

## CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

<b>Project Name:</b>	Bighorn Backcountry Ranch RCPP
<b>Proposed Implementation Date:</b>	May- August 2026
<b>Proponent:</b>	Hauer & Hennen Land and Cattle- Scott Hauer
<b>Location:</b>	NE4- Sec. 26, T23N R20E
<b>County:</b>	Fergus
<b>Trust:</b>	Common Schools

### I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Scott is working on a large-scale stock water project in conjunction with World Wildlife Fund. For this project, Scott is planning on teeing into an existing pipeline at the NE4- Sec. 26, T23N R20E. From there a spur line will run south where a winter tank will be installed on private land. The planned route runs 1320 feet on school trust land. The objectives of this project are to provide reliable water for winter grazing and spread-out water sources to improve grazing utilization.

### 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: Scott Hauer  
Surface Lessees: Hauer & Hennen Land and Cattle  
Other: Patrick Rennie (DNRC Archaeologist), Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team (MSGOT)

#### 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 grant the LUL for the requested pipeline route.

**Alternative B (the Proposed Action)** – Under this alternative, the Department grants Hauer & Hennen Land and Cattle, a Land Use License for the proposed actions of crossing School Trust Land with a stock water pipeline.

### 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 very limited for shallow excavations, due to instability when they are trenched to depths of 5 to 6 feet. Installation of this pipeline may prove to be challenging given this characteristic.

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.

All soils in the project area are rated as slight to moderate for erosion hazard. The planned pipeline route is across native rangeland with an established plant community. This community will help provide resilience to erosion and be able to revegetate after the disturbance. In areas with severe disturbance, reseeding may be necessary to help establish a plant community which will reduce erosion potential.

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

**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.*

No significant impacts to local or regional water resources are anticipated. Project will improve livestock water distribution and quantity

**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.*

Project location is within Sage Grouse core habitat. Additionally, there are two identified sage grouse leks within two miles of the planned route. Per the Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team, they have outlined additional guidelines to help limit possible disturbance to sage grouse in the attached letter.

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

Because of a lack of cultural or paleontologic resources, proposed stock water development activities are expected to 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.

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.*

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 the construction phase 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 improve water reliability and distribution across the landscape. This will further improve the grazing utilization on both school trust and private land.

**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 grants Hauer & Hennen Land and Cattle, a Land Use License for the proposed actions of crossing School Trust Land located at NE4- Sec. 26, T23N R20E with a stock water pipeline.

**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.

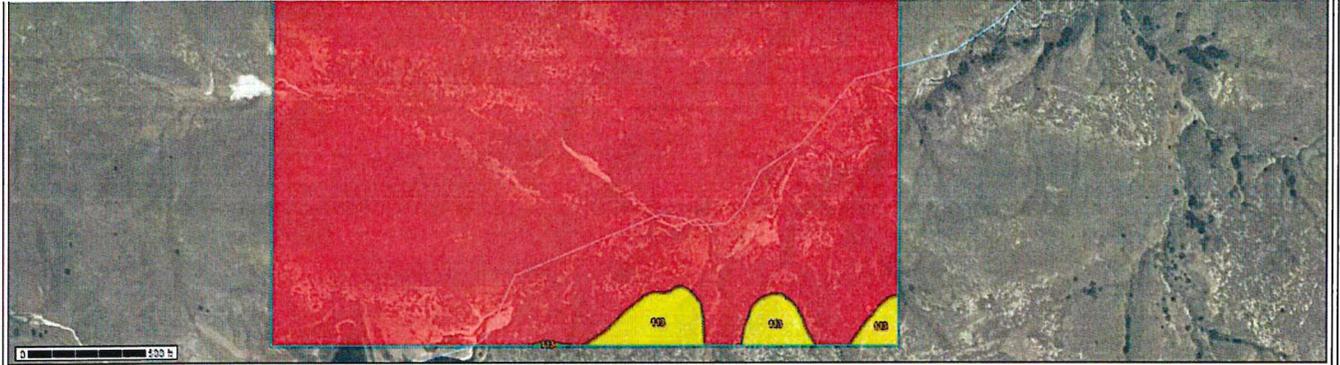
**27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:**

EIS       More Detailed EA       No Further Analysis

<b>EA Checklist Prepared By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Cole Stumpf <b>Title:</b> Land Use Specialist
<b>Signature:</b>	<i>Cole T. Stumpf</i> <b>Date:</b> 17 Mar. 2026

<b>EA Checklist Approved By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Josh Stoychoff <b>Title:</b> Unit Manager, Northeastern Land Office
<b>Signature:</b>	<i>Josh Stoychoff</i> <b>Date:</b> 3/16/26

## Appendix A: Soil Data



Warning: Soil Ratings Map may not be valid at this scale.

### Tables - Shallow Excavations - Summary By Map Unit

#### Table - Shallow Excavations - Summary by Rating Value

Summary by Rating Value			
Summary by Rating Value	Rating	Acres in AOI	Percent of AOI
Very limited		175.0	98.2%
Somewhat limited		3.2	1.8%
<b>Totals for Area of Interest</b>		<b>178.2</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

#### 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).

Warning: Soil Ratings Map may not be valid at this scale.

### Tables - Soil Rutting Hazard - Summary By Map Unit

Summary by Map Unit - Fergus County, Montana (MT027)							
Summary by Map Unit - Fergus County, Montana (MT027)	Map unit symbol	Map unit name	Rating	Component name (percent)	Rating reasons (numeric values)	Acres in AOI	Percent of AOI
<b>Totals for Area of Interest</b>						<b>178.2</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

#### Table - Soil Rutting Hazard - Summary by Rating Value

Summary by Rating Value			
Summary by Rating Value	Rating	Acres in AOI	Percent of AOI
Severe		178.2	100.0%
<b>Totals for Area of Interest</b>		<b>178.2</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

#### 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.

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.

#### Rating Options - Soil Rutting Hazard

**Aggregation Method:** Dominant Condition  
**Component Percent Cutoff:** None Specified  
**Tie-break Rule:** Higher

Warning: Soil Ratings Map may not be valid at this scale.

Tables - Erosion Hazard (Off-Road, Off-Trail) - Summary By Map Unit

Summary by Map Unit - Fergus County, Montana (MT027)

Summary by Map Unit - Fergus County, Montana (MT027)

Map unit symbol	Map unit name	Rating	Component name (percent)	Rating reasons (numeric values)	Acres in AOI	Percent of AOI
<b>Totals for Area of Interest</b>					<b>178.2</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table - Erosion Hazard (Off-Road, Off-Trail) - Summary by Rating Value

Summary by Rating Value

Rating	Acres in AOI	Percent of AOI
Slight	177.9	99.8%
Moderate	0.3	0.2%
<b>Totals for Area of Interest</b>	<b>178.2</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Description - Erosion Hazard (Off-Road, Off-Trail)**

The ratings in this interpretation indicate the hazard of soil loss from off-road and off-trail areas after disturbance activities that expose the soil surface. The ratings are based on slope, soil erosion factor K, and an index of rainfall erosivity (R). The soil loss is caused by sheet or rill erosion in off-road or off-trail areas where 50 to 75 percent of the surface has been exposed by logging, grazing, mining, or other kinds of disturbance.

The ratings are both verbal and numerical. The hazard is described as "slight," "moderate," "severe," or "very severe." A rating of "slight" indicates that erosion is unlikely under ordinary climatic conditions; "moderate" indicates that some erosion is likely and that erosion-control measures may be needed; "severe" indicates that erosion is very likely and that erosion-control measures, including revegetation of bare areas, are advised; and "very severe" indicates that significant erosion is expected, loss of soil productivity and off-site damage are likely, and erosion-control measures are costly and generally impractical.

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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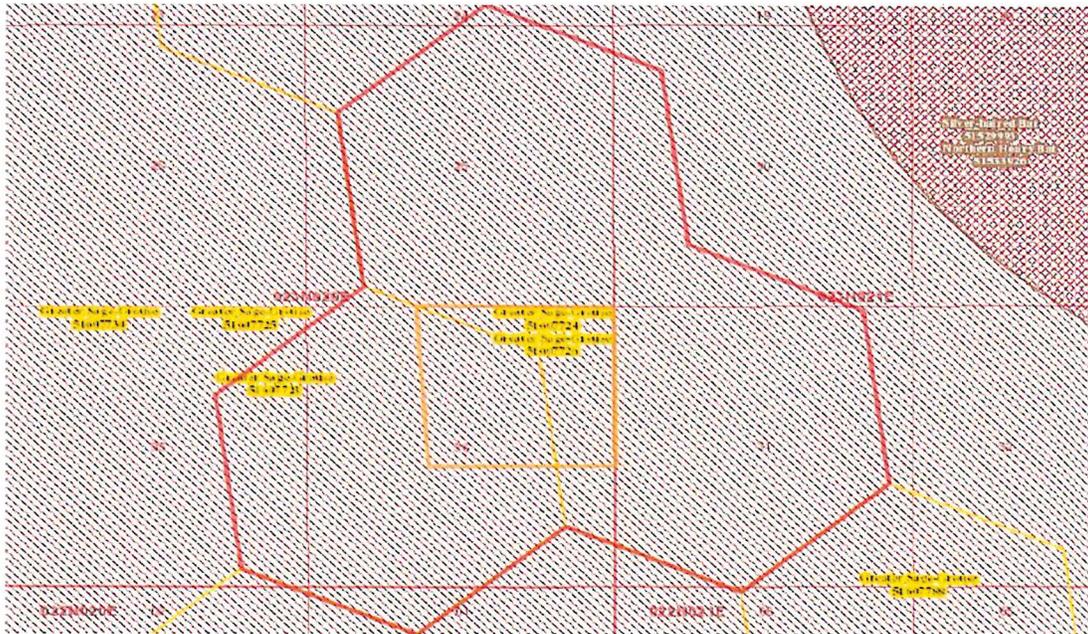
## Appendix B: Species of Concern

### Native Species

Summarized by: **SOC Report (Custom Area of Interest)**

Filtered by:

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



### Species Occurrences

**B - Greater Sage-Grouse (Centrocercus urophasianus) SOC**

USFWS Sect	# SO	# Obs	Predicted Model	Range
	5	36		

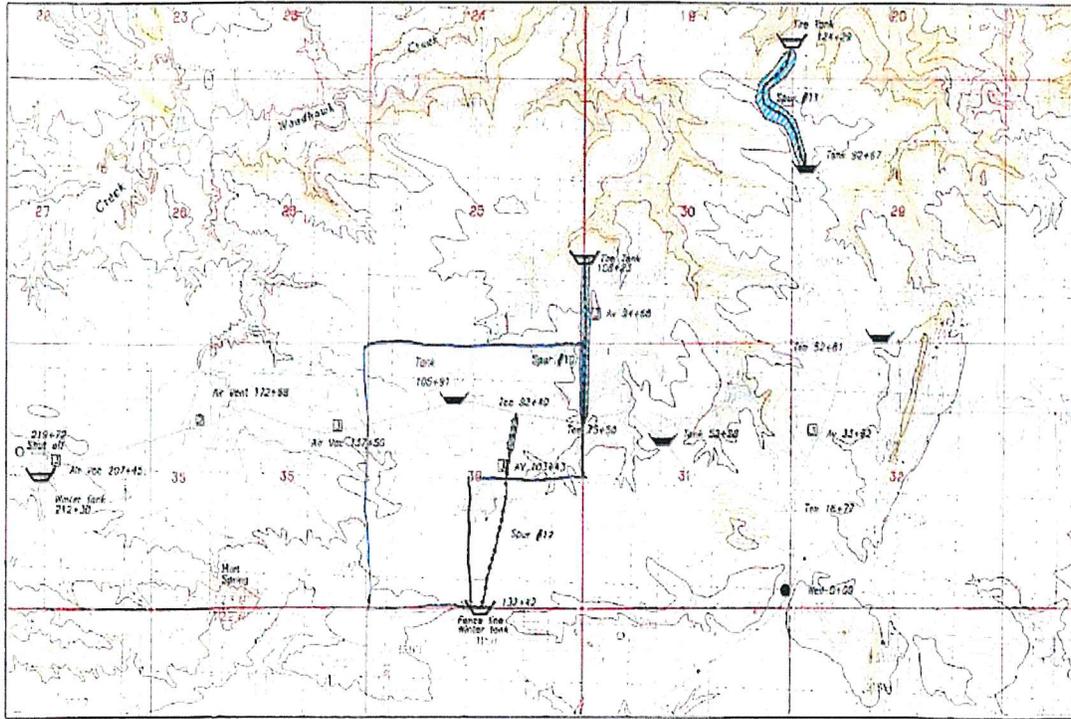
[View in Field Guide](#) [View Predicted Models](#) [View Range Maps](#)

USFS: Sensitive - Known in Forests (BD) Global: G3 State: S2 Species of Conservation Concern in Forests (CG) BLM: SENSITIVE FWP SWAP: SGCN FIF: 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: Feb 10, 2026)

**Predicted Models:** 100% Moderate (Inductive)

## Appendix C: Maps



- Legend
-  Planned Rubber Tee and meter fiberglass kinks
  -  Existing Storage Tanks
  -  Continuous acting Air Valve
  -  Air vent Valve
  -  Smaller continuous acting valve
  -  Existing Fiberglass buried Storage Tank
  -  4-4 Placed 8" HDPE 200 cu"
  -  Existing pipeline valve sizes and type
  -  Existing Wet Pit or Cistern with Booster pumps
  -  Possible Adverse Soil (Bedrock at about 2 feet)

Ranch Original Pipeline layout

T 23 N R 20 E sec. 36 - Ag 4382