

## CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

<b>Project Name:</b>	<b>2010 Triangle Chinook Telephone Exchange Fiber Optic Cable and Facilities</b>
<b>Proposed Implementation Date:</b>	Spring 2010-Fall2010
<b>Proponent:</b>	Triangle Communications-Lee Schuster
<b>Location:</b>	See Attached
<b>County:</b>	Blaine County
<b>Trust:</b>	See Attached

### I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The proponent is requesting permission for encroachment on state lands for placing of fiber optic cable and installation of related facilities.

### 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 Montana Department of Resources and Conservation/ Trust Lands Management Division (DNRC/TLMD) – Helena, MT and the Northeastern Land Office (NELO) have all been informed of the proposed installation project.

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

DNRC/TLMD and NELO have jurisdiction over this proposed project.

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 DNRC **does not** allow the proponent to install cable and facilities.

**Alternative B (the Proposed Action)** – Under this alternative, the DNRC **does** allow the proponent to install cable and facilities.

### 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 soils within the proposed project area are dense clays, clays, clay loams, and silty loams. The terrain is mostly gently rolling plains with breaks and small drainages.

If the proponent is allowed to install the communication line some soils will be displaced and there is the potential for soil compaction to occur. The proponent will be required to put back any displaced soil and construction activities will only be allowed when the soil is dry or frozen.

Mitigation measures including no vehicle operation during wet or muddy conditions, will minimize any impacts.

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.*

All water resources are avoided or directionally drilled under in order to minimize impacts.

No important groundwater resources are expected to be impacted.

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.*

Construction equipment has the potential to generate airborne dust. These activities will minimally affect air quality for a very limited amount of time.

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 majority of the telecommunication line will follow nearby existing road barrow pits and grades.

In some areas the proposed telecommunication line will cross range land that consists mainly of native vegetation. The vegetation within the project corridor will be disturbed. The vegetation will regenerate naturally.

No rare plants or cover types are present.

No long term cumulative effects to vegetation are anticipated.

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**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 project area is in some areas considered sage grouse habitat. The installation of cable primarily along county roadbeds minimizes or eliminates any additional disturbance to habitat in both the short and long term. The proposed project would disturb any wildlife near areas of construction activities. Any disturbances will be temporary.

No cumulative effects to habitats are anticipated.

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**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.*

There are no known federally listed threatened or endangered species in the proposed break area. No wetlands are present.

The Montana Natural Heritage Program lists 43 Species of Concern, and 12 Potential Species of Concern in Blaine County that may occur on or near the project area. See attached.

The cumulative effects of the proposed telecommunication cable route to the wildlife habitats and the associated Species of Concern would be minimal and short-term due to the installation primarily following existing roadbeds.

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**10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:**

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

Ethos Consultants, Inc. of Havre conducted a Class III intensity level cultural and paleontological resources inventory of the area of potential effect for Triangle Telephone Cooperative's 2009 Chinook Exchange. During the course of inventory 16 cultural resources were identified and documented on state land. The proposed telecommunications cable route has been revised so as to avoid Adverse Effects to potential Heritage Properties as defined under the Montana State Antiquities Act. A formal report of findings has been prepared and is on file with the DNRC and the Montana State Historic Preservation Officer.

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**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 operations heavy equipment, vehicles, atvs, etc. will be seen and heard in the vicinity of the project. These will only be present during installation and therefore no long term affects to the aesthetics of this area will occur.

There will be installation of some facilities, mostly in remote areas, and designed as to blend in with the surroundings and not cause an eye sore.

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 significant 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.*

Seismic operations have been permitted on some tracts involved with this project. The seismic lines will have been shot and completed prior to the beginning of the communications cable installation.

No combined cumulative effects from these actions are expected.

<b>IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.</i></li> <li>• <i>Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.</i></li> </ul>

- *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 is some human safety risks associated with operating heavy machinery. The proponent and their employees accept these risks.

Operating equipment and vehicles on and around public roads poses a hazard. The proponent and their employees shall take steps to minimize hazards to the public and accept any and all liabilities.

**15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:**

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

There will be no impact to agricultural activities and production.

The project could provide a boost to industrial and commercial activities by providing high speed telecommunications.

**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.*

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.*

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

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**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 minimal increases in traffic, no changes in traffic patterns, and no need for additional fire protection, or police services.

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

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**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.

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**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.*

There are no wilderness areas or access routes through this tract.

This area has public access from public roads and is used primarily for antelope and upland bird hunting. These recreational opportunities will be disturbed on the short term but no cumulative effects are expected.

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**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.

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

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**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.

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**23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:**

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

The new telecommunication cable will provide a better communication system to people who live in 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 easement of tracts in this project will return about \$50,000 to the trust. This amount was determined using acreage taken in easements, and the Blaine County Fee schedule.

These tracts are currently being managed in their best use.

<b>EA Checklist Prepared By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Monte McNally <b>Title:</b> Land Use Specialist
<b>Signature:</b> /s/ Monte N. McNally	<b>Date:</b> 3/12/2010

<b>V. FINDING</b>
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**25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:**

I have selected the **Alternative B (Proposed Action)**, and recommend that the DNRC **does** allow the proponent to renovate the native rangeland.

**26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:**

I have evaluated the potential environment affects and have determined that no cumulative environmental or social effects will result from the action alternative. A significant amount of revenue to the State will result from the proposed activity.

**27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:**

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

<b>EA Checklist Approved By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Barny D. Smith
	<b>Title:</b> Unit Manager, Northeastern Land Office
<b>Signature:</b> /s/ Barny D. Smith	<b>Date:</b> 3/10/2010

T29N, R21E, Sec 26 – S  $\frac{1}{2}$  NE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , W  $\frac{1}{2}$  SE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  SE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , E  $\frac{1}{2}$  SW  $\frac{1}{4}$ , NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  and the SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  NW  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L# 5465  
5.540 Acres taken

T29N, R21E, Sec 27 – N  $\frac{1}{2}$  NE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , and the SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  NE  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L# 5476  
1.371 Acres taken

T29N, R21E, Sec 35 – E  $\frac{1}{2}$  NW  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L# 5464  
1.312 Acres taken

T29N, R21E, Sec 36 – W  $\frac{1}{2}$  NW  $\frac{1}{4}$ , E  $\frac{1}{2}$  SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  and the SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  SE  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L#5465  
2.804 Acres taken

T 29N, R22E, Sec 19 – N  $\frac{1}{2}$  S  $\frac{1}{2}$   
L# 5463  
2.663 Acres taken

T26N, R21E, Sec 16 – W  $\frac{1}{2}$  NW  $\frac{1}{4}$ , SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  NW  $\frac{1}{4}$ , N  $\frac{1}{2}$  SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  and the SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  SE  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L# 3030  
3.530 Acres taken

T28N, R 19E, Sec 3 – S  $\frac{1}{2}$  N  $\frac{1}{2}$   
L# 8063  
2.450 Acres taken

T28N, R22E, Sec 7 – E  $\frac{1}{2}$  NE  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L# 93  
1.007 Acres taken

T29N, R21E, Sec 9 – SW  $\frac{1}{4}$ , SW  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L#91  
.110 Acres taken

T29N, R21E, Sec 25 – N  $\frac{1}{2}$  NW  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L#5476  
1.065 Acres taken

T 28N, R22E, Sec 6 – Lot 2, Lot 3, SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  NE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , N  $\frac{1}{2}$  SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  and the SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  SE  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L#5464  
2.669 Acres taken

T 30N, R20E, Sec 36 – W  $\frac{1}{2}$  NE  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L#97

1.243 Acres taken

T30N, R20E, Sec 25 – NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  and the W  $\frac{1}{2}$  SE  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L# 97

1.277 Acres taken

T30N, R20E, Sec 24 – SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  SE  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L#97

.649 Acres taken

T30N, R19E, Sec 24 – N  $\frac{1}{2}$  NE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  and the NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  SE  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L# 2565

2.406 Acres taken

T 30N, R19E, Sec 13 – W  $\frac{1}{2}$  SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  and the SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  SE  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L#1388

1.309 Acres taken

T31N, R19E, Sec 36 – E  $\frac{1}{2}$  SW  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L#99

1.239 Acres taken

T29N, R19E, Sec 36 – W  $\frac{1}{2}$  NE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  and the NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  SW  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L# 9087

2.298 Acres taken

T29N, R21E, Sec 5 – S  $\frac{1}{2}$  NE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  SE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  and the S  $\frac{1}{2}$  SW  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L#89

3.130 Acres taken

T28N, R21E, Sec 27 – SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  NW  $\frac{1}{4}$ , N  $\frac{1}{2}$  SW  $\frac{1}{4}$ , SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  and the S  $\frac{1}{2}$  SE  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L# 2556

2.331 Acres taken

T29N, R20E, Sec 16 – NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  NE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , W  $\frac{1}{2}$  NE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , and the SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  NW  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L# 453

1.926 Acres taken

T 29N, R20E, Sec 12 – N  $\frac{1}{2}$  NW  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L#5465

1.073 Acres taken

T29N, R 20E, Sec 11 – NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  NE  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L# 5465

.129 Acres taken

T29N, R20E, Sec 9 – SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  SW  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L# 1376  
.373 Acres taken

T29N, R20E, Sec 1 – SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  NE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  SE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  SE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , and the E  $\frac{1}{2}$  SW  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L#5465  
2.815 Acres taken

T 29N, R18E, Sec 36 – N  $\frac{1}{2}$  NW  $\frac{1}{4}$ , and the SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  NW  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L#2558  
2.153 Acres taken

T28N, R18E, Sec 16 – W  $\frac{1}{2}$  SW  $\frac{1}{4}$ , SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  SW  $\frac{1}{4}$ , and the SE  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L# 2555  
2.675 Acres taken

T29N, R18E, Sec 3 – E  $\frac{1}{2}$  SE  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L# 1385  
1.384 Acres taken

T29N, R18E, Sec 10 – N  $\frac{1}{2}$  NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  and the SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  NW  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L# 1385  
1.726 Acres taken

T29N, R18E, Sec 16 – W  $\frac{1}{2}$  NE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  and the NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  SE  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L#2557  
1.383 Acres taken

T29N, R18E, Sec 23 – SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  NE  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L# 1386  
.152 Acres taken

T31N, R19E, Sec 16 – E  $\frac{1}{2}$  E  $\frac{1}{2}$ , and the SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  SE  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L#5997  
2.925 Acres taken

T29N, R21E, Sec 16 – W  $\frac{1}{2}$ , NW  $\frac{1}{4}$ , SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  NW  $\frac{1}{4}$ , NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  and the W  $\frac{1}{2}$  SE  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L# 90  
2.885 Acres taken

T36N, R20E, Sec 36 – S  $\frac{1}{2}$  S  $\frac{1}{2}$   
L#6730  
2.427 Acres taken

T31N, R 18E, Sec 16 – E  $\frac{1}{2}$  NW  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L#5952  
1.249 Acres taken

T30N, R 17E, Sec 36 – NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  NE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , and the SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  NE  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L#1407  
.558 Acres taken

T32N, R18E, Sec 15 – N  $\frac{1}{2}$  NW  $\frac{1}{4}$ , SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  NW  $\frac{1}{4}$ , and the NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  SW  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L#4292  
L#4291  
2.988 Acres taken

T32N, R18E, Sec 13 – E  $\frac{1}{2}$  NE  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L#10032  
.993 Acres taken

T27N, R20E, Sec 36 – W  $\frac{1}{2}$  NE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , N  $\frac{1}{2}$  SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  and the SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  SE  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L#6196  
2.554 Acres taken

T33N, R18E, Sec 33 – N  $\frac{1}{2}$  NE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  NE  $\frac{1}{4}$   
L# 6396  
1.527 Acres taken