

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Land Breaking of tame grass, formerly conservation reserve program acreage, for conversion to dryland agriculture. Lease No. 10354

Proposed Implementation Date: August 30, 2010

Proponent: Tyler Tarum, P O Box 67, Richland, Montana 59260

Type and Purpose of Action: Surface lessee, Tyler Tarum has made a land breaking request to the Glasgow Unit Office of the Department of Natural Resources & Conservation. The surface lessee has requested permission to break 261.8 acres of tame/native grass currently listed as conservation reserve program acreage. The land breaking would be a conversion from present use of conservation reserve program acreage that will have an expiring contract date of 9/30/2010, for the purpose of growing small grain crops. The acreage would be reclassified from conservation reserve program acreage to dryland agriculture upon conservation reserve program expiration.

Location: W2, Section 36 Township 29 North Range 40 East

County: Valley

I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

Tyler Tarum the surface lessee has made a request to break 261.8 acres (more or less) of tame grass conservation reserve program acreage on State land Lease No. 10354. The request was sent to the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Glasgow Unit Office for review and evaluation. The request will be reviewed per Department of Natural Resources and Conservation land breaking criteria for all lands other than native sod. The Glasgow Unit Office contacted the following government agency for comments: Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks.

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

The other government agencies that may have jurisdiction for this project are the United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency and United States Department of Agriculture, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Service.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

No Action Alternative: Deny permission to the surface lessees to break 261.8 acres of former conservation reserve program acreage for dryland agriculture to produce small grain crops.

Action Alternative: Grant permission to the surface lessees to break 261.8 acres of former conservation reserve program acreage for dryland agriculture to produce small grain crops.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

RESOURCE

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

<p>4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE: Are fragile, compactible or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?</p>	<p>No Action Alternative: The soils on the State land will remain the same and continue to produce tame grass vegetation. The area will continue to produce vegetation for possible livestock grazing after conservation reserve program ends.</p> <p>Action Alternative: This type of project will impact the soils that are currently producing tame grass vegetation. The soils will be broken up for the purpose of producing dryland small grain crops. The soil type that will be broken for dryland agriculture is: Phillips-scobey complex, 2 to 9% slopes. The Phillips-scobey complex is suitable for dryland agriculture. This soil type has minima hazard of soil blowing and water erosion. The 261.8 acres requested for breaking will maintain current soil qualities and soil stability under dryland agriculture management.</p> <p>Mitigation: There will be a supplemental lease agreement with the lessee. The supplemental lease agreement will address areas of dryland agriculture that may have future erosion problems. If department personnel find areas of erosion, low production or other environmental issues. The lessee will be required to seed perennial vegetation on all designated acreages. Department personnel will flag all areas of unsuitable soils before land breaking. These areas will be left in permanent vegetation.</p>
<p>5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality?</p>	<p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative annual precipitation will be utilized by the tame grass plant community. There will be no impacts to water quality, quantity and distribution.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The project will allow the surface lessee to expand his dryland agriculture small grain crop production. The land breaking for small grain crops will not use water resources, other than the water associated with the topsoil from annual precipitation.</p>
<p>6. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?</p>	<p>No Action Alternative: No impacts will occur to air quality under this alternative.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The breaking of the tame grass land acreage for dryland agriculture purposes will have no impacts to the air quality of the State land.</p>
<p>7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?</p>	<p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative the current tame grass plant community will remain intact.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The breaking of the tame grass plant community will permanently destroy the current plant community on the project area. The tame grass community consisting of conservation reserve program acreage contains no known rare plant species. This plant community is currently pubescent wheatgrass, slender wheatgrass, alfalfa, western wheatgrass, and tall wheatgrass. The project</p>

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
	area will produce small grain crop vegetative type communities after land breaking.
8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?	<p>No Action Alternative: The habitat types associated with a tame grass plant community will remain intact.</p> <p>Action Alternative: This type of activity will disturb the habitat types on the State land. The area of impact is a tame grass plant community. This type of tame grass plant community has limited habitat resources. There will be minimal impacts to the wildlife and upland bird resources associated with the State land. There will be some areas of tract that will continue to produce a native rangeland plant community. The remaining native plant community will provide some habitat resources for song birds, upland game birds, waterfowl, and whitetail deer.</p>
9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Sensitive Species or Species of special concern?	<p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no change to the current environmental resources.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The project area contains no known unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources. The project area consists of bench areas, with tame/native grass vegetation. There are small areas of native rangeland located on other areas of tract. These areas are not part of the project site and will not be impacted by the land breaking process.</p>
10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	<p>No Action Alternative: The project area has no known historical or archaeological sites and existing status would remain.</p> <p>Action Alternative: There are no known historical or archaeological sites on the project area that will be impacted. The project area was inspected by Glasgow Unit Office personnel for archaeological, historical and paleontological resources. There were no historical or archaeological sites identified during the on-site inspection.</p>
11. AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light?	<p>No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts that would occur to the aesthetic values associated with the State land under this alternative.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The project site is located in a rural area and is not visible to the general public from a county road. The project will have no impacts to the aesthetic values associated with the State land involved with this project or other surrounding lands.</p>
12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?	<p>No Action Alternative: There will be no demands on environmental resources of land, water, air or energy occurring under this alternative.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The project will place no demands on environmental resources of land, water, air or energy.</p>
13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or	No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no changes to existing plans, studies or projects that the Department of

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
projects on this tract?	<p>Natural Resources and Conservation may have occurring on the State land.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The breaking of the tame/native grass vegetation will not impact other projects or plans that the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation may have occurring on this tract of State land.</p>

III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION	
RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?	<p>No Action Alternative: No human health or safety risks would occur under this alternative.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The breaking of tame/native grass vegetation for dryland small grain production has minimal human health or safety risks.</p>
15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	<p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no changes to current agriculture activities.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The project will enhance the surface lessee's ability to produce small grain crops on his State land lease. The production of dryland small grain crops will also enhance the revenue generated for the School Trust.</p>
16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.	<p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to quantity and distribution of employment.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The project will not impact the quantity and distribution of employment.</p>
17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?	<p>No Action Alternative: No local and state tax base and tax revenues would be impacted under this alternative.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The project will have no impacts on the local or state tax base.</p>
18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed?	<p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no demands for government services.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The project will place no demands for government services.</p>
19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	<p>No Action Alternative: No impacts would occur to the locally adopted environmental plans or goals under this alternative.</p> <p>Action Alternative; The project will not impact locally adopted environmental plans and goals. The United States Department of Agriculture agencies will review this land breaking request by our lessee. The writer of this document envisions that they will approve of the land breaking request with there specific management plan of operation.</p>
20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or	<p>No Action Alternative: No impacts would occur to access and quality or recreation associated</p>

