

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Box L Farms Break Request

Proposed Implementation Date: April 2011

Proponent: Box L Farms, 508 Prairie Del Rd. Richland, MT 59260

Type and Purpose of Action: Rob Davis of Box L Farms has requested to break 156.0 acres of expired CRP land on his State lease #2749. The previous CRP contract expired on September 30, 2011. He wishes to utilize the expired CRP acreage for small grain production in the future.

Location: NW4 of Sec. 32 - Twp. 34N - Rge. 44E

County: Daniels

I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED: Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

The proponent, Box L Farms, has submitted a break request in writing to the Glasgow Unit Office (GUO) of the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. The request will be reviewed per DNRC land breaking criteria for all lands other than native sod.

FWP was solicited for comment on December 20th, 2011. Mark Sullivan, Region 6 Wildlife Manager, responded on January 9th, 2012.

NRCS and FSA administered the former CRP contract, and they require the lessee to follow specific conservation guidelines to remain eligible for future farm programs and payments.

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

DNRC is not aware of any other agencies with jurisdiction or other permits needed.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Action Alternative: Grant the proponent permission to convert 156.0 acres of expired CRP from permanent cover to annually planted small grain crops.

No Action Alternative: Deny the proponent permission to break 156.0 acres of expired CRP from permanent cover.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

RESOURCE

[Y/N]

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

N = Not Present or No Impact will occur.

Y = Impacts may occur (explain below)

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

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| <p>4.GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE: Are fragile, compactable or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?</p> | <p>100% of the soils present are Class I/II soil types. 78.4% are Turner sandy loams with 2-8% slopes and 21.6% are Tully-Lihen sandy loams with 1-8% slopes. Both of these soil types meet DNRC breaking criteria, but they are somewhat susceptible to wind erosion. There is evidence of past wind erosion throughout the field. Modern farming technology has allowed farmers to better manage sandy soils such as these. Our current lessee practices continuous cropping and good residual management both of these practices greatly reduce the likelihood of wind erosion. If erosion ever became a problem, the lessee would be required by the DNRC to reseed all eroding areas to permanent cover.</p> <p>Action: Removing the permanent vegetation may increase the likelihood of erosion, but erosion is not anticipated to increase and no impacts to the geology or soil characteristics are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the geology or soil characteristics will occur.</p> |
| <p>5.WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality?</p> | <p>Annually planted small grain crops would utilize the available water of the soil similarly to the tame grasses that are currently present.</p> <p>Action: The project is not anticipated to impact the water quality, quantity, and/or distribution of surface water.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the water quality, quantity, and/or distribution will occur.</p> |
| <p>6.AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?</p> | <p>Action: No impacts to air quality are anticipated to occur.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to air quality will occur.</p> |
| <p>7.VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?</p> | <p>A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program did not identify any plant species of concern or potential concern. The present tame grass stand (Crested wheatgrass with traces of alfalfa) would be broken up and small grain crops would be annually planted and harvested.</p> <p>Action: Vegetation cover would be altered from expiring CRP acreage to annually seeded cropland. No rare plants or cover types are present in the current stand of vegetation.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the vegetation cover, quantity, and/or quality will occur.</p> |
| <p>8.TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:</p> | <p>The tame grass stand is currently utilized for</p> |

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

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| <p>Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?</p> | <p>nesting, resting, and shelter for the by the area's wildlife. The area is not known to receive substantial use from important wildlife species.</p> <p>A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program lists the Iowa Darter as the only species of concern within the project area's township. The Iowa Darter is a minnow that belongs to the perch family and its primary habitat is small prairie rivers and streams. The project area is surrounded by agricultural lands and is not located near any wetlands and waterways, so no impacts to aquatic life are anticipated.</p> <p>Action: No impacts to terrestrial, avian, and/or aquatic life and habitats are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to terrestrial, avian, and/or aquatic life and habitats will occur.</p> |
| <p>9.UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Sensitive Species or Species of special concern?</p> | <p>A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program lists the Iowa Darter as the only species of concern within the project area's township. The Iowa Darter is a minnow that belongs to the perch family. The primary habitat of the Iowa Darter is small prairie rivers and streams. The project area is surrounded by agricultural lands and is not located near any wetlands and waterways.</p> <p>Action: No impacts to unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources will occur.</p> |
| <p>10.HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?</p> | <p>The acreage proposed to be broken was previously farmed and does not contain any historical, archaeological, and/or paleontological resources.</p> <p>Action: No impacts to the areas historical, archeological, and/or paleontological resources will occur.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the areas historical, archeological, and/or paleontological resources will occur.</p> |
| <p>11.AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light?</p> | <p>The land surrounding the project area consists of a mixture of grazing lands, agricultural lands, and CRP lands. The project area is not near any prominent topographic features, no excessive noise or light will be produced, and it is not visible from a populated or scenic area.</p> <p>Action: No impacts to the areas aesthetics are anticipated.</p> |

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

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| | No Action: No impacts to the areas aesthetics will occur. |
| 12.DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project? | Action: No impacts to the demands of environmental resources such as land, water, air, and/or energy resources are anticipated. No Action: No impacts to the demands of environmental resources such as land, water, air, and/or energy resources will occur. |
| 13.OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract? | Action: No impacts to studies, plans, and/or projects are anticipated. No Action: No impacts to studies, plans, and/or projects will occur. |

III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

| RESOURCE | [Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES |
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| 14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area? | Action: No impacts to human health and/or safety risks are anticipated. No Action: No impacts to human health and/or safety risks will occur. |
| 15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities? | Returning the expiring CRP acreage to agricultural production would slightly increase the area's small grain production. Action: No impacts to industrial and commercial activities are anticipated. No Action: No impacts to the industrial, commercial, and/or agricultural activities and production will occur. |
| 16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number. | Action: No impacts to quantity and distribution of employment are anticipated. No Action: No impacts to quantity and distribution of employment will occur. |
| 17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue? | Action: The proposed action may slightly increase tax revenue from the increased revenues generated via the lease being returned to production. No Action: No impacts to the state tax base and/or tax revenues will occur. |
| 18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed? | Action: No impacts to the level of demand for government services are anticipated. No Action: No impacts to the level of demand for government services will occur. |

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| <p>19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?</p> | <p>Action: No impacts to local environmental plans and goals are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to local environmental plans and goals will occur.</p> |
| <p>20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?</p> | <p>The area proposed for breaking is publically accessible. The current stand of CRP is utilized by the public for hunting whitetail deer, upland birds, mule deer, and antelope. The removal of this type of cover will reduce bedding and nesting habitat; however, the annually planted stands of small grains may provide a food source for wildlife during certain times of the year. It is not known if the change, converting bedding and nesting cover to a food source, will negatively or positively impact this area.</p> <p>Action: Hunting opportunities for the public to pursue upland game birds, whitetail deer, mule deer, and antelope on this acreage would remain, but the quality may or may not be impacted. No other impacts to recreational or wilderness activities are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the quality of recreational and wilderness activities will occur.</p> |
| <p>21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?</p> | <p>Action: No impacts to the density and/or distribution of population and housing are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the density and/or distribution of population and housing will occur.</p> |
| <p>22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?</p> | <p>Action: No impacts to the areas social structures and/or traditional lifestyles are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the areas social structures and/or traditional lifestyles will occur.</p> |
| <p>23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?</p> | <p>Action: No impacts to the areas cultural uniqueness and/or diversity are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the areas cultural uniqueness and/or diversity will occur.</p> |
| <p>24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:</p> | <p>Action: No impacts to the social and economic circumstances are anticipated.</p> <p>No Action: No impacts to the social and economic circumstances will occur.</p> |

