

# CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Installing an underground Power Line

Proposed Implementation Date: Winter of 2010-2011

Proponent: Norval Electric Cooperative, 1130 US Highway 2 W, Glasgow, Montana 59230

Type and Purpose of Action: Norval Electric Cooperative has submitted a Construction License Application to the Glasgow Unit Office to install a new three-phase underground power line from their Peerless substation to the town of Richland of which portions will be located on State land in Daniels County. The power line upgrade is necessary to maintain a reliable service to consumers on this portion of their system. Having the new line next to a highway allows them easy access during storms.

Location: Sections SE4, Sec.1 Twp.35N Rge. 43E, All, Sec. 12 Twp. 35N Rge. 44E, NE4, Sec. 8 Twp. 35N Rge. 44E, E2, Sec. 9 Twp. 35N Rge. 44E, All, Sec. 10 Twp. 35N Rge. 44E, All, Sec. 11 Twp. 35N Rge. 44E, NW4, Sec. 1 Twp. 35N Rge. 43E, NE4, Sec. 1 Twp. 35N Rge. 43E, NE4, Sec. 7 Twp. 35N Rge. 44E

County: Daniels

## I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

Norval Electric Cooperative has made a Construction License Application and submitted it to the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Glasgow Unit Office along with the survey plats for each state tract that will be crossed. The purpose of the requests is to place new buried power lines as part of a new power line project. The new line will be placed in close proximity to existing highway. The underground line will be placed in a manner as to not interfere with the lessee's surface activities. Also, the surface lessee's have been contacted by Norval Electric Cooperative in order for lessees to sign Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Notice of Settlement of Damages Form. There are no damages anticipated.

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

United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency- Will be contacted to obtain permission to cross and disturb State lands enrolled in Conservation Reserve Program.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Action Alternative: Grant Right a Construction License to Norval Electric Cooperative to place new buried power line on State owned tracts.

No Action Alternative: Deny a Construction License requested by Norval Electric Cooperative to place new buried underground power line on State owned tracts.

## II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS
<p>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?</p>	<p>General Discussion: Very minimal grazing, dryland agriculture and conservation reserve program acreage will be impacted by this activity. There are no fragile, compactable, or unstable soils present or any unusual geologic features. The native and tame grass vegetation will return to the disturbed areas from existing seed sources. The various soil types will continue to produce vegetation and small grain crops.</p> <p>Action: This disturbance caused by the installation of the buried power line cable will be done using a static plow to install cable in less sensitive areas and by using a directional boring machine to install cable under roads and waterways.</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 water crossing on the West Fork of the Poplar River will see very minimal impacts. This crossing will not impact fish, waterfowl species or aquatic vegetation.</p> <p>Action: Impacts to the water quality, quantity, and/or distribution of surface and ground water on or around the construction area will be reduced through mitigation. Mitigation: Disturbances to sensitive areas will be minimized by using directional boring to install the cable. Heberly and Associates is aware of these areas of concern and is in the process of obtaining the necessary 3/10 and 404 permits.</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. The project will occur in the winter time and minimal vegetation will be disturbed by the installation of the buried power line.</p>

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	<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: This affected area is small in nature and located along a highway. The area of impact has minimal habitat for wildlife and birds.</p> <p>Action: Impacts to terrestrial, avian, and/or aquatic life and habitats will be mitigated. Mitigation: Cables will be buried below ground and the waterways will be directional bored.</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: A search of the Natural Resource Inventory Survey system found no species of special concern to be present within the proposed action areas.</p> <p>Action: It is anticipated that the implementation of this action will not affect any known unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources. Any concerns about damages to the West Form of the Poplar River or other wetland areas can be mitigated. Mitigation: Directional boring machine must be used to install cable around wetland areas.</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: Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation has inspected the State lands to be impacted through the Field Evaluation process. There were no historical or archaeological sites found on the State land.</p> <p>Action: There is no need for action on tract as no historical, archaeological or paleontological sites where found.</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 areas are located next to a highway. The landscape consists of gently rolling hills and plains.</p> <p>Action: The area has been disturbed in the past and no long term impacts to the areas aesthetics are anticipated. The power line will be buried and the pedestals are small enough that they will not interfere with the areas aesthetics. Increases of noise and light will occur during construction; these impacts will be eliminated as soon as the project is completed.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the areas aesthetics will</p>

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	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>General Discussion: No such documents are known to exist.</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 are anticipated to occur.</p>

## III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

RESOURCE	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. The area is sparsely populated and risks from working near a Highway Right of Ways are minimal due to the minimal levels of traffic on this rural highway.</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 surface lessees will have no decreased revenues due to surface disturbance caused by the installation of the buried telecommunications cables.</p> <p>Action: There will be no mitigation for the power line installation as activities will be done in winter not affecting growing small grain crops or grass plant production.</p> <p>No Action: No action will reduce future potentials for industrial, commercial, and/or agricultural activities</p>

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	in the area.
16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.	Action: Because the project will be completed in a relatively short time frame, 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: The granting of the Construction License for the project will increase the county tax base by adding infrastructure.  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?	General Discussion: The area receives minimal traffic during most of the year due to low population levels. Slight increases in traffic occur during time periods with increased ranching and farming activities.  Action: Increases in traffic levels will occur during installation. The increased traffic is not anticipated to occur as substantial levels. 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 to occur as the construction is in remote areas.  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: Most of the tracts of State land are legally accessible and provide recreational opportunities. No wilderness areas, wilderness study areas or areas of critical environmental concern are located within a close proximity to the proposed project area.  Action: Proposed action area is mostly located near an existing highway. The project area contains minimal recreational opportunities. No impacts to recreational quality or recreational opportunities are anticipated as project will be done in winter.  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: The service provided by the new underground power line may or may not increase the likelihood of future rural development in this area. No impacts to

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	<p>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 will 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, native/traditional lifestyles, or communities will occur.</p>
23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	<p>Action: No impacts to the areas cultural uniqueness and/or diversity are anticipated to occur.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the areas cultural uniqueness and/or diversity will occur.</p>
24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:	<p>General Discussion: The project will provide the opportunity for local businesses to supply the applicant with materials needed for installation of the buried power line and to supply the material used for the line itself. This opportunity may or may not benefit local businesses.</p> <p>Action: The state trust will receive some monetary compensation for the Construction License and the county will benefit from an increased tax base. Also, the rural residents in the project area will benefit fit from the additional electric power from the new line.</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 Construction License.</p>

EA Checklist Prepared By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Randy Dirkson (Land Use Specialist)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

IV. FINDING	
25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:	Action alternative Recommend approving Construction License for this portion of Norval Electric underground power line installation.
26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:	Short-term and small-scale impacts to the native pasture, tame pasture, agricultural land, and Conservation Reserve Program located within proposed action area are expected. No Archaeological sites are present within the project area. This project will benefit the school trust by generating additional revenue from the Construction License. Completion of the project will increase Daniels county resident's

