

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Pondera County application for a new gravel pit, G-1503-15.
Proposed Implementation Date:	Summer/Fall 2016
Proponent:	Pondera County, 20 4 th Ave SW, Conrad, MT 59425
Location:	Lot 3, Section 30, T30N, R2W
County:	Pondera County
Trust:	Common Schools

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The applicant has applied for a gravel permit to remove 75,000 cubic yards of material from the above mentioned tract. The material will be removed from a newly mined area known as the DNRC Pit. The tract currently is currently leased for agricultural purposes. This gravel permit #G-1503-15 is on DNRC owned land and will be operated by Pondera County. The proponent will be required to strip off the existing top soil and overburden and maintain it for reclamation purposes. This will lead to an increased return to the Common Schools trust by allowing for the sale of the gravel.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

Pondera County-Proponent
DNRC-Surface Owner
Tyler Bucklin-Surface Lessee, Lease #5381
DEQ-Open Cut Mining Bureau

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

DEQ-Open Cut Mining Bureau

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action) – Do not approve the permit to take and remove gravel from the DNRC Pit.

Alternative B (the Proposed action) – Approve the permit to take and remove gravel from the DNRC Pit.

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.

Approximately 15.54 acres of surface disturbance will occur during the initial phase of this project. The total area that will be affected by the proposed project is 22.36 acres. The additional acreage will be used once the original 15.54 acres is mined out and reclaimed. All topsoil will be striped and stockpiled for reclamation. Reclamation will require the slopes of the area to be put back to a natural contour with erosion control techniques. Cumulative impacts to the soil resources are not expected.

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.

There are no ephemeral drainages, surface water, or ground water resources present on this tract. Other water quality and/or quantity issues will not be impacted by the proposed action.

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.

Pollutants and Particulates may be increased during the construction of the project. After the completion of the project pollutant and particulate levels should return to normal.

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.

Vegetation will be minimally impacted as approximately 22.36 acres of land is disturbed in the removal of the gravel. The tract is all agricultural land that is used for small grain production. Noxious and annual weeds within the proposed small volume permit area are a concern, but this concern will be mitigated as the proponent is responsible for controlling weeds within the gravel permit area. Cumulative impacts on the vegetative resources are not expected as the gravel permit area will be reclaimed and reseeded.

A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted and there were no plant species of concern noted or potential species of concern noted on the NRIS survey.

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.

The area is not considered critical wildlife habitat. However, this tract provides habitat for a variety of big game species (mule deer, whitetail deer, pronghorn antelope), predators (coyote, fox, badger), upland game birds (sharp tail grouse, Hungarian partridge), other non-game mammals, raptors and various songbirds. The proposal does not include any land use change which would yield changes to the wildlife habitat. The proposed action will not impact wildlife forage, cover, or traveling corridors. Nor will this action change the juxtaposition of wildlife forage, water, or hiding and thermal cover.

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.

A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted and there were three animal species of concern, zero potential species of concern, and one special status species noted on the NRIS survey: Mammals-Hoary Bat. Birds-Golden Eagle, Burrowing Owl, and Bald Eagle. This particular tract of agricultural land does not contain many, if any of these species. Threatened or endangered species, sensitive habitat types, or other species of special concern or potential species of concern will not be impacted by the removal of the gravel.

There are no threatened or endangered species, sensitive habitat types, or other species of special concern associated with the proposed tract.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

A cultural resource inventory was completed by the Conrad Unit Office on September 29, 2015. No cultural resources were found within the project area, so it is assumed that cultural resources will not be impacted by this proposed project.

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.

This may permanently change the appearance of the landscape. But the addition of reclamation efforts should make the site more aesthetically pleasing after the construction. Noise levels may be increased during the project but should return to normal after the completion of the project. Minimal impacts are expected.

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.

The demand on environmental resources such as land, water, air, or energy will not be affected by the proposed project. The proposed project will not consume resources that are limited in the area. There are no other projects in the area that will be effected the proposed project.

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.

Currently, there are no other studies, plans, or projects associated with the proposed project area.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.</i>• <i>Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.</i>• <i>Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.</i> |
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14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

No impacts to human health and safety would occur as a result of the proposal.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

The proposed action will only minimally impact the growing of small grain crops on the state tract as the site will be reclaimed and reseeded.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

The proposal would have no affect on quantity and distribution of employment.

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.

The proposed action will not affect tax revenue.

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

Being remote agricultural land, no traffic changes would be anticipated. All state and private land are under the County Coop wildfire protection program. The proposed project would not change the demand for government services in the area.

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.

The proposed project is in compliance with Federal, State, and County laws. No other management plans are in effect for the area.

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.

The area where the project is being performed is on State Land that is legally accessible to the public. The proposed project is not expected to impact general recreation activities on this tract.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing

The proposed project will not change the human population distribution or the housing requirements in the area.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

There are no native, unique or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity that would be impacted by the proposal.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

The proposed project will not impact the cultural uniqueness and/or cultural diversity of the area.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

This project will benefit the common school trust in terms of the \$25.00 fee generated from the gravel permit application. The common school trust will also be compensated at the rate of \$1.00/yard X 75,000 yards for a total of \$75,000.00.

Cumulative impacts are not likely as the area is only used for small grain production and the removal of the gravel will only minimally impact the small grain production on the tract as the site will be reclaimed and reseeded.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Tony Nickol	Date: August 31, 2016
	Title: Land Use Specialist, Conrad Unit, Central Land Office	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative B (the Proposed action) – Approve the permit to take and remove gravel from the DNRC Pit.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:


I have reviewed all identified impacts and conclude that no significant impacts will occur as a result of implementing the selected alternative.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Erik Eneboe Title: Conrad Unit Manger
Signature: 	Date: August 31, 2016

