CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	**Spectrum Nav. Water ROW Underground Fiber Optic App.**
Proposed Implementation Date:	**Summer of 2026**
Proponent:	**Spectrum Pacific West, LLC**
Location:	**T19N R2E Sec. 5**
County:	**Cascade**

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Spectrum has submitted an application for a 20-foot-wide easement to construct and maintain an underground telecommunications fiber optic cable within the SW¼ NE¼ of Section 5, Township 19 North, Range 2 East. The proposed easement corridor is located beneath the Missouri River, a navigable waterway on State trust land. The conduit used for fiber optic cable installation is 1.25 inches in diameter. The purpose of the proposed action is to facilitate the installation of fiber optic infrastructure to improve telecommunications service in the surrounding region. The Montana State Board of Land Commissioners has authority to grant easements for this purpose pursuant to MCA 77-2-101, 77-2-102, 77-2-104, and 77-1-1112 and 77-1-1115.

Exhibits:

- Exhibit A: Vicinity Map
- Exhibit B: Aerial Photo with Easement Location Indicated
- Exhibit C: Valuation

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 Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Archaeologist, Patrick Rennie
Montana Natural Heritage Program

Public outreach was limited to the list above due to the larger impacted project corridor outside of State Trust Land (the impacted Trust Land involves a small segment of the proposed route) resulting in the supposition that local area residents are well informed of the project and the evident need for the improvement of important energy infrastructure. No comments in opposition were received by DNRC.

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

The proposed easements would involve Montana State Trust Land allocated to the Public Lands Trust (Navigable Rivers). Approval of the project is contingent on the proponent obtaining all necessary and lawful permits, licenses, and authorizations from the appropriate entities.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

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

Alternative B: Action Alternative: Recommend the proponent be granted an easement to install an underground telecommunications cable via directional boring.

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 proposed fiber optic cable would be installed using directional boring methods. Directional boring typically disturbs only the soil within the direct bore path and small entry and exit areas. The conduit used for fiber optic cable installation is 1.25" in diameter. Due to the limited extent of ground disturbance, no significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to geology or soils are anticipated.

Alternative A (No Action): Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed easement would not be granted, and no ground-disturbing activities would occur. No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on geology or soils would be expected.

Alternative B (Proposed Action): Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the proponent would install an underground telecommunications cable via directional boring. Minor and temporary soil disturbance would occur at bore entry and exit locations and along the subsurface bore path. Due to the limited scale of disturbance and the use of directional boring techniques, impacts to geology and soils are anticipated to be minimal.

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.

Because the fiber optic cable would be installed beneath the riverbed using directional boring methods and no infrastructure would be placed within the active waterway, no significant impacts to water quality, quantity, or distribution are anticipated.

Alternative A (No Action): Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed easement would not be granted, and no construction activities would occur. No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to water quality, quantity, or distribution would be expected.

Alternative B (Proposed Action): Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the proponent would install an underground telecommunications cable beneath the riverbed using directional boring methods. No structures or infrastructure would be placed within the active channel. Minor and temporary disturbance may occur at bore entry and exit locations; however, because the bore would occur beneath the riverbed, impacts to surface water quality, quantity, and distribution are anticipated to be minimal.

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.

Some minor and temporary indirect impacts to air quality may occur from dust generation and vehicle and equipment emissions during construction activities associated with installation of the proposed fiber optic cable. However, no long-term impacts on air quality are anticipated.

Alternative A (No Action): Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed easement would not be

granted, and no construction activities would occur. No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on air quality would be expected.

Alternative B (Proposed Action): Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the proponent would install an underground telecommunications cable via directional boring. Temporary and localized impacts to air quality may occur from vehicle traffic, operation of construction equipment, and minor dust generation during installation activities. These impacts would be short term in duration and are not anticipated to result in long-term degradation of air quality.

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.

Because the fiber optic cable would be installed underground using directional boring methods, impacts to vegetation cover, quantity, and quality are anticipated to be minimal. Disturbance would primarily be limited to temporary impacts at bore entry and exit locations.

Alternative A (No Action): Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed easement would not be granted, and no ground-disturbing activities would occur. No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to vegetation cover, quantity, or quality would be expected.

Alternative B (Proposed Action): Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the proponent would install an underground telecommunications cable via directional boring. Minor and temporary vegetation disturbance may occur at bore entry and exit locations and in areas accessed by construction equipment. Due to the limited extent and temporary nature of disturbance, long-term impacts to vegetation cover, quantity, and quality are anticipated to be minimal.

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.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) was contacted for comment regarding the proposed project. No response was received.

Because the fiber optic cable would be installed underground using directional boring methods, impacts to terrestrial, avian, and aquatic species and their associated habitats are anticipated to be minimal. Disturbance would primarily be temporary and limited to boring entry and exit locations.

Alternative A (No Action): Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed easement would not be granted, and no construction activities would occur. No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to terrestrial, avian, or aquatic species or habitats would be expected.

Alternative B (Proposed Action): Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the proponent would install an underground telecommunications cable via directional boring. Temporary disturbances from construction equipment, vehicle traffic, and limited ground disturbance may occur at bore entry and exit locations. Because the cable would be installed underground and no infrastructure would be placed within the active waterway, long-term impacts to terrestrial, avian, and aquatic life and habitats are anticipated to be minimal.

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.

Because the fiber optic cable would be installed underground using directional boring methods, impacts to unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources and associated habitats are anticipated to be minimal. Disturbance would primarily be temporary and limited to boring entry and exit locations.

Alternative A (No Action): Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed easement would not be granted, and no construction activities would occur. No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources or associated habitats would be expected.

Alternative B (Proposed Action): Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the proponent would install an underground telecommunications cable via directional boring. Minor and temporary disturbance may occur at bore entry and exit locations and in areas accessed by construction equipment. Due to the limited extent of surface disturbance and the underground nature of the installation, no significant impacts to unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources or associated habitats are anticipated.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:
Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

A Class I (literature review) cultural resource investigation was completed by the DNRC staff archaeologist for the area of potential effect (APE). The review included examination of project maps, DNRC site and site lead databases, land use records, General Land Office survey plats, and control cards. The Class I review identified no previously recorded cultural or paleontological resources within the APE. No additional archaeological field survey is proposed for the project. If previously unknown cultural or paleontological resources are discovered during construction, all work in the vicinity would cease until the resources can be evaluated by a qualified professional.

Alternative A (No Action): Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed easement would not be granted, and no ground-disturbing activities would occur. No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to cultural or paleontological resources would be expected.

Alternative B (Proposed Action): Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the proponent would install an underground telecommunications cable via directional boring. Based on the Class I cultural resource review and the lack of recorded resources within the APE, no impacts to known cultural or paleontological resources are anticipated. If previously unidentified resources are encountered during construction, work in the vicinity would cease and appropriate procedures would be followed.

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.

Once installed, the fiber optic cable would be underground and not visible at the surface; therefore, no long-term impacts to the visual quality or aesthetics of the area are anticipated.

Alternative A (No Action): Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed easement would not be granted, and no construction activities would occur. No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on aesthetics or visual resources would be expected.

Alternative B (Proposed Action): Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the proponent would install an underground telecommunications cable via directional boring. Temporary visual disturbance may occur during construction activities due to equipment and personnel presence; however, once installation is complete and the site is reclaimed, the infrastructure would not be visible at the surface and long-term impacts on aesthetics or visual resources are anticipated to be negligible.

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 measurable increase in demand for environmental resources such as land, air, water, or energy is anticipated as a result of the proposed easement.

Alternative A (No Action): Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed easement would not be granted, and no construction activities would occur. No demand for additional environmental resources, including land, water, air, or energy, would be expected.

Alternative B (Proposed Action): Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the proponent would install an underground telecommunications cable via directional boring. Resource use would be limited to temporary and short-term construction-related needs, including fuel and equipment operation. No long-term or substantial demand for land, water, air, or energy resources is anticipated following project completion.

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 easements.

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 adverse effects to human health and safety are anticipated as a result of the proposed easement.

Alternative A (No Action): Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed easement would not be granted, and no construction activities would occur. No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on human health and safety would be expected.

Alternative B (Proposed Action): Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the proponent would install an underground telecommunications cable via directional boring. Short-term safety risks associated with construction activities, including operation of heavy equipment and excavation at bore entry and exit points, may occur. Standard construction safety practices and regulatory requirements would be followed. No long-term adverse impacts to human health and safety are anticipated.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:
Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

The proposed project would not alter or result in changes to existing industrial, commercial, or agricultural activities or production.

Alternative A (No Action): Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed easement would not be granted, and no construction activities would occur. No impacts to industrial, commercial, or agricultural activities or production would be expected.

Alternative B (Proposed Action): Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the proponent would install an underground telecommunications cable via directional boring. The project would not introduce new industrial, commercial, or agricultural activities and would not alter existing land uses or production. Any construction-related activities would be temporary and would not be expected to affect ongoing industrial, commercial, or agricultural operations.

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 project is not expected to result in the creation or elimination of permanent jobs in the area.

Alternative A (No Action): Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed easement would not be granted, and no construction activities would occur. No impacts to the quantity or distribution of employment would be expected.

Alternative B (Proposed Action): Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the proponent would install an underground telecommunications cable via directional boring. The project may result in temporary, short-term employment during construction activities; however, it is not expected to create or eliminate permanent jobs or substantially affect the long-term distribution of employment 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 local or state tax revenues is anticipated as a result of the proposed easement.

Alternative A (No Action): Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed easement would not be granted, and no construction activities would occur. No impacts to the local or state tax base or tax revenues would be expected.

Alternative B (Proposed Action): Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the proponent would install an underground telecommunications cable via directional boring. The project is not expected to result in a measurable change to the local or state tax base or tax revenues. Any tax contributions associated with the project would be minor and consistent with existing regulatory frameworks.

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 increase in demand for government services is anticipated as a result of the proposed easements.

Alternative A (No Action): Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed easement would not be granted, and no construction activities would occur. No impacts to demand for government services would be expected.

Alternative B (Proposed Action): Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the proponent would install an underground telecommunications cable via directional boring. The project is not expected to result in a

measurable increase in demand for local, state, or federal government services. Any service needs associated with permitting, inspection, or oversight would be minor and short term in nature during construction.

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 or goals are expected to be affected by the proposed easements.

Alternative A (No Action): Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed easement would not be granted, and no construction activities would occur. No impact on locally adopted environmental plans or goals would be expected.

Alternative B (Proposed Action): Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the proponent would install an underground telecommunications cable via directional boring. The project is not expected to conflict with or affect any locally adopted environmental plans or goals.

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.

The proposed easement is not expected to adversely affect recreational activities in the area.

Alternative A (No Action): Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed easement would not be granted, and no construction activities would occur. No impacts to access to or the quality of recreational activities would be expected.

Alternative B (Proposed Action): Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the proponent would install an underground telecommunications cable via directional boring. Temporary, short-term disruptions to recreational access or use may occur during construction activities; however, no long-term impacts to recreational opportunities or quality of use are anticipated.

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 changes to population density, population distribution, or housing are anticipated as a result of the proposed easements.

Alternative A (No Action): Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed easements would not be granted, and no construction activities would occur. No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to population, housing, or population distribution would be expected.

Alternative B (Proposed Action): Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the proponent would install an underground telecommunications cable via directional boring. The proposed action would not induce population growth, require additional housing, or alter the density or distribution of population in the area. Temporary construction activities would be limited in duration and scope.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:
Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

No changes to social structures or mores are anticipated as a result of the proposed easements.

Alternative A (No Action): Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed easements would not be granted, and no construction activities would occur. No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on social structures or mores would be expected.

Alternative B (Proposed Action): Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the proponent would install an underground telecommunications cable via directional boring. The proposed action would be temporary in duration and limited in scope. No disruption of existing communities, traditional lifestyles, or social structures is anticipated as a result of the project.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:
How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

The proposed easement is not anticipated to adversely affect the unique qualities of the area, including cultural uniqueness or diversity.

Alternative A (No Action): Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed easement would not be granted, and no ground-disturbing activities would occur. No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to cultural uniqueness or diversity would be expected.

Alternative B (Proposed Action): Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the proponent would install an underground telecommunications cable via directional boring. Because the cable would be installed underground and surface disturbance would be minimal and temporary, no significant impacts to the cultural uniqueness, diversity, or unique qualities of the area are 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 cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

Alternative A (No Action): Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed telecommunications upgrade would not occur. No additional revenue would be generated for the applicable trusts. Existing telecommunications, television, and internet services in the area would remain unchanged.

Alternative B (Proposed Action): Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the telecommunications facility would be upgraded to improve service reliability and expand the availability of high-speed internet and digital television services in the surrounding area. The proposed action would also generate approximately $2,001.24 in revenue for the applicable trusts.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:**	Kasydi Lucas	**Date:**	5/18/2026
	Title:	Land Use Specialist- Helena Unit		

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Two alternatives presented and fully analyzed in this Environmental Checklist include:

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

Alternative B (Proposed Action): Recommend the proponent be granted an easement to install an underground telecommunications cable via directional boring.

On behalf of the DNRC I have selected Alternative B: Action Alternative.

- The Action Alternative will benefit the surrounding area with new telecommunication infrastructure.
- The land involved in the project is held by the State of Montana in trust for the support of specific beneficiary institutions. This project consists of MCA 77-1-202, 203.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

After Reviewing the two Alternatives, I find that the Action Alternative will have no significant adverse impacts on the Physical Environment or the Human Population. Standard utility ROW easement stipulations are recommended.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

[ ]	EI	[ ]	More Detailed EA	[X]	No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:**	Adam Blythe
	Title:	Helena Unit Manager
Signature:		**Date:** 5/19/26