

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: New Buried Telephone Lines

Proposed Implementation Date: Spring /summer 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 install two buried telephone communications cables on State land. The proposed ROW will cross Sec. 16 of Twp. 30N, Rge. 31E. The proposed project is located along the edge of an existing county road. The project area will include 2.243 acres of native rangeland. Triangle has already submitted the \$50.00 application fee. Triangle would also be required to submit additional money to the State for surface damages if the project proceeds.

Location: Sec. 16 of Twp. 30N, Rge. 31E.

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 contracted a licensed surveyor to assist with the completion of the ROW application. 2 copies of the completed Right of Way Application have been submitted to the DNRC - Glasgow Unit Office.

The surface lessee has been contacted by Triangle Communications, and they have completed the Settlement of Damages Form (DS-457).

Ethos Consultants was contracted by Triangle Communications to perform a cultural resources study of the proposed route.

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 install two buried telephone communications cables.

No Action Alternative: Deny the Right of Way Easement requested by Triangle Communications to install two buried telephone communications cables.

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

General Discussion: A total of 2.243 acres of State land is included in project area of this ROW. The

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<p>present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?</p>	<p>proposed project has been moved away from the county road ROW in some areas to avoid dense stands of Russian Olive trees. There are no fragile, compactable, or unstable soils present or any unusual geologic features.</p> <p>Action: This disturbance caused by the installation of the two buried telephone communications cables would be located in open areas to limit disturbances to the vegetation responsible for soil stability. No impacts to the geology or soil characteristics are anticipated to occur.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the geology or soil characteristics would 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 would 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 would quickly return to normal levels.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the air quality would 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: Scarlet Ammannia was listed as a "species of concern" on the attached NRIS survey. No other 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 would occur.</p>

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<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: A list of species found on the Montana Natural Heritage Program lists is attached to this document and discussed in the next section. None of the 21 listed bird species of concern 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 would 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: There are not any federally listed or endangered species or identified habitat present. A NRIS survey was completed to identify species of concern within the project area's township and has been attached. The NRIS survey lists 21 bird species and 1 plant species as "species of concern". None of the "sensitive species" are known to readily use the project area for breeding, cover, or food because of its close proximity to the road. No other unique, endangered, fragile or limited resources are known to be located in this area.</p> <p>Action: No impacts to unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources would 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 alongside a county road. The area was examined by DNRC staff and Patrick Rennie, DNRC Archaeologist, was consulted regarding this project. Please reference Patrick Rennie's attached email regarding the matter. He states, "Ethos Consultants looked at the telephone line routes last summer. I have reviewed the corresponding report, and I have consulted with the SHPO. No state owned cultural resources should be impacted with proposed developments, so no additional archaeological investigative work is recommended before we process the R/W applications".</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</p>	<p>General Discussion: The landscape consists of mostly flat plains. There are dense stands of Russian Olive</p>

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<p>populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light?</p>	<p>trees located in small patches along the road.</p> <p>Action: The proposed project has been designed to avoid the areas with dense stands of Russian Olive trees. The fiber optic cable will be buried and only short term impacts are anticipated. These impacts would not have any lasting effects to the area's aesthetics.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the areas aesthetics would occur.</p>
<p>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>	<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 would occur.</p>
<p>13.OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?</p>	<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 would occur.</p>

III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
<p>14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?</p>	<p>General Discussion: The proposed project would create human health and/or safety risks associated with the installation and maintenance of the telephone communications lines.</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 lines.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to human health and/or safety risks would occur.</p>
<p>15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?</p>	<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 the signing of</p>

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	<p>the Settlement of Surface Damages Form.</p> <p>No Action: No action would possibly reduce future potentials for industrial, commercial, and/or agricultural activities, requiring telephone communication lines, to expand and develop in this area.</p>
16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.	<p>Action: No impacts to quantity and distribution of employment are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to quantity and distribution of employment would occur.</p>
17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?	<p>Action: No impacts to the state tax base and/or tax revenue are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the state tax base and/or tax revenues would occur.</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>Action: A slight increase in traffic levels would occur during installation. No impacts to government services are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the level of demand for road use or government services would occur.</p>
19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	<p>General Discussion: There are no known zoning or management plans in affect in the construction areas.</p> <p>Action: No impacts to local environmental plans and goals are anticipated occur.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to local environmental plans and goals would occur.</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>General Discussion: This tract of State land is legally accessible and provides recreational opportunities. No wilderness areas are located near the proposed project area.</p> <p>Action: No impacts to recreational quality or recreational opportunities of the project area or surrounding lands are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the quality of recreational and wilderness activities would occur.</p>
21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?	<p>Action: No impacts to the density and/or distribution of population and housing are anticipated to occur.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the density and/or distribution of population and housing would occur.</p>
22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	<p>Action: No impacts to the areas social structures, native/traditional lifestyles, or communities are anticipated to occur.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts social structures,</p>

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	native/traditional lifestyles, or communities would occur.
23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	Action: No impacts to the areas cultural uniqueness and/or diversity are anticipated to occur. No Action: No impacts to the areas cultural uniqueness and/or diversity would occur.
24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:	Action: The State trust would receive money for both surface damages and for the \$50.00 application fee for the ROW easements. Also, the rural residents in the project area would benefit from the installation of the new telephone communication lines. No Action: No impacts to the social and economic circumstances would occur and the State trust would not receive additional revenue from the ROW easement.

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

Date: April 21, 2010

IV. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:	
26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:	
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 21, 2010

