CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Wyrick Gravel Pit
Proposed Implementation Date:	Spring/Summer 2018
Proponent:	Wyrick Construction PO Box 52 Baker MT 59313 (406) 778-2147 cell: (406) 891-0555
Location:	Section 16 – T9N-R60E (Common School Trust)
County:	Fallon

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The proponent has applied to renew and expand an existing DNRC gravel permit located in T9N-R60E-Sec 16. This gravel is used for roads and other construction projects. The total pit size will be expanded from 8.2 acres to 17.1 acres, and the total volume of material removed will be approximately 100,000 cubic yards.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

Wyrick Construction has submitted a Noxious Weed Control Plan to Fallon County and is working with the Montana Department of Environmental Quality with their Opencut Mining Plan of Operation and Limited Opencut Operation. Land Use Specialist, Scot Aye, conducted a site inspection of the pit area in November, 2017. Surface lessee, Fred Hoff, was contacted by Scott Aye and Wyrick Construction notifying Fred of the amended pit size.

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

DEQ - Opencut Mine Plan of Operation Update
DEQ – Limited Opencut Operation Update
Fallon County Weed District – Noxious Weed Control Plan Update

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

No Action Alternative: The proposed gravel permit renewal would not be granted. Current gravel pit operations would cease, existing gravel stockpiles would be allowed to be removed, the pit area would be reclaimed, and non-motorized recreational use and leasing for farming/grazing purposes would continue.

Action Alternative: The gravel permit amendment would be granted to Wyrick Construction to expand the pit area and mine and remove gravel from trust land.

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.

Section 16
The proposed gravel pit site and access road are located on the Ludlow Member of the Fort Union Formation consisting of sandstone, siltstone and mudstone.

Any topsoil and subsoil shall be stripped and stockpiled for use in reclamation. Reclamation will require the slopes of the area be put back to a natural contour with erosion control techniques.

Soil types on this site include silty clay loam and loams with very low slopes. The soils on the pit site and where the access road is located for this project are only moderately susceptible to degradation in the wettest of conditions with high traffic. Soil restoration potential is high along the access road and the proposed pit site.

A shallow pit was dug during the site inspection, and there appears to be 1-2 feet of topsoil. A small cut along the road, near the Quonset hut shows there are significant amounts of gravel in the soil profile.

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.

The proposed gravel pit site is located uphill and between two unnamed intermittent waterways. The drainage to the east of the proposed project flows into a reservoir, and joins with the west drainage north of the dam, where it then flows into the East Fork of Beaver Creek. The access road and pit should not affect this waterway.

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.

An increase of fugitive dust particulates would occur from machinery during proposed gravel activities. Impacts to air quality are expected.

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.

The proposed gravel pit site is located on land that has been previously plowed. This area is surrounded mostly by agricultural crop land with intermittent mixed grass prairie and wetlands in the low areas that are not farmed and part of a watershed. The proposed gravel pit is located directly off of an existing two-track road. Ground disturbance has prematurely taken place on the proposed gravel pit of approximately 17.1 acres. Most topsoil has been removed and set aside to be used for rehabilitation. All motorized vehicle use would occur only during dry soil conditions. When the permit expires or a renewal is not granted, the proponent will replace all topsoil, return the land to a natural, farmable slope, and reseed the area with a native grass seed mixture which shall be approved by the Eastern Land Office prior to seed application. The proponent will monitor the site and control weeds for 3 years after the gravel pit is reseeded. No significant impacts are expected to occur from the proposed activity.

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.

A variety of deer, small mammals, raptors, upland game birds and songbirds use this area and activities from the proposed project could temporarily disrupt wildlife movement and patterns. The proposed project should not have any effect on fish habitat or water flow in the two nearby waterways. Due to the limited disturbance area exposed to proposed project activities off of existing roads, most nesting and calving activities should not be affected; minimal impacts are anticipated.

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.

This section is located within the Sage Grouse general habitat area boundary. The nearest documented leks are located in neighboring townships, T8N-R61E and T8N-59E, approximately 6-10 miles away from the proposed gravel pit. The Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program was notified and sent Wyrick their recommendations. A search was conducted using the Montana Natural Heritage Program database to identify point observations of species of concern in and near the section of the proposed activity and none were on record to have existed within 2 miles of the project over the past 10 years.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:
Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

DNRC Archaeologist, Patrick Rennie was also consulted regarding the nature of the initial pit location and the potential to impact historical and archaeological resources. His findings are as follows:

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 on state land. No additional archaeological investigative work will be conducted in response to this proposed development. However, if previously unknown cultural or paleontological materials are identified during project related activities, all work will cease until a professional assessment of such resources can be made.

A field evaluation was also conducted by DNRC Engineer Trevor Taylor and Mineral Resource Specialist Heidi Crum on June 30, 2015 and later on November, 2017 by Land Use Specialist, Scott Aye. The site had been cultivated previously and no identifiable historical or archaeological items were found to be at, or near the location of the proposed gravel pit.

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.

Proposed gravel pit location is in a relatively sparsely populated area and far away from highways. The pit location is 2.5 miles east of State Highway 7 and 0.5 miles north of County Road 619 (Big Hill Road). The site is surrounded by agricultural lands and will be visible to the limited traffic that utilizes this county road. Minimal aesthetic impacts are expected. Gravel pit excavation will only occur during day and night time hours and some noise is expected during the operation.

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 proposed project will disturb the land that is within the project boundary during the duration of the pit operations (approximately 17.1 acres), will use an insignificant amount of water for gravel excavation, and will affect the air quality due to airborne dust particles resulting from pit operations, and vehicles traveling to and from the gravel pit. No cumulative effects to environmental resources have been identified as a result of mining for gravel.

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.

DNRC Checklist EA for initial gravel pit located in 16 in T9N-R60E (8-10-15).

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.

No human and health safety risks were identified as a result of the proposed expansion and permit renewal other than the typical occupational hazards that coincide with gravel operations.

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

The proposed project will be reclaimed in a manner so that this land can continue to be used for agricultural activities and production.

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 proposed project would not create, move, or eliminate jobs.

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.

None.

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.

None.

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.

No known zoning or management plans exist for this 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.

No wilderness or recreational areas are located in this section.

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.

None.

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

None.

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

None.

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 proponent has provided $25 application fee for a gravel permit and will pay $1.50 per cubic yard in royalties. The existing grazing lease on the State Sections listed above provide approximately $7,368 in annual revenue from Section 16 that goes to Common Schools. A slight decrease in that amount will occur due to the lease record change with the acreage decreasing by the size of the gravel pit.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:**	Trevor Taylor	**Date:**	4/20/18
	Title:	Petroleum Engineer		

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

After reviewing the Environmental Assessment, I have selected the Action Alternative, to issue a Gravel Permit. I believe this alternative can be implemented in a manner that is consistent with the long-term sustainable natural resource management of the area and generate revenue for the common school trust.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

I conclude all identified potential impacts will be mitigated by utilizing the stipulations listed below and no significant impacts will occur as a result of implementing the selected alternative.

Stipulations:

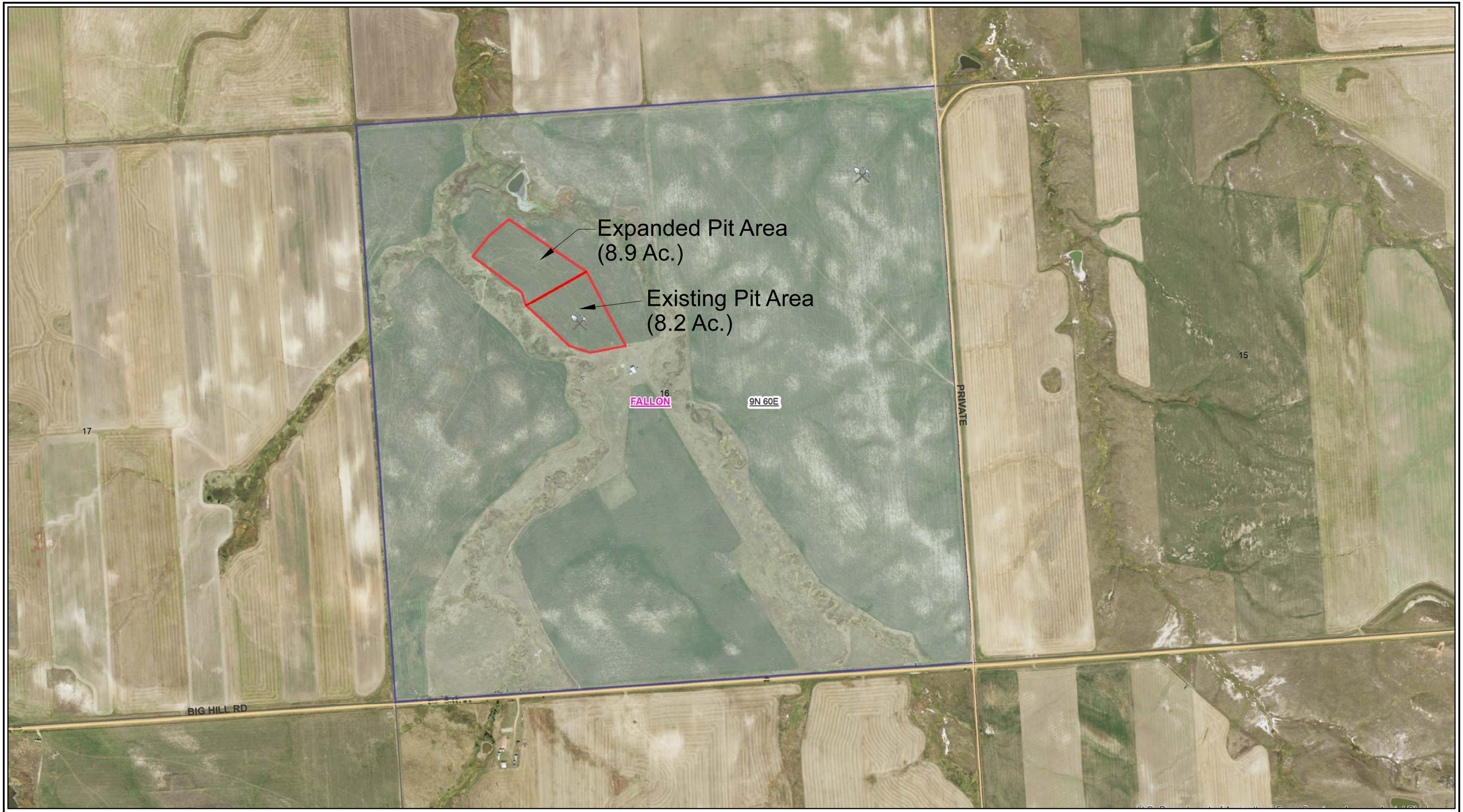
1. Proponent will repair any soil damage and seed any disturbed areas with grass seed. A crested wheatgrass/alfalfa mix or a seed mix requested from the surface lessee may be used.
2. Proponent will stockpile the top 19 inches of topsoil, separate from the subsoil layers below. Reclamation will have the original 19 inches of topsoil above the subsoil for reseeding.
3. Proponent will monitor sites and control weeds for a period of 3 years after reclamation.

4. All necessary permits will be secured.
5. All vehicle traffic only permitted in dry or frozen conditions.
6. All vehicles must be washed, particularly the undercarriage, to assure removal of dirt, plant material, and seeds prior to entering the tract.
7. The site shall be reclaimed and recontoured in such a manner that it can easily be farmed and shall have no slopes greater than 5:1.
8. Silt barriers will be installed down-gradient from disturbed areas to protect drainages from stormwater runoff flowing off site.
9. A pre-inspection and release inspection from the county weed coordinator will be required.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

[ ]	EIS	[ ]	More Detailed EA	[X]	No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:**	Monte Mason
	Title:	MMB Bureau Chief
Signature:	Monte L Mason	**Date:** April 20, 2018



Wyrick Construction Gravel Pit Expansion

500' 0 500' 1000' 1500'
Map Scale: 1" = 1000'

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Map Description: Wyrick Pit Expansion
Location: Fallon County
Date: April 23, 2018
Prepared By: TT - MMB