DSL-252

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT	
Project Name: Triangle Communications South Malta FTTH Upgrade.	Proposed Implementation Date: Spring/Summer 2022
Proponent: Triangle Communications, PO Box 1140, Havre, MT 59501	
Type and Purpose of Action: The proponent proposes to install an underground fiber-optic telecommunications cable within a right-of-way 20′ wide (10′ on either side of a centerline) across School Trust land in Phillips County. This line would be "knifed in" (entrenched using machinery that requires very little digging, usually a line about 12" wide at most). The line would allow for improved telecommunication capabilities in this rural area and the surrounding communities.	
Location: Multiple tracts; see attached spreadsheet.	County: Phillips

I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT	
1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED: Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.	The Right-of-Way application from Triangle was sent to the Glasgow Unit office. This project falls on Trust Land within the Glasgow Unit.
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:	Action Alternative: Grant permission to Triangle Communications to install the telecommunications line on School Trust land. No Action Alternative: Deny permission to Triangle Communications to install the telecommunications line on School Trust land.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS
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?	The area of impact consists of a large sample of 0-10% slope soils. These soils are not fragile or unstable, and no unusual geologic features are present. Action Alternative: There would be temporary soil disturbance due to the digging (knifing) required to install the line underground. This disturbance is relatively shallow and does not remove/displace any soil. Slight soil compaction would occur due to temporarily increased vehicle use. No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no changes to soils on the School Trust land.
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?	There are no important water resources present within the area of impact. There is no potential for impact on drinking water in the area. Action Alternative: The proposed project would not negatively impact the quality, quantity and distribution of water. No Action Alternative: Under this alternative, there would be no impacts to water quality, quantity and distribution.
6. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?	This project is not influenced by any air quality regulations or zones. A short-term increase in vehicle traffic would result in a slight increase in dust. No pollutants would be produced. Action Alternative: This type of project on the School Trust land would

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
	have minimal impact to the air quality. Some dust may occur due to vehicle use. No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would 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?	The acreage within the area of impact consists of native grasses, agriculture land and various forbs managed for livestock grazing and crop production. No rare plants or cover types are present. Action Alternative: The telecommunications line would have no impact on the vegetative community due to the knifing process used to install the line. No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no impacts to the plant communities on the School Trust land.
8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?	The School Trust land provides habitat for a wide variety of wildlife species. Action Alternative: Any impacts due to installation of the line would be small and would be mitigated quickly with the normal management practices. No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no impacts to the habitat.
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?	A portion of the area of impact consists of Core and General greater sage-grouse habitat. The project was submitted to the MT Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program (MSGHCP) for review before submitting applications. The program responded with mitigation practices and recommendations to ensure impact to

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
	sage-grouse habitat was kept to a minimum. No wetlands are within the area of impact. The species of concern listed as being present within the area of impact are: Black tailed Prairie Dog, Sprague's Pipit, Burrowing Owl, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Greater Sage Grouse, Baird's Sparrow, Mountain Plover, Long-billed Curlew, Brewers Sparrow, Greater Sage-Grouse, Ferruginous Hawk, Franklin Gul, Hoary Bat, Eastern Red Bat, Little brown Myotis, golden eagle, Meriam's shrew, Veery, Striate Disc, Bobolink, Sage thrasher, and plains hog-nosed Snake. Action Alternative: Any impacts due to installation of the line would be small and would be mitigated quickly with the return to normal grazing/management practices. Impacts to sage-grouse habitat will be mitigated by following MSGHCP recommendations and mitigation practices. No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no impacts to the environmental resources.
10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	A Class 3 Cultural Resource Inventory was performed along the route of the proposed project by Ethnoscience Inc. for the applicant. Action Alternative: The Class 3 inventory found the proposed project would have no effect on historical, archaeological or paleontological resources. No Action Alternative: There would be no impact to historical or archaeological sites under this alternative.
11. AESTHETICS: Is the project on a	The proposed project crosses multiple

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light?	tracts in remote, sparsely populated areas. Action Alternative: An underground line in this area would not alter the aesthetics at all. After installation, there would be no visible impacts. No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would 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 would affect the project. Action Alternative: The proposed project would place no additional demands on any environmental resources in the area. No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would 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 studies, plans or projects on these tracts. Action Alternative: This project would not impact any other plans or studies that Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation has on the School Trust land impacted. No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no impacts to the plans or studies that Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation has on the School Trust land.

III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION	
RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?	The operation and movement of heavy equipment and vehicles has inherent risks that are not impacted by access across the School Trust land. Action Alternative: The installation of the cable would slightly increase the risk of fire during the project due to increased vehicle traffic. No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no impacts to human health or safety.
15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	The area of impact is classified as grazing acreage and cultivated farmland, or as unsuitable acreage. Action Alternative: Any short-term disturbance to vegetation on the tract would be too small to have a measurable economic impact on the agricultural activities on this tract. No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no impacts to agricultural activities on the School Trust land.
16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.	Action Alternative: The project would not create nor impact any jobs in the area. No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts to quantity and distribution of employment under this alternative.
17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?	Action Alternative: The project would have no impacts on the local and state tax base and tax revenues. No Action Alternative: There would be

	no impacts to the local and state tax 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?	Action Alternative: The project would increase vehicle traffic in the area during installation. There would be no additional demand for governmental services. No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no additional demand for government services.
19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	There are no special management plans in effect on the School Trust land. It is managed for typical agricultural activities. Action Alternative: The project has cleared State (DNRC) management plans. No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no impacts to locally adopted environmental plans and goals.
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?	This project would have no impact on access to School Trust land. Action Alternative: No changes to public land access or recreational potential would occur. No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts to the recreational values associated with the School Trust land under this alternative.
21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?	Action Alternative: The project would not impact the density and distribution of population and housing. No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts to the density and distribution of population and housing.
22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is	Action Alternative: The project would

some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	enhance telecommunications capabilities for residents in the surrounding area. No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts to the social structures under this alternative.
23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	Action Alternative: The project would not impact the cultural uniqueness and diversity of this rural area. No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts to the cultural uniqueness and diversity under this alternative.
24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:	This fiber optic upgrade project is intended to provide greater telecommunication capabilities in the surrounding area/communities. This is a very rural area with limited capabilities currently. Action Alternative: Allowing installation of the cable across School Trust land would have little economic impact to the School Trust but would provide surrounding communities with increased telecommunications capabilities. No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts to the social and economic circumstances under this alternative.

EA Checklist Prepared By: s/Jack Medlicott\s Date: 4/19/2022

Jack Medlicott Land Use Specialist

IV. FINDING	
25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:	Action Alternative
26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:	No significant impacts expected.
27. Need for Further Environmental Analysis: [ ] EIS [ ] More Detailed EA [X] No Further Analysis	

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

s/Matthew Poole\s (Signature) Date: April 19, 2022

TWP	RGE	SEC	Acres
24N	29E	16	3.69
27N	29E	4	1.31
27N	29E	16	2.47
25N	31E	36	4.17
29N	28E	5	1.23
23N	29E	16	2.68
27N	28E	20	2.71
27N	28E	29	2.01
27N	28E	17	0.67
29N	30E	36	2.43
29N	27E	13	2.2
28N	31E	16	0.4
28N	30E	36	4.49
28N	30E	4	1.22
27N	29E	28	0.28
29N	30E	22	1.33
28N	30E	35	0.29
29N	29E	9	0.71
29N	29E	16	4.15
27N	27E	16	2.7
24N	31E	7	1.32
25N	28E	36	2.76
27N	26E	36	2.45
27N	32E	36	1.96
27N	33E	16	2.46
25N	29E	16	1.22
Totals			53.31