CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	**Mutchler Properties LLC Spring Development & Stock Water Tank - Lease # 5707**
Proposed Implementation Date:	February, 2016
Proponent:	Ross Coffman – Lessee
Location:	Section 36, Township 3 North, Range 22 East
County:	Stillwater

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Ross Coffman is proposing the installation of a spring development in the SE4NE4 of Section 36.

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 Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) Southern Land Office, The Department of Natural Resources Trust Lands Archaeologist and Ross Coffman – Lessee of State Lease # 5707, are involved in this project.

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

No other governmental agencies have jurisdiction over this proposal.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action) – The DNRC does not grant permission to install the spring development.

Alternative B (the Proposed action) – The DNRC does grant permission to install the spring development.

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 soils consist of loams or clay loams with some sandstone outcroppings to the south of the project area. The spring development has been planned out to avoid unstable areas. Once construction is finished, the affected area will be reseeded with native grasses to reduce erosion and proper moisture drainage will be re-established. Various spring developments in the area show that with post installation reclamation, these soils are capable of handling such an action.

No significant adverse impacts to the soils are anticipated.

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.

This project would divert the water from one spring into one stock water tank directly adjacent to the spring on the State land. The purpose of this project is to increase the amount of available water for livestock to better distribute their grazing patterns. Various spring developments in the area show with post installation reclamation, the water quality, quantity, and distribution are not significantly impacted.

No significant adverse impacts to water quality, quantity, or distribution are anticipated.

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.

Dirt work may generate some airborne dust. These activities will minimally affect air quality for a very limited amount of time.

No significant adverse impacts to air quality are anticipated

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 proposed project area contains common native grasses found in our area including, Western Wheatgrass, Bluebunch Wheatgrass, Blue Grama, Sandberg Bluegrass, Prairie Junegrass, Needle and Thread, and Green Needlegrass. These grasses are not considered rare or endangered cover types.

The proposed project area is in Sage Grouse General Habitat and the nearest active lek is 4 miles to the southeast of the proposed project. The proposed action would not alter the Greater Sage Grouse's habitat significantly because of the small size of the project, the location of the project, and the rehabilitation procedures following the project. The proposed project location is in an area that does not consist of preferred Sage Grouse habitat because it is in a small coulee devoid of any sagebrush. In addition, spring developments and installation of water tanks in General Sage Grouse Habitat are listed in the exempt activities of the Governor's Executive Order No. 12-2015. The following stipulations described in the Governor's Executive Order No. 12.2015 will be followed for the proposed project:

1. Vegetation removal as part of permitted activities will be limited to the minimum disturbance required by the project.
2. Reclamation will re-establish native grasses, forbs, and shrubs during interim and final reclamation.
3. The spring development will be protected by fencing and enough water will remain at the site to provide mesic vegetation.
4. The stock tank will be more than 0.25 miles from a lek in General Habitat.
5. The construction of the spring development and water tank will be outside of March 15-July 15.
6. The water tank will contain bird escape ramps.

By following these stipulations outlined in the Governor's Executive Order No. 12-2015, no significant adverse impacts to Sage Grouse General Habitat are anticipated with the proposed project.

No significant adverse impacts to vegetation cover are anticipated.

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.

A field survey of the proposed project area was done on December 7, 2015. No fish were found to use the springs or subsequent drainage areas where the project will take place.

The wildlife habitat, following construction of this project, will benefit greatly from the increase in available water. There may be some disturbance of their normal use of the area during construction, but this will be for a very limited amount of time. Following construction, use of the area by wildlife should return to normal.

The proposed project area is in Sage Grouse General Habitat and the nearest active lek is 4 miles to the southeast of the proposed project. The proposed action would not alter the Greater Sage Grouse's habitat significantly because of the small size of the project, the location of the project, and the rehabilitation procedures following the project. The proposed project location is in an area that does not consist of preferred Sage Grouse habitat because it is in a small coulee devoid of any sagebrush. In addition, spring developments and installation of water tanks in General Sage Grouse Habitat are listed in the exempt activities of the Governor's Executive Order No. 12-2015. The following stipulations described in the Governor's Executive Order No. 12.2015 will be followed for the proposed project:

7. Vegetation removal as part of permitted activities will be limited to the minimum disturbance required by the project.
8. Reclamation will re-establish native grasses, forbs, and shrubs during interim and final reclamation.
9. The spring development will be protected by fencing and enough water will remain at the site to provide mesic vegetation.
10. The stock tank will be more than 0.25 miles from a lek in General Habitat.
11. The construction of the spring development and water tank will be outside of March 15-July 15.
12. The water tank will contain bird escape ramps.

By following these stipulations outlined in the Governor's Executive Order No. 12-2015, no significant adverse impacts to Sage Grouse General Habitat are anticipated with the proposed project.

No significant adverse impacts to terrestrial, avian and aquatic life and habitats are anticipated.

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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.

The Species of Concern Report from the Montana Natural Heritage Program indicates that the Greater Sage Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) and the Black-tailed Prairie Dog (*Cynomys ludvicianus*) may occur in the area. However, these species have not been observed on this tract.

The proposed action would not alter the Black-tailed Prairie Dog's habitat significantly because of the small size of the project and the rehabilitation procedures following the project. No Prairie Dogs were observed during the field survey conducted on December 7, 2015.

The proposed project area is in Sage Grouse General Habitat and the nearest active lek is 4 miles to the southeast of the proposed project. The proposed action would not alter the Greater Sage Grouse's habitat significantly because of the small size of the project, the location of the project, and the rehabilitation procedures following the project. The proposed project location is in an area that does not consist of preferred Sage Grouse habitat because it is in a small coulee devoid of any sagebrush. In addition, spring developments and installation of water tanks in General Sage Grouse Habitat are listed in the exempt activities of the Governor's Executive Order No. 12-2015. The following stipulations described in the Governor's Executive Order No. 12.2015 will be followed for the proposed project:

13. Vegetation removal as part of permitted activities will be limited to the minimum disturbance required by the project.
14. Reclamation will re-establish native grasses, forbs, and shrubs during interim and final reclamation.
15. The spring development will be protected by fencing and enough water will remain at the site to provide mesic vegetation.

16. The stock tank will be more than 0.25 miles from a lek in General Habitat.
17. The construction of the spring development and water tank will be outside of March 15-July 15.
18. The water tank will contain bird escape ramps.

By following these stipulations outlined in the Governor's Executive Order No. 12-2015, no significant adverse impacts to Sage Grouse General Habitat are anticipated with the proposed project.

No significant adverse impacts are anticipated.

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10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:
Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

A field survey was conducted on December 7, 2015. During the field inspection, the lessee, Ross Coffman pointed out some petroglyphs on sand stone rocks located in the SE4SE4 of Section 36. The petroglyphs are located approximately ¼ mile south of the proposed project area. The entire project area was surveyed during the field inspection and the petroglyphs were the only cultural resources found during the field survey.

A Class I (literature review) level review was conducted by the DNRC staff archaeologist for the area of potential effect (APE). This entailed inspection of project maps, DNRC's sites/site leads database, land use records, General Land Office Survey Plats, and control cards. The Class I search results revealed that no cultural or paleontological resources have been identified in the APE on state land. No additional archaeological investigative work will be conducted in response to this proposed development. However, if previously unknown cultural or paleontological materials are identified during project related activities, all work will cease until a professional assessment of such resources can be made.

No significant cumulative impacts are anticipated.

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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 project is located in an isolated area away from any population. No long term or cumulative effects to aesthetics are anticipated.

No significant impacts 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 project will divert water from one spring. This project will only collect portions of the available water supply provided by the spring. Water will continue to travel down the drainage past the spring development and pipeline.

No significant impacts to environmental resources are anticipated.

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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.

There are some human safety risks associated with operating equipment. The proponent and their employees accept these risks as acceptable occupational hazards.

No significant adverse impacts to human health and safety are anticipated.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

The proposed spring development would increase the efficacy with which the lessee grazes livestock on this tract of State land. By increasing the distribution of water, the livestock would graze the land more evenly. By grazing the land more evenly, the cattle would utilize the available forage better and have less impact on the areas where they tended to congregate prior to the project's installation.

No significant adverse impacts to industrial, commercial, and agriculture activities are anticipated.

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 activity will not create, move or eliminate any jobs. No new jobs will be created.

No significant adverse impacts to the employment market are anticipated.

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.

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 increases in traffic, no changes in traffic patterns, and no need for additional fire protection, or police services.

No significant adverse impacts to government services are anticipated.

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.

There are no zoning or other agency management plans affecting these lands.

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 will be no direct or cumulative impacts on recreation or wilderness activities.

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 impacts 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.

No significant impacts are anticipated.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:
How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

The proposed project will not have significant adverse impacts on any unique quality 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.

The tract where the proposed project area is located is currently leased as grazing land that is rated at 165 AUMs per year. The proposed project will encompass less than 1 acre, and will not reduce the AUM rating of this tract.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:**	Jocee Hedrick	
	Title:	Land Use Specialist	
Signature: Jocee Hedrick			**Date:** 2/4/16

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

I have selected the Proposed Alternative B, and recommend that the DNRC does allow the construction and installation the spring development on Section 36, T3N R22E.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

I have evaluated the potential environment effects and have determined that no significant adverse environmental impacts will result from the proposed activity.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

☐ EIS ☐ More Detailed EA ☑ No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:**	Matthew Wolcott
	Title:	Southern Land Office Area Manager
Signature: [signature]		**Date:** Feb 05 2016