

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Diamond Bar J Spring Development
Proposed Implementation Date:	Summer, 2014
Proponent:	Lessee – Diamond Bar J Ranch
Location:	T8S R10W Section 16
County:	Beaverhead

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The lessee, Diamond Bar J Ranch, is proposing to extend a pipeline from an existing spring head box and pipeline currently under LUL 8626 issued in 2009 and a lease improvement (stock tank and pipeline) originally issued in 1969 at the site known as School Section Spring. The current proposal includes a new branch off of the existing pipeline along a 2-track road through the SESW and SWSE where the line would enter adjacent BLM land. This EA checklist serves to analyze a change to the existing land use license No. 8626 with the addition of the proposed new pipeline.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

Natural Resource Conservation Service – Dillon Field Office
Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks Biologist Craig Fager
Montana Natural Heritage Program
DNRC Archaeologist Patrick Rennie

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

The BLM has conducted a separate review for their involvement in the project.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A – No action alternative. The proposed project would not be approved.
Alternative B – Approve the project

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.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service soils classification web site listed 2 soils located in the project area. Soils on site are 511F – Kellycreek, stony-Pensore, extremely stony-hysoop, very stony complex 15 to 50% slopes, and 9105F – Ratiopeak, bouldery-poin, flaggy complex, 15-45% slopes. Both soil types are approximately 60" of gravel / stone to bedrock. The proposed project involves the use of a vibra-shank to install

the pipeline at a depth of approximately 18 inches. The proposed project would not cause increased erosion on the site.

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.

No important surface water resources are located within one mile of the proposed project area.

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.

None

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.

The project would include minimal temporary ground disturbance with equipment. Due to the low acreage (less than or equal to 1 acre) affected, no cumulative effects to vegetation would result from this project.

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.

No surface water is present in the project area. The area is used extensively by elk, deer, and antelope. All species of wildlife currently use the existing stock tank. Elk, deer, antelope, and numerous bird species use the area as calving/fawning/nesting ground in the spring of the year. Direct impacts to all wildlife by the proposed project include the operation of machinery and increased human presence. Impacts by machinery and human presence will be a single occurrence and of short duration. Timing of the project would be during the summer to avoid calving/fawning/nesting season. Wildlife will continue to have access to upland water sources as a result of this project. No cumulative effects to wildlife would occur as a result of this project.

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 Montana Natural Heritage Program was solicited for input from the sensitive species database for the project area. The resulting report contained three species of concern:

1) Greater Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) – The greater sage-grouse is a State of Montana, U.S. Forest Service, and BLM listed sensitive species. Current use of the surrounding area by sagegrouse includes leks, nesting, and brood rearing habitat. There are no known leks located within a mile of the proposed project. In discussion with the NRCS, to avoid nesting season construction of the project would commence in July. The proposed construction of the stock water pipeline will not impact sage-grouse movement and use of the area.

2) Parry's Fleabane (*Erigeron parryi*) – Parry's fleabane is a BLM and State of Montana sensitive species. The species has only been found in Beaverhead, Jefferson, and Madison Counties in Montana. Parry's fleabane habitat is dry slopes and thin ridgelines. Flowering and seed set occurs in late June through mid July. Part of the proposed project is located in areas which would support Parry's fleabane, particularly the area where the pipeline would be buried from entering onto the state tract in the SESW to exiting the tract in the

SWSE. Equipment use of the site would impact minimal acreage and construction would occur along an existing 2-track road.

3) Bitterroot Milkvetch (*Astragalus scaphoides*) – Bitterroot milkvetch is listed as a U.S. Forest Service, BLM, and State of Montana sensitive species. The species is known to occur only in Beaverhead County, Montana and Lemhi County, Idaho. Flowering occurs in late May to early June with seed set in July. The timing of construction for the proposed project is late summer to early fall after seed set and plants should be in dormancy. Actual construction on the project will impact a low amount of acreage minimizing impacts to the plant.

4) Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) – The golden eagle is a protected species under the Federal Bald & Golden Eagle Protection Act passed in 1962 and is listed as sensitive by the state and BLM. This proposed project would occur during July and would not affect any known golden eagle nesting habitat. Duration of equipment use and increased human presence would be of short duration.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

Numerous large rock chips were found approximately ½ mile from the proposed project area. These rock chips were found in 2007 scattered throughout the higher elevation areas in the North half of the section during a field inspection for grazing lease renewal. A visit to the project site with Patrick Rennie, DNRC Archaeologist, was conducted on June 17, 2009. No cultural resources were found in the project area. Samples of the rock chips collected from higher elevation sites were collected. Patrick tentatively identified the rock as dacite.

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.

None

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 BLM completed a separate analysis on the proposed project where it leaves Trust Land and enters BLM land. No cumulative effects on environmental resources are expected as a result of this proposed project.

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.

The BLM conducted a separate analysis on the proposed project where it leaves Trust Land and enters BLM land. The two project analyses are for the same project and will benefit adjacent BLM lands with no adverse impacts to the Trust Land.

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.

None

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

The proposed project will improve water availability for livestock on the lessee's adjacent BLM permit.

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.

None

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.

None

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.

None

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.

The proposed project would improve water availability on adjacent BLM land to the South of the Trust Land.

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.

The proposed project would not have an impact on access to or quality of recreational 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.

No change in population or housing would result from this proposed project.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

No disruption would occur as a result of this proposed project.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

The proposed project is a buried pipeline and would not impact any unique qualities 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 return to the trust if the project is approved includes an approximate \$200.00 per year fee for a 10 year land use license. The current fee for LUL No. 8626 is \$150 for 10 years. The amendment to the existing LUL would provide an additional \$1000 to the Trust Beneficiary over the remaining 5 years of the land use license. No other potential future uses other than as livestock grazing is expected on this tract as it is an isolated section surrounded by BLM land on all but 1/2 mile and is not located near any urban or subdivided areas.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Charles Maddox	Date: 6/2/2014
	Title: Land Use Specialist	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative B – Approve the project as proposed, and allow the proponent to expand the existing underground stock water pipeline from state land on to private and BLM lands.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

This project should have no significant long term impacts or cumulative effects on the area. Very little ground disturbance will occur, there is no surface water present in the project area, and the improved stock tank and spring development will be a long term benefit to wildlife in the project area. Mitigation measures should include washing of equipment prior to entering state land, seeding disturbed areas and monitoring and spraying for noxious weeds if they should occur once the project is completed.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS More Detailed EA No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Timothy Egan	
	Title: Dillon Unit Manager	
Signature: /S/ Timothy Egan	Date: June 9, 2014	