CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	CRP Break Request
Proposed Implementation Date:	2011
Proponent:	Mark Stephens—P.O. Box 292, Augusta, Mt. 59410
Location:	NE1/4, SW1/4 Sec.32, T23N, R11E —Common Schools Trust
County:	Chouteau

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

To break out an expired 187.4 acres of CRP for dryland small grain production.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

Mark Stephens, Lessee of State Lease #9706.
USDA-FSA—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-NRCS—Ft. Benton Field Office, Lessee must obtain an updated Conservation Plan to accommodate this new cropland acreage.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A: The "No Action" alternative.
Alternative B: The alternative to allow the 187.4 acres of expired CRP land to be broken out and farmed for grain production.

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 all loams. The soils are: Bearpaw-Vida Clay loam, Vida-Zahill Clay Loam, Savage Silty Clay Loam. These loams are all Class 3E soils.

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 low probability of any water degradation from this project.

No cumulative effects to the water resources 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.

Pollutants or particulates will not be produced.

No cumulative effects 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.

The present CRP stand of Crested wheatgrass and alfalfa will be destroyed. These are neither native nor rare.

No cumulative effects are anticipated.

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. There is no aquatic habitat on this tract of land. There were no CRP tract specific concerns raised from the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks scoping process for this section. If there are any populations present, they will be dispersed.

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. The project is a 187.4 acre tract in Sec. 32. It is only a very small portion of the total land base of CRP held within Chouteau County. 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. There are no leks within 20 miles of this tract.

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. This particular tract of CRP does not contain many, if any of these species. If any are present, they will be dispersed into surrounding permanent cover types.

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 archaeological, historical or paleontological resources present.

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 excessive noise or light associated with it.

No cumulative effects are anticipated.

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.

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks has been scoped concerning this project.

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 break 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 Trusts will increase substantially for this acreage. The Class 3E soils of Bearpaw-Vida and Vida-Zahill Clay Loams are capable of producing 48 bu/ac winter wheat, 42 bu/ac spring wheat and 70 bu/ac barley. The Savage Silty Clay Loam can produce 46 bu/ac winter wheat, 41 bu/ac spring wheat and 68 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.

No cumulative effects to the employment market are anticipated.

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 or revenue 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 lessees must obtain an NRCS-Conservation Plan for these tracts of land. Furthermore, in order to break the proposed acreage, the soils have to pass the strict requirements set by Mt. DNRC's Land Breaking Policy. All soils within the project area 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 these tracts.

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 School Trusts are anywhere from a low figure of $15.00 per acre to a high end figure of $30.00 per acre revenue from this small grain production.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:** Barny D. Smith Lewistown Unit Manager **Signature:**	**Date:** May 12, 2011

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative B
The alternative to allow the 187.4 acre tract of expired CRP land to be broken out and farmed for grain production.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Minimal negative impacts are expected with this land breaking. 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 Trust Land; for all state lands other than Native Sod, which includes CRP.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

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

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:** Clive Rooney **Title:** Area Manager, DNRC-NELO	
Signature: /s/ Clive Rooney		**Date:** 5/13/11