

## CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

<b>Project Name:</b>	Trusler Ranch Grant
<b>Proposed Implementation Date:</b>	December 2014 – December 2015
<b>Proponent:</b>	Tom Trusler (Trusler Ranch)
<b>Location:</b>	Sections 29 Township 2S Range 47E Lots 7,8,13,14 in the West Fork Drainage of Little Pumpkin Creek in Southeastern Montana.
<b>County:</b>	Powder River

### I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Tom Trusler (Trusler Ranch) is proposing a fuels reduction and salvage harvest of fire killed ponderosa pine. The area proposed consists of 189 acres. The purpose of the action is to reduce fuel loading, promote where possible healthy live trees showing signs of good health and vigor, and to capture whatever value the timber may have before it rots and loses all value.

### 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 Trusler Ranch has contacted adjoining land owners to see if they had any questions or concerns. They did not have any concerns. One neighbor is also participating in this grant, another is in the process of having their land logged.

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

Hazard Reduction Agreement. (HRA)

#### 3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

**NO ACTION:** Current land use activities of grazing would continue without change. Increased fire hazard will occur as the fire killed ponderosa pine trees fall becoming 1000 hour fuels.

**ACTION ALTERNATIVE:** This alternative would continue the current land use of grazing and would also incorporate a fuels reduction/ salvage harvest of 189 acres. When live trees showing signs of good genetics and health are encountered they will be left as seed trees, in areas where live trees are prevalent a crown spacing of 40 to 60 feet will be maintained.

### 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.*

Geology of the area is Fort Union Formation, silt loams and clay loams that are shallow over stratified sandy, silty, and clayey shale. And deep soils that are dominantly silty clay loam throughout. Soils disturbance will be minimal due to very short skid trails and relatively flat ground. Any impacts from skidding activities would be mitigated mostly by the scattered nature of the timber, and dispersing the skidding activity over a large area.

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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.*

The project area has no tributary drains the closest tributary drains into the West Fork of Little Pumpkin Creek. No perennial, Class I streams are present within any of the 5 units. The area is characterized by low precipitation and tributary streams that flow in spring, but are dry most of the year. Any class III stream segments located within project unit boundaries would be marked as exclusion or restriction zones on the ground where needed. Due to the low precipitation, the lack of perennial streams, there would be a low risk of direct or indirect impacts to water quality, and cumulative impacts are not likely. BMPs and site specific mitigations, to control erosion and protect water quality would be implemented.

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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.*

Particulate would be released into the atmosphere when the Slash piles are burned. Slash would only be ignited when ambient air conditions are suitable and air dispersal flows are adequate to lift the smoke into the winds aloft for rapid and thorough dispersal. Environmental conditions required prior to ignition must include adequate snow cover on the ground surface with a long-term forecast of continued low temperatures during daylight hours. There would likely be no cumulative impacts on air quality as a result of the proposed action.

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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 project area consists of mixed grass and Ponderosa Pine types with smaller amounts of Rocky Mountain Juniper interspersed throughout. The Ponderosa Pine generally occurs along the upland areas and in the swale and draw features associated with the uplands. The majority of the acres to be treated are burnt and are heavy with tree mortality. In most units there is as much as 90% tree mortality. No cumulative impacts to vegetative communities are likely to occur as a result of the proposed activity.

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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.*

This section has the potential to hold a wide variety of wildlife species. The primary species that inhabit the area are mule deer, whitetail deer, elk, Merriams turkey, toads, cottontail rabbits, raptors, migratory prairie birds and others. The project operations should produce only minor environmental impacts to wildlife species because of the relatively small area the project encompasses. Mule deer, whitetail deer and to a lesser extent, elk may be temporarily displaced during project implementation activities. Their ability to adapt and relatively small size of the project area coupled with the existing surrounding habit will ensure their needs during the displacement period will be met. No cumulative impacts on terrestrial, avian, and aquatic habitats are likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

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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.*

There are no known threatened and endangered species in this general area. There are no limited environmental resources within this area. The small size coupled with the existing surrounding habitat would create no cumulative impacts as a result of the proposed activity.

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**10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:**

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

There are no known sites of interest in the project area.

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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 proposed project would produce a very minimal temporary visual impact. This effect would be mitigated over time as the disturbed sites recover and the Slash piles are burned. The project area is on private land limiting the majority of the visual impact to the proponent. For these reasons, along with the scattered nature of the timber and grasslands no cumulative impacts are anticipated as a result of the proposed activity.

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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 project would not use resources that are limited in the area

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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.*

This section is currently used as a grazing tract. The property owner has no concerns with the proposed project. No cumulative impacts are likely to occur due to the remoteness of the project area.

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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION</b></p>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.</li><li>• Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.</li><li>• Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.</li></ul> |
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**14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:**

*Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.*

Human health would not be impacted by the proposed project or associated activity. Safety considerations and temporary risks would increase for the professional contractors working within the project area, and possibly for public vehicle traffic on the highway and the county roads while log trucks are hauling. There are no unusual safety considerations associated with the project. The local residents should not face increased health or long term safety hazards because of the project.

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

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

The section involved with the proposed project is classified as grazing land. Some forage has started to regrow since the 2012 fire. The current amount of available livestock forage would temporarily be reduced. Over a short period of time the disturbed sites will recover and forage levels should return to their present levels or beyond.

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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.*

People are currently employed in the wood products industry in the region. Due to the relatively small size of the project, there would be no measurable cumulative impact from this proposed action on employment.

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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.*

People are currently paying taxes from the wood products industry in the region. Due to the relatively small size of the project, there would be no measurable cumulative impact from this proposed action on tax revenues.

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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 would be no measurable cumulative impacts related to this project that would warrant any government services due to the relatively small size of the project area, there will be short-term impacts to traffic patterns to locals, but due to the low population in the area no long term effects are foreseeable.

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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 project is located on private land and will not affect any of the organizations listed above.

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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.*

All of the units are on private land, and are not accessible to the public.

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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.*

There would be no measurable cumulative impacts related to population and housing due to relatively small size of the project, and the fact that people are already employed in this occupation in the region

**22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:**

*Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.*

No impacts would be expected with either alternative.

**23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:**

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

No impacts would be expected with either alternative.

**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.*

N/A

<b>EA Checklist Prepared By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Andy Miller	<b>Date:</b> November 10, 2014
	<b>Title:</b> Forester	

**V. FINDING**

**25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:**

The Project alternative is the selected Alternative.

**26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:**

The proposed project of 189 acres would not result in nor cause significant environmental impacts. The predicted environmental impacts would be adequately mitigated through the project plan, salvage prescription, operating period, unit boundaries, skid trail layout, and contract stipulations.

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

EIS       More Detailed EA       No Further Analysis

<b>EA Checklist Approved By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Chris Pilecki	
	<b>Title:</b> Area Manager	
<b>Signature:</b>		<b>Date:</b> 12/2/14