

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

<u>Project Name:</u> Phillips Break Request	<u>Proposed Implementation Date:</u> October 2011
<u>Proponent:</u> Jerry Phillips, 130 Phillips Rd, Richland, MT 59260	
<u>Type and Purpose of Action:</u> Mr. Phillips has requested to break 765.4 acres of expiring CRP land on his State lease #849. The previous CRP contract expired on September 30, 2011. He wishes to utilize the expired CRP acreage for small grain production in the future.	
<u>Location:</u> All of Sec. 25 Twp. 35N Rge. 43E and All of Sec. 25 Twp. 35N Rge. 43E.	<u>County:</u> Valley

I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

<p>1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED: Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.</p>	<p>The proponent, Jerry Phillips, has submitted a break request in writing to the Glasgow Unit Office (GUO) of the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. The request will be reviewed per DNRC land breaking criteria for all lands other than native sod.</p> <p>FWP was solicited for comment on September 27, 2011.</p> <p>NRCS and FSA administered the former CRP contact, and they would require the lessee to follow certain guidelines to remain eligible for future farm programs and payments.</p>
<p>2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:</p>	<p>DNRC is not aware of any other agencies with jurisdiction or other permits needed.</p>
<p>3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:</p>	<p>Action Alternative: Grant the proponent permission to break 765.4 acres of expired CRP from permanent cover.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Deny the proponent permission to break 765.4 acres of expired CRP from permanent cover.</p>

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS
	<p>N = Not Present or No Impact will occur. Y = Impacts may occur (explain below)</p>

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<p>4.GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE: Are fragile, compactable or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?</p>	<p>98% of the soils present are Class III soil types and well suited for small grain production. Reeder-Cambert-Doney complex makes up 49% of the soil and is capable of producing 25 bu/acre of spring wheat. Farnuf Loam makes up 34% of the soil and is capable of producing 35 bu/acre of spring wheat. Farnuf-Reeder loams make up 15% of the soil and are capable of producing 28 bu/acre of spring wheat. The remaining 2% of soil is the Reeder-Doney-Cambert complex and it is a Class V soil type. The 2 fields contain less than 10 acres of the Reeder-Doney-Cambert complex and it is located along the field edges. Removing the permanent cover will make the soils more susceptible to erosion; however, the continuous cropping methods used by our lessee should ensure erosion does not become a problem. No unusual geologic features or fragile, compactable, or unstable soils are present.</p> <p>Action: Removing the permanent vegetation may increase the likelihood of erosion, but erosion is not anticipated to increase and no impacts to the geology or soil characteristics are anticipated. Lessee will be required to reseed all eroding areas to permanent cover if erosion becomes a problem in the future.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the geology or soil characteristics will occur.</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>Small grain crop production would utilize the soils available water similar to the tame grasses that are present. Significant waterways would not be broken to ensure water quality is unaffected by the proposed action.</p> <p>Action: The project is not anticipated to impact the water quality, quantity, and/or distribution of surface water.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the water quality, quantity, and/or distribution will occur.</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>Action: No impacts to air quality are anticipated to occur.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to air quality will occur.</p>
<p>7.VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?</p>	<p>A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program did not identify any plant species of concern or potential concern. The present tame grass stand would be broken up and small grain crops would be annually planted and harvested.</p> <p>Action: Vegetation cover would be altered from expiring CRP acreage (tame grass) to annually seeded cropland. No rare plants or cover types are present</p>

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

	<p>in the current stand of vegetation.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the vegetation cover, quantity, and/or quality will occur.</p>
<p>8.TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?</p>	<p>A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program identified 2 species of concern and 1 potential species of concern. The database lists the Iowa Darter and Ferruginous Hawk as species of concern and Brook Stickleback as a potential species of concern. None of the listed species are known to use the area proposed for breaking because the fish species require water and the bird species prefer sagebrush grasslands.</p> <p>Action: No impacts to terrestrial, avian, and/or aquatic life and habitats are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to terrestrial, avian, and/or aquatic life and habitats will occur.</p>
<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>	<p>A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program identified 2 species of concern and 1 potential species of concern. The database lists the Iowa Darter and Ferruginous Hawk as species of concern and Brook Stickleback as a potential species of concern. The listed species would not be impacted because the bird species prefers sagebrush grasslands and the fish species require water. No plant species of concern or wetlands are present within the project area.</p> <p>Action: No impacts to unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources will occur.</p>
<p>10.HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?</p>	<p>The acreage proposed to be broken was previously farmed and does not contain any historical, archaeological, and/or paleontological resources.</p> <p>Action: No impacts to the areas historical, archeological, and/or paleontological resources will occur.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the areas historical, archeological, and/or paleontological resources will occur.</p>
<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>	<p>The project area currently consists of a mixture of grazing lands, agricultural lands, and CRP lands. This project area is not near a prominent topographic feature, no excessive noise or light will be produced, and it is not visible from a populated or scenic area.</p> <p>Action: No impacts to the areas aesthetics are</p>

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

	<p>anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the areas aesthetics will occur.</p>
<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>	<p>Action: No impacts to the demands of environmental resources such as land, water, air, and/or energy resources are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the demands of environmental resources such as land, water, air, and/or energy resources will occur.</p>
<p>13.OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?</p>	<p>Action: No impacts to studies, plans, and/or projects are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to studies, plans, and/or projects will occur.</p>

III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
<p>14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?</p>	<p>Action: No impacts to human health and/or safety risks are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to human health and/or safety risks will occur.</p>
<p>15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?</p>	<p>Action: No impacts to industrial and commercial activities are anticipated. Returning the expiring CRP acreage to agricultural production would result in increased small grain production.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the industrial, commercial, and/or agricultural activities and production will occur.</p>
<p>16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.</p>	<p>Action: No impacts to quantity and distribution of employment are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to quantity and distribution of employment will occur.</p>
<p>17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?</p>	<p>Action: The proposed action may increase tax revenue from the increased revenues generated via the lease being returned to production.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the state tax base and/or tax revenues will occur.</p>
<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>	<p>Action: No impacts to the level of demand for government services are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the level of demand for government services will occur.</p>
<p>19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:</p>	<p>Action: No impacts to local environmental plans and</p>

<p>Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?</p>	<p>goals are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to local environmental plans and goals will occur.</p>
<p>20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?</p>	<p>Bedding and nesting cover provided by the current stand of CRP would be removed, but a new edge would be created and wildlife greatly benefits from such edges.</p> <p>Action: Hunting opportunities for upland game birds, whitetail deer, mule deer, and antelope may or may not be impacted. No other impacts to recreational or wilderness activities are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the quality of recreational and wilderness activities will occur.</p>
<p>21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?</p>	<p>Action: No impacts to the density and/or distribution of population and housing are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the density and/or distribution of population and housing will occur.</p>
<p>22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?</p>	<p>Action: No impacts to the areas social structures and/or traditional lifestyles are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the areas social structures and/or traditional lifestyles will occur.</p>
<p>23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?</p>	<p>Action: No impacts to the areas cultural uniqueness and/or diversity are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the areas cultural uniqueness and/or diversity will occur.</p>
<p>24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:</p>	<p>Action: No impacts to the social and economic circumstances are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the social and economic circumstances will occur.</p>

EA Checklist Prepared By: _____
Matthew Poole (Land Use Specialist)

Date: October 11, 2011

