

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Red Mountain/Chessman Reservoir Stewardship Specific Project Agreement Implementation.
Proposed Implementation Date:	August 22, 2014
Proponent:	State of Montana
Location:	T8N, R5W, Sects. 1,2,3,4,5, 8,9,10,11,12 T9N, R5W, Sects. 34
County:	Lewis and Clark

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

In cooperation with the USDA Forest Service (Forest Service), Helena National Forest, Helena Ranger District, the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), Forestry Division, is proposing to treat 490 acres of National Forest System (NFS) lands within the Red Mountain Flume Chessman Reservoir Project Area (*see Attachment A – Project Area Map*). The purpose of this project (*Flume Chessman Project*) is to reduce the likelihood of physical damage to the City of Helena municipal watershed infrastructure (flume and reservoir) in the event of a wildfire or from falling dead trees [*see Environmental Assessment for the Red Mountain Flume Chessman Reservoir Project (Flume Chessman EA): Need for the Proposal pgs 2-3; http://a123.q.akamai.net/7/123/11558/abc123/forestservic.download.akamai.com/11558/www/nepa/94938_FSPLT3_1451501.pdf*].

This project would be carried out under the authority of the “Master Stewardship Agreement between the State of Montana [DNRC] and the [Forest Service], Northern Region” (FS Agreement No. 13-SA-11015600-063) and the “Stewardship Agreement Supplemental Project Agreement between the Montana [DNRC] and the [Forest Service], Helena National Forest Tiered to the Master Stewardship Agreement” (FS Agreement No. 14-SA-11015600-013). The Master Stewardship Agreement authorizes the USFS and the DNRC to cooperatively conduct restoration activities on NFS lands within the State of Montana consistent with the provisions outlined in the Agreement. This Agreement also allows for the development of subsequent Supplemental Project Agreements (SPA) that ultimately specify project areas to be treated and associated management activities to be implemented that carry out the objectives of both Agreements. The Red Mountain Chessman Flume SPA outlines the purpose and actions associated with this particular project.

In August 2013, the Forest Service published the Environmental Assessment for the Red Mountain Flume Chessman Reservoir Project (*see hyperlink to Flume Chessman EA*) and in April 2014, published the Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact for the project (http://a123.q.akamai.net/7/123/11558/abc123/forestservic.download.akamai.com/11558/www/nepa/94938_FSPLT3_1637893.pdf) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA; 42 U.S.C. § 4321 et seq.) and other applicable federal laws. Together, both of these documents outline the proposed need, proposal and design features, anticipated environmental effects, and the proposed decision to implement the Flume Chessman Project.

By being signatories to the Master Stewardship Agreement and the SPA, DNRC is required to fulfill its duties outlined by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA; [Montana Code Annotated 75-1-101 through 75-1-324](#)) and the DNRC Administrative Rules for MEPA ([ARM 36.2.521 through 543](#)). Since comprehensive public involvement, project design, and environmental analysis has already been conducted by the Forest Service under NEPA for this particular project, DNRC is fulfilling its MEPA by adopting the public involvement processes and analyses by reference that are within and associated with the Flume Chessman EA.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project. List number of individuals contacted, number of responses received, and newspapers in which notices were placed and for how long. Briefly summarize issues received from the public.

On March 15th, 2013, the Forest Service scoped the project with several interested individuals, agencies, and organizations (see http://a123.g.akamai.net/7/123/11558/abc123/forestservic.download.akamai.com/11558/www/nepa/94938_FSPLT2_384299.pdf). In June of 2013, a Preliminary Environmental Document was distributed to the public for review and comment for a 30-day period (see http://a123.g.akamai.net/7/123/11558/abc123/forestservic.download.akamai.com/11558/www/nepa/94938_FSPLT3_1425169.pdf). A list of individuals who commented on this project as well as the responses developed by the Forest Service are available at: http://a123.g.akamai.net/7/123/11558/abc123/forestservic.download.akamai.com/11558/www/nepa/94938_FSPLT3_1451599.pdf. Other public involvement activities include those listed in the "Public Involvement and Collaboration" Section on pgs 4-6 of the Decision Notice (http://a123.g.akamai.net/7/123/11558/abc123/forestservic.download.akamai.com/11558/www/nepa/94938_FSPLT3_1637893.pdf).

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

Examples: cost-share agreement with U.S. Forest Service, 124 Permit, 3A Authorization, Air Quality Major Open Burning Permit.

See information under I. Type and Purpose of Action.

3. ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT:

Describe alternatives considered and, if applicable, provide brief description of how the alternatives were developed. List alternatives that were considered but eliminated from further analysis and why.

The alternatives considered for this project are documented on pgs 6-19 of the Flume Chessman EA. While the Forest Service considered other alternatives, it made a determination based on public comment to analyze a no-action alternative and the proposed action.

<p style="text-align: center;">III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT</p>

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| <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> |
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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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to soils.

See pgs 35-41 in the Flume Chessman EA for impacts related to geology and soils.

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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to water resources.

See pgs 28-35 in the Flume Chessman EA for impacts related to water quality, quantity, and distribution.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced (i.e. particulate matter from road use or harvesting, slash pile burning, prescribed burning, etc)? Identify the Airshed and Impact Zone (if any) according to the Montana/Idaho Airshed Group. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to air quality.

See pgs 150-154 in the Flume Chessman EA for impacts related to 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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to vegetation.

See pgs 20-28, 41-59, 133-138, and 154-156 in the Flume Chessman EA for impacts related to vegetation including fuels, sensitive plants and weeds.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

See pgs 63-133 and 142-147 in the Flume Chessman EA for impacts related to wildlife, avian and aquatic life and habitats.

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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

See pgs 63-133 in the Flume Chessman EA for impacts related to unique and endangered wildlife species.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

See pgs 138-142 in the Flume Chessman EA for impacts related to historical and archaeological sites.

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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to aesthetics.

See pgs 148-150 in the Flume Chessman EA for impacts related to visuals.

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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to environmental resources.

Cumulative effects have been comprehensively analyzed for in the Flume Chessman EA under each of the resources in the Environmental Effects section pgs 19-162.

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.

Helena Forest Plan and Amendments, 1986

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.

See pgs 20-28 and 147-148 in the Flume Chessman EA for impacts related to health and safety.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

See pgs 156-162 in the Flume Chessman EA for impacts related to commercial activities.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to the employment market.

See pgs 156-162 in the Flume Chessman EA for impacts related to quantity and distribution of employment.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

No expected impact on local and state tax base and tax 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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

No expected increased demands 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.

NA

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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

See pgs 147-148 in the Flume Chessman EA for impacts related to recreation and wilderness activities.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to population and housing.

No expected impacts to density and distribution of population and housing.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

No expected impacts to social structures and mores.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

See pgs 160-161 in the Flume Chessman EA for impacts related to cultural uniqueness and diversity.

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 direct, indirect, and cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

See pgs 156-162 in the Flume Chessman EA for impacts related to economics.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Andy Burgoyne Title: Unit Manager, Helena Unit, Montana DNRC	Date: August 4, 2014
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V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

As Decision Maker for this EA Checklist, I have concluded the following:

- The NEPA and public processes conducted by the Forest Service for the Flume Chessman Project also fulfill DNRC's obligations under MEPA. All analyses and public participation processes within the Flume Chessman EA are adequate and complete and meet what is required of DNRC under MEPA (*Montana Code Annotated 75-1-101 through 75-1-324*) and the DNRC Administrative Rules for MEPA (*ARM 36.2.521 through 543*).
- I concur with the Forest Service Decision Maker's determination in his Decision Notice published April 7, 2014 to implement the proposed action (see http://a123.g.akamai.net/7/123/11558/abc123/forestservic.download.akamai.com/11558/www/nepa/94938_FSPLT3_1637893.pdf). I therefore adopt his Decision Notice and related appendices by reference. Additionally, in reviewing public comment and the need for

the proposal, I also concur that there is no need to design and analyze any additional action alternatives.

- I concur with the Forest Service Decision Maker's determination that the proposed action will not significantly impact the quality of the human environment. Thus, the proposed action will not trigger any of the significance criteria outlined in ARM 36.2.524 (<http://www.mtrules.org/gateway/RuleNo.asp?RN=36.2.524>) and therefore, an environmental impact statement (EIS) is not warranted.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

See above

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Hoyt Richards Title: Area Manager, Central Land Office, Montana DNRC
Signature: <i>Hoyt Richards</i>	Date: <i>Aug 4, 2014</i>

Attachment A – Project Area Map



