

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Bales Ranch Stock Water Pipeline
Proposed Implementation Date:	2026
Proponent:	Bales Ranch Inc.
Location:	T9S-R45E-36
County:	Powder River

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The Proponent has requested to install an improvement consisting of a stock water pipeline and a stock tank on this tract of State Trust Land. The pipeline would tie into an existing line located on deeded property to the south and extend approximately 1400 feet through NE 1/4 of the tract. The line would be installed utilizing a static plow method. No tanks will be placed on the trust land only the pipeline which will be permitted through a land use license

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 is working on an application for improvement to state land as well as a land use license. A field review of the site was completed on June 30th, 2026, by DNRC field staff.

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

None

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A- Approve installation of the stock water pipeline and stock tanks.

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- Some soil disturbance will occur in the area of the pipeline. This disturbance should be minimal in nature. The soils at this site are shallow in nature. The proposed pipeline would be installed using a static plow method and disturbance should be naturally reclaimed within one growing season.

Alternative B- No Impact.

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- The pipeline would be fed from an existing pipeline system located on surrounding BLM and Private land. The project should not result in any degradation of water quality.

Alternative B- No Impact

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- Pollutants and particulates may be increased during the construction of the project. After the completion of the project pollutant and particulate levels should return to normal.

Alternative B- No Impact

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- There may be disruption to some of the vegetation currently growing at the site. Species present on the site include Western Wheatgrass (*Agropyron smithii*), Blue Grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), Green Needlegrass (*Stipa viridula*) Needle and Thread (*Stipa comata*), Prairie Junegrass (*Koeleria pyramidata*), Bluebunch Wheatgrass (*Agropyron spicata*), Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) Prairie Sandreed (*Calamovilfa longifolia*), Sandberg Bluegrass (*Poa secunda*), Silver Sagebrush (*Artemisia cana*). Vegetation disturbance should be minimal and recover naturally within one growing seasons. Line would be installed using a static plow method.

Alternative B- No Impact

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- There may be minimal disruption to the wildlife that inhabit the area. Disturbance may occur while the construction is being completed. After construction is complete and the area is reclaimed there should be minimal impact. This project will also create more reliable water sources for wildlife in the area.

Alternative B- No Impact

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 showed observations of four sensitive species in the general project area. Due to the small scope of this project should not cause any significant impact to this species if present. The species noted are listed below.

Brewer's Sparrow-*Spizella breweri*
Northern Leopard Frog-*Lithobates pipiens*

This project is located within designated Greater Sage Grouse Core Habitat. The pipeline will be installed using the BMP's set forth for that use.

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Proposed pipeline installation work 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.

Alternative B- No Impact

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- Noise levels may be increased slightly and temporarily during the project but will return to normal after the completion. No lasting aesthetic impacts are expected.

Alternative B- No Impact

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 impact expected

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

None

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.

Alternative A- There may be potential safety risks for laborers but the potential risk is minimal with proper safety efforts.

Alternative B- No Impact

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

Alternative A- It would have a positive effect on Agricultural Activities and Production.

Alternative B- No Impact

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 impact expected.

Alternative B- No Impact

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

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 significant impact

Alternative B- No Impact

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

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 impact expected

Alternative B- No Impact

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 Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Impact

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Alternative A- No Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Impact

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

Alternative A- No Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Impact

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- This project would be permitted through the approval of a land use license. This project would allow for better grazing distribution and a more reliable water source for livestock and wildlife in the area.

Alternative B- No Impact

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Scott Aye	Date: 8-10-2026
	Title: Land Program Manager	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative A

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The granting of the requested stock water pipeline land use license on this tract of state-owned trust lands for improving grazing distribution, water availability and wildlife habitat should not result in nor cause significant environmental impacts. The proposed action satisfies the trusts fiduciary mandate by protecting the resource through improving grazing distribution and ensures the long-term productivity of the land as well as the purchase of a Land Use License. An environmental assessment checklist is the appropriate level of analysis for the proposed action

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:☐

EIS

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More Detailed EA

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No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Chris Pileski
	Title: Eastern Land Office; Area Manager
Signature: /s/ Chris Pileski	Date:

