CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Windmill Livestock Spring Development
Proposed Implementation Date:	September, 2010
Proponent:	Windmill Livestock, (Tom Rice)
Location:	Section 36, Township 8 South – Range 10 West
County:	Beaverhead County

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Windmill Livestock of Dillon Montana the lessee of State Section 36, Township 8 South – Range 10 West has submitted an Improvement Request Form for the purpose of a spring development and installation of a stock water tank for watering livestock on the section.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

The following people were contact seeking comments and concerns;

Bob Brannon, MT Fish Wildlife and Parks Biologist
Patrick Rennie. MT DNRC Archeologist
Dennis Myer, MT DNRC Water Resources
Beaverhead County Commissioners
PDI LLC, Neighboring Landowner
Glen Hegsted, Neighboring Landowner
Peter Tomaryn, Neighboring Landowner
BLM Dillon Field Office
LaCense Montana LLC, Neighboring Landowner
Montana Natural Heritage Program

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

NA

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Action Alternative: Allow spring development to occur as well as installation of a stock water tank for watering livestock animals.

No Action Alternative: Deny the spring development and installation of a stock water tank on the state section.

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.

According to the NRCS soil survey they list the soil at the site of the spring development as being **Dyce, very boulder soils**. The parent material of such soils is clayey slope alluvium over residuum weathered from interbedded sedimentary rock. The soils are usually found around slumps and have the ground surface covered with cobbles, stones and or boulders which is the case on this section. The soils on the section show evidence of slumping in the past and portions of the section probably remain unstable. The place where Windmill Livestock plans on excavating for the spring development is on gentle terrain that appears to be stable at this time. Digging in the vicinity of the spring will not trigger any further slumping because of its location on a flat bench away from any steep slopes.

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.

The section lies approximately ¼ mile south of the confluence of the Beaverhead River and Grasshopper Creek. The Beaverhead River runs the length of the section. In the decade of the sixties the Interstate (I15) was constructed through the section following the general location of the Beaverhead River. Because the Montana Department of Transportation was concerned about the steep slopes above the river moving and slumping into the river they drilled a number of wells on the section and pumped the water overland to reduce the potential for slumping. Checking our files here in Dillon and with our water resource folks in Helena there are no records to indicate the depth or length of time that the wells were pumped. At this time all wells have been abandoned and there is no evidence of recent slumping on the section.

If this proposal is approved it would not affect the Beaverhead River. There is already an existing spring development and stock tank on the section but it runs dry once cattle have been present for a few weeks. If an additional spring was developed it would lead to better dispersion of the cattle. The first development has not affected the river and a second development would not cause any short or long term effects to the river. There are no other perennial streams on the section.

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.

This proposal would not affect air quality standards in the area.

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.

An NRIS search revealed that Scallop-leaf Lousewort (**Pedicularis crenulata)**, Mealy Primrose **(Primula incana)**, Railhead Milk Vetch (**Astragalus terminalis**) and Bitteroot milkvetch (**Astragalus terminalis**) are present within 1.5 miles of the proposed project area. All three are listed as sensitive species, by the USFS and or the BLM. None of these species were identified on the state section and were not seen on a field inspection

in mid August, 2010. Because the plants are not present at the proposed spring development location these identified sensitive species should not sustain any long term or cumulative effects if the spring is developed.

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 spring development as proposed is far enough away from the Beaverhead River to not affect the blue ribbon trout stream, and in addition has a relatively small foot print. The possibility of having any long term or cumulative effects on fish, wildlife, or birds is very minimal.

Because of a lack of surface water on the section the proposal could provide water for wildlife, and birds. This development would allow animals and birds to get water in much greater seclusion than going to the Beaverhead River which is along the freeway.

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.

Gray Wolf (**Canus Lupus**) Wolves are distributed throughout Southwest Montana. The project would not have any measurable effect on wolf prey or wolves, thus direct, indirect, or cumulative effects are not anticipated.

Greater Sage-grouse (**Centrocercus Urophasianus**) Greater sage Grouse use has been recorded in the project area. The DNRC is not aware of any important breeding leks in the vicinity. If sage-grouse are using the tracts, they could be directly disturbed and displaced by activities associated with the spring development during the construction, however, the disturbance would be short term and would not be expected to have a measureable impact on sage grouse. There isn't any sage brush near where the development is proposed. Measurable direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would not be anticipated as a result of the proposed project.

Ferruginous Hawk (**Buteo Regalis)** Ferruginous hawks have been sighted near the proposed project area. It is a BLM sensitive species and has been sighted near the project area. The project would not cause direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on this species because of its small footprint.

Great Basin Pocket Mouse (**Perognathus parvus)** Great Basin Pocket Mice have been identified as using the proposed project area. The mouse is listed as a sensitive species by the BLM and USFS. This proposal would impact an area less than an acre in size. The NRIS search reveals an area of approximately five miles where the sightings of this mouse have occurred. Because of the small size of the proposal the long term or cumulative effects would be minimal. During the construction phase of the spring development some impacts may occur to mice living in that area. The effects however would not be long term or cumulative on the habitat or mouse population in the sighting area.

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

MT DNRC Archeologist Patrick Rennie has indicated that this section has had numerous archeological sites associated with it. There are no records indicating any findings where the proposed spring development site is. He would like a DNRC employee to be on hand if the site is developed to see if anything is located during the development phase of the project to see if anything is located when the soil disturbance occurs.

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 spring development would be located approximately 10 miles south of Dillon Montana. The spring if developed would not be visible from the Freeway or the Beaverhead River, and is not visible from the only ranch near the proposal. There is an existing County Road that traverses the section and the development would be visible from the County Road (200 yards off the road). However this is ranching and grazing country and it would fit in with the surrounding aesthetics for this area. Long term impacts to aesthetics are not anticipated from this proposal.

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.

If the spring is developed it would help disperse cattle over a larger area and cause less grazing pressure around the only other available stock water tank on the section. It should not cause greater demand for environmental resources of land water air or energy.

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.

There are no current plans or projects on this tract that I am aware of.

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.

Traffic safety during the development of the spring could present a safety hazard. The road leading to the spring is steep and visibility is poor in places. Although the road is used infrequently this development may occur during the hunting season and the posting of road signs indicating that equipment is on the road would help reduce any traffic safety issues.

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

It may help better disperse livestock over the entire section during the grazing season and thus better utilize the grazing potential of the lease.

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.

This proposal will not create employment in the Dillon, MT area.

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.

NA

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.

This proposal will not increase the need for 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.

The Beaverhead County Commissioners and County Planning Department were notified of this proposal and they didn't submit any concerns or comment on the proposal.

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.

This proposal will not affect any 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.

There will be no changes in population or housing with this proposal.

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

NA

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

This is located in ranching country and will fit in with the current unique quality of the surrounding 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.

This improvement request will not affect the return to the trust however it will make the lease more desirable if the spring is developed for the current and any future lessees.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Timothy Egan	Date: 9/2/2010
	Title: Dillon Unit Manager	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Approve improvement request to allow the spring development

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Significant impacts are not anticipated as a result of the action. Critical habitat is not present for any wildlife species, water quality in the Beaverhead River will not be impacted and livestock management will improve.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

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

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Garry Williams	
	Title: Area manager Central Land Office	
Signature:		Date: 9/7/10