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DNRC - Trust Land Management Division

DEC 19 2003

DS-252{PRIVATE }

D.N.R.C.

{PRIVATE } CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Hill County Electric Cooperative, Inc. - Maintenance of Unauthorized Electrical Facilities on State land in Blaine, Choteau, Fergus, and Hill Counties
Proposed Implementation Date: December 22, 2003

Proponent: Hill County Electric Cooperative, Inc., P.O. Box 2330, Havre, MT 59501 - (406) 394-7804

Type and Purpose of Action: Hill County Electric Coop., Inc. is applying for a land use license to maintain and authorize its electric facilities in trespass on State lands in Blaine, Choteau, Fergus, and Hill Counties.

Location: Electrical facilities, underground and aerial transmission lines and distribution lines in unauthorized use on State lands.
Counties: Blaine, Choteau, Fergus, & Hill

{PRIVATE } PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Table with 2 columns: Question/Requirement and Answer. Includes a 'RECEIVED' stamp from the Legislative Environmental Policy Office dated Jan 05 2004.

{PRIVATE }IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

<p>4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE: Are fragile, compactible or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geological features? Are there special reclamation considerations?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The land use license will allow Hill County Electric Coop., Inc. to maintain electric facilities that are currently in trespass on State lands. Maintenance of electric facilities may cause localized areas of soil compaction and soil erosion. Only a small portion of the landscape's soil will be physically disturbed. Construction activities and the operation of equipment may only occur when the topsoil is dry or frozen. No long-term negative impacts to the soil resources are expected, as long as Hill County Electric follows these mitigation measures.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: The soils on the State land will not be altered. Hill County Electric Coop. will not be issued a land use license for the maintenance of existing electric facilities currently in trespass on State lands in Hill, Choteau, Fergus, and Hill Counties.</p>
<p>5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there portential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The proposed action will not have any adverse impacts on the quality, quantity, or distribution of water resources in the immediate or surrounding areas. Maintenance of electric facilities will not contaminate drinking water or degrade water quality in the immediate area of disturbance or in surrounding areas.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: The water quality, quantity, and distribution on these tracts of State land will not be affected. Hill County Electric Coop. will not be issued a land use license for the maintenance of existing electric facilities currently in trespass on State lands in Hill, Choteau, Fergus, and Hill Counties.</p>
<p>6. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: No pollutants or particulates will be produced as a result of maintaining electric facilities. The air quality will not be impacted with this type of activity.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: The air quality will remain the same on these tracts of State land. Hill County Electric Coop. will not be issued a land use license for the maintenance of existing electric facilities currently in trespass on State lands in Hill, Choteau, Fergus, and Hill Counties.</p>
<p>7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The vegetative communities located in the immediate area of disturbance will be temporarily altered by the manipulation of vehicles on the ground and surface disturbances by construction activities. Hill County Electric Cooperative, Inc. will be responsible for noxious weed control that may arise from maintaining the electric facilities on the State land.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: The vegetative cover, quantity, and quality will not be altered on these tracts of State land in Hill, Choteau, Fergus, and Hill Counties. Hill County Electric Coop. will not be issued a land use license for the maintenance of existing electric facilities on State land.</p>

<p>8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: Wildlife habitat will not be significantly impacted as a result of the proposed action. The construction process and road travel may temporarily displace wildlife species found in the immediate area of disturbance. Wildlife species will not be permanently relocated with this type of activity. Wildlife habitat will not be permanently destroyed with this type of activity.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: The terrestrial and avian life and their habitats that currently exist on these tracts of State land will not be disturbed. Hill County Electric will not be issued a land use license for the authorization and maintenance of electric facilities on State land.</p>
<p>9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Sensitive Species or Species of special concern?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The proposed project is not expected to cause adverse impacts on threatened or endangered species. There is no confirmed use of the area by a threatened or endangered species, but the potential of occasional use does exist. There are no other species of special concern, nor are there any sensitive habitat types associated with the proposed project. Wetlands will not be disturbed.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: The unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources will not be altered on these tracts of State land. Hill County Electric will not be issued a land use license for the authorization and maintenance of electric facilities on State land.</p>
<p>10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archeological, or paleontological resources present?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: Historical and archaeological resources will not be impacted with this type of activity. Hill County Electric will hire an Archaeologist to conduct a cultural survey of any new area that is to be disturbed. If a cultural site is located in the direct route of any project, the proponent shall cease all construction activities and notify the Havre Unit Office and the MT DNRC Archaeologist in Helena immediately.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Historical and archaeological sites will not be disturbed on these tracts of State land. Hill County Electric will not be issued a land use license for the authorization and maintenance of electric facilities on State land.</p>
<p>11. AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographical feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The maintenance of electric facilities will not cause a change in the aesthetic character found on these tracts of State land. Some of these tracts of State land are visible to the public and some are not. This type of activity will not cause excessive noise and light. Powerlines exist on adjacent lands and some will be placed on prominent topographical features for access and safety reasons.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: The aesthetic character that is found on these tracts of State land will not be altered. Hill County Electric will not be issued a land use license for the authorization and maintenance of electric facilities on State land in Blaine, Choteau, Fergus, and Hill Counties.</p>

<p>12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENGERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: There will be small demand on the environmental resource of land for the construction and maintenance of these electric facilities. There will be demands on the environmental resources of water, air, or energy. The project will not use resources that are limited in the area. There are no other activities nearby that will affect the maintenance of electric facilities on State land.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no demands on the environmental resources of land, water, air or energy on these tracts of State land in Blaine, Choteau, Fergus, and Hill Counties. Hill County Electric will not be issued a land use license for the authorization and maintenance of electric facilities on State land in Blaine, Choteau, Fergus, and Hill Counties.</p>
<p>13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The proposed action will not interfere with other studies, plans, or projects that the MT DNRC may have for these tracts of State land within Blaine, Choteau, Fergus, and Hill Counties. There are no other environmental documents pertinent to these tracts of State land at this time.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: The Montana DNRC will continue to administer licensed activities on State lands. The Montana DNRC will continue to perform studies, plans, and projects on these tracts of State land within Blaine, Choteau, Fergus, and Hill Counties.</p>

III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

<p>14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risk in the area?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The maintenance of electric facilities will add to the human health and safety risks found on these tracts of State land. Hill County Electric, their subcontractors, and/or their employees assume these risks as occupational hazards.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no additional human health and safety risks in this area. Hill County Electric will not be issued a land use license for the authorization and maintenance of electric facilities on State land in Blaine, Choteau, Fergus, and Hill Counties.</p>
<p>15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The maintenance of electrical facilities will not add to or alter the industrial, commercial, and agricultural activities or production that occurs on these tracts of State land.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: The industrial, commercial, and agricultural activities and production will not be altered on these tracts of State land. Hill County Electric will not be issued a land use license for the authorization and maintenance of electric facilities on State land in Blaine, Choteau, Fergus, and Hill Counties.</p>

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<p>16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The maintenance of electrical facilities will create additional temporary work for Hill County Electric employees and their subcontractors. No Action Alternative: The quantity and distribution of employment will not be impacted in this area. Hill County Electric will not be issued a land use license for the maintenance of electric facilities on tracts of State land in Blaine, Choteau, Fergus, and Hill Counties.</p>
<p>17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The maintenance of electrical facilities on State land will not create or eliminate tax revenue within Blaine, Choteau, Fergus, and Hill Counties. The local and state tax base will not be affected with this type of activity. No Action Alternative: The local and state tax base and tax revenues will remain the same in Blaine, Choteau, Fergus, and Hill Counties.</p>
<p>18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc.) be needed?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: There will be no substantial traffic added to existing roads for the maintenance of electrical facilities on State land. This activity will not demand government services or the services of fire protection, police, or schools. No Action Alternative: There will be no demand for any government services on these tracts of State land. The traffic levels will remain the same on the designated roads in this area. Hill County Electric will not be issued a land use license for the authorization and maintenance of electrical facilities on State land.</p>
<p>19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc., zoning or management plans in effect?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The MT DNRC is currently in the process of accepting non-exclusive historic utility right-of-way easement applications. These non-exclusive easements are for utilities that were installed on State land prior to 1997. There are no zoning or management plans in effect for this type of activity on State land. No Action Alternative: There are no other locally adopted environmental plans or goals for these tracts of State land at this time. The MT DNRC will continue to administer all licensed activities on State land.</p>
<p>20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The maintenance of electrical facilities on State land will not impact the access to or quality of recreational activities that may occur on these tracts. The public will continue to use tracts of State land that have legal access for recreational activities. The main types of recreational activities that occur on these legally accessible tracts of State land include hunting, hiking, and bird watching. Any person in possession of a State Lands Recreational Use License may recreate on State land. No Action Alternative: The access to and quality of recreational activities will continue to remain the same on these tracts of State land.</p>

III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

<p>21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The maintenance of electrical facilities on State land will not impact the density and distribution of population and housing in these areas. No Action Alternative: The density and distribution of population and housing will not be affected. Hill County Electric will not be issued a land use license for the authorization and maintenance of electrical facilities on tracts of State land within Blaine, Choteau, Fergus, and Hill Counties.</p>
<p>22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The maintenance of electrical facilities on State land will not cause a disruption of the native or traditional lifestyles that exist in these areas. No Action Alternative: The social structures and mores will not be impacted in these areas. The native and traditional lifestyles found in these areas demand the use of electrical facilities to maintain the standard of living.</p>
<p>23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The maintenance of electrical facilities will not impact the cultural uniqueness and/or the cultural diversity of the area. Hill County Electric will hire an Archaeologist to perform a cultural survey for new projects. No Action Alternative: The cultural uniqueness and diversity of these tracts of State land will not be altered. Hill County Electric will not be issued a land use license for the authorization and maintenance of electrical facilities on State land in Blaine, Choteau, Fergus, and Hill Counties.</p>
<p>24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMICAL CIRCUMSTANCES:</p>	<p>Action Alternative: There are no other social or economical circumstances associated with the proposed action. No Action Alternative: There are no further social or economical circumstances associated with this project. The Montana DNRC will continue to use Environmental Assessment Checklists to make decisions regarding these types of projects on State land.</p>

EA Checklist Prepared By: Dan Dobler, Havre Unit Manager, Northeastern Land Office


Signature

Date: December 12, 2003

{PRIVATE }IV. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:	Action
26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:	SA N.S.I.
27. Need for Further Environmental Analysis: <input type="checkbox"/> EIS <input type="checkbox"/> More Detailed EA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Further Analysis	

EA Checklist Approved by: Clive Rooney, Area Manager, Northeastern Land Office



Signature

12-16-03

Date: