

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Installation of a buried pipeline to allow for natural gas transmission from an existing gas pipeline to connect to the Dakota State tank battery to allow for heating of the tanks in the winter months.
Proposed Implementation Date:	Winter/Spring 2017/2018
Proponent:	Somont Oil Company, Inc., 419 Ferdig Road, Oilmont, MT 59466
Location:	E2SE4, Section 7, T34N, R1W
County:	Toole County
Trust:	Common Schools

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Somont Oil Company, Inc. has requested to install a buried pipeline to allow for natural gas transmission from an existing gas pipeline to connect to the Dakota State tank battery to allow for heating of the tanks in the winter months. The pipeline is covered under their oil and gas lease #OG-6821-62. The proposed construction area is in either agricultural land or unsuitable land that has been disturbed for the heavy oil and gas production on the tract.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

Somont Oil Company, Inc.-Proponent

Lynn Stewart-Surface Lessee, Lease #8583

DNRC-Surface and Mineral Owner

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

DNRC is not aware of any other agencies with jurisdiction or other permits needed to complete this project.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action) – Deny Somont Oil Company, Inc. permission to install the buried gas pipeline.

Alternative B (the Proposed action) – Grant Somont Oil Company, Inc. permission to install the buried gas pipeline.

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.

Soils at the proposed project site are silty to clayey in texture. The topography is flat to gently rolling and the pipeline will be installed from a buried pipeline to allow for natural gas transmission from an existing gas pipeline to connect to the Dakota State tank battery to allow for heating of the tanks in the winter months. These soils and slopes are generally suitable for the installation of the buried pipeline. Equipment will cause localized areas of soil compaction and will disturb the soil where the buried pipeline is being placed. Reclamation requirements are to compact and level the trenching scar created in the installation of the buried pipeline. Then, seed the impacted area 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 as the use of a trencher will minimize the surface disturbance caused by the construction project. Any areas that are farmed will not require reclamation.

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 water rights associated with this tract. 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 830.00' of a buried gas pipeline will be installed by the utilization of a trencher. The vegetation consists of small grains and tame/native species. Noxious and annual weeds within the proposed construction areas are a concern, but this concern will be mitigated as the applicants 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 reseeding mixture will consist of a grass seed mixture of 35% Western Wheatgrass, 35% Slender Wheatgrass, 15% Bluebunch Wheatgrass, 10% Green Needle grass, and 5% Lewis blue flax. If drilled the rate will be 8 #/acre, if broadcast the rate will be 16 #/acre.

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 construction operations. The proposed action will not have long-term negative effects on existing wildlife species and/or wildlife habitat.

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 T34N, R1W. There was one species of concern and zero potential species of concern noted on the NRIS survey: Birds—Chestnut-collared Longspur. This tract of agricultural and unsuitable 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.

During the field inspection, there were no historic, archaeological, or paleontological sites found within the proposed buried gas pipeline installation area. The proposed construction area is in agricultural and unsuitable land that has been partially disturbed for the heavy oil and gas production on the tract.

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.

Installation of the buried gas pipeline will not affect the aesthetics of the land in any way as it will not be visible. It will lead to no erosion of the soil resources on the tract as the line is located below the soil surface.

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 results of this project will not affect the industrial, commercial, or agricultural activities or production in the area.

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.

This project will not create any new jobs, as the project will be completed in house by the proponent.

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 add to the 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 Somont Oil Company Inc. 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 is in compliance with 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 proposed project area is in the Kevin-Sunburst oil field and generally has a low recreational value. The tract is not 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.

The proponent has interest in the State of Montana Oil and Gas Lease #OG-6821-62 that is associated with this state tract. This lease entitles them to reasonable development of oil and gas wells on this tract after DNRC approval. The Common School trust will be compensated for all oil removed from producing wells. The surface lessee will receive compensation for any actual damages caused by the installation of the buried gas pipeline.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Tony Nickol	Date: December 11, 2017
	Title: Land Use Specialist, Conrad Unit, Central Land Office	

V. FINDINGS

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Grant Somont Oil Company, Inc. permission to install the buried gas pipeline.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:


Short-term and small-scale impacts to the cropland and native rangeland are expected along the pipeline route. All disturbed areas will be reclaimed according to the specifications outlined within this EA. Significant impacts are not anticipated as a result of the selected alternative.

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: January 4, 2018

Toole County, Montana

