CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Ruby River Properties, LLC Stock Water Well and Tank Project
Proposed Implementation Date:	Summer, 2012
Proponent:	Lessee, Ruby River Properties, LLC
Location:	NW¼SE¼NW¼ Section 25, T8S R5W
County:	Madison

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The lessee of State Lease No. 10104, Ruby River Properties, LLC has proposed a stock water development on the above referenced state Trust land lease. The purpose of the project is to improve cattle distribution by providing an additional upland water source. The proposed project would include drilling a well and placement of a new tank in close proximity to the well.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks
Patrick Rennie, DNRC Archaeologist
Montana Natural Heritage Program

A scoping letter was emailed to Craig Fager on August 7, 2012 with a deadline for comments of August 16, 2012.
A call was received from Craig Fager, DFWP Biologist, on August 8 to discuss the proposed project, no additional mitigation measures were requested for the project.
Patrick Rennie was emailed for comments on August 15, 2012 and responded the same day in regard to archaeology. His comments are summarized in the "Archaeology" section.
Martin Miller from the Montana Natural Heritage Program responded to a request for information on sensitive and endangered species and plant communities on August 8, 2012. The information received from MNHP is summarized in Section 9 of this document.

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

If the project is approved, a water right form will be submitted to DNRC Water Rights Bureau for the new water right.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

A) No action – the well and stock tank would not be authorized for placement on the Trust Land
B) Allow the well and stock tank to be placed on Trust Land to improve livestock distribution on the lease.

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 project would impact an area less than 100 feet in diameter to drill the well and place a stock tank. Occasional vehicle use to the tank to check the function and make repairs would be expected in the future when livestock were in the pasture. Soils in the area would not be significantly impacted by the proposed project.

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 proposed project is not located near a surface water source and will not negatively affect water quality, quantity, or distribution.

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 project would not negatively impact air quality of the area.

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 vegetative community on site is common to the area and the state and is composed of native species. Current vegetation on the site includes bluebunch wheatgrass, needle-and-thread grass, blue grama, Western wheatgrass, and fringed sagewort.

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 proposed project is located on the lower slopes above the Ruby River. The proposed project would not inhibit wildlife movement in this area. No fisheries habitat is located within the project area.

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 and around the project area. Six Species of concern were identified in the report and are listed below.

1) Golden Eagle (Aquila chrysaetos) – Golden eagles are a BLM sensitive species and classified in the State of Montana as a species potentially at risk. The proposed project will not alter the existing vegetative community type and would not influence use of the area by golden eagles. The project would not have cumulative effects on golden eagle habitat or species distribution in the area.

2) Greater Sage-grouse (Centrocercus urophasianus) – Greater sage-grouse use has been recorded in the area near to the proposed project. The site is comprised of native grasses including needle-and-thread grass, bluebunch wheatgrass, sandberg bluegrass, western wheatgrass, and Junegrass. An occasional sagebrush plant was noted near the site but no medium or large patches of sagebrush were found within a half

mile of the project site. No significant or cumulative effects to sage grouse are expected as a result of this proposed project.

3) Ferruginous Hawk (Buteo regalis) – Ferruginous hawks have been sighted adjacent to the proposed project area. It is a BLM sensitive species. The foothill area approximately 1 mile from the project area meets nesting habitat descriptions. The project would not appreciably increase cumulative effects on this species.

4) Sage Thrasher (Oreoscoptes montanus) – Sage thrashers are listed as sensitive by the BLM and State of Montana. The proposed project will not increase human use of the area and would not significantly alter the current vegetative community. The project would not cause cumulative impacts to the sage thrasher.

5) Black-tailed Jack Rabbit (Lepus californicus) – The black-tailed jack rabbit is listed as a species of concern by the State of Montana. The species was first observed in the project area in 1937 and the last observation was in 1969. The project would not increase human use of the area or significantly alter existing habitat so cumulative effects on the potential use of the area by the black-tailed jack rabbit would be minimal.

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

Patrick Rennie, DNRC Archaeologist, was consulted regarding cultural resource concerns on the tract. No cultural resources were identified for the tract.

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 proposed project is not located on a prominent topographic feature and would not affect local aesthetics.

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 project will include drilling a stock water well and placement of a stock tank on the above referenced Trust Land. The proposed project will not negatively affect the area and would not significantly increase demand for environmental resources.

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.

No on-going studies or projects are located on the tract.

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 would not create additional health and safety risks.

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

The management of both the Trust Land and adjacent private land can be improved as a result of the project by improving livestock distribution on the upland sites.

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 project would not have an effect on employment.

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 would not have an impact on taxes and 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.

No changes would be required for government services.

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 project would not interfere with any known government plans or zoning laws.

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 project would not alter recreational opportunities on the tract.

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 proposed project would not require additional housing and will not affect population.

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

This project will not disrupt traditional lifestyles or communities.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:
How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

The project is not expected to alter any unique quality of the Ruby Valley.

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.

The return to the Common Schools Trust cannot be measured in dollar amounts at the current time. The approval and completion of the proposed project would allow more flexible management on the affected state trust lands and adjacent private lands by improving livestock distribution. Future stocking rates could increase as a result and create more return to the Trust.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:**	Charles Maddox	**Date:**	August 21, 2012
	Title:	Land Use Specialist		

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

B) Allow the well and stock tank to be placed on Trust Land to improve livestock distribution on the lease.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

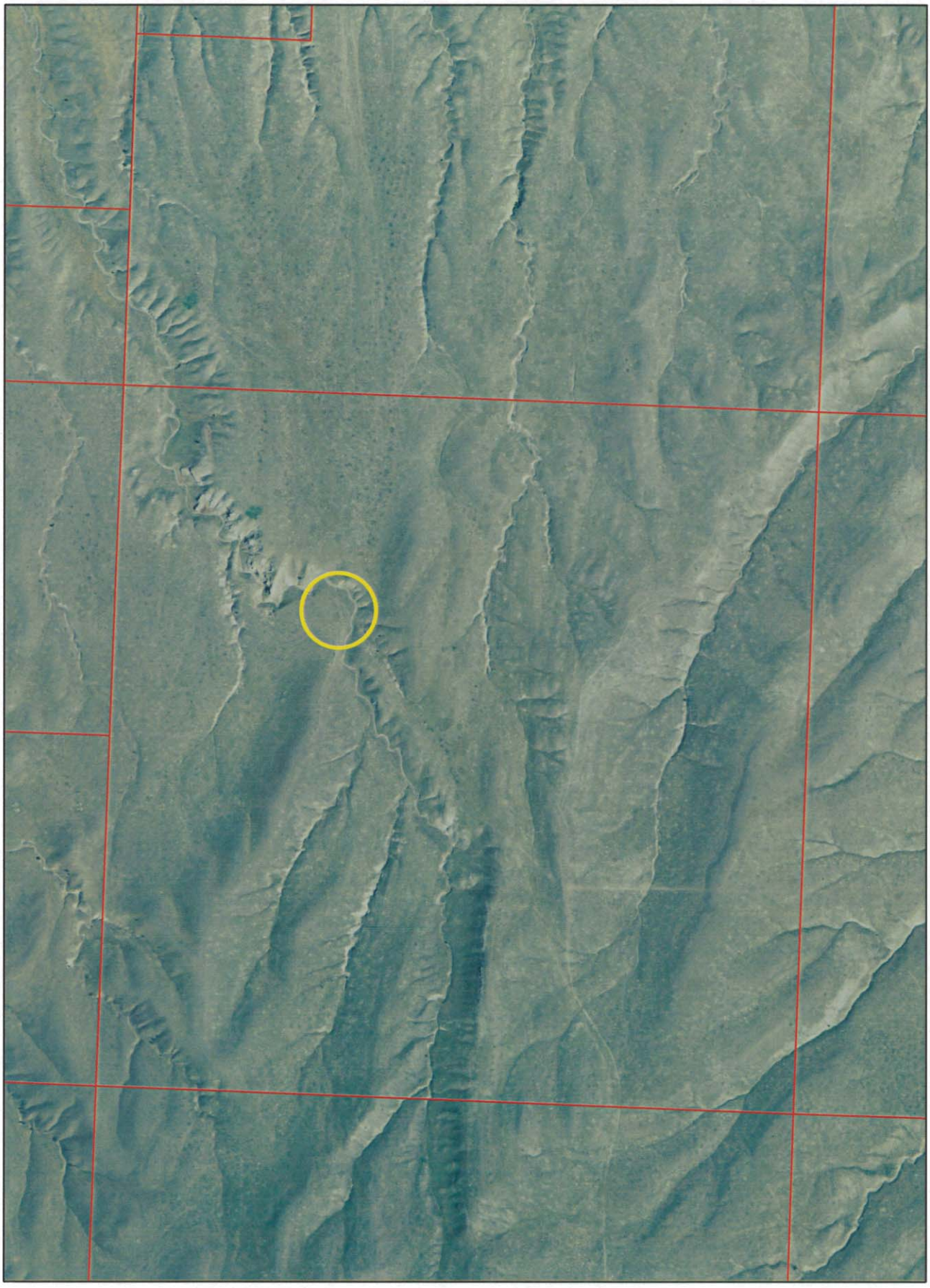
This proposal should allow better distribution of cattle and help improve range conditions on the tract.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

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

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:**	Timothy Egan
	Title:	Dillon Unit Manager
Signature: /S/ Timothy Egan		**Date**: 8/22/12

T8S R5W Section 25



1 inch = 1,056 feet

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