

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND RECLASSIFICATION CAPABILITY INVENTORY

Project Name: Buffalo Jump Rd Commercial Lease	Proposed Implementation Date: 07/1/2026
Proponent: Bozeman Unit DNRC Description of Project: The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) Forestry & Trust Land Management Division (FTLD), Bozeman Unit is proposing the conversion of 20.0 acres of State land described as a portion of the W2SW4 of Section 2, Township 1 North, Range 2 East from Classified "Grazing" to "Other" for the purpose of commercial leasing for development. The lands involved in the proposed action are held by the State of Montana for the Support of the Montana Tech Trust. The Board of Land Commissioners (Land Board) and the DNRC are required by law to administer these State Trust Lands to produce the largest measure of reasonable and legitimate return over the long run for these institutions [1972 Montana Constitution, Article X, Section 11; Montana Code Annotated (MCA) 77-1-202]. This land is currently classified as Grazing land and is leased by Geoffrey Martel. This land is not within a municipal or other local government zoning district. Reclassifying this land from Grazing production to "Other" would allow the use of a commercial lease for management and increased income generation of this land.	
Type of Reclassification: FROM: ☒ Grazing Timber Ag Other TO: Grazing Timber Ag ☒ Other ACRES: 20.0 Acres TRUST(s): Montana Tech	
Location: A portion of W2SW4 of Section 2, T1N, R2E	County: Gallatin

I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT	
1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED: Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.	11/19/2004 –DNRC Real Estate Management plan was finalized, and the plan considered some State Trust Lands may be suitable for commercial development. 02/24/2024 – Letter of Interest/Intent for commercial utility development. 12/10/2024 – Request for Proposals released by DNRC Real Estate Management Bureau, published Bozeman Daily Chronicle. 03/2025 –Proposal received for commercial development. 06/27/25 - Scoping notice sent to adjacent landowners requesting comments on the proposed commercial development and reclassification of the land. The scoping

	notice was also posted on the DNRC Public Notices website at https://dnrc.mt.gov/Environmental-Docs/ . One comment was received during the scoping process from the adjacent property owner to the south, concerned with an increase in noise, wildfire risk, and weed management. These concerns are addressed in the appropriate sections below.
2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:	The property is outside any municipal or county zoning maps or plans.
3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:	Alternative A – Reclassify the land to “Other” and pursue development. Alternative B – Do not Reclassify the land to “Other”. The land would remain as classified Grazing land.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS N = Not Present or No Significant Impact will occur. Y = Impacts may occur (explain below) LAND CAPABILITY CHARACTERISTICS
4. GEOLOGY, SOILS AND MINERALS: Are fragile, compactible or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations? Are there any mineral characteristics and how would reclassification impact development? If any lands are proposed for breaking, what are the soil types & capability classes, texture, “T” factor, Wind Erodibility Group (WEG), and slopes? What crops will be grown and what are their potential yields? Will there be any mitigation measures implemented to address identified soil limitations?	[N] The USDA soil survey for Gallatin County indicates the soils on this 20.0-acre site are classified as Chinook fine sandy loam, 0 to 8 % slopes. Alternative A – The reclassification would illicit no direct change. It would be expected to continue as a Grazing Lease until the proposal for development is finalized. Alternative B - The land would remain classified as Grazing, but development or other proposals to increase revenue to the Trust would still be sought and considered to meet the DNRC’s trust obligations.
5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality?	[N] There are no groundwater or surface water resources present. Alternative A – The reclassification and development activities would not negatively impact existing ground water or surface water resources. Alternative B – The land would remain classified Grazing, but development or other proposals to increase revenue to the Trust would still be sought and considered

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

	to meet the DNRC's trust obligations.
6. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?	[Y] The parcel is located just south of I-90 along Buffalo Jump Road in Logan, MT. Agricultural, grazing, and commercial activities are other uses adjacent to this parcel. The parcel is currently Grazing land, and during agricultural management on adjacent parcels there can be an increase in particulate associated with harvest and planting. Alternative A – The reclassification will illicit no long-term change in air quality. Any future development activities may have short term effects due to construction activities. No measurable increases in traffic emissions are anticipated. Alternative B – The land would remain classified Grazing, but development or other proposals to increase revenue to the Trust would still be sought and considered to meet the DNRC's trust obligations.
7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present? <i>What is the existing vegetation?</i>	[Y] Vegetative ground cover is predominantly native and introduced grasses with large patches of invasive and noxious weeds. There are no documented rare plants on the site. Weeds are controlled by the lessee. Alternative A – The reclassification would illicit no direct change to the vegetation. It would be expected to continue as a Grazing Lease until the proposal for development is finalized. If the proposed project moves forward, existing vegetation would be removed during construction but reseeded where possible to minimize impact. Weed management within the 20-acre parcel would be the responsibility of the proponent. Alternative B - The land would remain classified Grazing, but development or other proposals to increase revenue to the Trust would still be sought and considered to meet the DNRC's trust obligations.
8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish? <i>What wildlife resources use or occupy the area?</i>	[N] Current seasonal grazing of the land provides habitat for fauna such as insects, small animals (which are prey for raptors, fox, and coyote), deer, elk and field birds. Alternative A – The reclassification would illicit no direct change. It would be expected to continue as a Grazing Lease until the proposal for development is finalized. Alternative B - The land would remain classified as Grazing, but development or other proposals to increase revenue to the Trust would still be sought and considered to meet the DNRC's trust obligations.

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9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Sensitive Species or Species of special concern?

[N] The Montana Natural Heritage Program database lists seven species of concern within the area of interest. This list includes two species of plants: annual Scarlet Paintbrush and annual Muhly; and five bird species: long-billed curlew, bald eagle, veery, great blue heron, and golden eagle. The plant species have not been identified in the proposed project location, and it is unlikely Alternative A or B would have any impact on those species given the existing use of the tract for grazing.

Grizzly bear and lynx are generally identified for this area of Montana. This tract does exhibit some ideal historical habitat for Grizzly Bear. Due to the nature of the existing disturbance adjacent to the proposed location (Buffalo Jump Road, I-90, agriculture and localized recreational target shooting), it is unlikely the selection of Alternative A would have any impact on Grizzly Bears. This particular tract is not identified as ideal habitat for Lynx and development (Alternative A) would not be expected to have an impact on Lynx populations.

Alternative A - The reclassification would illicit no direct change. The tract is expected to continue as a Grazing Lease until the proposal is finalized. If the parcel were developed according to the proposal, disturbance would be expected to be minimal, due to the relatively small size of the project parcel and the current proximity to Buffalo Jump Road.

Alternative B – The land would remain classified Grazing, but development or other proposals to increase revenue to the Trust would still be sought and considered to meet the DNRC's trust obligations.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?

[N] The DNRC staff archaeologist inventoried much of the W1/2 of section 2, T1N R2E to Class III standards. Two cultural resource sites were documented. One (24GA2375) is well outside the area of potential effect for the proposed gas compressor station. It consists of two cairns. The other site (24GA2374) consists of eight cairns and a tipi ring-size stone circle that might be within the east margin of the compressor station footprint.

If site 24GA2374 can be avoided with project related ground disturbances, steel T-posts should be placed every 10 m around the perimeter of the site for a visible avoidance boundary. Placement of the T-posts should occur in advance of compressor station construction work.

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If site 24GA2374 cannot be avoided and the stone features will be disturbed/destroyed with compressor station construction work, then complete excavation and mapping of the stone features can be accomplished by the DNRC over approximately 4 days. While excavation and mapping work can be conducted in-house, the DNRC requests CENEX to cover the cost of specialized analysis that the DNRC staff archaeologist cannot accomplish. These include two thermoluminescence dates (\$5000), one radiocarbon date (\$800), sourcing of obsidian or fine-grained volcanic artifacts (\$45 per sample x 5 samples = \$225), and a paleoethnobotanical study on hearth fill contents if a hearth is exposed during excavation. Total costs of specialized analysis would not exceed \$9,025.

11. AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light? Are there notable aesthetic features on the tract?

[Y] The 20.0-acre site, and the surrounding parcel vary from relatively flat to rolling hills and are currently used for non-irrigated pastureland. There is irrigated cropland to the west, and low-density commercial development along the north boundary of the surrounding parcel, and I-90 approximately three-quarters of a mile north of the surrounding parcel boundary. Significant amounts of recreational target shooting have taken place on and around the 20.0-acre parcel identified for development.

Alternative A – The reclassification would illicit no direct change to the aesthetics. It would be expected to continue as a Grazing Lease until the proposal for development is finalized. If development were to occur, the aesthetics would be directly impacted within the 20-acre parcel. The remainder of the parcel would not be impacted given its adjacency to other commercial industrial uses of land. In response to the scoping comment concerning noise, DNRC requested information from the Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality and Gallatin County Zoning/Planning for rules and regulations associated with the proposed use. MT DEQ does not have rules related to noise pollution outside of residential areas. The location of the proposed project is outside any local, regional or state zoning/planning area and therefore no restrictions are in place regarding noise levels.

Alternative B – The land would remain classified Grazing, but development or other proposals to increase revenue to the Trust would still be sought and considered.

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	to meet the DNRC's trust obligations.
12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?	[N] The parcel currently requires few resources. If the proposed development were to occur, a groundwater well and associated septic system would be established, and electrical and natural gas utilities would be added to the site. These resources are not limited in the project area. Alternative A – The reclassification would illicit no direct change. It would be expected to continue as a Grazing Lease. Development will require adding basic utilities but not to exceed or impact local demand. Alternative B – The land would remain classified Grazing, but development or other proposals to increase revenue to the Trust would still be sought and considered to meet the DNRC's trust obligations.
13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?	[Y] Final Real Estate Management Plan finalized in 2004. Alternative A – The reclassification would illicit no direct change. It would be expected to continue as a Grazing Lease until the proposal for development is finalized. The Final Real Estate Management plan considered some State Trust Lands may be suitable for commercial development. Alternative B – The land would remain classified Grazing, but development or other proposals to increase revenue to the Trust would still be sought and considered to meet the DNRC's trust obligations.

III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS & CAPABILITY CHARACTERISTICS
14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?	[N] The proposed parcel is adjacent to Buffalo Jump Road which is used for agricultural, industrial, recreational and residential traffic. Alternative A – The reclassification would illicit no direct change. It would be expected to continue as a Grazing Lease until the proposal for development is finalized. Development of the parcel would increase vehicle traffic for a short period of time. There would be no direct impacts to the health and safety of the human population. Alternative B – The land would remain classified Grazing, but development or other proposals to increase revenue to the Trust would still be sought and considered

	Alternative B – The land would remain classified Grazing, but development or other proposals to increase revenue to the Trust would still be sought and considered to meet the DNRC’s trust obligations.
22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	[N] The current grazing land is rural and minimally used by the general public and native communities. Neither alternative would affect social conditions.
23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	[N] The tract is currently a grazing tract. Surrounding land use is agricultural and commercial industrial. Alternative A – The reclassification would illicit no direct change. The parcel is expected to continue as a Grazing Lease until the proposal is finalized. If the parcel were developed according to the proposal, there would be no unique qualities of land impacted. Alternative B – The land would remain classified Grazing, but development or other proposals to increase revenue to the Trust would still be sought and considered to meet the DNRC’s trust obligations.
24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:	[Y] The 20-acre site is part of a larger grazing tract. The most recent grazing lease invoice was \$2,829.00. Alternative A – The reclassification would illicit no direct change. The parcel is expected to continue as a Grazing Lease until the proposal is finalized. If the parcel were developed according to the proposal, the remainder of the tract would continue to receive approximately \$2,800.00 annually. The proposal accepted by DNRC would generate an initial fee of \$20,000.00 annually, with a 2% annual escalator. The trust land is currently tax exempt and generates no tax revenue for local taxing jurisdictions. Under a commercial lease, the previously tax-exempt land would be taxable under beneficial use, and the privately-owned improvements would also be taxable, generating tax revenue for local jurisdictions. Alternative B – The land would remain classified Grazing, but development or other proposals to increase revenue to the Trust would still be sought and considered to meet the DNRC’s trust obligations, producing approximately \$2800.00 per year and returning no tax revenue to the local jurisdictions.

Document Prepared By: Kara Huyser, Bozeman Unit Manager & Andy Burgoyne, CLO Trust Land Program Manager
Date 11/18/2025

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative A – Reclassify the land to other, pursue future commercial development.

27. Need for Further Environmental Analysis:

☐ EIS ☐ More Detailed EA ☒ No Further Analysis

Hoyt Richards
Name

CLO Area Manager
Title

Hoyt Richards
Signature

11/18/2025
Date

V. RECLASSIFICATION RECOMMENDATION AND APPROVAL

28. Land Office Recommendation, including Highest and Best Use:

The Central Land Office recommends reclassification from Grazing to "Other". The lands involved in the proposed action are held by the State of Montana for the Support of the Montana Tech. The Board of Land Commissioners (Land Board) and the DNRC are required by law to administer these State Trust Lands to produce the largest measure of reasonable and legitimate return over the long run for these institutions [1972 Montana Constitution, Article X, Section 11; Montana Code Annotated (MCA) 77-1-202].

These lands have been considered for development as the highest and best use as directed by the 2004 Final DNRC Real Estate Management Plan. This consideration was reaffirmed by a proposed commercial lease fee at \$20,000.00 annually, much greater than the capacity of the land to generate revenue through a grazing lease.

While we understand the desire to maintain grazing land in the Gallatin Valley, this parcel is small and already bounded by existing agricultural and grazing use plus adjacent rural commercial industrial lands. Development may continue to the north, but a conservation easement exists on private lands directly to the west and the remainder of the tract will continue in grazing. In the short term, this reclassification will not eliminate the grazing currently surrounding the land.

29. Recommendation by AG Bureau Chief:

Recommend approval

Reasons for Recommendation:

Kara Motulko
AG Bureau Chief Signature

11/18/25
Date

Recommendation by REMB Bureau Chief:

reclassification to "Other"

Reasons for Recommendation:


REMB Bureau Chief Signature

11-18-25

Date

30. Final Decision on Reclassification by Trust Land Management Division Administrator:

☒ Approve

☐ Deny


Signature

11-18-2025

Date