CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Vigilante Electric Cooperative Wisdom power line proposal 2010
Proposed Implementation Date:	Spring, 2011
Proponent:	Vigilante Electric Cooperative
Location:	T2S R15W Section 34
County:	Beaverhead

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Vigilante Electric Cooperative (VEC) has applied to place an above ground residential power line on Montana Trust Land located in T2S R15W Section 34. The power line would parallel the County Road known as the Steel Creek Road for approximately ¼ mile. The purpose of the project is to re-route service to the Steel Creek Subdivision located to the East of the state tract.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

Patrick Rennie, DNRC Archaeologist
Craig Fager, Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks Biologist
Ben Miller, Vigilante Electric Cooperative
Martin Miller, Montana Natural Heritage Program

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

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

A) No action, the power line would not be allowed to cross through Trust Land

B) Allow the power line to be constructed along the county road and grant an easement to VEC for the line

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.

Soils on the affected site have been previously impacted by the construction and continued use of the County Road. No cumulative impacts to the soil are expected as a result of this proposed project. There are no unusual geologic features located on or adjacent to the proposed project area.

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.

The Big Hole River and Steel Creek are located within approximately 1 mile of the project site. The proposed project will not adversely impact water resources in the area.

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.

The project would not produce negative effects to air quality.

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 project would include placing 1 to 2 poles on the Trust Land which would include some disturbance of vegetative cover at the pole site. The project will not impact any known rare plants or cover types. Any additional disturbance to the vegetation in the project area may require reseeding and / or reclamation by the proponent, VEC.

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.

Due to the immediate proximity of the project to a well traveled County road, close proximity to State Highway 43 and the town of Wisdom, both located approximately ½ mile from the site, the project is not expected to have any cumulative effects on terrestrial or avian habitats. No aquatic habitat is located on the Trust Land.

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.

Martin Miller of the Montana Natural Heritage Program was solicited for input on State and Federal species of concern and endangered species. The subsequent report listed the following five species:

1) Greater Sage-Grouse (Centrocercus urophasianus) – Sage-grouse are currently listed by the US Fish & Wildlife Service as a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act. Sage-grouse are listed as an at-risk species by the State of Montana and as a sensitive species by the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S.D.A. Bureau of Land Management (BLM). This project is located in close proximity to the town of Wisdom, State Highway 43, and immediately adjacent to Steel Creek Road, a well-traveled County Road. The close proximity to Wisdom and frequent use of the public roads adjacent to the tract create numerous long-term detrimental effects to sage-grouse use of this site. The addition of the power line will not create a positive or negative cumulative effect regarding sage-grouse use of the site.

2) Long-billed Curlew (Numenius americanus) – Long-billed curlew are listed as at risk by the State of Montana and as a sensitive species by the BLM. Due to the close proximity of the project to the town of Wisdom, State Highway 43, and immediately adjacent to a well-traveled county road, Steel Creek Road, impacts to curlew use of the site by the project would be minimal.

3) Arctic grayling (Thymallus arcticus) – Fluvial arctic grayling are currently listed by the US Fish & Wildlife Service as a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act. Grayling are listed as a high risk species

by the State of Montana, and as a sensitive species by the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S.D.A. Bureau of Land Management. The proposed power line does not cross aquatic habitat sites on the State Trust Land so no effect to arctic grayling would result.

4) Pygmy rabbit (Brachylagus idahoensis) – Pygmy rabbits are listed as at risk by the State of Montana and as a sensitive species by the U.S. Forest Service and BLM. The project area consists of high human use due to the close proximity of the site to the town of Wisdom, State Highway 43, and immediately adjacent to a well-traveled county road, Steel Creek Road. Additional impacts to Pygmy rabbit use of the site created by the proposed project are expected to be minimal.

5) Gray wolf (Canis lupus) – The gray wolf is currently back on the endangered species list and is listed as Secure by the State of Montana and sensitive by the U.S. Forest Service and BLM. The project area consists of high human use due to the close proximity of the site to the town of Wisdom, State Highway 43, and immediately adjacent to a well-traveled county road, Steel Creek Road. Additional impacts to grey wolf use of the site created by the proposed project are expected to be minimal.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:
Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

Patrick Rennie, DNRC Archaeologist, was solicited for comments on historical and archaeological sites located on the tract. According to records, an irrigation ditch is recorded on the section and would not be impacted by the proposed project.

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.

No cumulative effects to aesthetics are expected as a result of this project.

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 cumulative effects to environmental resources are expected as a result of this project.

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.

No other studies, plans, or projects were reported during the scoping of this project.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *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.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:
Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

No additional health or safety risks are posed by this project.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:
Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

No additional industrial, commercial, or agricultural activities will be produced as a result of this project.

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 project will have no net effect to 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.

No additional tax revenue is expected as a result of this project.

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.

No additional government services are expected as a result of this project.

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.

No zoning concerns or management plans were reported for this area during scoping for this project.

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.

This project would not alter access to or quality of recreational or wilderness activities.

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.

This project would not alter the population of the area. The project is designed to re-route the power supply to an existing housing development located to the East of the tract.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:
Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

No long term disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities would result from this project.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:
How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

The project would not alter the cultural uniqueness or diversity of the area.

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.

Return to the State Normal School Trust would result in an additional approximate $530.00 one-time fee for the easement based on a $1000.00 per acre value and an easement area of 0.53 acres.

EA Checklist Prepared By:				
	Name:	Charles Maddox	**Date:**	4/15/11
	Title:	Land Use Specialist		

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative B) Allow the power line to be constructed along the county road and grant an easement to VEC for the line.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

No long term or cumulative effects are anticipated from this proposal. The installation of the power line has a small foot print and will have minimal impact on the surrounding environment.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

[ ] EIS [ ] More Detailed EA [X] No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:				
	Name:	Timothy Egan		
	Title:	Dillon Unit Manager		
Signature:	/S/ Timothy Egan		**Date**:	4/18/11

T2S R15W Section 34

1 inch = 1,056 feet

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