

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Donsbach Water Development
Proposed Implementation Date:	Summer, 2022
Proponent:	Kirk Donsbach – Lessee of Lease # 351
Location:	NW4, Section 36, Township 19 North, Range 22 East
County:	Fergus

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Kirk Donsbach is proposing to install a shallow well and stock tank in the SW4SE4NW4 of Section 36, Township 19 North, Range 22 East. The proposed water development installation is planned to be installed directly adjacent to Box Elder Creek in hopes to have access to water on years when the creek is dry. The proposed shallow well will be used for stock water.

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)
Northeastern Land Office (NELO) & Lewistown Unit Office
Proponent: Kirk Donsbach – Lessee of State Lease #351

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

The proponent must obtain a water right from the DNRC's Water Resources Division. The State of Montana must be listed as one of the owners of the water right.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action) – The DNRC does not grant permission to Kirk Donsbach to install a shallow well.

Alternative B (the Proposed action) – The DNRC does grant permission to Kirk Donsbach to install a shallow well.

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.

There are no fragile or unstable soils present in the area of the proposed well installation. The soils consist of clay loams. The well installation site is planned to avoid unstable areas and will have little impact to the soil profile.

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.

The project would increase the local availability of water for livestock. There will be a very localized cone of depression when the well is in use, which will be infrequent. Because the well will be so shallow and infrequently used, there is not likely to be groundwater effects to the surrounding area. Also, since the well will only be used when the stream is already too low to be used, there should not be any effect on in stream flow.

No significant impacts to local or regional water resources 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 well location area is currently being used as grazing land. During a site visit on May 9, 2022, the native vegetation species that were noted included: Western Wheatgrass, Needle & Thread, Prairie Junegrass, Sandberg Bluegrass, and Threadleaf Sedge. All of the adjacent grazing land was found to be in good condition during the site visit. Digging a shallow well in this area is not expected to have significant adverse impacts to the vegetation cover, quantity or quality.

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.

Section 36, T19N R22E has also been identified as Core Sage Grouse Habitat. The proposed well location on Section 36 is over 0.6 miles away from the nearest active lek. Under the Governor's Executive Order No. 12-2015, drilling of agriculture water wells more than 0.6 miles from the perimeter of a lek in Core Areas is an exempt activity. Therefore, no review is required by the Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team at this time.

No significant adverse impacts are anticipated.

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 may occur within the area in and around Section 36. The digging of the shallow well is not anticipated to have any adverse impacts to any of the listed species of concern. Some or all of the species may traverse this tract and may be temporarily displaced near the proposed well location during construction for a short period of time.

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No significant adverse impacts are anticipated.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

A field inspection of the proposed well location was completed on May 9, 2022. No historic or archaeological sites were identified immediately near the proposed well location.

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 revealed that no cultural or paleontological resources have been identified in the APE. Because of a lack of permanent water, and because the local geology is not likely to produce caves, rock shelters, or sources of tool stone, 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 adverse impacts are anticipated.

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.

There will just be one stock water tank installed in the creek bottom out of site of the county road. Stock tanks are a common site in the area as it is mostly rural agricultural use adjacent to this tract. There will be no additional noise or light changes to the area.

No significant adverse impacts are anticipated.

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.

No limited environmental resources will be significantly impacted due to the proposed project. This project is not anticipated to add any significant cumulative demands on environmental resources.

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.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

The proposed well would add a water source to a tract that has had limited water availability in the past. This will help better distribute livestock grazing throughout the tract.

No adverse impacts to 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 project will not create or eliminate any jobs.

No 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 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.

No adverse impacts to the recreational value are anticipated.

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 adverse 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 adverse impacts are anticipated.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

The proposed project is not anticipated to have any adverse impacts to 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.

No monetary return to the trust is anticipated. The shallow well and associated stock tank will be considered an improvement owned by the lessee, Kirk Donsbach.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Jocee Hedrick
	Title: Lewistown Unit Manager
Signature:	<i>Jocee Hedrick</i>
	Date: 5/12/22

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

I have selected the Proposed Alternative B and recommend that permission be granted to Kirk Donsbach to install a new stock water well with associated stock tank.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

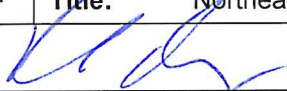
I have evaluated the potential environment effects and have determined that no significant adverse environmental impacts will result from the proposed activity.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Clive Rooney
	Title: Northeastern Land Office Area Manager
Signature: 	Date: 5/13/22