DS-252

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Land renovation of crested wheatgrass rangeland. State of Montana Lease Number 1012.	Proposed Implementation Date: Fall 2016
Proponent: Jay A. Crandell, P O Box 916, Scobey, Montana 59263	
Type and Purpose of Action: Surface lessee, Jay A. Crandell is working with the Department of Natural Resources & Conservation, Glasgow Unit Office personnel to improve the natural resource production on 247.5 acres of crested wheatgrass. The surface lessee will spray the crested wheatgrass in the fall of 2016 and seed the 247.5 acres to native grass and forb species.	
Location: Lots 1-4, E2, E2SW4, E2NW4, Section 7 Township 36 North Range 46 East	County: Daniels

I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT	
1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED: Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.	Jay A. Crandell the surface lessee is working with Department of Natural Resources and Conservation personnel to improve nature resource production on 247.5 acres (more or less) of crested wheatgrass. The 247.5 acres will be sprayed and inter-seeded into existing surface plant community with native grass and forb species.
2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:	The other government agencies that may have jurisdiction for this project are the United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency and United States Department of Agriculture, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Service.
3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:	No Action Alternative: Deny permission to the Jay A. Crandell to improve rangeland production on 245.7 acres of crested wheatgrass. Action Alternative: Grant permission to Jay A. Crandell to improve rangeland production on 245.7 acres of crested wheatgrass.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS
4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE: Are fragile, compactible or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special	No Action Alternative: The soils on the State land will remain the same and continue to produce crested wheatgrass vegetation. The area will continue to produce vegetation for grazing.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
reclamation considerations?	Action Alternative: This type of project will have minimal impact on the soils that are currently producing crested wheatgrass vegetation. The soils will have minimal impacts from inter-seeding native grass and forb species. The soil type that will be renovated is: Turner Sandy loam, 2 to 8% slopes. The Turner Sandy is suitable for dryland agriculture. This soil type has moderate to high hazards to wind and water erosion, Turner-Beaverton complex, 2 to 8 percent slopes. The Turner-Beaverton complex is suitable for dryland agriculture. This soil type has moderate to high hazards to wind and water erosion. The lessee will mitigate impacts for the hazards of wind and water erosion. Through management practices such as seeding the native grass and forbs into the crested wheatgrass plant stubble. Mitigation: There are no areas of tract that will be flagged by Departmental personnel and left in current vegetative cover. The planting of native grass and forbs into existing surface plant stubble will mitigate the erosion hazards of wind and water.
5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality?	No Action Alternative: Under this alternative annual precipitation will be utilized by the tame grass plant community. There will be no impacts to water quality, quantity and distribution. Action Alternative: The project will allow the surface lessee to improve natural resource production through rangeland renovation. The land renovation of seeding native grass and forbs will not use water resources, other than the water associated with the topsoil from annual precipitation.
6. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?	No Action Alternative: No impacts will occur to air quality under this alternative. Action Alternative: The land renovation of the crested wheatgrass acreage to a native rangeland resource will have no impacts to the air quality of the State land.
7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?	No Action Alternative: Under this alternative the current tame grass plant community will remain intact. Action Alternative: The renovation of the crested wheatgrass plant community will permanently destroy the current plant community on the project area. This type of plant community contains no known rare plant species. This plant community is currently crested wheatgrass, a very common tame grass introduced plant species.
8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND	No Action Alternative: The habitat types associated with a crested wheatgrass plant

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?	community will remain intact. Action Alternative: This type of activity will disturb the habitat types on the State land. The area of impact is crested wheatgrass, a tame grass plant community. This type of tame grass plant community has limited habitat resources. Seeding the project area to native grass and forbs will improve the wildlife habitat on the 247.5 acres There will be minimal impacts to the wildlife and upland bird resources associated with other portions of the State land. There will be some areas of tract that will continue to produce a native grass and forb plant community. The remaining native grass and forb plant community will provide habitat resources for song birds, upland game birds, waterfowl, and whitetail deer.
9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Sensitive Species or Species of special concern?	No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no change to the current environmental resources consisting of crested wheatgrass environment. Action Alternative: The project area contains no known unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources. The project area consists of flat to gently rolling terrain, with a crested wheatgrass plant community. There are other areas under this lease that contain native plant species. This native plant species community will see no impacts from the rangeland renovation process. All drainages will be left intact for water runoff erosion control.
10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	No Action Alternative: The project area has no known historical or archaeological sites and existing status would remain. Action Alternative: There are no known historical or archaeological sites on the project area that will be impacted. The project area was inspected by Randy Dirkson, Land Use Specialist from the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Glasgow Unit Office for archaeological, historical and paleontological resources. There were no historical or archaeological sites identified during the on-site inspection.
11. AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light?	No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts that would occur to the aesthetic values associated with the State land under this alternative. Action Alternative: The project site is located in a rural area and is not visible to the general public. The project will have no impacts to the aesthetic values associated with the State land involved with this project or other surrounding lands. The aesthetic values of this area for the most part are dryland agriculture producing small grain and pulse crops. There are scattered tame grass/native rangelands in the vicinity of the project site.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
	There are also scattered areas of conservation reserve program acreage scattered near project site.
12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?	No Action Alternative: There will be no demands on environmental resources of land, water, air or energy occurring under this alternative. Action Alternative: The project will place no demands on environmental resources of land, water, air or energy. The nearby activities occurring on surrounding lands are the tillage of dryland agriculture acreage for the production of small grain and pulse crops. There are also areas where livestock grazing occurs.
13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?	No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no changes to existing plans, studies or projects that the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation may have occurring on the State land. Action Alternative: The rangeland renovation of the crested wheatgrass vegetation will not impact other projects or plans that the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation may have occurring on this tract of State land. The rangeland renovation project will not impact surrounding deeded lands.

III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION	
RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?	No Action Alternative: No human health or safety risks would occur under this alterative. Action Alternative: The rangeland renovation of crested wheatgrass vegetation to improve the natural resource has minimal human health or safety risks.
15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no changes to current agriculture activities. Action Alternative: The project will enhance the surface lessee’s ability to produce native vegetation on his State land lease. The production of native vegetation on State land will also enhance the revenue generated for the School Trust.
16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.	No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to quantity and distribution of employment. Action Alternative: The project will not impact the quantity and distribution of employment. The land renovation will be accomplished by the surface lessee or his designated hired labor force.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?	No Action Alternative: No local and state tax base and tax revenues would be impacted under this alternative. Action Alternative: The project will have no impacts on the local or state tax base.
18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed?	No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no demands for government services. Action Alternative: The project will place no demands for government services.
19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	No Action Alternative: No impacts would occur to the locally adopted environmental plans or goals under this alternative. Action Alternative; The project will not impact locally adopted environmental plans and goals. The United States Department of Agriculture agencies (Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources and Conservation Service) will review this rangeland renovation request by Jay A. Crandell. The writer of this document envisions that they will approve of the rangeland renovation request with their specific management plan of operation.
20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?	No Action Alternative: No impacts would occur to access and quality or recreation associated with the State land under this alternative. Action Alternative: The project area has minimal recreational value in its current state, some upland bird hunting and hunting whitetail deer. The rangeland renovation project will have minimal impacts to the recreational values associated with this tract of state land. There will be no impacts to recreational values on other bordering lands. The bordering lands contain habitat for upland birds and whitetail deer. The bordering lands will provide hunting recreational values for upland birds and whitetail deer.
21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?	No Action Alternative; No impacts will occur to density and distribution of population and housing under this alternative. Action Alternative: The project will not impact the density and distribution of the population and housing on this rural area.
22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	No Action Alternative; No impacts will occur to native or traditional lifestyles or communities under this alternative. Action Alternative: The project will not impact the social structures of the local communities.
23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	No Action Alternative: No impacts will occur to the cultural uniqueness and diversity under this alternative. Action Alternative: The project will not impact the cultural uniqueness and diversity of the State land. The project will not impact

	cultural uniqueness and diversity of the surrounding deeded lands.
24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:	No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no social or economic impacts that would occur Action Alternative: The cumulative affects of this project provides economic benefit to Jay A. Crandell and the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, State land School Trust Fund. The rangeland renovation on the State land will increase Jay A. Crandell's annual revenue from his State land lease holdings. The Department of Natural Resources will see additional revenue generated from this tract of State land for the School Trust. The rangeland renovation will remove a tame grass environment that has no benefit to the lessee or the State land natural resource. The rangeland renovation will improve the surrounding native rangeland environment through the seeding of native grass and forbs on this tract.

EA Checklist Prepared By: \S\
Date: 3/29/16
Randy Dirkson Land Use Specialist

IV. FINDING	
25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:	Action alternative
26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:	No significant impacts anticipated. The renovation will result in increased production of forage if successful.
27. Need for Further Environmental Analysis: [ ] EIS [ ] More Detailed EA [X] No Further Analysis	

EA Checklist Approved By: Matthew Poole Glasgow Unit Manager
Name Title

s/Matthew Poole\s Date: March 29, 2016
Signature