

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Sperry Grade Missoula Electric Cooperative (MEC) Easement
Proposed Implementation Date:	March 2026
Proponent:	DNRC & MEC
Location:	Section 36, Township 15 North – Range 14 West
County:	Missoula

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) proposes an easement grant to Missoula Electric Cooperative (MEC) to install underground power in two locations on North Sperry Grade Road and within the Clearwater Unit compound. It would encumber 0.098 acres. See Exhibits A and B.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project. List number of individuals contacted, number of responses received, and newspapers in which notices were placed and for how long. Briefly summarize issues received from the public.

Internal scoping with DNRC staff was conducted.

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

Examples: cost-share agreement with U.S. Forest Service, 124 Permit, 3A Authorization, Air Quality Major Open Burning Permit.

N/A

3. ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT:

Describe alternatives considered and, if applicable, provide brief description of how the alternatives were developed. List alternatives that were considered but eliminated from further analysis and why.

No Action Alternative

The proposed easement would be denied and would not occur.

Action Alternative

The proposed easement would be approved and would occur.

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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to soils.

The project area consists of Perma gravelly loam and Tally variant sandy loam. Both are defined as somewhat excessively drained (United States Natural Resources Conservation Service (1995) *Soil Survey of Missoula County Area, Montana, Part 1*).

Alternative A No Action Alternative:

The effects of No-Action would be the same as those described under the existing conditions and are not expected to cause direct, indirect and cumulative impacts to soils.

Alternative B Action Alternative:

The proposed easement would be granted. Due to the soil types and small project footprint, negligible disturbance or direct impacts and no indirect or cumulative impacts to soils are expected.

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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to water resources.

The project area does not have surface or groundwater resources at the easement sites.

Alternative A No Action Alternative:

The effects of No-Action would be the same as those described under the existing conditions and are not expected to cause direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to water quality, quantity, and distribution.

Alternative B Action Alternative:

The proposed easement would be granted and is not expected to cause direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to water quality, quantity, and distribution.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced (i.e. particulate matter from road use or harvesting, slash pile burning, prescribed burning, etc)? Identify the Airshed and Impact Zone (if any) according to the Montana/Idaho Airshed Group. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to air quality.

No impacts to air quality would be anticipated with either alternative.

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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to vegetation.

The project area consists of native and nonnative grasses and a ponderosa pine overstory.

Alternative A No Action Alternative:

The effects of No-Action would be the same as those described under the existing conditions and are not expected to cause direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to vegetation.

Alternative B Action Alternative:

The proposed easement would be granted. Due to the small project footprint, negligible disturbance or direct impacts and no indirect or cumulative impacts to vegetation are expected.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

The project area has terrestrial and avian species present.

Alternative A No Action Alternative:

The effects of No-Action would be the same as those described under the existing conditions and are not expected to cause direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to terrestrial, avian, and aquatic life and habitats.

Alternative B Action Alternative:

The proposed easement would be granted and is not expected to cause direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to terrestrial, avian, and aquatic life and habitats.

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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

Fisheries- No Federally listed threatened and endangered fish species or critical habitat for threatened and endangered fish species as designated by the USFWS would be affected by this project

Terrestrial Wildlife: Potential habitat for grizzly bears exists in the project area. Potential habitat exists in the project area for gray wolves and pileated woodpeckers.

Alternative A No Action Alternative:

The effects of No-Action would be the same as those described under the existing conditions and are not expected to cause direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources.

Alternative B Action Alternative:

The proposed easement would be granted. Given the small project footprint, these actions are not expected to cause direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

A Class I (literature review) level review was conducted by the DNRC staff 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.

Because there is a low likelihood of the presence of cultural or paleontologic resources, issuance of easements for this project will result in *No Effect* to *Antiquities* as defined in the Montana State Antiquities Act. No additional archaeological investigative work will be conducted.

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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to aesthetics.

No impacts are likely to occur under either alternative.

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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to environmental resources.

No impacts are likely to occur under either alternative.

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

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

Alternative A No Action Alternative:

The effects of No-Action would be the same as those described under the existing conditions and are not expected to cause direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to human health and safety.

Alternative B Action Alternative:

The proposed easement is expected to provide an improved power grid within the immediate area. These actions are expected to cause minor, beneficial direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to human health and safety.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

No change from existing conditions is anticipated.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to the employment market.

No change from existing conditions is anticipated.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

No change from existing conditions is anticipated.

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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

No change from existing conditions is anticipated.

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.

None.

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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

No change from existing conditions is anticipated.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to population and housing.

No change from existing conditions is anticipated.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

No change from existing conditions is anticipated.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

No change from existing conditions is anticipated.

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 direct, indirect, and cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

No change from existing conditions is anticipated.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Kristen Baker-Dickinson	Date: 2/5/2026
	Title: Clearwater Unit Manager	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

The Action Alternative has been selected because it meets the intent of the project objectives outlined in Section I – Type and Purpose of Action.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

I find that the Action Alternative will not have significant impacts for the following reasons:

- The Action Alternative is in compliance with the existing laws, rules, policies, and standards applicable to this type of proposed action.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

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EIS

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More Detailed EA

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No Further Analysis


EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Sierra Farmer
	Title: Trustlands Program Manager
Signature: 	Date: 2/5/26

Exhibit A Proposed Easement on North Sperry Grade Road

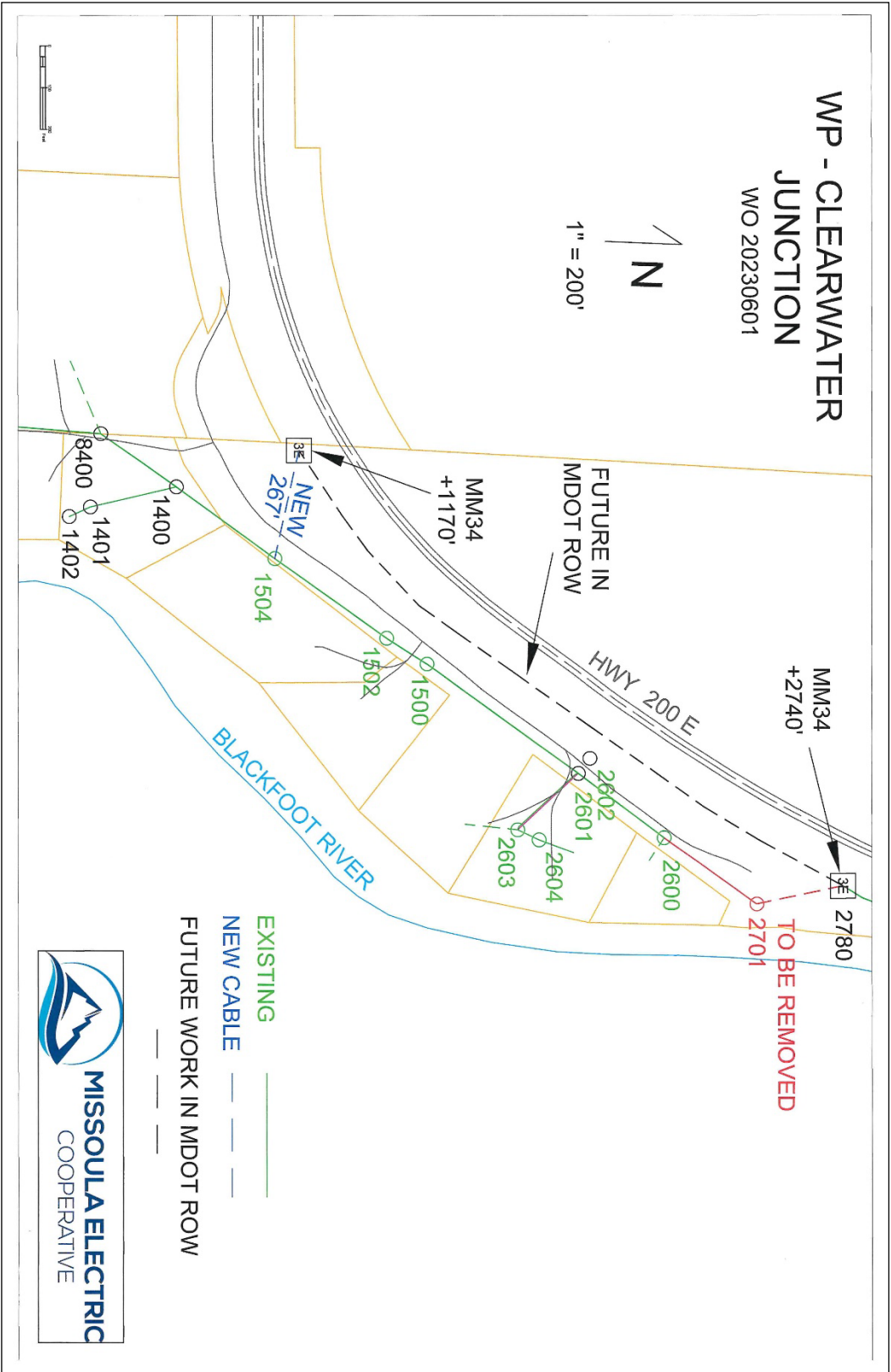


Exhibit B Proposed Easement within the Clearwater Unit Compound

