

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: LUL # 8642, Installation of a buried 3 aught power distribution line.

Proposed Implementation Date: Summer/Fall 2010

Proponent: Sun River Electric Co-Op, 310 1st Ave. South, PO Box 309, Fairfield, MT 59436

Type and Purpose of Action: Currently, Sun River Electric Co-Op has an overhead electric primary distribution line, D-11606. A group of large storage tanks that is traveling from the West Coast to the Tar Sands in Alberta, Canada will be traveling this route. In order to accommodate the height of these tanks, the electric line must be buried for a total of 5800', 1484' of which will be on state land. Sun River Electric has requested a LUL in order to allow for this line to be buried and then they will apply for an easement once the final route has been selected. The proposed construction area is next to the existing Highway 89 ROW within 50' of the highway fence.

Location: T27N, R6W, Sec 10 N2SE4
Trust: Common Schools

County: Teton

I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

DNRC, Surface owner
Sun River Electric, proponent
Perkins Ranch, Surface Lessee

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

There are no other agencies with jurisdiction on this project.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Approve the request.
Deny the request

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? Are there special reclamation considerations? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?

[Y] Soils consist of Shambo-Amor loams, 2 to 8% slopes, class 3E and Kiev-Roundor gravelly loams, 2 to 15% slopes, class 4E. These soils and slopes are generally suitable for the installation of a primary buried electrical distribution line. The topography is flat to gently rolling and the line will be installed next to the existing Highway 89 ROW within 50' of the existing highway fence. Equipment will cause localized areas of soil compaction and will disturb the soil were the primary buried electrical distribution line is being placed. Reclamation requirements are to compact and level the plow scar created in the installation of the primary buried electrical distribution line. Then, seed the impacted area with the existing grass types and seeding rates that are listed in item 7 of this assessment. Cumulative impacts on soil resources are not expected as the use of a vibratory plow will minimize the surface disturbance caused by the construction project.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

<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? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?</p>	<p>[N] There are no ephemeral drainages present on this tract. There are no documented and/or recorded water rights associated with the proposed tract. Other water quality and/or quality issues will not be impacted by the proposed action.</p>
<p>6. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I air shed)? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?</p>	<p>[N] The proposed action will not impact the air quality.</p>
<p>7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?</p>	<p>[Y] Vegetation will be minimally impacted as approximately 1484' of a primary buried electrical distribution line will be installed by the utilization of a vibratory plow. The vegetation consists of a mixture of native and introduced species. Noxious and annual weeds within the proposed construction areas are a concern, but this concern will be mitigated as the applicants are responsible for controlling weeds within the construction areas. Cumulative impacts on the vegetative resources are not expected as the proposed construction areas will be reclaimed and reseeded. The reseeding mixture will consist of a grass seed mixture of 35% Western Wheatgrass, 35% Slender Wheatgrass, 15% Bluebunch Wheatgrass, 10% Green Needle grass, and 5% Lewis blue flax. If drilled the rate will be 8#/acre. If broadcast the rate will double. There were no plant species of concern or potential species of concern noted on NRIS survey.</p>
<p>8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?</p>	<p>[N] The area is not considered critical wildlife habitat. However, these tracts provide habitat for a variety of big game species (mule deer, whitetail deer, pronghorn antelope), predators (coyote, fox, badger), upland game birds (sharp tail grouse, Hungarian partridge), other non-game mammals, raptors and various songbirds. The proposal does not include any land use change which would yield changes to the wildlife habitat. The proposed action will not impact wildlife forage, cover, or traveling corridors. Nor will this action change the juxtaposition of wildlife forage, water, or hiding and thermal cover.</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? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?</p>	<p>[N] A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted and there were two animal species of concern and no potential species of concern noted on the NRIS survey.</p> <p>The Gray Wolf exhibits no particular habitat preference except for the presence of native ungulates within its territory on a year-round basis. In addition, they prefer areas with few roads and human disturbance. Given the fact that the construction area contains no transient native ungulates and the area is contained next to Highway 89 within 50' of the highway fence, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects are expected due to the proposed installation of the primary buried electrical distribution line.</p>

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

	<p>Ferruginous hawks are generally associated with needing cliffs, trees, or mid-elevation slopes for nesting. Given the fact that the construction area contains none of this habitat and the area is contained next to Highway 89 within 50' of the highway fence, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects are expected due to the proposed installation of the primary buried electrical distribution line.</p>
10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	<p>[N] During the field inspection there were no historic, archaeological, or paleontological sites found within the proposed primary buried electrical distribution line installation area. A portion of the proposed construction area is in part of an old road bed and has been previously disturbed.</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? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	<p>[N] Installation of the primary buried electrical distribution line will not affect the aesthetics of the land in any way as it will not be visible. It will lead to no erosion of the soil resources on the tract as the line is located below the soil surface.</p>
12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, and AIR OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	<p>[N] The demand on environmental resources such as land, water, air, or energy will not be affected by the proposed project. The proposed project will not consume resources that are limited in the area. There are no other projects in the area that will affect the proposed project.</p>
13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of other private, state or federal current actions w/n the analysis area, or from future proposed state actions that are under MEPA review (scoping) or permitting review by any state agency w/n the analysis area?	<p>[N] There are no other studies, plans or projects that will affect this proposed action.</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>[N] This project will not add to the health and safety of the area.</p>
15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	<p>[Y] The results of this project will not affect the industrial, commercial, or agricultural activities or production in the area.</p>
16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number. Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	<p>[N] This project will not create any new jobs, as the project will be completed in house by the proponent.</p>
17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	<p>[N] This project will not affect the tax base or tax revenues as it is replacing an existing power distribution line.</p>
18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	<p>[N] This project is of a small scale and being funded by Sun River Electric Co-Op. There will be no excessive stress placed of the existing infrastructure of the area.</p>

<p>19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?</p>	<p>[N] The proposed project is in compliance with Federal, State, and County laws. No other management plans are in effect for the area.</p>
<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? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?</p>	<p>[N] The proposed project is not expected to impact general recreation activities on this State Land.</p>
<p>21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?</p>	<p>[N] The project is of a very small scale and will not affect the density and distribution of population or housing in the surrounding area.</p>
<p>22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?</p>	<p>[N] The proposed project will not alter the social structure of the surrounding native communities.</p>
<p>23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?</p>	<p>[N] The proposed project will not impact the cultural uniqueness and/or cultural diversity of the area.</p>
<p>24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES: Is there a potential for other future uses for easement area other than for current management? Is future use hypothetical? What is the estimated return to the trust. Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?</p>	<p>[Y] This project will benefit the school trust in terms of a fee generated from LUL #8642 and from the future easement. The fees will be \$150.00 per year for the two year term of the license for a total of \$300.00. The easement will be for a 20' wide strip of land that crosses approximately 1484'. This will affect an estimated 0.68 acres X \$700.00 per acre equals \$476.00 of approximately revenue generated from the future easement. Cumulative impacts are not likely as the area is only used for grazing and the primary buried electrical distribution line will not affect the long-term viability of grazing on the tract.</p>

EA Checklist Prepared By: /S/ Tony Nickol
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Teton County