CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Frying Pan 2
Proposed Implementation Date:	2019
Proponent:	Beaverhead County Road Department
Location:	Surface and Minerals- T6S-R9W-Sec 35
County:	Beaverhead

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The Beaverhead County Road Department (henceforth referred to as the proponent) has requested two proposals on State Trust land (T6S-R9W-Sec 35), one for conducting excavation of aggregate test holes and one for expanding the current gravel pit.

The test pits will be 3-foot pits using a backhoe or trackhoe to do the excavation at approximately 10 to 12 locations to photograph and determine soil salvage requirements for the opencut permitting process through the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Extend all or select pits to the extent reachable by machine to verify gravel resource.

The expansion of the current gravel pit proposal will supply the proponent with gravel for county projects. The expansion will make the gravel pit a total size of approximately 29.0 acres (see attached map). Reclamation work will include back sloping cut slopes to a 3 to 1 pitch, spreading top soil over the exposed areas and grass seeding disturbed areas. The proponent will also be responsible for spraying weeds for 3 years after completion of the permit. The revenue generated from this project goes to Deaf and Blind Schools trust.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:
Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

1. Harold Brown
   344 Frying Pan Road
   Dillon, MT 59725

2. Larry Laknar
   85 Lost Trail
   Dillon, MT 59725

3. Brian DeMars
   165 Pioneer Drive
   Dillon, MT 59725

4. Steve & Mary Sturgeon
   539 Thomsen Ave
   Dillon, MT 59725

5. Beaverhead County Commissioners
   2 South Pacific St
   Dillon, MT 59725

6. MT Fish Wildlife & Parks
   Craig Fager, Wildlife Biologist
   730 North Montana St
   Dillon, MT 59725

7. Patrick Rennie, MT DNRC Archeologist
   prennie@mt.gov

Comments:

- **Larry Laknar:** "I do not object to the expansion or use of the gravel pit in this proposal. I recently signed a road easement through our property for access to this gravel pit. I would suggest that the County add some gravel to the existing road to insure all weather access to the pit. During wet conditions caused by weather, there are portions of this road that become very muddy and rutty. Almost impassable except with 4 wheel drive vehicles. We use this road to access our DNRC leased land adjoining the pit area, so we have some experience with road conditions year around."

- **Brian & Betty DeMars:** "We do not object to the expansion of the gravel pit proposal. We would like to suggest to the County that they add some gravel to the existing road that borders our property on the north and east sides, especially the east side, to insure access to the pit. The road gets very rutted and slick when it is wet. At times, the road is almost impassible. We feel that the big dump trucks, belly dump trucks, trailers and other equipment could do even more damage to the road. We use this road to access our home site that is just east of the pit site."

- **Mary Sturgeon:** Mary had concerns about road maintenance, if the county were to damage the road would they fix/maintain the Frying Pan road that goes through the subdivision. She did not oppose the gravel pit.

- **Craig Fager, MTFWP Biologist:** Craig said he does not see any issues with the gravel pit and its impact.

- **Patrick Rennie, MT DNRC Archeologist:** Patrick said he does not see any concerns with the gravel pit.

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

Montana DNRC - Permit to Test for Aggregate

State of Montana DEQ – Opencut Mining Permit

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

A. **Action Alternative:** Grant Beaverhead County Road Department a permit for test pits and a gravel permit to expand their existing gravel mine from 20 to 29 acres of state land in Section 35, T6S – R9W in the Frying Pan area north of Dillon.

B. **No Action Alternative:** The proposed expansion of the gravel pit would not be granted.

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.

A. Action Alternative: Site geology consists of alluvial deposits containing detrital sedimentary rocks located in the Frying Pan drainage. The soils within the extraction area are primarily mapped as Bronec-Kalsted gravelly sandy loams, 2 to 8 percent slopes. Soils would be stripped, stockpiled, and replaced following the removal of fill material. The site will be mined to a maximum depth of 25 feet and the reclamation work will include back sloping cut slopes to a 3 to 1 pitch, spreading top soil over the exposed areas and grass seeding disturbed areas. The site would be returned to a post-mining land use of rangeland/pasture. Cumulative impacts to soil would likely be negligible.

B. No Action Alternative: No impacts expected. The site would remain permitted for 20 acres of gravel extraction to a depth of 15 feet.

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.

A. **Action Alternative:** The estimated depth to the water table is 130' +/-, this data was gathered by averaging nearby well log data using the Ground Water Information Center (GWIC) on the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology (MBMG) web site. The site will be mined to a maximum depth of 25', therefore no groundwater resources are expected to be impacted. There is a small emergent wetland located near the south east corner of the existing pit and is not located in the proposed pit boundary, this area will not be disturbed. No cumulative effects to water resources are anticipated.

B. **No Action Alternative:** No impacts to water resources.

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.

A. **Action Alternative:** During the summer months dust particulates could increase if dry conditions are encountered when the gravel pit is being excavated, along with vehicle and equipment traffic generating some airborne dust. However, the pit is located in a sparsely populated area and no cumulative effects to air quality are anticipated.

B. **No Action Alternative:** No impacts to air quality.

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.

A. **Action Alternative:** The proposed expansion of the gravel pit would have an impact on the vegetation community that is currently present on the site. Montane Sagebrush Steppe and Rocky Mountain Lower

Montane, Foothill, and Valley Grassland plant communities in proposed project area will be impacted. Vegetation species on site include: bluebunch wheatgrass, needle and thread grass, prairie junegrass, indian ricegrass, sandberg bluegrass, blue grama, forbs, plains prickly pear, fringed sagewort, winterfat and theadleaf sedge. Invader vegetation species on site include: broom snakeweed, russian thistle and green rabbitbrush. The data was gathered for this location using the latest DNRC range evaluation form from 10-29-2014. A search was conducted using the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) database on 01/02/2019 and found no rare plants or cover types for this location.

Topsoil will be stockpiled on site and used for reclamation, if there is not enough topsoil excavated on site top soil will be hauled in for proper reclamation. Native grass species mix approved by DNRC will be used to seed for reclamation and the proponent will also be responsible for spraying weeds for 3 years after completion of the permit.

B. **No Action Alternative:** No impacts to vegetation.

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. **Action Alternative:** There may be minimal disruption to the wildlife that inhabit the area. The scale and length of the project should not be enough to permanently disrupt the wildlife species. Species in the area include whitetail and mule deer, antelope, raptors and other birds, various rodents, rabbits, reptiles and others.

B. **No Action Alternative:** No impacts to fish and wildlife.

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. **Action Alternative:** A search was conducted using the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) database on 01/02/2019 and found 5 species of concern that have the potential to use the area, but there are no point observations documented nor has the DNRC observed any of the listed species on this site. The species that were identified are the Hoary Bat, Golden Eagle, Ferruginous Hawk, Greater Sage-Grouse and Great Blue Heron. There is also a bat roost nearby (within 10,000 meters) that is listed as an IAH (important animal habitat) but due to the habitat requirements for the roost (e.g. trees, rock outcrops) there will be no disturbance to the bat roost. The proposed gravel pit site location there are no trees or rock outcrops present. The project will not disturb any suitable roost habitat.

The site is not within Greater Sage Grouse general or core habitat. There isn't any sage brush present at the proposed gravel pit site and it is not within identified a Greater Sage Grouse general or core habitat area. Although sage grouse, Golden Eagles, Ferruginous Hawks may be present near or use the area occasionally, the project area is not critical habitat for any of these bird species.

The size of the pit expansion is small in size and no long term or cumulative impacts to unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources are anticipated.

B. **No Action Alternative:** No impacts to unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources.

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

A. Action Alternative: The DNRC archaeologist conducted a Class III intensity level cultural and paleontological resources inventory of the area of potential effect (APE). Despite a detailed examination of the APE no cultural or paleontologic resources were identified. As such, proposed gravel development activities will have *No Effec*t to *Antiquities* as defined under the Montana State Antiquities Act. A formal report of findings has been prepared and is on file with the DNRC and the Montana State Historic Preservation Officer.

B. **No Action Alterative:** No impacts to historical or archaeological sites.

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.

A. **Action Alternative:** The proposed gravel pit is approximately 4 miles north of Dillon, MT off Frying Pan Road. The pit floor is already approximately 15 feet below the surrounding grade and therefore buffered from the surrounding landscape both in terms of visibility and noise. The pit and mining equipment could continue to be visible from the traffic that utilizes I-15 (approx. ½ mile away), the community off Tenderfoot Trail (approx. ¾ mile away) and a residential home (within 1,000' of pit). There could be a level of noise heard from the pit during operational hours from the nearby residences, but no change from present use. Staging for equipment and the material stockpile would be located on site. Little impact should be felt aesthetically in the scope of this project. There should be minimal lasting effects on the landscape from this project.

B. **No Action Alternative:** No impacts to aesthetics.

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.

A. **Action Alternative:** The proposed project would have an impact on the land (approximately 29 acres) and would minimally affect the air quality due to airborne dust particles resulting from mining activities and vehicles traveling to and from the gravel pit. The gravel pit will only be excavated to a maximum depth of 25 feet. The visual impact should be minimal and will be back sloped and seeded to reduce any cumulative impacts to the environment. This is not a new activity; this gravel pit has existed on this site since 1998.

B. **No Action Alternative:** No new impacts to environmental resources.

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.

The DNRC is unaware of any other plans, studies or projects planned or occurring on this tract of state land (Section 35, T6S – R9W).

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.

A. **Action Alternative:** No human and health safety risks were identified as a result of the proposed project other than the typical occupational hazards that coincide with gravel and mining operations. The proponent would be held liable for all risks to human health and safety.

B. **No Action Alternative:** No impacts to human health and safety.

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

A. **Action Alternative:** This proposal is not expected to alter current or future industrial, commercial, and agricultural activities and production.

B. **No Action Alternative:** No impacts to industrial, commercial and agriculture 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.

A. **Action Alternative:** This proposal would not create, move, or eliminate jobs.

B. **No Action Alternative:** No impacts to 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.

A. **Action Alternative:** This proposal is not expected to affect local and state tax base and tax revenues.

B. **No Action Alternative:** No impacts to local and state tax base and tax revenues.

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.

A. **Action Alternative:** This proposal is not expected to impact the overall demand for government services in the area.

B. **No Action Alternative:** No impacts on demand for 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.

A. **Action Alternative:** This proposal is not expected to impact locally adopted environmental plans or goals.

B. **No Action Alternative:** No impacts to locally adopted environmental plans or goals.

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.

A. **Action Alternative:** This proposal is not expected to impact access to and quality of recreational and wilderness activities.

B. **No Action Alternative:** No impacts on access to and quality of recreational and 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.

A. **Action Alternative:** This proposal is not expected to impact density and distribution of population and housing.

B. **No Action Alternative:** No impacts to density and distribution of population and housing.

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

A. **Action Alternative:** This proposal is not expected to impact social structures and mores.

B. **No Action Alternative:** No impacts to social structures and mores.

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

A. **Action Alternative:** This proposal is not expected to impact cultural uniqueness and diversity of the area.

B. **No Action Alternative:** No impacts to cultural uniqueness and diversity.

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 existing grazing lease on this tract provides approximately $170.30 in annual revenue that goes to Deaf and Blind Schools. The proponent has provided $25.00 for a test gravel permit. The proponent also holds the gravel

permit for this tract which can generate up to $12,500.00 in annual revenue at a rate of $1.25 per yard (depending on demand for gravel and price per yard) from W2SE4, Sec. 35, T6S, R9W that goes to Deaf and Blind Schools.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Jackson Spooner	Date: 01/29/2019
	Title: Dillon Unit Senior Engine Boss	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

A. Action Alternative: Grant Beaverhead County Road Department a permit for test pits and a gravel permit to mine on 29 acres of state land in Section 35, T6S – R9W in the Frying Pan area north of Dillon.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Significant impacts are not anticipated as a result of the proposed activity. The gravel pit will encompass a small area (29.0 acres) in an area well suited as a gravel source. The pit is situated a sufficient distance from streams to provide adequate filtration and depth of the pit will be limited to avoid impacts to ground water. The proposed action satisfies the trusts fiduciary mandate and ensures the long-term productivity of the land. An environmental assessment checklist is the appropriate level of analysis for the proposed action.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

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

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Timothy Egan	
	Title: Dillon Unit Manager	
Signature: /S/ Timothy Egan		Date: February 6, 2018

Attachment 1

Proposed Gravel Pit Boundary with Approximant Test Pit Locations
(W2SE4, Sec. 35, T6S, R9W)