

N2pCHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Diamond D Angus livestock water improvement
Proposed Implementation Date:	Summer 2024
Proponent:	Diamond D Angus Inc
Location:	N2, Section 1, T29N, R7W
County:	Pondera
Trust:	Common Schools (CS)

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Diamond D Angus Inc has requested to install a water collection system and place a stock water pipeline across state land. This livestock water improvement will be located in N2, [AB1]Section 1, T29N, R7W. This project will consist of developing a shallow water collection system in a pre-existing reservoir and connecting it to an above-ground water pipeline that will be 1.5" in diameter and span approximately 4000 feet, running west to east. The lessee will use a portable water tank and transport it across each paddock when moving livestock. The collected water will be pumped through the pipeline using a solar-powered generator. This project will provide a reliable water source for livestock on the lease. Minor dirt work will occur with this project. See **Exhibit A**, Project Location Map for details on locations of the projects.

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 Project is located on state-owned land and Diamond D Angus Inc is the proponent. Agencies involved in the permitting process include the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, (DNRC) – Trust Land Management Division

Surface Lessee:

Lots 1,2,3,4, S2N2, Section 1, T29N, R7W – Agreement Number: AG-667 – Diamond D Angus Inc

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

DNRC has one water share from Pondera County Canal and Reservoir Company assigned to provide water to existing pit on state tract.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action) – Deny Diamond D Angus Inc permission to operate and maintain the livestock water improvement.

Alternative B (the Proposed action) – Grant Diamond D Angus Inc permission to operate and maintain the livestock water improvement.

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.

Soils at the proposed project sites are silty to clayey in texture with some heavier clay areas having a saline influence. The topography is flat to gently rolling. Soils around the water collection system will have the largest impact from equipment disturbance but the soil here is suitable for installation. The water pipeline will lie on top of the ground, thus soils will see little to no impact. Cumulative impacts on soil resources are not expected.^[AB2]

Determination:

No Effect. It is not anticipated that the Project will result in negative cumulative effects of geology and soil quality, stability, and/or moisture.

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.

Surface or Groundwater Resources:

The Ryan Lauffer irrigation ditch runs through this tract from Miller Coulee. The ditch delivers water to private land to the east and was built before state ownership. This lease (AG-667) has one PCCRC water share and is used to fill the reservoir where the water collection system will be installed. Montana State Board of Land Commissioners has a stockwater right on this tract (41M 30109681).

Determination:

No Effect. It is not anticipated that the Project will result in negative cumulative effects of water quality, quantity, and/or distribution.

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:

There are no Nonattainment areas located on or near the Project, per the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Nonattainment area maps (NEPAssist, 2022). The proposed activities will not result in any new air emissions.

Determination:

No Effect. It is not anticipated that the Project would result in negative cumulative effects on air quality.

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.

Vegetative Community:

Vegetation around the Project site consists of native rangeland and contains Western Wheatgrass (*Pascopyrum smithii*), Alkali Sacaton (*Sporobolus airoides*), Needleandthread (*Stipa comata*), Prairie Junegrass (*Koeleria macrantha*), Blue Grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), Sandberg Bluegrass (*Poa secunda sandbergii*), Threadleaf Sedge (*Carex filifolia*), Kentucky Bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*), Timothy (*Phleum pratense*), Crested Wheatgrass (*Agropyron cristatum*), Smooth Brome (*Bromus inermis*), Fringed Sagewort (*Artemisia frigida*), and various forbs. The Natural Heritage Program database did not indicate any plant species of concern within T5N, R5E.

Determination:

Effect, Not Likely to Adversely Effect. Noxious weeds and annual weeds within the proposed construction area is a concern, but lessee will control any weeds that develop. Negative cumulative impacts on the vegetation resources are not expected.

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.

Habitat:

The Project site is not considered Critical Habitat per the EPA. The surrounding area provides habitat for a variety of big game species, predators, upland game birds, other non-game mammals, birds of prey, and various songbirds.

Determination:

Effect, Not Likely to Adversely Effect. The Project has the potential to impact wildlife temporarily through the operation of maintenance equipment if the water line and water collection system require repairs. However, the Project does not impact wildlife forage, cover, or travel corridors. Nor does this action change the juxtaposition of wildlife forage, water, or hiding and thermal cover. Overall, the Project is not expected to have negative cumulative effects on wildlife or habitat.

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.

Species of Concern/Threatened/Endangered:

Federally listed mammal species that occur in Montana Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*), Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus*), Swift Fox (*Vulpes velox*), and Trumpeter Swam (*Cygnus buccinator*). Federally listed avian species that occur in Montana include Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*), Rufa Red Knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*), Whooping Crane (*Grus americana*), and Yellow-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*). For additional information and additional species (fish, plants, & insects) see <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/report/species-listings-by-state?stateAbbrev=MT&stateName=Montana&statusCategory=Listed>

Wetlands:

The National Wetland Inventory (NWI) identifies a Freshwater Emergent Wetland adjacent to the Project footprint. For a complete description of wetland classification codes, go to <https://www.fws.gov/wetlands/data/Mapper.html>.

Determination:

Effect, Not Likely to Adversely Effect. The Project has the potential to impact wildlife temporarily through the operation of maintenance equipment if the water line and water collection system require repairs. However, the Project does not impact wildlife forage, cover, or travel corridors. Nor does this action change the juxtaposition of wildlife forage, water, or hiding and thermal cover. The Project does not propose any soil disturbance and therefore the Project is not expected to impact wetlands through stormwater runoff of disturbed soils. The Project is not expected to have negative cumulative effects on wildlife or habitat.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

Historical and Archeological Sites:

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.

Determination:

Because the proposed project is 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.

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.

Visual and Noise:

The Project is located approximately 11 miles west of Valier, Montana (population 530) and 12 miles northeast of Dupuyer, Montana (population 93).

Determination:

No Effect, Not Likely to Adversely Effect. The Project is not expected to have cumulative impacts on aesthetics.

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 on environmental resources.

Determination:

No Effect. The demand on environmental resources such as land, water, air, or energy will not be affected by the proposed action. The Project will not consume resources that are limited in the area.

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 projects or plants being considered on the tract listed for this EA.

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

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

Determination:

No Effect. Any risk to human health and safety will be restricted to Diamond D Angus Inc personnel during the normal day-to-day operations of managing the water line and water well.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

Land Use:

The current land use on which the water line and water well are placed of consists of 310.4 grazing acres and 6 unsuitable acres.

Production:

The Project will improve livestock distribution and generally improve the proponent's ranching opportunities.

Determination:

Effect, Beneficial Effect. The Project is not expected to have negative cumulative effects on future land use activities.

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.

Determination:

No Effect. The Project will be installed using local contractors. The proposed action will not have negative cumulative effects to the employment market.

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.

Determination:

The Project is not expected to have negative cumulative effects on taxes and/or revenues.

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

Demand for Government Services:

This Project is small scale and is funded by Diamond D Angus Inc. Additional government services (e.g. fire protection, police, schools, etc.) are not required for the operation and maintenance of a water line and water well. There will be no excessive stress placed on the existing infrastructure of the area.

Determination:

No Effect. Future Project activities are not expected to impact traffic, increase demand for government services, or place excessive stress on the existing infrastructure of the area. Therefore, the Project is not expected to have negative cumulative effects on government services.

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.

Determination:

No Effect. The Project is in compliance with State and County laws. No other management plans are in effect for the area.

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.

Legal Access and Recreation Opportunities:

The Project is located on legally accessible land. Recreation potential consists of hunting.

Determination:

No Effect. The Project will not result in any new permanent impacts to the surface of the land, impact access, or recreational opportunities. The Project is not expected to have negative cumulative effects on recreational and wilderness activities.

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

Determination:

No Effect. The Project will not require additional housing and is not expected to have negative cumulative effects on population and housing.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Social Structures:

The Project borders Kingsbury Hutterite Colony to the west. The Project is approximately 2.5 miles south of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. No archeological sites were identified within the Project footprint.

Determination:

No Effect. The Project is consistent with the surrounding land use, therefore, negative cumulative effects on native or traditional lifestyles or communities are not expected.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

Determination:

No Effect. The Project will not result in any new activities to occur in the area and therefore it is not expected to have negative cumulative effects on the unique quality of the area.

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 livestock water improvement will provide a reliable water source on the tract which will positively impact livestock distribution and general ranch management. This project is authorized under the improvement request form.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Abby Brett	Date: 9/9/2024
	Title: Land Use Specialist, Conrad Unit, Central Land Office	

V. FINDINGS

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative B (the Proposed action) – Grant Diamond D Angus Inc permission to operate and maintain the livestock water improvement.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

No significant impacts are expected.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis


EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Erik Eneboe
	Title: Conrad Unit Manager, CLO, DNRC
Signature: 	Date:

Exhibit A
Project Location Map

Diamond D Angus Inc Water Collection System & Stockwater Pipeline

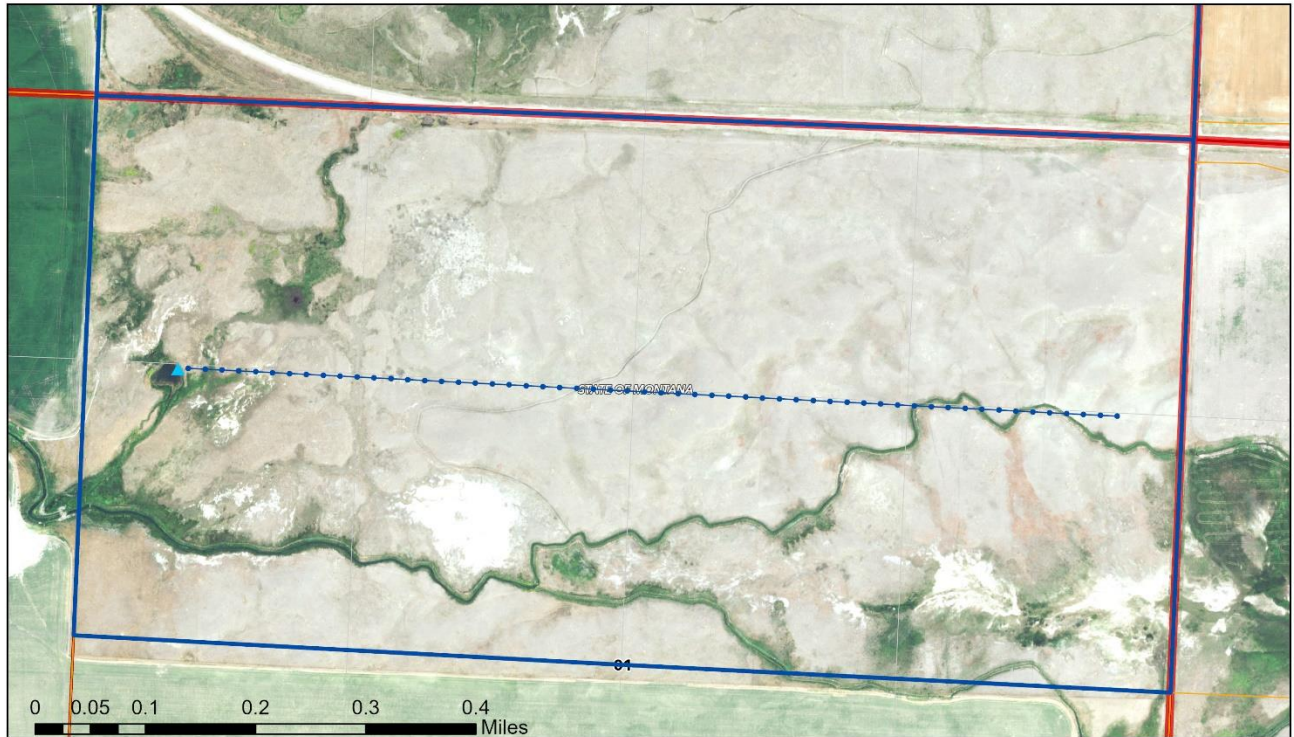


Exhibit A
Project Location Map

Legend

- Water Collection System
- Stockwater pipeline
- Trust Lands Surface Tracts

Lease No. AG-667
N2, Section 1, T29N, R7W
Lessee: Diamond D Angus Inc

Author: Abby Brett 8/23/24

