CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	LUL #3071011 for a water pipeline and two stock water tanks.
Proposed Implementation Date:	Spring 2012
Proponents:	Meissner Ranches Inc., PO Box 490, Chester, MT 59522
Location:	See below list of tracts.
County:	Liberty
Trust:	Common Schools

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Meissner Ranches Inc. lessees of state leases #6655, #7829, and #7830 have requested to place a livestock water line and two stock water tanks on and across state land located in Section 33, T36N, R5E and Sections 3, 10, and 15, T35N, R5E. This will allow them to connect to a spring located on deeded land in SE4SE4, Section 29, T36N, R5E to a private water system located on deeded land in the NE4SW4, Section 15, T35N, R5E. The water line will be 2.0" HDPE pipe static plowed to a depth of 6' for a distance of approximately 10,513.00' on state land and 12,508.00 on deeded land. Two stock water tanks will be placed on state land. One tank will be located in the SW4NW4, Section 3, T35N, R6E and in the NW4SW4, Section 10, T35N, R6E. A detailed map showing the location for this project lay out is included within this assessment. The primary objective is to provide reliable stock water to deeded and state pasture in order to allow for better livestock distribution.

Township	Range	Section	Portion Affected	Footage Affected	Miles Affected	Lease #	Trust
36N	5E	33	W2NW4	1,100.00	0.21	6655	CS
36N	5E	33	E2W2, E2SE4	2,771.00	0.52	7829	CS
35N	5E	3	Lot 4, SW4NW4, W2SW4	2,461.00	0.47	7830	CS
35N	5E	10	S2NW4, SW4	4181.00	0.79	7830	CS
TOTALS				10,513.00	1.99		CS

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

Meissner Ranches Inc.-Proponent, Surface Lessee, Leases #6655, #7829, and #7830.
DNRC-Surface Owner

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

There are no other agencies with jurisdiction on this project.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action) – Deny the proponent permission to place the stock water line and the two stock water tanks.

Alternative B (the Proposed action) – Grant the proponent permission to place the stock water line and the two stock water tanks.

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 soil types are primarily made up of silty and thin hilly sites. These soil types are made up of gently rolling to steep topography. Any concerns over the steepness of the slopes will be mitigated as the water line will be installed in order to avoid the steep slopes. Equipment will cause localized areas of soil compaction and will disturb the soil were the water line is being placed. Reclamation requirements are to compact and level the plow scar created in the installation of the water line. Then seed the impacted area with the existing grass types and seeding rates that are listed in item 7 of this assessment. Cumulative impacts on soil resources are not expected and any difficulties will be further mitigated by the use of a static plow to place the water line which will cause limited soil disturbance. In addition, the disturbed areas will be reclaimed and reseeded by the proponents.

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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 are two ephemeral drainages present on these tracts, McTosh Coulee and Government Creek. There are numerous documented and/or recorded water associated with the proposed project area. The developed spring to feed the project is located on private land owned by the proponent. The proposed action will improve overall water reliability and quantity for the proponent on the adjacent state and deeded pastures. Cumulative effects to water resources are not expected from the project. The water line will be buried and the additional stock water tanks will provide reliable water to livestock therefore lessening the impact on the ephemeral drainages. Other water quality and/or quantity issues will not be impacted by the proposed action.

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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.

The proposed action will not impact the air quality.

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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 will be minimally impacted as approximately 1.99 miles of 2.0" HDPE pipe will be placed 6' deep. The pipe will be installed by the utilization of a static plow. Noxious and annual weeds within the proposed construction areas are a concern, but this concern will be mitigated as the proponents are responsible for controlling weeds within the construction areas. Cumulative impacts on the vegetative resources are not expected as the proposed construction areas will be reclaimed and reseeded. The reseeding mixture will consist of a grass seed mixture of 30% Slender Wheatgrass, 30% Rough Fescue, 15% Green Needlegrass, 10% Western Wheatgrass, 10% Bluebunch Wheatgrass, and 5% Cicer Milkvetch. If drilled the rate will be 8#/acre. If broadcast the rate will be doubled.

A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted and there were no plant species of concern noted or potential species of concern noted on the NRIS survey.

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 area is not considered critical wildlife habitat. However, these tracts provide habitat for a variety of big game species (mule deer, whitetail deer, pronghorn antelope), predators (coyote, fox, badger), upland game birds (sharp tail grouse, Hungarian partridge), other non-game mammals, raptors and various songbirds. The proposal does not include any land use change which would yield changes to the wildlife habitat. The proposed action will not impact wildlife forage, cover, or traveling corridors. Nor will this action change the juxtaposition of wildlife forage, water, or hiding and thermal cover. Wildlife usage is expected to return to "normal" (pre-action usage) following the completion of the project. The proposed project will also provide a reliable water source for wildlife.

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.

There are no threatened or endangered species, sensitive habitat types, or other species of special concern associated with the proposed project area. At this time, no known unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources have been identified within the proposed project area.

A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted for T35N, R5E. There were three animal species of concern and zero potential species of concern noted on the NRIS survey: Birds-Veery and McCown's Longspur. Invertebrates-Gray Comma. These particular tracts of native grazing land do not contain many, if any of these species. If any are present, they will be dispersed into the surrounding permanent cover and return to the project area once it is completed.

A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted for T36N, R5E. There was seven animal species of concern and one potential species of concern noted on the NRIS survey: Birds-Northern Goshawk, Sprague's Pipit, Veery, Bobolink, Clark's Nutcracker, Long-billed Curlew, and Swainson's Hawk. Invertebrates-Gray Comma. This particular tract of native grazing land does not contain many, if any of these species. If any are present, they will be dispersed into the surrounding permanent cover and return to the project area once it is completed.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:
Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

The DNRC staff archaeologist conducted a Class III inventory of the area of potential effect on state lands. No cultural or paleontologic resources were identified. No additional archaeological investigative work is recommended.

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.

The livestock water line will be buried so there will be no aesthetic impacts.

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 demand on environmental resources such as land, water, air, or energy will not be affected by the proposed action. The proposed action will not consume resources that are limited in the area. There are no other projects in the area that will affect the proposed project.

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.

There are no other projects or plans being considered on the tract listed on this EA.

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 proposed project will not change human safety in the area.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:
Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

The proposed livestock water development will improve livestock distribution and generally improve the proponent's ranching opportunities.

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 proposed action will not significantly affect long-term employment in the surrounding communities.

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 proposed action will not affect tax revenue.

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

This project is of a small scale and being funded by the proponent. There will be no excessive stress placed of the existing infrastructure of the area.

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 proposed action is in compliance with State and County laws. No other management plans are in effect 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 proposed project area is accessible via Windy Ridge Road and adjacent state land. The tracts generally have high recreational value. The proposed action is not expected to impact general recreational and wilderness activities on these state tracts.

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

The proposal does not include any changes to housing or developments.

No direct or cumulative effects to population or housing are anticipated.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:
Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

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?

The proposed action will not impact the cultural uniqueness or diversity 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.

This project will generate $25.00 for the LUL application fee and $500.00 for the ten year term of the license. Cumulative impacts are not likely as the area is only used for livestock grazing and the buried livestock water pipeline will improve the long-term viability of grazing on the tract. The addition of the two livestock water tanks will provide a reliable source of water to the pastures which will positively impact livestock distribution.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:** Tony Nickol	**Date:** February 13, 2012
	Title: Land Use Specialist, Conrad Unit, Central Land Office	

V. FINDINGS

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative B (the Proposed action) – Grant the proponents permission to place the stock water line and the two stock water tanks.

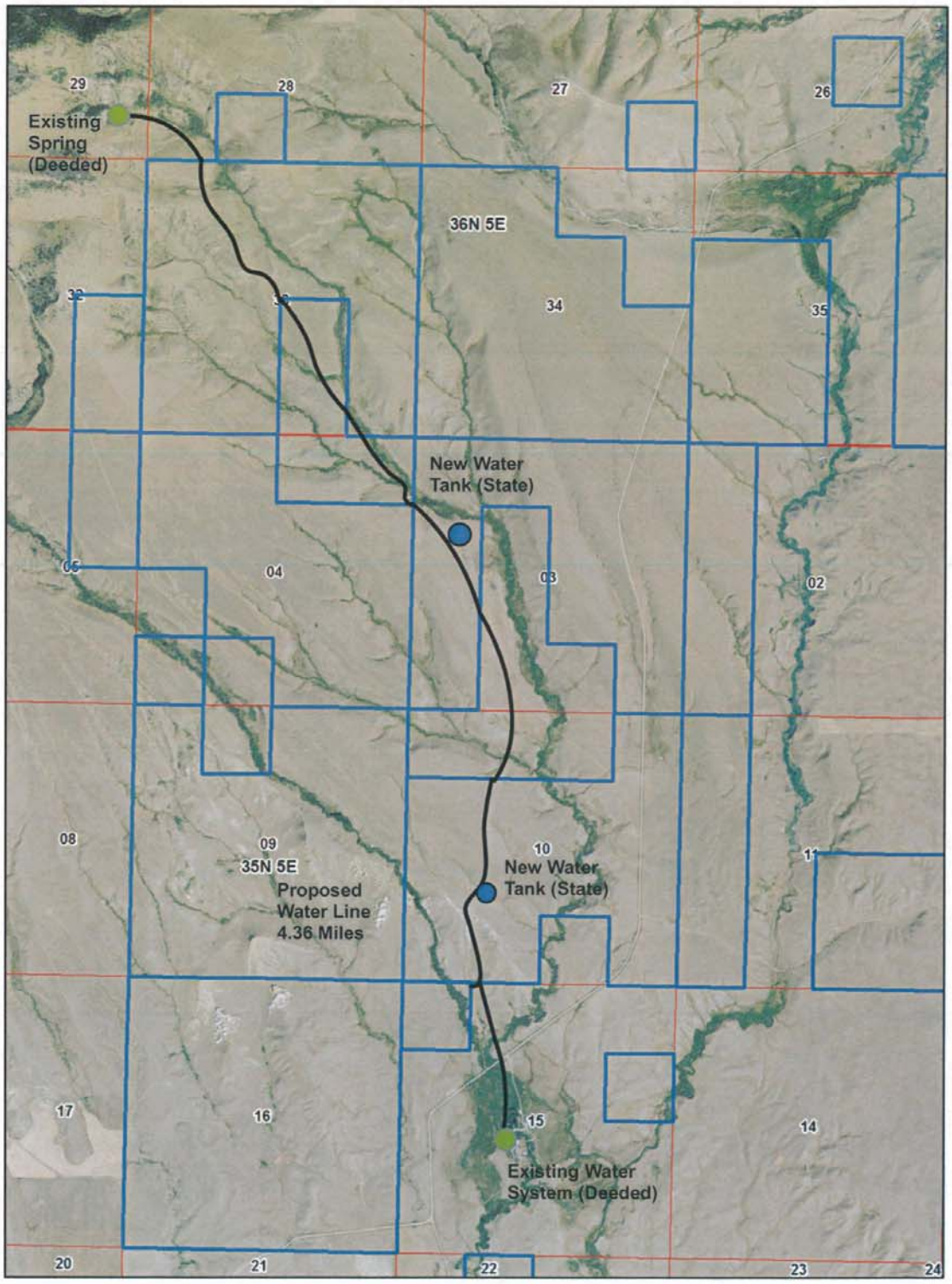
26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

This water pipeline will improve livestock distribution and generally allow for better management of the state lease. No archaeological sites are present within the project area. Overall, no negative environmental impacts are expected.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

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

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:**	Erik Eneboe
	Title:	Conrad Unit Manger, CLO, DNRC
Signature:		**Date**: February 14, 2012


29
28
27
26
Existing
Spring
(Deeded)
36N 5E
34
35
New Water
Tank (State)
04
03
02
08
09
35N 5E
Proposed
Water Line
4.36 Miles
10
New Water
Tank (State)
17
16
15
14
Existing Water
System (Deeded)
20
21
22
23
24