

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Steel Creek Ranch Stockwater Tank Improvement
Proposed Implementation Date:	June, 2012
Proponent:	Steel Creek Ranch LLC
Location:	Section 13, Township 3 South – Range 15 West
County:	Beaverhead County

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Proponent proposes to develop and install a spring tank, 500 feet of underground pipeline and stock water tank to water cattle on State ground in Section 13, T 3 S – R 15 W. The spring box will be installed using a track hoe and will be placed at the outlet of a wet area. An underground pipeline of approximately 500 feet will be run to a 13 foot tire stock tank. The stock tank will have a wildlife ramp in it and a fence will be constructed around the spring area to prevent any damage by cattle. The project is tied to fencing and riparian enhancement improvements on the ranch. This spring development will be incorporated into the landowners grazing plan for the Arctic Grayling CCAA program in the Big Hole Valley.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

FWP Fisheries Biologist, Matt Jager
US Fish and Wildlife Service Partners Program
FWP Wildlife Biologist, Craig Fager
DNRC Archeologist, Patrick Rennie
MT Natural Heritage Program

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

No other permits are needed for this project.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Action Alternative: Allow the proponent to develop an existing spring by installing a spring box, installation of underground pipeline and stock tank for watering livestock on state land.

No Action Alternative: Deny permission to the proponent to develop an existing spring by installing a spring box, installation of underground pipeline and stock tank for watering livestock on state land.

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 identified the soils at the location of the spring, underground pipeline and stock tank as being Barbarela-Rogert Complex. It's made up of colluviums over residuum weathered from granite and gneiss and or schist. These soils have a land capability rating is 6e. This type of soils make up is very gravelly sandy loams. These soils are well drained and can become droughty. The installation of the underground pipeline and stock tank should not have any long term cumulative impacts to soils near the location of 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 current area where the spring is located is sustaining some minor rutting and trampling from cattle use where the livestock are trying to find water. The installation of the spring box and fencing of spring may improve the water quality around the spring area if the proposal is allowed to move forward.

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.

There will be no air quality issues associated with this proposal. The location is an isolated site away from populated areas. Construction should take about three days. Some dust will be generated during the construction of this project; however no long term or cumulative impacts 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 of the area identifies a sensitive plant species *Penstemon lemhiensis*, Lemhi Beardtongue near the location of the proposal. An inspection of the site didn't identify the plant at the location of the proposal. Because the plant was not found near the project proposal no long term or cumulative impacts are anticipated from this proposal.

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 installation of the stock water tank will not affect the use of the area by terrestrial, avian and aquatic life. The proposal may improve use of the spring by keeping the cattle from trampling the vegetation around the spring. Installation of the stock tank will be of short duration and overall disturbance of terrestrial, avian, and aquatic life will be minimal. No direct, indirect or cumulative effects to terrestrial, avian and aquatic life and habitats are foreseen 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.

The Montana Natural Heritage program was contacted regarding species of concern within the project area. The search identified two species of concern; Gray Wolf and Greater Sage Grouse.

Gray Wolf (Canus Lupus) Wolves are distributed throughout Southwest Montana. The project would not have any measurable effect on wolf prey or wolves, thus direct, indirect, or cumulative effects are not anticipated.

Greater Sage-grouse (Centrocercus Urophasianus) Greater sage Grouse use has been recorded in the project area. The DNRC is not aware of any important breeding leks in the vicinity. If sage-grouse are using the tract, they could be directly disturbed and displaced by activities associated with this project; however, the disturbance would be short term and would not be expected to have a measurable impact on sage –grouse habitat. Measurable direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would not be anticipated as a result of the proposed project.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

MT DNRC Archeologist Patrick Rennie was contact and there are no know archeological sites 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.

The project is located in an isolated area away from public view. The area receives the most traffic during the big game hunting season and will not be visible from the only public road in the area. The project will not have a significant impact to the aesthetics. The main activity in this area is cattle grazing and a new spring development will not impact the overall character of the landscape.

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.

Demands on environmental resources will be minimal. The DNRC Dillon Unit is unaware of any planned or future projects planned for the 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.

Scoping for this project didn't identify any known other projects under MEPA review at this time.

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.

No long term or cumulative impacts to human health and safety were identified from this proposal.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

The installation of the spring box, underground pipeline, stock tank and fencing of the riparian area could benefit the grazing on this state section and help provide for long term proper management of this section by distributing livestock away from the spring area.

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 if approved would provide a contractor in the area with a few days work. Employment opportunities from this proposal will not have any effect on the long term employment in the Wisdom, MT area.

7. 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 if approved would not provide any increase in tax revenue to the county or state.

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 would be no increase in demand for government services if this project was approved.

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 proposal is tied to fencing and riparian enhancement improvements on the ranch. This spring development would be incorporated into the landowners grazing plan for the Arctic Grayling CCAA program in the Big Hole Valley.

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 would have no long term or cumulative impacts to recreation in the Wisdom, MT 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.

This proposal will not impact current density and distribution of population and housing in the Wisdom, MT area.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

This proposal is compatible with the current use of the land which is cattle grazing. There would be no long term or cumulative impacts to social structures and mores if this project was approved.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

The project is located in an isolated area away from public view. The area receives the most traffic during the big game hunting season. The project will not have a significant impact to the aesthetics. The main activity in this area is cattle grazing and a new spring development will not impact the overall character of the landscape.

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 if approved would be listed as an improvement on the lessee's lease.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Timothy Egan	Date: 5/29/12
	Title: Dillon Unit Manager	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Approve lease improvement request for a spring development project

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Significant impacts are not anticipated as a result of the proposed activity. The spring development project is designed for riparian enhancement purposes associated with a cooperative arctic grayling conservation program.

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

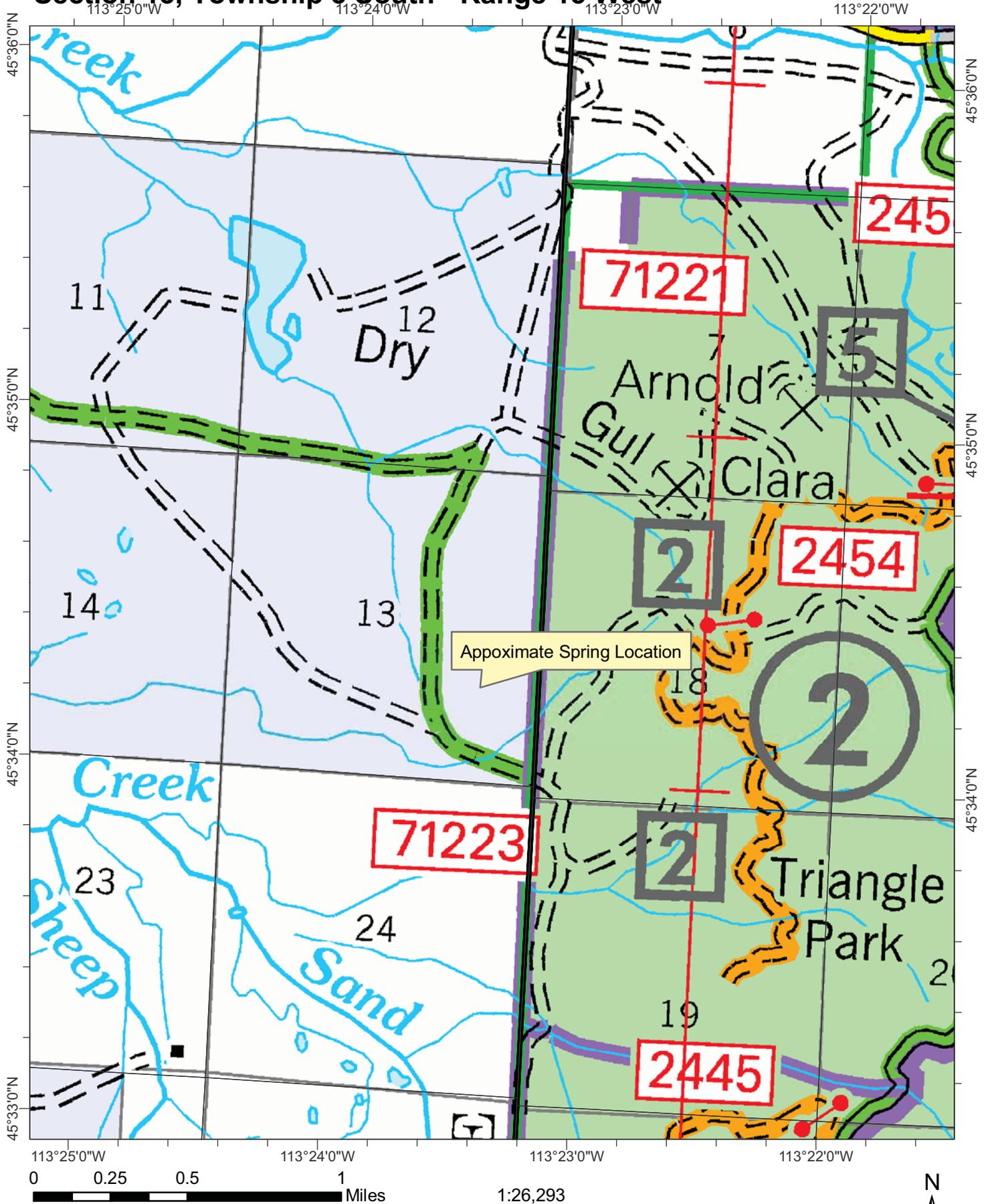
Signature:

A. J. Wilk

Date:

5/30/2012

Steel Creek Spring Development Section 13, Township 3 South - Range 15 West



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