

Environmental Assessment

Telecommunications Cable Right-of-Way WYW-165184

February 2011

BLM

Worldland Field Office, Wind River/Bighorn Basin District, Wyoming



The BLM's multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources on public lands.

DOI-BLM-WY-010-2010-069-EA

Table of Contents

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND	1
1.1 Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action	1
1.2 Decisions to be Made	1
1.3 Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Plans or Other Environmental Analyses	2
1.4 Scoping, Public Involvement and Issues	2
2.0 PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES	3
2.1 Alternative 1 – Proposed Action	3
2.2 Alternative 2 – Proposed Action with Terms and Conditions	3
2.3 Alternative 3 – No Action	3
2.4 Alternatives Considered but not Analyzed in Detail	4
3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT	4
4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS	4
4.1 Direct and Indirect Effects	4
4.2 Cumulative Effects	5
4.3 Mitigation Measures Considered	6
4.4 Residual Effects	6
5.0 PREPARER(S)	7
6.0 ADDENDUM	7

WY-010-2010-069-EA
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

EA Number: WY-010-2010-69-EA

BLM Office: Worland Field Office

File Number: WYW-165184

WYW-165184-01

Proposed Action Title/Type: Buried Fiber Optic Telecommunications Cable
Right-of-Way

Location: T. 47 N.	R. 89 W.,	SEC(S): 19, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30
T. 47 N.	R. 90 W.,	SEC(S): 24, 25, 26, 27, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35
T. 47 N.	R. 91 W.,	SEC(S): 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30
T. 47 N.	R. 92 W.,	SEC(S): 2, 11, 12, 13, 24, 25, 26, 32, 33, 34, 35
T. 46 N.	R. 93 W.,	SEC(S): 19
T. 47 N.	R. 93 W.,	SEC(S): 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31
T. 45 N.	R. 94 W.,	SEC(S): 3, 7, 8, 9, 17
T. 46 N.	R. 94 W.,	SEC(S): 2, 11, 14, 23, 24
T. 47 N.	R. 94 W.,	SEC(S): 35
T. 45 N.	R. 95 W.,	SEC(S): 1, 2, 4, 12

Other Reference: Blue Mesa East, Broom Draw, Chimney Gulch, Kirby, Neiber,
Schuster Flats SE, Ten Sleep, Wild Horse Hill, Worland, Worland SE

Applicant: TCT West Inc.

1.1 Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

A right-of-way is needed to construct a buried telecommunications cable and appurtenances across public land to upgrade existing telecommunications service by completing the connection between Ten Sleep, Meeteetse and Grass Creek to the TCT West Inc. (TCT) office in Basin. TCT West provides telecommunications service in the area.

TCT West Inc. (TCT West) was granted right-of-way WYW-165124 for telecommunications cable purposes on June 29, 2009. The Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) denied TCT West access within the highway portion of the cable route due to WYDOT construction projects on the highway within the next several years. TCT West has rerouted the cable project and applied for new right-of-way WYW-165184. The route has been shortened by 600 feet to avoid cultural resource sites. Other changes were negligible.

1.2 Decisions to be Made:

The BLM would decide whether or not to grant the right of way, and if so, under what terms and conditions.

1.3 Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Plans or Other Environmental Analyses

The authority for the proposed right-of-way grant is Section 501 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, 43 U.S.C. 1761-1771, as amended, which authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to grant rights-of-way on public lands for telephone communication systems pursuant to the regulations at 43 CFR 2800.

The right-of-way proposed is not in conflict with land use plans, multiple use values or environmental protection requirements.

Conformance with Applicable Land Use Plan:

This proposed action is subject to the following land use plans:

Name of Plan:	Date Approved:
Washakie Resource Area RMP/EIS	09/02/1988
Grass Creek Planning Area RMP	09/14/1998

The plans have been reviewed and it is determined that the proposed action is in conformance with land use plan terms and conditions as required by 43 CFR 1610.5.

1.4 Scoping, Public Involvement and Issues

The proposed action was reviewed by Worland Field Office natural resource staff to aid in developing issues, alternatives, and appropriate mitigation requirements.

The following BLM Worland Field Office personnel were contacted regarding this proposal:

Marit Bovee	Archaeologist
Karen Hepp	T & E Plants Coordinator
Ted Igleheart	Wildlife Biologist
Tim Stephens	Wildlife Biologist
Paul Rau	Outdoor Recreation Planner
Mike Tietmeyer	Rangeland Management Specialist

Other persons/agencies consulted include:

Mike Stephenson Mid-State Consultants

Public involvement has not been solicited considering the scope and nature of the action proposed.

2.0 PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

2.1 Alternative 1 – Proposed Action

The proposed action would be to grant a right-of-way on BLM-administered public lands under the authority of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) to TCT West for the construction, use, maintenance and termination of a telecommunication cable and related facilities subject to the applicants stated operating procedures. The Photo Exhibit in the addenda depicts affected public lands.

The proposed right-of-way would be issued to TCT West for a term of thirty years (Map Exhibit). The right-of-way would be 20 feet wide and 221,320.512 feet in length (101.616 acres) for a buried fiber optic cable and related facilities (WYW-165184). The cable would be buried. Additional right-of-way 20 feet by 221,320.512 feet in length (101.616 acres) would be needed for a term of three years for construction purposes and reclamation monitoring (WYW-165184-01). The right-of-way would be 203.232 acres total.

TCT West has filed a negative hazardous materials statement in their application.

Rural Development Utilities Program funds would not be used for this project. Rent would be assessed.

2.2 Alternative 2 – Proposed Action with Terms and Conditions

Based on BLM staff input, terms and conditions were identified to be necessary and proper to provide adequate protection of natural resource values.

Terms and conditions for the telephone cable are incorporated as part of the proposed action including operating procedures intended to stabilize the watershed or otherwise minimize impacts to resource values. The terms and conditions include measures addressing standard issues such as cultural resources and the reduction of soil erosion and sediment load.

2.3 Alternative 3 – No Action

Under the no-action alternative the right-of-way would not be granted and the cable would not be built on the subject public land. Telephone service would have to be provided by some other means or telecommunications service abandoned. The service provider would be unable to provide service or would be required to propose an alternate technology. This alternative is not considered necessary for the protection of environmental or multiple use values.

2.4 Alternatives Considered but not Analyzed in Detail

Alternative routes on public land would have similar characteristics. The project extends from an existing line and the service area contains a large proportion of public land. The alternatives considered are not technically, economically, or environmentally preferable to the proposed action. They will not be considered further.

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The proposed cable would be located along existing roads and highways from Ten Sleep to Worland to Cottonwood Creek.

The subject land is subject to the following uses: domestic livestock grazing, wildlife habitat, dispersed outdoor recreation, watershed protection, oil and gas lease activities and rights-of-way, including roads, power lines, telephone cable, and pipelines.

Both the surface and mineral estates of the subject land are owned by the United States.

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The following are mandatory elements and/or environmental resources that are required for consideration in all NEPA analyses. All of these elements were reviewed for the proposed action and the no action alternative. Any element that was affected is discussed and analyzed in the narrative.

Resources and environmental elements not present or affected and not discussed in this EA include the following critical elements: air quality, areas of critical environmental concern (ACEC's), cultural resources, environmental justice, flood-plains, hazardous or solid wastes, invasive non-native species, Native American religious concerns, prime or unique farmlands, threatened or endangered species (T&E), water quality (drinking / ground), wetlands and riparian zones, wild and scenic rivers or wilderness.

The critical elements will not be impacted by either the proposed action or the alternatives or the impact was too slight to merit documentation.

Other elements of the environment or elements related to issues identified through scoping that are not affected include: outdoor recreation and domestic livestock grazing.

4.1 Direct and Indirect Effects

The following impact analysis consists of those impacts that were considered to be substantial enough to warrant narrative. The threshold of impacts is directed

at "real environmental issues" that affect the "quality of the human environment" as stated in the policy of CEQ regulations 40 CFR 1500.2.

Construction of the buried fiber optic telecommunications cable would subject approximately 203.232 acres of public land in and adjacent to existing roads and trails on public land to surface disturbing activity.

The public land has already been developed or subject to road use or vehicle trail use under right-of-way or casual use and little additional visual intrusion would be created. Allowing the cable to be buried would involve a minimum of new construction. The total right-of-way area subject to disturbance is 40 feet by 221,320.512 feet (203.232 acres) including short term (three years) right-of-way that would be granted for construction purposes. Erosion is not expected to be significant considering the amount of ground disturbance or vegetation removal involved in typical buried cable installations.

Burying the cable would result in short-term impact to the soil and vegetative resources. Construction in typical cable plowing operations would disturb less than the 203.232 acres of public land surface in the right-of-way. The facilities proposed would be constructed with minimal disturbance to the existing ground cover vegetation. The loss of ground cover or potential use by livestock would be negligible, especially since it would be located predominantly on and near existing roads and trails. Erosion is not expected to be significant considering the amount of ground disturbance or vegetation removal proposed.

The limited area, temporary construction, and ongoing maintenance and operating activity proposed is not expected to significantly impact wildlife habitat values in the proposed route.

Public expectations regarding the ability of both the BLM and the applicant to address the need for enhanced telecommunications service would be positively reinforced.

Under the no action alternative the applicant would be unable to meet customer need for improved telecommunications service. Public expectations regarding the ability of both the BLM and the cable company to address this need would not be met.

4.2 Cumulative Effects

The buried cable would add to the cumulative total of the number of rights-of-way along the route (roads, power lines, pipelines and other cable facilities). Irreversible or irretrievable impacts would not occur.

4.3 Mitigation Measures Considered

This environmental assessment analyzes the impacts of construction, operation, maintenance, and termination. The proposed action is as submitted by the applicant with the addition of the BLM terms and conditions to mitigate the impacts of cable installation on the environment.

The proposed fiber optic telecommunications cable right-of-way would be authorized pursuant to FLPMA, subject to prior existing rights, BLM policy, regulations and land use plans, the applicant's stated operating procedures, and applicable laws and regulations.

The operating procedures included in the Plan of Development submitted by the applicant are part of the right-of-way grant by reference except where modified by the terms and conditions in this environmental assessment.

The standard mitigation measures including weed control and protection of cultural resources is expected to adequately mitigate impacts caused by use and maintenance of the right-of-way.

Construction activity would be limited to the authorized right-of-way width.

Above ground facilities would be painted or otherwise constructed of material to blend in with the natural landscape.

The cable right-of-way would be subject to prior existing rights and coordination with existing authorized users.

Measures that have not been adequately addressed in the applicants stated operating procedures are specifically included in the Record of Decision for this document as part of the proposed action.

4.4 Residual Effects

There would be no residual impacts. Long term productivity of the site for all existing uses is not expected to be effected. Above ground cabinets and cable markers would be removed upon termination of the right-of-way.

The immediate impacts of construction would be relatively short lived. Unacceptable erosion, seriously impairing long term watershed quality, is not expected to occur.

The terms and conditions of the right-of-way would mitigate impacts of temporary construction activity and ongoing maintenance and operating activity on wildlife habitat values in the area.

Cultural resources have been reviewed and are not impacted.

The proposed cable would not adversely impact existing authorized users, including grazing or energy related uses.

5.0 PREPARER(S)

Victor Trickey Realty Specialist

Date:

February 24, 2011

6.0 ADDENDUM

Map Exhibit
Photo Exhibit



Photo Exhibit 1 of 3
WYW-165184
TCT Fiber Optic Cable Right-of-Way
(adjacent to road)



Photo Exhibit 2 of 3
WYW-165184
TCT Fiber Optic Cable Right-of-Way
(adjacent to road)



Photo Exhibit 3 of 3
WYW-165184
TCT Fiber Optic Cable Right-of-Way
(adjacent to road)