

# CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Installing an underground distribution power line	Proposed Implementation Date: 2015
Proponent: Big Flat Electric Cooperative Incorporated, PO Box 229, Malta, Montana 59538	
Type and Purpose of Action: Big Flat Electric Cooperative Incorporated has made a Right of Way Easement Application to the Glasgow Unit Office for an existing underground electric distribution power line located on State land in Phillips County.	
Location: W2SW4, SW4NW4, SE4SW4, Section 36 Township 33 North Range 30 East , SW4SE4, Section 17 Township 33 North Range 31 East	County: Phillips

## I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

<p>1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED: Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.</p>	<p>Big Flat Electric Cooperative Incorporated has made a Right of Way Easement Application and submitted it to the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Glasgow Unit Office along with the survey plats for the State land tracts crossed by this project. The surface lessee's have been contacted by Big Flat Electric Cooperative Incorporated in order for lessees to sign Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Notice of Settlement of Damages Form. There are no surface damages anticipated.</p>
<p>2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:</p>	<p>Phillips County Commissioners, United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency. United States Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management</p>
<p>3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:</p>	<p>Action Alternative: Grant a Right of Way Easement to Big Flat Electric Cooperative Incorporated for an existing underground power line on State owned land.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Deny a Right of Way Easement requested by Big Flat Electrical Cooperative Incorporated for an existing underground power line on State owned land.</p>

## II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS
<p>4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:            Are fragile, compactable or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features?            Are there special reclamation considerations?</p>	<p>General Discussion: Very minimal native rangeland, acreage will be impacted by this activity. There are no fragile, compactable, or unstable soils present or any unusual geologic features. The various soil types will continue to produce native vegetation upon project completion.</p>

## II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

	<p>Action: This disturbance caused by the installation of the underground power line will be done using heavy power line installation equipment for a short time period. There will be minimal compaction to the various soil types by the equipment.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the geology or soil characteristics will occur.</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>General Discussion: There are no ephemeral or perennial streams located in the path of the project.</p> <p>Action: No impacts to the water quality, quantity, and/or distribution of surface and ground water resources on the State land. The electric power line will be installed with underground power line equipment with minimal surface disturbance on a 20 foot wide construction area.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the water quality, quantity, and/or distribution will occur.</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>General Discussion: The project area is not located in an air quality regulation zone or airshed.</p> <p>Action: The air quality may or may not be temporarily reduced during installation. Small amounts of pollutants from machinery and particulates from the disturbance of the areas soil may be produced. The possible reduction in air quality will be minimal and will quickly return to normal by natural means.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the air quality will occur.</p>
<p>7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?</p>	<p>General Discussion: No rare plants or cover types are present within the project area. The project will occur in the fall and minimal vegetation will be disturbed by the installation of the underground power line.</p> <p>Action: The plant communities will be in the dormant growth stage when installation will be occurring. The impacts to plant growth will be minimal and areas will see plant regeneration from exiting seed sources.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the vegetation cover, quantity, and/or quality will occur.</p>
<p>8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?</p>	<p>General Discussion: This affected area is small in nature and located in a rural area. The area of impact has some habitat types for Sage grouse, song birds, sharp-tail grouse, pronghorn antelope, mule deer and various raptors. There may also be some small areas that have small prairie potholes with habitat for some waterfowl types.</p>

## II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

	<p>Action: Impacts to terrestrial, avian, and aquatic habitat sources will be minimal to none. Area of impact has minimal aquatic habitat on or near the project site. There are no expected impacts to the aquatic habitat associated with the surface water resources on surrounding federal and deeded lands.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to terrestrial, avian, and/or aquatic life and habitats will occur.</p>
<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>	<p>General Discussion: A search of the Montana Natural Resource Inventory Survey system found the following species of concern to be present within the proposed action areas: Swift fox, Bairds sparrow, Chest-nut collard longspur, Greater Sage Grouse, Loggerhead shrike, Long-billed curlew, McCowens Longspur.</p> <p>Action: It is anticipated that the implementation of this action will not affect any known unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources. The project will have very minimal impacts to species of concern.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources will occur.</p>
<p>10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?</p>	<p>General Discussion: Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation has inspected the State land to be impacted through the Field Evaluation process. Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Glasgow Unit Office personnel found no historical or archaeological sites on the State land along the right of way easement application route.</p> <p>Action: There is no need for action on tract as there are no cultural sites located on the right of way easement application route.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the areas historical, archeological, and/or paleontological resources will occur.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>General Discussion: The project areas are located in a rural area. The landscape consists of rolling to hilly terrain. The project will not be visible to the general public.</p> <p>Action: The area is native rangeland acreage. No long term impacts to the areas aesthetics are anticipated. The power line will be an underground electrical line will not interfere with the areas aesthetics. Increases of noise will occur during construction; these impacts will be eliminated as soon as the project is completed.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the areas aesthetics will occur.</p>

## II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

<p>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?</p>	<p>General Discussion: The area does not contain limited resources. Nearby activities consist mostly of general ranching and farming operations.</p> <p>Action: No impacts to the demands of environmental resources such as land, water, air, and/or energy resources are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the demands of environmental resources such as land, water, air, and/or energy resources will occur.</p>
<p>13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?</p>	<p>General Discussion: The writer of this document is not aware of other environmental documents pertinent to the project area, other than those listed in this document.</p> <p>Action: No impacts to studies, plans, and/or projects pertinent to this area are anticipated to occur.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to studies, plans, and/or projects are anticipated to occur.</p>

## 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>General Discussion: The proposed project will create human health and/or safety risks associated with the installation and maintenance of the power line. The area is sparsely populated and risks from working in a rural area are minimal to the local populace.</p> <p>Action: The employer and employee identify these risks as occupational hazards. These risks will only be present during installation and maintenance of the proposed power line. There will be mitigation of health and safety risks by using trained professionals with proper safety efforts.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to human health and/or safety risks will occur.</p>
<p>15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?</p>	<p>General Discussion: The surface lessees will have no decreased revenues due to surface disturbance caused by the installation of the overhead electrical lines.</p> <p>Action: There will be no need for mitigation for the power line installation. Activities will be done in fall with minimal impacts affecting growing grass and forb plant production.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts will occur on the local agricultural activities in the area.</p>

## II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

<p>16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.</p>	<p>Action: Because the project will be completed in a relatively short time frame, no impacts to quantity and distribution of employment are anticipated. Big Flat Electric Cooperative Incorporated has permanent employees that will complete the power line construction.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to quantity and distribution of employment will occur.</p>
<p>17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?</p>	<p>Action: The granting of the Right of Way Easement for the project will increase the county tax base by adding infrastructure.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the state tax base and/or tax revenues will occur.</p>
<p>18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed?</p>	<p>General Discussion: The area receives minimal traffic during most of the year from the rural population. Slight increases in traffic occur during various time periods with increased farming and ranching activities, and various types of recreational use.</p> <p>Action: Increases in traffic levels will occur during installation. The increased traffic is not anticipated to occur at substantial levels. No impacts to government services are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the level of demand for road use or government services will occur.</p>
<p>19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?</p>	<p>General Discussion: There are no known zoning or management plans in affect in the construction areas.</p> <p>Action: No impacts to local environmental plans and goals are anticipated to occur as the construction is in remote areas.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to local environmental plans and goals will occur.</p>
<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>	<p>General Discussion: The two tracts of State land are not legally accessible and provide some recreational opportunities. No wilderness areas, wilderness study areas or areas of critical environmental concern are located within a close proximity to the proposed project area.</p> <p>Action: The project area contains some recreational opportunities. No impacts to recreational quality or recreational opportunities are anticipated as project will be done in a short time frame.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the quality of recreational and wilderness activities will occur.</p>
<p>21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND</p>	<p>Action: The service provided by the new buried power</p>

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?	line may or may not increase the likelihood of future rural development in this area. No impacts to the density and/or distribution of population and housing are anticipated to occur.  No Action: No impacts to the density and/or distribution of population and housing will occur.
22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	Action: No impacts to the areas social structures, native/traditional lifestyles, or communities are anticipated to occur.  No Action: No impacts social structures, native/traditional lifestyles, or communities will occur.
23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	Action: No impacts to the areas cultural uniqueness and/or diversity are anticipated to occur.  No Action: No impacts to the areas cultural uniqueness and/or diversity will occur.
24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:	General Discussion: The project will provide the opportunity for local businesses to supply the applicant with materials needed for installation of the buried power line. This opportunity may or may not benefit local businesses.  Action: The state trust will receive some monetary compensation for the Right of Way Easement and the county will benefit from an increased tax base.  No Action: No impacts to the social and economic circumstances will occur and the state trust will not receive additional revenue from the Right of Way Easement.

EA Checklist Prepared By: Randy Dirkson, Land Use Specialist /S/Date: 11/20/15

IV. FINDING	
25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:	Action alternative.
26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:	No significant impacts are anticipated as the power lines have already been installed.
27. Need for Further Environmental Analysis:	
<input type="checkbox"/> EIS <input type="checkbox"/> More Detailed EA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Further Analysis	

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

2015 s/Matthew Poole\s Date: November 24,  
Signature

