

## CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

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| <b>Project Name:</b>                 | MDT RoW S-448 Culvert – S of Gildford  |
| <b>Proposed Implementation Date:</b> | October 2018   |
| <b>Proponent:</b>                    | Montana Department of Transportation, 2701 Propect PO Box 201001, Helena MT 5962 |
| <b>Location:</b>                     | Section 15, Township 32N, Rng 11E  |
| <b>County:</b>                       | Hill   |

### I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Montana Department of Transportation is applying for a roght-of-way easement required for highway construction and maintenance including occupancy by public utilities through: S15, Twn 32N, Rng 11E. The right-of-way is needed for highway drainage purposes.

### II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

Montana Department of Transportation, 2701 Prospect, Helena MT – Robert Heiser  
Montana DNRC, Havre Field Office, Ryan Call - Land Use specialist  
Wickens Construction was previously granted a permit to remove 2600 cubic yards of borrow material for the culvert replacement

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

MDT has already been granted a .03acre LUL for the replacement of the Culvert  
Wickens Construction, Inc. has a Limited Opencut Operation permit from the Opencut Mining Section of DEQ.

**3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:**

Alternative A: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: The alternative to allow for the use of the state land located outside of the right of way for repair and maintenance of the Culvert

### 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: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: Site geology consists of alluvial deposits located in the England Coulee drainage bottom, Claggett Shale outcrops in the immediate mid benches rising up from the drainage bottom, and the Judith River sandstone, shale, mudstone, and siltstones surrounding of the site.

The soil at the site is listed as a Hillon-Joplin Loam with 8-25% slopes. The soil is moderately fragile meaning that they have a moderate potential to resist degradation and be moderately resilient. The current state of the Culvert has allowed for a washout of soils and erosion to occur, the proposed action will attempt to minimize future erosion and allow for water to flow instead of pooling. Cumulative impacts to soil would likely be negligible.

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**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: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: The current state of the culvert has allowed for standing water and erosion. Removal of borrow material was located up-slope from England Coulee. Erosion control BMAs would be in place where appropriate, limiting the potential for sediment to be lost downslope and into England Coulee. Ground-disturbing work would be conducted during what is typically a low-precipitation time of year. A reservoir approximately 500 feet upstream and on the opposite side of highway 448 likely contains normal flow events, resulting in lower flows through the reach of England Coulee adjacent to the project area than in those upstream. Cumulative effects on water resources are likely negligible.

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**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: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B- No Impacts Expected

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**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: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: There is no evidence of rare plants or cover types in the scope of the project. The vegetation at this site is normal for what is to be expected in a silty site in north-central Montana, along with dominant stands of crested wheatgrass (*Agropyron cristatum*). There are no rare plants or cover types present. The vegetation would be removed as soil is stripped and the site would be replanted with plant species compatible with the proposed reclaimed use. No cumulative effects are anticipated.

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**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: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: There may be minimal disruption to the wildlife that inhabit the area. The scale and length of the project should not be enough to permanently disrupt the wildlife species. Species in the area include whitetail and mule deer, antelope, raptors and other birds, various rodents, rabbits, reptiles and others.

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**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: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Database shows that no species of concern were noted within or near the general project area.

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**10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:**

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

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Alternative A: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: A Class III cultural and paleontological resources inventory was conducted of much of the area of potential effect on state land in 2014. Despite a detailed examination, no cultural or fossil resources were identified in the easement corridor. No additional archaeological or paleontological investigative work is recommended. The proposed project will have *No Effect* to *Antiquities* as defined under the Montana State Antiquities Act. A formal report of findings is on file with the DNRC and the Montana State Historic Preservation Officer.

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**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: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: Very little impact should be felt aesthetically in the scope of this project. There should be minimal lasting affects on the landscape from this project.

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**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: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: No impacts expected

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**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: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: No impacts expected

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| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION</b></p> |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>RESOURCES</i> potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.</li><li>• Explain <i>POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS</i> following each resource heading.</li><li>• Enter “NONE” if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.</li></ul> |
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**14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:**

*Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.*

Alternative A: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: Typical safety risks for laborers working would be present, but the potential risk should be minimal with proper safety efforts.

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**15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:**

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

Alternative A: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: The proposed project is for access to a culvert on the side of the highway to monitor drainage and would have minimal effects on industrial, commercial, and agricultural activities

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**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: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: This project would have minimal effects on creating, moving, or eliminating jobs.

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**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: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: No impacts expected

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**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: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: No impacts expected

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**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: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: No impacts expected

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**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: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: No impacts expected

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**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: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: No impacts expected

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**22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:**

*Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.*

Alternative A: The “No Action” alternative

Alternative B: No impacts expected

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**23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:**

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

Alternative A: The “No Action” alternative


Alternative B: No impacts expected

**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: The "No Action" alternative

Alternative B: No impacts expected

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| <b>EA Checklist Prepared By:</b>   | <b>Name:</b> Ryan Call<br><b>Title:</b> Havre - Land Use Specialist |
| <b>Signature</b>  | <b>Date</b> February 4, 2019  |

**V. FINDING**

**25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED: Alternative B**

**26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:**

The granting of the requested RoW on these tracts of state-owned trust lands should not result in nor cause significant negative environmental impacts. The proposed action satisfies the trusts fiduciary mandate and ensures 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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| <b>EA Checklist Approved By:</b>  | <b>Name:</b> Clive Rooney<br><b>Title:</b> Area Manager |
| <b>Signature</b> S/Clive Rooney/S | <b>2/4/2019</b>   |