CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Road 1009 Sand Testing
Proposed Implementation Date:	Winter/Spring 2024
Proponent:	Asgard Resources, LLC
Location:	S$^{1}/_{2}$ T28N-R58E-Section 16 (Common Schools Trust)
County:	Roosevelt

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Asgard Resources, LLC henceforth referred to as the proponent, has applied for an aggregate test permit on State Trust Lands within the above-referenced tract in Roosevelt County. This project area can be seen in attachment A on page 17. This project would utilize a backhoe to dig holes to a depth of approximately 20 feet. Testing and documenting would be performed by employees or contractors of the proponent.

If approved, the proponent would be issued a test permit to determine the aggregate resource contained within the above-referenced tracts. Soil and substrate would be excavated from the ground and sub-surface. Topsoil would be saved, and the disturbance created would be reclaimed immediately upon completion of documenting the test pit.

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 submitted a permit to test for aggregate to the DNRC to explore gravel resources. The Glasgow Unit has been notified of application. As well as the surface lessee Dave Granley– Lease No. 3338.

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

- Montana DNRC – TLMD – MMB – Permit to Test for Aggregate

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

***No Action Alternative*:** The permit to test for aggregate would be denied and the proponent would not be allowed to test for aggregate from the Montana State Trust Lands tracts referenced above.

***Action Alternative*:** The permit to test for aggregate would be approved and the proponent would be allowed to dig test holes on the proposed location within Montana State Trust Lands referenced above.

SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS TO THE PHYSICAL AND HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

The impacts analysis identifies and evaluates direct, secondary, and cumulative impacts.

• **Direct impacts**: impacts that occur at the same time and place as the action that causes the impact

• **Secondary impacts**: further impacts to the human environment that may be stimulated, or induced by, or otherwise result from a direct impact of the action.

• **Cumulative impacts**: collective impacts on the human environment of the proposed action when considered in conjunction with other past and present actions related to the proposed action by location or generic type.

Related future actions must also be considered when these actions are under concurrent consideration by any state agency through pre-impact statement studies, separate impact study evaluation, or permit processing procedures.

Where impacts are expected to occur, the impacts analysis estimates the duration and severity of the impact.

The duration of an impact is quantified as follows:
• **Short-term**: impacts that would not last longer than the proposed operation of the site, including reclamation of the site.
• **Long-term**: impacts that would remain or occur following reclamation of the proposed site.

The severity of an impact is measured using the following:
• **No impact**: There would be no change from current conditions.
• **Negligible**: An adverse or beneficial effect would occur but would be at the lowest levels of detection.
• **Minor**: The effect would be noticeable but would be relatively small and would not affect the function or integrity of the resource.
• **Moderate**: The effect would be easily identifiable and would change the function or integrity of the resource.
• **Major**: The effect would alter the resource.

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.

Current Conditions:

Geology: Site geology consists of alluvium and colluvium.

Soils: According to the USDA's Web Soil Survey, the project area is comprised of three soil types.

- Lallie silty clay, saline, 0 to 2 percent slopes
- Tally-Lihen sandy loams, 1 to 8 percent slopes
- Typic fluvaquents, 0 to 2 percent slopes

These soils exhibit the following properties:

K Factor – The K factor ratings indicate the susceptibility of a soil to sheet and rill erosion by water. The soils present in the project area have low to medium susceptibility to erosion by water.

Shallow excavations –This rating measures the ease of digging and resistance to sloughing. These soils exhibit somewhat limited to very limited rating to shallow excavations.

Soil compactibility risk – Soils found in the project area exhibit a medium risk to soil compactibility.

Wind erodibility group – Soils found in the project area exhibit medium risk of wind erosion.

Soil restoration potential – Soils found in the project area exhibit a moderate to high potential for soil restoration.

Soil rutting hazard – Soils found in the project area exhibit a moderate to severe soil rutting hazard.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The selection of the no action alternative would not be expected to have any direct, secondary or cumulative impacts to the geology and soil quality, stability and moisture.

Action Alternative:
Direct Impacts: The proponent would use existing roads to access the project area followed by tracking a backhoe and light-duty trucks off road to test hole sites. The proponent would strip and stockpile topsoil prior to continuing to dig to an approximate depth of approximately 20 feet below ground surface. Upon reaching the desired depth, the proponent would evaluate the aggregate resource present by taking pictures, measurements, and samples. The excavation of topsoil and aggregate resource would be reversible by replacing substrate back into the hole and spreading topsoil over the stripped area. Testing would be conducted in areas with mild topography and under dry or frozen conditions. This should mitigate the risk of displacing, compacting, or otherwise impacting the soils beyond the direct areas of testing. The test pits will be reclaimed immediately upon digging. These activities would not inhibit the success of reclamation. Negligible, short-term impacts to geology and soil quality and moisture would be expected from the selection of the action alternative.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected to geology and soil quality, stability and moisture from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: Cumulative impacts expected to geology and soil quality, stability and moisture are not expected to change from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: Impacts from the selection of the action alternative are expected to be short term.

Mitigations
The potential selection of action alternative would include the following stipulation in the permit to test for aggregate:

- Testing activities shall only be conducted when the ground is dry or frozen to reduce potential for rutting.
- Topsoil would be saved in a separate pile and disturbance would be reclaimed immediately upon completion of logging the test hole(s).

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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.

Current Conditions

Surface Water: Shotgun creek, an ephemeral stream, flows through the north half of section 16 flowing through a freshwater emergent wetland that occupies the east half of the northwest quarter and continues into the neighboring section 16. A small freshwater emergent wetland is noted in the north half of the southeast quarter of section 16. A map showing these surface water features can be found on page 17 of attachment B.

Ground Water: A search of the Montana Ground Water Information Center's website yields 33 water wells within 1 mile of the project area. 16 of the wells are represented in the table below as the other 17 wells have insufficient data regarding water table elevation measurements. Each well is summarized below in Table 1. Inaccurate reporting, less refined legal descriptions and poor mapping accuracy may lead to inconsistencies between the reported and physical location of groundwater wells.

GWIC ID	Latitude	Longitude	Surface Elevation	Static Water Level	Calculated Water Table Elevation
3481	48.17132111	-104.2365987	2002	91	1911
40304	48.168036	-104.224787	2003	60	1943
40305	48.165759	-104.215932	2009	23	1986
40306	48.165759	-104.215932	2009	26	1983
163352	48.183833	-104.221311	2028	49	1979
195772	48.168947	-104.230111	1998	76	1922
215456	48.17182	-104.247685	2014	92.4	1921.6
239610	48.17200353	-104.2415322	2009	94.71	1914.29
315966	48.16772152	-104.2591863	2007	5.8	2001.2
268749	48.16945	-104.244813	2010	104.5	1905.5
268750	48.168303	-104.244818	2010	103	1907
288853	48.173306	-104.248056	2019	24.5	1994.5
288854	48.173278	-104.24875	2018	24	1994
288855	48.173861	-104.247944	2021	24.5	1996.5
288856	48.174167	-104.248556	2020	25	1995
288857	48.174333	-104.248278	2020	25	1995

Table 1.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The selection of the no action alternative would not be expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to water quality, quantity, and distribution.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The average calculated groundwater elevation from nearby water wells is approximately 1959 feet above sea level. The current project area elevation ranges from approximately 2000 to 2022 feet above sea level, which has an approximate range of 41 to 63 feet greater than the average calculated groundwater elevation.
Groundwater would not be expected to be encountered during testing activities, if groundwater is encountered digging will stop, and the test hole backfilled. If groundwater is encountered, some turbidity would be expected to occur locally. However, no appreciable changes to groundwater quantity or quality are expected if it is intersected during testing operations. Digging in groundwater can cause some temporary turbidity in the water table's direct vicinity, but overall quality and quantity would not be expected to change.
Overall, direct impacts to groundwater or surface water in the project area are expected to be negligible and short-term.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected to surface or ground water quality or quantity, resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: The cumulative impacts to surface or groundwater quality or quantity from the selection of the action alternative are not expected to change.

Duration: Impacts from the selection of the action alternative are expected to be short-term.

Mitigations

The potential selection of action alternative would include the following stipulation in the permit to test for aggregate:

- All equipment utilized in testing activities must be regularly maintained and inspected to ensure it is not leaking fluids, spreading noxious weeds, or creating an undue fire hazard.
- Testing activities must keep a 50-foot setback from delineated wetlands, as seen on wetlands map in attachment B.

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.

Current Conditions

Currently, emission sources in the project area include vehicles travelling on adjacent county roads, agricultural producers and oil and gas operators. Other emissions may come from heating homes and other buildings in the greater area. Fugitive dust from vehicle travel on other adjacent gravel roads contributes small amounts of airborne particulate matter in the area. Farming activity including plowing may also create seasonal fugitive dust in the area.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The selection of the no action alternative would not be expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impact to air quality.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: Fugitive dust may be generated from testing activities including travelling to testing sites, digging test holes, and reclaiming. Emissions including carbon dioxide from testing activities would be expected, these sources of air contamination may affect air quality temporarily during project activities. Impacts to air quality resulting from the selection of the action alternative are expected to be negligible.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected to surface or ground water quality or quantity resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: There are no cumulative impacts expected to surface or ground water quality or quantity from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: Impacts to air quality are expected to be short-term.

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.

Current Conditions

According to the Montana Natural Heritage Program the proposed testing area is covered by Lowland/Prairie grassland system. This system is comprised of species including needle and thread, little bluestem, threadleaf sedge, prairie sandreed, sand bluestem, big bluestem, bluebunch wheatgrass, sun sedge, purple threeawn, scurf pea and Indian breadroot.

An inventory of the Montana Natural Heritage Program's Species of Concern database was conducted for the project area. The search yielded no vegetative species of concern.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The selection of the no action alternative would not be expected to have any direct, secondary or cumulative impacts to vegetation.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: Vegetation communities would be affected by this project. The use of excavation equipment would temporarily disturb some areas of the plant community. This would occur from the vegetation being compacted and excavated by equipment. Damage to the plant community should be lessened at this time of year since most species should be dormant. Per the stipulations of the permit, the proponent would be responsible for the management and mitigation of invasive weeds at the testing sites. The proponent would also be responsible for reseeding the affected areas with a native range mixture as provided within this document. Overall, the impacts to vegetation cover, quantity and quality would be expected to be minor. No appreciable changes to vegetation are expected to occur resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Secondary Impacts: Secondary impacts may occur in the form of noxious weed propagation from the site. Weed impacts can be mitigated to negligible with proper efforts.

Cumulative Impacts: Short term, negligible cumulative impacts are expected to vegetation cover, quantity and quality from the selection of the action alternative. The additional impacts are not expected to appreciably change vegetation cover, quantity and quality.

Duration: Impacts to vegetation cover, quantity and quality are expected to be short-term.

Mitigations
The potential selection of action alternative would include the following stipulation in the permit to test for aggregate:

- The proponent will be responsible for the management, mitigation and elimination of invasive weeds introduced or propagated from testing activities. Such activities include digging and the transportation of equipment to and from each testing site.
- The Proponent will be responsible for reseeding the disturbed areas with the certified weed free seed mixture seen below. Any other proposed seed mix must be approved by the Glasgow field office.

Species	Full stand Seed rate	% of Mix	lbs/ac PLS for Drill	Drill Seeding	Broadcast
Slender Wheatgrass	7	30	2.1	0.5	4.2
Little Bluestem	4	30	1.2	0.5	2.4
Prairie Sandreed	4	10	0.4	0.75	0.8
Needle and thread	9	20	1.8	0.75	3.6
Purple Prairie Clover	3.5	5	0.2	0.25	0.4
Blue flax	3.5	5	0.2	0.25	0.4
Total PLS Lbs/ac			5.9		11.7

Notes: 1. Seed mix based on seed available at Circle S seeds in Three Forks, MT. Any licensed seed vendor or certified weed seed is allowable.
2. This seed mix follows the reclamation guidelines for both the Sage Grouse Executive order 12-2015 and the MSU Extension/ NRCS Revegetation guidlines (November 2022).
3. For varying seed depths use the middle value in the case of three depth recomendations or the shallower value in the case of only two depth recomendations.
4. Alternative species may be requested due to lack of availability or prohibitive expense but must be approved by the field office.

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.

Current Conditions

The proposed project area serves as habitat for a variety of big game, large and small mammals, raptors, and a variety of other birds. Proximity to local roads and oil and gas operations have likely altered the usefulness of the project area by wildlife.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The selection of the no action alternative would not be expected to have any direct, secondary or cumulative impacts to terrestrial, avian and aquatic life and habitats.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The action alternative would create minor audible and visual disturbances for a short time frame to any animals that may occupy the project area or its surroundings. Similar habitat and forage can be found throughout the surrounding area and could sustain the impacted wildlife species temporarily. Grazing by domestic animals would continue. Impacts to terrestrial, avian and aquatic life and habitats are expected to be short-term and minor.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected to terrestrial, avian and aquatic life and habitats.

Cumulative Impacts: Cumulative impacts to terrestrial, avian and aquatic life and habitats would not be expected to appreciably change from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: Impacts from the selection of the action alternative are expected to be short-term.

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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.

Current Conditions
An inventory of the Montana Natural Heritage Program's Species of Concern was completed for the project area. The project area is adjacent to occurrences of three species of concern that includes Whooping Crane, Long-eared Myotis, and Bat roost (non-cave).
Long-eared Myotis are year-round residents of Montana, and their habitats include riverbanks in eastern Montana.
Whooping Cranes are migratory birds that use eastern Montana as a stopping point between breeding grounds. Observations of individual birds in other areas of the state include grain and stubble fields as well as wet meadows, wet prairie habitat, and freshwater marshes that are usually shallow and broad with safe roosting sites and nearby foraging opportunities.
Bat Roost (non-cave) delineates an area of occupancy of any bat species that live in non-cave areas which would inhabit rock outcrops, trees, and abandoned buildings for example.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The selection of the no action alternative would not be expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The action alternative would create small, temporary, visual and audible disturbances for 1 – 2 days in the project area. Some minor, short-duration disturbance to individuals of any of these species may occur if they are in the vicinity of the project area during testing activities. However, no appreciable changes to the population of any of these species The buffer from wetlands and surface water should further mitigate the potential of disturbing the Whooping Crane or Long-eared Myotis.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected to unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources.

Cumulative Impacts: There are existing disturbances near the project area. Which includes adjacent roads oil and gas operations, and agricultural activities. These factors are disturbances that have been present for long periods of time. The proposed activity would add to the disturbance, in a negligible and short-term manner. The additional impacts introduced from the selection of the action alternative are not expected to appreciably change the impacts to unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources.

Duration: Impacts from the selection of the action alternative are expected to be short-term.

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10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological 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, but it should be noted that Class III level inventory work has not been conducted there to date.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The selection of the no action alternative would not be expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to historical or archaeological sites.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The selection of the action alternative would have no impact to antiquities as defined under the Montana State Antiquities Act. If previously unknown cultural or paleontological materials are identified during project related activities, all work would cease until a professional assessment of such resources can be made.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected to historical and archaeological sites.

Cumulative Impacts: Cumulative impacts to historical and archaeological sites would not be expected to appreciably change from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: No impacts expected.

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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.

Current Conditions

The project area is currently comprised of vegetation as described in section 7 of this document, an area of open lowland prairie. The project area has been managed by an agriculture and grazing lease with the Department. The project area is located approximately 2.7 miles northeast of Bainville. Testing operations may be visible from adjacent roads and lands.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The selection of the no action alternative would not be expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to aesthetics.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: Recreationists, residents, and motorists in the area would see an excavator and several trucks in the project area. The testing is only expected to take 1 or 2 days. After the testing is complete, the test hole disturbances will be visible by individuals recreating in the project vicinity. As revegetation is established, the test holes will become less apparent and are expected to return to a pre-testing level of aesthetics. Minimal

disturbances to aesthetics are expected during operations. However, there are no long-term effects on aesthetics anticipated if the action alternative is selected. Increased noise levels will also occur from the proposed action. Noise levels from testing activities are expected to be similar to those produced from motorists travelling on adjacent roads. Increases in noise levels are expected to be minor and short-term.

Secondary Impacts: Noise and visual impacts will occur outside of the project area. However, these impacts are expected to be minimal and short-term.

Cumulative Impacts: Cumulative impacts to aesthetics would not be expected to appreciably change from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: Impacts to aesthetics from the selection of the action alternative are expected to be short-term.

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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.

Current Conditions

The composition of land, water and air is described within other sections of this document. Energy sources that would be required by the project are abundant in the area.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The no action alternative is not expected to have direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to the demands of environmental resources of land, water, air or energy.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The proposed project would create individual test holes within a larger area of approximately 320 acres. The overall disturbance created within the project area would be expected to have minor and short-term impacts on the environmental resources of the land. The expected impacts to water and air were identified earlier in this document. Energy resources in the area are abundant and any impact to energy resources would be expected to be negligible.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: Cumulative impacts for land, water and air are evaluated in their respective sections. There are no appreciable changes to cumulative impacts expected to energy resources resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: Impacts of the selection of the action alternative are expected to be short-term.

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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.

Current Conditions

The entirety of the testing area has an overlying grazing lease as well as two oil and gas leases, OG-31059-94 and OG-43195-15, held by Oasis Petroleum and Northern Oil and Gas, respectively.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The no action alternative is not expected to have direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to other environmental documents or projects pertinent to the area.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The grazing lessee would realize a short-term negligible loss in vegetation within their lease. Upon reclamation the impacted areas would return to native rangeland. The proposed project would have a temporary, negligible impact to the surface lease agreement. There would be no anticipated impacts to the oil gas leases. Any future development in the area would likely be restricted to utility or mineral development.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: There are no changes to cumulative impacts expected from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: Impacts of the selection of the action alternative are expected to be short-term.

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.

Current Conditions

The current condition of the site poses no risk to human health or safety.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The no action alternative is not expected to have direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to human health or safety.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The proposed project is expected to have a negligible impact to human health or safety, other than the occupational risks typically associated with aggregate testing machinery. The site is in a rural area away from residences. Impacts to air quality and water quality are evaluated in their respective resource sections of this document. During project activities there would be a minor increase in truck traffic and a single backhoe will be working within the project areas, the impact to human health and safety resulting from the selection of the action alternative is expected to be short-term and negligible as the activities would occur for one to two days with minimal increases in traffic.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: There are no cumulative impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: Impacts of the selection of the action alternative are expected to be short-term.

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15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:
Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

Current Conditions

The testing area is in a rural area where agriculture and oil and gas are the most prominent industries.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The no action alternative would not be expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impact to industrial, commercial, and agriculture activities and production.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The action alternative would not be expected to have any significant impacts upon the industrial, commercial, or agriculture activities currently present.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: There are no changes to cumulative impacts expected from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: No impacts identified.

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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.

Current Conditions

The closest town and employment center is Bainville, Montana. The workforce consists mainly of ranchers and oil and gas employees.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The no action alternative is not expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to the quantity and distribution of employment.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: No direct impacts are expected to quantity and distribution of employment from the selection of the action alternative.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: There are no changes to cumulative impacts expected from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: No impacts identified.

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.

Current Conditions

Trust land is exempt from local property tax. Operators and lessees conducting business on Trust Lands must pay business taxes.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The no action alternative is not expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impact on local and state tax bases or tax revenues.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: No direct impacts to local and state tax base and tax revenue are expected from the selection of the action alternative.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: There are no changes to cumulative impacts expected from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: No impacts identified.

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

Current Conditions

The traffic sources in the area are on mostly contained on Highway 2 and county road 1009. Emergency services would likely come from Bainville, Culbertson, or Sidney, MT.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The no action alternative is not expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts on the demand for government services.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The proposed action is not anticipated to have any impact on demand for government services.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: There are no changes to cumulative impacts resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: No impacts identified.

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.

Current Conditions

There are no known environmental plans or goals for this tract or in the project vicinity.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The no action alternative is not expected to have any direct, secondary or cumulative impact on locally adopted environmental plans or goals.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: No impacts expected, there are no known zoning or management plans.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: There are no changes to cumulative impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: No impacts identified.

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.

Current Conditions

The project area is not designated as wilderness, nor does it provide access to wilderness. Montana State Trust Lands are accessible for public use by purchasing the necessary conservation license through Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:
The no action alternative is not expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impact on the access to and quality of recreational and wilderness activities.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The project area does allow for public use. Public recreation on this tract is expected to be minimal. Direct impacts to recreationists would be temporary while testing activities occur. An increase in noise and visual impacts would occur for anyone in the vicinity of the project area.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: There are no changes to cumulative impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: Impacts of the selection of the action alternative are expected to be short-term.

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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.

Current Conditions

The closest major population center to the project area is Bainville, Montana.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The no action alternative is not expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impact the density and distribution of population and housing.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: No direct impacts are expected to the density and distribution of population and housing from the selection of the action alternative.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: There are no cumulative impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: No impacts identified.

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22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:
Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Current Conditions

There are no known native or traditional lifestyles near the project area.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The no action alternative is not expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impact to social structures, native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: There are no direct impacts expected to native or traditional lifestyles.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: There are no cumulative impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: No impacts are expected; therefore, duration is not applicable.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:
How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

Current Conditions

There are no known unique qualities of the area.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The no action alternative is not expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impact to cultural uniqueness or diversity.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: There are no direct impacts expected to cultural uniqueness and diversity.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected to cultural uniqueness and diversity.

Cumulative Impacts: There are no cumulative impacts expected to cultural uniqueness and diversity.

Duration: No impacts are expected; therefore, duration is not applicable.

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.

The return to the trust would be a one-time application fee of $25.00 and the testing activities should not impede the existing utilization of the current lessees.
Upon reclamation, vegetation would be reestablished, and the area returned to grazing and agricultural ground.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:** Thomas Palin	**Date:** February 22, 2024
	Title: Mineral Resource Specialist	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

The action alternative is the selected alternative.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The granting of the requested aggregate test permit pits on this tract of State Trust Lands is not expected to result in, nor cause significant environmental impacts. The proposed action satisfies the Trust's fiduciary mandate and accounts for the long-term productivity of the land. An environmental assessment is the appropriate level of analysis for the proposed action.

I conclude that all identified potential impacts will be mitigated by utilizing permit requirements, including the stipulations listed below.

1. The permit holder shall be in compliance with all applicable state and federal laws, rules, and regulations, including but not limited to those concerning safety, environmental protection, reclamation, drone flight requirements for photography and topographic mapping over the site.

2. Topsoil/sod will be stockpiled separately from subsoil for reclamation. The licensee shall fill holes with subsoil before covering them with topsoil and sod. All holes must be filled and reclaimed immediately upon completion of logging the test hole.

3. Geologic, geochemical/geophysical information (including but not limited to detailed sample site locations, areas disturbed by gravel pit testing, and sample results for each corresponding sample site) if collected for the tract will be provided to Minerals Management Bureau, TLMD MT-DNRC with a report on exploration activities. The lessee shall also concurrently provide GPS, GIS, or other data, detailed maps, and/or aerial photos associated with the associated permit to MMB. The licensee should advise the department if they consider this information confidential.

4. If any cultural or paleontological resources are encountered during testing, all operations must stop, and the proponent shall contact the DNRC.

5. Testing will be limited to occur only under dry or frozen conditions, to mitigate impacts on soils.

6. All equipment utilized in testing must be inspected prior to testing to ensure it is not leaking fluids, spreading noxious weeds, or creating an undue fire hazard.

7. The proponent will seed disturbances with the below certified weed free seed mix, any other proposed seed mix must be approved by the Glasgow field office.

Species	Full stand Seed rate	% of Mix	lbs/ac PLS for Drill	Drill Seeding	Broadcast
Slender Wheatgrass	7	30	2.1	0.5	4.2
Little Bluestem	4	30	1.2	0.5	2.4
Prairie Sandreed	4	10	0.4	0.75	0.8
Needle and thread	9	20	1.8	0.75	3.6
Purple Prairie Clover	3.5	5	0.2	0.25	0.4
Blue flax	3.5	5	0.2	0.25	0.4
Total PLS Lbs/ac			5.9		11.7

Notes: 1. Seed mix based on seed available at Circle S seeds in Three Forks, MT. Any licensed seed vendor or certified weed seed is allowable.
2. This seed mix follows the reclamation guidelines for both the Sage Grouse Executive order 12-2015 and the MSU Extension/ NRCS Revegetation guidlines (November 2022).
3. For varying seed depths use the middle value in the case of three depth recomendations or the shallower value in the case of only two depth recomendations.
4. Alternative species may be requested due to lack of availability or prohibitive expense but must be approved by the field office.

8. The proponent will contact the DNRC and surface lessee at least 48 hours before project activities commence.

9. If any damage(s) to fences is incurred the proponent will fix the damage(s).

10. Testing activities must keep a 50-foot setback from delineated wetlands, as seen on wetlands map in attachment B.

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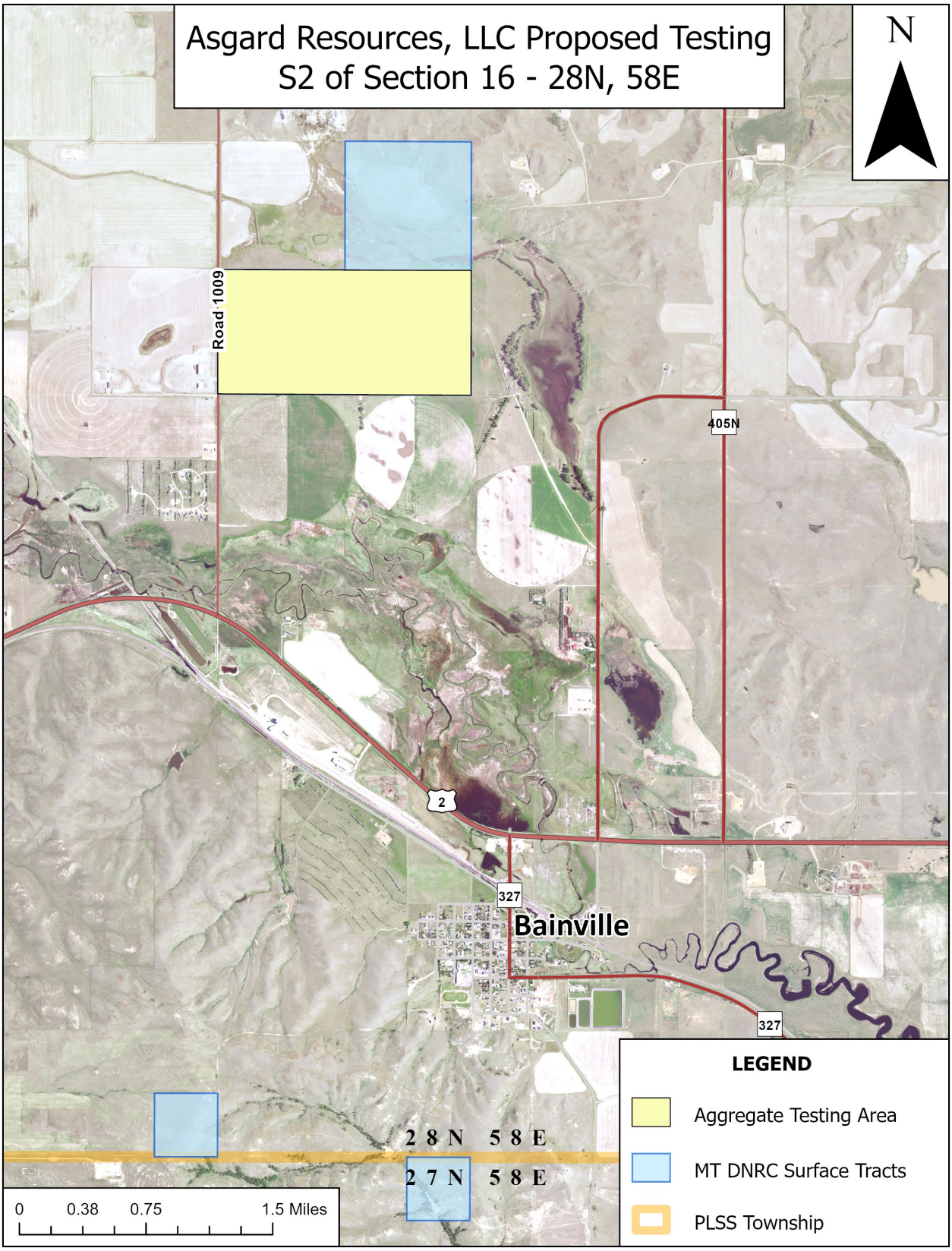
27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

☐ EIS ☐ More Detailed EA ☑ No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:** DEPyh (Don E. Pyrah)
	Title: Glasgow Unit Mgr
Signature: DEPyh	**Date:** 2/22/24

Attachment A – Location Map



Attachment B – Wetland Map