CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Van Deren Fence Improvement Request
Proposed Implementation Date:	Fall 2017
Proponent:	Robert Van Deren
Location:	Township 6 South, Range 8 West, Section 3
County:	Beaverhead County

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The proponent wants to install approximately 1,547 feet of new 12.5-gauge high-tensile single strand electric fence between uplands grazing and river bottom. Posts for the fence would be full treated wood and composite line posts, electric fence wire to be 30-32 inches high. The purpose of the action would be to control grazing in the bottom land and protect riparian zone from over grazing.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

A scoping letter was sent out in November to:
Vanna Boccadori, Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks Biologist
Patrick Rennie, DNRC Archaeologist.

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

No other governmental agencies or permits are needed for this proposal.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A: Action Alternative, allow construction of 1,547 feet of single strand smooth wire electric fence as proposed by Robert Van Deren and outlined in 1. Type & Purpose of Action.

Alternative B: No Action Alternative, do not allow proponent to install electric fence.

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.

The NRCS soil survey of SW1/4, SW1/4, section 3, T6S, R8W describes the soils as Dillon-Ashbough-Beavrock silt loams, 0 to 4 percent slopes, low erosion potential from water or wind, and rarely flooded.

Description of Dillon:

Landform: Flood plains, stream terraces

Typical profile: A – 0 to 4 inches: silt loam
Bw – 4 to 11 inches: silt loam
BC – 11 to 31 inches: loam
2C1 – 31 to 36 inches: loamy sand
2C2 – 36 to 60 inches: very gravelly sand

Natural drainage class: Somewhat poorly drained

Land capability classification: 4e

Description of Ashbough:

Landform: Flood plains, stream terraces

Typical profile: A – 0 to 4 inches: silt loam
Bw – 4 to 12 inches: silt loam
C1 – 12 to 22 inches: stratified loam to very fine sandy loam to sandy loam
C2 – 22 to 43 inches: stratified loam to very fine sandy loam to sandy loam
Cg1 – 43 to 51 inches: stratified sandy loam to silt loam
Cg2 – 51 to 61 inches: stratified sandy loam to silt loam
2C – 61 to 84 inches: extremely gravelly sand

Natural drainage class: Moderately well drained

Land capability classification: 4e

Description of Beavrock:

Landform: Flood plains

Typical profile: Oi – 0 to 3 inches: slightly decomposed plant material
A – 3 to 8 inches: silt loam
C – 8 to 23 inches: stratified clay loam to silty clay loam to sandy loam
Cg1 – 23 to 28 inches: silty clay loam'
2Cg2 – 28 to 60 inches: extremely gravelly sand

Natural drainage class: Poorly drained

Land capability classification: 5w

Alternative A: Action Alternative, the 1,547-foot fence will be installed with minimal heavy equipment use. Little soil disturbance will occur because of installing the electric fence, there may be some miner disturbance near the site of the activity including some compaction or minor rutting from the activity. Mitigation would include smoothing and grading out any ruts that do occur. This will also allow for better grazing control of cattle in the bottom land and riparian zone.

Alternative B: No Action Alternative, under this alternative the fence would not be installed on the site and no soil disturbance or minor compaction would occur.

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 area around the proposed fence is in the bottom land/riparian zone with Albers Slough flowing at about 80 yards from the proposed fence at the closest point. According to NRCS the average depth to water table is about 24" to 42" inches for Dillon, 42" to 60" inches for Ashbough, and 12" to 36" for Beavrock.
Alternative A: Action Alternative, No short or long term or cumulative effects are anticipated to water quality, quantity, or distribution if the action alternative is chosen.

Alternative B: No Action Alternative, Under this alternative no action would be taken and no short, or long term or cumulative effects would occur to water quality, quantity, or distribution.

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: Action Alternative, No long term or cumulative effects to air quality would occur if the action alternative is chosen.

Alternative B: No Action Alternative, Under this alternative there would not be any impacts to air quality standards.

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.

The vegetative community on site is common to the area and the state and is composed of mostly native species. Current vegetation on the site includes plains muhly, sand dropseed, western wheatgrass, kentucky bluegrass, baltic rush, basin wildrye, blue grama, needle and thread grass, sandberg bluegrass, forbs, greasewood, foxtail barley, sticky – leaf rabbitbrush, field chickweed, sedge, tufted hairgrass, pussytoes, slender wheatgrass, japanese brome, sweet clover and pigweed.

Alternative A: Action Alternative, no major cumulative impacts to the vegetation is expected as a result of this project. The fence will influence the surrounding vegetation because it will allow for more control of where and when the cattle are grazing in the riparian area.

Alternative B: No Action Alternative, under this alternative there would not be any impacts to vegetation cover, quantity and quality.

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: Action Alternative, the area of this proposal is not considered critical wildlife habitat. However, this tract has the potential to provide habitat for a variety of animal species (deer, black bear, elk, songbirds, and ground squirrels), predators (coyote, bobcat, fox & badger), other non-game mammals, and raptors. The proposal does not include any major land use change which would yield changes to the wildlife habitat. The proposed action could slightly impact wildlife forage, cover, or traveling corridors do to more control of cattle grazing. This action will also not have any major change to the juxtaposition of wildlife forage, water, or hiding and thermal cover so no long term or cumulative impacts are anticipated if the action alternative is chosen.

Alternative B: No Action Alternative, If the no action alternative is chosen there would no changes in use from current conditions so there would be no impacts to terrestrial, avian, and aquatic life or habitats. No impacts would occur under this 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.

No specific on-site observations of Threatened or Endangered species have been recorded at this site and no important habitat for endangered species has been identified on this state land. A search of Natural Heritage data through NRIS was conducted and found two species of concern (the spotted bat and westslope cutthroat trout) that have a confirmed occupancy within one to two miles from the proposed fence location. The area is also within five miles to known occupancy of bald eagles, the bald eagles are a sensitive species.

Alternative A: Action Alternative, the proposed fence and its location should not have any short term, long term or cumulative effects on the species of concern/sensitive species or their habitat.

Alternative B: No Action Alternative, under this alternative all conditions would remain in their current condition and there would not be any short term, long term or cumulative effects on the species of concern/sensitive species or their habitat.

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 revealed that no cultural or paleontological resources have been identified in the APE. Because the low-impact nature of the proposed project, 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.

Neither of the proposed alternatives, Action or No- Action will affect the historical value of the land.

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: Action Alternative, the fence project is located near Albers Slough about 10 miles north of Dillon. Most of the surrounding land is private and is mainly used for agriculture, with some hunting and fishing activities also taking place. The proposed fence is going to be single strand 12.5 gage wire, that will be 30-32 inches off the ground with treated wood and composite line posts. The Aesthetics in the area should not be impacted by the proposed project.

Alternative B: No Action Alternative, there would not be any impacts to the aesthetics of the area under this alternative.

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: Action Alternative, this alternative would not cause any additional demands on Environmental Resources of land, water air, or energy.

Alternative B: No Action Alternative, this alternative would not cause any additional demands on Environmental Resources of land, water air, or energy.

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.

Alternative A: Action Alternative, The Montana DNRC, Dillon Unit is unaware of any other environmental documents or studies that are occurring on this tract. This alternative would not cause any cumulative impacts to any other analysis that is occurring.

Alternative B: No Action Alternative, choosing this alternative would have no effects on other environmental documents pertinent to the area.

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.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:
Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

Alternative A: Action Alternative, the health and safety risks associated with the project are related to recreational use and the installation of an electric fence. The issue of liability and potential for injury to sportsman from electric fence has been raised in comments received for past project proposals. However, electric fence is commonly used throughout the state in a variety of locations and there is no record of liability or significant injury resulting from electric fence use in the state. This alternative poses little risk to human health and safety.

Alternative B: No Action Alternative, choosing this alterative would have no effects on human health and safety.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:
Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

Alternative A: Action Alternative, the proposed fence will affect how cattle graze the tract by allowing control of grazing in the river bottom and uplands. No increase or decrease in agricultural production would occur as a result of this project.

Alternative B: No Action Alternative, this alternative would have no impact on the industrial, commercial and agriculture activities and production.

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.

Neither of the proposed alternatives will change the quantity and distribution of employment.

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.

Neither of the proposed alternatives will impact the local and state tax base or revenues.

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.

Neither of the proposed alternatives will impact the demand for government services.

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.

Neither of the proposed alternatives will impact locally adopted environmental plans and goals.

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.

Neither of the proposed alternatives will change the access to and quality of recreational and wilderness activities.

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.

Neither of the proposed alternatives will alter the density and distribution of population and housing in the town of Dillon or Beaverhead County.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:
Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Neither of the proposed alternatives will alter social structures and mores in the town of Dillon or Beaverhead County.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:
How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

Neither of the proposed alternatives will affect any cultural uniqueness and diversity.

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: Action Alternative, this alternative would not generate any revenue to the trust but it would improve utilization of forage by construction of the new fence.

Alternative B: No Action Alternative, this alternative would not generate any revenue to the trust.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:**	Jackson Spooner	**Date:**	11/28/2017
	Title:	Senior Engine Boss		

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative A: Action Alternative, Allow construction of approximately 1547 feet of 12.5 gauge high-tensile single strand electric fence between uplands and river bottom. Posts would be full treated wood and composite line posts, electric fence wire to be 30-32 inches high.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

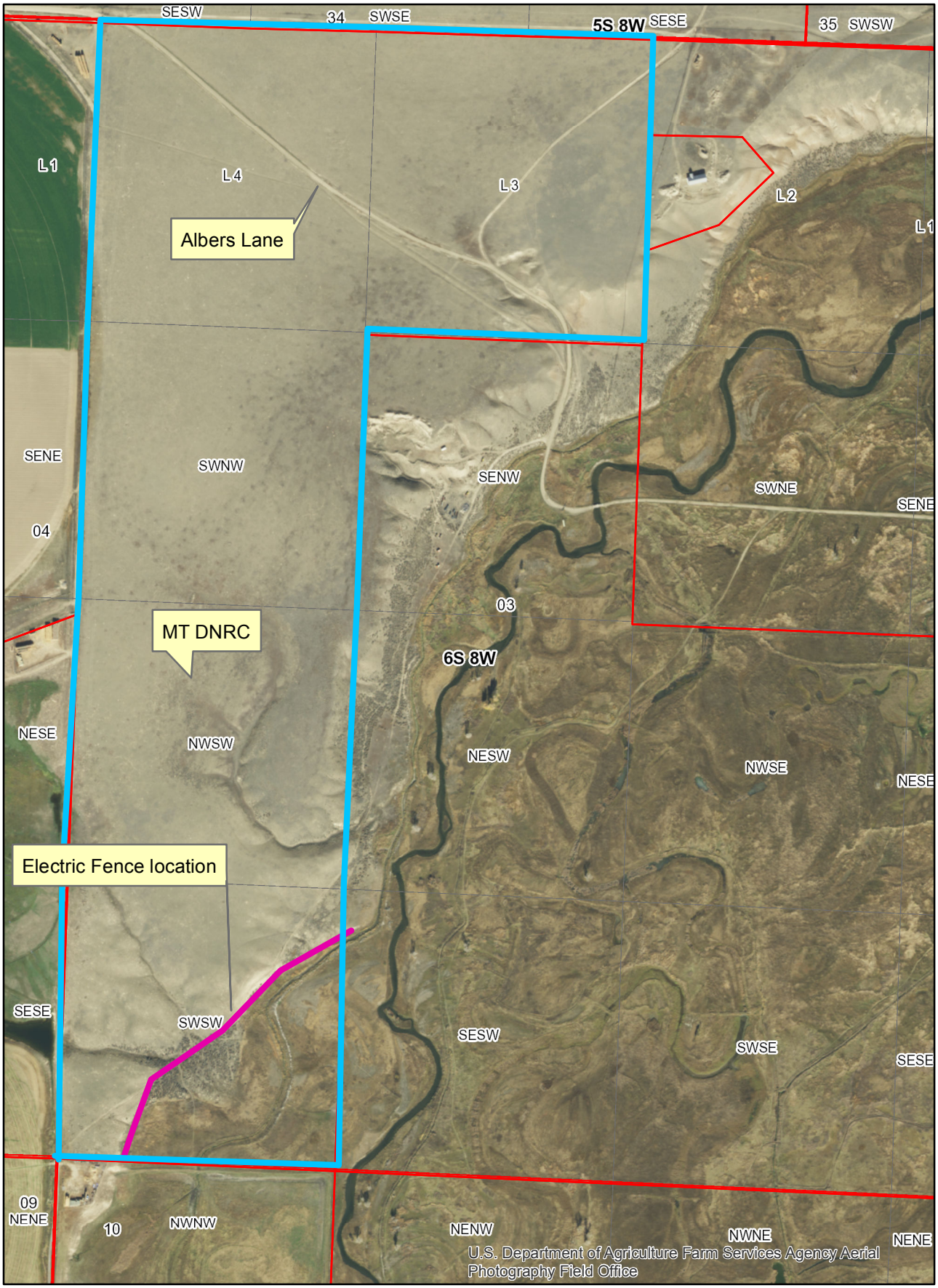
No long term or cumulative impacts are anticipated from the construction of the fence on state trust land.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

	EIS		More Detailed EA	X	No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:**	Timothy Egan
	Title:	Dillon Unit Manager
Signature: /S/ Timothy Egan		**Date**: December 5, 2017

VanDeren Electric Fence Improvement Map
Township 8 South, Range 8 West, Section 3



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