

## CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

<b>Project Name:</b>	Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program, Veebaray
<b>Proposed Implementation Date:</b>	2016
<b>Proponent:</b>	Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks and Veebaray Company Ranch
<b>Location:</b>	T22N R53E Sec 36 and T22N R54E Sec 36
<b>County:</b>	Richland

### Definitions

#### I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks and Veebaray Company Ranch, heretofore referred as proponent, has notified the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation of their intent to add improvements to the stock water system on state owned tracts T22N-R53E-Sec36 and T22N-R54E-Sec 36. This is part of an upland game bird habitat enhancement program.

#### 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 submitted a request for enhancement of improvements for stock water system on state lands. Due to the nature of this request, no public comment was sought. DNRC staff has evaluated the sites.

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

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MT FWP)

**3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:**

Alternative A- Grant improvements.

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- Some soil disturbance would take place during construction of the pipelines and placement of tanks. The soil in this area is not fragile or compactable.

Alternative B- No Impact.

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**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- The distribution area for stock water would be expanded.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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 would be an increased level of pollution and particulates during construction. This should be a short period of time, and levels are expected to return to normal at completion of construction. Increases in particulates during construction should be negligible.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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- No impact expected. Plant species which occupy the area include Western Wheatgrass (*Agropyron smithii*), Green Needlegrass (*Stipa viridula*), Blue Bunch Wheatgrass (*Agropyron spicatum*), Prairie Sandreed (*Calamovilfa longifolia*), Needle and Thread (*Stipa comata*), Prairie Junegrass (*Koleria pyramidata*), Blue Grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), Threadleaf Sedge (*Carex filifolia*), Fringed Sagewort (*Artemisia frigida*), Broom Snakeweed (*Gutierrezia sarothrae*), Downy Brome (*Bromus tectorum*) and Japanese Brome (*Bromus japonicus*). Any noxious weed infestations caused by this activity on state land will be the responsibility of the proponent to control.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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- This project is expected to enhance upland bird habitat. Tanks will be fitted with bird ladders.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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 Program Database shows no threatened, endangered or sensitive species within the general project area. A field review of the site also noted no species of concern within the project area. These locations are not located within Greater Sage Grouse Core, General, or Connectivity habitat.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:**

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

Alternative A- No historical or archeological sites were noted within the proposed lease area upon field inspection and a review of the TLMS database. 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 revealed that no cultural or paleontological resources have been identified in the APE. Because little ground disturbance is expected with the proposed project, and because the local geology is not likely to produce caves, rock shelters, or sources of tool stone, no additional archaeological investigative work will be conducted. 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.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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 impact expected.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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 impact expected.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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 required.

## 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.

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### 14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

*Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.*

Alternative A- There may be potential safety risks associated with this project. These risks can be mitigated with proper training and on site safety protocols.

Alternative B- No Impact

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### 15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

Alternative A- This proposed project should lead to enhanced agricultural activities. These include greater opportunity to more evenly use available grazing opportunities and the implementation of rest rotation grazing practices.

Alternative B- No Impact

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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.*

Alternative A- No impact expected.

Alternative B- No Impact

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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.*

Alternative A- No impact expected.

Alternative B- No impact.

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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*

Alternative A- No impact expected.

Alternative B- No Impact

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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.*

Alternative A- MT FWP has established a management plan in conjunction with the project.

Alternative B- No Impact

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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.*

Alternative A- The cooperation of the Veebaray Ranch and the MT FWP should result in enhanced upland game bird habitat and increased recreation use opportunities for the public.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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- This project should have no effect on population and housing demand.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:**

*Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.*

Alternative A- This project should cause no disruption of native or traditional lifestyles.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:**

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

Alternative A- No Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Impact

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**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- This project does not generate additional revenue to the trust, but the improved grazing distribution and management plan should have positive effects on these tracts.

Alternative B- Additional revenue to the trust would not be realized.

<b>EA Checklist Prepared By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Aaron Kneeland	<b>Date:</b> 06-27-2016
	<b>Title:</b> Land Use Specialist	

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**V. FINDING**

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**25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:**

Alternative A

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**26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:**

The granting of the requested activity on state owned trust lands for the proposed enhanced stock water pipeline and tanks should not result in nor cause significant environmental impacts. The predicted environmental impacts have been identified and mitigation measures have been addressed. The proposed action satisfies the trusts fiduciary mandate and ensures the long term productivity of the land. An environmental assessment checklist is the appropriate level of analysis for the proposed action

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**27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:**

EIS                       More Detailed EA                       No Further Analysis

<b>EA Checklist Approved By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Scott Aye
	<b>Title:</b> Eastern Land Office, Lands Program Manager
<b>Signature:</b> /s/ Scott Aye	<b>Date:</b> 07-12-2016