

## CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**Project Name:** SRI – Hamilton Ranch Buried Stock Water Pipeline and Stock Tank Request 2015  
**Proposed Implementation Date:** Fall, 2015 to Winter, 2016  
**Proponent:** Lessee, SRI River Holdings, LLC  
**Location:** T3S R5W Section 30  
**County:** Madison

### I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The Lessee, SRI River Holdings, LLC has submitted a proposal to place an improvement on a portion of their Montana State Trust Land grazing lease located in the S½SW¼ of Section 30, T3S R5W. The improvement would include burying approximately 2,700 feet of plastic pipeline running from a well located on adjacent private land in the SWSE of Section 25, T3S R6W to a stock tank to be placed in the NESES of Section 30. The project would provide a dependable water source to a dry area.

### II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

Dean Waltee, Department of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks Wildlife Biologist  
Patrick Rennie, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Archaeologist  
Martin Miller, 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 State Normal Schools Grant.

#### 3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

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

**Alternative B:** Action Alternative: Allow the proponent to install a buried pipeline, and the installation of a single stock water tank.

### 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.*

No fragile, compactable, or unstable soils are present. Construction of the project would entail burying approximately 2,700 feet of +/- 1.5" pipe. Impacts to the soil would be minimized by use of a dozer with a vibra-shank ripper or small excavator to place the pipe.

**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.*

No surface water resources are located within the project area. This tract is part of a checkerboard ownership pattern of Trust Land with no naturally occurring surface water to provide for livestock use and distribution. The project would improve water availability for livestock and wildlife and improve cattle grazing distribution on this upland site.

**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.*

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.

**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 all species of wildlife. This upland site is located approximately 2.5 miles from the nearest naturally occurring surface water source. 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. Escape ramps would be placed in tanks 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 in the vicinity of the project area. The query results are listed below:

**Great Blue Heron** (*Ardea herodias*) – The Great Blue Heron is currently listed as sensitive by the State of Montana. According to the MNHP site, the blue heron primarily inhabits riparian areas and wetland habitats. This project is part of a plan by the lessee to provide an upland water source for livestock on dry rangeland approximately 3 air miles away from the Beaverhead River. The site is all dry rangeland and would not impact blue heron habitat.

**Golden Eagle** (*Aquila chrysaetos*) – Golden eagles are a protected species under U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service regulations, it is also a BLM sensitive species and classified in the State of Montana as a species potentially at risk. The proposed project will not alter the existing vegetative community type and would not influence use of the area by golden eagles. The project would not have cumulative effects on golden eagle habitat or species distribution in the area.

**Mountain Plover** (*Charadrius montanus*) – Mountain plover are a BLM and State of Montana listed sensitive species. According to the MNHP site, mountain plover utilize Montana grasslands as breeding and nesting ground with their preferred areas being prairie dog towns. There are no prairie dog towns located anywhere near the proposed project area. The proposed project would include a buried pipeline and a stock tank which would not affect habitat preference of the plover.

**McCown's Longspur** (*Rhynchophanes mccownii*) – McCown's longspur is a BLM and State of Montana listed sensitive species. From MNHP website: **State Rank Reason** – "*Species faces threats from cover-type conversion and altered grazing and fire regimes and although populations in the core of their breeding range in northeast Montana appear to be relatively stable, declines are occurring in much of the species global breeding range.*"

The proposed project would include a buried pipeline and a stock tank which would not convert native grassland and would not affect habitat preference of McCown's longspur.

**Hoary Bat** (*Lasiurus cinereus*) – The hoary bat is a state listed species of concern. According to the MNHP site, the species prefers coniferous and deciduous woodlands located in mountain settings or riparian areas along waterways. This project is located in grasslands with no timber located on or near to the site. The pipeline would also be buried. No impacts to hoary bats would result from this proposed project.

**Townsend's Big-eared Bat** (*Corynorhinus townsendii*) – Townsend's big-eared bat is a U.S. Forest Service, U.S. BLM, and State of Montana listed sensitive species. Listed habitat on the MNHP site is caves in forested habitat. This project will be located in open grassland and will not affect Townsend's big-eared bat habitat.

**Wolverine** (*Gulo gulo*) Wolverine is listed as a State of Montana Species of Concern. The USFS and BLM list the species as Sensitive. According to the MNHP site, wolverines favor high elevation forest sites. The proposed project is located in a dry low elevation grassland site. The proposed pipeline would be buried. This project would not cause direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to wolverine.

#### **10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:**

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

Patrick Rennie, DNRC Archaeologist, was consulted regarding possible cultural resources inside the proposed project area. No cultural resource concerns were found in a search of the database, and no evidence was found during a field inspection conducted on April 2, 2015.

#### **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 not located on a prominent topographic feature and will not alter aesthetics 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 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 as a result of the project may increase use of this 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 by 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 should 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 return to the State Normal Schools Trust for this project cannot be measured in dollars received. No additional revenue is expected as a result of this project as the animal unit months (AUM's) are calculated on a forage production basis. The lessee is expected to harvest that forage and use the AUM's by fencing, placing improvements, and/or herding their livestock. The lessee's stock water pipeline and tank project would increase the overall value of the lease by creating a long term water source on the affected section and adjacent Trust Land.

<b>EA Checklist Prepared By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Charles Maddox	<b>Date:</b> 4/9/2015
	<b>Title:</b> Land Use Specialist	

**V. FINDING**

**25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:**

**Alternative B:** Action Alternative: Allow the proponent to install a buried pipeline, and the installation of a single stock water tank.

**26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:**

No significant long term or cumulative impacts are anticipated with the completion of this project. The installation of a new stock water tank will help spread livestock over the entire lease.

**27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:**

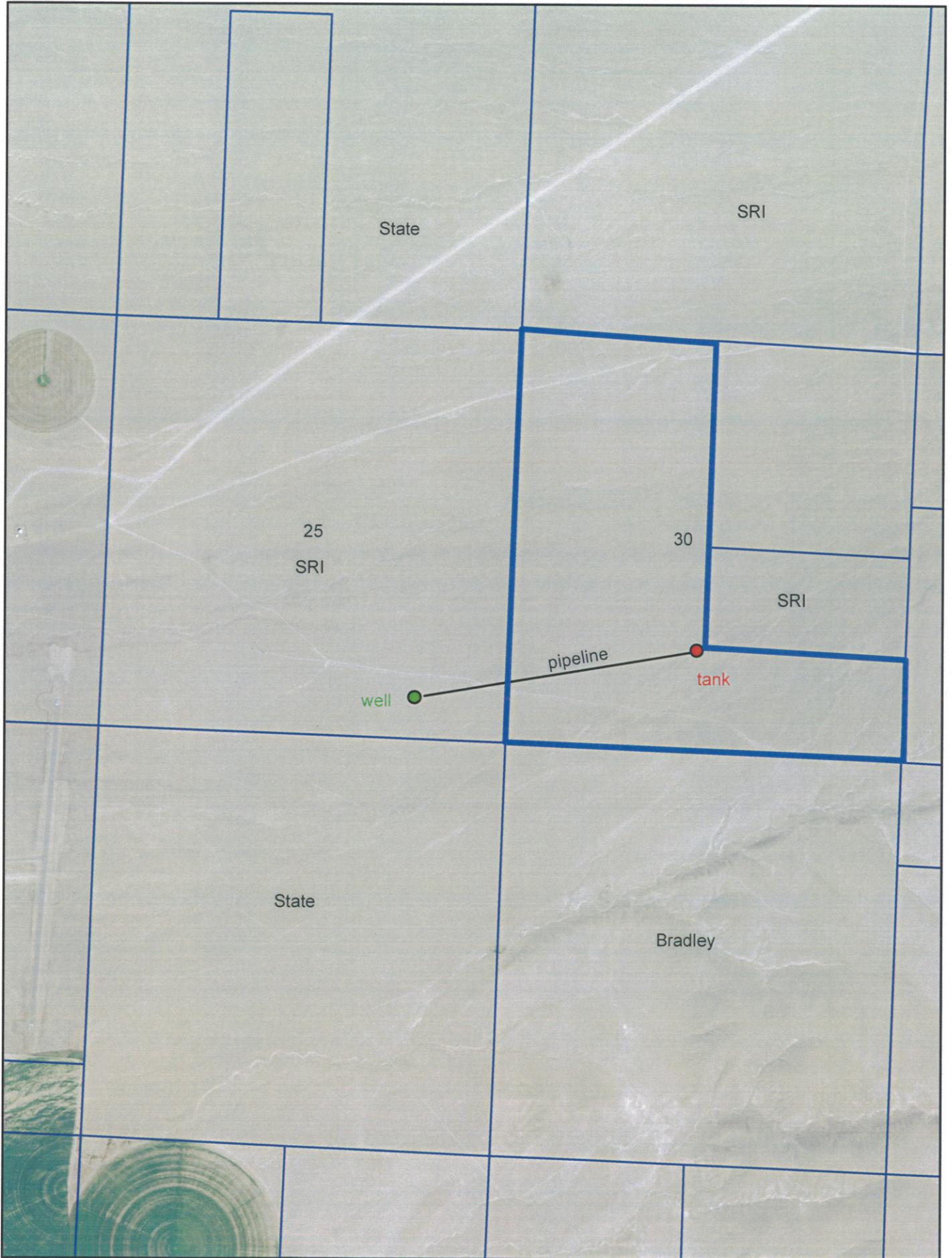
EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

<b>EA Checklist Approved By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Timothy Egan
	<b>Title:</b> Dillon Unit Manager
<b>Signature:</b> /S/ Timothy Egan	
<b>Date:</b> 4/20/2015	

T3S R5W Sec. 30 2013



1 inch = 1,667 feet