

## CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

<b>Project Name:</b>	Easement application for existing road use.
<b>Proposed Implementation Date:</b>	Fall 2013
<b>Proponent:</b>	Kenneth G. Morris, 81 17 <sup>th</sup> Lane NW, Fairfield, MT 59436
<b>Location:</b>	NE4NW4, SE4NW4, NE4SW4, Section 33, T22N, R6W
<b>County:</b>	Teton
<b>Trust:</b>	Common Schools (CS)

### I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The proponent has applied for an easement across state land to use an existing two track trail for ingress and egress to and from the real estate described as the W2SW4, Section 33, T22N, R6W for farm and ranch purposes, including access to a single family residence. The two track trail will only be used as an alternative access route. The two track trail crosses approximately 0.73 miles or 2.65 acres of state land to access deeded property. The proposed easement will be 30' wide on the existing two track trail.

### II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

DNRC-Surface Owner  
Kenneth G. Morris-Surface Lessee, Lease #7268  
Kenneth G. Morris -Proponent and Adjacent Land Owner

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

DNRC is not aware of any other agencies with jurisdiction or other permits needed to complete this project

**3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:**

Alternative A (No Action) – Deny the proponent the requested easement.

Alternative B (the Proposed action) –Grant the proponent the requested easement.

### 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.*

Soils and geology in this area are generally suitable for road use. The proponent will use an existing two track trail and no road improvements will occur. The existing road surface is rutted and covered with existing surface gravel. No grading and graveling of the existing two track trail will occur.

No cumulative effects to the soils are anticipated.

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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.*

No important surface or groundwater resources will be impacted by the proposed easement as the two track trail is existing and no road improvements will take occur.

Other water quality and/or quantity issues will not be impacted by the proposed action.

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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 easement will consist of no disturbance to soils, so no cumulative effects to air quality are anticipated.

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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.*

The vegetation within the proposed project area consists primarily of native rangeland grasses, forbs, and shrubs. An existing two track trail will be used and no road construction will take place, so no impact to the existing vegetation will occur.

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.

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**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 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. The proposed action will not have long-term negative effects on existing wildlife species and/or wildlife habitat.

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**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.*

This parcel is located in the NCD grizzly bear recovery zone. The proposal is to use an existing two track trail. No improvements to the two track trail will take place.

A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted. There were four animal species of concern and zero potential species of concern noted on the NRIS survey: Birds-Ferruginous Hawk, Bobolink, and McCown's Longspur. Fish-Arctic Grayling. This particular tract of native rangeland does not contain many, if any of these species. Threatened or endangered species, sensitive habitat types, or other species of special concern or potential species of concern will not be impacted by the utilization of the existing two track trail.

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**10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:**

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

No historical, archaeological, or paleontological resources were identified along the two track trail. No road improvements will take place to the two track trail, so no cultural resources will be impacted by this proposed easement.

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**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 state land does not provide any unique scenic qualities not also provided on adjacent private lands. The proposed easement will use an existing two track trail, so there would be no change to the aesthetics in either alternative.

No direct or cumulative effects to aesthetics are anticipated.

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**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 action.

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**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 tracts 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 easement will not impact human health or safety in the area.

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**15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:**

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

The proponent will use an existing two track trail and no road improvements will occur. The use of this existing two track trail will not add to or alter agricultural activities or production on the lease.

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**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 create any jobs as the two track trail is existing and no road improvements will take place.

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**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 are no direct or cumulative effects to taxes or revenue for the proposed project.

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**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 will be no direct or cumulative effects on government services.

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**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.

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**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 tract of state land generally has a low recreational value. The tract is legally accessible to the public via 1<sup>st</sup> Road SW. The proposed action is not expected to impact general recreational activities on this state land.

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**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.

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**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.

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**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.

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**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 will benefit the school trust in terms of the \$50.00 fee generated from the easement application. The easement on the Common Schools trust land will affect 2.65 acres. The Common Schools trust will be compensated for this easement utilizing fair market value. This is an existing two track trail and no road improvements will occur, so no cumulative economic or social effects are likely to occur.

<b>EA Checklist Prepared By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Tony Nickol	<b>Date:</b> November 5, 2013
	<b>Title:</b> Land Use Specialist, Conrad Unit, Central Land Office	

**V. FINDING**

**25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:**

Alternative B (the Proposed action) –Grant the applicant the requested easement.

**26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:**

The main objective of this road easement is to provide access to isolated deeded land so the applicant can sell a conservation easement on the ranch. The applicant will be utilizing an existing road to access private property used for farm and ranch lands and to a possible future single family residence. No new road improvements and/or road construction is planned. However, minimal road improvements, such as culvert installation to provide drainage and gravel in low areas may occur in the future. There are no other reasonable routes to provide access to this property. Significant impacts are not anticipated as a result of issuing these easements. The applicant will pay the school trust fair market value for the easement.

**27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:**

EIS                       More Detailed EA                       No Further Analysis

<b>EA Checklist Approved By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Erik Eneboe
	<b>Title:</b> Conrad Unit Manager, CLO
<b>Signature:</b> 	<b>Date:</b> November 6, 2013

