



Scoping Notice

Non-Mechanized Mineral Exploration Programmatic Review

May 15, 2026

The lands involved in this proposed scoping notice are held in trust by the State of Montana. (Enabling Act of February 22, 1889; 1972 Montana Constitution, Article X, Section 11). The Board of Land Commissioners and the DNRC are required by law to administer these trust lands to produce the largest measure of reasonable and legitimate return over the long run for the beneficiary institutions (Section 77-1-202, MCA).

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), Minerals Management Bureau, is proposing a scoping notice for the following:

Programmatic Environmental Analysis for Non-Mechanized Mineral Exploration Land Use Licenses

This is a scoping notice to gather public input on a Programmatic Environmental Analysis for Non-Mechanized Mineral Exploration Land Use Licenses. The Forestry and Trust Lands Division, through its Minerals Management Bureau (MMB) and Unit Offices, issue Land Use Licenses allowing for non-mechanized mineral exploration on State of Montana Trust Lands.

A non-mechanized land use license (NM LUL) allows the authorized party to utilize non-mechanized methods for exploration activities such as:

- Geologic mapping
- UAV (drone) topographic and photographic surveys
- Ground and aerial geophysical surveys
- Rock/soil/sediment sampling for geochemical analyses
- Surface water sampling, use of hand-held geophysics equipment
- Ground Penetrating Radar
- The use of element analyzers

The proponents of the Land Use Licenses are searching for the following materials:

- Precious and base metals
- Platinum group minerals
- Rare-earth-element-bearing minerals and associated minerals.



The locations, acreage, sample types and volumes, duration, and revenue created for non-mechanized exploration can vary. The Licensee is prohibited during the term of a Land Use License or any continuation thereof to remove gems and/or metalliferous or non-metalliferous minerals from the licensed premises except in small quantities for test purposes or as may be permitted by DNRC.

In accordance with the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), The DNRC is soliciting public comments as it relates to the construction of a Programmatic Environmental Analysis for non-mechanized mineral exploration on State of Montana Trust Lands. Through the construction of previous environmental analyses, it has become apparent to MMB staff, the impacts are largely consistent throughout the state and have minor differences between them based on location. It is the intent of the Bureau to find a more streamlined approach to evaluating the impacts of NM LULs. A programmatic review will allow for the elimination of repetitive analysis, while accommodating site specific considerations. It is the intent of the Bureau to create one programmatic review that identifies impacts that remain consistent from project to project. For impacts that change based upon location, the bureau intends to create an accompanying checklist EA, which will be utilized for site specific considerations.

Additional special stipulations may be added to the license for site specific considerations identified in the checklist EA.

The Minerals Management Bureau invites written comments and suggestions on the issues or resource concerns important to the public, related to this proposal. The public comment period will be open for a period of 30 days. Please respond by June 15, 2026, to: <https://forms.office.com/g/9RrY8Bygiu>

Questions regarding the Programmatic Environmental Analysis for Non-Mechanized Mineral Exploration Land Use Licenses may be directed to:

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