

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Installing an underground distribution Power Line

Proposed Implementation Date: 2010

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

Type and Purpose of Action: Norval Electric Cooperative has submitted a Right of Way Easement Application to the Glasgow Unit Office to install a new underground power line to replace aging distribution facilities, 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. This project was completed in 2010 under an emergency construction license.

Location: Sections NE4NW4, NE4, Section 1 Township 35 North Range 43 East , N2, Section 7 Township 35 North Range 44 East, NE4, Section 8 Township 35 North Range 44 East, N2, Section 9 Township 35 North Range 44 East, N2, Section 10 Township 35 North Range 44 East, Section 11 Township 35 North Range 44 East, N2, Section 12 Township 35 North Range 44 East, SE4, Section 1 Township 35 North Range 44 East

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 Right of Way Easement Application and submitted it to the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Glasgow Unit Office along with the survey plats for those State land tracts 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 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 some surface damages anticipated.

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

Daniels County Commissioners, United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency. To inform the Farm Service Agency that the power line will cross conservation reserve program acreage.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Action Alternative: Grant Right of Way Easement to Norval Electric Cooperative to place a new buried power line on State owned land.

No Action Alternative: Deny a Right of Way Easement requested by Norval Electric Cooperative to place new buried underground power line on State owned land.

| II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT | |
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| 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 native rangeland, dry land 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 various soil types will continue to produce native vegetation, dry land crops and tame grass vegetation.</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: There is one surface water area associated with the project sites. The surface water area is the West Fork of the Poplar River.</p> <p>Action: No impacts to the water quality, quantity, and/or distribution of surface and ground water resources on the State land. The electric power line will be installed under the river bed with a boring machine.</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 and minimal vegetation will be disturbed by the installation of the buried power line.</p> <p>Action: The plant communities will be dormant stages when installation occurs. The impacts to plant growth will be minimal and areas will see plant regeneration</p> |

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

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| | <p>from exiting seed sources.</p> <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 in a rural area. The area of impact has minimal habitat for wildlife and birds. The area along the West Fork of the Poplar River has some fish habitat resources.</p> <p>Action: Impacts to terrestrial, avian, and aquatic habitat sources will be minimal. Area has aquatic habitat on or near the project site. There is no expected impacts to the aquatic habitat</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.</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 land 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 in a rural area. The landscape consists of flat lowland terrain. The project is located next to a highway and will be visible to the local population.</p> <p>Action: The area is native rangeland, dry land agriculture and conservation reserve program acreage. 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</p> |

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| | <p>completed.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the areas aesthetics will occur.</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>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 |
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| 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 in a rural area are minimal.</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. There will be mitigation of health and safety risks by using trained professionals with proper safety efforts.</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 electrical lines.</p> <p>Action: There will be no mitigation for the power line installation as activities will be done in early winter not affecting growing grass plant production.</p> <p>No Action: No action will reduce future potentials for</p> |

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

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| | industrial, commercial, and/or agricultural activities 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 Right of Way Easement 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: These tracts of State land are legally accessible from a highway and provide some 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 some recreational opportunities. No impacts to recreational quality or recreational opportunities are anticipated as project will be done in early 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 | Action: The service provided by the new underground power line may or may not increase the likelihood of |

| II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT | |
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| and require additional housing? | <p>future rural development in this area. 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 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 Right of Way Easement and the county will benefit from an increased tax base. Also, the rural residents in the project area will benefit 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 Right of Way Easement.</p> |

EA Checklist Prepared By: _____

Date: _____

Randy Dirkson (Land Use Specialist)

| IV. FINDING | |
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| 25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED: | Action Alternative: Recommend approving Right of Way Easement for this portion of Norval Electric underground power line installation. |
| 26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS: | Short-term and small-scale impacts to the native rangeland resource, dry land agriculture and conservation reserve program acreage 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 |

