

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	McCone Electric ROW For Musselshell River Reroute
Proposed Implementation Date:	2015-2016
Proponent:	McCone Electric Co-Op. Inc.
Location:	T18N-R29E-Sec 36
County:	Garfield County

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

To grant a ROW easement to McCone electric for the overhead distribution lines that are located on state land within T18N-R29E-Sec36, Garfield County. This line was installed during the flooding of the Musselshell River in 2011. The existing line was in danger of being washed out. The proponent was made aware that they need to procure easement to the new line installed and have done so.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:
Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

McCone Electric is requesting ROW easement for overhead distribution lines placed on state lands from the DNRC Eastern Land Office. The requested utility easement is 1452.77 acres in length and 20 feet in width with 10 feet on each side of the centerline. The total acreage encompassed by this easement would be .67 acres.

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:
None

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:
Alternative A- Grant McCone Electric a right of way easement for the stated electric distribution line and associated maintenance.
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- There is no evidence of fragile soils within the scope of this project. There should be no lasting adverse effects to the soil quality, stability or moisture. Soil structures are not fragile or unstable.

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 Significant Impact

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- Alternative A- Where the construction and maintenance takes place there may be disturbance to the vegetation cover. Vegetation is comprised mainly of Western Wheatgrass (*Agropyron smithii*), Blue Grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), Sandberg Bluegrass (*Poa secunda*), Green Needlegrass (*Stipa viridula*), Sandberg Bluegrass (*Poa secunda*), Inland Saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*), and Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) and various forbs and shrub species

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- No Significant Impact

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 Service Database shows 3 species of concern in the general project area. Little Brown Myotis (*Myotis Lucifugus*), Silver Haired Bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*), and Sauger (*Sander Canadensis*). No significant impact to any of these species is expected. This project is not located within Greater Sage Grouse Core, Connective or General Habitat.

Alternative B- No Impact

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

Alternative A- A field review of the project area showed no findings of historical, archeological or paleontological resources. A search of the TLMS database shows no recorded historical or cultural sites on the tract.

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- This will add an overhead power line to the landscape. This electric line would be visible from the main county road. This line replaced a previous overhead electric distribution line.

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 Significant Impact

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

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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. |
|---|

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 trained and qualified professionals. Safety concerns become minimal for work done in this fashion. Minimal impacts expected. Once completed this line would increase electrical reliability in remote and rural areas of Western Garfield County.

Alternative B- No Impact

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

Alternative A- It would have a positive effect on Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural Activities and Production in the area.

Alternative B- No action on this issue would have a negative impact on the Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural activities in the area.

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 significant impact

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 significant Impact

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 significant Impact

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 significant impact

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 significant impact

Alternative B- No Impact

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Alternative A- No significant Impact

Alternative B- No Impact

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

Alternative A- No significant Impact

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 will provide income for the trust in the form of the purchase of a right of way easement. The easement would be valued at a price of \$325.00 per acre with a total easement price of \$217.75.

Alternative B- No Impact

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Scott Aye	Date: 11-18-15
	Title: Land Use Specialist	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative A

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The granting of the requested right of way easement upon this tract of state owned trust lands for the proposed electrical distribution line should not result in nor cause significant environmental impacts. The predicted environmental impacts have been identified and mitigation measures addressed in the EA checklist. The predicted impacts will be adequately mitigated through the construction plans. 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: Marc Aberg
	Title: Lands Program Manager
Signature: /s/ Marc A. Aberg	Date: 11-18-2015

