

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Riverside Contracting Inc._Aggregate Test Permit T-0500-66

Proposed

Implementation Date: August through December 2026

Proponent: Riverside Contracting Inc.

Location: Township 23N, Range 5E, Sections 8 & 17

County: Chouteau County

Trust: Montana State University Eastern, University of Montana Western;
Common Schools

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 August 20, 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 23N Range 5E, Sections 8 and 17 (Exhibit B). 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. The proponent will salvage and replace topsoil and reseed disturbed areas with an approved seed mix.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

Application was received by DNRC Minerals Management Bureau on August 20, 2026.

The application was forwarded to the Lewistown Unit Office August 20, 2026.

The surface lessee for this tract will be contacted prior to commencing testing activities on each of the sections and informed of the application.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

No Action Alternative: The aggregate testing would be denied

Action Alternative: The aggregate testing 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 will not impact any unique geologic features.*

Land Cover ?

View Level 1 | View Level 2 | View Level 3

Level 1 Land Cover Summary

■ 86% Human Land Use

84% Agriculture

84% (2,137 Acres) [Cultivated Crops, Dryland](#)

1% (15 Acres) [Pasture/Hay, Dryland](#)

2% Transportation

2% (47 Acres) [Other Road](#)

<1% Developed

<1% (9 Acres) [Developed - Vegetation](#)

■ 11% Grassland

11% Lowland - Prairie Grassland

11% (278 Acres) [Great Plains Dry Mixedgrass Prairie](#) HGCN

■ 3% Wetland and Riparian

2% Wet Meadow and Marsh

2% (60 Acres) [Great Plains Wet Meadow, Marsh and Shrub Swamp](#) HOPC HGCN

<1% Alkaline - Saline Wetlands

<1% (8 Acres) [Great Plains Saline Marsh and Wet Meadow](#) HGCN

<1% Riparian and Wetland Forest

<1% (4 Acres) [Great Plains Floodplain Forest](#) HOC HGCN

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.

Section 8:

SOC Occurrences

with MT Status = Species of Concern, Special Status

Reports based on Visible Map Extent (Polygons are shown just for reference)

Species Occurrences

Species List | plus Occurrences | plus Obs (may take a while)

▣ Mammals - Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos*)

Section 17:

SOC Occurrences

with MT Status = Species of Concern, Special Status

Reports based on Visible Map Extent (Polygons are shown just for reference)

Species Occurrences

Species List | plus Occurrences | plus Obs (may take a while)

▣ Mammals - Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos*)

Conducting aggregate testing on this section 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 tract 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 one to two growing seasons.

Is the project 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 site evaluation was conducted by the DNRC staff archaeologist for the area of potential effect (APE). The search revealed tipi rings have been identified in the NE4SE4 of 23N, 5E, 8 of the APE.

The area in which the tipi rings are located are outlined in a map in Exhibit A and are to be avoided during testing activities.

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:
 - DNRC – AG-1533 – Ag and Grazing (Section 8)
 - DNRC – AG-9663 – Ag and Grazing (Section 17)
 - See Exhibit A – Areas of Avoidance

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?

- Yes:
 - NRCS – Chouteau County Long Range Plan

Checklist EA	Name: Kelly Bertellotti	Date: 8/28/2026
Prepared By:	Title: Minerals Resource Specialist	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

No Action Alternative: The proponent's application would be denied, and the proponent would not be allowed to conduct aggregate testing for the period requested in the application.

Action Alternative: The proponent's application would be granted, and the proponent would be allowed to conduct aggregate testing for the period requested in the application.

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 decided to select the action alternative, and the Department will issue an aggregate testing permit as applied for by the proponent. This decision is consistent with the mission of the State of Montana School Trust Lands and will protect the future income generating capacity of the land.

26.SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

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

Appendix A: List of Standard Stipulations:

I have concluded that through the implementation of the stipulations listed below that the impacts of the proposed action are non-significant, being either negligible or minor and short-term in nature.

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.
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.

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

Checklist EA Approved By:	Name:
	Title:
Signature:	Date: 9/14/26

Exhibit A:

Areas of Avoidance

Township 23N, Range 5E, Section 8 – NE4SE4



Exhibit A:

Areas of Avoidance

Township 23N, Range 5E, Section 17

9663_M.Pimperton Alfalfa Seeding

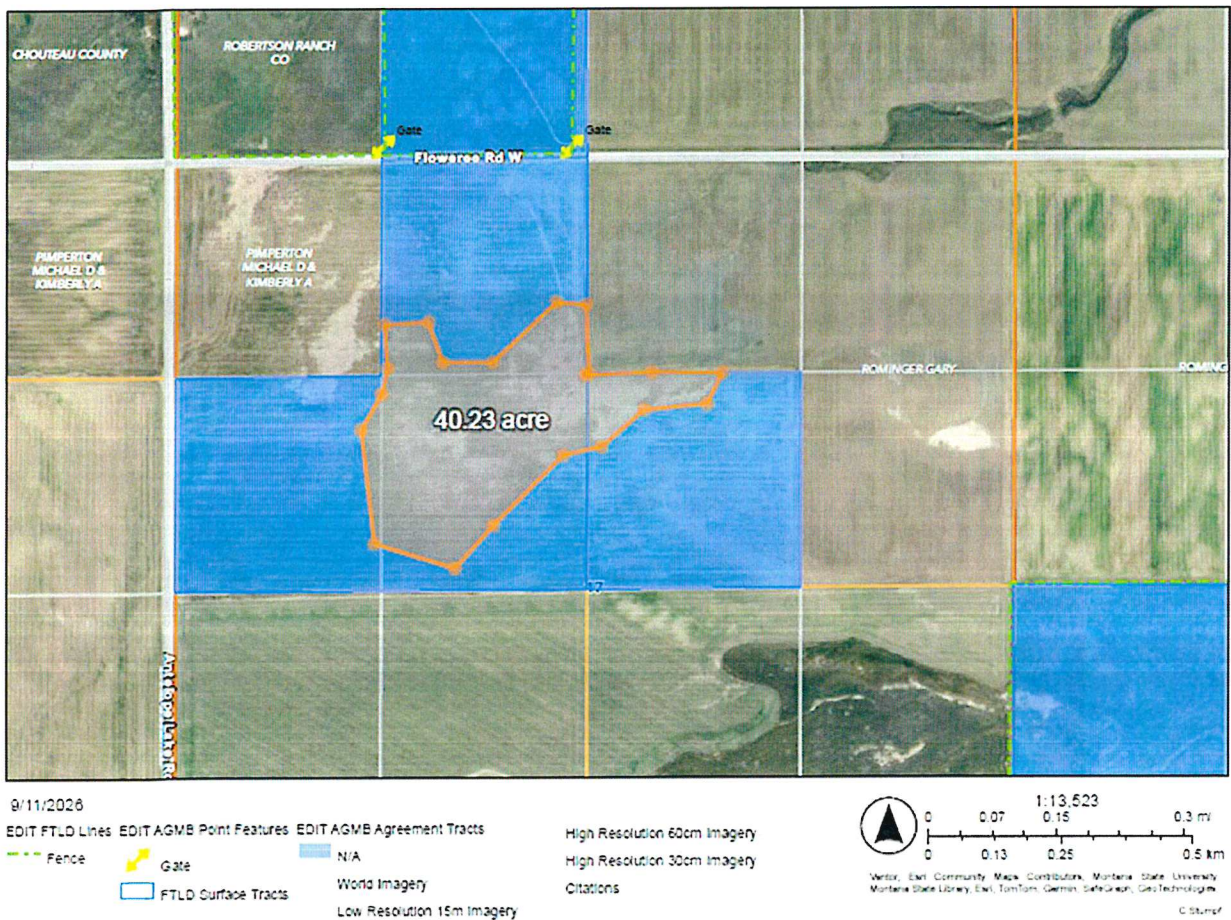


Exhibit B:

Township 23N, Range 5E, Section 8 and 17 – Montana State Trust Lands (Blue)



