

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative Temporary Construction License and Easement
Proposed Implementation Date:	July 2010
Proponent:	Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative
Location:	Section 33, Township 1 South, Range 24 East
County:	Yellowstone County

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative (YVEC) is relocating overhead electric distribution lines in this area due to the new Yellowstone County Veterans Cemetery and its associated relocation of Laurel Airport Road. As a part of this relocation project, a power pole is being placed in the easement right-of-way granted to the Montana Department of Transportation for a line that crosses Buffalo Trail (State Highway 532) at its intersection with the relocated Laurel Airport Road. The location of this new pole requires two guy wires and anchors be placed outside of the right-of-way and on the Trust land for support. The guy wires would encroach due west approximately 35' into the Trust land. Yellowstone Valley Electric will follow-up with an easement application and the area encumbered will be approximately 10' wide by 50' long.

After discussions between the Southern Land Office Area Planner and YVEC, there was agreement between the two parties that language would be included in the new easement allowing DNRC to request that the guy wires and anchors be relocated if at some point in the future they disrupt future development of this portion of the section. This was an issue due to the close proximity of the guy wires and the only access to this portion of the section from Buffalo Trail.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

No formal public scoping was performed by DNRC for this proposed project. A Settlement of Damages form was obtained from the grazing lessee.

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

None.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Proposed Alternative: Approve the request to issue a temporary construction license and easement to permit the installation of two guy wires and anchors that will encroach on Trust land from a new power pole in the State Highway right-of-way.

No Action Alternative: Deny the request to issue a temporary construction license and easement to permit the installation of two guy wires and anchors that will encroach on Trust land from a new power pole in the State Highway right-of-way.

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 area proposed for the license and easement is flat and the soils in the easement area consist mostly of gravelly loams. There are other newly relocated power poles with anchors in the vicinity so the proponent has dealt with this soil type and any modifications needed to provide for a sturdy line. The NRCS Soil Survey does not indicate any weaknesses to these soils that would significantly impact the proposed action.

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 significant adverse impacts to water quality, quantity or distribution are anticipated from the proposed action.

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.

No significant impact to air quality is expected from the implementation of the proposed action.

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 installation of the anchors will disturb a small portion of the Trust land, but overall the proposed action should have minimal disturbance of existing vegetative cover. The areas that are disturbed will be required to be rehabbed and re-seeded. No significant adverse impacts to vegetative cover, quantity or quality are expected as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

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.

No significant impacts to terrestrial, avian and aquatic life and habitats are expected to occur as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

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.

A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program database indicated that there were no species of special concern in the area.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

The proposed license and easement is located near a State Highway and there has been some disturbance in the easement area from previous road construction projects. The SLO Area Planner conducted a site survey and did not note any historic or archaeological features that would have prompted further investigation. No significant adverse impact to historic or archaeological sites is expected as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

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.

The proposed action would result in the installation of two guy wires and anchors on the Trust land, adjacent to Buffalo Trail. There is an existing overhead powerline that runs parallel to Buffalo Trail and the addition of the guy wires and anchors is not expected to add or detract from the existing aesthetics. Therefore, no significant adverse impact to aesthetics is expected as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

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 significant adverse impacts to environmental resources of land, water, air or energy are expected to occur as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

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 no other known studies or future government actions planned for this Trust parcel.

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

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

No significant adverse impacts to human health and safety are expected to occur as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

The proposed easement does not impact any crop lands and a settlement with the grazing lessee has been obtained. No significant adverse impacts to industrial, commercial and agricultural activities and production are expected to occur as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

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 action is not expected to have a significant impact on the quantity and distribution of employment.

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.

The proposed action is not expected to have an adverse impact on tax revenue.

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

The implementation of the proposed alternative should not generate any additional demands on governmental 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.

Implementation of the proposed alternative is not expected to conflict with any locally adopted plans.

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 Trust parcel that would be impacted by the approval of the proposed action does have public access via Buffalo Trail. The implementation of the proposed alternative is not expected to have any adverse impact on the ability to access or utilize this Trust land for recreational use.

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 proposed action is part of a larger project that is relocating an existing line that ran along the abandoned Laurel Airport Road to a new location along the relocated Laurel Airport Road. No significant adverse impacts to density and distribution of population and housing should occur as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

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 proposed alternative.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

The proposed alternative is not expected to have a significant adverse impact on cultural uniqueness or diversity.

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 State will benefit by getting one-time fee of \$150 for the Temporary Construction License and will also receive a one-time fee of \$200 for the easement. The Common Schools Trust will be the beneficiary of this payment.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Jeff Bollman, AICP	Date: 8 July 2010
	Title: Area Planner, Southern Land Office	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

The proposed alternative has been selected and it is recommended that a Temporary Construction License and easement be granted to Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative for the purpose of installing two guy wires and anchors on Trust land from a new power pole in the State Highway right-of-way.

To mitigate a potential future impact to the Trust and facilitate future development on the parcel, language will be recommended for inclusion in the easement document allowing DNRC to request that the guy wires and anchors be relocated at YVEC expense if at some point in the future they disrupt future development of this portion of the section.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The potential for significant adverse impacts to the Trust lands listed above are minimal due to the nature of the proposed action which include the issuance of temporary construction licenses and easement to permit the installation of two guy wires and anchors. There are no natural features or nearby species of concern that could produce adverse impacts from the proposed action.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS More Detailed EA No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Richard A. Moore
	Title: Area Manager, Southern Land Office
Signature: /s/ Richard A. Moore	Date: 7/19/10