

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	DNRC Northeast Land Office Multiple Gravel Test Sites
Proposed Implementation Date:	January 2020 through November 2020
Proponent:	DNRC NELO
Location:	14N 15E 26, 7N 15E 16, 17N 11E 31&32, 8N 12E 16
County:	Wheatland and Judith Basin
Trust:	University of Montana, Common Schools

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The DNRC Northeast Land Office has proposed to test several different sites for gravel resources. Testing would be done with a mini-excavator and would be immediately reclaimed.

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 Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)
Northeastern Land Office (NELO)
Proponent: DNRC NELO
Surface Lessees: Bos Terra, Two Dot Land and Livestock, Freda R Evans Credit Shelter Trust, John H Whelan, Shane Moe

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

The DNRC, and NELO have jurisdiction over this proposed project.

The proponent is responsible for acquiring all required permits for the proposed project. The proponent is responsible for settling all surface damages with the surface lessees.

DNRC is not aware of any other agencies with jurisdiction or other permits needed to complete this project

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action) – Under this alternative, the Department does not grant permission to conduct gravel testing on several trust land tracts.

Alternative B (the Proposed Action) – Under this alternative, the Department does grant permission to conduct gravel testing on several trust land tracts.

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.

All of the soils that will be impacted by this testing rated severe for rutting hazard so work would only be done in dry or frozen conditions. Most of the soils in test areas are rated as slight for off road erosion hazard with only one site having significant acreage that was rated as a moderate hazard. Testing will be done with a tracked mini excavator that causes minimal ground disturbance and all pits will be small and immediately reclaimed so no major erosion should occur.

No cumulative effects to geology and soil quality, stability and moisture are anticipated.

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.

Several of the sites to be tested are on terraces above streams but all are sufficiently higher elevation than the stream and above surrounding static water levels that no groundwater should be contacted. All sites are sufficiently above groundwater levels as determined by information from the Montana Ground Water Information Center. No cumulative effects to the water resources are anticipated.

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.

The air quality in the area will not be affected. No cumulative effects to air quality are anticipated.

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.

Only one of the sites has a rare plant, Small Dropseed, known to be present near the site located at 7N 15E S16. Someone trained in plant identification will be present onsite to make sure that this plant will not be disturbed if found. No long term cumulative effects to vegetation are anticipated.

Species of Concern										
1 Species										
Filtered by the following criteria:										
Source = 2070155 (based on mapped Species Occurrences)										
<small> ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED DATE 05-10-2011 BY 60322 UCBAW/STP/STP </small>										
SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	TAXA SORT	OTHER NAMES	FAMILY (SCIENTIFIC)	FAMILY (COMMON)	GLOBAL RANK	STATE RANK	USFWS	USFS	HABITAT
<i>Sporobolus vaginatus</i>	Small Dropseed			Poaceae	Grasses	G5	S12			Grasslands (low elevation)

Species Occurrences verified in these Counties: CHANDLER, SANSBOURNE, WHEATLAND
State Rank Reason: Based on Rankland, where it is known from a few widely scattered and poorly documented sites.

If re-seeding is necessary the proponent will acquire certified, weed free seed and refer to the Plant Materials Tech Note No. MT-46 (Rev. 4) dated September 2013 for seeding rates.

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.

Some of the areas to be tested are potentially important habitats for wildlife because they are near perennial stream but because the testing will only take place over the course of a single day and all test pits will be immediately filled back in there should be no cumulative effects to terrestrial, avian, or aquatic habitat and only temporary displacement should occur. Any active wildlife burrows, nests, or other important habitat features will be easily avoided during testing.

There are some known and inventoried historical sites present on several of the areas to be tested but they will be avoided and the DNRC archaeologist will be out to inventory all of the sites before excavation occurs

No effects on historical, archaeological, or paleontological resources anticipated.

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.

All test pits dug for this project would be immediately filled in and reseeded. Since the test pits are such a small area, usually 24" by 6-8' there should be no negative affects to the overall aesthetics of these pieces of land.

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.

No direct or cumulative effects to environmental resources are anticipated.

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.

There are no other projects or plans being considered on the tracts listed in this EA Checklist.

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.

Once the testing has been completed there will be no health and safety concerns associated with this project. During testing there will be some safety concerns associated with operating equipment but they will be the responsibility of the proponent to mitigate.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

This project will not add to or deter from other industrial, agricultural, or commercial activities in this area.

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 project will not create any new jobs. These positions are already held by employees of the proponent. No cumulative effects to the employment market are anticipated.

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.

There are no direct or cumulative effects to taxes or revenue for the proposed project.

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

There will not be any increases in traffic or traffic patterns if this project is approved. There will be no direct or cumulative effects on government services.

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.

There are no zoning or other agency management plans affecting this project.

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.

There will be no direct or cumulative effects on recreation or wilderness activities.

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 does not include any changes to housing or developments. No direct or cumulative effects to population or housing are anticipated.

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 have no effect on any unique quality 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 has the potential to create a significant income for the trust if gravel is found. There is potential for any gravel that is found to be used on a nearby highway projects that could be sold at a premium because it will already be permitted.

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative B (the Proposed Action) – Under this alternative, the Department does grant permission to conduct gravel testing on several trust land tracts.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

I have evaluated the potential environment effects and have determined that no negative long-term environmental impacts will result from the proposed activity.

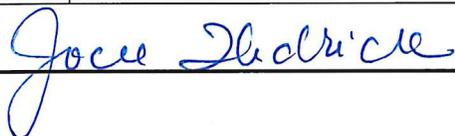
27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Dustin Lenz Title: Land Use Specialist
Signature: 	Date: 30 December 2019

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Jocee Hedrick Title: Unit Manager, Northeastern Land Office
Signature: 	Date: 12/30/19

7N 15E 16



14N 15E 26



8N 12E 16



17N 11E 31&32

