

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Steve's Fork County Road Realignment and Easement
Proposed Implementation Date:	2016
Proponent:	Garfield County
Location:	T18N-R34E-Sec 36
County:	Garfield County

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The Garfield County Road Department has requested a right of way easement for a county road on T18N-R34E-Sec 36 from the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Eastern Land Office. The easement application is for the existing county road on this tract along with the realignment of existing road to create a new intersection to allow for improved motorist visibility and safety. Garfield County does not currently possess an easement for the current road location but has applied for the entirety of the route along with the realignment. The total length of the requested easement would be 9252.54 feet with a width of 30 feet encompassing a total acreage of 10.55 acres.

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 Proponent has requested right of way easement on the section of State Trust Land mentioned above. Dowl Engineering is working on behalf of the Garfield County Road Department and has submitted the DS-406 application for right of way easement. A field review of the site was conducted by ELO staff on June 24, 2016. Due to the small scope of the project no public comment was sought. Project consultation was received from the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program.

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

None

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A- Grant Garfield County a right of way easement for the county road and associated reroute.

Alternative B- No Action

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.

Alternative A- Soil disturbance will occur if the easement is granted. Soils on the site are generally stable in nature. No fragile, compactable or unstable soils were noted within the project area. Disturbance will come from general cut and fill operations common with building public roads to grade.

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- Water quality may be impacted during construction activities due to potential runoff near an Camp Creek tributary of Steve's Fork Creek. Effects should be minimal and water quality should not be noticeably degraded. Effects should be mitigated through the use of erosion control techniques and devices.

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- Pollutants and particulate levels may be increased during the construction of the project. After the completion of the project pollutant and particulate levels should return to normal. Increase in pollutants during construction should be negligible.

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- Vegetation cover quantity and quality will be affected by the construction of the project. The action will remove some plants through disturbance. No rare plant species were noted within the project area. Upon completion of the project the disturbed area will be reseeded to native plant species. Current vegetative community consists of Western Wheatgrass (*Agropyron smithii*), Green Needlegrass (*Stipa viridula*), Inland Saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*), Blue Grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), Prairie Junegrass (*Koeleria pyramidata*), Needle and Thread (*Stipa comata*), and various forb species.

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- A minor impact to wildlife and birds may be expected during the construction phase of the activity. The use by wildlife and birds should return to normal levels after the construction phase of the project is completed. Fish use should not be impacted due to lack of water habitat within the scope of the project.

Alternative B- No Significant Impact

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.

Alternative A- A search of the Montana NRIS Natural Heritage Database shows two sensitive species Loggerhead Shrike - *Lanius ludovicianus* Plains Spadefoot - *Spea bombifrons* within the general area of the project. No significant impacts to these species are expected due to the small scope of the project. This project is located within General Greater Sage Grouse Habitat and consultation from the MSGHCP has been received

by the proponent and the DNRC-ELO (Project #1463166256670). The closest noted active lek is over 2 miles from the proposed project.

Alternative B- No Significant Impact

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

Alternative A- A site review by ELO field staff of the project area revealed no historical archeological or paleontological resources within the scope of the impact. A search of the TLMS database shows no noted historical or archeological resources.

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.

Because the topographic setting and geology suggest a low to moderate likelihood of the presence of cultural or paleontological resources, proposed road realignment are expected to have No Effect to Antiquities. 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.

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- No major impacts to the aesthetics of the area are expected. The construction area is not on a prominent location. The site will be visible from the county road; once reclamation is completed on the site the aesthetics of the area should return to near pre construction levels.

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- No significant impact

Alternative B- No Significant Impact

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.

None

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.

Alternative A- By granting access as county roads this should improve the safety of road and allow for better access for emergency vehicles in this area of the county. Safety for motor vehicle traffic should be improved due to better visibility and an improved location for an intersection.

Alternative B- No Significant Impact

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

Alternative A- It would have a positive effect on Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural activities and efficiency. The road will allow for travel and access to remote parts of the county.

Alternative B- No Significant Impact

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.

Alternative A- The project has the potential to create jobs with advancement opportunities.

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- County taxes may be used to fund the construction of this project. The cost of which is unknown at this time.

Alternative B- No Significant Impact

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

Alternative A- Maintenance of the road would require occasional re-gravelling and grading. This material will be acquired and maintenance implemented by Garfield County.

Alternative B- No Significant Impact

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.

Alternative A- No Impact

Alternative B- No Impact

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.

Alternative A- Approval of the right of way will ensure public access to the State Trust lands crossed by the county road.

Alternative B- No Significant Impact

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.

Alternative A- No Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Significant Impact

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Alternative A- No Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Significant Impact

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

Alternative A- No Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Significant Impact

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.

Alternative A- This will provide income for the trust in the form of the purchase of a permanent easement. The amount is set at \$300.00 per acre. The project would encompass 10.55 acres, for a total easement price of \$3,165.00.

Alternative B- No Significant Impact

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Scott Aye	Date: 6-27-2016
	Title: Land Program Manager	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative A

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The granting of the requested right of way easement across state owned trust lands for the Steve's Fork Road and associated proposed realignment, should not result in nor cause significant environmental impacts. The proposed action satisfies the trusts fiduciary mandate and ensures the long term productivity of the land. An environmental assessment checklist is the appropriate level of analysis for the proposed action.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Chris Pileski
	Title: ELO Area Manager
Signature:	Date: