

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Clearwater Wind East, LLC Road Use
Proposed Implementation Date:	2022
Proponent:	Clearwater Wind East, LLC
Location:	T12N-R45E-Sec 16
County:	Custer County

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Clearwater Wind East, LLC, heretofore referred to as proponent, has requested of the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation to issue a Land Use License to use an existing two track road on state owned tract T12N-R45E-Sec 16 for the purpose of installing, maintaining, and decommissioning a temporary meteorological tower on deeded land to the northeast.

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 proponent has requested that the DNRC allow travel on an existing two track road on this state-owned tract. DNRC staff has evaluated this site, and due to the nature of this request, no public comment was sought. The Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program was consulted for the project as it is within designated General Habitat. The proponent has received a consultation from the Sage Grouse Program.

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

None

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A- Grant request for the project.

Alternative B- No Action.

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.

Alternative A- There should be no impact to the soils as this is an existing two track road with a history of use. There should be no lasting adverse effects to the soil quality, stability or moisture. The soil structures are not fragile or unstable; soils are clay type.

Alternative B-No Impact

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.

Alternative A- No Impacts expected

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- There should be an increase in pollutant and particulate levels during road use. As this will be an as-needed project and not continuous, the levels should be negligible and should return to normal pre-use levels.

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- There should be no impact to vegetative cover as this is an existing road. Current plant species which occupy the use area include Western Wheatgrass (*Agropyron Smithii*), Green Needlegrass (*Stipa Viridula*), Little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scopaeium*, and Fringed Sagewort (*Artemisia frigida*).

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- There should be no impact.

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Database showed the following species of concern within the general area:

Greater Sage-Grouse(*Centrocercus urophasianus*)

Loggerhead Shrike(*Lanius ludovicianus*)

Sharp-tailed Grouse(*Tympanuchus phasianellus*)

This project is located within Greater Sage Grouse Core Habitat. The proponent has submitted the project to the Montana sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program and has received a letter consultation from the program

for project No's. 4148, 4163, 4169, 4170, 4172, 4173, 4183, 4223, 4225 (legacy Project No. 328 Timing restrictions and reclamation recommendations from the Sage Grouse Program as set forth by EO-10-2014 and EO-12-2015 will be followed.

Alternative B- No Impact

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

Alternative A- A search of the TLMS Database and a field visit showed nothing noted in this project area. This is an existing road. No cultural resources will be disturbed with continued use of the existing road.

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A-No impacts expected

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- No Impacts expected

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- There may be risks to human health and safety during the project, but this activity should be done by qualified professionals. Safety concerns should be minimized with proper safety protocol employed by the workers.

Alternative B- No impact

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

Alternative A- No impacts expected.

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- No impacts expected.

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- No Impacts expected

Alternative B- No Impact

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

Alternative A- Traffic should increase slightly, but no need for additional services.

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- No Impacts expected

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- No Impacts expected

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- No Impacts expected

Alternative B- No Impact

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Alternative A- No Impacts expected

Alternative B- No Impact

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

Alternative A- No Impacts expected

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- Granting of this license will return \$200.00 to the trust during the duration of this ten-year license.

Alternative B- No Impact

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Aaron Kneeland	Date: 9-9-2022
	Title: Land Use Specialist	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The granting of the requested action on state owned trust lands for the proposed temporary road use should not result in nor cause significant environmental impacts. The predicted impacts will be adequately mitigated through the Land Use License terms. An environmental assessment checklist is the appropriate level of analysis for the proposed action

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS More Detailed EA No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Scott Aye
	Title: ELO Land Program Manager
Signature: /s/ Scott Aye	Date: 9-9-2022