CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	**Central Montana Communications Fiber Optic**
Proposed Implementation Date:	Summer 2012
Proponent:	Central Montana Communications, Havre MT
Location:	Lease #10196 31N 26E Sec. 16
County:	Blaine County
Trust:	Common Schools

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The proponent is requesting permission to obtain and install in a right of way two underground telephone communication cables occupying the same trench in a 20 foot easement.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

The Montana Department of Resources and Conservation/ Trust Lands Management Division (DNRC/TLMD) – Helena, MT and the Northeastern Land Office (NELO) have jurisdiction over this project.

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

DNRC/TLMD and NELO are not aware of any other agencies with jurisdiction or other permits needed to complete this project.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action) – Under this alternative, the DNRC **does not** allow the proponent to install the underground communication cables.
Alternative B (the Proposed Action) – Under this alternative, the DNRC **does** allow the proponent to install the underground communication cables.

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.

The project area consists of nearly flat to gently rolling borrow area along county road. There is some upland saline influence to these soils but are mostly clayey in nature. Disturbed areas will be broadcast seeded immediately to prevent erosion.
No negative effects on the soil quality, stability or moisture are anticipated.

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 Milk River flows south of the project area. No installation will be allowed during muddy or runoff conditions. A native seed mix will be planted to accelerate filtration.
No important groundwater resources are expected to be impacted.

No cumulative effects to the water resources are anticipated.

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.

Operating heavy equipment and support vehicles has the potential to generate airborne dust. These activities will minimally affect air quality for a very limited amount of time.

No cumulative effects to air quality are anticipated.

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.

No rare plants or cover types are present.
Native grass will be seeded over project area. There will be no cumulative effects to vegetation.

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.

The project area has heavy vehicle and train traffic. This traffic minimizes the value of habitat in the project area to terrestrial, avian and aquatic life.
No cumulative effects.

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.

There are 11 species of concern listed as possibly being in or near the project area. The close proximity to two well traveled roads and the Great Northern Railroad suggest that this would not be a preferred habitat for most listed. The short duration of the project and the mitigation measures being taken will negate any cumulative effects to resident species.

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

A cultural resource inventory was conducted by Ethos Consulting and filed with the State archaeologist. There were no findings within the project area.

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.

The proposed project is not located on a prominent topographic feature.

The state land does not provide any unique scenic qualities.

The proposed activity will be conducted along publicly travelled routes. Heavy equipment will be visible during the installation, and a trench will be visible until grass seed takes.

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 demands on limited resources are required for this project.

No direct or cumulative effects to environmental resources are anticipated.

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.

There are no other projects or plans being considered on the tracts listed on this EA.

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.

There are some human safety risks associated with operating heavy machinery. The proponent and their employees accept these risks.

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

There will be no impact to industrial or commercial activities.

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.

No cumulative effects to the employment market are anticipated.

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.

There are no direct or cumulative effects to taxes or revenue for the proposed 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

There will be no long term increases in traffic, no changes in traffic patterns, and no need for additional fire protection, or police services. There is a short term increase in traffic while this installation takes place. The proponent shall take all precautionary measures to ensure public safety.

There will be no direct or cumulative effects on government services.

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.

There are no zoning or other agency management plans affecting these lands.

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.

There are no wilderness areas or access routes through this tract.

This area has public access from the highway and county road. Given the closeness to public roads recreational use is minimal.

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

The proposal does not include any changes to housing or developments.

No direct or cumulative effects to population or housing are anticipated.

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

There are no native, unique or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity that would be impacted by the proposal.

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

This is a short term project that will leave no visible change to 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.

This project and resulting easement will yield approximately $2581 to the trust. There will be no cumulative economic or social effects due to the proposed action.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:** Monte McNally **Title:** Land Use Specialist	
Signature: /s/ Monte McNally		**Date**: 5/21/2012

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

I have selected the **Alternative B (Proposed Action),** and recommend that the DNRC **does** allow the proponent to install the fiber optic cables.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

I have evaluated the potential environment affects and have determined that no cumulative environmental or social effects will result from the action alternative. Revenue to the State will result from the proposed activity.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

	EIS		More Detailed EA	XXX	No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:**	Barny Smith
	Title:	Unit Manager, Northeastern Land Office
Signature: /s/ Barny D. Smith		**Date:** 5/21/2012