

## CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

<b>Project Name:</b>	TRECO Powder River Reroute
<b>Proposed Implementation Date:</b>	2015-2016
<b>Proponent:</b>	Tongue River Electric Co-Op
<b>Location:</b>	T1N-R54E-Sec 16
<b>County:</b>	Custer County

### I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Tongue River Electric Co-Op has applied for a right of way easement for a two 7.2 KV electric lines on the above mentioned tract of trust land. The right of way requested would be 9072.21 feet in length with a width of 20 feet and would encompass 4.16 acres in total.

### II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

#### 1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

*Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.*

TRECO is has filed an application for right of way across state land form, along with surveys of the project route. Both of the requested electrical lines currently exist on the state trust land. Flooding of the Powder River has caused the current area of electrical line #1 crossing to become in danger of washing out. As such the proponent has reengineered the line to be moved to a more suitable crossing upstream from the existing one. The proposed project was inspected by DNRC ELO field staff on November 16, 2015.

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

None

#### 3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A- Grant TRECO a right of way easement for the mentioned service lines  
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- Soils in the area are generally silty. Soils within the project area are generally not fragile, compactable or unstable. The topography of the area is flat to gently rolling.

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 work in the Powder River is expected.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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

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**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 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

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**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

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**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- No evidence of sensitive or endangered species was found in the scope of this project. A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Service Database shows no recorded observations of any Endangered, Threatened or Sensitive Species within the general project area.

The tract in which the project is proposed is located within Greater Sage Grouse General Habitat. The closest noted active lek is approximately 5.5 miles from the proposed project location. This location would be outside the NSO and nesting season time restrictions set forth by EO-10-2014 and EO-12-2015. The proposed project is not located within suitable Sage Grouse Habitat.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:**

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

Alternative A- Upon inspection of the parcels by the Eastern Land Office staff no significant findings were noted on these parcels. A search of the TLMS Database shows no noted or recorded findings of Historical or Archeological resources. Due to the small scope of the project no impacts are expected.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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- No significant impact is expected to the view shed. Both electric lines currently exist and only one will experience a minor reroute.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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

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**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

<b>IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.</i></li><li>• <i>Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.</i></li><li>• <i>Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.</i></li></ul>



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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 who accept the risks as an occupational hazard. Safety concerns become minimal for work done in this fashion. The current electrical line is in danger of being washed out by the Powder River, which could cause a safety risk to residents and operators. This proposed reroute will move the electric line to an area that should not be at risk of washout.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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 in the area through an increase in the available electricity supply within the rural area.

Alternative B- No impact

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**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

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**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

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**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 impacts expected

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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

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**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- The current electrical line is in danger of being washed out by the Powder River, which could cause a safety risk to residents and operators. This proposed reroute will move the electric line to an area that should not be at risk of washout.

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**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

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**22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:**

*Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.*

Alternative A- No impacts expected

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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

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**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 permanent easement. The price per acre is set at \$325.00. The total easement price will be \$1352.00.

Alternative B- No Impact

<b>EA Checklist Prepared By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Scott Aye	<b>Date:</b> 11-18-2015
	<b>Title:</b> Land Use Specialist	

**V. FINDING**

**25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:**

Alternative A

**26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:**

The granting of the requested easement upon state owned trust lands for the proposed overhead electric distribution lines 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

<b>EA Checklist Approved By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Marc Aberg
	<b>Title:</b> ELO Lands Program Manager
<b>Signature:</b> /s/ Marc A. Aberg	<b>Date:</b> 11-18-2015