

United States
Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Miles City Field Office

Prairie Co. Projects 2013

Environmental Assessment (EA)
DOI-BLM-MT-C020-2013-0012-EA

For Further Information Please Contact:

Bureau of Land Management
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BLM



**UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT REVIEW

OFFICE/AREA: Miles City Field Office	DOI-BLM-MT-C020-2013-0012-EA
	DATE POSTED: 10/04/2012
NAME: Prairie Co. Projects 2013 EA	DATE DUE: 11/15/2012
	FUNDING: 8200
LOCATION: Little Sheep PPI Ext. T.13N., R.47E., Sec. 5 & 8 Wagon Tongue PPL 2 Ext. T.15N., R.46E., Sec. 35 & 36 Prairie County (All Project) See attached Maps	Little Sheep PPI Ext. #419579 Wagon Tongue PPL 2 Ext. #419670

ORIGINATOR DATE/INITIALS	TITLE	ASSIGNMENT
Patrick Merrill	Range Tech	Completion

REVIEWERS	TITLE	ASSIGNMENT	DATE/INITIALS
Dale Tribby	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife Review	10/23/2012 <i>dct</i>
CJ Truesdale	Archaeology	Cultural	<i>CJ 01/29/2013</i> <i>MT-020-13-27</i>
Dena Lang	Outdoor Recreation Planner	VRM	10/30/12 DJL
Reyer Rens	Supervisory RMS	Review	RR 1/29/2013



 ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR

1/31/2013
 DATE

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

PROPOSED ACTION/TITLE TYPE: Prairie Co. Projects 2013 EA

EA NUMBER: DOI-BLM-MT-C020-2013-0012-EA

RIPS NUMBER: Little Sheep PPI Extension. #419579
Wagon Tongue PPL 2 Extension. #419670

LOCATION OF PROPOSED ACTION:

Little Sheep PPI Ext. T.13N., R.47E., Sec. 5 & 8

Wagon Tongue PPL 2 Ext. T.15N., R.46E., Sec. 35 & 36

Prairie County (All Project)

See attached Maps

PREPARING OFFICE: Miles City Field Office

DATE OF PREPARATION: 10/04/2012

CONFORMANCE WITH APPLICABLE LAND USE PLAN: This proposed action is in conformance with the Big Dry RMP ROD approved in 1996, as amended by the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing for Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota ROD approved in 1997. The Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing for Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota ROD states on page 11 “guidelines are best management practices, treatments and techniques, and implementation of range improvements...” Page 14 of the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing for Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota ROD says “guidelines are provided to maintain or improve resource conditions in uplands and riparian habitats available to livestock grazing.”

SCOPING: This project was posted on Montana/Dakotas BLM webpage on 10/24/2012 for public information requests. Internal scoping identified the issues below. No issues were brought forth by the public.

ISSUES IDENTIFIED THROUGH SCOPING:

- Cultural:
- Livestock Grazing:
- Vegetation:
 - Effects on native vegetation
- Wildlife:
 - Effects to sage and sharp-tailed grouse habitat
 - Effects to crucial winter range habitats
 - Effects to nesting migratory birds

PURPOSE AND NEED: The purpose of the Environmental Assessment is to analyze the effects of improved distribution and enhanced livestock water resources on public land in portions of Prairie County. The need is to construct new, replace or augment the current livestock watering facilities. The improved watering facilities will help the Norris AMP allotment (#01269) continue to meet the Standards for

Rangeland Health under current permitted management practices. The additional water source would increase management options to address upland, riparian, and wildlife habitat conditions on the Pasture 7 West allotment (#01293).

PROPOSED ACTION: The Bureau of Land Management proposes to design, contract and inspect, upon completion, the installation of two pipelines. The permittee would be required to furnish the pumping systems, overflow systems and a minimum of a 1,000 gallon livestock water tank for each watering site. If any portion of the project crosses private or state lands, the permittee will be responsible for contributed funds prior to letting any contract. The BLM would disburse funds for the installation of pipe and apertures for these projects. Some blading may occur to access the well locations. The selected routes have been approved by needed specialists. Also blading may occur along pipeline routes to ensure proper bury depth of pipe. This would also allow access for maintenance. Water rights would be filed by BLM upon completion of tank locations as specified in the cooperative agreement.

Construction activities will not occur between December 1 and March 31 to minimize impacts to wintering big game species, particularly mule deer and antelope. Construction activities will not occur between April 15 and July 15 to minimize impacts to migratory birds and sage/sharp-tailed grouse species and associated nesting activities.

Little Sheep PPL Extension: The proposed action is to design, contract, inspect and construct a pipeline at the location shown on the attached map. The pipeline is approximately 5,900 feet in length and will be constructed with 1 ½ inch HDPE SDR 13.5 pipe on public land. The pipeline will be plowed (ripped) in at the depth of 5 to 6 feet. Contractor will pre-rip the line, and then come back one final time, rip and lay the pipe in the trench. After pipe is set in the ground, the contractor will then dig holes with the backhoe, to assemble curb stop valves, hydrants assemblies, air relief valves and stop and waste valves. The pre-rip is necessary so the contractor will know where large boulders or rock ledges are. If the equipment cannot pull through these areas the contractor will come back with the backhoe and break through these areas to achieve proper bury depth. At areas where a backhoe is utilized, disturbance will be 15 feet wide. Total disturbance along pipeline route will be approximately 4 feet wide except at points where apertures are installed. This pipeline will cross public land. Pipeline will end at a windmill site on public lands that no longer produces water. Pipeline will tie into an existing livestock watering tank.

Wagon Tongue PPL 2 Ext.: The proposed action is to design, contract, inspect and construct a pipeline at the location shown on the attached map. The pipeline is approximately 4,400 feet in length and will be constructed with 1 ½ inch HDPE SDR 13.5 pipe on public land. The pipeline will be plowed (ripped) in at the depth of 5 to 6 feet. Contractor will pre-rip the line, and then come back one final time, rip and lay the pipe in the trench. After pipe is set in the ground, the contractor will then dig holes with the backhoe, to assemble curb stop valves, hydrants assemblies, air relief valves and stop and waste valves. The pre-rip is necessary so the contractor will know where large boulders or rock ledges are. If the equipment cannot pull through these areas the contractor will come back with the backhoe and break through these areas to achieve proper bury depth. At areas where a backhoe is utilized, disturbance will be 15 feet wide. Total disturbance along pipeline route will be approximately 4 feet wide except at points where apertures are installed. Wagon Tongue PPL 2 Ext will consist of one livestock watering tank in Sec. 35. This tank will be equipped with a float valve. No overflow assembly will be required.

ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION: The “No Action” alternative would be to not install any of the proposed projects. Therefore all or part of the projects listed will not be installed and the BLM will not incur any expenses for the installation of pipelines.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT:

The following critical resources have been evaluated and are not affected by the proposed action or the alternatives in this EA:

Mandatory Item	Potentially Impacted	No Impact	Not Present On Site
Threatened and Endangered Species			X
Floodplains			X
Wilderness Values			X
ACECs			X
Water Resources		X	
Air Quality		X	
Cultural or Historical Values		X	
Prime or Unique Farmlands			X
Wild & Scenic Rivers			X
Wetland/Riparian	X		
Native American Religious Concerns			X
Wastes, Hazardous or Solids			X
Invasive, Nonnative Species			X
Environmental Justice			X

The following non-critical resources will not be impacted by this proposed action; therefore they will not be analyzed in detail by this Environmental Assessment: Forestry, Hydrology, Lands/Realty, Geology/Minerals, Recreation, Socio-economics.

Cultural: There was a 30 meter corridor inventoried along the route of the proposed Little Sheep Pipeline extension. The inventory of the 13.03 acres resulted in 1 cultural site, MT-020-13-27-Site2, and no isolates being recorded. The site is the Cherry Creek water well. BLM contracted and entered an agreement with the grazing permittee for the drilling and development of the well in 1966. The well is 90 feet deep and at the time of drilling flowed at 4 gallons per minute. The well has since gone dry. The site is not considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

There was a 30 meter linear corridor inventoried for cultural resources centered along the proposed Wagon Tongue Pipeline 2 extension. There were no cultural sites or isolates recorded along the 13.36 acre inventory corridor for the Wagon Tongue Pipeline.2 Extension

Grazing Administration:

Little Sheep PPL Extension: This project is located within the South Unit of Norris AMP #01269. The allotment consist of 4,179 acres of public lands rated at 1,057 AUM’s, 1,909 acres of private lands and 1,292 acres of state lands.

Wagon Tongue PPL 2 Ext.: This proposed project is located in the Pasture 7 West Allotment #01293. The allotment consists of 3,785 aces of public lands rated at 1,004 AUM’s, 240 acres of private lands and 285 acres of state land.

Livestock Grazing:

Little Sheep PPL Extension: Livestock grazing within the Norris AMP South Unit consisted of grazing approximately 140 head of cattle year round. There is a six pasture deferred rotation established on this

allotment. The available water primarily consists of windmill operated wells and one pipeline. Water supply remains consistent throughout the allotment except for in Pasture "E" where the only source of water (windmill generated well) has failed. Re-establishing water in this pasture will allow for current pasture rotations to continue.

Wagon Tongue PPL 2 Ext.: The Pasture 7 West Allotment is managed as a cow/calf operation with a 05/15-10/31 grazing system. A five pasture deferred grazing rotation is currently in place.

Soils: Soils have developed in alluvium and residuum derived from the Tongue River Member of the Tertiary Fort Union Formation. Lithology consists of light to dark yellow and tan siltstone and sandstones with coal seams. In many areas, the coal seams have burned, baking the surrounding rock, producing red, hard fragments. Differences in lithology have produced the topographic and geomorphic variations seen in the area. Higher ridges and hills are often protected by an erosion resistant cap of clinker, porcellanite or sandstone. Soils have surface and subsurface textures of silt loam and fine sandy loam. Soil depths vary from deep on lesser slopes to shallow and very shallow on steeper slopes. Soils are generally productive, though varies with texture, slope and other characteristics. There are no sodium salts present in large enough amounts to effect plant growth and productivity. Slopes may be as much as 75 percent though are generally 12 to 15 percent.

Vegetation: All these projects are geographically located around Little Sheep Mountain and Big Sheep Mountains in Northwest Prairie County and retain the same vegetative characteristics. All of the allotments that these projects are associated with are dominated by cool season grasses and forb species. The dominate grasses that are found throughout the allotments include western wheatgrass, crested wheatgrass, bluebunch wheatgrass, needleandthread, Prairie Junegrass, prairie sandreed, little bluestem, Sandberg's bluegrass, green needlegrass, threadleaf sedge, thick spike wheatgrass and blue grama. The dominate forbs and half shrubs that occur on the allotment include winter fat, fringed sagewort, scarlet globemallow, dandelion, American vetch and numerous others. The dominate upland shrub found on the allotment is silver sagebrush. The uplands have generally been determined to be in good condition overall and are meeting the standards for rangeland health.

There are numerous draws/drainages that are located within the allotment and they are dominated by green ash, chokecherry, silver buffaloberry, golden current, gooseberry, snowberry and silver sagebrush. Much of the green ash dominated draw bottoms are also dominated sod forming grasses including Kentucky bluegrass. The green ash draws located within the allotments are typical of most woody draws found in eastern Montana, as the regeneration of green ash and chokecherry is very limited. The green ash within the draw is all of a similar age class and decadent or dying. Chokecherry is located on the sides of the draw, less accessible to livestock. These draws would be considered functioning at risk due to the lack of a diverse age class of green ash trees and the lack of green ash and chokecherry regeneration.

Visual Resource Management:

Wagon Tongue PPL 2 Extension: This portion of the project falls within a VRM Class IV management objective. The objective of this class is to provide for management activities which require major modifications of the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high. These management activities may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewer attention. However, every attempt should be made to minimize the impact of these activities through careful location, minimal disturbance, and repeating the basic elements.

Little Sheep PPL Extension: The portion of this project falls within a VRM Class III objective. The objective of this class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

The landscape type is panoramic with flat land and rolling hills with horizontal lines. Drainages are also within the proposed project area causing some contrast to the landscape. Color varies by season from a green to a grayish hue. Texture is smooth with some patchy areas of brush and sage.

Wildlife:

Little Sheep PPL Extension: The area provides habitat for wildlife including mule deer, whitetail deer, antelope, sage grouse, sharp-tailed grouse, wild turkey, and numerous other non-game animals and migratory birds. This area is also considered winter range for mule deer. There is one known sharp-tailed grouse lek site within the project area. It is located at T.13N., R46E., Sec. 13 (PR-Unk91). There are no known habitats for endangered or threatened species within this area.

Wagon Tongue PPL 2 Ext.: The area provides habitat for wildlife including mule deer, whitetail deer, antelope, sage grouse, sharp-tailed grouse, wild turkey, and numerous other non-game animals and migratory birds. This area is also considered winter range for mule deer. There are two sharp-tailed grouse leks within the Pasture 7 West Allotment boundary. They are located at T.15N., R46E., Sec. 27 (PR_Unk34) (PR_052). There are several more sharp-tailed grouse leks sites outside of the allotment boundary and outside of the recommended buffer zone for this project. There is also one raptor nest location located at T.15N., R46E., Sec. 25 (Unknown Buteo). No recent data was found to indicate recent activity or numbers. There are no known habitats for endangered or threatened species within this area.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:

DESCRIPTION OF IMPACTS FROM PROPOSED ACTION:

Cultural:

Little Sheep Pipeline Extension: No affect to historic properties through the proposed action. The one site recorded during the inventory of the Little Sheep Pipeline Extension is not considered eligible for listing on the Nation register of Historic Places.

Wagon Tongue Pipeline 2 Extension: No affect to Historic Properties.

Livestock Grazing:

Little Sheep PPL Extension: The installation of this pipeline will have no direct impact for livestock grazing. Water has historically been provided for livestock in this pasture by a windmill. This pipeline will replace the method water is furnished at the already established livestock watering facility.

Wagon Tongue PPL 2 Ext.: The installation of this pipeline will improve livestock distribution over the entire pasture. Currently livestock graze the north side of this pasture utilizing the current livestock watering facilities. Livestock will utilize the south side of this pasture for short lengths of time in the fall and spring. When temperatures rise livestock will not utilize this portion of the pasture due to distance and elevation change. This project will help move and distribute cattle in these underutilized areas. The implementation of this project will assist the allotments grazing strategies in meeting resource objectives and standards for rangeland health.

Soils: Mixing of soil horizons will occur during construction of the pipelines and wells. Mixing may affect productivity of surface flora and effect subsurface flora and fauna. Compaction of adjacent soils would occur due to equipment operation. Compaction may affect soil productivity until released due to natural means such as freeze – thaw cycles. Soil erosion from wind and water could occur during and shortly after project construction. Once construction is completed and vegetation is reestablished, erosion, compaction and productivity should return to natural conditions.

Vegetation: Localized vegetative disturbance will occur on well and pipeline sites; however this impact will heal itself and become less evident with time, usually within 1 to 2 growing seasons. The area around the stock tanks will receive disturbance when the pump and hydrants are open for livestock watering. These areas may become weedy with annual vegetation as a result of the livestock use, however the disturbance is considered minimal. In addition, the vegetative area in the proximity of the livestock tanks may receive heavier livestock grazing pressure. This use is expected to be within allowable use parameters and those areas that have had past heavy grazing pressure, also are expected to move into the allowable use levels.

The proposed livestock watering projects would increase time between grazing and decrease intensity of grazing herbaceous vegetation around existing water sources. Vegetative vigor would increase by reducing grazing pressure with enhanced livestock distribution throughout the allotment. Vegetation in areas previously less utilized, would be maintained with moderately increased grazing influence.

Visual Resource Management: The projects within the VRM Class III and IV management objective will create some disturbance. After re-vegetation of the proposed area, the view should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Any changes of surface disturbance should try to meet the natural features of the landscape by following lines, form, minimal disturbance and color.

Wildlife: The proposed wells will disturb some sagebrush grasslands habitat until re-vegetation occurs. Activities during well drilling and associated completion of the project will temporarily displace some wildlife species. Construction will not occur from December 1 to March 31 at the proposed project sites to protect big game winter range habitat. In addition, construction will not occur from April 15 to July 15 to protect migratory bird and grouse nesting activities at all locations.

Little Sheep PPL Extension: This pipeline extension will provide water to a pasture essentially comprised of 100 percent crested wheatgrass. This water is crucial in being able to hold livestock within this section while native plant species in other pastures are allowed to grow without livestock grazing use. Impacts to the project area are minimal. However, adjacent areas within the allotment would improve by providing for this consistent source of livestock water.

Wagon Tongue PPL 2 Ext.: Livestock utilization levels have caused concerns for health of hardwood draws. The additional water source would allow increased opportunity to address effects to uplands, riparian areas, and wildlife habitats through grazing management. Additional water would increase opportunity to adjust timing, intensity, and frequency of livestock grazing across the allotment and move conditions toward meeting Standards for Rangeland Health.

DESCRIPTION OF IMPACTS FROM ALTERNATIVE 1 - NO ACTION:

Cultural: No impact to cultural resources through the no action alternative.

Livestock Grazing: Livestock grazing will continue as usual without dependable water for some allotments and pastures. Current livestock water sources will continue to age and lose reliability. Once these water sources are non-operational, grazing management will need to be adjusted to meet the domestic livestock water needs. Management flexibility will be maintained at the current level for now and decrease over time. Areas adjacent to the existing water sources will be utilized at the current degree, being heavy in some instances, increasing over time.

Soils: Plowing, tank development, compaction, and ground-cover removal would not occur. Soils would potentially decline in health because of inadequate livestock distribution continue.

Vegetation: Historic use pattern on upland and riparian vegetation will remain the same. Objectives would not be met to disrupt the current livestock distribution patterns to minimize over utilization on woody hardwood draws and to distribute livestock evenly on the uplands. The current grazing management is not providing the amount of residual vegetation desired.

Visual Resource Management: No change to the visual landscape would occur.

Wildlife: The no-action alternative would result in no direct habitat loss or wildlife disturbance on public lands. Some of the project areas such as Little Sheep PPL extension would not improve habitat conditions if the proposed projects are not constructed. The Wagon Tongue PPL extension would have little effect on the allotment if not constructed.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

There will be no other cumulative impacts from this project in addition to those identified in the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management EIS completed in August of 1997. Those cumulative impacts include population increase or decrease, agricultural subsidies, economic competition, and restructuring, wildlife use, management practices and land use changes such as increase recreation use. A detailed discussion of these cumulative impacts can be found on Pages 27 and 28 of the Standards and Guidelines EIS.

MITIGATION: Wildlife escape ramps would be placed in all stock tanks on public lands. Construction would not occur from April 15 through July 15 in order to protect nesting birds and from December through March to protect wintering big game.

CONSULTATION/COORDINATION: Grant Norris (permittee), Eaton and Sons (permittee)

LIST OF PREPARERS:

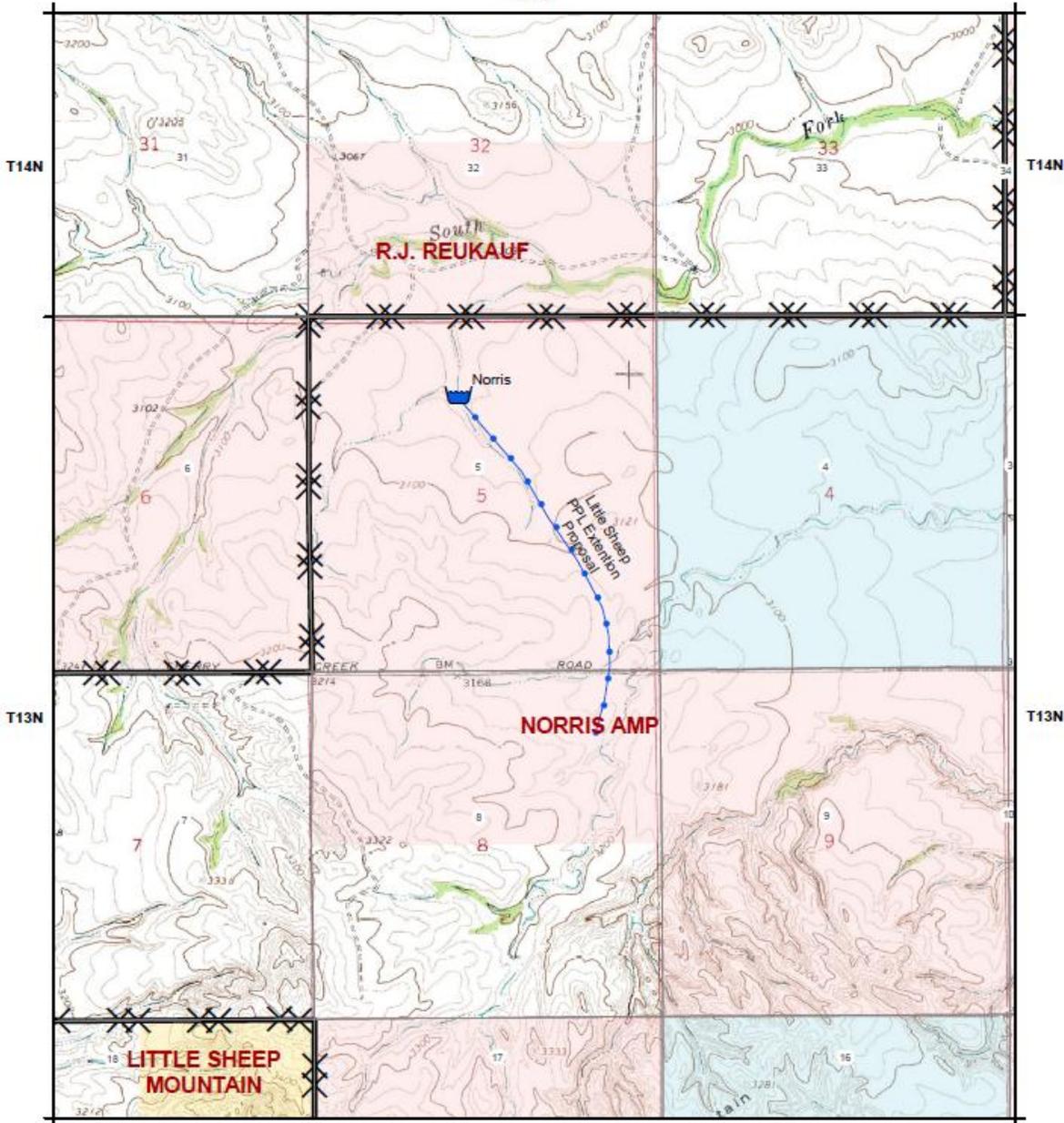
Patrick Merrill, Range Tech
Dale Tribby, Wildlife Biologist
CJ Truesdale, Archeologist
Curt Kunugi, Civil Engineer
Dena Lang, Outdoor Recreation Planner
Reyer Rens, Supervisory RMS
Kathy Bockness, Environmental Coordinator



Little Sheep PPL 419579 (ext) proposal



R47E



R47E

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-  RIP_line_ppl
-  RIP_line_fence

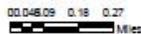


UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MILES CITY FIELD OFFICE

CAUTION:
Land ownership data is derived from less accurate data than the 1:24000 scale base map. Therefore, land ownership may not be shown for parcels smaller than 40 acres, and land ownership lines may have plotting errors due to source data.

Sept. 19, 2012

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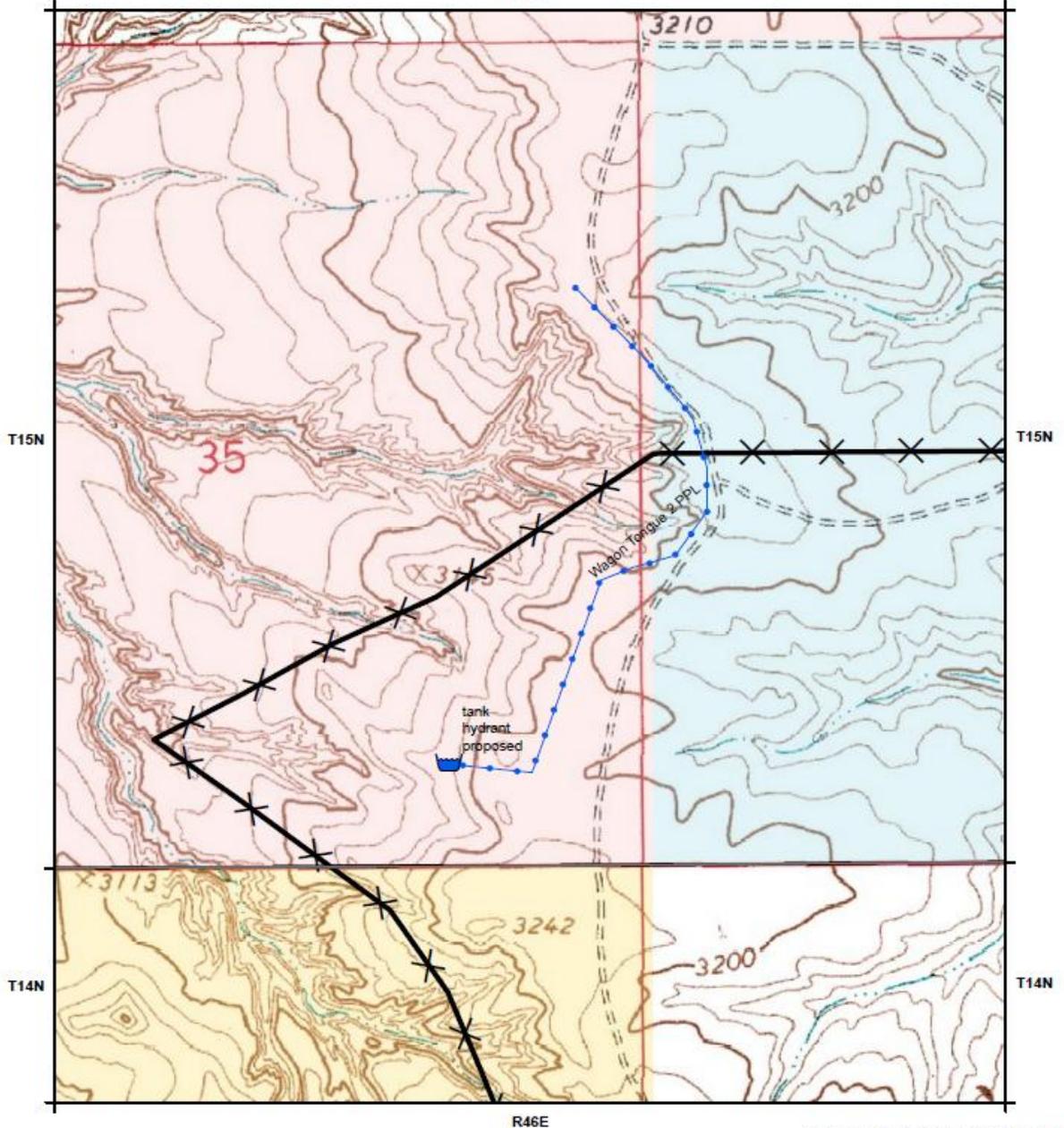


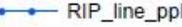
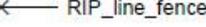


Wagon Tongue PPL 2 Extension



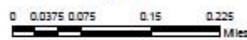
R46E



-  RIP_point
-  RIP_line_ppl
-  RIP_line_fence

Sept. 17, 2012

1:10,000



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CAUTION:
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BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MILES CITY FIELD OFFICE
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
Prairie Co. Projects 2013 EA
DOI-BLM-MT-C020-2013-0012-EA**

BACKGROUND

The origin of the environmental assessment was due to several requests from grazing permittees to develop more livestock watering locations to provide better distribution over the public and private lands.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

On the basis of the information contained in the EA, and all other information available to me, it is my determination that:

- (1) the implementation of the Proposed Action will not have significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in the Big Dry Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement;
- (2) the Proposed Action is in conformance with the Resource Management Plan; and
- (3) the Proposed Action does not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment.

Therefore, an environmental impact statement or a supplement to the existing environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared.

This finding is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR '1508.27), both with regard to the context and to the intensity of the impacts described in the EA.

Context

The Bureau of Land Management proposes to design, contract and inspect, upon completion, the installation of two pipelines. The permittee would be required to furnish the pumping systems, overflow systems and a minimum of a 1,000 gallon livestock water tank for each watering site. If any portion of the project crosses private or state lands, the permittee will be responsible for contributed funds prior to letting any contract. The BLM would disburse funds for the installation of pipe and apertures for these projects. Some blading may occur to access the well locations. The selected routes have been approved by needed specialists. Also blading may occur along pipeline routes to ensure proper bury depth of pipe. This would also allow access for maintenance. Water rights would be filed by BLM upon completion of tank locations as specified in the cooperative agreement.

Construction activities will not occur between December 1 and March 31 to minimize impacts to wintering big game species, particularly mule deer and antelope. Construction activities will not occur between April 15 and July 15 to minimize impacts to migratory birds and sage/sharp-tailed grouse species and associated nesting activities.

Little Sheep PPL Extension: The proposed action is to design, contract, inspect and construct a pipeline at allocation shown on the attached map. The pipeline is approximately 5,900 feet in length and will be constructed with 1 ½ inch HDPE SDR 13.5 pipe on public land. The pipeline will be plowed (ripped) in at the depth of 5 to 6 feet. Contractor will pre-rip the line, and then come back one final time, rip and lay the pipe in the trench. After pipe is set in the ground, the contractor will then dig holes with the backhoe, to assemble curb stop valves, hydrants assemblies, air relief valves and stop and waste valves. The pre-rip is necessary so the contractor will know where large boulders or rock ledges are. If the equipment cannot pull through these areas the contractor will come back with the backhoe and break through these areas to achieve proper bury depth. At areas where a backhoe is utilized, disturbance will be 15 feet wide. Total disturbance along pipeline route will be approximately 4 feet wide except at points where apertures are installed. This pipeline will cross public land. Pipeline will end at a windmill site on public lands that no longer produces water. Pipeline will tie into an existing livestock watering tank.

Wagon Tongue PPL 2 Ext.: The proposed action is to design, contract, inspect and construct a pipeline at allocation shown on the attached map. The pipeline is approximately 4,400 feet in length and will be constructed with 1 ½ inch HDPE SDR 13.5 pipe on public land. The pipeline will be plowed (ripped) in at the depth of 5 to 6 feet. Contractor will pre-rip the line, and then come back one final time, rip and lay the pipe in the trench. After pipe is set in the ground, the contractor will then dig holes with the backhoe, to assemble curb stop valves, hydrants assemblies, air relief valves and stop and waste valves. The pre-rip is necessary so the contractor will know where large boulders or rock ledges are. If the equipment cannot pull through these areas the contractor will come back with the backhoe and break through these areas to achieve proper bury depth. At these areas disturbance will be 15 feet wide. Total disturbance along pipeline route will be approximately 4 feet wide except at points where apertures are installed. Wagon Tongue PPL 2 Ext will consist of one livestock watering tank in Sec. 35. This tank will be equipped with a float valve. No overflow assembly will be required.

Intensity

I have considered the potential intensity/severity of the impacts anticipated from the Prairie Co. Projects 2013 EA decision relative to each of the ten areas suggested for consideration by the CEQ. With regard to each:

- 1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.** The EA considered both potential beneficial and adverse effects. None of the effects are beyond the range of effects analyzed in the Big Dry RMP.
- 2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety.** No aspect of the proposed action would have an effect on public health and safety.
- 3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity of historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.** No known historic or cultural resource sites will be affected by the proposed action. A review of BLM and Montana SHPO Cultural Resource Records databases indicates that no previously recorded cultural resource sites or paleontological localities have been recorded on public lands within the project area. A class III inventory of the proposed locations recorded one new cultural site. The one cultural site is not considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Consequently, no cultural resource values considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places would likely be impacted or affected by this undertaking (see report number listed in the environmental assessment). There are no parks, prime farmlands, or wild and scenic rivers in the planning area.

4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial. No unique or appreciable scientific controversy has been identified regarding the effects of the proposed action.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. The analysis has not shown that there would be any unique or unknown risks to the human environment.

6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration. This project neither establishes a precedent nor represents a decision in principle about future actions. The proposed action is consistent with actions appropriate for the area as designated by the Big Dry RMP.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. The environmental analysis did not reveal any cumulative effects beyond those already analyzed in the EISs which accompanied the Big Dry RMP.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources. The proposed action will not adversely affect any district, site, highway, structure, or object listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources. The identified cultural properties were appropriately recorded and avoided during fieldwork.

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. There are no endangered or threatened species or its habitat in the project area.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. The proposed action does not threaten to violate any Federal, State, or local law.



Todd D. Yeager
Field Manager
Miles City Field Office

1/31/2013

Date

**UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MILES CITY FIELD OFFICE
RECORD OF DECISION
Prairie Co. Projects 2013 EA
DOI-BLM-MT-C020-2013-0012-EA**

DECISION

It is my decision to select the Proposed Action Alternative as described in the Prairie Co. Projects 2013 EA. The EA and the FONSI analyzed the selected alternative and found no significant impacts. Implementation of this decision will result in rangeland improvement activities, including the installation of two new wells and three new pipelines on public lands. All design features identified in the EA will be implemented. The selected alternative is in conformance with the Big Dry Resource Management Plan, as amended.

ALTERNATIVES

In addition to the selected alternative, the EA considered other alternatives. Alternative 1 the “No Action” alternative would be to not authorize the construction of Little Sheep Mtn. PPL Extension and Wagon Tonge PPL 2 Extension on public land in Prairie County.

RATIONALE FOR SELECTION

The purpose of the action is to create reliable water to provide for livestock grazing in a manner that will allow the allotment to continue to meet the Standards for Rangeland Health. The selected alternative would most effectively meet the purpose of the action. It would provide reliable water. The No Action Alternative would carry out no management actions thus not meeting the purpose and need of providing reliable water so that livestock grazing would occur in such a manner that would allow the allotment to continue to meet the Standards for Rangeland Health.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

The permittees for the propose projects including Little Sheep Mtn. PPL Extension and Wagon Tonge PPL 2 Extension have been consulted. The Prairie Co. Projects revised 2013 EA was made available online via the Miles City Field Office NEPA log.

IMPLEMENTATION

Once the Prairie Co. Projects 2013 EA FONSI and Decision Record are approved, a Cooperative Range Improvement Agreement would be signed with the Cooperators. Once this Cooperative Range Improvement Agreement is approved by the Authorized Officer, this gives the Cooperators authorization to proceed with the project.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OPPORTUNITIES

The following sections of the Code of Federal Regulations, chapter 43- §4120 and §4160 provide authority for the actions proposed in this decision. The language of the cited sections can be found at a library designated as a federal depository or at the following web address:

http://www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/wo/Information_Resources_Management/policy/im_attachments/2007.Par.69047.File.dat/IM2007-137_att1.pdf

Any applicant, permittee, lessee or other affected interest may protest a proposed decision under Sec. 43 CFR§4160.1. Any protest shall be made in person or in writing within 15 days after receipt of this proposed decision to:

Todd D. Yeager
Field Manager
Bureau of Land Management, Miles City Field Office
111 Garryowen Road
Miles City, MT 59301

The protest, if filed, should clearly and concisely state the reason(s) why the proposed decision is in error. In the absence of a protest, the proposed decision will become my final decision without further notice.

Appeal: Any applicant, permittee, lessee, or other person whose interest is adversely affected by the final decision may file an appeal in accordance with 43 CFR 4.470 and 43 CFR 4160.1-4. The appeal may be accompanied by a petition for stay of the decision in accordance with CFR 4.21, pending final determination of an appeal. The appeal and decision for stay must be filed in the office of the authorized officer, as noted above, within 30 days following receipt of the final decision, or within 30 days after the date the proposed decision becomes final.

The appeal shall state the reasons, clearly and concisely, why the appellant thinks the final decision is in error and otherwise comply with the provisions of 43 CFR 4.470 which is available from the BLM office for your use in a BLM office.

In accordance with 43 CFR§4.21(b)(1), a petition for stay, if filed, must show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- 1) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied.
- 2) The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits
- 3) The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and
- 4) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.



1/31/2013

Todd D. Yeager
Field Manager
Miles City Field Office

Date