

## CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

<b>Project Name:</b>	Jesse Smalis Stock Well
<b>Proposed Implementation Date:</b>	2024
<b>Proponent:</b>	Jesse Smalis
<b>Location:</b>	T14N-R49E-Sec 36
<b>County:</b>	Prairie

### I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The surface lessee Jesse Smalis wishes to drill a well on the above mentioned tract of State Trust Land and has filed the appropriate improvement form. The well is a new well and will be located in close proximity (~20 feet) of an existing but defunct well. The purpose of this well is to provide a more reliable water source for livestock on this section.

### 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 proponent has requested that the DNRC allow the drilling of a stock water well and has filed a DS-405 improvement form detailing expenditures. DNRC staff has evaluated this site, and due to the small scope and nature of this request, no public comment was sought. The Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program was not consulted as this activity is exempt under EO 10-2014 and EO 12-2015.

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

DRNC – Water Resources Division

#### 3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A: Approve improvement form for water development on state land  
Alternative B: No action

### 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.*

Alternative A: The presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils was not noted in the area of development. Due to the small scope and footprint of the project no significant impact is expected.

Alternative B: No Impact

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**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.*

Alternative A: Groundwater resources will be utilized for stock water purposes. This may have a small effect on available groundwater resources; any effect should be minimal in nature. No surface water resources should be affected by this project.

Alternative B: No Impact

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**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.*

Alternative A: No Significant Impact

Alternative B: No Impact

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**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.*

Alternative A: Some vegetation would be affected through this project. Dominant species in the area are Western Wheatgrass (*Agropyron smithii*), Blue Grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), Needle and Thread (*Stipa comata*), Green Needlegrass (*Stipa viridula*), Crested Wheatgrass (*Agropyron cristatum*), and various forbs and shrubs. Any effect to the vegetative community should be minimal in nature during the construction phase of the project. After completion the vegetative community should return to pre-development state.

Alternative B: No Impact

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**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.*

Alternative A: Construction of this project may disrupt wildlife activity in the area for a few days. Upon completion of the project the wildlife use and habitat should return to normal with the added benefit of a new water source.

Alternative B: No Impact

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**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.*

Alternative A: A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program Database shows two species of concern that has been observed in the general project area, the **Greater Sage-Grouse** (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) and the **Sharp-tailed Grouse** (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*). While these species may be present, no impact is expected due to this project. This project is located within designated Greater Sage Grouse General Habitat. However, it is an exempt activity under EO 10-2014 and EO 12-2015.

Alternative B: No Impact

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**10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:**

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

Alternative A: A Class I (literature review) level review was conducted by the DNRC staff archaeologist for the area of potential effect (APE). This entailed inspection of project maps, DNRC's sites/site leads database, land use records, General Land Office Survey Plats, and control cards. The Class I search results revealed that no cultural or paleontological resources have been identified in the APE.

Because the topographic setting and geology suggest a low to moderate likelihood of the presence of cultural or paleontologic resources, proposed activities are expected to have *No Effect* to *Antiquities*. No additional archaeological investigative work will be conducted in response to this proposed development. However, if previously unknown cultural or paleontological materials are identified during project related activities, all work will cease until a professional assessment of such resources can be made.

Alternative B: No Impact

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**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.*

Alternative A: No Significant Impact

Alternative B: No Impact

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**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.*

Alternative A: No Significant Impact

Alternative B: No Impact

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**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.*

Alternative A: No Impact

Alternative B: No Impact

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<b>IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION</b>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>RESOURCES</i> potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.</li><li>• Explain <i>POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS</i> following each resource heading.</li><li>• Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.</li></ul> |
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**14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:**

*Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.*

Alternative A: No Significant Impact

Alternative B: No Impact

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**15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:**

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

Alternative A: The development of the water source will add to positive agricultural activities and production in the area.

Alternative B: No Impact

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**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.*

Alternative A: No significant impact

Alternative B: No Impact

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**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.*

Alternative A: No Significant Impact

Alternative B: No Impact

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**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*

Alternative A: No Impact

Alternative B: No Impact

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**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.*

Alternative A: No Impact

Alternative B: No Impact

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**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.*

Alternative A: No Significant Impact

Alternative B: No Impact

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**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.*

Alternative A: No Impact

Alternative B: No Impact

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**22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:**

*Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.*

Alternative A: No Impact

Alternative B: No Impact

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**23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:**

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

Alternative A: No Impact

Alternative B: No Impact

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**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.*

Alternative A: No direct monetary return to the trust will be gained. The project will provide a reliable water source for livestock and wildlife in the area. This should aid in grazing distribution and benefit the resource.

Alternative B: No Impact

<b>EA Checklist Prepared By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Seth Urick	<b>Date:</b> 06-18-2024
	<b>Title:</b> Land Use Specialist	

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**V. FINDING**

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**25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:**

Alternative A

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**26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:**

The granting of the requested stock water well development on this tract of state owned trust lands for the purpose of improving grazing distribution and wildlife habitat should not result in nor cause significant environmental impacts. The proposed action satisfies the trusts fiduciary mandate and ensures the long term productivity of the land. An environmental assessment checklist is the appropriate level of analysis for the proposed action

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

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

<b>EA Checklist Approved By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Scott Aye
	<b>Title:</b> Lands Program Manager
<b>Signature:</b> 	<b>Date:</b> 6-25-24