

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Native/Tame Break Request
Proposed Implementation Date:	March 1, 2011
Proponent:	Dean E. Robertson—63654 US Hwy 87, Loma, Mt. 59460
Location:	All Sec.36, T27N, R10E—Common Schools Trust
County:	Chouteau

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

To break out the S½ of the section of tame grass and NW1/2NW1/4, NE1/4 of the section of native grass for small grain production less the breaks area of the E1/2NE1/4. Amounting to approximately 500 acres of 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.

Dean E. Robertson—Lessee of State Lease #2726
USDA-NRCS—Chouteau County Office, Ft. Benton
Mt. DNRC---Lewistown Unit Office
Mt. F,W&P—Region 4.

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

USDA-FSA—Chouteau County Office, Ft. Benton—Notification of new breaking.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A: The “No Action” alternative.
Alternative B: The alternative to allow the proposed acreage to be broken out for small grain farming.

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.

There are no unusual geological features present. The soils are mostly loams with some clay loams mixed in. The soils are: Marvin clay, Phillips-Elloam Complex, Joplin-Hillon Loam, Telstad-Joplin Loam and Thoeny-Elloam-Absher Complex.

No cumulative effects to the soils 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.

There is a very low probability of any water degradation from this project. There is a small reservoir within the E1/2NW1/4 that 50% of the years do not contain any water.

No cumulative effects to water resources are expected.

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.

Pollutants or particulates will not be produced.

No cumulative effects are anticipated.

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.

The S1/2 of the section is all tame pasture. The SW1/4 has wild rye grass, the SE1/4 is seeded to crested wheatgrass. The N1/2 has previously been chiseled and is all native. It consists of mostly needlandthread grass and western wheatgrass. There are no rare plants or cover types present.

The present stands of grass within the area to be broken will be destroyed.

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.

Aquatic life will not be adversely affected. The reservoir area will not be disturbed. It is not included within the project area.

The Mt. F,W&P was scoped on June 4, 2010. Their response was received June 21, 2010.

The Mt. DNRC has the responsibility of maintaining a positive revenue stream on this acreage for the Common Schools Trust.

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.

At this time no known unique; endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources have been identified within the proposed project area. A review of the Sage-Grouse Lek and Lek Area data in ArcGis showed no sage grouse leks in or near the proposed project area.

A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program identified several species of birds on the Species of Special Concern report: Brewer's Sparrow, Long-billed Curlew, Greater Sage-Grouse, Chestnut-Collared Longspur Sparrow, McCown's Longspur Sparrow, Ferruginous Hawk, Burrowing Owl, Golden Eagle, Sprague's Pipet and the Grasshopper Sparrow. The Greater Short-horned Lizard, the Black-Tailed Prairie dog and the Merriam's Shrew were the animals listed for Chouteau County.

There is a 14 acre prairie dog town just north of the reservoir. Most of it is within the area and soils that are not a part of this project to be disturbed. There is also another dog town less than a mile to the northeast and one less than 2 miles to the south. Due to the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks concern for the prairie dogs, the E1/2NW1/4 will be left undisturbed. A few dogs may be displaced along the fringes of this town.

If there are any of the above listed species present, they will be dispersed into the surrounding area.

With the use of the USDA-NRCS Conservation Plan, minimum cumulative effects are anticipated.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

There are no known cultural resources within this section. (See #13)

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.

This project will not be visible from any populated areas. There should not be any excessive noise or light associated with it.

No cumulative effects are expected.

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.

There are no other activities nearby that should affect this land breaking project.

No cumulative effects are anticipated.

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.

In 1993, Patty Hazen, Soil Conservationist set up a range chiseling project and tame pasture project with water development and cross fences. It was part of an old EQIP Project. She did a cultural survey at that time for the whole section. No sites were noted. On 11/30/2001, DNRC Archaeologist, Pat Rennie checked out the SE1/4 for a range renovation project. He stated that "There are no cultural concerns 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.

Human health and safety will not be affected by this project.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

Agricultural production will greatly increase. Revenues to the School Trust will increase from an AUM rate of \$6.12 for 115 AUM's to \$20.00--\$30.00 per acre. The Class 3E soils are capable of producing: Phillips-Elloam Complex—44 bu/ac winter wheat, 39 bu/ac spring wheat and 64 bu/ac barley. Joplin-Hillon Loam—44 bu/ac winter wheat, 39 bu/ac spring wheat and 64 bu/ac barley. Telstad-Joplin Loam—45 bu/ac winter wheat, 40 bu/ac spring wheat and 65 bu/ac barley. The Class 4E soils are capable of: Marvan Clay—34 bu/ac winter wheat, 31 bu/ac spring wheat and 52 bu/ac barley. Thoeny-Elloam-Absher Complex—29 bu/ac winter wheat, 26 bu/ac spring wheat and 45 bu/ac barley. These figures come from the USDA Chouteau County Soil Survey.

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.

New jobs will not be created.

There are no direct or cumulative effects to the employment market.

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 tax base will not be affected.

There are no direct or cumulative effects to taxes for the proposed project.

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

Additional services will not be required.

No cumulative effects are anticipated.

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 Mt. DNRC requires that the lessee must obtain an NRCS-Conservation Plan for this section of land. Furthermore, in order to break the proposed acreage, the soils have passed that criteria set by the policy.

No further mitigation will be required.

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.

Wilderness or recreational areas are not accessed through this tract. There is minimal recreational potential within this section.

There will be no direct or cumulative effects on recreation or wilderness 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.

Additional housing will not be a requirement of this project.

No direct or cumulative effects are anticipated.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Disruption is not likely. 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?

There should be no shift in the quality 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.

Estimated return to the Common School Trust should be anywhere from \$20.00 per acre to \$30.00 per acre from this classification change to agricultural land.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Barney D. Smith Lewistown Unit Manager	Date: Nov. 23, 2010
	Signature: /s/ Barney D. Smith	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative B: The alternative to allow the proposed acreage to be broken out for small grain farming.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Minimal negative impacts are expected with this classification/land breaking change. The lessee must obtain an NRCS-Conservation Plan and follow it. All of the soils meet or exceed the Mt. DNRC's requirements for soils that can be broken under the Department's Policy and Procedures for Granting Land Breaking on State Land; for all state lands.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS
 More Detailed EA
 No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Clive Rooney
	Title: Area Manager, DNRC
Signature: /s/ Clive Rooney	
Date:	