

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	HT Ranch Stock Water Reservoir
Proposed Implementation Date:	2019
Proponent:	HT Ranch Inc
Location:	T5S-R60E-Sec 16
County:	Carter County

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

HT Ranch, Inc, heretofore referred to as proponent, has requested of the DNRC Eastern Land Office permission to construct a reservoir on state owned tract T5S-R60E-Sec 16. This proposed reservoir would 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.

The proponent has requested that the DNRC allow construction of a stock water reservoir on this state owned section. DNRC staff has evaluated this site, and due to the small scale and nature of this request, no public comment was sought.

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

DNRC Water Resources Division.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A- Grant request for the project.

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- There is expected soil disturbance to the site area during construction. The soil structures are not fragile or unstable; soils are of a clay type. Construction would be done in such a manner as to minimize any erosion potential. 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- Surface water would be utilized.

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- There may be an increase in pollutant and particulate levels during construction. After construction, the levels should return to normal pre-use levels.

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- There should be disturbance to the vegetative cover at the project location. Current plant species which occupy the use area include: Blue Grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), Prairie Junegrass (*Koeleria pyramidata*), Western Wheatgrass (*Agropyron smithii*), Green Needlegrass (*Stipa Viridula*), Sandberg bluegrass (*Poa secunda*), Fringed Sagewort (*Artemisia frigida*), Cheatgrass brome (*Bromus tectorum*), Greasewood (*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*), Common snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*), and Big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*). 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- There should be a positive impact to wildlife through an increased availability of water.

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 that three species of concern have been observed in the general area: the Black-tailed Prairied Dog (*Cynomys ludovicianus*), Brewer's Sparrow (*Spizella breweri*), and the Greater Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*). While these species may be present, no impact is expected due to this project. This project is located within Greater Sage Grouse Core Habitat, but is an exempt activity as listed in Attachment "F" of EO-10-2014 and EO-12-2015, pertaining to the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program. As the closest identified lek to the project is approximately 1.59 miles away, this project would be outside of the .6 mile NSO and nesting restrictions set forth by EO-10-2014 and EO-12-2015. Construction will occur outside of the timing restriction period, and the surface area will be less than 10 surface acres. The Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program was not consulted.

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 so 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

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

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.</i>• <i>Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.</i>• <i>Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.</i> |
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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 project, but this activity should be done by qualified professionals. Safety concerns should be minimized with proper safety protocol employed by the workers.

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- The project should have a positive effect on Agriculture Activities by allowing for improved distribution of grazing.

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- This proposal will not financially benefit the trust directly, but will add value to the tract through increased grazing distribution as well as providing an additional water source for wildlife

Alternative B- No Impact

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Seth Urick	Date: 09-09-2019
	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 construction of the HT Ranch stock water reservoir 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 No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Scott Aye
	Title: ELO Land Program Manager
Signature: 	Date: 09-09-2019