power line would be buried underground and not visible upon installation except for signage marking its location.

Action Alternative: No significant impacts to the aesthetics of the School Trust land are anticipated.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to aesthetics associated with the School Trust land.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?

Environmental resources in the area are not specifically limited and are not affected by the proposed project. No nearby activities will affect the project.

Action Alternative: The proposed project would not place additional demands on any environmental resources in the area.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no demands placed on environmental resources of land, water, air or energy.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?

There are currently no other known studies, plans or projects on this tract that would be impacted by this project.

Action Alternative: No impacts to the studies, plans or projects on this tract are anticipated.

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No Action Alternative: No impacts to the studies, plans or projects on this tract.

III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
<p>14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The installation of the line would require the use of heavy equipment. The operation and movement of heavy equipment and vehicles has inherent safety risks.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to human health or safety.</p>
<p>15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?</p>	<p>The area of impact is classified as native rangeland and is currently managed for livestock grazing with minimal industrial and commercial activity.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The proposed project would have no economic impact on the agricultural activities on this tract.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to agricultural activities on the School Trust land.</p>
<p>16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project would not create nor impact any jobs in the area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to quantity and distribution of employment under this alternative.</p>
<p>17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project would have no impacts on the local and state tax base and tax revenues.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the local and state tax</p>

	base under this alternative.
18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed?	<p>Action Alternative: The project would increase traffic along the nearby county road during installation. There would be no additional demand for governmental services.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no additional demand for government services.</p>
19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	<p>There are no special management plans in effect on the School Trust land. It is leased for grazing livestock.</p> <p>Action Alternative: No impacts to locally adopted environmental plans and goals are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to locally adopted environmental plans and goals.</p>
20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?	<p>The area of impact is near a county road and easily accessible to the public through Federal land. These tracts have good recreational opportunity.</p> <p>Action Alternative: No changes to public land access or recreational potential would occur.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the recreational values associated with the School Trust land under this alternative.</p>
21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?	<p>Action Alternative: The project would not impact the density and distribution of population and housing.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the density and distribution of population and housing.</p>
22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or	Action Alternative: The project would not disrupt the traditional lifestyles

<p>traditional lifestyles or communities possible?</p>	<p>of the local community.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the social structures under this alternative.</p>
<p>23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project would not impact the cultural uniqueness and diversity of this rural area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the cultural uniqueness and diversity under this alternative.</p>
<p>24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:</p>	<p>This power line is intended to remove overhead cables and bury them to service the surrounding area/communities.</p> <p>Action Alternative: Allowing installation of the line across School Trust land would have little economic impact to the School Trust and would benefit residents of the surrounding area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the social and economic circumstances under this alternative.</p>

EA Checklist Prepared By: s/Luke Gunderson\s Date: 05/26/20
Luke Gunderson Land Use Specialist

<p>IV. FINDING</p>	
<p>25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:</p>	<p>Action Alternative</p>
<p>26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:</p>	<p>No significant impacts expected.</p>
<p>27. Need for Further Environmental Analysis:</p>	

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By: Matthew Poole Glasgow Unit Manager
Name Title

s/Matthew Poole\s Date: June 9, 2020
Signature