

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Lease Improvement Request for a stock water pipeline, water tank, and repair of the existing reservoir dam.
Proposed Implementation Date:	Winter 2018, Spring 2019
Proponents:	Witt Ranch Co., 2555 Russell Road, Carter, MT 59420
Location:	All, Section 36, T28N, R3E
County:	Liberty
Trust:	Common Schools

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Witt Ranch Co., lessee of state lease #4270, has requested to place a livestock water line and water tank on state land located in the NE4NW4, Section 36, T28N, R3E. This project will consist of connecting to an existing water line on deeded land and installing approximately 375.00' of 1.25" HDPE pipe trenched to a depth of 6.00'. Then the lessee will place a stock water tank on the state land. This project will provide a reliable source of water for livestock on the lease. Also, the lessee has proposed to repair the dam on the existing reservoir located in the NE4SE4, Section 36, T28N, R3E. It appears that a badger has dug a hole in the dam and the water has eroded through the tunnel. Minor dirt work will occur with this project. A detailed map showing the location for these projects are included within this assessment.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

Witt Ranch Co.-Proponent, Surface Lessee, Leases #4270
DNRC-Surface Owner

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

There are no other agencies with jurisdiction on this project.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action) – Deny the proponent permission for the stock water pipeline, water tank, and repair of the existing reservoir dam.

Alternative B (the Proposed action) – Grant the proponent permission for the stock water pipeline, water tank, and repair of the existing reservoir dam.

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 soil types are primarily made up of silty sites. These soil types are made up of gently rolling topography. Equipment will cause localized areas of soil compaction and will disturb the soil were the water pipeline, water tank, and repair of the existing reservoir dam is being conducted. Reclamation requirements are to compact and level the trench scar created in the installation of the water line and to level any other disturbed areas. Then seed the impacted areas with the existing grass types and seeding rates that are listed in item 7 of this assessment. Cumulative impacts on soil resources are not expected and any difficulties will be further mitigated using a trencher to place the water line which will cause limited soil disturbance. In addition, the disturbed areas will be reclaimed and reseeded by the proponent.

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.

There are no documented and/or recorded water rights that will be impacted by the proposed project. The proposed project will improve overall water reliability and quantity for the proponent on the state pasture. Cumulative effects to water resources are not expected from the project. Other water quality and/or quantity issues will not be impacted by the proposed action.

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.

The proposed action will not impact the air quality.

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.

Vegetation will be minimally impacted as approximately 375.00' of 1.25" HDPE pipe will be placed 6' deep. The pipe will be installed by the utilization of a trencher. Noxious and annual weeds within the proposed construction areas are a concern, but this concern will be mitigated as the proponents are responsible for controlling weeds within the construction areas. Cumulative impacts on the vegetative resources are not expected as the proposed construction areas will be reclaimed and reseeded. The reseeded mixture will consist of a grass seed mixture of 35% Western Wheatgrass, 35% Slender Wheatgrass, 15% Blue bunch Wheatgrass, 10% Green Needle grass, and 5% Lewis Blue Flax. If drilled the rate will be 8 lbs./acre and if broadcast the rate will be doubled.

A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted and there were no plant species of concern noted or potential species of concern noted on the NRIS survey.

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.

The area is not considered critical wildlife habitat. However, this tract provides habitat for a variety of big game species (mule deer, whitetail deer, pronghorn antelope), predators (coyote, fox, badger), upland game birds (sharp tail grouse, Hungarian partridge), other non-game mammals, raptors and various songbirds. The proposal does not include any land use change which would yield changes to the wildlife habitat. The proposed action will not impact wildlife forage, cover, or traveling corridors. Nor will this action change the juxtaposition of wildlife forage, water, or hiding and thermal cover. Wildlife usage is expected to return to "normal" (pre-action usage) following the completion of the project. The proposed project will also provide a reliable water source for wildlife.

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.

There are no threatened or endangered species, sensitive habitat types, or other species of special concern associated with the proposed project area. At this time, no known unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources have been identified within the proposed project area.

A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted for T28N, R3E. There were two animal species of concern and zero potential species of concern noted on the NRIS survey: Mammals-Black-tailed Prairie Dog. Birds-Ferruginous Hawk. This tract of agricultural and native grazing land does not contain many, if any of these species. If any are present, they will be dispersed into the surrounding permanent cover and return to the project area once it is completed.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

A cultural resource inventory was completed by the Conrad Unit Office on November 30, 2018. No cultural resources were found within the project area, so it is assumed that cultural resources will not be impacted by this proposed project.

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.

The livestock water line will be buried, the water tank will look like the existing tank on deeded land, and the reservoir is existing, so there will be no aesthetic impacts.

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.

The demand on environmental resources such as land, water, air, or energy will not be affected by the proposed action. The proposed action will not consume resources that are limited in the area. There are no other projects in the area that will affect the proposed project.

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.

There are no other projects or plans being considered on the tract listed on this EA.

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.

The proposed project will not change human safety in the area.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

The proposed livestock water development will improve livestock distribution and generally improve the proponent's ranching opportunities.

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.

The proposed action will not significantly affect long-term employment in the surrounding communities.

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.

The proposed action will not affect tax revenue.

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

This project is of a small scale and being funded by the proponent. There will be no excessive stress placed of the existing infrastructure of the area.

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.

The proposed action follows State and County laws. No other management plans are in effect for the area.

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.

This tract of state land is rural and generally has low recreational value. The tract is legally accessible, and the proposed action is not expected to impact general recreational and wilderness activities on this state tract.

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

The proposal does not include any changes to housing or developments.

No direct or cumulative effects to population or housing are anticipated.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

There are no native, unique or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity that would be impacted by the proposal.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

The proposed action will not impact the cultural uniqueness or diversity of the area.

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.

Cumulative impacts are not likely as the area is only used for agriculture and livestock grazing. The buried stock water pipeline, new water tank, and repair of the existing reservoir dam will improve the long-term viability of grazing on the tract. The addition of the water tank will provide a reliable source of water to the pasture which will positively impact livestock distribution. This project is authorized under the lease improvement request form.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Tony Nickol	Date: November 30, 2018
	Title: Land Use Specialist, Conrad Unit, Central Land Office	

V. FINDINGS

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative B (the Proposed action) – Grant the proponent permission for the stock water pipeline, water tank, and repair of the existing reservoir dam.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:


This livestock water development will improve livestock distribution and generally allow for better management of the state lease. No negative environmental impacts are expected.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Erik Eneboe
	Title: Conrad Unit Manger, CLO, DNRC
Signature: 	Date: December 4, 2018

Liberty County, Montana



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