

## CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

<b>Project Name:</b>	Western Area Power Administration Fiber Optic Line
<b>Proposed Implementation Date:</b>	2011-2012
<b>Proponent:</b>	WAPA
<b>Location:</b>	T 20N-48E-Sec 36 NE4,NE4
<b>County:</b>	McCone County

### I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The United States Department of Energy; Western Area Power Administration has requested an amendment to their current right of way deed number 2955. This amendment is for the purpose of adding acreage to the easement in order to increase the capacity of the Circle Substation.

### II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

WAPA has completed DNRC form DS- 406-A with all required materials in accordance with the easement process. WAPA has also provided a signed DS-457 by the affected surface lessee

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

None

#### 3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A- Allow WAPA to expand the current easement (D-2955) for the purpose of expanding the Circle Substation.

Alternative B- No action.

### 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.*

Alternative A- Disturbance of the soil will occur through the leveling of the expansion site. Soils in this area are durable and conducive to construction and engineering.

Alternative B-No Impact

#### 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.*

Alternative A- No Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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.*

Alternative A- Pollutants and Particulates may be increased during the construction phase of the project. After the completion of the project pollutant and particulate levels should return to normal. Increase in pollutants during construction should be almost negligible.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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.*

Alternative A- Where the construction takes place there may be disturbance to the vegetation cover. The current plant community in the area is comprised mostly of introduced species. These species include Crested wheatgrass (*Agropyron cristatum*), Smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*), and Alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*).

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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.*

Alternative A- There may be very minimal effects on any animal habitats within the boundaries of the project construction. Wildlife that inhabit the project area include antelope, deer, coyotes, rodents and reptiles. Wildlife may be temporarily disturbed during the construction of the project. After completion of the project there should be no lasting impacts to these species.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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.*

Alternative A- There is no evidence of sensitive or endangered species in the scope of this project.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:**

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

Alternative A- Upon inspection of the parcels by the Eastern Land Office staff no significant findings were noted on these parcels. Due to the small scope and previous disturbance no significant impacts should occur.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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.*

Alternative A- The current WAPA substation would increase in size by approximately 1.66 acres. Effects on aesthetics should be minimal due to the remote location. There would be no increase to noise or light due to the project.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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.*

Alternative A- Should the amendment be granted the current substation would be able to increase capacity and provide more electricity to the area.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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.*

None

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



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**14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:**

*Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.*

Alternative A- Any work on the substation will be performed by trained professionals. The site itself will remain off limits to the public in order to protect its safety.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:**

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

Alternative A- It would have a positive effect on Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural Activities and Production.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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.*

Alternative A- This project has the potential to create jobs with further development possibilities.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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.*

Alternative A- No Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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*

Alternative A- No Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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.*

Alternative A- No Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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.*

Alternative A- No Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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.*

Alternative A- No Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Impact

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**22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:**

*Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.*

Alternative A- No Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Impact

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**23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:**

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

Alternative A- No Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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.*

Alternative A- This will provide income for the trust in the form of the purchase of a permanent easement. The amount is not set at this time.

Alternative B- No Impact

<b>EA Checklist Prepared By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Scott Aye	<b>Date:</b> 6-17-2011
	<b>Title:</b> Land Use Specialist	

**V. FINDING**

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**25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:**

Alternative A

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**26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:**

The granting of the requested right of way easement amendment upon state owned trust lands for the proposed Circle Substation expansion should not result in nor cause significant environmental impacts. The predicted environmental impacts have been identified and mitigation measures addressed in the EA checklist. The predicted impacts will be adequately mitigated through the construction plans. The proposed action satisfies the trusts fiduciary mandate and ensures the long term productivity of the land. An environmental assessment checklist is the appropriate level of analysis for the proposed action

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**27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:**

EIS       More Detailed EA       No Further Analysis

<b>EA Checklist Approved By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Marc Aberg
	<b>Title:</b> ELO Lands Program Manager
<b>Signature:</b> /S/ Marc A. Aberg	<b>Date:</b> 6-17-2011