CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Matador – Ruby Range Stock Water Development Project 2014
Proposed Implementation Date:	Winter, 2014 / Spring, 2015
Proponent:	Matador Ranch, Kyle Hardin - Manager
Location:	T9S R7W Sec. 17 & 18, and T9S R8W Sec. 13
County:	Beaverhead

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The DNRC received an improvement request form from Kyle Hardin, manager for Matador Cattle Company to develop 3 spring sites located on 3 adjacent state sections. The developed springs would be piped underground with one stock tank per line. The project is located in the Southern Ruby Mountains area of Beaverhead County. The project would directly affect three tracts of Trust Land.

The purpose of the project is to provide water to an area which currently does not have dependable surface water available. The affected tracts include T9S R7W Sec. 17 & 18 and T9S R8W Section 13. Three aerial photographs depicting the project have been included with this environmental assessment.

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
Ole Berkram, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, Dillon Office
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 Common Schools Grant.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

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

Alternative B: Preferred alternative. To allow the construction of the three spring developments with associated buried pipelines, and one stock water tank per line.

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.

Construction of the proposed project would include use of a backhoe to excavate the spring sites and either a vibrashank ripper on a dozer or a backhoe to bury the line with minimal soil disturbance. The spring sites would be jack-leg fenced to exclude cattle from trampling the spring source. The disturbed area around the stock tank sites would have rock placed around them to prevent erosion and reduce trampling impacts. No long term cumulative impacts to soils in the project area are expected as a result of this project.

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 few springs or seeps to provide for livestock use and distribution. The project could improve water quantity, reduce trampling of spring sites, and improve cattle grazing distribution on this upland area of the Ruby Mountains.

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. Dean Waltee, DFWP Biologist, requested that the pipeline on Section 17, T9S R7W be extended to avoid placement in sagebrush. The request would add approximately 200-300 feet of additional pipeline to a stock tank location outside of the sagebrush site. Matador was approached with this request and agreed to the new tank location.

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. Construction practices used in the placement of the pipeline and stock tanks would include rocking tank sites and jack-leg fencing spring sources to limit disturbance to the ground surface 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) website was queried for information regarding sensitive or endangered species located in the vicinity of the project area. The query results are listed below:

Sage Grouse – (Centrocercus urophasianus) – Sagegrouse have been listed as a species of concern with a Montana State sagegrouse management plan in effect. The project is located outside of identified sage grouse core habitat. DFWP wildlife biologist Dean Waltee was solicited for comments on the project. Comments received included a request to extend the pipeline approximately 300 feet to the West of the requested location in Section 17, T9S R7W to move the water tank outside of an existing sagebrush stand to reduce impacts to sagegrouse habitat. Matador Ranch was advised of this proposed change and agreed to alter the planned stock tank location to mitigate potential impacts identified by DFWP to sage grouse.

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

Patrick Rennie, DNRC Archaeologist, visited the site in Summer of 2014. A lithic scatter site and hearth site were found. According to Patrick, the sites should not be impacted by construction of the 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 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 provide more reliable water sources and improve access to water. Current water on site is in the form of small seeps and springs in the bottom of drainages. Stock tanks would reduce impacts to drainages by providing accessible water on upland sites in the spring and improve livestock use and distribution on the three sections.

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 Common 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 spring development, stock water pipeline, and tank project would increase the overall value of the lease by creating a long term water source on the affected sections 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 the construction of the three spring developments with associated buried pipelines, and one stock water tank per line.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

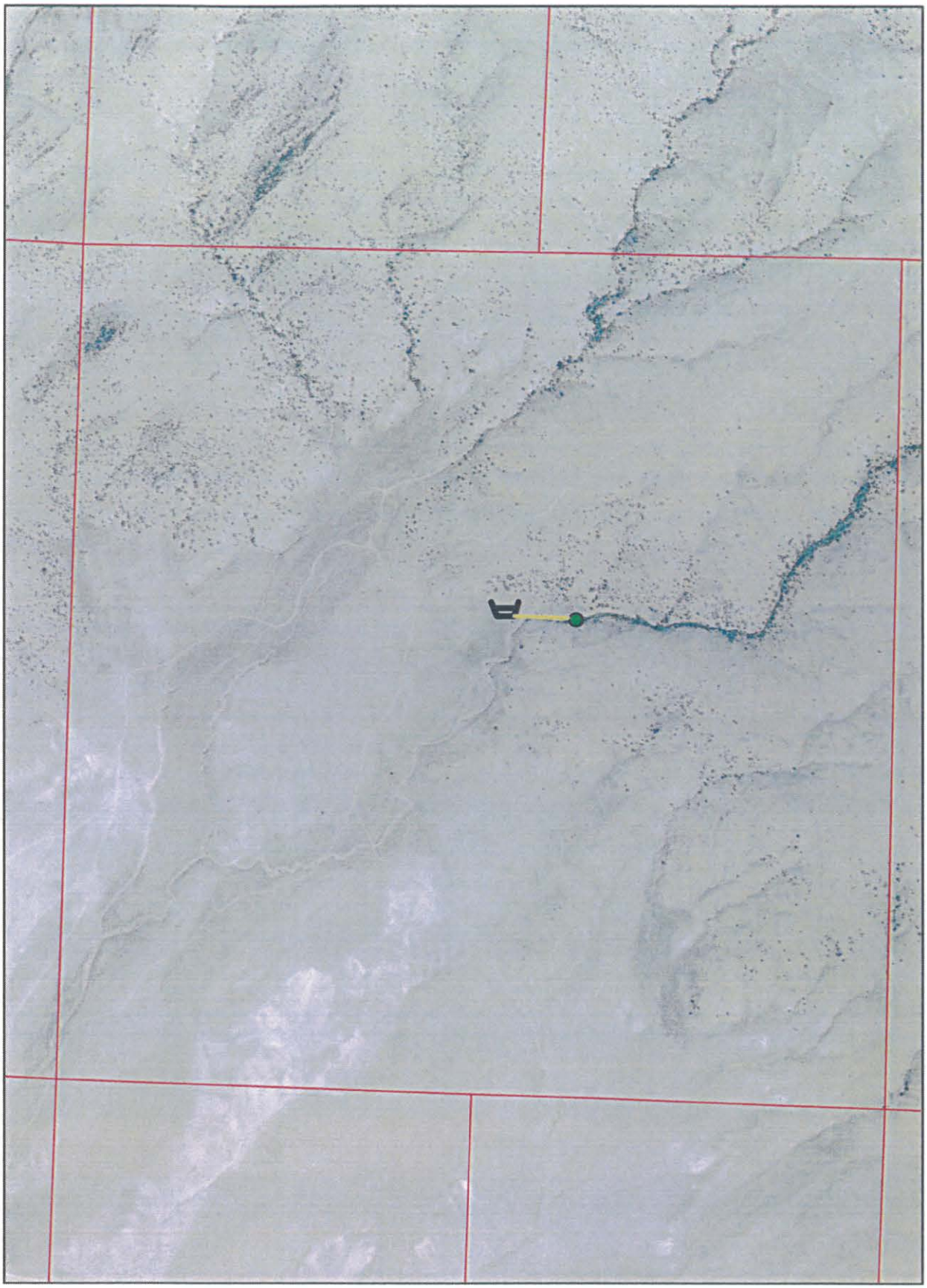
This proposal will have some minor disturbance during the construction phase of the project but no significant long term effects or cumulative impacts are anticipated. The development of the springs, installation of underground pipelines and stock tanks should help better distribute livestock across these leases.

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

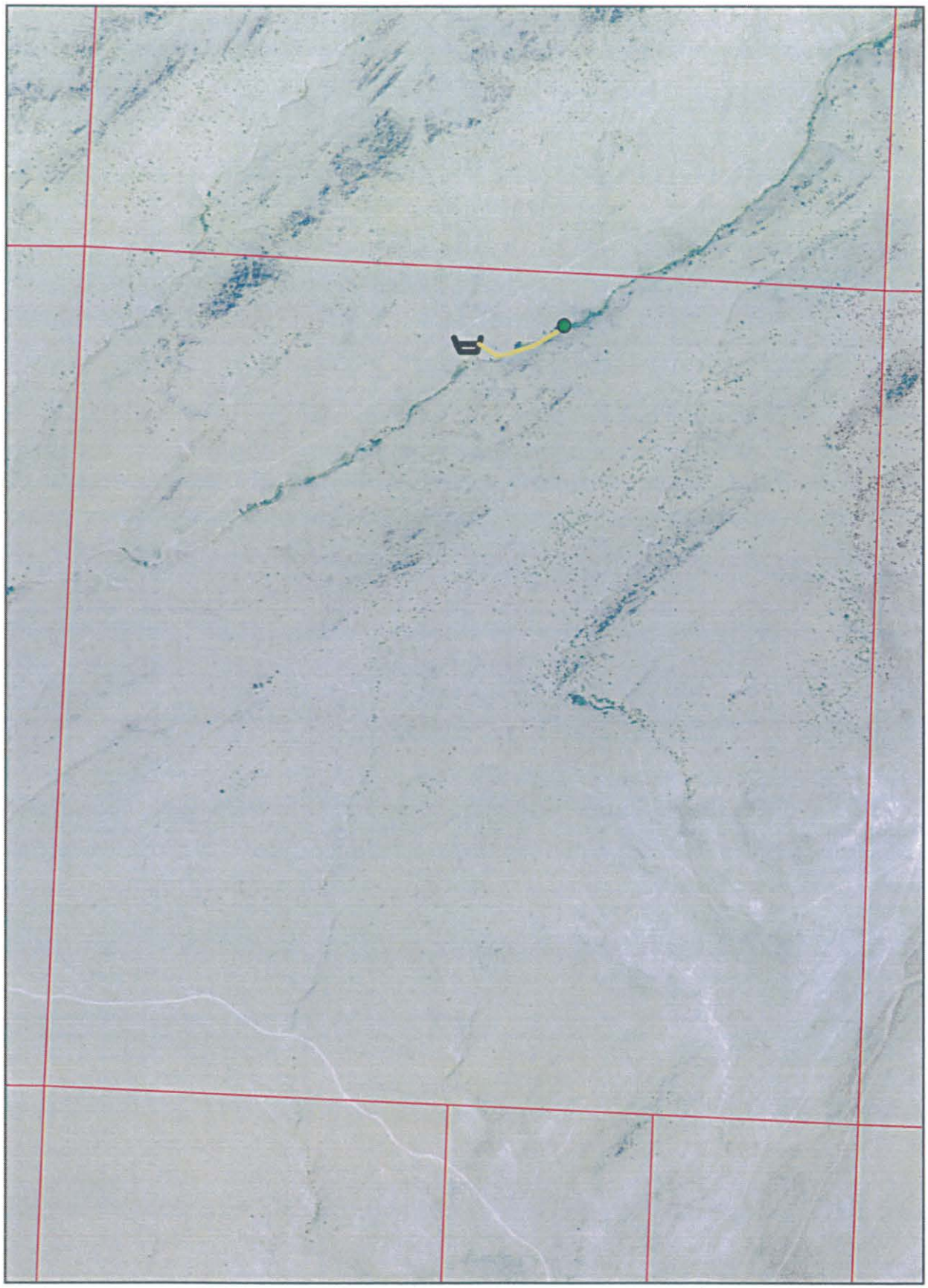
T9S R7W Sec. 17 2013



1 inch = 880 feet

N

T9S R7W Sec. 18 2013



1 inch = 880 feet

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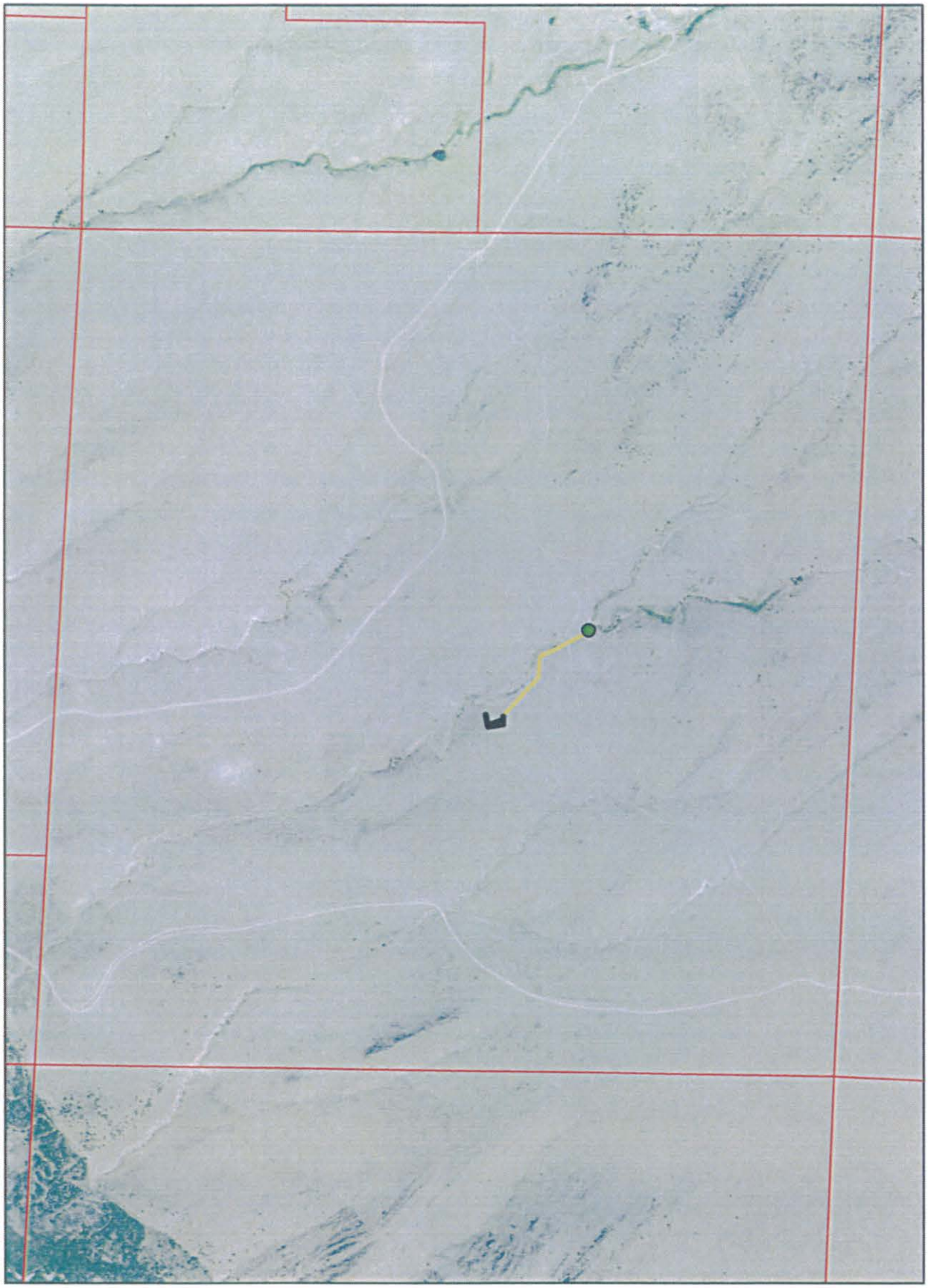
T9S R8W Sec. 13 2013



1 inch = 880 feet

N