

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Jack Rea Buried Stock Water Pipelines and Stock Tanks Request
Proposed Implementation Date:	Spring or Summer, 2020
Proponent:	DNRC Grazing Lessee, Jack Rea
Location:	T11N R2W Section 16
County:	Lewis & Clark

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The DNRC Grazing Lessee, Jack Rea has submitted a proposal to place improvements on his Montana State Trust Land grazing lease number 10493 located in Section 16, T11N R2W. The portion of the improvement located on Trust Land would include two pipelines from existing wells to two new stock water tanks. One pipeline is in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ and would be approximately 1000 feet in length and the other is in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ and would be approximately 1200 feet in length with 2 new stock water tanks at the end of each pipeline. The project would provide a dependable water source to a dry area, improve grazing distribution and grass utilization with the existing fence infrastructure, and would keep livestock out wet areas in the section. Please see attached map.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

Jenny Sika, Department of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks Wildlife Biologist
Patrick Rennie, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Archaeologist Montana Natural Heritage Program

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

No other governmental agencies with jurisdiction or additional permit requirements were identified during the scoping for this proposed project. The project as proposed would involve only Montana Trust Land allocated to the Common Schools.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A: No action alternative. The proposed project would not be approved.

Alternative B: Action Alternative: Allow the proponent to install two separate buried pipelines, and the installation of a two stock water tanks at the end of each 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.

The following information was derived from Web Soil Survey for this section. The proposed pipelines and stock water tanks would be constructed on three different soil types. The pipeline in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the section begins on a Silty-Droughty ecological site with Hauz-Sieven-Tolman channery loams which contain channery loam soils over very channery clay loams and extremely channery loams in the soil profile with a parent material consisting of residuum weathered from igneous rock and/or argillite. The pipeline ends with a tank on a Sandy ecological site with Kalsted-Chinook sandy loams which contain sandy loams throughout the soil profile with an alluvium parent material. The pipeline and tank in NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ is entirely located in a Silty-Limy ecological site with Musselshell-Crago complexes which contain loams over gravelly loams and very gravelly sandy loams in the soil profile with and alluvium parent material. These soils types have a slight erosion hazard, moderately suited for mechanical site preparation, low resistance to soil compaction, and high restoration potential.

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.

This section contains multiple unnamed intermittent tributaries, all flow in a westerly direction towards Prickly Pear Creek, a tributary to Hauser Lake of the Missouri River. There are two existing wells which would supply water to the proposed pipelines and tanks. The lessee currently uses stock water tanks at the locations of each well to water livestock. In the past the lessee had hauled water to portable stock water tanks to utilize the pasture fenced separate in the pasture fenced separately located mostly in W $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ and NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$. The project would improve water availability for livestock and wildlife and improve cattle grazing distribution on this upland site. This project would have a positive effect on the intermittent tributaries as livestock would utilize the stock water tanks and stay out of the wet areas.

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.

Air Quality would not be affected by this project.

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.

Montana Natural Heritage Map viewer classifies both locations of pipelines and tanks as Rocky Mountain Lower Montane Foothill and Valley Grassland. DNRC Land Use Specialist Heidi Crum completed a site visit on 1/7/20 and found the following species present: big sagebrush, western yarrow, bluebunch wheatgrass, Idaho fescue, prairie junegrass, needle & thread grass. Cover, quantity, and quality of vegetative communities would not be significantly affected by this project due to the low amount of disturbance and use of low impact equipment. The proposed pipeline would be installed on approximately 2200 feet of native rangeland and would be reseeded with a seed mix approved by DNRC.

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 project would increase the availability of water for both livestock and wildlife. These upland sites are located approximately 0.5 miles from the nearest naturally occurring surface water source; Prickly Pear Creek. The entire section is fenced on the perimeter with several cross fences to create smaller pastures. Prickly Pear Creek does not flow through Section 16, but this section does contain several intermittent unnamed tributaries. Construction practices used in the placement of the pipeline and stock tank would be a one-time short duration occurrence to limit disturbance and will not lead to negative cumulative effects on wildlife. A wildlife escape ramp would be placed in each tank for birds and small mammals.

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.

The Montana Natural Resource Information Service (NRIS) was queried for information regarding sensitive or endangered species located near the project area. There are no documented point observations of any species of concern in Section 16. The Great Blue Heron and Spotted Bat species have been observed in the area and their habitat polygons overlap into Section 16. The Great Blue Heron polygon overlaps in the to the S½S½ of Section 16 and is a confirmed nesting area buffered by 6,500 meters to include foraging areas near a breeding colony. The Spotted Bat polygon covers all of Section 16, is an area of confirmed occupancy with adults and juveniles, and has a buffer of 10,000 meters to include maximum foraging distance of this species.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

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 results revealed that no cultural or paleontological resources have been identified in the APE, but it should be noted that Class III level inventory work has not been conducted there to date.

Because the topographic setting and geology suggest a low to moderate likelihood of the presence of cultural or paleontologic resources, the proposed action is expected to have No Effect to Antiquities. 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.

A field inspection by DNRC Land Use Specialist, Heidi Crum was completed on January 7, 2020. No cultural resources were found near the 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 project is in a rural part of Lewis & Clark County, the pipelines would both cross Danas Point Road, and would alter aesthetics of the area temporarily during construction and minimally when the project is complete.

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.

No demands for additional environmental resources are required for this project. No cumulative effects to environmental resources should result from this 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.

No other studies, plans, or projects were identified during the scoping for this project.

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.

No health or safety risks are posed by the project.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

If approved, this project is designed to improve access to water to aid in improving livestock distribution and forage utilization.

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 project will not create or eliminate permanent jobs in the area.

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.

No significant increase in tax revenues are expected as a result of this project.

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.

No increased demand for government services are expected as a result of this project.

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.

No locally adopted environmental plans will be affected by this project.

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 project will not negatively alter recreational activities in the area. The improved access to upland water sources may increase use of the area by wildlife, enhancing recreational opportunities.

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.

No change in population will result from this project.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

No change in social structures and mores are expected as a result of this project.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

The action affects water availability in a dry area. The increased water availability would improve both livestock distribution and wildlife use of the upland areas.

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 grazing lease and on this tract of State Trust Lands generates approximately \$668 in revenue annually for the Common Schools trust. This project would enable the lessee to improve management of the rangeland by spraying weeds and maintaining fences at higher elevations, which were previously inaccessible by vehicles.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Heidi Crum	Date: 1/13/2020
	Title: Land Use Specialist	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative B: Action Alternative: Allow the proponent to install two separate buried pipelines, and the installation of a two stock water tanks at the end of each pipeline.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Installation of the stock water pipelines and stock water tanks will help disperse livestock over the lease and help better utilize the available forage. No long term or cumulative impacts are anticipated from the implementation of this proposal.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: John Huston
	Title: Helena Unit Manager
Signature: 	Date: 2/6/20

T11N-R2W-Section 16

Existing wells are indicated by the blue triangle inside a green circle, the proposed pipelines are blue dashed lines and the proposed tanks are at the west end of the pipelines. Existing fences are green dashed lines. The well in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ has an existing tank next to the well.

