

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Greycliff Riprap Project (LUL #6191)
Proposed Implementation Date:	March 2011
Proponent:	Sweet Grass County, P.O. Box 888, 200 West 1 st Avenue, Big Timber, MT 59044 Ph: 406-932-5152
Location:	Section 8-T1S-R16E (Navigable River – Common Schools)
County:	Sweet Grass

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The Proponent has applied to the DNRC for a Land Use License for the purpose of removing old remnant riprap from the Yellowstone River channel and constructing a series of rock vanes along the bank of the navigable Yellowstone River for approximately 2700 lineal feet in order to slow the erosion of riverbank/farmland. A portion of the proposed project would be within the low water mark of the Yellowstone River in Section 8-T1S-R16E. All proposed project riprap removal and construction activities would be performed by excavators and dump trucks located on the top of the river bank and in the river channel. Rock vane construction activities would consist of placing 40” rock sloped in a manner to maintain the existing bank. Project activities would occur during low water flows and the entire project would be completed when conditions are appropriate.

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 Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Sweet Grass County, Sweet Grass County Conservation District, Department of Environmental Quality, U.S Army Corps of Engineers, and the Montana Natural Heritage Program were involved. No formal public scoping was performed for this License request.

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

The Sweet Grass County Conservation District (310 Permit), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Section 404 Permit), Sweet Grass County (Floodplain Permit), and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (318 Authorization). The Sweet Grass County Weed Board administers the State weed laws in Sweet Grass County.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Action Alternative: A Land Use License would be granted for the purpose of removing remnant riprap and constructing a series of rock vanes along the bank of the navigable Yellowstone River for approximately 2700 lineal feet in Section 8-T1S-R16E.

No-Action Alternative: No Action - No Land Use License would be granted.

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 proposed project is located within the rocky riverbed of the Yellowstone River. All proposed project riprap removal and construction activities would be performed by equipment located on the top of the river bank and in the river channel. Rock vane construction activities would consist of placing 40" rock in a sloped manner to maintain the existing bank. Project activities would occur during low water flows and the entire project would be completed when conditions are appropriate in March 2011. All necessary permits would be secured (310 permit, 404 permit, and 318 authorization). Minimal impacts 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.

The proposed project is located within the rocky riverbed of the Yellowstone River. All proposed project riprap removal and construction activities would be performed by equipment located on the top of the river bank and in the river channel. Project activities would occur during low water flows and the entire project would be completed when conditions are appropriate in March 2011. All necessary permits would be secured (310 permit, 404 permit, and 318 authorization). Minimal 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.

A short duration increase in pollutants and particulates would occur from heavy machinery during proposed activities. Minimal impacts to air quality are expected.

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 would be impacted as a result of the upland ingress and egress of construction equipment on private property. Any disturbed areas would be rehabilitated and reseeded with native species. Much of the proposed project is located within the rocky riverbed of the Yellowstone River where there is no vegetation cover. No significant impacts are expected.

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.

A variety of fish, big game, small mammals, raptors, and birds use this area. The proposed project's activities would occur during low water in March when there is minimal breeding and nesting activities. Due to the timing of the proposed riprap removal and construction activities during low water flow, minimal impacts are expected.

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 proposed project area search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program database identified five vertebrate animals that are listed as sensitive, a species of concern, threatened species, or endangered species: bald eagle, bobolink, Yellowstone cutthroat trout, black-tailed prairie dog, and gray wolf.

Bald eagles may inhabit the proposed project area with the closest known nest approximately 2 miles to the northwest. Breeding dates in Montana range from March to July so proposed project activities would occur during the early part of breeding season. Due to the distance to the nearest nest, and the timing of the project at the earliest portion of the breeding season, minimal impacts are expected.

Bobolinks are known to exist from mid-April to September within the proposed project area and build nests in tall grass and mixed-grass prairies. Due to the proposed project activities occurring in March before the bobolink's arrival in mid-April, and all activities occurring between the banks of the Yellowstone River where bobolinks do not build nests, minimal impacts are expected.

Yellowstone cutthroat trout are known to inhabit the Yellowstone River year-round within the proposed project area. Yellowstone cutthroat trout typically spawn in spring and early summer after flows have declined from their seasonal peak. The proposed project may occur during the very early stages of spawning activities but would be completed before the main spawning season occurs, minimal impacts are expected.

Black-tailed prairie dogs exist approximately one mile to the west of the proposed project area at Greycliff Prairie Dog Town State Park on the other side of Interstate 90. Due to the distance from the proposed project area to the prairie dog town, Interstate 90 located between the proposed project area and the town, and all proposed project activities occurring between the banks of the Yellowstone River, minimal impacts are expected.

Gray wolves are known to exist in the proposed project area. Due to no known dens or rendezvous sites in or near the proposed project area, minimal impacts are anticipated.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

The proposed project is located within the low water marks of the Yellowstone River. No significant impacts are anticipated.

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.

Removal of remnant riprap should improve aesthetics for Yellowstone River recreationists; due to the distance from the proposed project area to the nearest residences in a sparsely populated area, minimal impacts are anticipated due to proposed project activities.

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.

None.

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.

None.

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.

None.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

The proposed project would slow the erosion of existing farmland, no significant impacts are expected.

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.

None.

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.

None.

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.

None.

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.

None.

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.

Access opportunities would remain the same as before the proposed project, no impacts are expected.

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.

None.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

None.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

None.

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 action has provided \$25 via a Land Use License application fee and would provide a one-time \$150 rental fee.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Richard A. Moore	Date: November 22, 2010
	Title: Southern Land Office Area Manager	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

After review, I have selected the proposed Action Alternative, to grant a Land Use License for the purpose of removing remnant riprap and constructing a series of rock vanes along the bank of the navigable Yellowstone River. This project is within the low water mark of the Yellowstone River in Section 8-T1S-R16E. I believe this alternative can be implemented in a manner that is consistent with the long-term sustainable natural resource management of the area.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

I conclude all identified potential impacts will be avoided or mitigated by securing the appropriate permits, project timing, design, and no significant impacts will occur as a result of implementing the selected alternative.

Mitigation measures:

1. All work shall be completed in an expeditious manner during low water conditions to avoid unnecessary impacts to the river.
2. Construction of rock vanes will consist of placing rock sloped in a manner to maintain the existing bank.
3. All activities performed in the river and immediate vicinity will be conducted in a manner to reduce turbidity and to minimize disturbance to the riverbed and riverbank.
4. To prevent leaks of petroleum products into the river, no defective equipment shall be operated in the river or adjacent areas.
5. All necessary permits (310 permit, 404 permit, and 318 authorization) shall be secured before any activities begin.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Jeff Bollman
	Title: SLO Area Planner
Signature: /s/ Jeff Bollman	Date: 11/23/2010