CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	**Missoula Electrical Cooperative Monture Road emergency utility install**
Proposed Implementation Date:	**July 2012**
Proponent:	**Missoula Electrical Cooperative**
Location:	**Sec. 16 T.15N., R.12W.**
County:	**Powell**

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Missoula Electric Cooperative (MEC) is seeking to install an underground high voltage powerline along the northern portion of Monture Road, concurrent with Blackfoot Telephone (BT) ordinary maintenance of its existing communications facilities which are under easement. Under emergency licensing, MEC would be required to follow through with an easement application within 120 days.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

Ross Baty, DNRC Wildlife biologist; Tim Weaver, Blackfoot Telephone engineer; Dave Poukish, DNRC Clearwater Unit Manager, Lisa Axline, DRNC ROW Section Supervisor, Shawn Thomas, DNRC Trust Lands Division Administrator were all contacted regarding the installation of this line.

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

None

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

No Action
No emergency access would be granted at this time. MEC would still make an easement application for next utility maintenance season, whereupon access & install would likely be approved.

Action Alternative
An emergency land use license for install would be granted. MEC would install utilities concurrent with Blackfoot Telephone utility maintenance, and follow with an easement application within 120 days of install.

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.

No Action No install would occur at this time. MEC would make application for an easement prior to next year's maintenance activities and would likely be granted an easement for installation next year.

Action Alternative Monture Road across state section 16 is an unperfected county road. The road leading into the state section and leading out of the state section is a legally sited county road, approved by Powell County in 1901. Request is for utility install within what functions as a 60-foot wide county ROW. Install would take place over a period of approximately 3 days. Surface disturbance is minimal, and no trenching is required. Install would not affect any geology, soil quality or stability or moisture.

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.

No Action No install would occur at this time. MEC would make application for an easement prior to next year's maintenance and would likely be granted an easement for installation next year.

Action Alternative – Install would not affect groundwater resources. There are no stream crossings in Monture Road within state section 16.

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.

NONE – Under both action alternatives there would be no affect 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.

NONE – Under both action alternatives there would be no affect to vegetation cover, quantity or quality.

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.

No Action No install would occur at this time. MEC would make application for an easement prior to next year's maintenance and would likely be granted an easement for installation next year because of the county maintenance of this road system (county road leading into and out of the section) and the lack of road closures to public travel.

Action Alternative State section 16 is classified as a non-recovery occupied grizzly bear habitat zone. As stated above, BT has existing easements, which allow entry for ordinary maintenance. Effects on terrestrial and avian life and habitats will be minimized under this alternative because installation would be reduced to one entry due to co-locating of the BT and MEC lines.

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.

No Action No install would occur at this time. MEC would make application for an easement prior to next year's maintenance and would likely be granted an easement for installation next year.

Action Alternative As stated above, this parcel is classified as a non-recovery occupied grizzly bear (a federally listed threatened species) habitat zone. There are no wetlands in the utility install area. Power line will be installed concurrent with an existing easement corridor, thereby reducing mechanized entry to the parcel and minimizing effects on grizzly habitat. It is also important to note that this is an open road, maintained as a county road and open to year round public motorized access. There will be no cumulative effects as a result of the installation of the MEC power utility line.

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

NONE - Request is for buried utility install along an existing utility easement corridor. Monture is an existing road, maintained by the county and utilized by the USFS, general public, third parties and recreationists. Ground disturbing activities have already occurred along this road and should any historical, archaeological or

paleontological resources be discovered, applicant will be required to cease operations and immediately notify the State Historical Preservation Office and the local Clearwater Unit manager.

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.

NONE Under either alternative, there would be no cumulative effects to aesthetics.

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.

NONE Under either alternative, there would be no cumulative effects to environmental resources.

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.

Ride the Pine timber sale, Blew It timber permit.
There are currently no proposed future state actions in the analysis area, and under either alternative there would be no cumulative impacts likely to occur as the result of any planned state or federal actions in the analysis area.

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 Action Removal of 1.25 miles of overhead power line in the vicinity would be delayed for one year until MEC could secure a permanent easement. Increased risk to fire potential caused by a downed or sparked line would remain until the line could be buried next year.

Action Alternative Potential fire hazard would be reduced sooner by installation of a buried line this year.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

MINIMAL – Under both alternatives, there will be short and long term commercial activities related to both the installation and long term maintenance of the power line.

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.

MINIMAL – Under both alternatives, temporary and short term increases would be seen in employment due to installation and long-term maintenance of the power line.

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.

MINMAL – Under both alternatives, MEC would continue to pay taxes on its infrastructure.

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

NONE – Under both proposals, there would be no changes to traffic or traffic patterns. The USFS Monture Guard Station would benefit from more stable power service, due to the burying of lines and reduced risk to tree and wind damage to the overhead lines which currently serve the station.

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.

Powell County Comprehensive Plan, Powell County Zoning & Development Regulations
Neither alternative would affect these plans and regulations.

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.

NONE – Monture Road is an open road, used year round for access to USFS, BCCA, DNRC and private lands. It is a well-used recreational area. Under both alternatives there would be no changes to recreational activities on the state parcel as a result of this road use license.

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.

NONE Under either action alternative, there would be no cumulative effects to population and housing.

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

NONE Under either action alternative, there would be no cumulative effects to native or traditional lifestyles or communities. Power already exists to the minimal private lands served.

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

NONE Under either action alternative, there would be no affect to the quality and uniqueness of the state parcel.

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.

Under the Action Alternative, the temporary land use license would collect a fee of $300, which would be distributed to the Common Schools trust.
MEC would be required to apply for an easement within 120 days, the revenue of which would be deposited into the permanent trust for Common Schools.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name: Dana Boruch** **Title: Right of Way Specialist, Southwestern Land Office**	**Date: July 20, 2012**

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Action Alternative

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

No significant potential impacts would occur with the implantation of the action alternative. Surface disturbance will be minimal and this action will help to minimize fire potential risk with the burying of the power line.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

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

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name: Dave Poukish** **Title: Unit Manager, Clearwater**
Signature: /s/ David M. Poukish	**Date**: 7/23/12