CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Coffee Creek Land Exchange
Proposed Implementation Date:	July 1, 2009.
Proponent:	DNRC – Anne and Christine Orning
Location:	7 miles north of Denton – Township 19N, Range 14 East, Sections 2 and 3
County:	Fergus County

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The DNRC and Anne and Christine Orning propose an exchange of 80 acres of school trust land for 80 acres of private land.

Private Land Proposed for Exchange	State Land Proposed for Exchange
NE4SW4, Sec 3 Twp 19N, Rge 14 E – 40 Acres	NE4SW4, Sec 3 – Twp 19N, Rge 14E – 40 Acres
NE4SW4, Sec 2, Twp 19N, Rge 14E – 40 Acres	N2SE4SW4, Sec 3,Twp 19N, Rge 14E – 20 Acres
	N2SW4SW4, Sec 3, Twp 19N, Rge 14E – 20 Acres

The exchange is proposed in order to consolidate land ownership boundaries between state and private land and to transfer an existing homesite from state to private ownership. Land management and recreational access would improve as a result of the exchange.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:
Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

Fergus County Commission, DFWP Stivers, all neighboring land owners, Central Montana Pheasants Forever.

A public hearing was advertised in the Lewistown News Argus 2 and 4th, 2009 and held April 6, 2009.

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

DNRC Water Rights Division, transfer of homesite and stock water rights.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

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.

No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to geological or soil resources are anticipated.

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.

DNRC would transfer a domestic water right and a stock water right associated with the homesite and adjacent pasture on state land to the Ornings. Coffee Creek flows through the private property that would be transferred to state ownership. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

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.

No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to air quality is anticipated as a result of the exchange.

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.

Existing land use patterns are expected to continue after the exchange. 29 acres of land enrolled in CRP will be transferred to private ownership and subject to the Orning's decision regarding reenrollment. DRNC is no longer elligble for CRP payments and if the exchange is not completed would require farming of the land.

No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to vegetation is anticipated as a result of the exchange

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.

The existing state lands are encumbered by a home and ranch developments. 29 acres are enrolled in CRP and is dominated by crested wheat grass and offers little habitat value. The private land proposed for exchange includes one 40 acre dryland crop parcel with low habitat value and one 40 acre parcel of native range on the Coffee Creek bottom with high habitat value for upland birds.

No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to terrestrial, avian or aquatic habitats is anticipated as a result of the exchange

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.

Neither the private or state land contain unique or fragile environmental resources.

No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to unique resources is anticipated as a result of the exchange

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:
Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

No cultural resources have been identified on either the private or state lands. The state archeologist Patrick Rennie was consulted regarding the exchange and expressed no concerns.'

No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to historical or archeological sites is anticipated as a result of the exchange

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.

The proposed land exchange will not effect area aesthetics. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to area aesthetics is anticipated as a result of the exchange

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 exchange will not increase demand for environmental resources.

No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts due to an increased demand for environmental resources is anticipated as a result of the exchange

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.

No other state or federal actions are known in this area. No studies or plans are known to exist for this tract.

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.

The proposed exchange will improve human safety by transferring land immediately adjacent to an occupied homesite from state to private ownership. While this state land is closed to hunting due to the quarter mile shooting restriction around dwellings this land has experienced recreational use conflicts with hunters within the closed area. Transfer to private ownership will allow for more aggressive signing and enforcement of hunting next to the homesite while providing a better hunting opportunity on nearby property.

No adverse direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to human health and safety are anticipated as a result of the exchange.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:
Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

Existing land use practices are expected to continue after the exchange.

No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to industrial, commercial or agricultural activities is anticipated as a result of the exchange

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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.

The land exchange will not impact employment.

No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to employment is anticipated as a result of the exchange

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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.

State trust land is tax exempt. As a result of the exchange one forty acre dryland crop parcel and one forty acre native rangeland parcel will become tax exempt when transferred from private to state ownership. The 80 acres of residential and farm land transferred from state to private ownership will become taxable. On balance the exchange will result in a small increase in taxable value.

No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to the local or state tax base are anticipated as a result of the exchange.

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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

There will be little to no effect on government services as a result of the proposed exchange.

No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to the demand for government services is anticipated as a result of the exchange

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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.

There are no known environmental plans or goals involving the area.

No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to locally adopted environmental plans or goals are anticipated as a result of the exchange

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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 exchange will result in 80 acres of additional recreational opportunity, primarily upland bird and deer hunting. The state land proposed for exchange is closed to hunting due to the proximity of the home.

No adverse direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to recreational opportunity is anticipated as a result of the exchange

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.

The proposed exchange would result in no change in population or housing.

No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to population or housing is anticipated as a result of the exchange

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:
Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Adjacent landowners were contacted regarding the exchange, response was received from two neighbors who were supportive of the exchange. The neighbor to the east of the private land to be acquired identified a fencing issue which DNRC agreed to remedy.

No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to social structures or mores is anticipated as a result of the exchange

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:
How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

The exchange would have no effect on cultural uniqueness and diversity.

No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to cultural uniqueness and diversity is anticipated as a result of the exchange

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 56.4 acre of private dryland farm ground is adjacent to state farm ground held under a cash lease for $21.19 / acre. The grazing land would support 6 AUM valued at the state minimum rental of $6.97. Thus, the dryland farm ground is expected to bring $1,195 per acre and the grazing land $41.82 for a total projected income of $1,236.

The state land held under CRP contract currently earns $17.50 / acre. The CRP contract expires October 1, 2009. The portion of the 29 acre CRP contract proposed for exchange earns $507.50 annually. The grazing land is tame pasture rated at .5 AUM / Acre for a total of 22.7 AUM. 22.7 AUM at the grazing rate of $6.97 per acre earns $158.21 annually. The homesite rental is currently $319.20 and is scheduled to rise to $596 in 2011. Thus, the state land currently earns $984 annually.

There are variables to consider when analyzing income under this land exchange. The CRP contract on the existing state land is due to expire in 2009. It is unknown if these payments will continue as under the existing farm bill state trust lands are not eligible to re-enroll in the CRP program. Agricultural lease rates are expected to increase with rising crop prices. The rental income of the homesite will increase as a result in the phase in of values established when the residential lease rate was increase to 5%. On balance income received by the trust is expected to be equal or slightly greater as result of the exchange.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Clive Rooney	Date: 5/22/09
	Title: Area Manager, Northeast Land Office	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Action, DNRC will recommend approval of exchange of the subject lands to the Board of Land Commissioners.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

No significant impact.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

[ ] EIS [ ] More Detailed EA [X] No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Clive Rooney	
	Title: Area Manager, Northeast Land Office	
Signature: /S/ Clive Rooney		Date: 5/22/09