

## CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

<b>Project Name:</b>	<b>Turk Rd ROW Application</b>
<b>Proposed Implementation Date:</b>	<b>Summer 2024</b>
<b>Proponent:</b>	<b>Northwestern Energy</b>
<b>Location:</b>	<b>T11N 5W Sec. 16</b>
<b>County:</b>	<b>Lewis and Clark</b>

### I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Northwestern Energy has submitted an easement application for a buried power line on State Trust Land located in T11N R5W Section 16. The route selected for the buried primary power line 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 primary power 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 mainly located on a "Holter-Castner channery loams, 8 to 45 percent slopes" soil type. This soil type has a "well suited" reclamation suitability rating. No cumulative impacts are anticipated to soils.

#### **10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:**

*Identify and determine 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 results revealed that no cultural or paleontological resources have been identified in the area of potential effect (APE).

Considering the low-impact nature of the proposed project, project related activities are expected to have *No Effect to Antiquities*. No additional archaeological investigative work will be conducted in response to this proposed development. However, if previously unknown cultural or paleontological materials are identified during project related activities, all work will cease until a professional assessment of such resources can be made.

#### **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.*

The proposed easement is in a rural/forested part of Lewis and Clark County Northwest of Helena, MT. The proposed lines would be placed underground, and disturbed areas would be reseeded. Other utilities are in the immediate vicinity of the proposed easement.

No anticipated impacts to aesthetics.

**Alternative A (No Action):** No work would occur. No direct impacts to aesthetics would occur.

**Alternative B (Proposed Action):** Allow the proponent to apply for the proposed easement to install, utilize and maintain buried primary power lines, no impacts to aesthetics are expected to occur.

#### **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.*

No demands for additional environmental resources are required for this project.

No cumulative effects to environmental resources should result from this proposed easement.

**Alternative A (No Action):** No work would occur. No direct impacts to demands on environmental resources of land, water, air or energy would occur.

**Alternative B (Proposed Action):** Allow the proponent to apply for the proposed easement to install, utilize and maintain buried primary power lines, no impacts to demands on environmental resources of land, water, air or energy are expected to 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 this 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 primary power 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 primary power 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.

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

**Alternative B (Proposed Action):** Allow the proponent to apply for the proposed easement to install, utilize and maintain buried primary power lines, minimal impacts to quantity and distribution of employment are expected to occur. Enhanced internet/communication services may allow for remote workers in the area.

**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.*

No significant increase in tax revenues are expected as a result of this proposed easement.

**Alternative A (No Action):** No work would occur. No direct impacts to local and state tax base and tax revenues would occur.

**Alternative B (Proposed Action):** Allow the proponent to apply for the proposed easement to install, utilize and maintain buried primary power lines, minimal impacts to local and state tax base and tax revenues are expected to occur.

**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.*

No increased demand for government services are expected as a result of this proposed easement.

**Alternative A (No Action):** No work would occur. No direct impacts to demand for government services would occur.

**Alternative B (Proposed Action):** Allow the proponent to apply for the proposed easement to install, utilize and maintain buried primary power lines, no impacts to demand for government services are expected to occur.

**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.*

No locally adopted environmental plans will be affected by this proposed easement.

**Alternative A (No Action):** No work would occur. No direct impacts to locally adopted environmental plans and goals would occur.

**Alternative B (Proposed Action):** Allow the proponent to apply for the proposed easement to install, utilize and maintain buried primary power lines, no impacts to locally adopted environmental plans and goals are expected to occur.

**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 primary power 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.*

Potential change in population will result from this proposed easement. Currently there is no power in the subdivision to the north of the state tract. Issuing this easement may make parcels more desirable in the area and may lead to increased development.

**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 primary power lines, potential 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 primary power 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.

**Alternative B (Proposed Action):** Allow the proponent to apply for the proposed easement to install, utilize and maintain buried primary power lines, minimal impacts to cultural uniqueness and diversity are expected to occur.

**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.*

The proposed easement on these tracts of State Trust Lands would generate approximately \$1,116.00 in revenue for the Common Schools Trust.

**.62 acres (Easement area) x \$1,800/acre = \$1,116.00 (11N 5W 16 Common Schools)**

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.

This proposed easement would enable the proponent to install, utilize, and maintain the proposed primary power lines for their customers.

**Alternative A (No Action):** No work would occur. No direct impacts to other appropriate social and economic circumstances would occur.

**Alternative B (Proposed Action):** Allow the proponent to apply for the proposed easement to install, utilize and maintain buried primary power line, minimal impacts to other appropriate social and economic circumstances are expected to occur. The common schools trust would generate revenue through an easement on state lands.

<b>EA Checklist Prepared By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Dylan Craft	<b>Date:</b> 6/25/2024
	<b>Title:</b> Land Use Specialist- Helena Unit	

**V. FINDING**

**25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:**

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

**26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:**

Allow the proponent to apply for the proposed easement. No long term or cumulative impacts are anticipated from the implementation of this proposal.

**27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:**

EI

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis


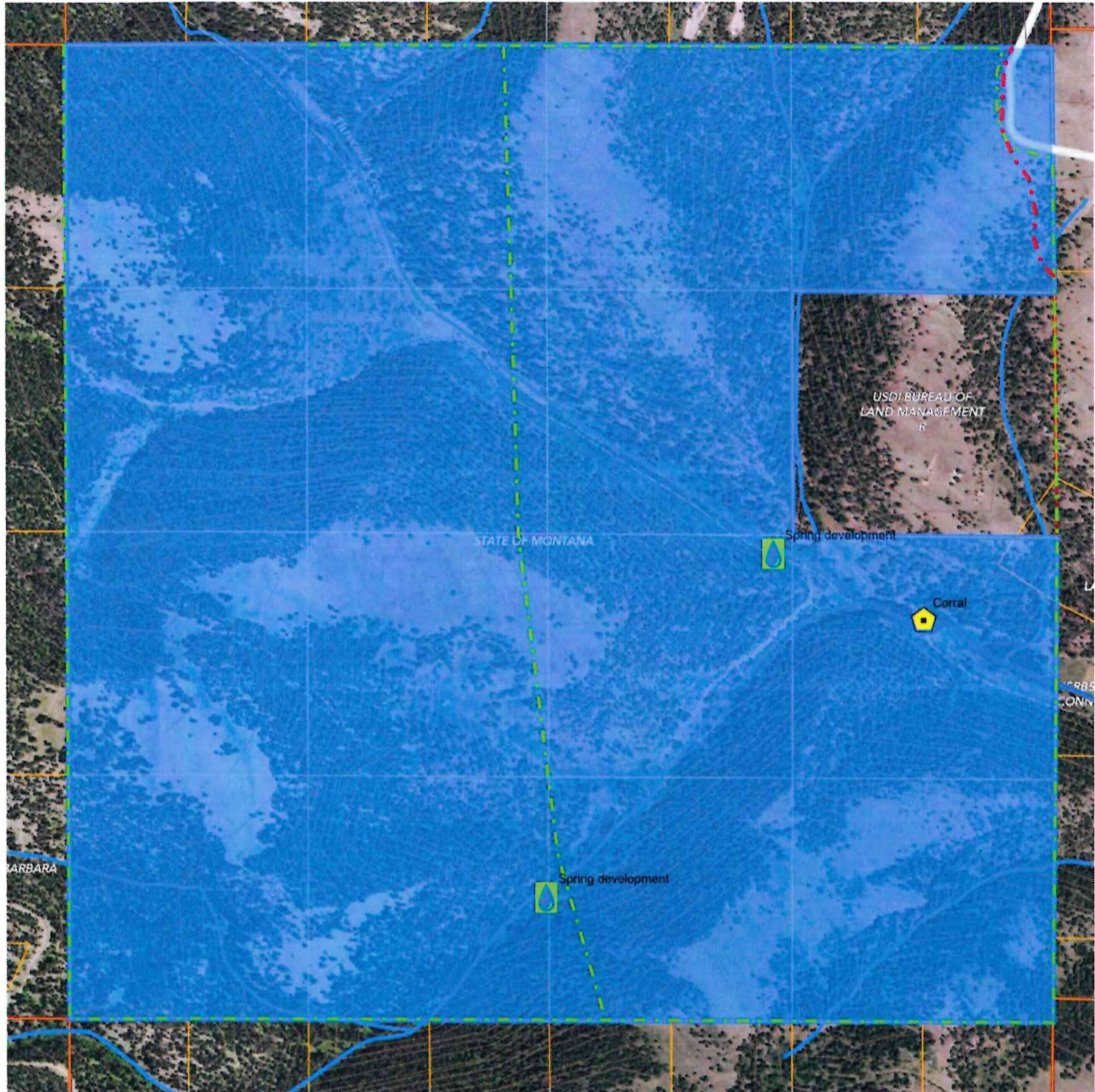
<b>EA Checklist Approved By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Adam Blythe
	<b>Title:</b> Helena Unit Manager
<b>Signature:</b> 	<b>Date:</b> 7/10/24

Exhibit A:

11N 5W Sec. 16 Proposed Easement indicated by the dashed red line across the state land in the NE corner of the tract.





FWP.MT.GOV



THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks  
4600 Giant Springs Road  
Great Falls MT 59405

July 1, 2024

Dylan Craft | Land Use Specialist  
Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation  
Central Land Office  
8001 N Montana Ave  
Helena, MT 59602

Dear Mr. Craft,

Thank you for the opportunity to review Northwestern Energy's underground power line installation proposal across state lands.

The site is in the vicinity of Threemile Creek. Any disturbance to the stream bed or banks, including boring under streambeds in the vicinity of streams will require a 124 or 310 permit. FWP will provide specific input through that process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jason Rhoten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jason Rhoten  
Region 4 Supervisor

