

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Lincoln Stock Water Pipeline
Proposed Implementation Date:	July, 2011
Proponent:	James Lincoln
Location:	Section 16, Township 11 South – Range 10 West
County:	Beaverhead County

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

James Lincoln of Clark Canyon Ranch is in the process of updating and expanding the amount of stock water available to the livestock he runs on his deeded and leased land from the BLM and MT DNRC. He has proposed the installation of some additional stock tanks and pipelines to fill the tanks to get better distribution of livestock over the range that he uses. His plan is to plow approximately 6,000 feet of new high density poly pipe underground on state land along an existing road in section 16, T 11S – R 10 W.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

MT Fish Wildlife & Parks Wildlife Biologist Craig Fager
MT Fish Wildlife & Parks Fisheries Biologist, Matt Jaeger
MT DNRC Archeologist, Patrick Rennie
Beaverhead County Commissioners
BLM Dillon Field Office
NRIS Search

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

This proposal will not only cross State land it will also cross private and BLM property. The installation will entail the installation of approximately 42,000 feet of underground pipe to spread stock tank watering for livestock over a large area of the landscape and allow for better utilization of the available forage in the Bell Canyon area.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Action Alternative: Grant James Lincoln a Land Use License (LUL) to allow the plowing of approximately 6,000 feet of underground stock water pipeline in Sections 16, Township 11 South – Range 10 West to pipe water to existing and new stock water tanks on adjacent BLM property.

No Action Alternative: Deny James Lincoln a Land Use License to install a new underground stock water pipe line to pump water across state land in Sections 16, Township 11 South – Range 10 West.

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 NRCS soil survey identifies the soils where the pipeline will be plowed as being Crago-Amesha complex. These soils are classified as being alluvium derived from limestone. The Crago soils are well drained with a land classification capability of being (non-irrigated) 6e. These soils go from being gravelly loam 1-10 inches below the surface, to very gravelly loam 10 – 30 inches below ground and extremely gravelly from 30- 60 inches. The Amesha soils are alluvium derived from sedimentary rock. These soils are also well drained with a non-irrigated land capability classification of 4e. Below the surface Amesha is mostly loam to 23 inches and sandy gravelly loams down to sixty inches. Neither soil should present a problem with compaction or installation during the plowing process if this project is allowed to move forward. No long term or cumulative effects are anticipated from this proposal.

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 pipeline proposal will cross one intermittent stream, which is a tributary of the intermittent stream in Bell Canyon drainage. This area receives between 10 - 14 inches of moisture/ year and the soils are highly pervious so there isn't any standing water where the pipeline would be buried. This proposal would have a low probability of affecting ambient water quality standards, or cause any degradation of water quality. No long term or cumulative effects are anticipated to water quality from this proposal.

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 will cause little or no degradation of air quality standards and is not located near a class one air shed. The closest community is Dillon, MT which is approximately 20 miles to the north. Prevailing winds blow from the southwest and will not cause adverse air quality concerns to the community. No long term or cumulative effects to air quality 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.

An NRIS search didn't reveal any rare plants or cover types located within the proposed project area. Delphinium bicolor (Limestone Larkspur) has been identified to the west of the project area on BLM lands but has not been found in Section 16, Township 11 South – Range 10 West where the project would occur. The tract had a range evaluation done in the summer of 2010 by Chuck Maddox, Dillon Unit Land Use Specialist. He identified the major decreaser grasses on the section as being Bluebunch Wheat grass and Indian Ricegrass. The two major increasers were Needle and thread grass, and Sandberg bluegrass.

This proposed action would have a very minimal impact on the surrounding vegetation. Because the pipeline would be plowed in with a dozer and the ground is relatively flat any ground disturbance to vegetation should be minimal. No long term or cumulative effects to vegetation would be 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.

The surrounding area of this proposal has a significant amount of use by avian species including Golden and Bald Eagles, Ferruginous Hawk, and Greater Sage Grouse. The wildlife use includes mule deer, occasional elk use, fox, coyote, and an array of small mammals including Pygmy Rabbits. The installation of the pipeline may cause short term disturbance and displacement during the plowing of the pipeline. This would be of short duration for the plowing would only occur during one to two day duration. No long term or cumulative effects are anticipated from this proposal.

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.

Bald Eagle, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* a confirmed nesting site along the Red Rock River has been observed and recorded in both 2001 and 2005. The exact location was not listed on the NRIS search but the listed occurrence of the nesting site is within 1 mile of the proposals location. This is far enough away from the nesting location to avoid disturbance or displacement. Bald Eagles are listed as threatened species by the US Forest Service and as a sensitive species by the Bureau of Land Management. No long term or cumulative effects are anticipated by this proposal.

Ferruginous Hawk, *Buteo regalis* A confirmed nesting site was observed in 1985 near the project area. The hawk is listed as a sensitive species by the Bureau of Land Management. An NRIS search didn't reveal any more new sighting but Ferruginous Hawks are probably still living in this area. Because this proposal is of a short duration and no long term disturbance is expected there will not be any long term or cumulative effects to the hawks in the area.

Golden Eagle, *Aquila chrysaetos* The Golden eagle is listed as a sensitive species by the Bureau of Land Management. An NRIS search confirmed that in 1985 a nesting site was identified on Forest Service land approximately 2.5 miles to the southwest of the project area. Because the nesting site is located 2.5 miles away from the proposed project and the small amount of disturbance that is expected from the proposal no short, long term or cumulative effects to golden eagles are anticipated from this proposal.

Greater Sage-Grouse *Centrocercus urophasianus*, A confirmed lek was identified within 1mile of the proposal in 1970, however Craig Fager, Wildlife biologist for the MT FWP isn't aware of any known leks today. The closest known lek is in Ashbough Canyon, 10 – 12 air miles from the project area. At this time there is little known sage grouse use near this proposed project. Because of this no long term or cumulative effects to sage grouse are anticipated from this proposal.

Pygmy Rabbit, *Brachylagus idahoensis* A NRIS search of the area revealed that in 1997 pygmy rabbits were observed using a small area of the state section where the project is proposed. Installation of the underground pipeline could have a short term impact on the rabbits. The duration of installation will only be for a couple of days and once installed there will be no further disturbance to the area. MT FWP biologist Craig Fager was consulted about this area and the effect on the rabbits if the proposal is allowed to proceed. Craig felt that the installation would not have any long term impacts or have any cumulative effects on the rabbit's population in the Bell Canyon area.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

Patrick Rennie the MT DNRC Archeologist was consulted about this project and he didn't have any cultural resource concerns associated with this proposal.

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.

Because the proposal will be underground no long term effect to the aesthetics of the area are anticipated. The installation will only be for a short period of time and the disturbance on the ground will be minimal. 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.

The water supply for this pipeline and stock tanks will be two existing wells, one on DNRC land and one on BLM land. The new pipeline could affect the viability of the wells in the future however this would be hard to determine without stress testing the wells. The project should help disperse livestock over the landscape and better utilize the existing forage out on the ground. Much of this area has very little water available for both livestock and wildlife. The project will have no other known impacts on environmental resources in the Bell Canyon area.

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 BLM completed a watershed assessment of this area a few years ago. A number of ranches in the Bell Canyon area were sold and changed hands so this proposal was not evaluated in the original assessment. The new landowner Jim Lincoln, has proposed this project and the BLM is currently conducting an environmental review.

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.

The project should not pose any known human health or safety risks if allowed to proceed.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

The project will not alter any current use patterns dealing with agricultural use. Grazing of livestock will continue as before, with better utilization of forage and dispersion of livestock over the landscape.

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.

The proposal will not alter current employment numbers in the Dillon 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.

The project will not alter the current local or state tax base in Beaverhead County or the state of Montana.

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.

There are no known impacts or increased demands on government services from this proposed action.

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.

I am unaware of any local, state or federal zoning plans or goals for the area.

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 wilderness or recreational activities in the area.

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.

N. A.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

This project is congruent with current social structures and mores in Southwestern Montana. Ranching and livestock production are the main economic drivers in Beaverhead County and this is a project to continue to promote these traditional lifestyle.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

The pipeline will be located underground and will not be visible once the disturbed vegetation grows back.

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 proposal will generate approximately \$150.00 every ten years for the trust.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Tim Egan	Date: June 15, 2011
	Title: Dillon Unit Manager	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

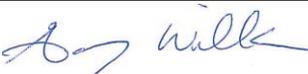
Issue the applicant a Land Use License authorizing the installation of a buried water line to transport stockwater from an existing well on private land across state land to a new stock tank site on BLM ownership.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The proposed project is not likely to result in significant impacts. There are no unique habitats or resources along the proposed pipeline route, the activity will be short term and disturbed sites will be re-vegetated at the conclusion of the project.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS
 More Detailed EA
 No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Garry Williams	
	Title: Area Manager, Central Land Office	
Signature: 	Date: June 16, 2011	

