

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Aggregate Testing – Riverside Contracting - Whitehall

Proposed

Implementation Date: April – May 2026

Proponent: Riverside Contracting, Inc.

Location: Township 1N, Range 5W, Sections 12 & 24

County: Jefferson County, Montana

Trust: MSU 2nd Grant (Montana State University)

Introduction: In January of 2025, the Minerals Management Bureau of the Forestry and Trust Lands Division of the Montana DNRC, completed a programmatic environmental analysis for aggregate testing. The programmatic environmental analysis goes into further detail and evaluates a wider scope of resources than this checklist environmental assessment. This checklist environmental assessment should be read and understood in conjunction with the programmatic environmental analysis. The programmatic environmental assessment can be found on the Departments website at: <https://dnrc.mt.gov/TrustLand/subsurface-resources/Aggregate-Testing-Programmatic-EA-FINAL.pdf>

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

On April 9, 2026, DNRC received an application from Riverside Contracting, Inc, henceforth referred to as proponent, to test for aggregate on State of Montana School Trust Lands. The application was made for Township 1 North, Range 5 West, Sections 12 and 24. This checklist analysis, in conjunction with the programmatic analysis, will evaluate the impacts of an action alternative and no action alternative.

The issuance of an aggregate testing permit allows the permittee to dig holes between 3ft and 20 ft in depth to observe and test the aggregate resource present.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

April 9, 2026, Application was received by DNRC Mineral Management Bureau.

April 10, 2026, Central Land Office (CLO) was notified of the application.

April 10, 2026, the CLO attempted to contact the surface lessee of the application.

April 17, 2026, an Archaeological site visit was conducted on Section 24 T1N, R5W.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

No Action Alternative: The aggregate testing application would be denied.

Action Alternative: The aggregate testing application would be approved with standard stipulations along with any special stipulations identified resulting from this analysis.

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Will the project impact any unique geologic features?

- No - This project area does not contain any unique geologic features, therefore, no unique geologic features will be impacted by testing.

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.

List any species of concern identified in the proposed testing area through review of the Montana Natural Heritage Program Map. Identify any impacts that aggregate testing would have on each of these species.

Species Occurrences



2 Definition of Species Occurrences

+ I - Bombus occidentalis (<i>Western Bumble Bee</i>)	SOC
+ B - Veery (<i>Catharus fuscescens</i>)	SOC
+ B - Evening Grosbeak (<i>Coccothraustes vespertinus</i>)	SOC
+ B - Bald Eagle (<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>)	SSS
+ B - Long-billed Curlew (<i>Numenius americanus</i>)	SOC
+ B - Green-tailed Towhee (<i>Pipilo chlorurus</i>)	SOC
+ B - Cassin's Finch (<i>Haemorhous cassinii</i>)	SOC
+ B - Great Blue Heron (<i>Ardea herodias</i>)	SOC
+ B - Yellow-billed Cuckoo (<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>)	SOC
+ M - Wolverine (<i>Gulo gulo</i>)	SOC
+ B - Brown Creeper (<i>Certhia americana</i>)	SOC
+ B - Pacific Wren (<i>Troglodytes pacificus</i>)	SOC
+ O - Bat Roost (Non-Cave) (<i>Bat Roost (Non-Cave)</i>)	IAH

Conducting aggregate testing on each of these Sections is not expected to have any direct, secondary or cumulative long-term impacts to unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources. Aggregate testing lasts for approximately 1-2 days and is conducted during daylight hours.

Increased noise and human activity levels will occur on the tracts during aggregate testing. The testing activity would likely cause wildlife within the vicinity to temporarily disperse and seek other suitable habitat on adjacent tracts during the day(s) of testing. Any wildlife that is dispersed from the project area would be expected to be able to return to the area upon conclusion of testing. Overall, impacts would be expected to be short-term and minor. Negligible amounts of vegetation/forage would be disrupted for approximately two growing seasons.

Is the testing area contained within the boundaries of the DNRC Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)?

- No – this testing area is not contained within the boundaries of the DNRC Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP).

Is the project area within Core or General Sage Grouse Habitat?

- No – This project is not located within designated Greater Sage Grouse General, Core or Connectivity Habitat.

Is the project area within one-half mile of an active Bald or Golden Eagle Nest?

- No – This project area is not within one-half mile of an active Bald or Golden Eagle Nest.

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 a partial concrete foundation (24JF734) is on section 12 but is not eligible for National Register listing. Additionally, there is a site lead of three low-profile cairns in the NESEW1/4 of section 24 (T1N R5W). These three features should not be damaged with aggregate testing until they are adequately evaluated.

A map of the archaeological area of avoidance is included in this Checklist Environmental Analysis and the Test Permit.

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.

Are there other studies, plans, or projects currently in place on this tract?

- Yes
 - AG - 1284 Grazing Lease
 - D – 15974 Northwestern Energy – See Attachment A
 - D – 01531 US West Communications
 - D – 02316 Northwestern Corporation DBA Northwestern Energy
 - D – 02861 Northwestern Corporation DBA Northwestern Energy – See Attachment B
 - AG - 5308 Grazing Lease
 - AG - 8335 Grazing Lease
 - AG – 10329 Agriculture Lease
 - D - 00611 Chicago Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway Company Railroad Easement - See Attachment C

- D – 02145 Chicago Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway Company Railroad Easement. See Attachment D
- D – 00699 Jefferson County – See Attachment E
- D – 15608 Department of Transportation – Helena – See Attachment F
- D – 16065 Northwestern Energy – See Attachment G
- D - 16070 Northwestern Energy – See Attachment H
- D – 03379 Department of Transportation – See Attachment I

Mitigations

- If the action alternative is selected, the testing permit shall contain the following special mitigations:
 - No testing shall occur within the boundaries of any of the easement areas.
 - The permittee shall complete an 811 call-before-dig utility locate prior to conducting testing.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

Are there any locally adopted environmental plans and goals for the tracts upon which aggregate testing is proposed?

- No

Checklist EA Prepared By:	Name: KELLY BERTELLOTTI	Date: 4-28-2026
	Title: MINERALS RESOURCE SPECIALIST	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Two Alternatives presented and fully analyzed in the EAC.

No Action Alternative: The aggregate testing application would be denied.

Action Alternative: The aggregate testing application would be approved with standard stipulations along with any special stipulations identified resulting from this analysis.

,

After a thorough review of the programmatic environmental analysis, the applicable rules and statutes related to aggregate testing, this checklist EA, and the management and mission of State of Montana school trust lands; I have selected, on the behalf of the DNRC the Action Alternative.

- The lands involved in the project are held by the State of Montana in trust for the support of specific beneficiary institutions. This project is consistent with MCA 77-1-202, 203;

26.SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

I have concluded that all potential impacts have either be addressed through the checklist, programmatic EA or reduced to insignificance by the adoption of stipulations.

Appendix A: List of Standard Stipulations:

1. The permittee must contact the Department's surface lessee at least 24 hours prior to entering the tract and commencing testing activities. Any damages to the surface lessee's leasehold interest, caused by the permittee's activities authorized herein are subject to Administrative Rule 36.25.138.
 - T1N, R5W, Sec. 12 & Sec. 24, SW1/4 and portion of N1/2 lying South of Rail Road R/W lessee's contact: John Smith, Phone # 406-287-5609
 - T1N, R5W, Sec. 24, N1/2 lying North of Railroad R/W lessee's contact: Ranch Land Inc. Phone # 406-491-2205
 2. The permittee shall only conduct operations under dry or frozen conditions. Operations are not allowed under wet or muddy conditions.
 3. No testing shall occur in areas where the slope is steeper than 4:1.
 4. The permittee shall abide by a 100-foot buffer from all surface water including wetlands.
 5. Topsoil/sod will be stockpiled separately from subsoil for reclamation. The permittee shall fill holes with subsoil before covering them with topsoil and sod. All holes must be filled and reclaimed immediately upon completion of logging the test hole.
 6. The permittee shall report test results to DNRC within 30 days of completing testing activities.
 7. The permittee shall only spread a native, weed-free seed mix on the disturbance. The mixture must be approved by the unit office prior to the spreading of seed.
 8. The permittee shall inspect and wash any equipment being utilized in operations prior to commencing work. This shall mitigate the risk of fire and the spread of noxious and invasive weeds.
-

9. The permittee shall be responsible for the elimination of noxious and invasive weeds that are introduced or exacerbated resulting from permitted activities.


10. The permittee shall keep a fire extinguisher readily available during operations. A fire start caused by permitted operations is the sole responsibility of the permittee.

11. The Department may postpone operations if they are deemed as a fire risk.

12. If any previously unidentified historical, archeological or paleontological resources are encountered during permitted activities the permittee shall stop activities, avoid the site, and immediately report it to DNRC.

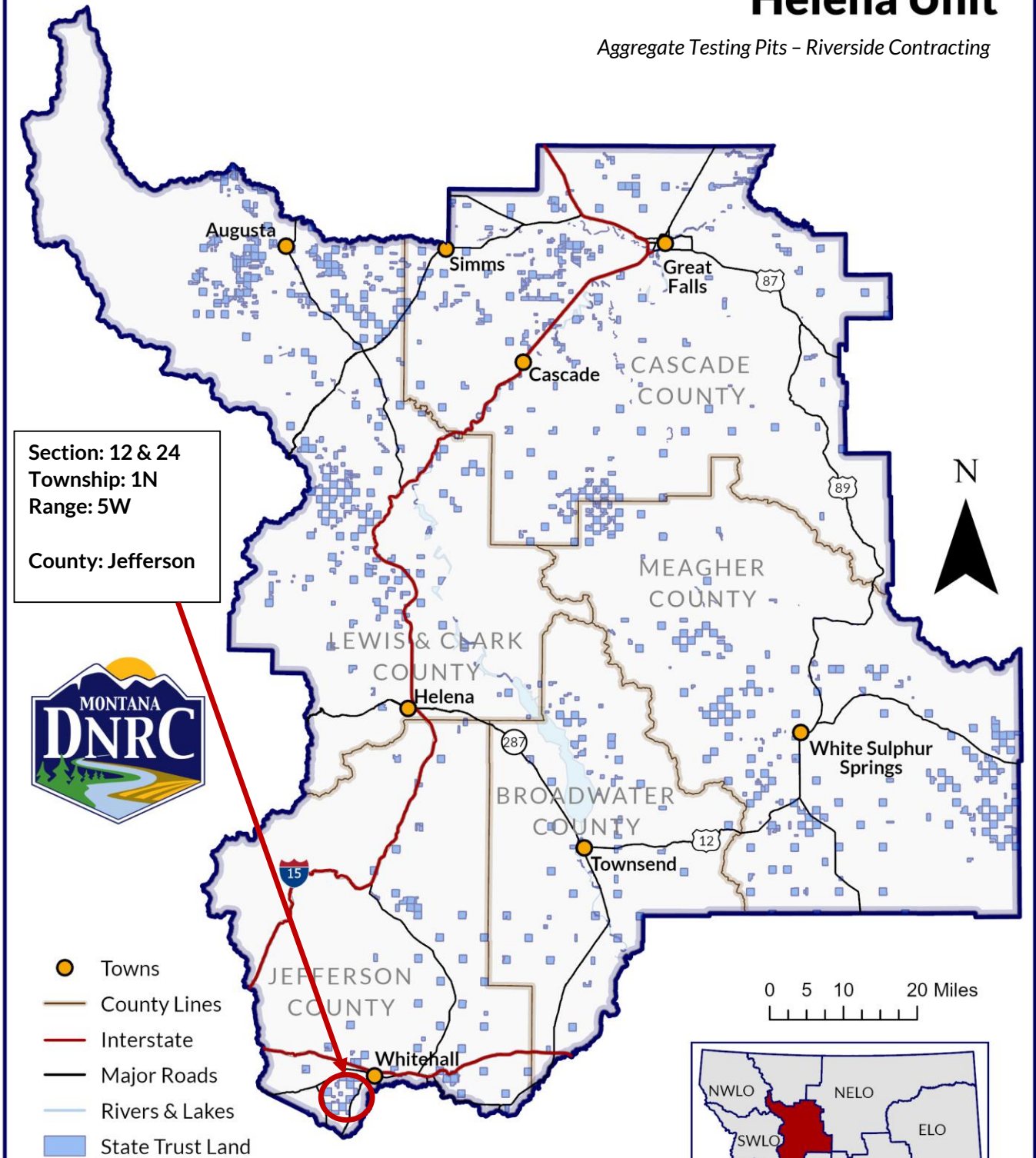
13. No testing shall occur: within the boundaries of any of the easement areas; near archeological sites, or east of the highway within Section 24. See attached Areas of Avoidance map.

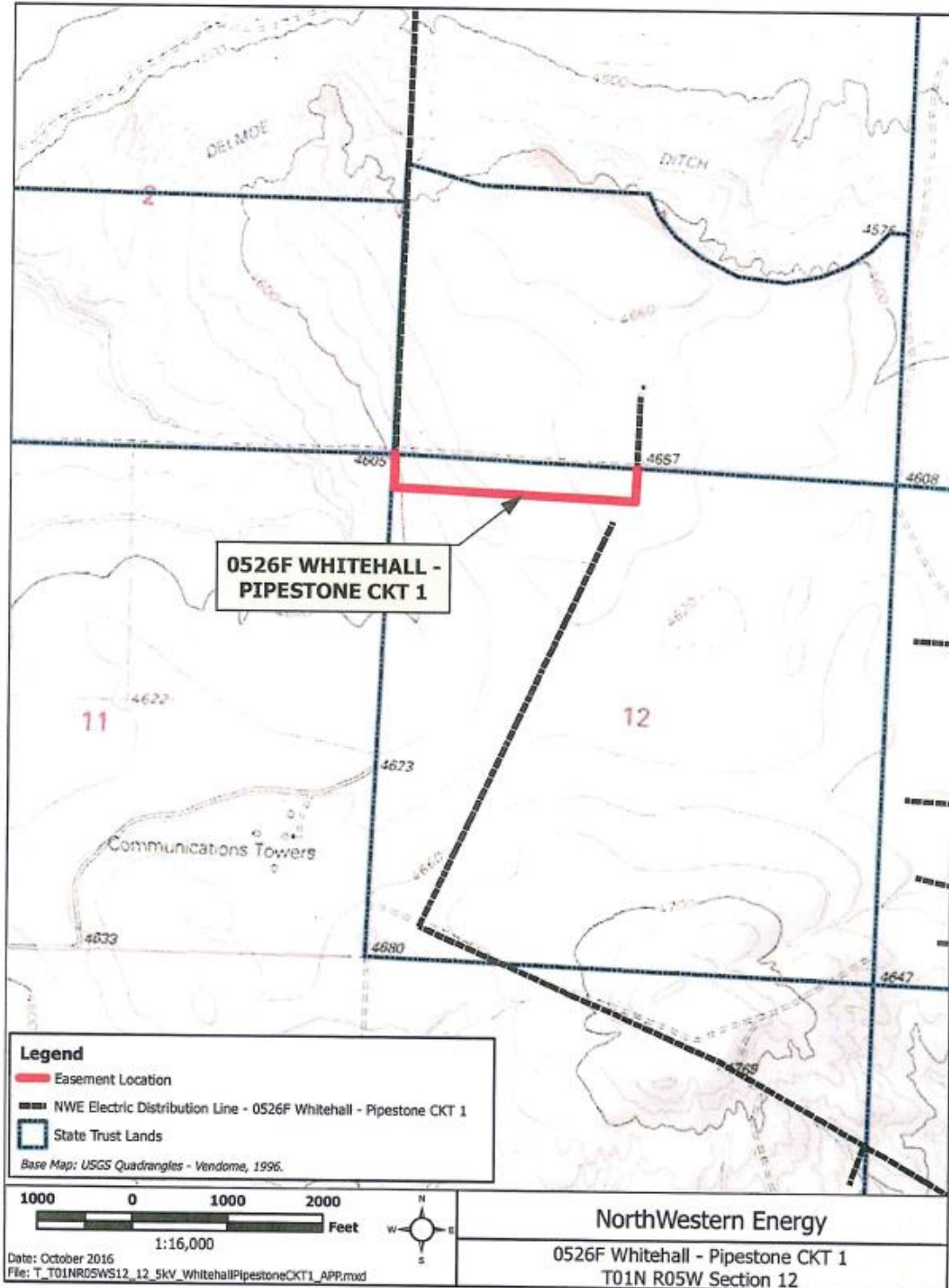
14. The permittee shall complete an 811 call-before-dig utility locate prior to conducting testing.

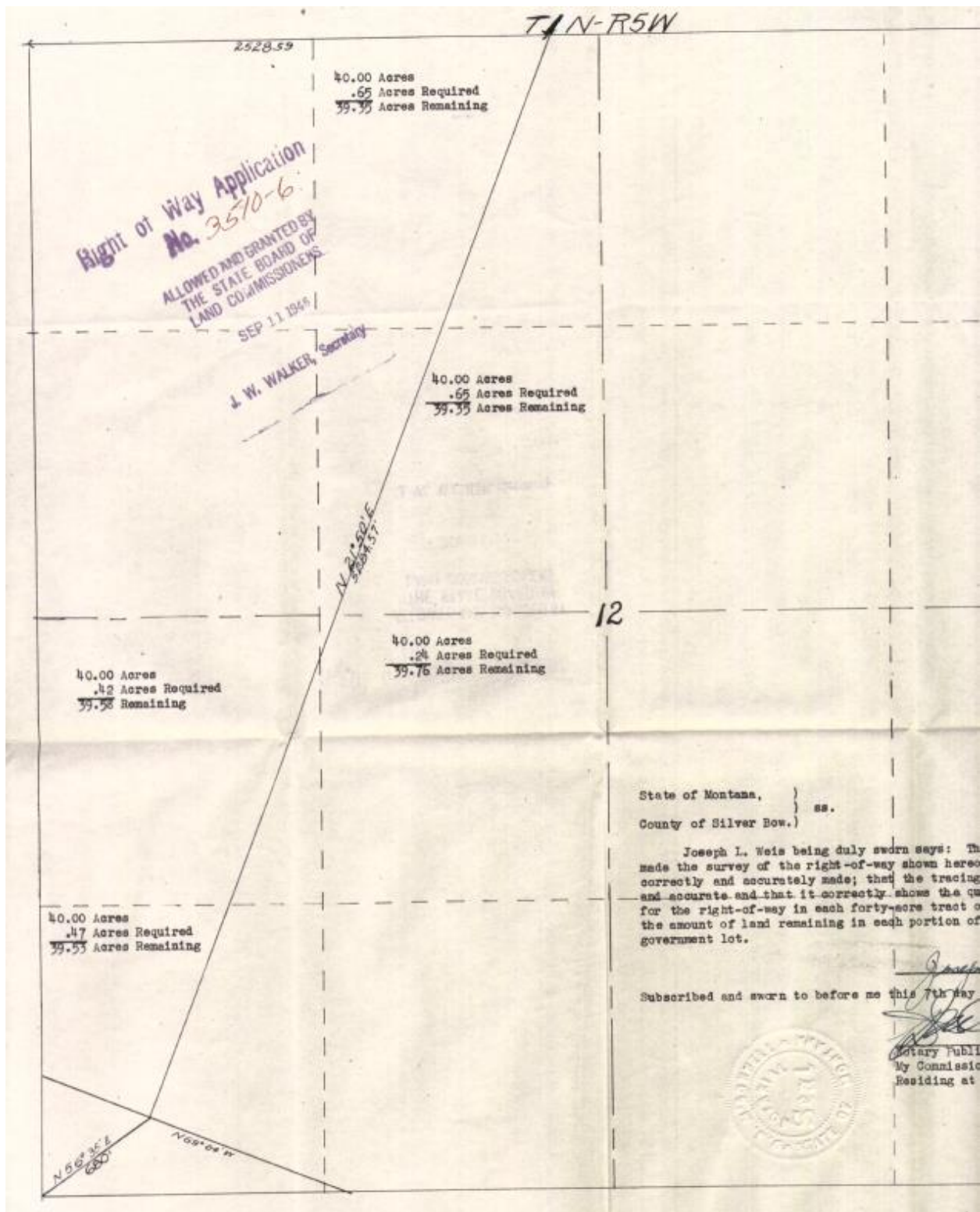
Checklist EA	Name: Adam Blythe
Approved By:	Title: Helena Unit Manager
Signature: 	Date: 5/14/26

State Trust Land Vicinity Map Helena Unit

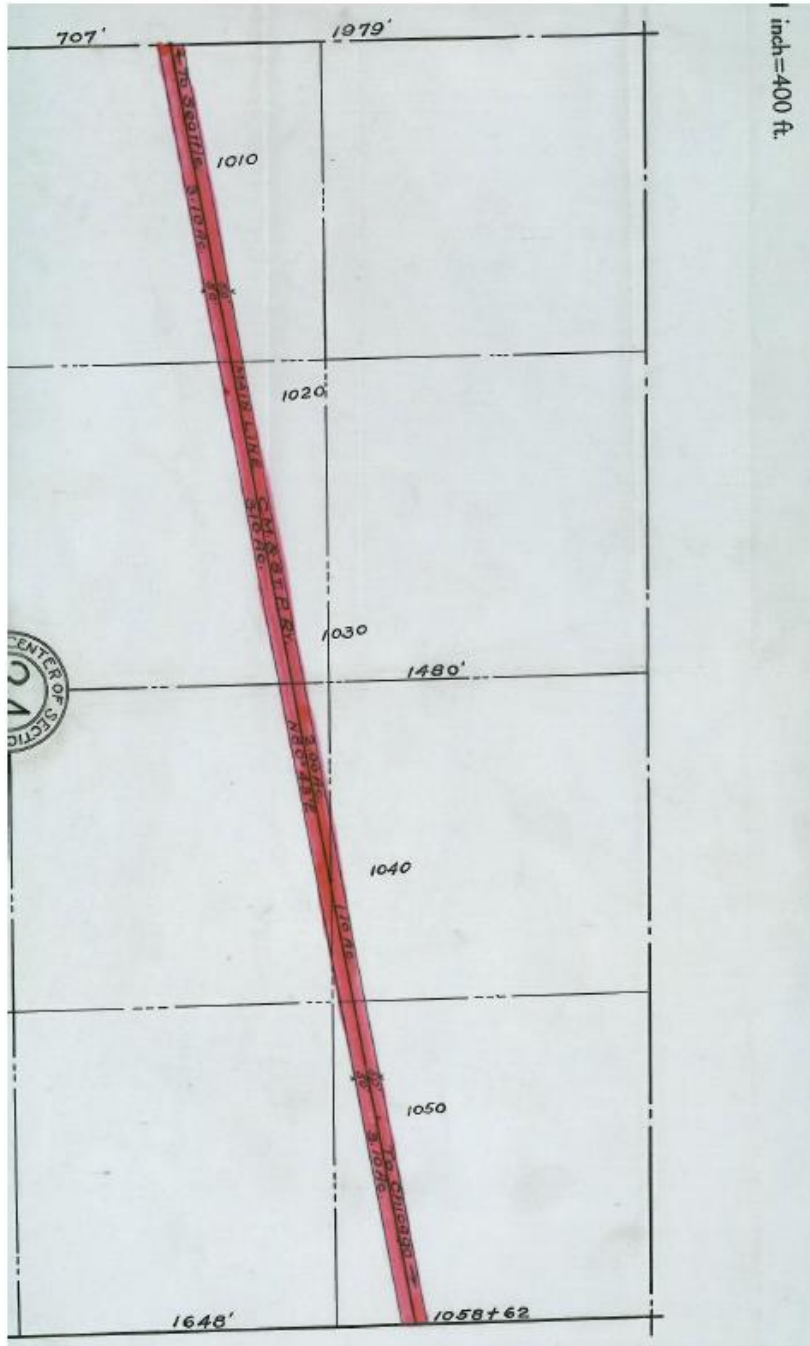
Aggregate Testing Pits - Riverside Contracting



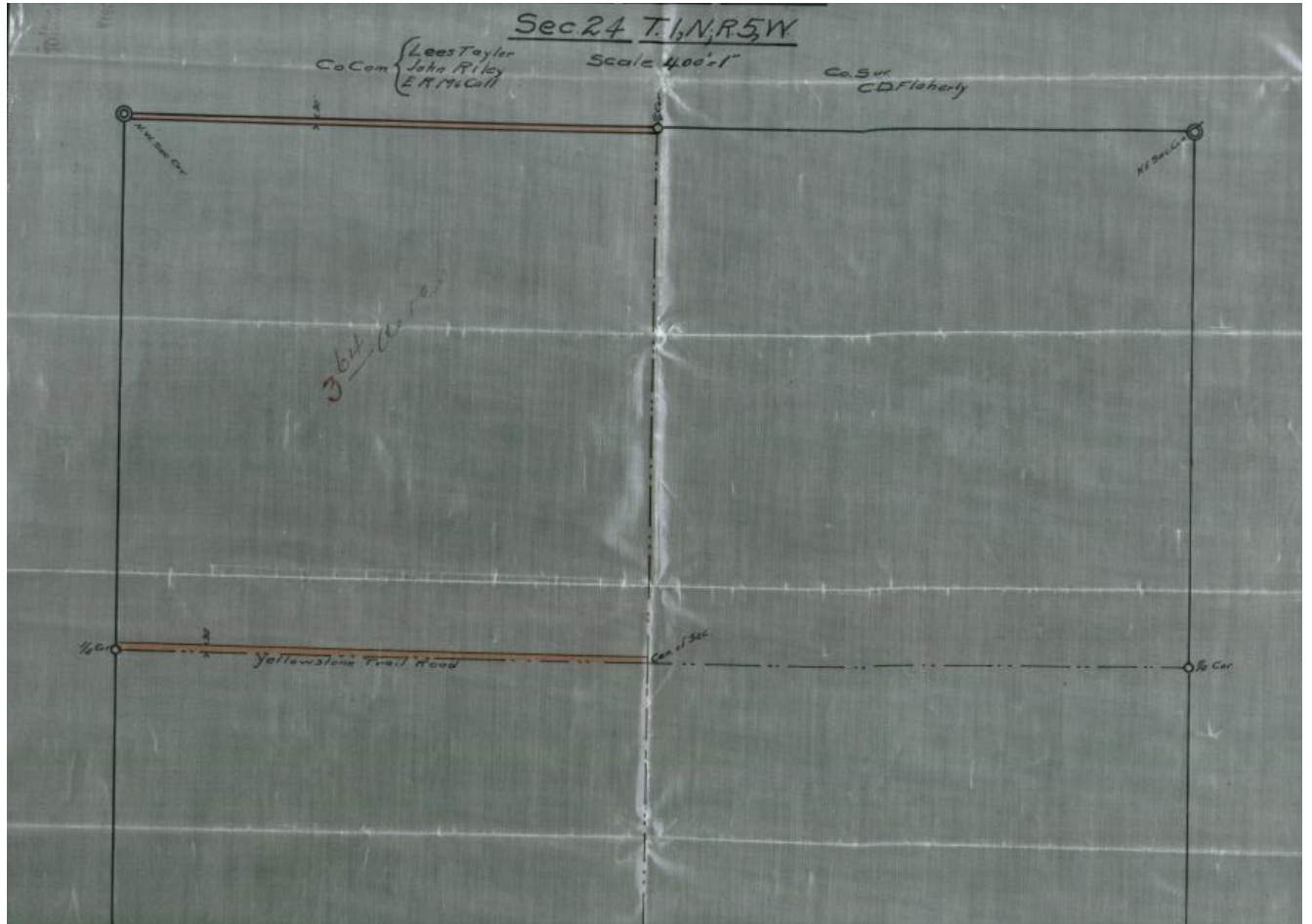




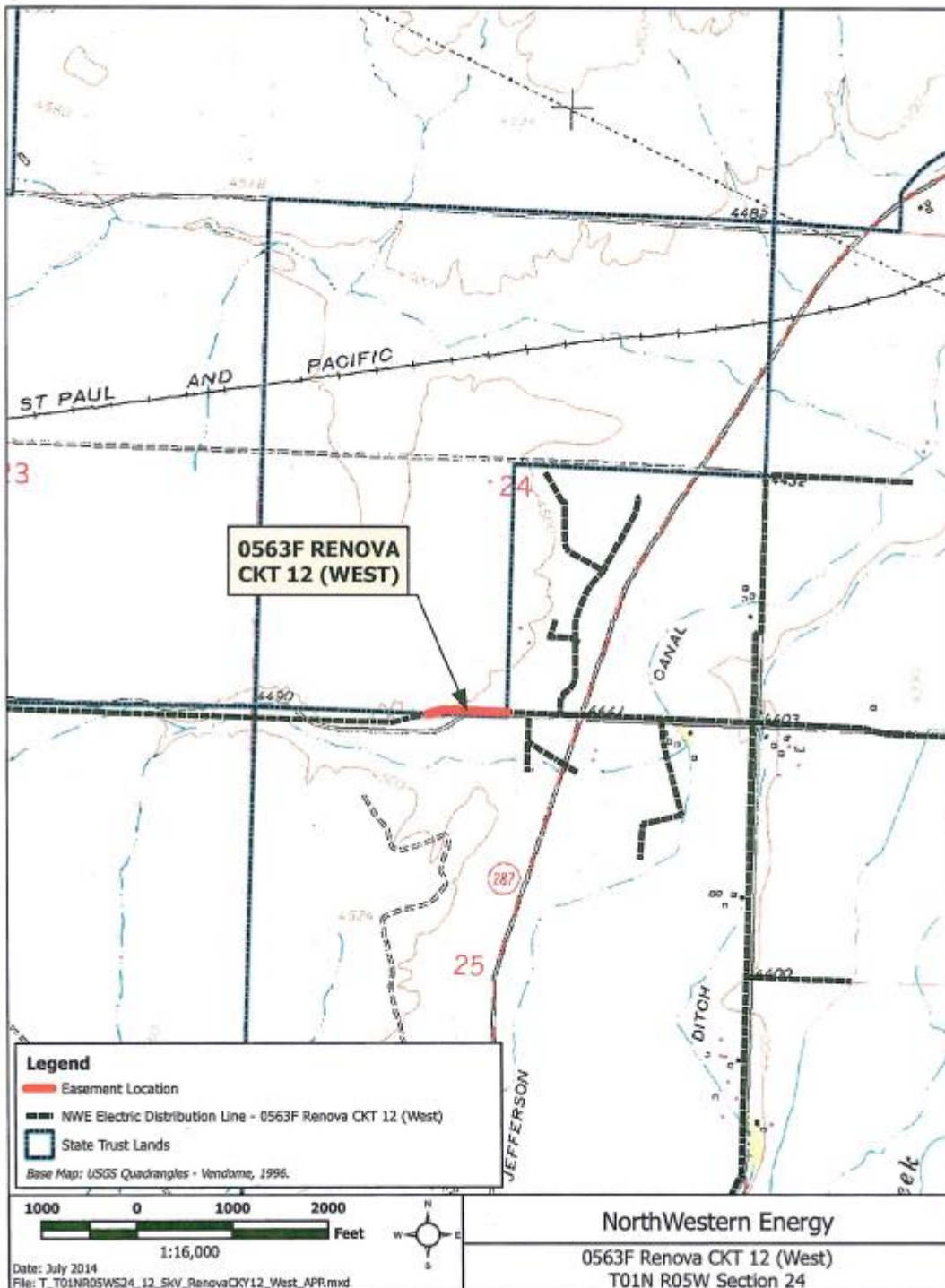
Attachment C: D - 00611 Chicago Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway Company Railroad Easement



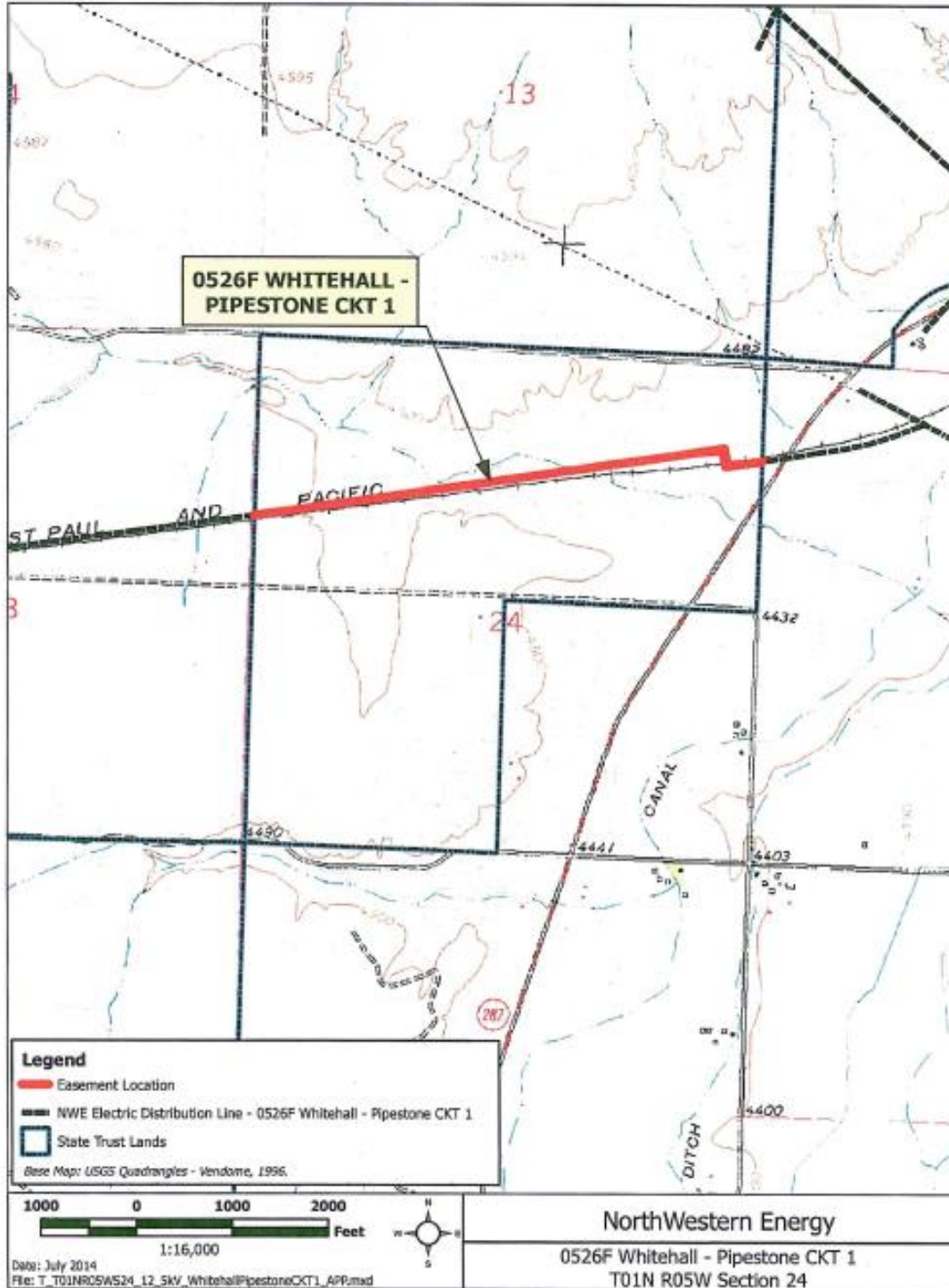
Attachment E: D – 00699 Jefferson County



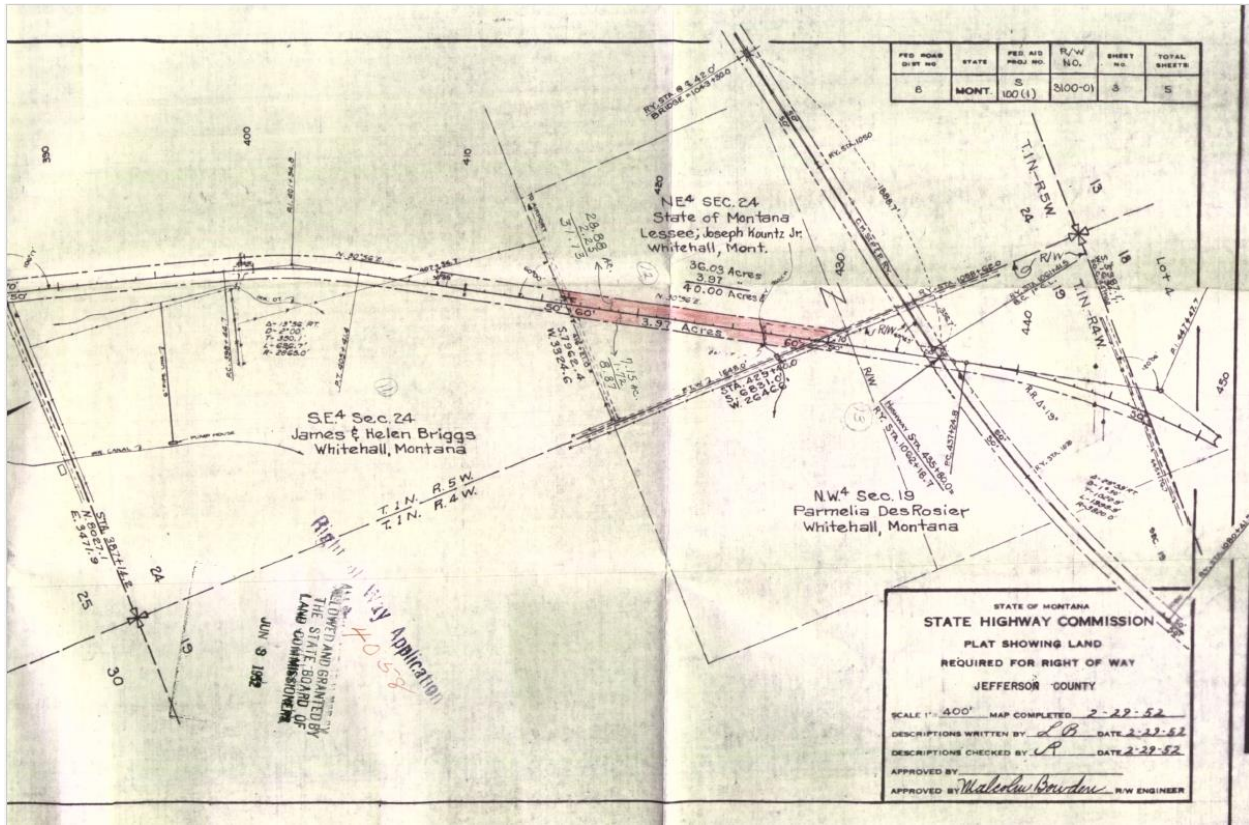
Attachment G: D – 16065 - Northwestern Energy



Attachment H: D - 16070 Northwestern Energy



Attachment I: D – 03379 Department of Transportation



Township 1 N, Range 5W, Section 12:



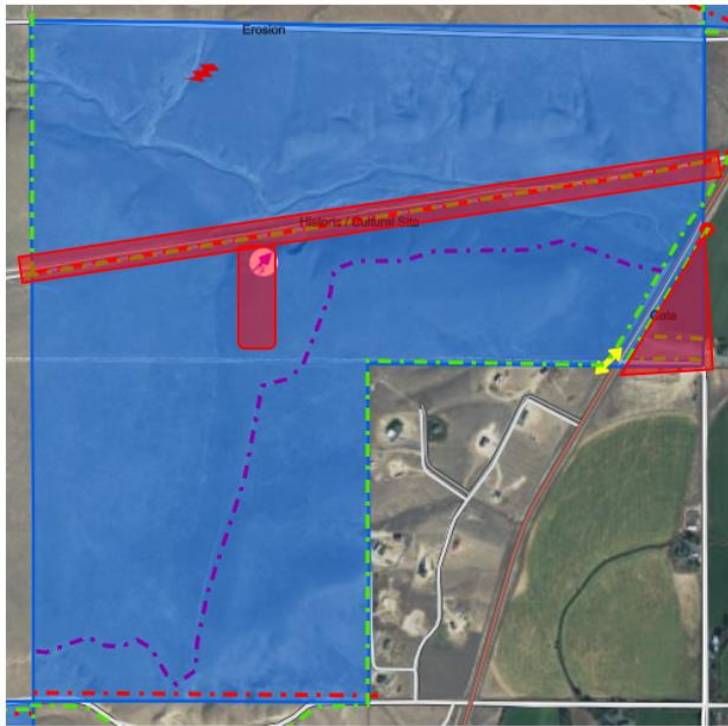


Township 1N, Range 5W, Section 24:



Area Of Avoidance:

Township 1 North, Range 5 West, Section 24



Areas of Avoidance include the areas outlined and highlighted in red shown in the above map.

Area of Avoidance Descriptions:

D – 02145 Chicago Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway Company Railroad Easement

A 100-foot strip through S2NW4, N2NE4, SW4NE4 of Section 24, Township 1 North, Range 5 West. No testing is to take place within or through the boundaries of the stipulated Railroad Easements.

No testing is to take place within the SE ¼ SE ¼ NE ¼, Section 24, Township 1 North, Range 5 West.