

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Charter Easement Application
Proposed Implementation Date:	Summer 2024
Proponent:	Flathead Fiber Optic and Consulting
Location:	T10N 4W Sec. 27
County:	Lewis and Clark

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Flathead Fiber Optic and Consulting has submitted an easement application for buried communication lines on State Trust Land located in T10N R4W Section 27. The route selected for the buried lines were the shortest distance to serve the surrounding area and existing networks. See attached map in exhibit A for proposed easement route and location.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

Department of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks- FWP Comments Email Platform
Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Archaeologist, Patrick Rennie
Montana Natural Heritage Program

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

The proposed easement would involve Montana State Trust Land allocated to the Common Schools Trust.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A: No action alternative. The proposed project would not be approved.

Alternative B: Action Alternative: Allow the proponent to apply for the proposed easement to install, utilize, and maintain buried communication lines.

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.

The following information was derived from Web Soil Survey for this section. The proposed easement would be located on a "Crittenden-Tolman complex, 4 to 35 percent slopes" soil type. This soil type has a "moderately suited" reclamation suitability rating. No cumulative impacts are anticipated to soils. Much of this corridor along the private road have existing utilities and have seen some form of soil

needle and thread, bluebunch wheatgrass, various sedges, various introduced grasses and various forbs.

DNRC will require the applicant to reseed and maintain weed management. Applicant will need to use a pre-approved seed mix for State Trust Land and would be responsible for weed management on the easement corridors.

Alternative A (No Action): No work would occur. No direct impacts to vegetation cover, quantity, and quality would occur.

Alternative B (Proposed Action): Allow the proponent to apply for the proposed easement to install, utilize and maintain buried communication lines, minimal impacts to vegetation cover, quantity, and quality are expected to occur.

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.

No cumulative impacts to terrestrial, avian, or aquatic life are anticipated from this proposed easement. This is a relatively common practice within close proximity to residential subdivisions. Montana FWP was contacted for comment and they did not have any questions or concerns regarding the proposed activity.

Alternative A (No Action): No work would occur. No direct impacts to terrestrial, avian, and aquatic life and habitats would occur.

Alternative B (Proposed Action): Allow the proponent to apply for the proposed easement to install, utilize and maintain buried communication lines, minimal impacts to terrestrial, avian, and aquatic life and habitats are expected to occur.

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.

The Montana Natural Resource Information Service (NRIS) was queried for information regarding sensitive or endangered species located near the proposed easement area. Species that have habitat polygons occurring in the proposed communication line location include: the Grizzly Bear, Hoary Bat, Spotted Bat, Bobolink, Brewer's Sparrow, Brown Creeper, Cassin's Finch, Clark's Nutcracker, Evening Grosbeak, Flammulated Owl, Green-tailed Towhee, Long-billed Curlew, Pileated Woodpecker, Pinyon Jay, Veery, Lesser Rushy Milkvetch, and Wedge-leaf Saltbush.

The proposed lines would be installed below ground, alongside an existing driveway, and construction is anticipated to be short duration.

No cumulative impacts anticipated to unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources.

Alternative A (No Action): No work would occur. No direct impacts to unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources would occur.

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.

No other studies, plans, or projects were identified during the scoping for these proposed easement.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *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.

No health or safety risks are posed by the proposed easement. The only risk associated with the proposed easement would be during the installation phase. Locating any other underground utilities would be the responsibility of the contractor to avoid these utilities during installation.

Alternative A (No Action): No work would occur. No direct impacts to human health and safety would occur.

Alternative B (Proposed Action): Allow the proponent to apply for the proposed easement to install, utilize and maintain buried communication lines, potential impacts to human health and safety are not expected to occur.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

If approved, this proposed easement is designed to allow access to the buried lines for maintenance and repair purposes.

Alternative A (No Action): No work would occur. No direct impacts to industrial, commercial and agriculture activities and production would occur.

Alternative B (Proposed Action): Allow the proponent to apply for the proposed easement to install, utilize and maintain buried communication lines, minimal impacts to industrial, commercial and agriculture activities and production are expected to occur. Enhanced internet/communication services would be expected across these areas.

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.

The proposed easement may potentially create or eliminate permanent jobs in the area. Local residents would have better access to high speed internet.

Alternative A (No Action): No work would occur. No direct impacts to quantity and distribution of

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.

This proposed easement will not negatively alter recreational activities in the area.

Alternative A (No Action): No work would occur. No direct impacts to access to and quality of recreational and wilderness activities would occur.

Alternative B (Proposed Action): Allow the proponent to apply for the proposed easement to install, utilize and maintain buried communication lines, no impacts to access to and quality of recreational and wilderness activities are expected to occur.

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.

No change in population will result from this proposed easement.

Alternative A (No Action): No work would occur. No direct impacts to density and distribution of population and housing would occur.

Alternative B (Proposed Action): Allow the proponent to apply for the proposed easement to install, utilize and maintain buried communication lines, minimal impacts to density and distribution of population and housing are expected to occur.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

No change in social structures and mores are expected as a result of this proposed easement.

Alternative A (No Action): No work would occur. No direct impacts to social structures and mores would occur.

Alternative B (Proposed Action): Allow the proponent to apply for the proposed easement to install, utilize and maintain buried communication lines, minimal impacts to social structures and mores are expected to occur.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

The proposed easement has no anticipated affects to the unique quality of the area.

Alternative A (No Action): No work would occur. No direct impacts to cultural uniqueness and diversity would occur.


anticipated from the implementation of this proposal.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EI

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Adam Blythe
	Title: Helena Unit Manager
Signature: 	Date: 6/25/24