

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Meissner/ Kauer Pipeline Project
Proposed Implementation Date:	Summer 2026
Proponent:	Trent Kauer
Location:	NWSW, NESW, SENW, SWNE, NWNW, NENE Sec. 36, T20N R12E
County:	Chouteau
Trust:	Common Schools

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Trent Kauer is implementing a large-scale water project across the Meissner Ranch to improve water availability for livestock. This project will involve extending existing livestock pipelines to areas of the ranch with less reliable water. For this project they are planning to run a pipeline and place a stock tank in section 36 of T20N R12E. This lease improvement will improve grazing distribution of both the state and adjacent private land.

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) & Lewistown Unit Office
Proponent: Trent Kauer
Surface Lessees: Meissner Ranches 2 INC Ag- 9415
Other: Patrick Rennie (DNRC Archaeologist)

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

The DNRC has jurisdiction over this proposed project. The project will be administered by the Lewistown Unit of the Northeastern Land Office.

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

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action) – Under this alternative, the Department does not approve the request for the installations of a pipeline and tank on School Trust Land.

Alternative B (the Proposed Action) – Under this alternative, the Department approves the request to install a pipeline and tank on State Land located at NWSW, NESW, SENW, SWNE, NWNW, NENE Sec. 36, T20N R12E.

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 soil types in the planned project area are rated as somewhat to very limited for shallow excavations, due to instability when they are trenched to depths of 5 to 6 feet. Installation of the pipeline utilizing a trenchless method rather than excavating will help mitigate potential impacts related to this soil characteristic.

Soils in the planned project area have a wide range of ratings when it comes to Road and Trail Erosion Hazard. The majority though are rated as severe mostly due to slope. The planned pipeline route will follow an existing two track road where soil erosion is already occurring. The proposed pipeline is not expected to cause significant amounts of additional erosion. The proponent will be responsible for trying to mitigate potential erosion while installing this pipeline.

The most limiting soil characteristic in the project area is rutting hazard. Soils are rated as severe for rutting hazards, when exposed to equipment operation. To mitigate this hazard, operations will be restricted to dry periods when the soil is most stable.

No significant cumulative impacts to geology or soil quality, stability, and moisture are anticipated. See appendix A for additional soil information.

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.

Existing water rights have been reviewed and there is no expansion to the water right. Use is within the allowable range of the current water right. No significant impacts to local or regional water resources are anticipated. Project will improve livestock water distribution and quantity.

No significant impacts to local or regional 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.

No significant impacts 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.

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.

The proponent is responsible for management of any invasive plants that show up because of the disturbance to the ground.

No rare plants or cover types are present. No significant impacts to vegetation are anticipated.

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 Montana National Heritage Program Environmental Summary for the project area predicts two Species of Concern status could be present in the area. The first is the Northern Redbelly Dace found in Arrow Creek. The proposed project is not going to cross Arrow Creek and there are no potential water quality impacts anticipated from this project. The Greater Sage-Grouse is the other SOC that is potentially in the project area. With construction planned outside of the lekking and nesting season there are no significant anticipated impacts to Sage-Grouse.

See Appendix B for additional Species of Concern data and predicted occurrence.

No significant impacts to terrestrial, avian, or aquatic habitats 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.

No significant impacts to unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources are anticipated, though temporary displacement of local wildlife may occur during the project.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

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 revealed that no cultural or paleontological resources have been identified in the APE. 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.

No significant effects on historical, archaeological, or paleontological resources are 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.

No significant impacts on the aesthetics of the area are anticipated.

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.

This project will improve water reliability and distribution across the landscape. This will further improve the grazing utilization across this section of School Trust Land.

No limited environmental resources will be significantly impacted because of this project. This project will also not add any significant cumulative demands on 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.

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.

The only anticipated impact to human health and safety is during construction of this project. In this period there will be an increased risk due to use of heavy machinery. It is the responsibility of the proponent to mitigate potential risk associated with the installation of the pipeline.

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 the 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 or eliminate any jobs, so no significant 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 significant increases in traffic, school attendance, or need for fire and police protection if this project is approved.

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 significant direct or cumulative effects on access to or quality of recreation and wilderness activities because of this project.

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.

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 significantly 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 significant impact on any culturally 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.

The proposed project will not have any significant cumulative economic or social effect.

V. FINDING**25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:**

Alternative B (the Proposed Action) – Under this alternative, the Department does grant approves Todd Smith's request for the proposed pipeline and stock tank on State Land located at NWSW, NESW, SENW, SWNE, NWNW, NENE Sec. 36, T20N R12E as it poses limited environmental impacts and will improve the overall functionality of the grazing land.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

I have evaluated the potential environment effects and have determined no significant impact to the environment because of this project.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:☐

EIS

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More Detailed EA

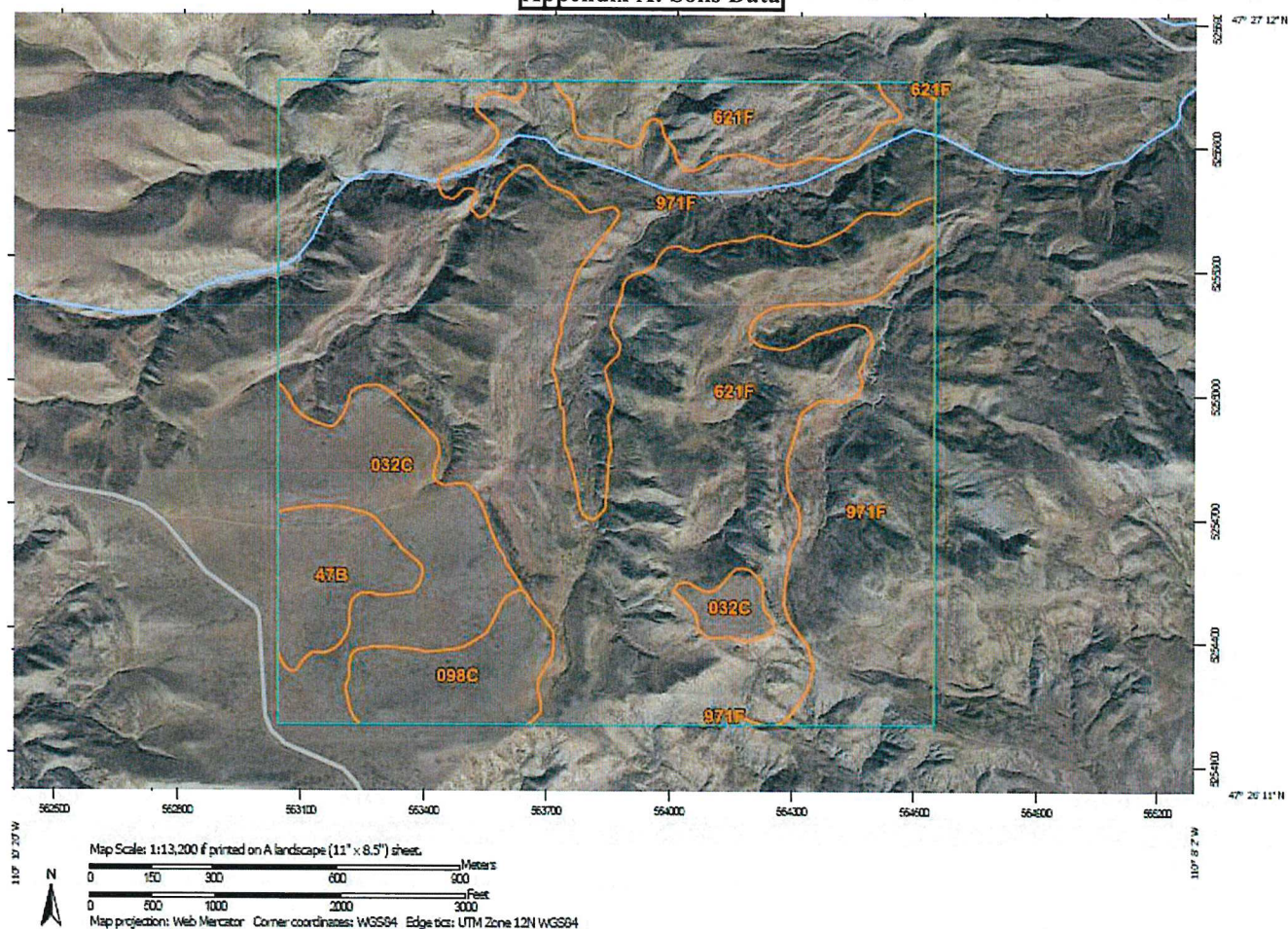
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No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Cole Stumpf
	Title: Land Use Specialist
Signature:	Date:

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Josh Stoychhoff
	Title: Unit Manager, Northeastern Land Office
Signature:	Date: 7/15/26

Appendix A: Soils Data



Natural Resources
Conservation Service

Web Soil Survey
National Cooperative Soil Survey

7/15/2026
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Shallow Excavation Hazard

Table — Shallow Excavations — Summary by Rating Value			
Summary by Rating Value			
Summary by Rating Value			
Rating	Acres in AOI	Percent of AOI	
Very limited	510.5	82.2%	
Somewhat limited	110.5	17.8%	
Totals for Area of Interest	621.0	100.0%	
Description — Shallow Excavations			
ENG - Engineering			
Shallow excavations are trenches or holes dug to a maximum depth of 5 or 6 feet for graves, utility lines, open ditches, or other purposes. The ratings are based on the soil properties that influence the ease of digging and the resistance to sloughing. Depth to bedrock or a cemented pan, hardness of bedrock or a cemented pan, the amount of large stones, and dense layers influence the ease of digging, filling, and compacting. Depth to the seasonal high water table, flooding, and ponding may restrict the period when excavations can be made. Slope influences the ease of using machinery. Soil texture, depth to the water table, and linear extensibility (shrink-swell potential) influence the resistance to sloughing.			
The ratings are both verbal and numerical. Rating class terms indicate the extent to which the soils are limited by all of the soil features that affect the specified use. "Not limited" indicates that the soil has features that are very favorable for the specified use. Good performance and very low maintenance can be expected. "Somewhat limited" indicates that the soil has features that are moderately favorable for the specified use. The limitations can be overcome or minimized by special planning, design, or installation. Fair performance and moderate maintenance can be expected. "Very limited" indicates that the soil has one or more features that are unfavorable for the specified use. The limitations generally cannot be overcome without major soil reclamation, special design, or expensive installation procedures. Poor performance and high maintenance can be expected.			
Numerical ratings indicate the severity of individual limitations. The ratings are shown as decimal fractions ranging from 0.01 to 1.00. They indicate gradations between the point at which a soil feature has the greatest negative impact on the use (1.00) and the point at which the soil feature is not a limitation (0.00).			
The map unit components listed for each map unit in the accompanying Summary by Map Unit table in Web Soil Survey or the Aggregation Report in Soil Data Viewer are determined by the aggregation method chosen. An aggregated rating class is shown for each map unit. The components listed for each map unit are only those that have the same rating class as listed for the map unit. The percent composition of each component in a particular map unit is presented to help the user better understand the percentage of each map unit that has the rating presented.			
Other components with different ratings may be present in each map unit. The ratings for all components, regardless of the map unit aggregated rating, can be viewed by generating the equivalent report from the Soil Reports tab in Web Soil Survey or from the Soil Data Mart site. Onsite investigation may be needed to validate these interpretations and to confirm the identity of the soil on a given site.			

Soil Erosion Potential

Table — Erosion Hazard (Road, Trail) — Summary by Rating Value				
Summary by Rating Value				
	Rating	Acres in AOI	Percent of AOI	
Erosion hazard severe		510.5	82.2%	
Erosion hazard moderate		88.5	14.2%	
Erosion hazard slight		22.0	3.5%	
Totals for Area of Interest		621.0	100.0%	
Description — Erosion Hazard (Road, Trail)				
FOR - Forestry				
The ratings in this interpretation indicate the hazard of soil loss from unsurfaced roads and trails. The ratings are based on soil erosion factor K, slope, and content of rock fragments.				
The ratings are both verbal and numerical. The hazard is described as "slight", "moderate", "severe", or "very severe". A rating of "slight" indicates that little or no erosion is likely; "moderate" indicates that some erosion is likely, that the roads or trails may require occasional maintenance, and that simple erosion-control measures are needed; and "severe" indicates that significant erosion is expected, that the roads or trails require frequent maintenance, and that costly erosion-control measures are needed. Erosion hazard "very severe" means that the combination of slope and soil erodibility render the site impractical for equipment use due to extreme erosion.				
Numerical ratings indicate the severity of individual limitations. The ratings are shown as decimal fractions ranging from 0.01 to 1.00. They indicate gradations between the point at which a soil feature has the greatest negative impact on the specified aspect of forestland management (1.00) and the point at which the soil feature is not a limitation (0.00).				
The map unit components listed for each map unit in the accompanying Summary by Map Unit table in Web Soil Survey or the Aggregation Report in Soil Data Viewer are determined by the aggregation method chosen. An aggregated rating class is shown for each map unit. The components listed for each map unit are only those that have the same rating class as listed for the map unit. The percent composition of each component in a particular map unit is presented to help the user better understand the percentage of each map unit that has the rating presented.				
Other components with different ratings may be present in each map unit. The ratings for all components, regardless of the map unit aggregated rating, can be viewed by generating the equivalent report from the Soil Reports tab in Web Soil Survey or from the Soil Data Mart site. Onsite investigation may be needed to validate these interpretations and to confirm the identity of the soil on a given site.				

Soil Rutting Hazard

Tables — Soil Rutting Hazard — Summary By Map Unit					
Summary by Map Unit — Chouteau County Area, Montana (MT615)					
Summary by Map Unit — Chouteau County Area, Montana (MT615)					
Map unit symbol	Map unit name	Rating	Component name (percent)	Rating reasons (numeric values)	Acres in AOI Percent of AOI
Totals for Area of Interest					621.0 100.0%
Table — Soil Rutting Hazard — Summary by Rating Value					
Summary by Rating Value					
	Rating	Acres in AOI	Percent of AOI		
Severe		621.0	100.0%		
Totals for Area of Interest		621.0	100.0%		
Description — Soil Rutting Hazard					
FOR - Forestry					
The ratings in this interpretation indicate the hazard of surface rut formation through the operation of forestland equipment. Soil displacement and puddling (soil deformation and compaction) may occur simultaneously with rutting.					
Ratings are based on depth to a water table, rock fragments on or below the surface, the Unified classification of the soil, depth to a restrictive layer, and slope. The hazard is described as slight, moderate, or severe. A rating of "slight" indicates that the soil is subject to little or no rutting. "Moderate" indicates that rutting is likely. "Severe" indicates that ruts form readily.					
Numerical ratings indicate the severity of individual limitations. The ratings are shown as decimal fractions ranging from 0.01 to 1.00. They indicate gradations between the point at which a soil feature has the greatest negative impact on the specified aspect of forestland management (1.00) and the point at which the soil feature is not a limitation (0.00).					
The map unit components listed for each map unit in the accompanying Summary by Map Unit table in Web Soil Survey or the Aggregation Report in Soil Data Viewer are determined by the aggregation method chosen. An aggregated rating class is shown for each map unit. The components listed for each map unit are only those that have the same rating class as listed for the map unit. The percent composition of each component in a particular map unit is presented to help the user better understand the percentage of each map unit that has the rating presented.					
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Appendix B: Species of Concern Report

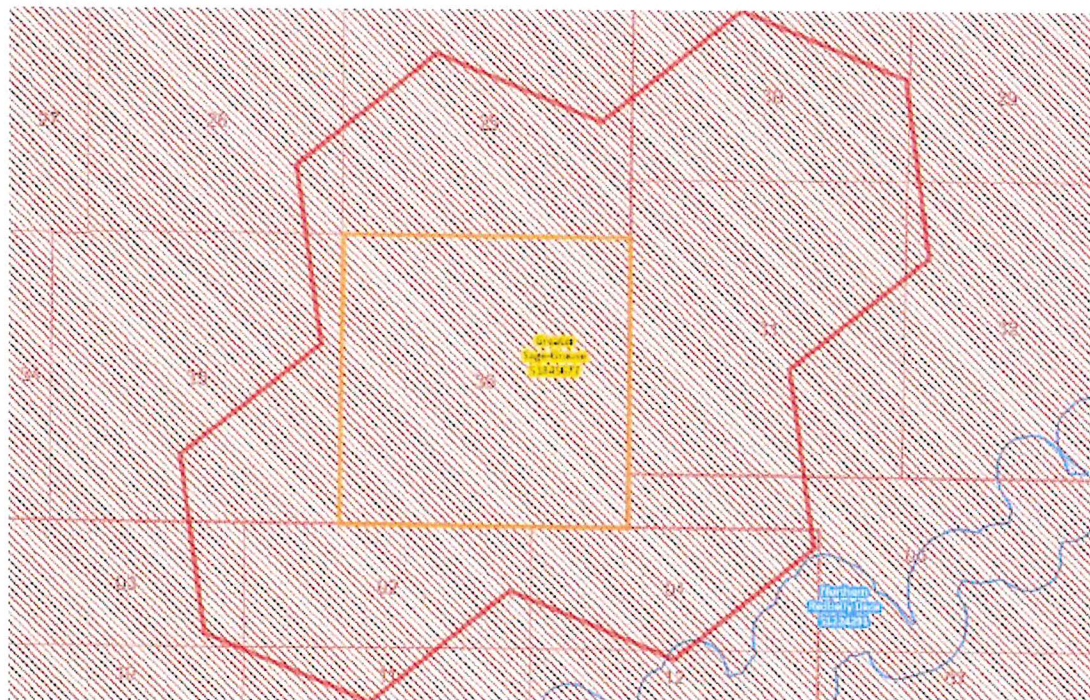
Native Species

 Suitable (introduced range)
  Non-native
  Historical
  1000m
10,000m

Summarized by: (Custom Area of Interest)

Filtered by:

Native Species reports are filtered for Species with MT Status = Species of Concern, Special Status, Important Animal Habitat, Species of Potential Concern



Species Occurrences

Spec	Rpts	# SO	# Obs	Predicted	Model	Range
F - Northern Redbelly Dace (<i>Chrosomus eos</i>)	soc	1				
View in Field Guide View Predicted Models View Range Maps Species of Concern - Native Species Global: G5 State: S2 FWP SWAP: SGCN						
Delineation Criteria: Stream reaches and standing water bodies where the species presence has been confirmed through direct capture or where they are believed to be present based on the professional judgement of a fisheries biologist due to confirmed presence in adjacent areas. In order to reflect the importance of adjacent terrestrial habitats to survival, stream reaches are buffered 100 meters, standing water bodies greater than 1 acre are buffered 50 meters, and standing water bodies less than 1 acre are buffered 30 meters into the terrestrial habitat based on PACFISH/INPISH Riparian Conservation Area standards. (Last Updated: Feb 18, 2026)						
Predicted Models: 25% Suitable (native range) (deductive)						
B - Greater Sage-Grouse (<i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i>)	soc	11				
View in Field Guide View Predicted Models View Range Maps USFS: Sensitive - Known in Forests (BD)						
Species of Concern - Native Species Global: G3 State: S2 Species of Conservation Concern in Forests (CG) BLM: SENSITIVE FWP SWAP: SGCN PIF: 1						
Delineation Criteria: Confirmed breeding area based on the presence of a nest, chicks, juveniles, or adults on a lek. Point observations are mapped in the center of a one-square mile hexagon to protect the exact locations of leks. The outer edges of this hexagon are then buffered by a distance of 6,400 meters in order to encompass a body of research indicating that females typically nest within this distance of a lek and that lek numbers are negatively impacted by fossil fuel drilling activities within this distance of a lek. If the locational uncertainty associated with the observation is greater than 5,000 meters, the observation is not valid for creation of a species occurrence. All of the one-square mile hexagons intersecting this buffered area are presented as the Species Occurrence record. (Last Updated: Jul 08, 2026)						
Predicted Models: 50% Moderate (inductive), 50% Low (inductive)						

