CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	**Ralph Miller Water Developments**
Proposed Implementation Date:	May 2016
Proponent:	Ralph Miller (grazing lessee)
Location:	Section 16, T10N, R4E
County:	Meagher
Trust:	Common Schools

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Ralph Miller has requested to install two tanks and bury approximately 8,800 feet of 2" plastic pipeline (12" – 18" deep) across state land in order to provide reliable livestock water on state land. The water source is Moose Creek, on private land in the NW¼ section 30, T10N, R4E. The affected areas would be approximately 2 acres of native rangeland, and would be a lease improvement.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

Agencies, Groups or Individuals Scoped:	Response:
DNRC, Landowner	Neutral
Ralph Miller, surface lessee	Proponent is in favor of the project

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

DNRC – Water Resources Division: Water right, with Trust Lands named as co-owner

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Proposed Alternative: To grant Ralph Miller permission to install two water tanks and bury 8,800 feet of pipeline across state land.

No Action Alternative: To deny Ralph Miller permission to install two water tanks and bury 8,800 feet of pipeline across state land.

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 are generally shallow and there are no fragile, compactable, or unstable soils. The disturbed soils will be seeded to orchardgrass and slender wheatgrass.

Proposed Alternative: Impacts to the soils would be temporary. No impacts to the soils or geologic features are anticipated.

No Action Alternative: No impacts to the geology or soil characteristics would occur.

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 does not contain any significant surface water resources, besides the irrigation ditch that goes through this tract. Indiana Creek is generally dry.

Proposed Alternative: The water would be piped from private land on Moose Creek into two tanks on state land. The project should not result in any degradation of water quality.
No Action Alternative: No impacts to the water quality, quantity, and/or distribution will occur.

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.

In general, this area is considered to be of high quality air standards with good ventilation and would not be affected by the proposal.

Proposed Alternative: No direct or cumulative effects are expected to occur to air quality as a result of the proposed action.
No Action Alternative: No impacts to air quality will occur.

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 are no known rare plants or cover types present. The Montana Natural Heritage Program lists whitebark pine as a species of concern within the township.

Proposed Alternative: Temporary disturbances to plant communities located within the proposed project area would occur. Whitebark pine is not on this section. Vegetative communities would not be permanently altered. No impacts to rare plants or cover types are anticipated.
No Action Alternative: No impacts to the vegetation cover, quantity, and/or quality will occur.

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 tract is used by a variety of wildlife, including large ungulates (elk, mule deer, whitetail deer, and pronghorn), small to large sized predators (weasels, skunks, red fox, and coyotes), numerous species of small mammals (mice, voles, ground squirrels, rabbits, etc.), various raptors (red-tailed hawks, golden eagles, American kestrels, prairie falcons, etc.) upland game birds (Hungarian partridge and sharp-tailed grouse), and numerous non-game bird species (a wide variety of migrant and resident bird species associated with available habitats). The proposed project would temporarily displace these wildlife species.

Proposed Alternative: Habitats would be temporarily disturbed during the installation of the water tanks and pipelines. No lasting impacts to terrestrial, avian, and/or aquatic life and/or habitats are anticipated.
No Action Alternative: No impacts to terrestrial, avian, and/or aquatic life and habitats will occur.

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.

At this time, no known unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources have been identified within the proposed project area. The Montana Natural Heritage Program lists nine species of concern within this township. These include the following: Wolverine, Little Brown Myotis, Veery, Greater Sage-Grouse, Bobolink, Pileated Woodpecker, Clark's Nutcracker, Green-tailed Towhee, and the Westslope Cutthroat Trout. According to the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program website, the project area is not in sage

grouse general or core habitat. None of the area's wildlife would be affected beyond temporary displacement during installation and maintenance of the lines.

Proposed Alternative: No impacts to unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources are anticipated.
No Action Alternative: No impacts to unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources will occur.

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

A Class III intensity level cultural and paleontological resources inventory was conducted of the area of potential effect on state land. Despite a detailed examination, no cultural or fossil resources were identified and no additional archaeological or paleontological investigative work is recommended. The proposed project will have *No Effect* to *Antiquities* as defined under the Montana State Antiquities Act. A formal report of findings has been prepared and is on file with the DNRC and the Montana State Historic Preservation Officer.

Proposed Alternative: No impacts to areas historical, archeological, and/or paleontological resources are anticipated.
No Action Alternative: No impacts to historical, archeological, and/or paleontological resources will occur.

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 landscape consists of rolling hills used primarily for general ranching operations. The pipelines would be buried so they would not interfere with the areas aesthetics. Noise increases would occur during construction; these impacts would cease as soon as the project is completed.

Proposed Alternative: No impacts to the aesthetics are anticipated.
No Action Alternative: No impacts to the aesthetics will occur.

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 area does not contain limited resources. Nearby activities consist mostly of ranching operations.

Proposed Alternative: No impacts to the demands of environmental resources such as land, water, air, and/or energy resources are anticipated.
No Action Alternative: 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:
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.

Proposed Alternative: No impacts to studies, plans, and/or projects pertinent to this area are anticipated to occur.
No Action Alternative: No impacts to studies, plans, and/or projects will occur.

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 project would create human health and/or safety risks associated with the installation and maintenance of the springs and pipelines.

Proposed Alternative: Ralph Miller and his contractor bear the risks associated with the installation of the tanks and pipelines. The risks would only be present during installation and maintenance of the proposed lines.
No Action Alternative: No impacts to human health and/or safety risks will occur.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

The project would improve the production and management of the cattle ranching operations.

Proposed Alternative: The proposed project would improve the livestock water situation in this pasture.
No Action Alternative: No changes with the water situation would occur.

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 project would be completed in a relatively short time frame and it wound not create permanent jobs; however, it is likely temporary jobs would be available during the installation of the line.

Proposed Alternative: No lasting impacts to quantity and distribution of employment are anticipated.
No Action Alternative: No impacts to quantity and distribution of employment will occur.

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.

Proposed Alternative: The project would not have any measurable effects to local or state tax revenues.
No Action Alternative: No impacts to the state tax base and/or tax revenues will occur.

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

Proposed Alternative: The proposal would not have any impacts on traffic or government services.
No Action Alternative: No impacts to traffic, road uses, or government services will occur.

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.

Proposed Alternative: No impacts to local environmental plans and goals are anticipated occur as the construction is in remote areas.
No Action Alternative: No impacts to local environmental plans and goals will occur.

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 state land is rural, not legally accessible, and has good recreational value. The proposal would not affect recreational activities.

Proposed Alternative: The proposed action is not expected to impact general recreational and wilderness activities on these state tracts.
No Action Alternative: No impacts to the quality of recreational and wilderness activities will occur.

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.

Proposed Alternative: The proposal does not include any changes to housing or developments. No direct or cumulative effects to population or housing are anticipated.
No Action Alternative: No impacts to the density and/or distribution of population and housing will occur.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Proposed Alternative: No impacts to the areas social structures, native/traditional lifestyles, or communities are anticipated to occur.
No Action Alternative: No impacts social structures, native/traditional lifestyles, or communities will occur.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

Proposed Alternative: No impacts to the areas cultural uniqueness and/or diversity are anticipated to occur.
No Action Alternative: No impacts to the areas cultural uniqueness and/or diversity will occur.

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.

Proposed Alternative: The proposed project would improve the grazing management on the lessee's ranch. This project would be a lease improvement,.
No Action Alternative: No impacts to the social and economic circumstances will occur.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:**	Casey Kellogg	**Date:**	May 13, 2016
	Title:	Land Use Specialist		

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Action Alternative as Proposed.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

This project will have no significant, detrimental impacts or cumulative effects regarding the project area which includes approximately 2 acres of native rangeland. The installation of two tanks and a buried 8,800 foot - 2" plastic pipeline (12" – 18" deep) across state land will be a long-term benefit to the grazing lease by providing reliable livestock water in the project area. In order to address the minimal ground disturbance, appropriate mitigation measures should occur which will include washing equipment and vehicles before entering state land, weed control, and re-seeding disturbed areas as necessary with a seed mix approved by DNRC staff.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

☐	EIS	☐	More Detailed EA	☒	No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:**	Andy Burgoyne
	Title:	Helena Unit Manager, Central Land Office
Signature:		**Date:** 5/16/16