

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	C X Ranch Fence Request
Proposed Implementation Date:	Summer / Fall, 2020
Proponent:	Lessee: Clifford & Nathan Cox
Location:	T9N R1W Section 36
County:	Broadwater

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

This fencing project is being proposed by the lessee, C X Ranch, Clifford & Nathan Cox, on the above referenced Trust Land to replace an approximate 150 feet of barbed wire fence with approximately 350 feet of new fence. The purpose of the fence request is to realign the current fence to reduce maintenance issues caused by a combination of steep slope and timber overstory. The proposal includes approximately 350 feet of 4 - 5 strand barbed wire fence, matching the existing fence configuration. The fence would be built to specifications of approximately 16" bottom wire and a top wire not to exceed 42". The project is located in close proximity to the Winston Cemetery in Broadwater County.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

Adam Grove, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks Biologist
Nathan Cox, Lessee
Montana Natural Resource Information Service
Patrick Rennie, DNRC Archaeologist

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

N/A

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A) Allow construction of the proposed fence
Alternative B) No action, fence construction would be denied.

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 project area is located in rolling terrain. Topography is steep in places and partially timbered. The proposed project would replace a length of fence currently located on a steep slope with a new fence located

near-by on a more gently sloping location. Due to the low impact nature of barbed wire fencing on soils, the project will not cause cumulative impacts. No special reclamation is expected.

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.

Water sources in the vicinity include Pole Creek. Water quality will not be directly affected by the proposed project.

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.

None

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.

No cumulative effects to vegetation are expected to result from this proposed project.

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 used by elk, whitetail deer, & mule deer. The proposed fence is designed to be wildlife friendly with a top wire not to exceed 42" and a bottom wire of 16". Adam Grove, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks biologist was solicited for comments on this project regarding wildlife impacts. He did not have concerns with the fence if built to the 16" bottom – 42" top configuration.

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.

A query was made on the Montana Natural Heritage Program site regarding endangered or sensitive species located in the vicinity of the project area. The resulting Species of Concern Data Report included 2 species found:

Long-billed Curlew - (*Numenius americanus*) – Long-billed curlews are listed as sensitive by the BLM and as a species of concern by the State of Montana. Curlews reportedly avoid areas like the project site that has trees and heavy brush. The site does not match curlew habitat preference, which is open short to mixed grass prairie. Curlews will not be affected by the proposed project.

Parry's Fleabane (*Erigeron parryi*) – Parry's fleabane is a BLM and State of Montana sensitive species. The species has only been found in Beaverhead, Jefferson, and Madison Counties in Montana. Parry's fleabane habitat is skeletal limestone derived slopes and thin ridge crests. Flowering and seed set occurs in late June through mid-July. According to the habitat description for this species the site of the existing fence proposed for removal contains suitable habitat for the fleabane, while the new fence would be placed on sites unsuitable for the species.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

Patrick Rennie, DNRC archaeologist, was consulted regarding the project. His input to this environmental assessment includes:

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. Considering the low-impact nature of the project, 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.

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 proposed fence would not be visible from open roads or trails. The project would not be detrimental to aesthetic values of the area.

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 limited resources would be required. The proposed project would not alter or affect other activities in the area. No cumulative effects to environmental resources are expected as a result of 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 or reviews were reported during 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 human health or safety risks are expected to result from this project.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

The proposed project would not significantly alter agricultural activities or production.

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 proposed project would not affect the employment market. No positive or negative cumulative effects to the employment market would result from this project.

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.

Tax revenue would not be affected by 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.

None

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.

None

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.

The proposed project would not affect recreational use of the area.

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.

None

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

None

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

The proposed project would not alter any unique quality 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 purpose of this environmental document is to assess a 4 - 5 strand barbed wire fence line improvement request which if approved would be owned by the lessee. Monetary return to the Common Schools Trust

beneficiary as a direct result of this proposed fencing project is zero. The proposed fence replacement would move the fence a short distance from its existing location and the old fence would be removed. The lessee will benefit from reduced maintenance cost on the lease and improved livestock control.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Charles Maddox	Date: 6/11/2020
	Title: Land Use Specialist	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Allow proponent to install new fence.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Installation of the fence will help the lessee improve grazing management on State leased land. 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: Heidi Crum	
	Title: Helena Unit Manager	
Signature:		Date: 6/14/20

T9N R1W 36



U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Services Agency Aerial Photography
Field Office.

1 inch = 250 feet