CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Clark Canyon Ranch McKnight Canyon Pipeline
Proposed Implementation Date:	Winter, 2015
Proponent:	Clark Canyon Ranch, Lessee
Location:	Section 22, T12S R10W
County:	Beaverhead

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

This environmental assessment is being conducted to study effects of a proposed buried stock water pipeline. The pipeline would link 2 existing improvements located entirely on Trust Lands in Beaverhead County. Clark Canyon Ranch, lessee of Trust Land located in Section 22, has requested to place a new buried water line from an existing well on Section 22 to an existing buried water line running along the boundary between Section 22 and Section 23. The purpose of the new line is to improve water flow in the existing pipeline originating on Trust Land in the NWSE of Section 36, T12S R10W approximately 2.5 miles Southeast of the proposed new line and ending in Section 15, T12S R10W approximately 1 mile North of the proposed line.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

Craig Fager, Department of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks Wildlife Biologist
Patrick Rennie, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Archaeologist
Vic Hager, RE Miller & Sons Construction Company
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 MSU Morrill Grant.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

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

Alternative B: Preferred alternative. To allow construction of the buried 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.

No fragile, compactable, or unstable soils are present. Construction of the project would entail burying approximately 2,800 feet of +/- 2" 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. These tracts are part of a large block of Trust Land with no naturally occurring water sources to provide for livestock use and distribution. The project would improve water availability in the existing water pipeline to 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 could increase the availability of water for both livestock and all species of wildlife.

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) Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) website 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 improve an existing water source for livestock on dry rangeland approximately 2 air miles away from the Red Rock River. The current water source available is directly from the well sites located in Sections 22 & 36. The site is all dry rangeland and would not impact blue heron habitat.

Ferruginous Hawk – (Buteo regalis) – The ferruginous hawk is a BLM sensitive species. Ferruginous hawks have been documented using the general area around the project as nesting and hunting ground. The low surface impacts resulting from the project would not significantly alter vegetative composition or nesting habitat for the hawks. No rock outcrops are located within or near the project site. The primary vegetation on-site is low growing grass species such as needle-and-thread. No cumulative effects are anticipated.

Golden Eagle (Aquila chrysaetos) – Golden eagles are 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.

Clark's Nutcracker (Nucifraga columbiana) – Clarks nutcracker is a state listed sensitive species. The Montana Natural Heritage Program site includes this excerpt regarding the species of concern status:

Threats or Limiting Factors

Loss of whitebark, limber, and ponderosa pines to disease, insect outbreaks, and fire may lead to local and widespread population declines (Tomback 1998).

This site is a grassland site, there is no timber located on-site and only sparse timber located approximately 0.5 miles West of the proposed project. The proposal would not impact Clark's nutcracker use of the area.

Brown Creeper (Certhia americana) – The brown creeper is a State of Montana species of concern. The Montana Natural Heritage Program site includes this excerpt for the species of concern status:

Threats or Limiting Factors

Concern for this species results from its strong association with unlogged old-growth forest, especially stands of cedar-hemlock, which are uncommon in Montana and are highly productive for timber (Casey 2000). Creepers are always less abundant in clearcuts or partially logged forests than in uncut areas (Hejl et al. 1995).

This proposed project is located in grassland with sparse timber located 0.5 miles West of the project. No old growth forest is within the proposed site. The species would not be impacted by the proposed project.

Brewer's Sparrow (Spizella breweri) – Brewer's sparrow is a BLM sensitive species. Per Montana Natural Resource Information Service (NRIS), the species prefers nesting in sagebrush averaging 16 inches in height. The site is dominated by grass with a trace of rabbitbrush. The proposed project would not significantly alter the current vegetative community or lead to negative cumulative effects on Brewer's sparrow populations of the area.

Cassin's Finch (Haemorhous cassinii) – Cassin's finch is a state listed species of concern. According to the Montana Natural Heritage Program site, it is a species preferring conifer forest types, an excerpt from the MNHP site on threats or limiting factors for the bird includes:

Threats or Limiting Factors

No significant threats have been identified that account for apparent population declines, unless recent extent of severe wildland fire in conifer forests has produced postfire ecological traps for Cassin's Finches. There is no evidence that the incidence of Mycoplasmal Conjuntivitis or West Nile Virus among Cassin's Finches is as extreme as in some populations of House Finches in the western U.S.

This site is located in grassland community type with no timber in or near to the project location. No impacts would occur to the Cassin's finch as a result of the projects completion.

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.

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 along a dry low elevation grassland site. The proposed pipeline would be buried. This project would not cause direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to wolverine.

Pygmy Rabbit (Brachylagus idahoensis) Pygmy Rabbits have been observed within the general vicinity of the project area. It is a BLM and US Forest Service sensitive species. The project will be underground in an area

dominated by grass with no sagebrush on site. This project would not cause direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to pygmy rabbits.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:
Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

Patrick Rennie, DNRC Archaeologist, was consulted regarding cultural resource issues on the tract. No cultural resources are listed in the data base. No cultural resources were identified during field inspections conducted by the Dillon Unit Land Use Specialist.

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 water flow to an existing stock water pipeline. The improved water availability would increase operational efficiency of the lessee.

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 an otherwise dry area. The increased water availability should increase 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 MSU Morrill Grant Trust for this project cannot be measured in dollars received. No additional revenue is expected as a result of this project as the fees received for the grazing lease are based on animal unit months (AUM's) that are calculated on a forage production basis. The lessee is expected to harvest that forage by utilizing the AUM's. To achieve this, the lease ground requires fencing, placing improvements, and/or herding livestock. The lessee's stock water pipeline project would increase the overall value of the lease by improving water availability and improve livestock distribution on the affected section and adjacent Trust Land.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Charles Maddox	Date: 3/5/2015
	Title: Land Use Specialist	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative B: Preferred alternative. To allow construction of the buried pipeline.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

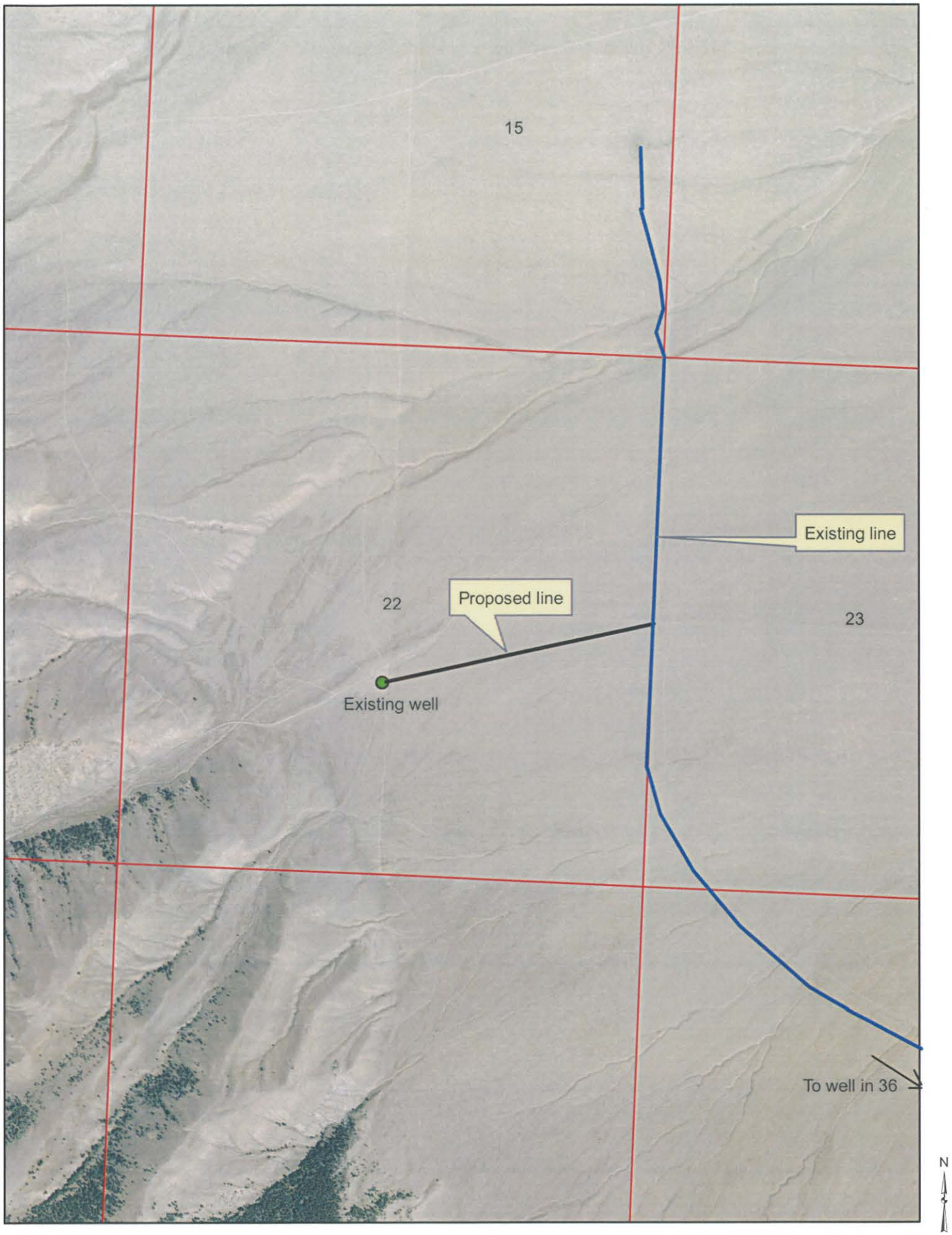
The project will have no long term impacts or cumulative effects. The pipeline installation will help to better distribute cattle over the leased ground.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

[ ] EIS [ ] More Detailed EA [X] No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Timothy Egan	
	Title: Dillon Unit Manager	
Signature: /S/ Timothy Egan Timothy Egan		Date: 3/10/2015

T12S R10W Sec. 22 2013



1 inch = 1,250 feet