

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION

Trust Land Management Division



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May 29, 2019

Clenera, LLC

APEX SOLAR COMMERCIAL LEASE

Environmental Impact Statement

SCOPING NOTICE

Clenera, LLC has proposed a commercial lease for a utility scale photovoltaic solar project on 1,308 acres in Beaverhead County upon parts of state-owned parcels: **Sections 27, 28, 33, and 34 in Township 5S, Range 9W**, as shown on the attached project area map.

The proposed commercial lease would authorize development of the entire acreage for the solar project including placement of panels, a substation, an operations and maintenance building, a grid of internal service roads, perimeter fencing, and equipment storage area. The project area would be categorically closed to recreational use, and the land would be reclassified from grazing to allow for commercial development. The proposal, and the commercial lease, along with frequently asked questions, are available for the public to view at DNRC's Dillon Unit Field Office at 840 North Montana St, or online at www.dnrc.mt.gov/solar.

The purpose of this scoping notice is to solicit input from federal, tribal, state and local governments, interested persons, and groups to help identify possible issues and alternatives to be considered in the EIS. The draft EIS will evaluate the potential direct, secondary, and cumulative impacts of the proposed solar project. The attached maps show the project area and proposed preliminary layout. In the draft EIS, DNRC will evaluate alternatives including the no action, proposed action, and other alternative(s). From the alternatives presented, DNRC will identify a preferred alternative. The purpose, need, and proposed action are described in more detail below.

PURPOSE AND NEED

DNRC's purpose and need in conducting the environmental review is to act upon the proposed commercial lease for a utility-scale solar project, determine any necessary lease amendments, finalize the reclamation plan, and determine the amount of bonding appropriate for the solar project.

PROPOSED ACTION

The Proposed Action would develop 1,308 acres for solar power facilities including placement of panels, a substation, an operations & maintenance building, equipment storage area, service roads, and perimeter fencing. Clenera, LLC is seeking to install crystalline silicon glass panels over most of the acreage and install a substation and operations and maintenance building near the center of the development. The panels are approximately six feet tall and installed via steel driven piles with racking.

The entire perimeter will be surrounded by an eight-foot tall chain-link security fence. The solar project is anticipated to take 12 months to fully install and is proposed to be operational in early 2021. The proposed commercial lease includes a 15-year operating term, with four, five-year renewal options. A map of the project area is attached.

The project area is currently leased for grazing and is encumbered by one active irrigation ditch and Northwestern Energy power lines. Under the Proposed Action, the grazing leases would be withdrawn, and the project area would be categorically closed to recreational use. The irrigation ditch and power lines would continue to be fully accessible to the owners for maintenance purposes.

The Proposed Action would generate increased revenue for the trust beneficiary, as mandated in the Montana Constitution, the Enabling Act, and Montana law MCA § 77-1-601. In Fiscal Year 2018, grazing revenue from the 1,308-acre project area totaled \$2,430. Once operational, the proposed commercial lease for the solar project would generate \$480,000 per year for the trust beneficiary for the first 15-years.

COMMENTS

The scoping period for the Apex Solar Commercial Lease Draft EIS is Wednesday, May 29, 2019, through Monday, July 1, 2019. The DNRC invites all written comments and suggestions concerning this proposal. Comments already submitted to the DNRC regarding this proposal will be considered as part of this scoping, and do not need to be resubmitted. Comments may be submitted electronically by email to:

DNRCApexSolar@mt.gov

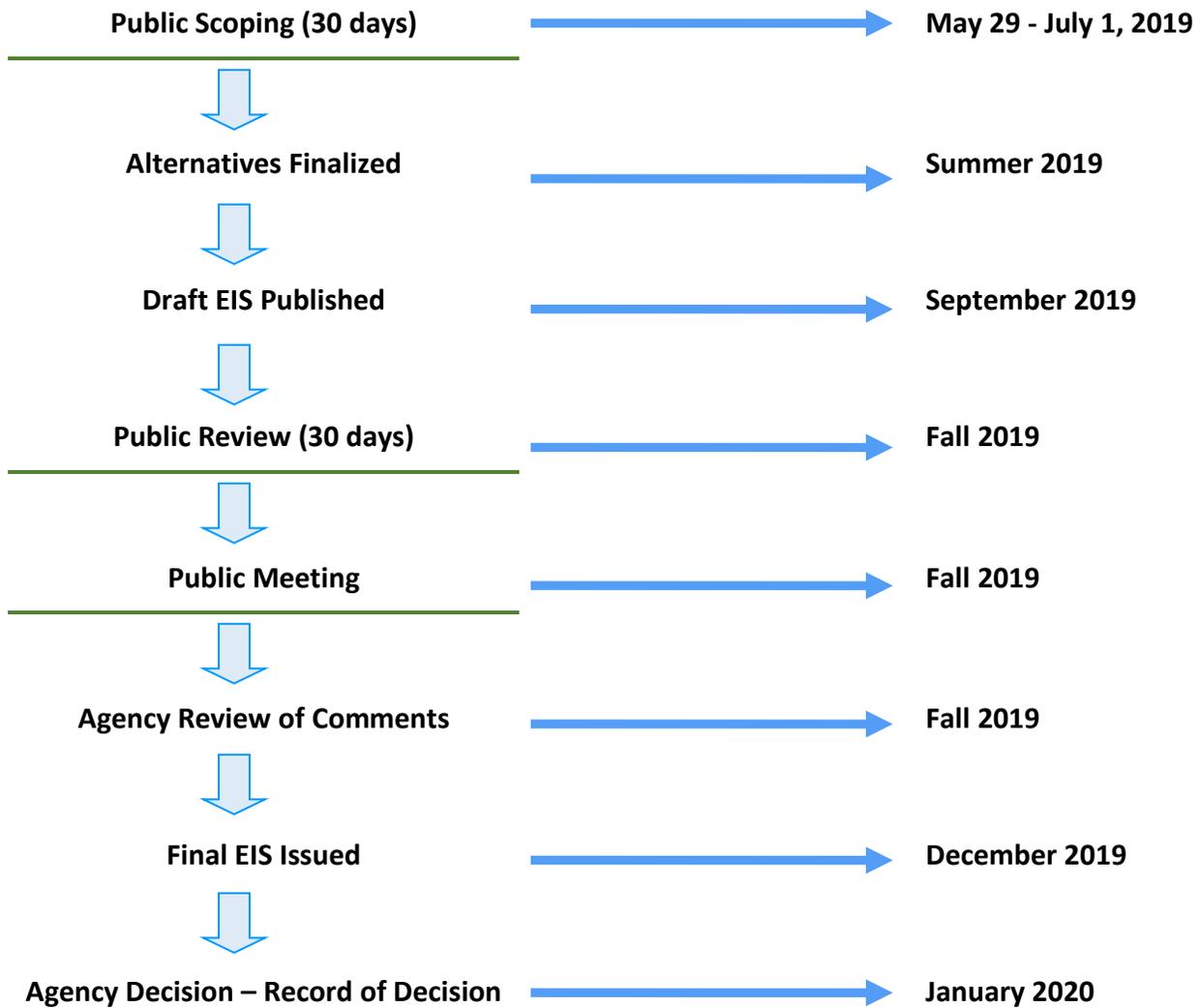
Or by mail to:

Tim Egan, Manager
DNRC Dillon Unit
840 N. Montana Street
Dillon, MT 59725

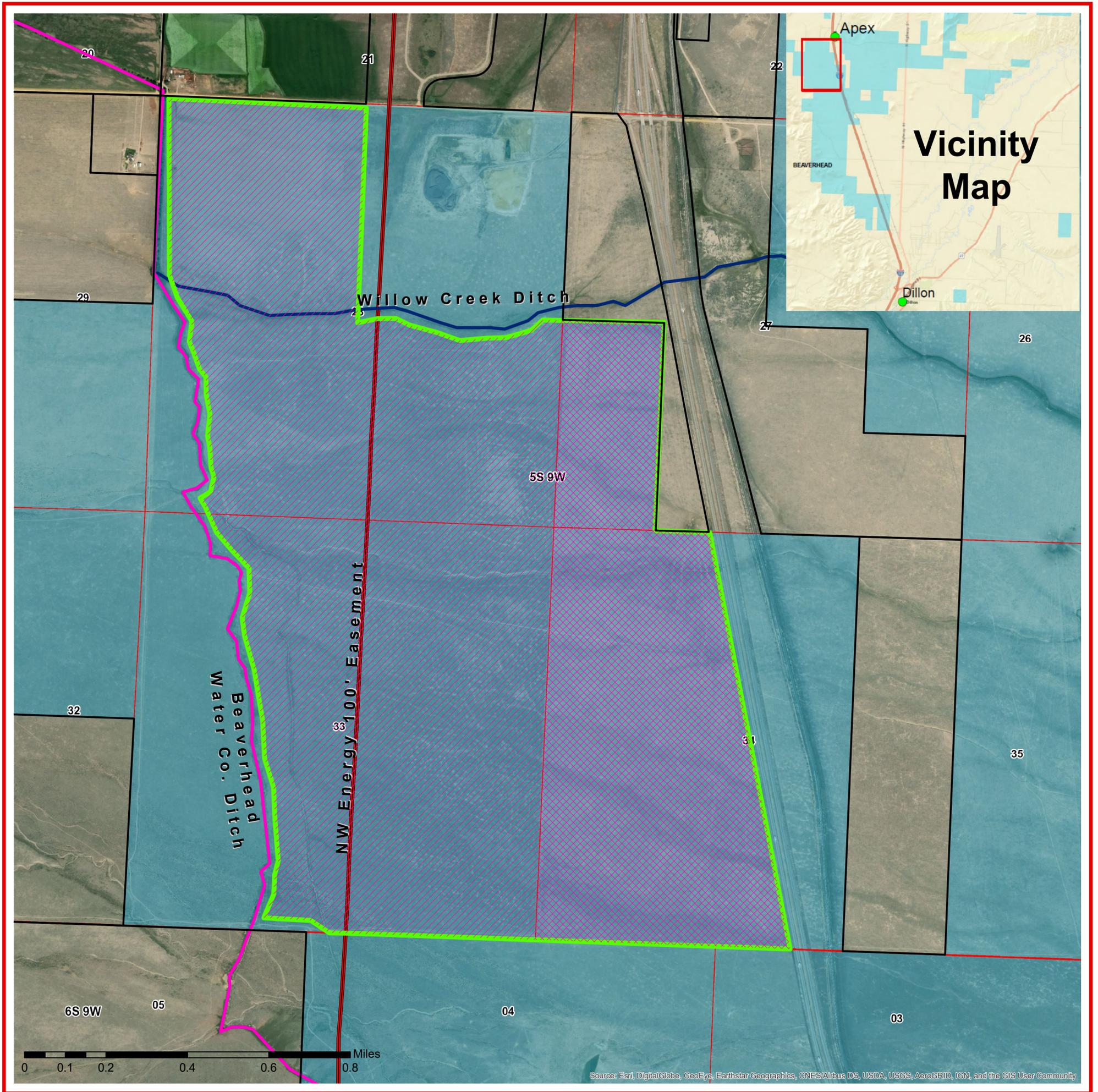
Please provide sufficient detail so that we can accurately address your comment. **All comments must be received by Monday, July 1, 2019.**

MEPA PROCESS OUTLINE

EIS POTENTIAL SCHEDULE



APEX SOLAR COMMERCIAL LEASE Project Area



Legend

- Apex Solar Project Area
- Grazing Leases #1335 & 6846
- Grazing Lease #6683
- Willow Creek Ditch
- Beaverhead Water Co. Ditch NW
- Energy Transmission Line
- Trust Land

Location: Beaverhead County, MT Date: 5-23-2019
 Prepared By: REMB Staff Member
 Projection: NAD83 Montana State Plane



Apex Solar

Preliminary Layout

