

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Mid-Rivers Telephone Cooperative, Inc., North Winnett Buried Telecommunications Cable
Proposed Implementation Date:	August, 2009
Proponent:	Mid-Rivers Telephone Cooperative, Inc.
Location:	See attached list of tracts
County:	Petroleum County
Trust:	Common Schools

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The proponent has requested a Land Use License (LUL) to place a buried telecommunications cable on the State Land tracts listed below. The proposed project will improve telecommunications service to Mid-Rivers' rural customers in the North Winnett, MT area. The proponent is concurrently applying for a permanent easement for this project.

T/17N, R/26E
Sec 36 – All

T/18N, R/27E
Sec 16 – All

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 Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), Real Estate Management Bureau (REMB) Trust Land Division (TLMD), and the State surface lessees (see attached list below) have all been informed of the proposed project.

State Surface Lessees

Jim and Jerry Brady - T/17N, R/26E, S 36
Cal and Randy Nunn - T/17N, R/26E, S 36
Daniel W. Iverson - T/18N, R/27E, S 16

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

The DNRC Trust Land Management Division has jurisdiction over this proposed project. The proponent has filed an Application for a permanent Right of Way Easement through these State Land Tracts. This EA will be attached to their application and forwarded to DNRC – REMB for processing.

DNRC is not aware of any other agencies with jurisdiction or other permits needed to complete this project

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action) – Under this alternative, the Department does not issue a Land Use License (LUL) to place a buried telecommunications cable on State Land.

Alternative B (the Proposed Action) – Under this alternative, the Department does issue a Land Use License (LUL) to place a buried telecommunications cable on State Land.

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 project will take place on mostly gently rolling terrain comprised of fine textured soils. Most soils in the project area are clays and silty clay loams.

There are no fragile, compactable, or unstable soils. There are no unique geologic features.

No cumulative effects to the soils are anticipated.

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.

No important surface or groundwater resources will be impacted by the proposed project.

No cumulative effects to the water resources are anticipated.

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.

There may be an increase in dust during construction. These impacts to air quality will be minor and temporary.

No cumulative effects to air quality are anticipated.

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.

The vegetation within the proposed project area consists of mostly native grass and forb species with some introduced grasses and forbs.

The cable will be ripped in with a static plow. The disturbed area will be very small. These plant communities are expected to revegetate naturally. The proponent will be responsible for any revegetation if necessary.

No rare plants or cover types are present.

No cumulative effects to vegetation are anticipated.

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.

The proposed action will not have long-term negative effect on existing wildlife species and/or wildlife habitat.

The area is not considered critical wildlife habitat.

No cumulative effects are anticipated.

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 proposed route follows the existing county roads. These areas are not considered important wildlife habitat.

No cumulative effects to habitat are anticipated.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

No historical, archeological or paleontological resources are known to be present.

The proponent will be required by Special Stipulations to avoid and report any archeological and paleontological resources encountered in the project area.

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.

During construction operations, a variety of vehicles, including quads, pickups, and bulldozers will be seen and possibly heard by people in the vicinity of the operations. These vehicles and equipment will only be visible during the construction operation and therefore no long term affects to the aesthetics of this area will occur.

The state land does not provide any unique scenic qualities not also provided on adjacent private lands. The proposed activity will be conducted in a remote area, so there would be no change to the aesthetics in either alternative.

No direct or cumulative effects to aesthetics are anticipated.

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 on limited resources are required for this project.

No direct or cumulative effects to environmental resources are anticipated.

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.

There are DNRC grazing leases associated with the surface of the State land where this project is proposed. The installation of the telecommunications cable will not have any long term affects to these lease operations.

There are no other projects or plans being considered on the tracts listed in this EA Checklist.

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.

There will be some health and safety concerns associated with the operation of heavy equipment in remote areas. The proponent and their employees are aware of any health and safety hazards and accept them as occupational hazards.

Once the survey has been completed, there will be no health and safety concerns associated with this project.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

This project will not add to or deter from other industrial, agricultural, or commercial activities in this area.

This proposed project will improve communications service and efficiency to rural Mid-Rivers customers

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 activity will create a limited number of jobs. These positions are already held by employees of the proponent. No new jobs will be created.

No cumulative effects to the employment market are anticipated.

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.

This project will not affect the tax base or tax revenues.

There are no direct or cumulative effects to taxes or revenue for the proposed project.

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

There will be no direct or cumulative effects on government services.

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.

There are no zoning or other agency management plans affecting these lands.

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 main recreational activity in this area is hunting. Approval of this proposed project would not affect hunting opportunities in this area.

There will be no direct or cumulative effects on recreation or wilderness activities.

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

The proposal does not include any changes to housing or developments. Population and housing will not be affected.

No direct or cumulative effects to population or housing are anticipated.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

There are no native, unique or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity that would be impacted by the proposal.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

The proposed project will have no effect on any unique quality of the area.

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 Land Use License Application fee is \$25. The LUL fee is \$150 to the Common Schools Trust. The Right of Way Easement application fees are \$100. And the land value fees will generate approximately \$967. The total revenue generated for the Trust is approximately \$1242.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Bill Creamer Title: Land Use Specialist
Signature:	<i>Bill Creamer</i> Date: 7/29/09

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

I have selected the Proposed Alternative B, and recommend the proponent be issued a Land Use License (LUL) to place a buried telecommunications cable on State Land.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

I have evaluated the potential environment effects and have determined that no negative long-term environmental impacts will result from the proposed activity.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS
 More Detailed EA
 XXX No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Barny D. Smith Title: Unit Manager, Northeastern Land Office
Signature:	<i>Barny D. Smith</i> Date: 7/29/09