CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	McCone Electric Cooperative Grid Update 2026
Proposed Implementation Date:	2026
Proponent:	McCone Electric Cooperative
Location:	T18N-R51E-Sec 36
County:	Dawson County

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

McCone Electric Cooperative (Proponent) has filed easement applications DS-406 with the DNRC for a proposed above ground electric line. This proposal will affect the above-listed tracts of Trust Land.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

The Proponent has submitted a DS 406a form. The proposed easement will be 33 feet wide. The total acreage requested for the easement is 4.29 acres, more or less. The proponent of the project has provided DS-457 Notice of Settlement of Damages form signed by the surface lessee of the tract.

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

None

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A- Approve the application for the right-of-way easement.

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- Some soil disturbance may occur during construction. The soils in the area are composed of thin silty, and shallow soil types. This soil is not fragile or compactable.

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 Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Impact

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 construction. After any work is completed, the pollutant and particulate levels should return to normal.

Alternative B- No Impact

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 takes place there may be disturbance to the vegetation cover. The current native range plant community in the area is comprised mostly native species. Current Species on the site include but are not limited to Western Wheatgrass (agropyron smithii), Bluebunch Wheatgrass (agropyron spicatum), Green Needlegrass (stipa viridula), Needle and Thread (stipa comata), Threadleaf Sedge (carex filifolia), Blue Grama (bouteloua gracilis), Sandberg Bluegrass (poa secunda), Prairie Junegrass (koleria pyramidata), Prairie sandreed (Calamovilfa longifolia),Fringed sagewort(Artemisia frigida), and other forbs.This construction method should not cause a permanent disturbance.

Alternative B- No Impact

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 may be very minimal effects on any animal habitats within the boundaries of the project construction. Any construction work done will be of a short timeline, and the impacted area is a small portion of the greater landscape. Wildlife that inhabit the project area include deer,antelope, coyotes, rodents, reptiles, migratory and prairie birds. Wildlife may be temporarily disturbed during the construction of the project. After completion of the project there should be no lasting impacts to these species.

Alternative B- No Impact

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- A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program database identifies the following species in the general project area:

Northern Hoary Bat(Lasiurus cinereus)
Silver-haired Bat(Lasionycteris noctivagans)
Bobolink(Dolichonyx oryzivorus)
Chestnut-collared Longspur(Calcarius ornatus)
Ferruginous Hawk(Buteo regalis)
Golden Eagle(Aquila chrysaetos)
Loggerhead Shrike(Lanius ludovicianus)
Long-billed Curlew(Numenius americanus)
Sharp-tailed Grouse(Tympanuchus phasianellus)

While noted in the general project area, no direct effects to these species are anticipated.
The Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program was not contacted as the project is not located within identified Greater Sage Grouse Habitat.
Alternative B- No Impact

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

Alternative A-Upon inspection of the parcel and search of the TLMS data base by the Eastern Land Office staff, no findings were noted. Due to the small scope and previous disturbance no significant impacts should occur. 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. 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.

Alternative B- No Impact

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- The proposed project is a replacement for an existing power line. There would be no lasting increase to noise or light due to the project.
Alternative B- No Impact

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 significant impact

Alternative B- No Impact

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

- *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.

Alternative A- Any construction work would be completed by trained professionals. There are inherent risks involved in the heavy construction industry and the workers accept risks as an occupational hazard.

Alternative B- No Impact

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

Alternative A- It may have a positive. effect on Agricultural Activities and Production.

Alternative B- No Impact

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- No impact expected.

Alternative B- No Impact

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

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 impact expected.

Alternative B- No Impact

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 impact expected.

Alternative B- No Impact

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 Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Impact

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 Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Impact

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

Alternative A- No Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Impact

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

Alternative A- No Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Impact

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 permanent easements. The fee schedule for grazing land in this area is $700.00 per acre which will amount to a total of $3,003.00 for the 4.29 acres in this project.

Alternative B- No Impact

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:**	Aaron Kneeland	**Date:**	10-30-2026
	Title:	Land Use Specialist		

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative A

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The granting of the requested right of way easement upon state owned trust lands for the proposed McCone Electric cooperative project should not result in nor cause significant environmental impacts. The predicted environmental impacts have been identified and mitigation measures addressed in the EA checklist. The predicted impacts will be adequately mitigated through the construction and reclamation plans. The proposed action satisfies the trusts fiduciary mandate. An environmental assessment checklist is the appropriate level of analysis for the proposed action

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

	EIS	
	More Detailed EA	
X	No Further Analysis	

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:**	Scott Aye
	Title:	Eastern Land Office, Land Program Manager
Signature: /S/ Scott Aye		**Date**: 10-30-2026