

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Hollenbeck Draw Sandstone Picker
Proposed Implementation Date:	Summer/Fall 2024
Proponent:	Rizing Construction, Inc.
Location:	Approximately 1.25 acres in the NW1/4 T9S-R22E-Sec 16 (Common Schools Trust)
County:	Carbon

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Rizing Construction, Inc. henceforth referred to as the proponent, has applied for a gravel aggregate take and remove permit on Trust Lands on the above-referenced tract in Carbon County. The project area can be seen on page number 19, attachment A. This project would utilize a CAT 308CR excavator, Bobcat 595 skid steer. A cargo trailer with self-containing restroom, and ½ ton truck with flatbed trailer would be staged approximately 1,200 feet from the rock picking operations.

If approved, the proponent would be issued an aggregate take and remove permit to remove sandstone rock within the above-referenced tract. Any rocks removed creating large divots or holes in the surface will be infilled and reclaimed with a certified weed free seed.

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 proponent submitted an aggregate take and remove permit to the DNRC Minerals Management Bureau. The Southern Land Office has been informed of the application. A Small Miner Exclusion Statement (SMES) has been obtained from DEQ by the proponent. Both lessee's, surface, and mineral, were sent letters notifying them of application, no response has been received.

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

The Montana DNRC, Forestry and Trust Lands Division has jurisdiction over the proposed action on State Trust Lands.

- Montana DNRC – FTLD – MMB – Aggregate Take and Remove Permit
- Montana DEQ – Small Miner Exclusion Statement (SMES)
- Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program Consultation

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

No Action Alternative: The aggregate take and remove permit would be denied and the proponent would not be allowed to remove decorative sandstone from the Montana State Trust Lands referenced above.

Action Alternative: The aggregate take and remove permit would be approved with stipulations and mitigations identified within this analysis. The proponent would be allowed to remove decorative sandstone from the Montana State Trust Lands, as seen on page 18, attachment A.

SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS TO THE PHYSICAL AND HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

The impacts analysis identifies and evaluates direct, secondary, and cumulative impacts.

- **Direct impacts:** impacts that occur at the same time and place as the action that causes the impact
- **Secondary impacts:** further impacts to the human environment that may be stimulated, or induced by, or otherwise result from a direct impact of the action.
- **Cumulative impacts:** collective impacts on the human environment of the proposed action when considered in conjunction with other past and present actions related to the proposed action by location or generic type. Related future actions must also be considered when these actions are under concurrent consideration by any state agency through pre-impact statement studies, separate impact study evaluation, or permit processing procedures.

Where impacts are expected to occur, the impacts analysis estimates the duration and severity of the impact.

The duration of an impact is quantified as follows:

- **Short-term:** impacts that would not last longer than the proposed operation of the site, including reclamation of the site.
- **Long-term:** impacts that would remain or occur following reclamation of the proposed site.

The severity of an impact is measured using the following:

- **No impact:** There would be no change from current conditions.
- **Negligible:** An adverse or beneficial effect would occur but would be at the lowest levels of detection.
- **Minor:** The effect would be noticeable but would be relatively small and would not affect the function or integrity of the resource.
- **Moderate:** The effect would be easily identifiable and would change the function or integrity of the resource.
- **Major:** The effect would alter the resource.

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.

Current Conditions:

Geology: Site geology consists of the Fort Union Formation consisting of shales and sandstones.

Soils: According to the USDA's Web Soil Survey, the project area is comprised of two soil types, rock outcrop and silt loams.

These soils exhibit the following properties:

K Factor – Silt loams exhibit a moderate risk to sheet and rill erosion from water.

Soil compactibility risk – Soils found in the project area exhibit a medium risk to soil compactibility.

Soil restoration potential – Soils found in the project area exhibit a low potential for soil restoration.

Soil rutting hazard – Soils found in the project area exhibit a severe soil rutting hazard.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The selection of the no action alternative would not be expected to have any direct, secondary or cumulative impacts to the geology and soil quality, stability, and moisture.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The proponent would use an existing access road to access project area. They would be expected to utilize an excavator, truck, and skid steer for project activities. The proposed area is an area that has been disturbed by similar previous activities. Topsoil would be disturbed while mining large flat sandstone rocks. Where topsoil is present, it shall be salvaged and stockpiled for reclamation efforts. Negligible, long-term impacts to geology and soil quality and moisture would be expected from the selection of the action alternative.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected to geology and soil quality, stability and moisture from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: The current nature of the site is one that has minimal soils present. Every effort should be made to salvage and stockpile topsoil for reclamation.

Duration: Impacts from the selection of the action alternative are expected to last until final reclamation.

Mitigations

The potential selection of action alternative would include the following stipulations in the permit to take and remove aggregate:

- Topsoil should be stripped and stockpiled in a location to be saved for reclamation.
- Topsoil stockpiles shall be seeded to mitigate potential erosion or loss of topsoil.
- The main haul route/access road will be maintained: blading or spot bladed shall occur where needed.
- Erosion wattles will be placed in areas to prevent erosion during operations if needed and in reclamation efforts.
- Any reclaimed slope shall be sloped 3:1 and blend into existing topography.
- To prevent unnecessary impacts on soils and reduce the potential for rutting no work may be conducted if significant precipitation has occurred within the last 24 hours.

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.

Current Conditions

Surface Water: The project area is at an average approximate surface elevation of 4223' above sea level. There is no surface water within 2,300 feet.

Ground Water: A search of the Montana Ground Water Information Center's water well data show there are no water wells within 1,500 feet of the project area.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The selection of the no action alternative would not be expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to water quality, quantity, and distribution.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The selection of the action alternative is not expected to have any direct impacts to water quality and distribution. The action alternative is expected to have no, or negligible, impacts to groundwater quality and quantity in the project area. Surface water quality and quantity are not expected to be impacted by the selection of the action alternative.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected to surface or groundwater quality or quantity resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: There are no cumulative impacts to surface or groundwater quality or quantity from the selection of the action alternative are not expected to change.

Duration: No impacts determined.

Mitigations

The potential selection of action alternative would include the following stipulation in the permit to take and remove aggregate:

- All equipment utilized in activities must be regularly maintained and inspected to ensure it is not leaking fluids, spreading noxious weeds, or creating an undue fire hazard.
- If groundwater is encountered during mining operations, all activities shall cease, and the permittee shall contact the Minerals Management Bureau.

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.

Current Conditions

Currently, significant emission sources in the project area are from vehicles travelling on Montana Highway 72, and other adjacent roads. Fugitive dust from vehicle travel on adjacent gravel roads contributes small amounts of airborne particulate matter in the area.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The selection of the no action alternative would not be expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impact to air quality.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: Fugitive dust would be generated from project activities. The dust created from these activities is expected to stay within direct vicinity of the source before settling. Wind velocities would introduce variability in dust dispersion in the area. Air quality directly adjacent to the project area could be temporarily impacted during project activities; however, those impacts are expected to be short-term and negligible. The project is anticipated to create carbon dioxide. According to the US Energy Information Administration, the operation of diesel equipment emits 0.01 metric tons of CO₂ per gallon of diesel fuel. The amount of fuel used would be dependent on market conditions and the overall use of the project area. There are no anticipated long-term

impacts on air quality. Any impact to air quality resulting from the selection of the action alternative would be expected to correlate directly with mining operations which are expected to be intermittent and seasonal over the length of the permit.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected to air quality resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: Air quality in the area can vary depending on the time of year due to seasonal weather patterns, wildfire smoke, heating of homes, and traffic within the area. The small amounts of additional dust and emissions beyond what is currently created by existing activities, is not expected to have appreciable impacts on the environment.

Duration: Impacts to air quality are expected to be short-term and intermittent.

Mitigations

The potential selection of action alternative would include the following stipulation in the permit to take and remove aggregate:

- Dust abatement would be applied as needed during hauling operation if excessive dust is created.

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.

Current Conditions

The project area is within an area that has already been disturbed. The surrounding area is comprised of shrubland, steppe and savanna system which includes but is not limited to Wyoming big sagebrush, western wheatgrass, mountain big sagebrush and a variety of other shrubs. The project area is also covered by scrub and dwarfland shrubland found on steep-facing erodible badlands, characterized by areas that receive 12 inches or less of precipitation.

An inventory of the Montana Natural Heritage Program's Species of Concern database was conducted for the project area. The search yielded no vegetative species of concern.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The selection of the no action alternative would not be expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to vegetation cover quantity and quality.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The project area has already been disturbed by previous mining. Per the stipulations of the permit, the proponent would be responsible for the management and mitigation of invasive weeds at the site. Overall, the impacts to vegetation cover, quantity and quality, would be expected to be minor. No appreciable changes to vegetation are expected to occur resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Secondary Impacts: Secondary impacts may occur in the form of noxious weed propagation from project activities. Weed impacts can be mitigated to negligible with proper efforts, such as monitoring and chemical treatment if necessary.

Cumulative Impacts: Noxious weed introduction and propagation is a serious concern throughout Montana. Mitigations must be considered for actions that could further exacerbate the problem. Mitigations are offered below and would be implemented within the aggregate take and remove permit if the action alternative is selected.

Duration: Impacts to vegetation cover, quantity and quality are expected to be short-term.

Mitigations

The potential selection of action alternative would include the following stipulation in the permit to take and remove aggregate:

- The Proponent will be responsible for the management, mitigation and elimination of invasive weeds introduced or propagated from activities. Such activities include mining and the transportation of equipment to and from each other sites.
- Trucks and other equipment should be washed and inspected, prior to activities, to limit the possible spread of noxious weeds.

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.

Current Conditions

The project area maybe used by a variety of terrestrial and avian wildlife, including white-tailed deer, mule deer, coyotes, foxes, raptors, rodents, and songbirds. Generally, many of these species are common in the region.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The selection of the no action alternative would not be expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to terrestrial, avian, and aquatic life and habitats.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The action alternative would create audible and visual disturbances for a short, intermittent time frame to any animals that may occupy the project area or its surroundings. Wildlife may pass through the project area as part of their movements between habitats. Disturbance in the vicinity, including the effects of the historical mining, various recreational activities, and other forms of human disturbance have impacted the ability of the area to be used for wildlife habitat. Given the current disturbances and limited hiding cover in the project area, many wildlife species have likely altered how they use the project area to times when human presence and disturbance is lessened, such as at night.

Similar habitat and forage can be found throughout the surrounding area and could sustain any impacted wildlife species temporarily. Impacts to terrestrial, avian and aquatic life and habitat are expected to be minor.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected to terrestrial, avian and aquatic life and habitats.

Cumulative Impacts: Cumulative impacts to terrestrial, avian and aquatic life and habitats would not be expected to appreciably change from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: Impacts from the selection of the action alternative are expected to be short-term and intermittent depending on the need or market for the material.

Mitigations

The potential selection of action alternative would include the following stipulation in the permit to take and remove aggregate:

- Operations may only occur during daylight hours.

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.

Current Conditions

The Montana Natural Heritage Program's species of concern was conducted for the project area. The search yielded the following species of concern that have potential to be within the project area.

- Grizzly Bear – Grizzly Bears can be found throughout much of western Montana in a variety of habitats that depend on the season, following food availability.
- Golden Eagle – A year-round habitant of Montana with nests found on cliffs and large trees. Hunting over prairie and open woodlands.
- Great Blue Heron – A year-round habitant of Montana primarily using wetlands along major rivers and lakes.
- Greater Sage-Grouse – A year-round habitant of Montana, the project area is within general habitat according to the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program.
- Pinon Jay – A year-round resident southeastern and central Montana living in low-elevation ponderosa pine and limber pine-juniper woodlands.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The selection of the no action alternative would not be expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The action alternative would create negligible changes to existing vegetation would occur, thus no appreciable changes in available habitats would be expected to occur. Some minor, intermittent disturbances to individuals of any of these species may occur if they are in the vicinity of the project area during activities. Better or similar coverage exists surrounding the project area for potential impacted species to use.

Grizzly Bear – Due to the lack of cover, food, and water, it is not expected that grizzly bears would utilize the project area frequently. Bears may utilize the project area or its surroundings to travel from one zone of suitable habitat to another.

Golden Eagle – The Montana DNRC complies with the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. No nests have been identified within the one-half mile buffer of the project area.

Great Blue Heron – The great blue heron utilizes wetlands and other aquatic based habitats. The nearest suitable habitat to the project area for the species would be the Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone River which is approximately ½ mile away from the project area at its nearest point. At this distance, any project related activities to the species would be expected to be negligible.

Greater Sage Grouse – The project area is located within general sage grouse habitat. The proponent is required to consult the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program, and pay mitigation debits.

Pinon Jay – The project area is largely void of trees, making it non-suitable for Pinon Jays. The bird may utilize the nearby areas in order to travel from one zone of suitable habitat to another, but would not be expected to spend a significant amount of time in the project area.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected to unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources.

Cumulative Impacts: The proposed activity would introduce disturbance, in a negligible and short-term and intermittent time frame. The additional impacts introduced from the selection of the action alternative are not expected to appreciably change cumulative impacts.

Duration: Impacts from the selection of the action alternative are expected to be short-term and intermittent.

Mitigations

The potential selection of action alternative would include the following stipulation in the permit to take and remove aggregate:

- The proponent and its employees would not be authorized to camp within the boundaries of the permitted area.
- The site must be kept clear of debris, garbage, and food.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

Current Conditions

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.

Rock collection work will 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.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The selection of the no action alternative would not be expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to historical or archaeological sites.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: Because the project area has already been disturbed from previous mining activities there are no anticipated impacts to historical, archeological, or paleontological resources.

However, if previously unknown cultural or paleontological materials are identified during project related activities, all work would cease until a professional assessment of such resources can be made.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected, resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: There are no cumulative impacts expected to historical and archeological sites from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: No impacts are anticipated; therefore, the duration of impacts is not applicable.

Mitigations

The potential selection of action alternative would include the following stipulation in the permit take and remove aggregate:

- If any cultural or paleontological resources are encountered during project activities, all operations must stop, and the proponent shall contact DNRC.

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.

Current Conditions

The project area is currently comprised of vegetation as described in section 7 of this document. The project area is within the Billings Southern Land Office and is currently being managed for an agriculture/grazing lease and an oil and gas lease.

Alternatives***No Action Alternative:***

There would be no direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to aesthetics expected from the selection of the no action alternative.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: An increase in noise from equipment may be heard adjacent to the project area. From adjacent roads the project area is not expected to be visible due to surrounding topography. Impacts to aesthetics are expected to be short-term and intermittent.

Secondary Impacts: Noise and visual impacts may occur in areas adjacent to the project area. However, these impacts are expected to be minor and decrease as distance from the project area increases. Secondary impacts are expected to be short-term.

Cumulative Impacts: Some minor additional noise may occur in areas adjacent to the project area. The selection of the action alternative is not expected to appreciably change the cumulative aesthetics in the area.

Duration: Impacts to aesthetics from the selection of the action alternative are expected to be short-term and intermittent.

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.

Current Conditions

The impacts to land, water and air are described within other sections of this document.

Alternatives***No Action Alternative:***

The no action alternative would not be expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts on the demands on environmental resources of land, water, air or energy.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The Direct impacts to land, water and air are analyzed within earlier sections of this document. Energy resources in the form of diesel fuel are abundant in the area and the project is expected to have negligible impacts on the demands of energy.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: Cumulative impacts for land, water and air are evaluated in their respective sections. There are no appreciable cumulative impacts expected to energy resources resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: Impacts of the selection of the action alternative are expected to be short-term.

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.

Current Conditions

There are no other pending environmental documents within the area. There are no known environmental plans for the project area.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The no action alternative would not be expected to have direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to other environmental documents pertinent to the area.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: There are no direct impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: There are no cumulative impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: With no direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts expected there is no duration anticipated.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.</i>• <i>Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.</i>• <i>Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.</i> |
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14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

Current Conditions

The current conditions of the tract pose no risk to human health or safety.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The no action alternative would not be expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to human health or safety.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The proposed project is expected to have a negligible impact to human health or safety, other than the occupational risks typically associated with mining. The site is in a rural area away from residences. Impacts to air quality and water quality are evaluated in their respective resource sections of this document. During project activities there would be a minor increase in truck traffic and excavator will be working within the project area, the impact to human health and safety resulting from the selection of the action alternative is expected to be short-term and negligible.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: There are no cumulative impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: Impacts of the selection of the action alternative are expected to be short-term.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

Current Conditions

The project areas are in a rural environment and industrial activities are mostly non-present. Commercial activities in the area are mostly driven by oil and gas, tourism and agriculture. Outdoor recreation is a large component of the activity in the area and consists of hiking, fishing, and hunting.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The no action alternative would be expected to have no direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to industrial, commercial, and agricultural activities.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The action alternative would not be expected to have direct impacts upon the industrial, commercial, or agriculture activities currently present.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: There are no cumulative impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: No impacts identified.

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.

Current Conditions

The closest town and employment center is Belfry, Montana approximately 6 miles to the north of the project area.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative: The no action alternative is not expected to have any direct, secondary or cumulative impacts to the quantity and distribution of employment.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: No direct impacts are expected to quantity and distribution of employment from the selection of the action alternative.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: There are no changes to cumulative impacts could be expected from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: No impacts identified.

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.

Current Conditions

Trust land is exempt from local property tax. Operators and lessees conducting business on Trust Lands must pay business taxes.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The no action alternative is not expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impact on local and state tax bases or tax revenues.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: No direct impacts to local and state tax base and tax revenue are expected from the selection of the action alternative.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: There are no cumulative impacts expected from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: No impacts identified.

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

Current Conditions

The traffic sources in the area are on Highway 72 and other adjacent roads. Emergency services would likely come from Belfry, MT.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The no action alternative is not expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts on the demand for government services.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: No direct impacts to the demand of government services are expected from the selection of the action alternative.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: There are no changes to cumulative impacts resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: No impacts identified.

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.

Current Conditions

There are no known environmental plans or goals for this tract in the project vicinity.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The no action alternative is not expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts on locally adopted environmental plans or goals.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: No locally adopted environmental plans and goals are known therefore no impacts are expected from the selection of the action alternative.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: There are no changes to cumulative impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: No impacts identified.

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.

Current Conditions

The project will occur on State of Montana Trust Lands. The tract is also adjacent to Bureau of Land Management owned land. This allows for the opportunity for public use and recreation. The project area is approximately ten miles east of the Absaroka Beartooth Wilderness. Montana State Trust Lands are accessible for public use by purchasing the necessary conservation license through Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The no action alternative is not expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts on the access to and quality of recreational and wilderness activities.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The proposed project area does have availability for public access. Recreation accessibility is not expected to be limited during project activities. However, the quality of recreation sought by individuals visiting the tract may be impacted by the proposed activity. Impacts to recreation are expected to be short-term and intermittent when mining occurs.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: There are no changes to cumulative impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: Impacts to recreation may occur during project operations which would be expected to be intermittent and short term.

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.

Current Conditions

The closest population center to the project area is Belfry, MT.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The no action alternative is not expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to the density and distribution of population and housing.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: No direct impacts to the density and distribution of population and housing are expected from the selection of the action alternative.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: There are no cumulative impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: No impacts identified.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Current Conditions

The Crow Reservation is approximately 40 miles to the east of the project area.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The no action alternative is not expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts on social structures, native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: No direct impacts are expected to native or traditional lifestyles.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Cumulative Impacts: There are no cumulative impacts expected from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: No impacts identified.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

Current Conditions

There are no known unique qualities of the area.

Alternatives:

No Action Alternative:

The no action alternative is not expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to cultural uniqueness or diversity.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: No direct impacts are expected to the unique qualities of the area.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected to cultural uniqueness and diversity.

Cumulative Impacts: There are no cumulative impacts expected to cultural uniqueness and diversity.

Duration: No impacts identified.

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.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The \$25 application fee would be retained by the Department. The aggregate take and remove permit would be denied and no further revenue would be expected to be generated aside from the current oil and gas lease and agriculture and grazing lease.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: If the action alternative is selected the project would provide the trust with a \$25.00 application fee and royalties of \$45.00 per ton of sandstone. Social and economic circumstances are expected to be minor and short-term from the selection of the action alternative.

Secondary Impacts: No secondary impacts expected.

Cumulative Impacts: Royalties from mineral related activities enter the permanent fund, which is invested to generate interest. The interest from the permanent fund is distributed to Montana Trust Lands beneficiaries through the legislature.

Duration: The principal amount of the permanent fund is not spent and generates interest annually to provide security and financial stability for the school trust. Royalties that enter the permanent fund have long-term positive impacts on generation of funds for the trust beneficiaries.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Thomas Palin Title: Mineral Resource Specialist	Date: August 5, 2024
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V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

The alternative action has been selected and it is recommended the gravel permit be issued to authorize the proponent to utilize a portion of State Land on Section 16, Township 9 South, Range 22 East in Carbon County. The potential for significant adverse impacts to the Trust lands listed above are minimal due to the nature of the proposed action, which would entail the proponent to take and remove sandstone rock within the above-referenced tract.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The granting of the requested aggregate take and remove on this tract of State Trust Lands is not expected to result in, nor cause significant negative environmental impacts. The proposed action satisfies the Trust's fiduciary mandate and ensures the long-term productivity of the land. An environmental assessment is the appropriate level of analysis for the proposed action.

I conclude that all identified potential impacts will be mitigated by utilizing permit requirements, including the stipulations listed below.

- 1) The permit holder shall be in compliance with all applicable state and federal laws, rules, and regulations, including but not limited to those concerning safety, environmental protection, reclamation, drone flight requirements for photography and topographic mapping over the site.
- 2) The proponent must notify DNRC at least 48 hours prior to proposed activities commencing.
- 3) If any cultural or paleontological resources are encountered during activities, all operations must stop and contact DNRC.
- 4) If groundwater is encountered during mining operations, all activities shall cease, and the permittee shall contact the Minerals Management Bureau.
- 5) To prevent unnecessary impacts on soils and reduce the potential for rutting no work may be conducted if significant precipitation has occurred within the last 24 hours.
- 6) Topsoil should be stripped and stockpiled in a location to be saved for reclamation.
- 7) Stockpile of topsoil shall be seeded or covered to impede potential erosion or loss of topsoil.
- 8) Erosion wattles will be placed in areas to prevent erosion during operations if needed and in reclamation efforts.
- 9) Any reclaimed slope shall be sloped 3:1 and blend into existing topography.
- 10) All equipment utilized in activities must be regularly maintained and inspected to ensure it is not leaking fluids, spreading noxious weeds or creating an undue fire hazard.
- 11) The Proponent will be responsible for the management, mitigation and elimination of invasive weeds introduced or propagated from activities. Such activities include mining and the transportation of equipment to and from each other sites.
- 12) The proponent and its employees would not be authorized to camp within the boundaries of the project area.
- 13) The site must be kept clear of debris, garbage, and food.
- 14) Dust abatement would be applied as needed during operations if excessive dust is created.
- 15) The main haul route/access road will be maintained: blading or spot bladed where needed.
- 16) If any damage to fences or gates are incurred the permittee will fix damages.
- 17) Trucks and other equipment should be washed and inspected, prior to activities, to limit the possible spread of noxious weeds.
- 18) Operations may only occur during daylight hours.
- 19) A fire plan is not required for this permit. However, any damages from a wildfire caused by the actions of the permittee, its employees, or subcontractors are the sole responsibility of the permittee. A fire extinguisher shall be always kept onsite and within every vehicle.
- 20) The below seed mix shall be used.

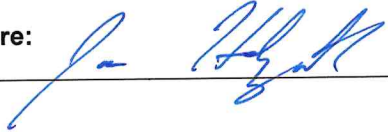
Planned Seeding Date: <u>Spring: before May 15</u>	Planned Seeding Depth: <u>1/4" to 1/2"</u>
Seeding Method: <u>Drill Seeder</u>	Row Spacing (inch) <u>7</u>

Table 1. Planned Perennial Species, Composition and Seeding Rates

Select Species	Enter Cultivar	Full Stand Rate (PLS lb/ac)	Enter Planned Percent of Mixture	Planned Rate (PLS lb/ac)	Number of Seeds/lb	Seeds/ft ²	Percent of Seeds/ft ²	Bloom Period	Total Planned (PLS lbs/field)
wheatgrass, slender	Copperhead 'First Strike'	7.00	15.0%	1.05	140,000	3.4	13%	-	4.20
wheatgrass, western	Rosana	10.00	18.0%	1.80	93,000	3.8	15%	-	7.20
needle and thread	Source Identified	9.00	10.0%	0.90	115,000	2.4	9%	-	3.60
bluegrass, big	Sherman	2.00	10.0%	0.20	882,000	4.0	16%	-	0.80
wheatgrass, bluebunch	Anatone	7.00	15.0%	1.05	139,000	3.4	13%	-	4.20
indian ricegrass	Nezpar	5.00	7.0%	0.35	235,000	1.9	7%	-	1.40
indian paintbrush, Wyomin		0.30	5.0%	0.02	4,915,000	1.7	7%	E, M	0.06
penstemon, fuzzytongue		3.00	5.0%	0.15	358,000	1.2	5%	E, M	0.60
phacelia, silverleaf	Stucky Ridge	6.90	5.0%	0.35	153,000	1.2	5%	E, M	1.38
yarrow, western	Great Northern	0.25	5.0%	0.01	2,850,000	0.8	3%	E, M, L	0.05
prairie coneflower	Stillwater	2.00	5.0%	0.10	600,000	1.4	5%	E, M, L	0.40

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS
 More Detailed EA
 No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Joe Holzwarth
	Title: Southern Land Office Area Manager
Signature: 	Date: 8/9/24

Attachment A

