

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT	
Project Name: Dry Prairie - Opheim Mainline	Proposed Implementation Date: Summer 2022
Proponent: Dry Prairie Rural Water Authority, PO Box 577, Culbertson, Montana 59218	
<p>Type and Purpose of Action: The applicant proposes to install a twelve-inch diameter water pipeline. The proposed area of impact would be 30 feet in width (15 feet on either side of a center line) across multiple tracts of Trustland. The total area of impact to the Trustland would be 87.13 acres more or less. The purpose of the requested Right of Way Easements is to expand the area served by Dry Prairie Rural Water Authority. If approved, ROWs would authorize pipeline construction, inspection, operation, maintenance, repair, and replacement.</p>	
<p>Location: Sections 5, 7, 8, 18, 19, 30, 31, and 32 of Twp. 31N, Rge. 40E; Sections 4, 5, 8, 17, 20, 29, and 32 of Twp. 32N, Rge. 40E; Section 3 of Twp. 33N, Rge. 40E; Section 11 of Twp. 34N, Rge. 40E; Section 36 of Twp. 35N, Rge. 40E; Sections 1 and 2 of Twp. 35N, Rge. 43E; Sections 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 of Twp. 35N, Rge. 44E; Sections 4 and 6 of Twp. 35N, Rge. 45E; Sections 28, 29, 30, 33, 34, 35, and 36 of Twp. 36N, Rge. 43E.</p>	County: Valley and Daniels

I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT	
<p>1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED: Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.</p>	<p>The "Opheim Mainline" is only a small portion of Dry Prairie's ongoing pipeline project to supply Northeast Montana's communities and rural residents with improved drinking water.</p> <p>Dry Prairie Rural Water Authority has submitted 34 Right of Way Easement applications to the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Glasgow Unit Office.</p> <p>Dry Prairie contacted DNRC's surface lessees with impacted leases. All involved surface lessees signed the required "settlement of damages" form.</p>
<p>2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:</p>	<p>Other government agencies that have jurisdiction for this type of project are United States Army Corps. of</p>

	Engineers, United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resource and Conservation Service, Montana Department of Environmental Quality, United States Fish & Wildlife Service, Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks, Valley and Daniels County Conservation Districts, Valley and Daniels County Commissioners, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Water Rights Division.
3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:	<p>Action Alternative: Grant 34 Right of Way Easements requested by Dry Prairie Rural Water Authority for the purpose of installing a 12-inch water pipeline.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Deny 34 Right of Way Easements requested by Dry Prairie Rural Water Authority for the purpose of installing a 12-inch water pipeline.</p>

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS
4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE: Are fragile, compactible or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?	<p>The soils throughout the project area vary greatly; however, the soils involved are not considered to be fragile, unstable, or unusual. Soils are typical soil types found throughout these portions of Valley and Daniels County. The project would only be a temporary disturbance and soils would be reclaimed following installation of the line.</p> <p>Action Alternative: Soils would be removed and stockpiled during installation of the pipeline. Soils would then be replaced following installation of the pipeline. If reclaimed properly, soils should be capable of producing dryland agriculture crops or native/tame grass vegetation to pre-disturbance levels.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this</p>

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
	alternative there will be no changes to soils on the State land.
5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality?	<p>Installation of the water pipeline should have no negative impacts to the area's surface or groundwater. A completed water pipeline would supply reliable water to the area which could be a positive impact to the area by reducing demand for the area's existing water resources.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The water pipeline project would give residents of the area the option to access the high-quality water provided by Dry Prairie. No negative impacts to the area's water quality, quantity and distribution should occur as the water would be piped in from the Missouri River.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no impacts to water quality, quantity, and distribution.</p>
6. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?	<p>The project would have minimal impacts to the air quality as this is a remote area with generally high air quality.</p> <p>Action Alternative: Exhaust and fumes from machinery associated with installation of the pipeline would occur. There would also be some dust produced during construction of the water pipeline.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to air quality.</p>
7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?	<p>Vegetation within the ROW corridor would be damaged/destroyed. Reclamation of the ROW would include reseeding the area to the vegetation type present before installation of the pipeline. No rare plants or cover types present and vegetative communities would not be permanently</p>

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

altered.

Action Alternative: The project area contains native rangeland plants, tame grasses, and annually planted small grain and pulse crops. Installation of the pipeline would destroy the sod that produces the native vegetation and tame grasses within the ROW corridor. If the pipeline was constructed during the growing season, the dryland agriculture crops would also be destroyed. Impacts would be limited to the current growing season. After reclamation, there should be no lasting impacts to the vegetation in the project area

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to the native rangeland plant community. There will be no impacts to the dryland agriculture small grain or pulse crop plant community on the State land.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?

The project area contains habitat types used by upland birds, songbirds, small mammals, antelope, whitetail deer and mule deer. The pipeline project is primarily along existing State Highway corridors where wildlife has either adapted to dealing with people and traffic or avoids. Additional water sources created from this project could have a positive impact on the wildlife and habitat resources.

Action Alternative: Potential impacts to the project area's wildlife and habitat should be minimal and limited to the time periods of installation and maintenance of the pipeline.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to the terrestrial, avian, and aquatic life and habitats.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
<p>9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Sensitive Species or Species of special concern?</p>	<p>Dry Prairie submitted the project to the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program. The proposed project route follows State highways and is located within a previously defined project boundary. It was determined the project is largely exempt from the program's stipulations with the exception of reclamation of the disturbed area and weed management of invasive and noxious weeds.</p> <p>Action Alternative: No impacts to the area's unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to the environmental resources.</p>
<p>10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?</p>	<p>Ethnoscience Inc. performed a Class III cultural resource inventory of the Area of Potential Effects in 2021. A copy of the study was submitted to DNRC and the Montana Historical Society. No additional sites were identified; it is believed the project would not impact any historical or archaeological sites.</p> <p>Action Alternative: There should be no impacts to historical or archaeological sites under this alternative.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to historical or archaeological sites under this alternative.</p>
<p>11. AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light?</p>	<p>The proposed project's location is visible to the public as it closely follows State highways. The pipeline would have above ground taps and signage marking the route following installation. The area already has road signs, powerlines and buried powerline markers, fences, fiber optic</p>

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
	<p>and phone line markers, etc.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The proposed project would not significantly impact the aesthetics of State land or surrounding area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to aesthetics associated with the State land.</p>
<p>12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?</p>	<p>Dry Prairie Rural Water Authority has a water right to utilize water from the Missouri River for this project. The land within the ROW corridor would be encumbered by the pipeline. No impacts to air or energy would occur.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The water from the Missouri River would be treated and pumped through the pipeline for utilization in areas not currently served from this water source. This would increase demand on the Missouri River's water resource and reduce demand on water resources within and surrounding the project area. No measurable impacts to land, air, or energy are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no increase or decrease to current demands placed on environmental resources of land, water, air or energy.</p>
<p>13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: This project would not impact plans or studies that Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation has on the State land.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to the plans or studies that Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation has on the State land.</p>

III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION	
RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?	<p>The installation of a water pipeline has various human health and safety risks.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The goal of Dry Prairie's project is to supply Northeast Montana with safe drinking water which should be a significant benefit to human health and safety if completed. There would be safety risks for workers during the construction of the project.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to human health or safety.</p>
15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	<p>Residents, businesses, farmers, ranchers, and State land lessees along the pipeline route could potentially benefit from the project if they pay to utilize water from the pipeline. This may increase production and allow for additional activities to occur.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The project could positively impact the current livestock grazing and dryland agriculture activities occurring on the State land.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to agricultural activities on the State land.</p>
16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.	<p>Action Alternative: The project would temporarily create a short-term demand for workers during the construction of the water pipeline. It is not clear if any additional jobs would be created to manage/maintain the pipeline or if existing employees would take on these responsibilities.</p>

	<p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to quantity and distribution of employment under this alternative.</p>
<p>17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will have no impacts on the local and state tax base and tax revenues.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the local and state tax base under this alternative.</p>
<p>18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed?</p>	<p>Traffic along the State highways that the project corridor follows would temporarily increase during installation of the pipeline.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The project would place no additional demands for government services.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no changes to the demand for government services.</p>
<p>19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project should not negatively impact local environmental plans and/or goals. Increased availability of a reliable water source may benefit local environmental plans and/or goals.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to locally adopted environmental plans and/or goals.</p>
<p>20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?</p>	<p>The area of impact is primarily native rangeland and dryland agricultural acreage along State highways. The pipeline's proximity to well-traveled highways limits the quality of recreational potential.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The project would have no impact to the recreational values associated with these tracts of State land. The recreational value associated with these tracts is located away from the project</p>

	<p>corridor.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the recreational values associated with the State land under this alternative.</p>
<p>21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?</p>	<p>A reliable drinking water supply could possibly result in residential development within the area.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The project may or may not impact the density and distribution of population and housing. No immediate impacts would occur.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the density and distribution of population and housing.</p>
<p>22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project would not disrupt the traditional lifestyles of the local community.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the social structures under this alternative.</p>
<p>23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project would not impact the cultural uniqueness and diversity of this rural area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the cultural uniqueness and diversity under this alternative.</p>
<p>24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The installation of the water pipeline would improve the social and economic circumstances for the residents of Northeastern Montana communities.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the economic circumstances under this alternative.</p>

EA Checklist Prepared By: Luke Gunderson, Land Use Specialist Date: 4/19/2022

IV. FINDING	
25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:	Action Alternative
26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:	No negative impacts anticipated. The area serviced by the pipeline will benefit from the addition of a reliable water source.
27. Need for Further Environmental Analysis: <input type="checkbox"/> EIS <input type="checkbox"/> More Detailed EA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Further Analysis	

EA Checklist Approved By: Matthew Poole Glasgow Unit Manager
Name Titles/Matthew Poole\s Date: April 19, 2022
Signature

T-R-S	Total Acres	Grazing acres	Ag Acres
31-40-05	3.64	3.64	
31-40-07	1.82	1.82	
31-40-08	1.81	1.81	
31-40-18	1.78	1.78	
31-40-19	1.86	1.86	
31-40-30	1.83		1.83
31-40-31	0.15		0.15
31-40-32	0.8		0.8
32-40-04	0.37	0.37	
32-40-05	1.52	1.52	
32-40-08	4.22	4.22	
32-40-17	3.65	3.65	
32-40-20	3.68	3.68	
32-40-29	3.64	3.64	
32-40-32	3.64	3.64	
33-40-03	3.66	0.42	3.24
34-40-11	3.31	3.31	
35-40-36	2.97	2.97	
35-43-01	2.09		2.09
35-43-02	1.52	1.52	
35-44-01	3.67		3.67
35-44-02	1.82		1.82
35-44-03	3.64	2.94	0.7
35-44-05	1.83		1.83
35-44-06	1.88		1.88
35-45-04	3.67	1	2.67
35-45-06	3.68		3.68
36-43-28	2.21	2.21	
36-43-29	3.4	3.4	
36-43-30	3.35	3.35	
36-43-33	1.05	1.05	
36-43-34	4.09	4.09	
36-43-35	2.64	2.64	
36-43-36	2.24	1.67	0.57