DSL-252

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT	
Project Name: Opheim Branch lines Phase 1-Dry Prairie Rural Water Authority-**ADD ON for Valley County Refuse District	Proposed Implementation Date: Summer 2025
Proponent: Dry Prairie Rural Water Authority, P O Box 577, Culbertson, Montana 59218	
Type and Purpose of Action: The applicant proposes to construct water transmission main and appurtenant items through one State of Montana Trust tract in Valley County. The selected pipeline route across state lands is the most cost-effective route for this project. A Programmatic Environmental Assessment for the Fort Peck Reservation Rural Water System/Fort Peck Reservation and Dry Prairie Service Areas was conducted in October 2022 (PEA) and is referenced below. In the environmental assessment areas listed below where the PEA is cited the appropriate page references are included in the text. In the areas where no PEA reference exists, findings from Glasgow Unit staff conducted independently are submitted because they were either not addressed in the PEA or did not meet the Glasgow Unit staff criteria.	
NW4NW4, NE4NW4 Section 16 Township 28 North, Range 40 East	County: Valley

I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT	
1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED: Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.	Dry Prairie Rural Water Authority has submitted a Right of Way Easement application to the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Glasgow Unit Office for Opheim Branch lines Phase 1, Glasgow Refuse District Add on, to place water transmission pipelines and appurtenant items on State of Montana Trust lands.
2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:	Other government agencies that have jurisdiction for this project are United States Department of Interior-Bureau of Reclamation, United States Department of Interior-Bureau of Indian Affairs, Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, and the United States Department of Interior-US Fish and Wildlife Service.
	Action Alternative: Grant a Right of

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:	Way Easement to Dry Prairie Rural Water Authority to place water transmission main lines and appurtenant items on State of Montana Trust land on the above referenced tracts. No Action Alternative: Deny a Right of Way Easement to Dry Prairie Rural Water Authority to place water transmission main lines and appurtenant items on State of Montana Trust on the above referenced tracts.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS
4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE: Are fragile, compatible or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?	Action Alternative: In the PEA (4-1) the proposed action would cause short term soil disturbance with the potential for minor soil erosion by wind and water. Modern Installation (plow in method) practices reduce disturbance. Best management practices during construction can prevent most soil erosion from normal events. • Glasgow Unit staff concur with the findings of the PEA No Action Alternative: The No Action alternative (4-1) also describes the possibility of additional impact by the creation of additional water wells and subsequent systems potentially in the future if proposed project is not implemented. • Glasgow Unit staff concur with the findings of the PEA.
5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation	Action Alternative: In the PEA (4-1) This action diverts water from the Missouri River and distributes that water through the proposed transmission and distribution lines. Also referenced are the crossings in ephemeral and perennial drainages and

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
of water quality?	wetlands resulting in minor short-term disturbances with negligible long term adverse effects • Glasgow Unit staff concur with findings of the PEA No Action Alternative: PEA (4-1) The No Action alternative results in continued efforts to obtain potable water which likely will have greater effects that the continued implementation of the Dry Prairie Water Authority plan. • Glasgow Unit staff concur with findings of the PEA.
6. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?	Action Alternative: No significant impacts to long term air quality are anticipated and are not mentioned in the Programmatic EA conducted in 2002. And Glasgow Unit staff believe short term air quality effects will be minimal resulting in no significant long term air quality impacts. No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to air quality.
7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover type present?	Action Alternative: PEA (4-2) Vegetation would be removed during the installation of waterlines and construction of facilities. Reclamation and reseeding with native species. • Glasgow Unit staff concur with findings of the PEA but add with "DNRC approved native grass seeding mix". • Glasgow Unit staff requires implementation of best practices to prevent and control the introduction of noxious weeds. No Action Alternative: PEA (4-3) The No Action Alternative would result in continued efforts to obtain potable

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
	water and adding new wells and expansion of other distribution systems could disrupt additional native prairie, croplands, and riparian areas. • Glasgow Unit staff concur with findings of the PEA.
8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?	Action Alternative: PEA (4-3) Wetlands would be affected by construction of the buried pipelines as they cross wetlands associated with perennial and ephemeral/intermittent streams, poorly drained depressions and stock ponds. Surface activity in these areas likely will increase sediment levels in these areas until vegetation is reestablished. Ecological impacts are likely to be relatively short term. • Glasgow Unit staff concur with the findings of the PEA. No Action Alternative: PEA (4-3) The No Action Alternative would result in continued efforts to obtain potable water and adding new wells and expansion of other distribution systems could disrupt additional native prairie, croplands, and riparian areas. • Glasgow Unit staff concur with the findings of the PEA.
9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Sensitive Species or Species of special concern?	Action Alternative: PEA (4-6) Species of Concern (Greater Sage Grouse, Northern Hoary Bat, Little Brown Myotis, and Great Blue Heron). The proposed project would not be likely to adversely affect the species of concern or modify or destroy critical habitats. Overall, the proposed project could result in direct loss of habitat used for hiding cover, foraging, nesting and thermal cover. Effects to wildlife and wildlife habitat would be negligible with mitigation, and monitoring.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
	• Glasgow Unit staff concur with findings of the PEA. No Action Alternative: PEA (4-3) The No Action Alternative would result in continued efforts to obtain potable water and adding new wells and expansion of other distribution systems could disrupt additional native prairie, croplands, and riparian areas. • Glasgow Unit staff concur with findings of the PEA.
10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	Action Alternative: A Class I (literature review) level review was conducted by the DNRC staff archaeologist for the are of potential effect (APE). This entailed inspection of project maps, DNRC's sites/site leads database, land use record, General Land Office survey plat, and control cards. The Class I search revealed that no cultural or paleontological resources have been identified in the APE. Because much of the APE was previously cultivated, no additional archaeological investigative work will be done. This project is unlikely to significantly impact additional cultural or paleontological resources. HOWEVER, if previously unknown cultural of paleontological materials are identified in areas of native vegetation and undisturbed soils, during project related activities, all work will cease until a professional assessment of such resources can be made. No Action Alternative: PEA (4-10) The No Action Alternative would result in continued efforts to obtain potable water and adding new wells and expansion of other distribution systems could affect cultural resources.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
	• Glasgow Unit staff concur with findings of the PEA.
11. AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light?	Action Alternative: This project on State land will not impact the aesthetics of the surrounding area. The project is located next to existing roadways. During installation operations, the project will be visible. Dry Prairie has been extending services in the area and the population is aware of the minimal disruptions created which are of short-term consequence. No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no long-term impacts to aesthetics associated with the State land.
12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?	Action Alternative: There are no other projects planned or underway that would affect the demands of environmental resources including land, water or energy. No Action Alternative: PEA (4-11) The No Action Alternative would result in continued efforts to obtain potable water by adding new wells and the expansion of other distribution systems could disrupt additional native prairie, croplands, riparian areas, and cultural resources • Glasgow Unit staff concur with findings of the PEA.
13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?	Action Alternative: There are no similar projects currently proposed. No Action Alternative: There are no similar projects currently proposed.

III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION	
RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?	Action Alternative: The installation of a water pipeline has minimal human health and safety risks. These risks are to be mitigated by the contractor providing the installation services. No Action Alternative: The No Action Alternative would result in continued efforts to obtain potable water by adding new wells and the expansion of other distribution systems could further disrupt additional aspects of Human Health and Safety.
15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	Action Alternative: The project will have no significant impact to the current livestock grazing or dryland agriculture activities that occur on State trust land. No Action Alternative: The No Action Alternative would result in continued efforts to obtain potable water by adding new wells and the expansion of other distribution systems could disrupt additional native prairie, croplands, riparian areas, and cultural resources including industrial, agricultural and commercial activities.
16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.	Action Alternative: PEA (4-8) Significant positive economic impact will result from this project. • Glasgow Unit staff concur with the PEA findings. No Action Alternative: PEA (4-9) Increased employment, earnings, and local spending would not be realized under this alternative. • Glasgow Unit staff concur with these findings.
17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?	Action Alternative: PEA (4-8) The project will receive both federal and state of Montana tax revenue. • Glasgow Unit staff concur with the PEA findings. No Action Alternative: PEA (4-9)

	Increased employment, earnings, and local spending would not be realized under this alternative. • Glasgow Unit staff concur with the PEA findings.
18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed?	Action Alternative: The project will place no additional demands for government services. No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no demand for government services.
19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	Action Alternative: No effect. No Action Alternative: No effect.
20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?	Action Alternative: No significant impacts to wilderness or recreational activity are anticipated. No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to wilderness or recreational activity.
21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?	Action Alternative: PEA (4-8) Timing of this project may affect availability of housing if the timing is concurrent with peak seasons for tourism, hunting, and petroleum development. • Glasgow Unit staff concur with the PEA findings. No Action Alternative: PEA (4-9) There will be no changes in the demand for temporary housing. • Glasgow Unit staff concur with the PEA findings.
22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	Action Alternative: PEA (4-12) The project will not negatively affect the existing population of negatively affect the socioeconomic or cultural status disrupt the traditional lifestyles of the local community. The water project will enhance the day to day lives of the rural communities by supplying reliable, potable water.

	• Glasgow Unit staff concur with the PEA findings. No Action Alternative: PEA (4-12) The no action alternative would not change existing conditions. • Glasgow Unit staff concur with the PEA findings.
23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	Action Alternative: PEA (4-12) The project will not negatively affect the existing population, the socioeconomic or cultural status, or disrupt the traditional lifestyles of the local community. The water project will enhance the day to day lives of the rural communities by supplying reliable, potable water. • Glasgow Unit staff concur with the PEA findings. No Action Alternative: PEA (4-12) The no action alternative would not change existing conditions. • Glasgow Unit staff concur with the PEA findings.
24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:	Action Alternative: The installation of these water pipelines and appurtenant items will improve the social and economic circumstances for the residents of Northeastern Montana area. No Action Alternative: There will be no change to current economic circumstances under this alternative.

EA Checklist Prepared By: Don Pyrah, Glasgow Unit Manager, 7/28/2025

IV. FINDING	
25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:	Action Alternative Approve the Dry Prairie Rural Water Authority request to construct water transmission main and appurtenant items through one State of Montana Trust tract in Valley County. The selected pipeline

	route across state lands is the most cost-effective route for this project. This add on to the previous Opheim Branch lines Phase 1B is to provide service the Valley County Refuse District.
26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:	Finding of No Significant Impact Glasgow Unit staff concur with these findings. **The Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment for the Fort Peck Reservation Rural Water System Fort Peck Reservation and Dry Prairie Service Areas October 2022 (PEA) are referenced in portions of the above EA.
27. Need for Further Environmental Analysis: [ ] EIS [ ] More Detailed EA [X] No Further Analysis	

EA Checklist Approved By: Jocee Hedrick Northeastern Area Manager/MTDNRC
Name Title

Jocee Hedrick

Signature Date: July 28, 2025