

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Art Thompson Corral Creek Stock Water Development Request 2020
Proposed Implementation Date:	Summer, 2020
Proponent:	Lessee: Art Thompson
Location:	T15S R5W Section 2
County:	Beaverhead

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

This stock water development project is being proposed by the lessee, Art Thompson, to improve water availability and quality on the above referenced Trust Land. The proposal includes a spring development, approximately 1,400 feet of pipeline, and a single stock water tank. The spring site is located in timber and will be powered by either a solar pump or portable generator. The stock tank will be located approximately ¼ mile South of the spring outside of timber in sagebrush/grass. The stock water tank will be fitted with wildlife escape ramps to minimize potential effects to small mammals and birds. The project is located in close proximity to the Idaho border in the Western Centennial Mountain Range of Beaverhead County.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

Dean Waltee, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks Biologist
Art Thompson, Lessee
Montana Natural Resource Information Service
Patrick Rennie, DNRC Archaeologist
Montana Sage Grouse Advisory Committee (MSGOT)

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

Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program was consulted for this project.
No other government oversight or agencies with jurisdiction or permits needed for this request.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A) Allow construction of the proposed water development
Alternative B) No action, water development construction would be denied.

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.

The project area is located in mountainous terrain. Topography is moderately steep and partially timbered. Due to the low impact nature of the water development project on soils, the proposal would not cause cumulative effects. No special reclamation is expected. If the project is approved, the site will be assessed after construction by Dillon Unit staff prior to grazing lease expiration and alterations may be required if significant impacts are noted.

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.

Water sources in the vicinity include the upper headwaters of the East Fork Corral Creek. The spring to be developed is one of the springs that make up the headwaters of the East Fork. The proposed water development would move livestock use out of the spring site and into an upland area. In-stream flow water quality is expected to improve as a result of the proposed project as cattle use of the spring site is reduced or eliminated.

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.

None

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.

No cumulative effects to vegetation are expected to result from this proposed project.

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 heavily used by elk & mule deer. The proposed project is located within designated core sage-grouse habitat. The project was submitted to MSGOT for sage grouse input. Input received included use of wildlife escape ramps on the stock tank. MSGOT also noted that the project is greater than 4 miles from the nearest active lek, construction is to be temporary in nature, the pipeline will be buried, installation methods would create minimal ground disturbance, and the vegetation will be reclaimed within one growing season. Dean Waltee, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks biologist was solicited for comments on this project regarding wildlife impacts. He did not expect the proposed water tank to have measurable negative impacts to wildlife use of the area.

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 query was made on the Montana Natural Heritage Program site regarding endangered or sensitive species located in the vicinity of the project area. The resulting Species of Concern Data Report included 9 species found:

1) **Wolverine** (*Gulo gulo*) – The wolverine is listed as a BLM and USFS sensitive species and a species potentially at risk by the State of Montana. The proposed water development project would not affect wolverine use of the area.

- 2) **Greater Sage-Grouse** (*Centrocercus urophasianus*)- Greater Sage-Grouse are listed as sensitive by the US Forest Service, BLM, and the State of Montana. The project area is located in Sage-Grouse core habitat as identified by the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. According to MSGOT, the nearest lek is over 4 miles North of the project area. There is heavy timber on and in the immediate vicinity of the proposed site. The stock tank will be fitted with a wildlife escape ramp. The water development project will have no cumulative effects to Sage-Grouse use or habitat.
- 3) **Great Grey Owl** (*Strix nebulosa*) - is listed as a sensitive species by the BLM and as a species of concern by the State of Montana. The stock water development proposal will have no effect on rodents that live in the area which are the main food source for the owl. Part of the project site is located at the edge of standing timber where the spring is located. The remainder of the project is located on open sagebrush grassland. The project would move cattle use out of the existing spring site/wet meadow area and onto a sagebrush-grass site. The project will not cause negative effects to the great gray owl.
- 4) **Grizzly Bear** (*Ursus arctos*) – The project site is in an area occupied by grizzlies in the Centennial Mountain Range. This population is part of the Yellowstone Distinct Population Segment (DPS) which was deemed by the USFWS to be a recovered population which no longer met the Endangered Species Act's definition of threatened or endangered as of March 22, 2007. The project would not alter grizzly habitat and would not cause cumulative effects to the species.
- 5) **Hoary Bat** – (*Lasiurus cinereus*) – The hoary bat is potentially at risk because of limited and/or declining numbers, range and/or habitat, even though it may be abundant in some areas. The mammal resides in Montana in the Summer living in riparian and forest habitats. Hoary bats are thought to prefer trees at the edge of clearings, but have been found in trees in heavy forests, and open wooded glades. The proposed water development will not have any direct, indirect or long term cumulative impacts on the hoary bat population in the area of the proposal.
- 6) **Bald Eagle** (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – Bald eagles are listed as Recovered, delisted, and being monitored by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Montana State, the US Forest Service, and the US Dept. of Interior Bureau of Land Management all list the bald eagle as sensitive. The proposed project would place a stock water development on an upland site in mountain big sagebrush - grass dry rangeland conditions outside of known bald eagle nesting areas. The project would not increase disturbance to bald eagle use of the area.
- 7) **Long-billed Curlew** (*Numenius americanus*) – Long-billed curlews are listed as sensitive by the BLM and as a species of concern by the State of Montana. Curlews avoid areas like the project site that has trees, heavy sagebrush, and dense grass and forbs. The site does not match curlew habitat preference, which is short to mixed grass prairie. Curlews will not be affected by the proposed project.
- 8) **Ballhead Ipomopsis** (*Ipomopsis congesta*) – Ballhead ipomopsis (gilia?) is listed as a State of Montana Species of Concern. According to the Montana NRIS site, it is found in "Open, often eroding sandy soil of sagebrush steppe in the foothill zone." It does not give a precipitation zone. Soils on site are silty to shallow, with dense overstory of mountain big sagebrush, understory is also dense grass and forbs. Habitat on-site does not meet criteria found in available literature and the proposed project would have no known impact to this species.
- 9) **McCown's Longspur** (*Rhynchophanes mccownii*) – McCown's longspur is a BLM and State of Montana listed sensitive species. From MNHP website: **State Rank Reason** – "*Species faces threats from cover-type conversion and altered grazing and fire regimes and although populations in the core of their breeding range in northeast Montana appear to be relatively stable, declines are occurring in much of the species global breeding range.*" The proposed project includes developing a spring, buried stock water pipeline, and a single stock tank. The proposed project would not convert native grassland and would not affect habitat preference of McCown's longspur.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

Patrick Rennie, DNRC archaeologist, was consulted regarding the project. He responded 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. The proposed pipeline route was inspected on foot. No cultural resources were identified.

Proposed developments will have *No Effect to Antiquities*. 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.

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.

The proposed project is located in a remote part of Beaverhead County in the Centennial Mountain Range. The site of the proposed water development is not visible from any open roads or trails. The project would not be detrimental to aesthetic values of the area.

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 limited resources would be required. The proposed project would not alter or affect other activities in the area. No cumulative effects to environmental resources are expected as a result of this 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.

A separate environmental assessment was conducted for a proposed fence replacement/realignment project located within 1 mile (East) of this project. The two projects are proposed by the lessee to be constructed during Summer, 2020 and interference between the projects would not occur. No other studies or reviews were reported during scoping for this project.

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 health or safety risks are expected to result from this project.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

The proposed project would not significantly alter agricultural activities or 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 affect the employment market, the lessee is planning on constructing the water development himself. No positive or negative cumulative effects to the employment market would result from this project.

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.

Tax revenue would not be affected by this 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.

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.

None

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 proposed project would not affect recreational use of the area.

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?

The proposed project would not alter any unique quality or 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.

The purpose of this environmental document is to assess a request to improve both quantity and quality of water to livestock and improve quality of water in-stream from the spring source by reducing trampling. The improvement, if approved, would be owned by the lessee. Monetary return to the Common Schools Trust beneficiary as a direct result of this proposed water development project is zero.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Charles Maddox	Date: 3/10/2020
	Title: Land Use Specialist	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative A) Allow construction of the proposed water development.

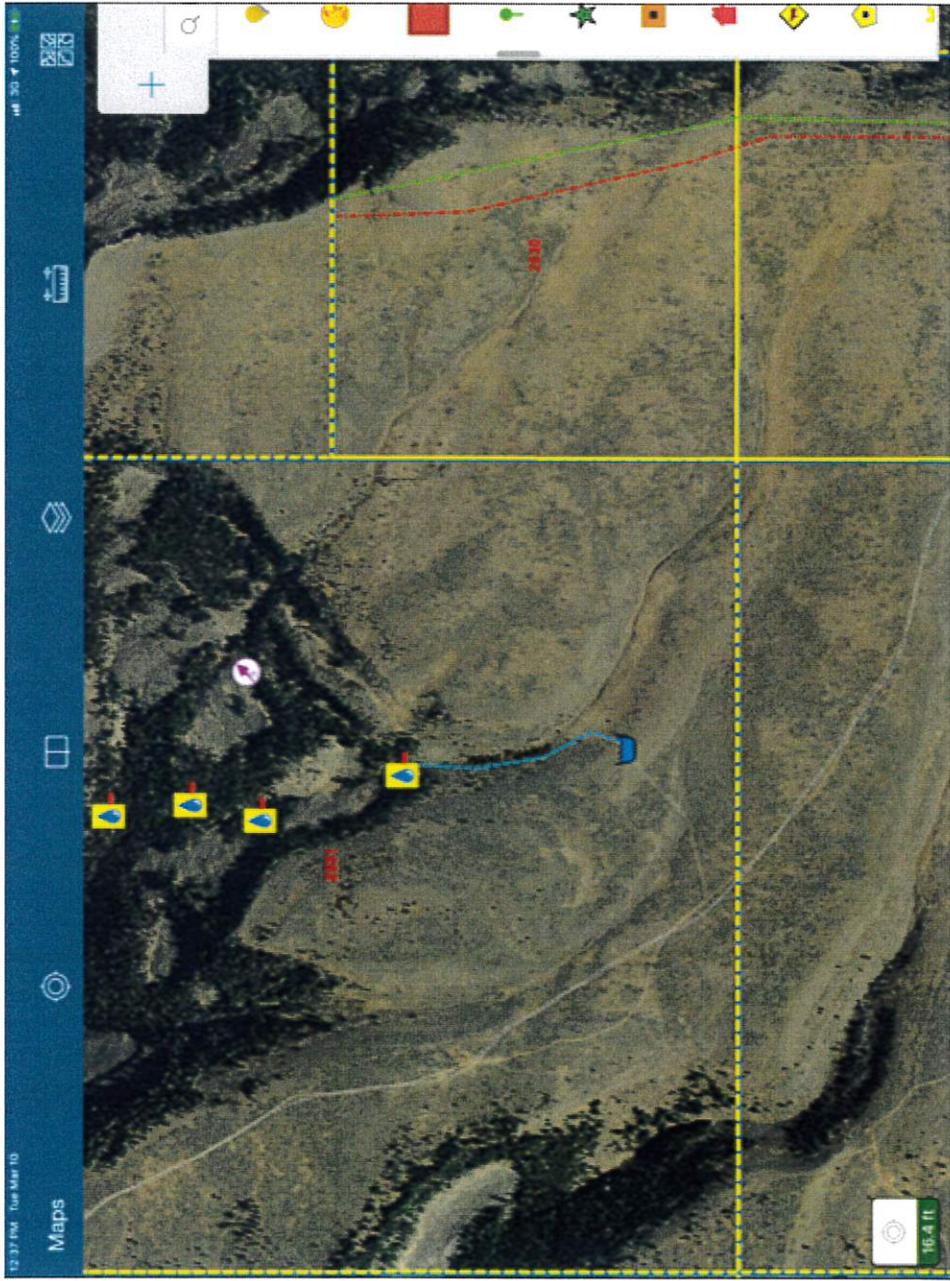
26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

I have evaluated the potential social, economic, and environmental effects of this proposal and have determined no significant impacts would result from the proposed water development. The development may improve quantity and quality of water to livestock and reduce trampling near the spring.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS
 More Detailed EA
 No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Timothy Egan	
	Title: Dillon Unit Manager	
Signature: /S/ Timothy Egan		Date: March 10, 2020



MONTANA SAGE GROUSE HABITAT CONSERVATION PROGRAM



STEVE BULLOCK, GOVERNOR

1539 ELEVENTH AVENUE

STATE OF MONTANA

PHONE: (406) 444-0554
FAX: (406) 444-6721

PO BOX 201601
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-1601

Project No. 3651
Governor's Executive Orders 12-2015 and 21-2015
Art Thompson Corral Creek Stock Water Pipeline

Charles Maddox
840 North Montana Street
Dillon, MT 59725

August 21, 2019

Dear Mr. Maddox,

The Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program received a request for consultation and review of your project or proposed activity on July 9, 2019, with additional information necessary for Program review received on August 21, 2019. Based on the information provided, all or a portion of this project is located within a Core Area for sage grouse. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) classifies this area as a Priority Habitat Management Area (PHMA).

Executive Orders 12-2015 and 21-2015 set forth Montana's Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy. Montana's goal is to maintain viable sage grouse populations and conserve habitat so that Montana maintains flexibility to manage our own lands, our wildlife, and our economy and a listing under the federal Endangered Species Act is not warranted in the future.

The Program has completed its review, including:

Project Description:

Project Type: Agriculture – Water/Habitat Improvement Project

Project Disturbance: 0.22 Miles

Construction Dates: August 2019 to November 2019, Temporary (< 1 Year)

Disturbance Duration: August 2019 to November 2019, Temporary (< 1 Year)

Project Location:

Legal: Township 15 South, Range 5 West, Section 2

County: Beaverhead

Ownership: Montana State Trust Land



Executive Orders 12-2015 and 21-2015 Consistency:

The project proposes to install a watering system for livestock in designated Core Area.

The purpose of this project, located east of Lima, Montana, is to install a livestock watering system. See Figure 1 (Art Thompson Corral Creek Stock Water Pipeline Project Location Map). This project will improve rangeland management by distributing livestock more evenly over the range as part of a prescribed grazing plan for long-term sage grouse habitat benefits.

The pipeline is scheduled to be installed from August to November 2019. The project would involve development of a spring. Approximately 1,500 feet of pipeline would be buried using a ripper trencher. The project is located adjacent to a stand of timber. Dense sagebrush stands will be avoided where possible. Power will be necessary to run a pump to fill the stock tank. Power will be supplied preferably by solar but may require a propane generator and would be used seasonally as needed. An escape ramp will be installed in the stock tank.

Based on the information you provided, your project is not within four miles of an active sage grouse lek. See Figure 2 (Art Thompson Corral Creek Stock Water Pipeline Project Lek Location Map).

Density Disturbance Calculation Tool (DDCT) Analysis:

The proposed project is to occur in a designated Core Area for sage grouse. The Program has calculated the density and disturbance levels within the project area using a Density Disturbance Calculation Tool. The results were compared to allowable thresholds set forth in the Executive Order 12-2015. Your project results are as follows. See Figure 3 (Density Disturbance Calculation Tool Map) and the Explanation Results Summary sheet.

DDCT Analysis Area Acres: 20,767.17
Total Preliminary Disturbance Acres: 0.36
Total Disturbed Acres in Analysis Area: 164.55
DDCT Result: 0.79%
New Disturbed Acres: 0.36
Affected Leks Within the DDCT Analysis Area: 0

Discussion:

The Art Thompson Corral Creek Stock Water Pipeline Project is within Core Area, and the nearest active sage grouse lek is approximately 5.4 miles to the northwest. The project DDCT calculation is 0.79%, which is below the 5% cap stipulated in Executive Order 12-2015. Impacts to sage grouse will be minimized through the following measures:



- the project is further than four miles from the nearest active lek;
- the project construction is temporary in nature;
- the pipeline will be buried;
- the installation methods will create minimal surface disturbance;
- the vegetation will be reclaimed within one growing season; and
- an escape ramp will be placed in the water tank.

Therefore, the project will not adversely affect sage grouse and will be consistent with Executive Order 12-2015.

Livestock grazing is the most widespread type of land use across the sagebrush biome. Although improper livestock management, as determined by local ecological conditions, may have negative impacts on sage grouse seasonal habitats, proper livestock management is a critical tool for providing and maintaining high quality sage grouse habitat.

Water pipelines and stock tanks can distribute livestock across the landscape in ways that avoid surface disturbance and provide conservation gain. Surface disturbance and the disruptive activities associated with installation are temporary, and vegetation should recover in one growing season. To be consistent with Executive Order 12-2015 projects should follow seasonal timing and NSO stipulations. When properly implemented, these projects will have long-term benefits.

Recommendations intended to support grazing management as a tool for providing quality sage grouse habitat are described in Executive Order 12-2015, Attachment G. Distribution of water to livestock can directly facilitate these recommendations by:

- rotating livestock to different pastures, while resting others to establish a diversity of habitat types;
- changing seasons of use within pastures to ensure all plants can reproduce;
- leaving residual cover (grass from the past season) to increase hiding and nesting cover for sage grouse;
- managing the frequency and intensity of grazing to sustain native grasses, wildflowers, and shrubs; and
- managing livestock access to water to ensure healthy livestock and healthy watersheds.

Recommendations:

The following stipulations are taken from Montana Executive Order 12-2015. These stipulations are designed to maintain existing levels of suitable sage grouse habitat by managing uses and activities in sage grouse habitat to ensure the maintenance of sage grouse abundance and distribution in Montana. Development should be designed and managed to maintain populations and sage grouse habitats.



- Weed management is required within Core Area Habitat for sage grouse. Reclamation of disturbed areas must include control of noxious weeds and invasive plant species, including cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) and Japanese brome (*Bromus japonicas*).

Your activities are consistent with the Montana Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy. Your proposed project or activity may need to obtain additional permits or authorization from other Montana state agencies or possibly federal agencies. They are very likely to request a copy of this consultation letter, so please retain it for your records.

Please be aware that if the location or boundaries of your proposed project or activity change in the future, or if new activities are proposed within one of the designated sage grouse habitat areas, please visit <https://sagegrouse.mt.gov/projects/> and submit the new information.

Thanks for your interest in sage grouse and your commitment to taking the steps necessary to ensure Montana's Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy is successful.

Sincerely,



Carolyn Sime
Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program Manager

Enclosures:

1. Figure 1. Art Thompson Corral Creek Stock Water Pipeline Project Location Map
2. Figure 2. Art Thompson Corral Creek Stock Water Pipeline Project Lek Location Map
3. Figure 3. Density Disturbance Calculation Tool Map

cc: Shawn Thomas
DNRC-Trust Land Management Administrator
P.O. Box 201601
Helena, MT 59620-1601



Figure 1

Art Thompson Corral Creek Stock Water Pipeline Project Location

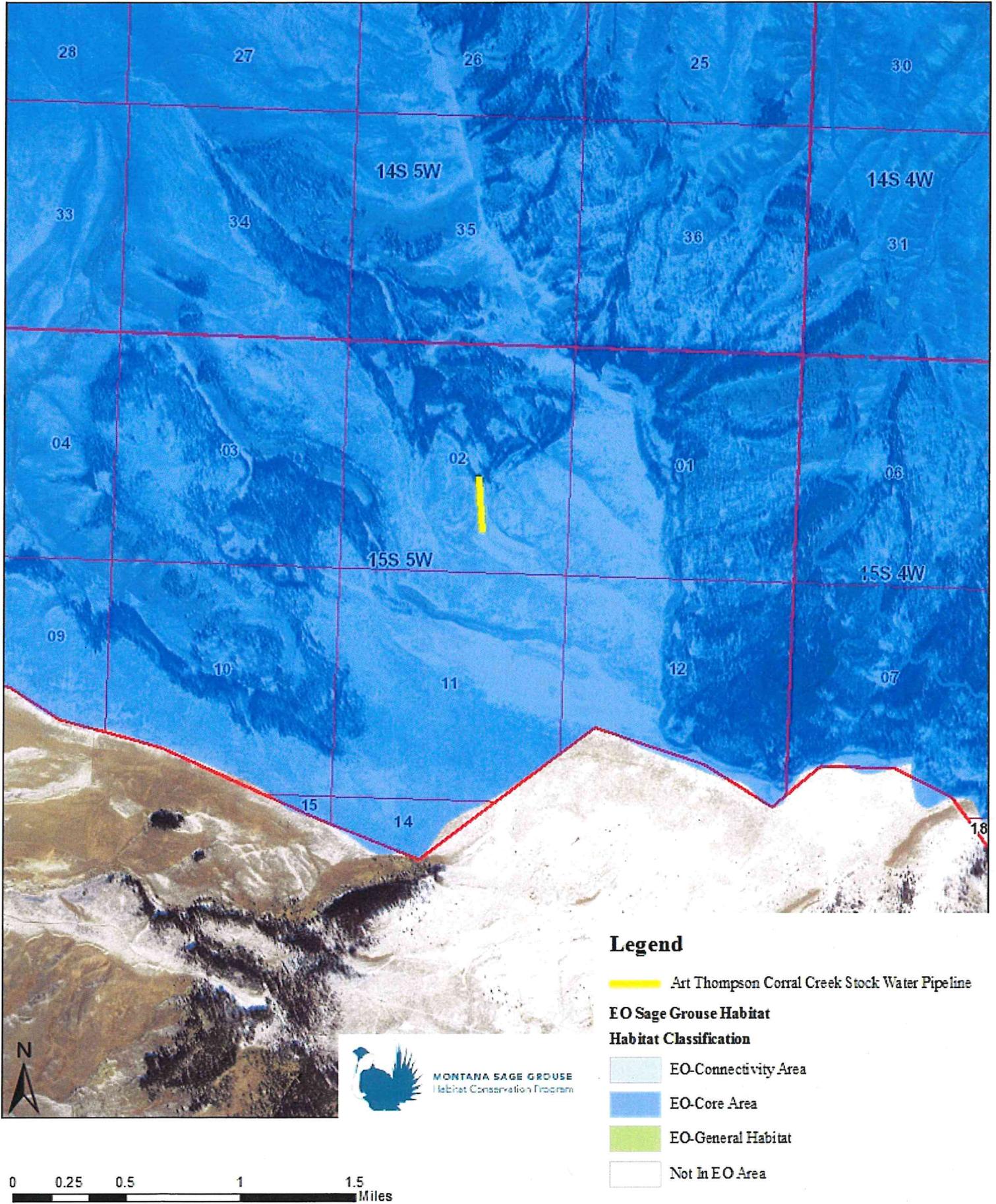


Figure 2

Art Thompson Corral Creek Stock Water Pipeline Project Lek Locations

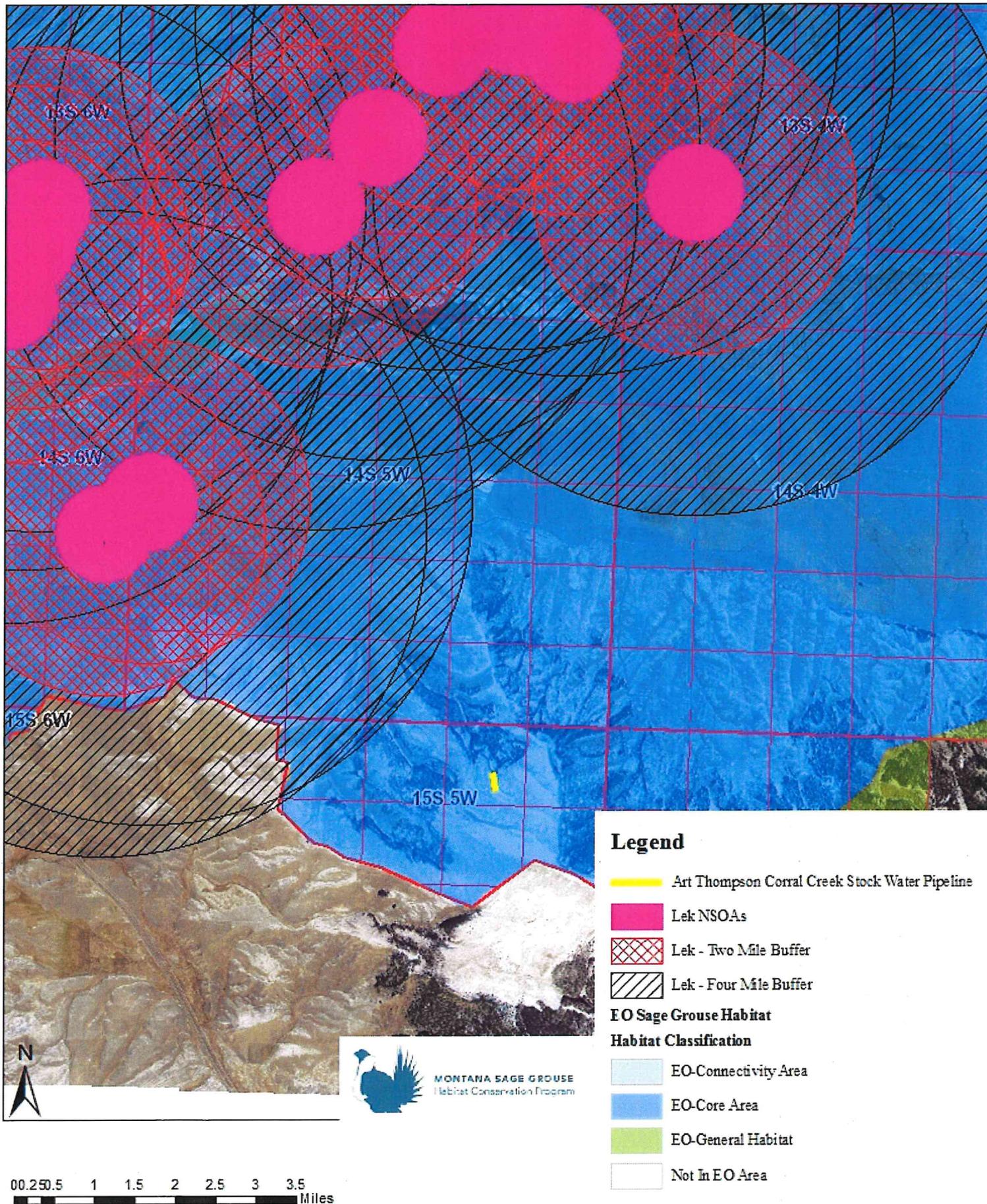
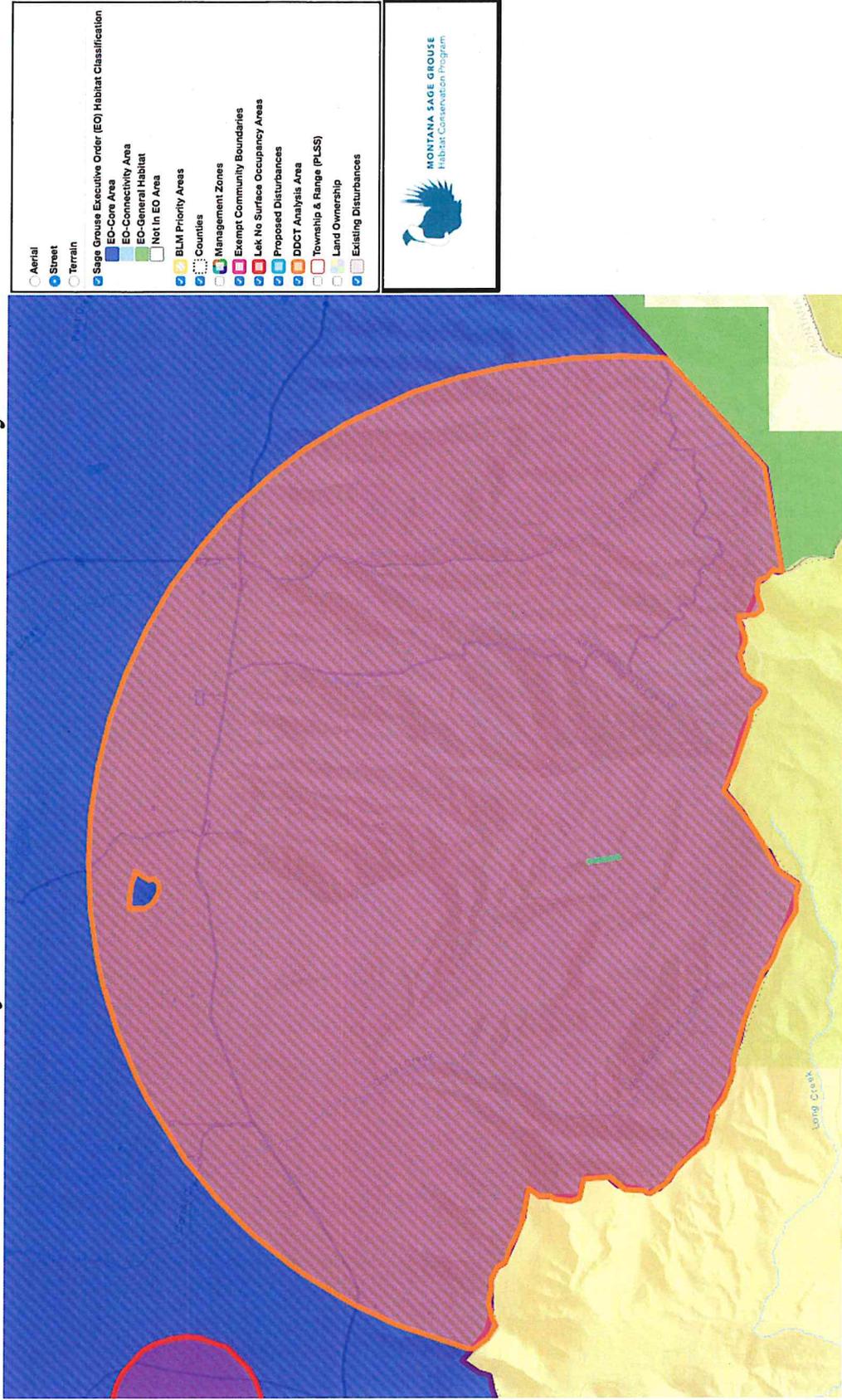


Figure 3

Art Thompson Corral Creek Stock Water Pipeline Project Density Disturbance Calculation Tool Analysis Area



Density Disturbance Calculation Tool Explanation and Results

[#3651] Art Thompson Corral Creek Stock Water Pipeline Project

Created on 08/21/2019 7:48 AM

Project stage changed from Due Diligence to Final Review.

Results are based on the data submitted by the proponent. DDCT calculation results are as follows.

DDCT Analysis Area	Proposed Disturbances Area	Existing + Proposed Disturbances Area within DDCT Analysis Area	DDCT Result	New disturbed acres	Affected Leks within the DDCT Analysis Area
20,767.17 acres	0.36 acres	164.55 acres	0.79%	0.36 acres	0

Result calculated on 07/09/2019 12:12 PM

Analysis Process and General Definitions

Existing Disturbances: All surface disturbances existing on the ground prior to any Proposed Disturbances that would be created by a new project.

Preliminary Disturbances: All surface disturbances associated with this project, as submitted to the Projects On-line Tool.

Total Preliminary Disturbance Acres: The number of acres contained within the entire polygon(s) delineating the disturbance area of this proponent's project.

Previously Proposed Disturbances: All Preliminary Disturbances proposed by other people prior to the current Preliminary Disturbance being submitted. Once a Preliminary Disturbance is finalized, the disturbance becomes an Existing Disturbance.

DDCT Analysis Area Acres: The number of acres within a polygon created by the following steps:

1. Map the *Preliminary Disturbance* polygon submitted by proponent.
2. Classify the habitat where proposed *Preliminary Disturbance* would occur: core area, general habitat, connectivity area, outside the Executive Order (none of the above). May include unsuitable habitat.
3. Buffer *Preliminary Disturbance/s* that would only occur in core habitat by four miles.
4. Look to see if the 4-mile buffer includes any active leks.
5. If yes, buffer those leks by four miles and add the acres to the polygon.
6. Remove any portion of the polygon that is not classified as core habitat so the DDCT Analysis Area only contains acres in core habitat.
7. Finalize the polygon. This is the DDCT Analysis Area polygon.
8. Calculate the number of acres in the DDCT analysis area polygon.

Total Disturbed Acres in DDCT Analysis Area: The total number of acres of disturbance within the DDCT Analysis Area polygon: all Existing Disturbances + Previously Proposed Disturbances + current Preliminary Disturbance.

DDCT Result: The Total Disturbed in DDCT Analysis Area acres divided by the DDCT Analysis Area acres x 100 to determine the percent disturbance which is compared to Executive Order 12-2015 5% disturbance threshold for core areas.

New Disturbed Acres: the total of new ground disturbance as a result of the project. This is portion of Preliminary Disturbances that do not overlap with already Existing Disturbances or Previously Proposed Disturbances. Acres are calculated from the resulting polygon, which is all new ground disturbance.

Affected Leks within DDCT Analysis Area: The total number of leks where any portion of the No Surface Occupancy area is within the DDCT Analysis Area.

Lek Distances: The shortest distance between the Preliminary Disturbance and any active leks with 4 miles of the Preliminary Disturbance.