

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Underground Fiber Optic Communications Cable
Proposed Implementation Date:	March 2022
Proponent:	3 Rivers Communications
Location:	Township 6 South Range 2 West Section 16
County:	Madison
Trust:	Common Schools

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The purpose of this easement is to provide Fiber to the Home (FTTH) facilities capable of providing telephone, high-speed data, and broadband services. The current copper lines are ageing and have reached their useful life limit, preventing 3 Rivers Communications from being able to fulfill service requests, including full deployment of broadband services. These improvements will offer state-of-the-art telecommunications facilities as well as future growth capabilities.

The fiber optic cables will be buried and placed within existing cable corridors along state lands, state highway, county or city road rights-of-way both in public rights-of-way and utilizing some private easements.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

3 Rivers Telephone Coop Inc will need to obtain a Settlement of Damages from the lessee on the parcel.

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

None

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Action: Process the applications for utility Right of Way Easement.

No Action: Do not process the applications for utility Right of Way Easement.

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.

Buried placement of the new facilities will be through the use of plowing, trenching, and boring, where appropriate, and for the most part with the use of a cable plow drawn by a crawler tractor. A short-term soil disturbance will occur with the action alternative due to construction operations. An equal amount of disturbance could occur if maintenance operations took place on the current copper lines. No adverse effects would be expected.

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 easement application is adjacent to roads with no adjacent water. Runoff could carry some sediment prior to revegetation. No long-term adverse effect to run off or water quality would be expected.

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.

An increase in vehicle and/or heavy equipment use may occur in the area while construction operations occur. No long-term adverse effects would be expected.

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.

Action Alternative: A short term disturbance will occur. Easement stipulations would include reseeding and weed management plan.

No Action Alternative: The easement for the current copper line allows for maintenance. The disturbance due to maintenance could be equal to the disturbance of the Action Alternative.

No long-term changes would be expected.

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.

Vehicle and human activity may increase in the area while construction operations occur. No long-term adverse effects to fish and wildlife would be expected under either alternative.

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 Montana Natural Heritage Program lists the Wolverine, Grizzly Bear, Great Blue Heron, Ferruginous Hawk, Greater Sage-Grouse, Clark's Nutcracker, and Brewers Sparrow as species of concern in the townships and ranges of the proposed easements. No adverse effect would be expected with either alternative.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

A Class I (literature review) level review was conducted by the DNRC staff archaeologist for the area of potential effect (APE). This entailed inspection of project maps, DNRC's sites/site leads database, land use records, General Land Office Survey Plats, and control cards. The Class I search results revealed that no cultural or paleontological resources have been identified in the APE, but it should be noted that Class III level inventory work has not been conducted there to date.

Because the topographic setting and geology suggest a low to moderate likelihood of the presence of cultural or paleontologic resources, proposed telecommunications cable installation activities are expected to have *No Effect to Antiquities*. No additional archaeological investigative work will be conducted in response to this proposed development. However, if previously unknown cultural or paleontological materials are identified during project related activities, all work will cease until a professional assessment of such resources can be made.

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.

Action Alternative: a short-term visual change will occur while work is in process.

No Action Alternative: a short-term visual change could occur if work was being done on the copper line easements.

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.

Neither alternative would require 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.

None

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

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

No effect under either alternative.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

Action Alternative – Improved data transmission infrastructure would be available.

No Action Alternative – Data capacity infrastructure would not be improved.

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 effect under either alternative.

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.

No effect under either alternative.

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

No effect under either alternative.

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.

None.

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 effect under either alternative.

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.

No effect under either alternative.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

No effect under either alternative.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

No effect under either alternative.

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 full market value for the 1.61 acres of encumbrance will be placed in the Common Schools Trust.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Katie Baret	Date: 3/1/2022
	Title: Acting Bozeman Unit Manager	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Action: Process the applications for utility Right of Way Easements

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

I have determined that none of the anticipated environmental impacts outlined in the EA are significant according to the criteria outlined in *ARM 36.2.524*. I find that no impacts are regarded as severe, enduring, geographically widespread, or frequent. Further, I find that the quantity and quality of various resources, including any that may be considered unique or fragile, will not be adversely affected to a significant degree. I find no precedent for future actions that would cause significant impacts, and I find no conflict with local, State, or Federal laws, requirements, or formal plans. In summary, I find that the identified adverse impacts will be avoided, controlled, or mitigated by the design of the project to the extent that the impacts are not significant.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Andy Burgoyne
	Title: CLO Trust Land Program Manager
Signature: 	Date: March 9, 2022

