CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	**Northwestern Energy easement for power line servicing Rocky Ridge**
Proposed Implementation Date:	**January 2014**
Proponent:	**Northwestern Energy**
Location:	**SE1/4SW1/4 Section 24 Township 9 North, Range 9 West**
County:	**Powell**

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Northwestern Energy (NWE) is requesting an easement for an overhead power line used to provide service to communications customers located on Rocky Ridge – a rocky outcrop located north of Deerlodge, Montana and a key communications location for several entities, including AT&T, Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and the DNRC. This line was installed approximately 1974. A pole relocation associated with BPA reconstruction activities in Fall 2013 do not permit this application to be processed under the state's historic easement laws.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

A public scoping notice was posted to the DNRC website on September 24, 2013. The Anaconda Unit Manager, the Powell County Board of County Commissioners, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Anaconda Sportsmen's Club were contacted. In addition, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai, the Nez Perce, the Kalispel Indian Community of the Kalispel Reservation and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe were all consulted.

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

None.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

No Action – The line is existing, and an emergency LUL was issued for the relocation of one pole by approximately 20 feet. This relocation affected the alignment of approximately 75 feet of an existing 570 foot line. Without an easement, Northwestern Energy would be required to obtain and hold an LUL for the time period that the overhead utility line is in place in order to provide continuing power to the commercial leases at the site.

Action – The easement would be issued authorizing the overhead line which has (except for one pole) been in place since 1974. Revenue from the easement would be disbursed into the permanent trust for Common Schools.

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.*

Disturbed Soils	
Intermediate Wheatgrass	5 #/acre PLS
Streambank Wheatgrass	5 #/acre PLS
Bluebunch Wheatgrass	7 #/acre PLS
"Durar" Hard Fescue	3 #/acre PLS
Total PLS/acre	**20 #/acre PLS**

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 is generally rocky areas interspersed with grasslands. As such, a variety of wildlife, including ground nesting birds, small mammals, raptors, and big game likely utilize the project area to meet some or all life requisites. Big game winter range exists in the project area.

No Action Alternative
No effects to any of the suite of wildlife that may be using the project area would be anticipated.

Action Alternative
The easement and associated use/maintenance would not appreciably alter existing habitats. Negligible disturbance to wildlife in the vicinity could occur with any proposed maintenance. Thus negligible effects to the suite of wildlife that may be using the project area could occur.

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.

Habitats for grizzly bears and Canada lynx do not exist in the project area. Similarly, habitats for any of the sensitive species or species of concern do not exist in the project area.

No Action Alternative No effects to threatened, endangered, sensitive, or species of concern terrestrial wildlife species would be anticipated.

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10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

This line was installed approximately 1974. A pole relocation associated with BPA reconstruction activities do not permit this application to be processed under the state's historic easement laws. The pole relocation moved an existing pole approximately 20 feet. Pursuant to BPA's federal responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and 36 CFT 800, it was determined that this action had the potential to cause effects on historic properties. SHPO, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai, the Nez Perce and the Coeur d'Alene Tribes were all consulted. In May 2013, SHPO concluded there was a low likelihood cultural properties would be impacted based on a review of their cultural resources files. They further determined that no further surveys were needed due to the previous disturbance of the site and the results of a previously completed cultural survey.

No Action Alternative There would be no impact by the proposed action.

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No Action Alternative There would be minimal impact to the commercial activities of NWE. Instead of a one-time payment, ongoing licensing payments would be required. Agricultural and industrial activities would not be impacted.

Action Alternative There would be minimal impact to the commercial activities of NWE. Instead of annual licensing payments, a one-time payment would be made for the easement. Agricultural and industrial activities would not be impacted.

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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.

Movement of the pole and maintenance of this distribution line are industrial activities, requiring planning, engineering and heavy equipment operators. The line was constructed in 1974, with the pole relocated under emergency licensing in August 2013.

No Action Alternative There would be little to no impact under the proposed action. Ordinary maintenance would occur, resulting in minimal employment and infrequent industrial activities.

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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.

NWE is taxed on its infrastructure under legislative direction and implementation by the Department of Revenue. This is an existing line, and it is presumed that it is taxed by the Department of Revenue as part of the ordinary taxing of utilities.

No Action Alternative There would be no known impacts to local and state tax base and tax revenues as a result of this proposal.

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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

Access to this location is over private roads maintained under the responsibility of both FWP and the DNRC. Applicants would be required to maintain the road for their proportionate share of use.

No Action Alternative will not result in any increases to traffic or impacts to government services.

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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.

This area is covered under the Powell County Growth Policy and Zoning and Development Regulations. Under either alternative, this project is not affected by that plan.

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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.

This site is located within Montana FWP's Spotted Dog Wildlife Management area, and FWP holds a grazing lease which excepts the entire commercial lease area.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

☐ EIS ☐ More Detailed EA ☑ No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:** Fred E. Staedler Jr. **Title:** Anaconda Unit Mgr.
Signature: /s/	**Date:** 11/19/13