

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Land Use License #8660, Grazing and Fence Installation Project
Proposed Implementation Date:	Summer/Fall 2010
Proponent:	John Balkenbush III, 545 Pioneer Road South, Conrad, MT 59425
Location:	SW4SW4, Section 26, T29N, R2W
County:	Pondera County
Trust:	Common Schools

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Issue a LUL for grazing, access and fencing. The tract currently is not leased for grazing. It does, however, have 3 active leases for gravel removal and 1 Land Use License for gravel storage. There is also a small volume gravel pit that is owned and operated by the DNRC. The proponent is proposing to build a four wire wood fence on the West and South edges of the tract in order to allow for grazing of the tract and adjacent deeded land. The proponent will construct a gate in order to allow for the gravel operations to continue unimpeded. The gate will also restrict access from unauthorized parties entering the tract. This will lead to an increased return to the Common Schools trust by allowing for utilization of unused grazing land.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

DNRC-Surface Owner
John Balkenbush III-proponent

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

No other governmental agencies have jurisdiction over this proposal.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action) – Do not approve the request grazing and fence installation project.

Alternative B (the Proposed action) – Approve the request grazing and fence installation 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 soil types are generally suitable for the installation of the four wire wood fence on the West and South edges of the tract. Topography is gently rolling except for the SW corner of the tract which contains a steep coulee. The coulee may present some difficulties to place a fence through, but these

difficulties will be mitigated as soil will be very minimally disturbed by the placement of the fence posts. The grazing portion of the tract is part of the Western Glaciated Plains in the 10"-14" rainfall zone. Limited grazing with not affected the soils as the grass is utilized. Cumulative impacts to the soil resources are not expected in either alternative.

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.

There are no ephemeral drainages, surface water, or ground water resources present on this tract. Other water quality and/or quantity issues will not be impacted by the proposed action.

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.

The proposal does not include any on-the-ground activities, or changes to activities that would affect air quality. No effects to air quality would occur.

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.

Vegetation will be minimally impacted as approximately 0.5 miles of 4 wire wood fence is constructed on the West and South edges of the tract. Noxious and annual weeds within the proposed construction areas are not a concern. Cumulative impacts on the vegetative resources are not expected due to the small amount of soil disturbance caused by placing the fence posts. Limited grazing of the tract also will not have any impact to the vegetative communities. Approximately 5 AUMS are available to utilize.

A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted and there were no plant species of concern noted or potential species of concern noted on the NRIS survey.

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 area is not considered critical wildlife habitat. However, this tract provides habitat for a variety of big game species (mule deer, whitetail deer, pronghorn antelope), predators (coyote, fox, badger), upland game birds (sharp tail grouse, Hungarian partridge), other non-game mammals, raptors and various songbirds. The proposal does not include any land use change which would yield changes to the wildlife habitat. The proposed action will not impact wildlife forage, cover, or traveling corridors. Nor will this action change the juxtaposition of wildlife forage, water, or hiding and thermal cover.

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.

A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted and there were zero animal species of concern identified and one potential species of concern noted on the NRIS survey.

The silver-haired bat was found to be potentially located in the township that contains this lease. This tract contains features that may allow for transient use by this species, but given the fact the proposal

does not include any activities which would alter any habitat, any effects are not expected in either alternative.

There are no threatened or endangered species, sensitive habitat types, or other species of special concern associated with the proposed tract.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

The cross fence installation route was surveyed and no cultural resource items were identified.

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.

No cumulative affects to aesthetics in the area are expected from the grazing or fence installation project.

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 demand on environmental resources such as land, water, air, or energy will not be affected by the proposed project. The proposed project will not consume resources that are limited in the area. There are not other projects in the area that will affect the 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.

Currently, there are no other studies, plans, or projects associated with the proposed project area.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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.

No impacts to human health and safety would occur as a result of the proposal.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

The proposed grazing and fence installation project will allow for grazing of the state tract and adjacent deeded land. This will generally improve John Balkenbush III's ranching opportunities.

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 proposal would have no affect on quantity and distribution of employment.

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.

The proposed action will not affect tax revenue.

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

Being remote grazing land, no traffic changes would be anticipated. All state and private land are under the County Coop wildfire protection program. The proposed project would not change the demand for government services in the area.

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 is in compliance with Federal, State, and County laws. No other management plans are in effect for the area.

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 area where the project is being performed is on State Land that is not legally accessible to the public. The proposed project is not expected to impact general recreation activities on this tract.

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 project will not change the human population distribution or the housing requirements in the area.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

There are no native, unique or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity that would be impacted by the proposal.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

The proposed project will not impact the cultural uniqueness and/or cultural diversity 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 proposed grazing and fence installation project will allow for livestock to utilize state and deeded land for grazing. The project will be covered under Land Use License #8660 which will allow the project to be implemented. The license will generate \$100.00 per year for the 10 year term of the license for a total of \$1000.00 which will benefit the Common School Trust. Currently the tract is not leased for grazing and this project would allow for utilization of the grass.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Tony Nickol	Date: August 13, 2010
	Title: Land Use Specialist, Conrad Unit, Central Land Office	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Issue LUL 8660.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

State Land tract is currently un-leased for grazing purposes. The applicant recently purchases adjacent private land and the LUL will allow for ranching access, grazing, and fencing. These activities will not interfere with the gravel mining operation on this property. No significant impacts are expected.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Erik Eneboe
	Title: Conrad Unit Manger
Signature: /S/ ERIK ENEBOE	
Date: August 16, 2010	

