

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Rebuild of Hwy. #208, Relocating Fiber Optic Cable

Proposed Implementation Date: Early Spring of 2010

Proponent: Triangle Communications, PO Box 1140, Havre, MT 59501

Type and Purpose of Action: Triangle Communications has submitted a Right of Way Easement Applications to relocate their existing fiber optic line/facilities due to the Highway #208 rebuild project. The proposed ROW will cross Sec. 36 of Twp. 34N, Rge. 30E. The proposed project is located along the edge of the existing road and to the west of an old fiber optic cable ROW belonging to Triangle. The project area will include 1.376 acres of native rangeland located in close proximity to the road. Triangle has submitted the \$50.00 application fee. Triangle would be required to submit an additional \$309.60 to the State for anticipated damages if the project proceeds.

Location: Sec. 36 of Twp. 34N, Rge. 30E.

County: Phillips

I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED: Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

The applicant has completed a Right of Way Application and submitted 2 copies to the DNRC - Glasgow Unit Office along with survey plats for the state tract they are proposing to cross. The purpose of the request is to relocate/replace an existing line due to planned future alterations of Hwy. #208. The surface lessee has been contacted by Triangle Communications, and they have completed the Settlement of Damages Form (DS-457).

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

The Federal Communications branch of the Federal Government may have jurisdiction for this type of project. Other State of Montana agencies may also have jurisdiction for this project.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Action Alternative: Grant Right of Way Easements to Triangle Communications to relocate/replace an existing line.

No Action Alternative: Deny the Right of Way Easement requested by Triangle Communications to relocate and/or replace an existing line.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

RESOURCE

[Y/N]

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

N = Not Present or No Impact will occur.

Y = Impacts may occur (explain below)

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:
Are fragile, compactable or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features?

General Discussion: A total of 1.376 acres of State land is included in this portion of the ROW applications. There are no fragile, compactable, or

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

<p>Are there special reclamation considerations?</p>	<p>unstable soils present or any unusual geologic features.</p> <p>Action: This disturbance caused by the relocation/ installation of the buried fiber optic cable will be located in close proximity to the road ROW. No impacts to the geology or soil characteristics are anticipated to occur.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the geology or soil characteristics will occur.</p>
<p>5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality?</p>	<p>General Discussion: The project area does not cross any areas with surface water resources, nor does the area contain any significant groundwater resources.</p> <p>Action: Impacts to the water quality, quantity, and/or distribution of surface and ground water on or around the construction are not anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the water quality, quantity, and/or distribution will occur.</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>General Discussion: The project area is not located in an air quality regulation zone or airshed.</p> <p>Action: The air quality may or may not be temporarily reduced during installation. Small amounts of pollutants from machinery and particulates from the disturbance of the areas soil may be produced. The possible reduction in air quality will be minimal and will quickly return to normal by natural means.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the air quality will occur.</p>
<p>7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?</p>	<p>General Discussion: No rare plants or cover types are present within the project area per the attached NRIS survey.</p> <p>Action: Temporary disturbances to plant communities located within the proposed project area will occur. Plant communities will not be altered long term.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the vegetation cover, quantity, and/or quality will occur.</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>General Discussion: The project area is small and located along HWY #208. A list of species found on the Montana Natural Heritage Program lists is attached to this document and discussed in the next section.</p>

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	<p>None of the 3 listed species are known to substantially use the habitat located within the project area.</p> <p>Action: The area within the proposed action area will be disturbed temporarily. No lasting impacts to terrestrial, avian, and/or aquatic life and habitats are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to terrestrial, avian, and/or aquatic life and habitats will occur.</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>General Discussion: The proposed area is small in size and located along HWY #208. A NRIS survey was completed for this area and has been attached. The Montana Natural Heritage Program list of "species of concern" includes the Golden Eagle, Greater Sage-Grouse, and Whooping Crane. No other unique, endangered, fragile or limited resources are known to be located in this area.</p> <p>Action: Greater Sage-Grouse are sensitive to noise and human activity which is already present on the highway, so they will not be impacted by this project. Golden Eagles have very widespread habitats and will not be impacted by this small project. This habitat does not match the characteristics needed to support the Whooping Crane.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources will occur.</p>
<p>10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?</p>	<p>General Discussion: The project site is located in close proximity a recently approved county road ROW project area. Montana Department of Transportation conducted an archeological survey in the area. No known historical or archaeological sites exist within the ROW proposed by Triangle Communications.</p> <p>Action: The project will have <i>No Effect</i> to <i>Antiquities</i> as defined under the Montana State Antiquities.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the areas historical, archeological, and/or paleontological resources will occur.</p>
<p>11. AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light?</p>	<p>General Discussion: The project area is located next to HWY #208. The landscape consists of gently rolling hills and plains. The area of the project's location has been disturbed in the past and will be again in the future.</p> <p>Action: Since the fiber optic cable will be buried, only short term impacts are anticipated. These impacts will not have any lasting effects to the area's aesthetics.</p>

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	No Action: No impacts to the areas aesthetics will occur.
12.DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?	<p>General Discussion: The area does not contain limited resources. Nearby activities consist mostly of general farming and/or ranching operations.</p> <p>Action: No impacts to the demands of environmental resources such as land, water, air, and/or energy resources are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the demands of environmental resources such as land, water, air, and/or energy resources will occur.</p>
13.OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?	<p>Action: No impacts to studies, plans, and/or projects pertinent to this area are anticipated to occur.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to studies, plans, and/or projects are anticipated to occur.</p>

III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?	<p>General Discussion: The proposed project will create human health and/or safety risks associated with the installation and maintenance of the communications line.</p> <p>Action: The employer and employee identify these risks as occupational hazards. These risks will only be present during installation and maintenance of the proposed line.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to human health and/or safety risks will occur.</p>
15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	<p>General Discussion: The area is primarily used for ranching and farming. Commercial and industrial activities are very limited near the project area.</p> <p>Action: The surface owner and/or lessee may experience a short term decrease in revenue due to surface disturbances. Triangle Communications has agreed to provide monetary compensation to the surface owner/lessee for such damages through signing the Settlement of Surface Damages Form. Once completed, the project will provide potential for industries and/or individuals to use the line for future developments requiring telecommunications.</p> <p>No Action: No action will reduce future potentials for industrial, commercial, and/or agricultural activities in the area.</p>

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16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.	Action: No impacts to quantity and distribution of employment are anticipated. No Action: No impacts to quantity and distribution of employment will occur.
17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?	Action: No impacts to the state tax base and/or tax revenue are anticipated. No Action: No impacts to the state tax base and/or tax revenues will occur.
18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed?	Action: A slight increase in traffic levels will occur during installation. No impacts to government services are anticipated. No Action: No impacts to the level of demand for road use or government services will occur.
19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	General Discussion: There are no known zoning or management plans in affect in the construction areas. Action: No impacts to local environmental plans and goals are anticipated occur. No Action: No impacts to local environmental plans and goals will occur.
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?	General Discussion: This tract of State land is legally accessible and provides recreational opportunities. No wilderness areas are located near the proposed project area. Action: Proposed action area is located near the road. The project area itself contains minimal recreational opportunities. No impacts to recreational quality or recreational opportunities of the project area or surrounding lands are anticipated. No Action: No impacts to the quality of recreational and wilderness activities will occur.
21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?	Action: No impacts to the density and/or distribution of population and housing are anticipated to occur. No Action: No impacts to the density and/or distribution of population and housing will occur.
22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	Action: No impacts to the areas social structures, native/traditional lifestyles, or communities are anticipated to occur. No Action: No impacts social structures, native/traditional lifestyles, or communities will occur.
23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of	Action: No impacts to the areas cultural uniqueness and/or diversity are anticipated to occur.

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the area?	No Action: No impacts to the areas cultural uniqueness and/or diversity will occur.
24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:	<p>Action: The state trust will receive \$309.60 (fee schedule) + \$50.00 (application fee) = \$359.60 as compensation for the ROW easements. Also, the rural residents in the project area will benefit from 21st century technology and be able to obtain high speed internet.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the social and economic circumstances will occur and the state trust will not receive additional revenue from the sale of the ROW easement.</p>

EA Checklist Prepared By: /s/
Matthew Poole (Land Use Specialist)

Date: 3/26/2010

IV. FINDING	
25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:	Select Action Alternative
26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:	The selection of the Action alternative will support the new building of the MDOT Whitewater highway. Impacts will be minor.
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: R. Hoyt Richards Glasgow Unit Manager
Name Title

 /s/
Signature

Date: April 9, 2010