

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Rattlesnake Stock Water Development Project
Proposed Implementation Date: May, 2015
Proponent: Cone Butte Ranch LLC
Location: Sec. 36, T18N, R21E
County: Fergus County
Trust: Common Schools

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The proponent is requesting permission to develop a stock water pit on the above named tract of State Land.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

The Northeastern Land Office (NELO), Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), Trust Land Management Division (TLMD), the Surface Lessee (proponent) of State Lease #6991 are involved with the proposed project.

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

No other governmental agencies have jurisdiction over this project.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action) – The State of Montana does NOT grant permission to develop a stock water pit on the above named tract of State Land.

Alternative B (the Proposed Action) – The State of Montana does grant permission to develop a stock water pit on the above named tract of State Land.

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.

There are no fragile or unstable soils present in the proposed project area. There are no unusual geological features.

No indirect or cumulative effects to soils are anticipated.

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.

The proposed water development will be in a small coulee, and is expected to fill with runoff from snowmelt.

No direct, indirect or cumulative effects to water quality, quantity, and distribution are anticipated.

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.

No pollutants or particulates will be produced by this type of activity.

No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to air quality are anticipated.

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.

Vegetation will be impacted during the excavation of the pit area. The impacted area is very small due to the small size of the proposed pit.

Noxious and annual weeds within the proposed construction area are not a concern. Cumulative impacts to the vegetative resources are not expected due to the small amount of soil disturbance and natural revegetation. The vegetation around the stock water pit will be impacted by livestock use. These impacts are considered acceptable as part of the stock pit use.

The Plant Species of Concern Report from the Montana Natural Heritage Program indicates that there are no plant species of concern within the proposed project area.

There are no rare plants or cover types present.

No indirect or cumulative impacts to vegetation are anticipated.

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 not considered critical wildlife habitat. However, this tract may provide habitat for a variety of wildlife species including mule deer, white tail deer, predators (coyote, fox, and badger), upland game birds (sharp tail grouse, Hungarian partridge), other non-game mammals, raptors and various songbirds.

The proposal does not include any land use change which would yield changes to the wildlife habitat. The proposed action will not impact wildlife forage, cover, or traveling corridors. Nor will this action change the juxtaposition of wildlife forage, water, or hiding and thermal cover.

No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to wildlife habitat are anticipated.

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 Animal Species of Concern Report from the Montana Natural Heritage Program indicates that Brewer's Sparrow (*Spizella breweri*), and Greater Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) may be found in the area..

A review of Natural Resource Information System (NRIS) for Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) was conducted. The proposed project area is well outside of any sage-grouse habitat. The nearest lek is over 10 miles from the proposed project area.

No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources are anticipated.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

There are no known archeological, paleontological, or historical resources present. If any are located during the course of the stock water pit construction the proponent is required to notify the Lewistown Unit Office immediately.

No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to archeological, paleontological, or historical resources are anticipated.

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.

This tract is located in a rural agricultural area. There are no prominent topographic features. There are no populated or scenic areas nearby. The proposed project will not produce significant increased light or noise levels. The state land does not provide any unique scenic qualities not also provided on adjacent private lands.

No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to aesthetics are anticipated.

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.

The proposed project will not affect any nearby activities.

No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to environmental resources are anticipated.

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.

There are no other studies, projects or plans on this tract.

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 impacts to human health and safety would occur as a result of the proposal. Health and safety risks associated with the stock water site construction are assumed by the proponent and are considered "occupational hazards".

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

The proposed stock water development will allow the proponent to better utilize the available AUMs.

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 proposal would have no effect on quantity and distribution of employment.

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 direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to the local and state tax base are anticipated.

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 direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to the demand for government services are anticipated.

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.

There are no zoning or other agency management plans affecting these lands.

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 tract is accessible to the public. The proposed action is not expected to impact general recreational activities on this tract of State Land. There are no wilderness areas nearby.

No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to the access and quality of recreational activities are anticipated.

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

The proposal does not include any changes to housing or developments.

No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

There are no native, unique or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity that would be impacted by the proposal.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

The State Trust lands in this proposal are currently managed for grazing. The State lands are generally indistinguishable from the adjacent private lands, with no unique quality.

The proposed project would not directly, indirectly, or cumulatively impact cultural uniqueness or diversity.

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 proposed project would not directly, indirectly, or cumulatively impact economics or social circumstances.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Bill Creamer
	Title: Land Use Specialist, Lewistown Unit, Northeastern Land Office
Signature: /s/ Bill Creamer	Date: 5/8/2015

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

I have selected the Proposed Action - Alternative B, I recommend that the State of Montana does grant permission to develop a stock water pit on the above named tract of State Land.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

I have evaluated the potential environment affects and have determined that there will be no significant negative environmental impacts as a result of the proposed project.

These tracts do not have any unique characteristics, critical habitat or environmental conditions.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Barny D. Smith
	Title: Lewistown Unit Manager, Northeastern Land Office
Signature: /s/ Barny D. Smith	
Date: 5/8/2015	