11 February 2020

Travis Vincent
Project Associate
Prickly Pear Land Trust
P.O. Box 892
Helena, MT 59624

RE: Environmental Report for the Potter Conservation Easement

Dear Mr. Vincent,

This letter is being submitted to fulfill the Environmental Report due diligence review for the Potter Conservation Easement. The property is located 13 miles east of Helena, Montana in portions of Sections 19, 20, 21, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, Township 10 North, Range 1 West, and Sections 5 and 6, Township 9 North, Range 1 West. The majority of the property is located in Lewis and Clark County with a small portion in Broadwater County. An interview was completed with Mr. Douglas Potter on January 17, 2020. Investigations of the property were completed on January 10, 2020 and January 17, 2020. Historical and present uses of the property were determined through the interview with Mr. Potter and the field surveys. Evidence of environmental contamination was not observed and additional review of the property is not recommended.

Prior Owners

The present day Potter Property was previously owned by several different individuals dating back to the mid-1800s. In 1919, Douglas Potter’s grandfather, Owen Potter, utilized the Homestead Act to claim ownership of about 160 acres. Owen Potter later passed the property to his three sons. Douglas (Doug) Potter and his wife Ronda inherited the property from Doug’s parents, Donald and Virginia, and his two uncles, Everett and Mansfield Potter.

Over many decades, Douglas Potter and relatives have been able to buy portions of the neighboring properties to create the current 3,100+ acre property. Some of the other previous owners of the Potter Property include: Matt Staff, John O’Neil, Ephraim Turley, George Christie Jr., Court Van Sherriff, and Lloyd and Mary Skedd. Many of the previous owners acquired their parcels between 1862 and the 1930s using the Homestead Act. Other land owners acquired their parcels after the subdivision and sale of larger parcels.

Past and Present Uses

In the past, homesteaders had a few attempted mining prospects on the property, these prospects were unsuccessful and later abandoned. The evidence of the abandoned prospect locations was not observed during field surveys.
There are several old homestead sites with abandoned buildings on the property. Many of the historic homestead sites were burned in the Canyon Ferry Complex of 2000, which burned the majority of the Potter Property; a few of the buildings at the abandoned homestead locations can be observed. After the fire of 2000, there was some logging/cutting of burnt Ponderosa pine snags.

There are a few gravity-driven, ditches/canals that ran from the south to the north across the property. The ditches were excavated using manual labor in the late 1800s or early 1900s and they used for carrying water for a mining operation near Sapphire Bar to the north. Today, the ditches are completely vegetated and they no longer carry water nor are used for mining or agricultural purposes.

The predominant past and present land uses by the majority of homesteaders on the property include agriculture practices, including dryland farming of wheat and barley, and livestock ranching, including conversion of grassland and shrubland to tame pasture for cattle grazing.

**Property Investigation**

No obvious evidence of environmental contaminants were observed in the proximity of the current residence, farm buildings, abandoned homestead buildings, historical refuse dump locations, or at any other locations on the Potter Property. No physical evidence of mining claims or pollution were observed anywhere on the property.

**Environmental Liens**

No environmental cleanup liens against the property exist on the title. No further investigation of the Potter Property for environmental contaminants is recommended.

In conclusion, please see the Potter Conservation Easement Baseline Documentation Report for additional environmental information including habitat descriptions, observed wildlife, and observed vegetation species. The Potter Conservation Easement Baseline Documentation Report also includes appendices for photographic documentation at the time of field investigation as well as and vicinity maps of the property.

Sincerely,

Camielle Westfall