

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

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| Project Name: | Cedar Creek Grazing Association Stock Water Pipeline |
| Proposed Implementation Date: | 2017 |
| Proponent: | Cedar Creek Grazing Association/Jim Steinbeisser |
| Location: | T14N-R55E-Sec36 |
| County: | Dawson County |

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The Cedar Creek Grazing Association heretofore referred to as proponent, has requested of the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation permission to construct a stock water pipeline on and across state owned tract T14N-R55E-Sec 36. The line will be constructed using the static plow method.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:
Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

DNRC staff has evaluated this site, and due to the location and nature of the project, no public comment was sought. The Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program was consulted as this tract is within designated General Habitat.

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

None

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A- Grant permission for construction of the pipeline.

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- Disturbance of the soil will occur through the trenching and burying of this line. 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- Pollutant and particulate levels may increase during the construction phase. After completion of the project, those should return to normal preconstruction levels. Increase in pollutants during the construction process should be almost negligible.

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- Where the construction takes place, there may be disturbance to the vegetative cover. Current plant species which occupy the construction area include Western Wheatgrass (*Agropyron Smithii*), Green Needlegrass (*Stipa Viridula*), Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), Prairie Sandreed (*Calamovilfa longifolia*), Needle and Thread (*Stipa comata*), Prairie Junegrass (*Koleria pyramidata*), Blue Grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), Fringed Sagewort (*Artemisia frigida*), Broom Snakeweed (*Gutierrezia sarothrae*). The disturbance of these plant species should be minimal and the are should revegetate naturally within two years.

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 minimal effect on any animal habitats within the boundaries of the project construction area. Wildlife may be temporarily disturbed during the construction of the project. After completion of the project, wildlife usage should return to pre-construction levels. Wildlife should benefit from the increased water source.

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: Wolverine, Greater Short-horned Lizard, and Great Plains Toad. Although these species have been identified in the general area, any impact from this project should be minimal and temporary. This project is located within

Greater Sage Grouse General Habitat. The proponent has submitted the project to the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program, and has received a consultation letter from the program for Project No. 2490. The project is outside of the NSO area. 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 field inspection by DNRC staff and a review of the TLMS database noted no historical or archeological sites in the proposed project area. 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. 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

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

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| <p style="text-align: center;">IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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- No impacts expected.

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- It should have a positive effect on Agricultural Activities and Production in the area. Grazing distribution and utilization should improve.

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- No Impact expected

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 permission for this project will result in the purchase of a ten-year Land Use License which will return two hundred dollars to the trust.

Alternative B- No Impact

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| EA Checklist Prepared By: | Name: Aaron Kneeland | Date: 10-24-2017 |
| | Title: Land Use Specialist | |

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative A

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The granting of the requested action on state owned trust lands for the Cedar Creek Grazing Association stock water pipeline should not have resulted in nor caused significant environmental impacts. The predicted impacts will be adequately mitigated through the construction and reclamation plans. The proposed action satisfies the fiduciary mandate of the trust and helps ensure the long-term productivity of the land. 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

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| EA Checklist Approved By: | Name: Scott Aye |
| | Title: ELO Land Program Manager |
| Signature: /s/ Scott Aye | |
| Date: 10-24-2017 | |