CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	**NoName Creek Easement Grant from DNRC to the BLM**
Proposed Implementation Date:	**2012**
Proponent:	**U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)**
Location:	**NoName drainage, Sec. 36 T.12N., R.10W. P.M.M.**
County:	**Powell**

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The BLM has requested a non-exclusive easement from the State of Montana DNRC to access their ownership in Township11 North, and Ranges 9 and 10 West. The grant would not include public access. The BLM holds other previously granted easements from the DNRC in this section. The DRNC holds reciprocating easements from the BLM to access this parcel. This easement would be a continuation of an access-related Memorandum of Understanding between the Montana DNRC and the BLM. The road requested is existing, a portion of which was constructed by the DNRC for the No Name Timber Salvage (TS-1607). While this road is ungated, access to this parcel is controlled through BLM-controlled and gated roads lower in the drainage. The construction and use of this road was analyzed as part of the Hoodoos Beetle Salvage environmental assessment completed in February 2009.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

The grazing licensee Winehouse Grazing and the pasturing agreement holder Donald Beck were contacted for comment on the proposal, as was the Powell County Board of County Commissioners. Agency resource specialists, FWP, and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal Historic Preservation Office were contacted as part of the scoping process for the Hoodoos Beetle Salvage environmental assessment completed in 2009.

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

No permits would be needed and no other agencies have jurisdiction in the granting of the easement, other than the recipient agency, the BLM.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

No Action

No easement would be granted. BLM would be left to find other efficient and reasonable access to a portion of its ownership, which may require additional road construction on their ownership. The road requested would still be utilized for management of state lands.

Action Alternative

A permanent non-exclusive easement would be granted to the BLM. State forestry management would continue with coordinated efforts on management of shared roads.

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 existing road has several areas with high clay content. Due to the clay-rich soils, use is generally limited to dry or frozen conditions. The BLM has similar resource management objectives. The road currently meets BMPs and is used to meet state forestry management objectives. Resource management entry into BLM ownership would undergo environmental review under the National Environmental Protection Act on a per-action basis. There are potential negative cumulative impacts to the road by granting the easement, however regular maintenance, commensurate with use, would adequately address those impacts.

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 would be no impact by the granting of the easement. The BLM has similar resource management objectives. The road is existing, currently meets BMPs and is used to meet state forestry management objectives.

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 would be no impact by the granting of the easement. The BLM has similar resource management objectives; the road is existing and is used currently to meet state forestry management objectives.

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.

There would be no impact by the granting of the easement. The road is existing and is currently used to meet state forestry management objectives.

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.

This parcel provides habitat for big game populations of summer elk and mule deer. Roads reduce habitat cover and disrupt migration. Roads also increase the animal's vulnerability to being harvested during the hunting season. The NoName parcel's access is controlled by a BLM-controlled road which is gated. Public motorized access to the DNRC parcel is currently restricted by this gate, while the state has the ability to gate off its own ownership should the need arise.

The road under analysis is an existing gated road which is sporadically used for state forest management purposes. It would continue to receive administrative use by both BLM and DNRC, which would not be expected to appreciably alter disturbance levels to wildlife. No changes in public motorized access would occur. Any commercial activities on the road by either party would require additional analysis to address any potential disturbance effects to resident wildlife. No changes to existing big game habitats would occur. Thus minor effects would be anticipated.

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 Hoodoo's Beetle Salvage environmental analysis identified several threatened, endangered, sensitive or species of concern which might utilize the parcel for habitat. They include Grizzly Bear, Canada Lynx, Gray Wolf, Flammulated Owl, Fisher, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Bulltrout and Pileated Woodpecker.

The road under analysis is an existing gated road that is sporadically used for state forest management purposes. It would continue to receive administrative use by both the BLM and DNRC, which would not be expected to appreciably alter disturbance levels to wildlife. No changes in public motorized access would occur. Any commercial activities on the road by either party would require additional analysis to address any potential disturbance effects to resident wildlife. No changes to existing habitats for any of the identified wildlife species in the project area would occur. Thus minor effects would be anticipated.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

There would be no impact by the granting of the easement. The BLM has similar management objectives; the road is existing and is used currently to meet state forestry management objectives.

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.

There would be no impact by the granting of the easement. The BLM has similar management objectives; the road is existing and is used currently to meet state forestry management objectives.

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.

There would be no impact by the granting of the easement. The BLM has similar management objectives; the road is existing and is used currently to meet state forestry management objectives.

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.

Montana DNRC Forested Lands Habitat Conservation Plan (December 2010)
Hoodoos Beetle Salvage (February 2009)

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.

There would be no impact by the granting of the easement. The BLM has similar management objectives, the road is existing and it is used currently to meet state forestry management objectives.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

This parcel is a forest classified parcel, which is currently utilized for grazing under a license. The grazing licensee Winehouse Grazing was contacted and had no comment regarding the proposal.
Commercial timber harvest for some of the BLM lands would be more easily accessible with the grant of this easement. Impacts on commercial, industrial and agricultural would be minimal with the granting of this easement as BLM has the option of construction significant amount of road on their own ownership to fully access their ownership.

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.

There would be minimal to no impact by the granting of the easement. The road is existing, and regular maintance commensurate with use would continue to occur whether or not the easement is granted. Commercial timber harvest for some of the BLM lands would be more easily accessible with the grant of this easement. Impacts on employment would be minimal with the granting of this easement as BLM as road maintenance would increase based on the increased use of the road for the BLM's management objectives.

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.

There would be no impact by the granting of the easement. Both agencies have similar ongoing management objectives, and both would continue those management objectives whether or not the easement is granted.

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 impact to traffic or changes to traffic patterns as a result of the granting of this easement. The BLM's management objective for this area is resource management, and there would be no additional demand for fire or police protection, nor would there be any impact on schools or other governmental services. Any changes to the management objectives for these lands by either agency would undergo further analysis at the time of any proposals.

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.

Montana DRNC Forested Lands Habitat Conservation Plan (December 2010)

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.

There would be minimal to no impact to access or quality of recreational and wilderness activities as a result of this easement grant. Access to this parcel is controlled by a BLM road which is gated. Public motorized access to the DNRC parcel is currently restricted by this gate. Public walk-in access would continue, with periodic seasonal interruptions as resource management activities occur on either the state or BLM grounds.

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.

NONE

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

NONE

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

NONE

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.

There will be a payment to the Common Schools trust in the amount of $10,980. This payment will be balanced against other state acquisitions of access rights across the BLM.
BLM will gain permanent access to their ownership, allowing for increase and more efficient land management thereby increasing timber harvesting opportunities. There is little to no practicable opportunity for uses outside of resource management for this area due to terrain and lack of year-round motorized access.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name: Dana Boruch**	**Date: December 21, 2011**
	Title: Right-of-Way Specialist	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

The action alternative is the selected alternative given there is minor potential for negative or un-acceptable impacts associated with granting the easement.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Potential impacts are minimal and can be acceptably mitigated.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

	EIS		More Detailed EA	XX	No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name: Brian Robbins**	
	Title: Anaconda Unit Forester	
Signature: B S Robbins		**Date:** 12/21/2011