CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	**3 Rivers Telephone Cooperative – Fiber Optic Cable**
Proposed Implementation Date:	June, 2013
Proponent:	3 Rivers Telephone Cooperative
Location:	Section 6, Township 16N, Range 10E, Lots 3-5, SE4NW4
County:	Judith Basin County
Trust:	Common Schools

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The proponent is requesting permission to place an underground fiber optic cable on the tract of State Land described above. The cable route will follow an existing private access road. There is a Granted Easement (#11307) for the historic road. The proponent has submitted an application for a Right of Way Easement on the proposed cable route.

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) – Northeastern Land Office (NELO), 3 Rivers Telephone Cooperative, and Robert D. Evans – surface lessee for Lease# 4523,

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

No other governmental agencies have jurisdiction over this proposal.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action) – Under this alternative, the DNRC does not grant permission to place an underground fiber optic cable on a tract of State Land.

Alternative B (Proposed Action) – Under this alternative, the DNRC does grant permission to place an underground fiber optic cable on a tract of State Land.

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.

There are no unusual geologic features in the proposed project area.

Reclamation and reseeding on disturbed areas is the responsibility of the proponent.

No cumulative effects to the soils 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.

No 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.

Truck traffic and dirt work may generate some 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.

Plant communities in the proposed right of way will be destroyed. The proponent will be responsible for reclaiming and reseeding the disturbed areas.

The proponent will be responsible for weed control and coordinate weed control measures with the surface lessee.

No rare plants or cover types are present.

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.

A search of the Natural Heritage Program identified 2 Species of Concern: Northern Redbelly Dace (*Phoxinus eos*), and Wolverine (*Gulo gulo*) that may occur in the area of the proposed project. These species are not expected to occur in the proposed project area.

No cumulative effects to fish and wildlife are anticipated.

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.

The proposed project area is adjacent to an existing access road and is minimal in size.

No cumulative effects to habitat are anticipated.

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

A field survey was conducted on May 2, 2013. No historical, archeological, or paleontological resources were identified.

There are no known historical, archeological, or paleontological resources on the proposed project site.

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 state land does not provide any unique scenic qualities not also provided on adjacent private and public lands.

The proposed project area is in a remote part of Judith Basin County. There may be some noise associated with the proposed activity. The activity is expected to have minimal negative 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.

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 the operation of heavy equipment. 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.

The proposed project will improve telephone service to the proponent's customer. The proposed project will not add or alter industrial, commercial, or agriculture activities or production.

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 activity will create a limited number of jobs. These positions are already held by employees of the proponent. No new jobs will be created.

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 increases in traffic, no changes in traffic patterns, and no need for additional fire protection, or police services.

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.

No impacts to the recreational value are anticipated.

There will be no direct or cumulative effects on recreation 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

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?

The proposed project will have no effect on any unique quality 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.

The ROW Application fee ($50.00) and proposed Easement fee ($143.98) returns a onetime payment of $193.98 to the trust.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:** Bill Creamer **Title:** Land Use Specialist	
Signature: /s/ Bill Creamer		**Date**: 5/9/13

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:
I have selected the Proposed Alternative B, and recommend that the DNRC does grant permission to place an underground fiber optic cable on a tract of State Land.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

I have evaluated the potential environment effects and have determined that no negative long-term environmental impacts 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 D. Smith **Title:** Unit Manager, Northeastern Land Office	
Signature: /s/ Barny D. Smith		**Date**: 5/9/13