CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Willow Creek Stock Pipeline
Proposed Implementation Date:	2019
Proponent:	Willow Creek Partners LLP
Location:	T7S-R57E-S36
County:	Carter

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The surface lessee Willow Creek Partners LLP has requested to place a stock-water pipeline on the above-mentioned tract of State Trust Land. This proposed pipeline should provide a more reliable water source for livestock in this area and encourage better grazing distribution, aiding in long-term productivity of the land.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

Lessee will file a DS-405 improvement form once the expenditures are determined. Due to the small scope of the project no public comment was sought.

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

NRCS EQIP Conservation Plan

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A: Allow construction of the water development on state land
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: The presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils was not noted in the area of development. Trenching of the pipeline will have a minimal short-term disturbance to the soil. Disturbance should fully recover in 1 to 2 growing seasons.
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: All water used will be piped in from deeded land. Ground and surface water from this tract should be unaffected.

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 be increased during the construction of the project; these levels should be minimal and return to normal levels after the completion of the project.

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: Some vegetation would be affected through this project. Dominant species in the area are Western Wheatgrass (*Agropyron smithii*), Green Needle Grass (*Stipia viridula*), Blue Grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), Prairie Junegrass (*Koeleria pyramidata),* Kentucky Bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*), Big Sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*) and various forbs and shrubs. Any effects to the vegetative community should be minimal in nature during the construction phase of the project. After completion the vegetative community should return to a pre-development state within two grazing seasons.

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: Construction of this project may disrupt wildlife activity in the area for a few days. Upon completion of the project the wildlife use and habitat should return to normal with the added benefit of a new 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 Program Database shows two sensitive species that have been observed in the general project area: the Northern Leopard Frog (*Lithobates pipiens*) and the Greater Sage Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasiaunus*). While these species may be present, no impact is expected due to this project. This project is located within Greater Sage Grouse General Habitat. The closest identified lek to the project is approximately 0.50 miles away. This project would be outside of the .25 mile NSO and nesting restrictions set forth by EO-10-2014 and EO-12-2015. The proponent has received a consultation from the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program for Project #3471 and will follow the recommendations set forth in that document.

Alternative B: No Impact

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

Alternative A: 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. 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.

Alternative B: No Impact

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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: During construction of the project noise levels may be increased slightly but this should only last for a few days, and return to normal levels. Due to the location of the project, it is not immediately visible from the surrounding countryside.

Alternative B: No Impact

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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: No Significant Impact
Alternative B: No Impact

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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: No Impact

Alternative B: No Impact

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.*

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

Alternative A: There may be risks to human health and safety during the construction of the project. Workers are trained in field specific safety practices, and safety concerns should be minimized with proper safety protocol employed by the workers. Through proper safety protocol any impact should be minimal.
Alternative B: No Impact

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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 development of the water source will add to positive agricultural activities and production in the area.
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 significant impact

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 Significant Impact

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

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: NRCS EQIP Conservation Plan

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 Significant Impact

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 Impact

Alternative B: No Impact

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

Alternative A: No Impact

Alternative B: No Impact

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

Alternative A: No Impact

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: The project will provide a reliable water source for livestock and wildlife in the general pasturing area. This should aid in grazing distribution and benefit the resource.

Alternative B: No Impact

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:**	Seth Urick	**Date:**	07-08-2019
	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 proposed stock water pipeline should not result in nor cause significant environmental impacts. The predicted impacts will be adequately mitigated. The proposed action 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 [X] No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:**	Scott Aye		
	Title:	Lands Program Manager		
Signature:	/s/ Scott Aye		**Date:**	07-08-2019