CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Lease Improvement / Livestock water development Lease #7336
Proposed Implementation Date:	Summer 2011
Proponents:	Leonard and Rayleen Blixrud, PO Box 44, Choteau, MT 59422 Dan and Jerry Stott, 253 Pelzman Road, Choteau, MT 59422
Location:	Lease #7336, NE4SW4, Section 14, T25N, R6W,
County:	Teton
Trust:	Common Schools

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Dan and Jerry Stott ranch managers for Leonard and Rayleen Blixrud, lessees of state lease #7336 have requested to place a livestock water line and two stock water tanks on and across the NE4SW4, Section 14, T25N, R6W. This will allow them to connect to a private water line located on deeded land in the SW4SW4, Section 14. The water line will be 1.5" HDPE pipe placed a depth of 6' for a distance of approximately 300' on state land. 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.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

Leonard and Rayleen Blixrud-Proponents, Surface Lessee, Lease #7336
Dan and Jerry Stott-Proponents, Ranch Managers for Leonard and Rayleen Blixrud
DNRC-Surface Owner
NRCS-EQIP-Proponent

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 proponents permission to place the stock water line and the two stock water tanks.

Alternative B (the Proposed action) – Grant the proponents 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 Yamacall-Delpoint loams which contain 2 to 8% slopes, Kremlin clay loam which contain 4 to 8% slopes, and Delpoint-Cabbart loams which contain 2 to 15% slopes. These soil types are made up of class 4E and 5E soils which are 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 trench 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 backhoe to place the water line due to the possibility of shale outcroppings which will result in 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 no ephemeral drainages present on this tract. There are no documented and/or recorded water associated with the proposed water line installation project. Other water quality and/or quantity issues will not be impacted by the proposed action. The water well to feed the project is located on private land owned by the proponents. The proposed action will improve overall water reliability and quantity for the proponents on the adjacent state and deeded pastures.

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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 300' of 1.5" HDPE pipe will be placed 6' deep. The pipe will be installed by the utilization of a backhoe. 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% Western Wheatgrass, 30% Slender Wheatgrass, 20% Green Needle grass, and 20% Blue Bunch Wheatgrass. If drilled the rate will be 7#/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, this tract provides 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 livestock water 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 was one identified threatened species (Grizzly Bear), noted to potentially utilize this area. The proposed livestock water pipeline does not include any activities which would alter any habitat, so not effects are expected in either alternative. 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 T25N, R6W. There were five species of concern and three potential species of concern noted on the NRIS survey: Mammals-Grizzly Bear. Birds—Black Tern, Horned Grebe, Hooded Merganser, Ferruginous Hawk, and Swainson's hawk. Fish-Brook Stickleback and Northern Redbelly X Finescale Dace. This particular tract of native rangeland 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 water line installation route was surveyed and no cultural resource items were located. Past lease records indicate there are no historical, archaeological, or paleontological resources present in the installation area. In addition, the site was further reviewed by the NRCS's archaeologist prior to the installation of the water line. NRCS has completed a negative findings report and state that no cultural resources are present in the project area, see attached report.

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 NRCS-EQIP. 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 by a two-track trail through deeded land and generally has low recreational value. The tract is not legally accessible and the proposed action is not expected to impact general recreational and wilderness activities on this state 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 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.

Cumulative impacts are not likely as the area is only used for livestock grazing and the buried livestock water pipeline will not affect the long-term viability of grazing on the tract. The addition of the two livestock water tanks will provide a reliable source of water too two pastures which will positively impact livestock distribution. This project is authorized under the improvement request form.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:** Tony Nickol	**Date:** May 10, 2011
	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.

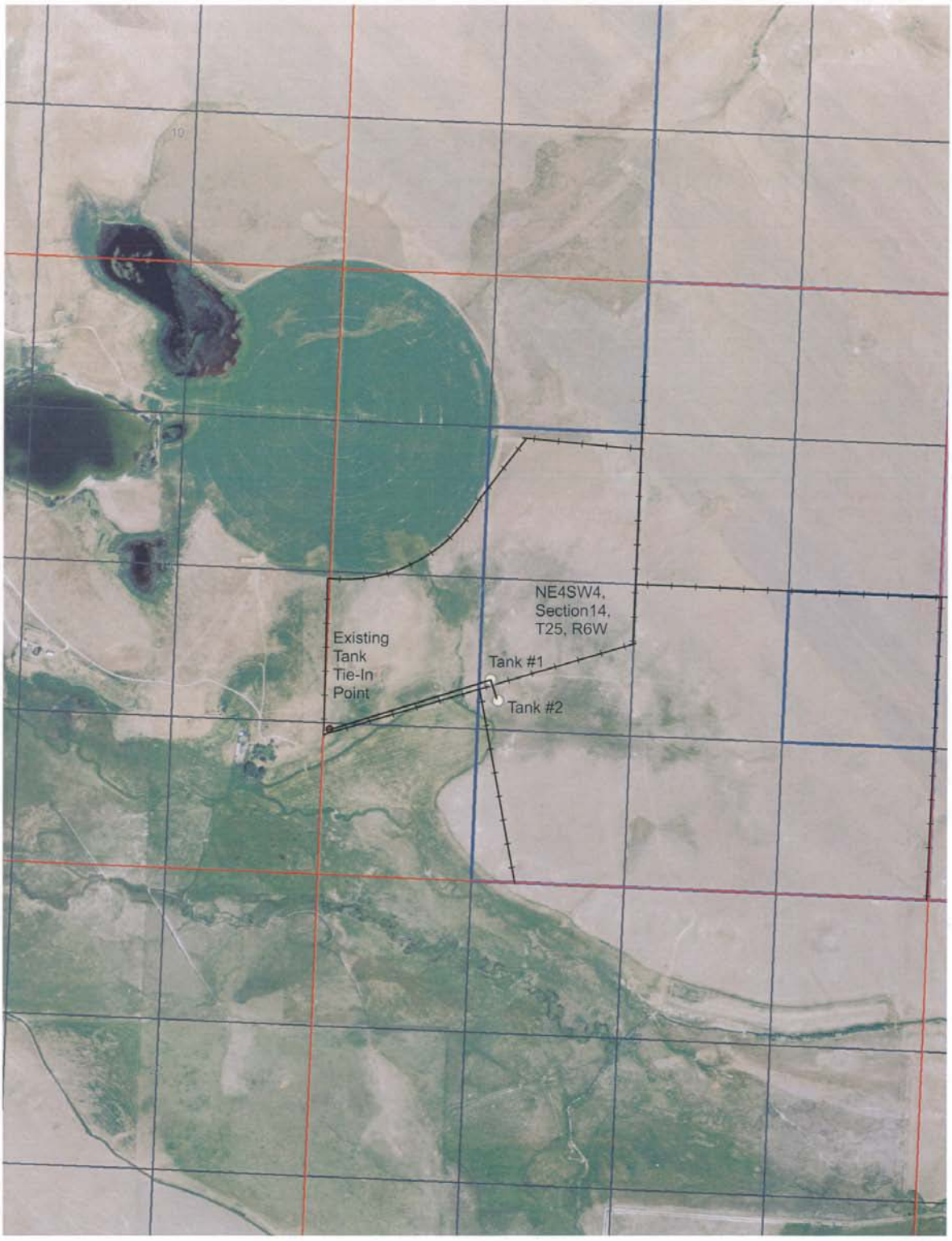
26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

This water well improvement 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**: May 12, 2011


NE4SW4,
Section14,
T25, R6W
Existing
Tank
Tie-In
Point
Tank #1
Tank #2

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Natural Resources Conservation Service

MT-CPA-8
REV. 04/2005

NRCS NEGATIVE FINDINGS REPORT

This form will be completed for surveys where no cultural properties (sites) were found. Completion of this form assumes that the surveyor has completed the NRCS National Cultural Resources Training and the inventory was conducted using enough 15-meter (50-foot) transects sufficient to cover the APE and any areas that could be affected by construction.

FIELD OFFICE: Choteau

COUNTY: Teton

TWN–RNG–SEC–QUARTER: T25N R6W Sec 14, T25N R6W Sec 4, 5, 8, 9, T25N R6W Sec 10, 11

STATE LAND: TWN–RNG–SEC: T25N R6W Sec 14

ACRES: 1

FILE SEARCH RESULTS: negative

CONTRACT #: (NOT REQUIRED) _____ **PROGRAM:** EQIP

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: LIST ALL PRACTICES COVERED BY THIS REPORT

Practice Name	Code	CI #	*If M Category Exception (1-4)	Method of Survey & width of transect
pipeline	516	1,4,6		walked 50' each side of route
tank	614	2,5,7		walked 50' around site
well	642	3		walked 50' around site
pump	533	8		walked 50' around site

* MAP IS NOT REQUIRED FOR M CATEGORY.

DATE OF INVENTORY: 12/13/2010

SURVEYOR'S NAME: B Wallace

TRIBAL/ALLOTED LAND: ☐ YES ☑ NO

IF YES, NOTIFICATION TO CULTURAL CONTACT: _____ (NAME) _____ (DATE)

DATE SENT TO AREA OFFICE: _____

COMMENTS:

ATTACH COPY OF USGS MAP