

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Divide Testing
Proposed Implementation Date:	Fall/Winter 2023
Proponent:	Riverside Contracting, Inc.
Location:	T1S-R9W-Sections 8, 9, 16 and 17 (Common Schools Trust)
County:	Silver Bow

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Riverside Contracting Inc. henceforth referred to as the proponent, has applied for a gravel test permit on Trust Lands on the above-referenced tracts in Silver Bow County. This project area can be seen in attachment A on page 16. This project would utilize a backhoe to dig holes to a depth of approximately 20 feet. Testing and documenting would be performed by employees of Trust Lands and Riverside Contracting, Inc.

If approved, the proponent would be issued a test permit to determine the gravel resource contained within the above-referenced tracts. Gravel and dirt would be excavated from the ground and sub-surface. Topsoil would be saved, and the disturbance created would be reclaimed immediately upon completion of documenting the test pit.

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 has submitted a permit to test for aggregate to the DNRC to explore gravel resources. The Anaconda Unit has been notified of application. As well as the surface lessee Margaret M Noyce Trust – Lease No. 6400.

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

- Montana DNRC – TLMD – MMB – Permit to Test for Aggregate

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

No Action Alternative: The permit to test for aggregate would be denied and the proponent would not be allowed to test for aggregate from the Montana State Trust Lands tracts referenced above.

Action Alternative: The permit to test for aggregate would be approved and the proponent would be allowed to dig test holes on the proposed location within Montana State Trust Lands referenced above.

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 alluvium and colluvium, that overlie the Renova Formation made up of tuffaceous sandstone and siltstone containing subordinate interbeds of limestone and lenses of cobbles and pebbles.

Soils: According to the USDA's Web Soil Survey, the project area within State Trust Land sections 8, 9, 16 and 17 comprises of 18 soil types.

These soils exhibit the following properties:

K Factor – The K factor ratings indicate the susceptibility of a soil to sheet and rill erosion by water. The soils present in the project area have a low to medium susceptibility to erosion by water.

Shallow excavations – This rating measures the ease of digging and resistance to sloughing. These soils exhibit somewhat limited to very limited rating to shallow excavations.

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

Wind erodibility group – Soils found in the project area exhibit medium to high risk of wind erosion.

Soil restoration potential – Soils found in the project area exhibit a moderate to high potential for soil restoration.

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

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

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

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The proponent would strip and stockpile topsoil prior to continuing to dig to an approximate depth of approximately 20 feet below ground surface, evaluation of the potential aggregate resource would follow. The removal of topsoil and any potential aggregate resource would be reversible by replacing substrate back into the hole and spreading topsoil over the stripped area. Testing would be conducted in areas with mild topography and under dry or frozen conditions. This should mitigate the risk of displacing, compacting, or otherwise impacting the soils beyond the direct areas of testing. The test pits will be reclaimed immediately upon digging. These activities would not inhibit the success of reclamation. Negligible, short-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: There are no cumulative impacts expected to geology and soil quality, stability and moisture from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: Any impacts would be expected to last the duration of the permit, until final reclamation.

Mitigations

The potential selection of action alternative would include the following stipulation in the permit to test for aggregate:

- Testing activities would be conducted when the ground is dry or frozen to reduce potential for rutting.
- Topsoil would be saved in a separate pile and disturbance would be reclaimed immediately upon completion of logging the test hole(s).

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: There is an ephemeral drainage that begins in the NE4 of section 16 and at times flows through the N2 of section 16 and 17. In Sections 8 and 9 an ephemeral stream is also present that flows from the N2 of the SE4 and exits section 8 at the SENE4.

Ground Water: A search of the Montana Ground Water Information Center's website yields 18 water wells within 0.5 miles of the project area. Each well is summarized below in Table 1. Inaccurate reporting, less refined legal descriptions and poor mapping accuracy may lead to inconsistencies between the reported and physical location of groundwater wells.

GWIC ID	Latitude	Longitude	Surface Elevation	Total Depth	Static Water Level	Calculated Water Table Elevation
107113	45.7513	-112.7485	5390	33	8	5382
107119	45.7511	-112.7425	5570	69	20	5550
161779	45.7536	-112.7349	5590	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
107106	45.773122	-112.734075	5460	60	30	5430
107107	45.77046	-112.73517	5482	51	36	5446
107108	45.767757	-112.739101	5430	40	10	5420
107110	45.750665	-112.743031	5425	32	17	5408
107111	45.754288	-112.748271	5413	78	60	5353
107112	45.754288	-112.748271	5413	78	60	5353
107116	45.747043	-112.748271	5398	38	Unknown	Unknown
107117	45.747043	-112.748271	5398	32	3	5395
122789	45.746137	-112.746961	5395	21	15	5380
131967	45.769126	-112.7373619	5470	55	16	5454
231212	45.77046	-112.73517	5482	143	95	5387
263209	45.770643	-112.7301575	5558	243	160	5398
289581	45.770643	-112.7301575	5558	183	90	5468
311382	45.7698	-112.7374	5450	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
297885	45.759722	-112.749167	5455	80	47.5	5407.5

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

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

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The average calculated groundwater elevation from nearby water wells is approximately 5415 feet above sea level. The current project area elevation ranges approximately from 5435 to 5792 feet above sea level, which has an approximate range of 20 to 377 feet greater than the average calculated groundwater elevation.

Groundwater would not be expected to be encountered during testing activities. If groundwater is encountered during testing activities, it will be noted in the logs and the hole will be backfilled in the same manner as it is when groundwater is not encountered. Digging in groundwater can cause some temporary turbidity in the water table's direct vicinity, but overall quality and quantity would not be expected to change. A surface water feature would remain upon reclamation.

Overall, direct impacts to groundwater or surface water in the project area are expected to be negligible and short-term.

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

Cumulative Impacts: There are no cumulative impacts expected to surface or ground water quality or quantity, resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: Any impacts would be expected to be short term, until final reclamation.

Mitigations

The potential selection of action alternative would include the following stipulation in the permit to test for aggregate:

- All equipment utilized in testing activities must be regularly maintained and inspected to ensure it is not leaking fluids, spreading noxious weeds or creating an undue fire hazard.

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, emission sources in the project area include vehicles travelling on Interstate 15, Montana Highway 43, and other adjacent roads. As well as emissions from heating homes and other buildings in the greater Divide area. Fugitive dust from vehicle travel on other adjacent gravel roads contributes small amounts of airborne particulate matter in the area. Farming activity including plowing may also create seasonal fugitive dust in the area.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The selection of the no action alternative would not be expected to have any impact to air quality.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: Fugitive dust may be generated from testing activities such as travelling to testing sites, digging test holes, and reclaiming. Air quality could be temporarily affected during testing activities. Some dust particulates from traveling to the test sites and digging the test pits may affect air quality temporarily during gravel testing operations. There are no anticipated long-term effects on air quality.

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

Cumulative Impacts: There are no cumulative impacts expected to surface or ground water quality or quantity from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: Any impacts would be expected to be short term, until final reclamation.

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 proposed testing area is covered by Montane Grasslands and Sagebrush Steppe. Montane Grassland system is comprised of perennial bunch grasses and forbs, dominated by Rough Fescue. Sagebrush Steppe is comprised of a variety of sagebrush.

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 impact to vegetation.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: Vegetation communities would be affected by this project. The use of excavation equipment would temporarily disturb some areas of the plant community. This would occur from the vegetation being compacted and excavated by equipment. Damage to the plant community should be lessened at this time of year since most species should be dormant. Per the stipulations of the permit, the proponent would be responsible for the management and mitigation of invasive weeds at the testing sites. The proponent will also be responsible for reseeding the affected areas with a native range mixture as suggested by the Anaconda Unit office.

Secondary Impacts: Secondary impacts may occur in the form of noxious weed propagation from the site. Weed impacts can be mitigated to negligible with proper efforts.

Cumulative Impacts: There are short term, negligible cumulative impacts expected to vegetation cover, quantity and quality from the selection of the action alternative.

Duration: Any impacts would be expected to be short term, until final reclamation.

Mitigations

The potential selection of action alternative would include the following stipulation in the permit to test for aggregate:

- The Proponent will be responsible for the management and mitigation of invasive weeds at the testing sites.
- The Proponent will be responsible for reseeding the disturbed areas with a certified weed free seed mixture suggested by the Anaconda Unit office.

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 proposed project area serves as habitat for a variety of big game, large and small mammals, raptors, and a variety of other birds.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The selection of the no action alternative would not be expected to have any impact to terrestrial, avian and aquatic life and habitats.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The action alternative would create minor audible and visual disturbances within a short time frame to any animals that may occupy the project area or its surroundings. Similar habitat and forage can be found throughout the surrounding area and could sustain the impacted wildlife species temporarily. Grazing by domestic animals would continue. Impacts to terrestrial, avian and aquatic life and habitats are expected to be short-term and minor.

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

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

Duration: Any impacts would be expected to be short term, until final reclamation.

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

An inventory of the Montana Natural Heritage Program's Species of Concern was completed for the project area. There was one point observation within the project area over the past decade. The observation was of a Bald Eagle.

Further research also found there are several Bald Eagle and Golden Eagle nests along the Bighole River. The project area does overlap with the suggested setback of 3000 meters from the Golden Eagle nest.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The selection of the no action alternative would not be expected to have any impact to terrestrial, avian and aquatic life and habitats.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The action alternative would create small temporary disturbances within a short time frame to species of concern in the area. Negligible changes to existing vegetation would occur, thus no changes in available habitats would occur. Some limited, short-duration disturbance to individuals of any of these species may occur if they are in the vicinity. The project will occur outside the Eagle breeding season, and Eagles are not expected to be nesting this time of year in this location. Due to the minimal length and disturbance The impacts to these species is expected to be negligible.

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

Cumulative Impacts: There are existing human disturbances near the project area. This includes HWY 43, Interstate 15, businesses, and ranches. All of these factors are disturbances that have been present for long periods of time. The proposed activity would add to the disturbance, in a negligible and short term manner.

Duration: Any impacts would be expected to be short term, until final reclamation.

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, but it should be noted that Class III level inventory work has not been conducted there to date.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The selection of the no action alternative would not be expected to have any impact to historical or archaeological sites.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: Trust Lands staff familiar with identifying surface stone features would be present during testing operations. Any historic or archeologic sites can be avoided by simply moving a test hole in either direction. If subsurface archeologic features are encountered during testing all work would stop until a professional evaluation can be made.

Secondary Impacts: There are no secondary impacts expected to historical and archaeological sites.

Cumulative Impacts: There are no cumulative impacts expected to historical and archaeological sites.

Duration: No impacts expected.

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

Located approximately 25.5 miles south of Butte on Interstate 15. Testing operations may be visible from the community of Divide, the scattered residents, and vehicles traveling on I-15.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The selection of the no action alternative would not be expected to have any impact to aesthetics.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: Recreationists, residents, and motorists in the area would see an excavator and several trucks in the testing area. The testing is only expected to take 1 or 2 days. After the testing is complete, the test hole disturbances will be visible by individuals recreating in the project vicinity. As revegetation is established, the test holes will become less apparent and are expected to return to a pre-testing level of aesthetics. Minimal disturbances to aesthetics are expected during operations. However, there are no long-term effects on aesthetics anticipated if the action alternative is selected. Increased noise levels will also occur from the proposed action. Noise levels from testing activities are expected to be like those produced from motorists travelling on Interstate 15 or Highway 43. Increases in noise levels are expected to be minor and short-term.

Secondary Impacts: Noise and visual impacts will occur outside of the project area. However, these impacts are expected to be minimal and short-term.

Cumulative Impacts: There are no cumulative impacts expected to aesthetics.

Duration: Any impacts would be expected to be short term, until final reclamation.

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

There are no limited resources in the area that would be utilized for this project.

Alternatives**No Action Alternative:**

The no action alternative is not expected to have impacts to the demands of environmental resources of land, water, air or energy.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The proposed project would create individual test holes within a larger area of approximately 3,148.96 acres. The overall disturbance created within the project area would be expected to have minor and short-term impacts on the environmental resources of the land. The expected impacts to water and air were identified earlier in this document. Energy resources in the area are abundant and any impact to energy resources would be expected to be negligible and short-term.

Secondary Impacts: No secondary impacts expected.

Cumulative Impacts: No cumulative impacts expected.

Duration: Any impacts would be expected to be short term, until final reclamation.

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

The entirety of the testing area has an overlying grazing lease held by Margaret M Noyce Trust. There is also an MDT stockyard just south of HWY 43 on section 17.

Alternatives**No Action Alternative:**

The no action alternative is not expected to have impacts to other environmental documents or projects pertinent to the area.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The grazing lessee would realize a short-term negligible loss in vegetation within their lease. Upon reclamation the impacted areas would return to native rangeland. The proposed project would have a temporary, negligible impact to the surface lease agreement. The proposed project would not be expected to have any impact on the MDT yard. Any future development in the area would likely be restricted to utility or mineral development.

Secondary Impacts: No secondary impacts expected.

Cumulative Impacts: No cumulative impacts expected.

Duration: Any impacts would be expected to be short term, until final reclamation.

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.

Current Conditions

The current condition of the site poses no risk to human health or safety.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The no action alternative is not expected to have impact to human health or safety.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The proposed action is expected to have no impacts to human health or safety, other than those typically associated with gravel testing employees. The project area is in a rural area away from residences.

Secondary Impacts: No secondary impacts expected.

Cumulative Impacts: No cumulative impacts expected.

Duration: No Impacts expected.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

Current Conditions

The testing area is in a rural area where agricultural is the most prominent industry.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The no action alternative would not be expected to have any impact to industrial, commercial, and agriculture activities and production.

Action Alternative:

Gravel testing would not be expected to have any significant impacts upon the industrial, commercial, or agriculture activities.

Secondary Impacts: No secondary impacts expected.

Cumulative Impacts: No cumulative impacts expected.

Duration: Any impacts would be expected to be short term, until final reclamation.

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 Divide, Montana. The workforce consists mainly of fly-fishing guides and ranchers.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The no action alternative is not expected to impact the quantity and distribution of employment.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: No direct impacts are expected to quantity and distribution of employment.

Secondary Impacts: No secondary impacts expected.

Cumulative Impacts: No cumulative impacts expected.

Duration: No impacts expected.

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 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: No secondary impacts expected.

Cumulative Impacts: No cumulative impacts expected.

Duration: No impacts expected.

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 43 and Interstate 15. Emergency services would likely come from Butte, MT.

Alternatives**No Action Alternative:**

The no action alternative is not expected to have any impact on the demand for government services.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The proposed action is not anticipated to have any impact on demand for government services.

Secondary Impacts: No secondary impacts expected.

Cumulative Impacts: No cumulative impacts expected.

Duration: No impacts expected.

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 or in the project vicinity.

Alternatives**No Action Alternative:**

Direct Impacts: The no action alternative is not expected to have any impact on locally adopted environmental plans or goals.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: No impacts expected, there are no known zoning or management plans.

Secondary Impacts: No secondary impacts expected.

Cumulative Impacts: No cumulative impacts expected.

Duration: Any impacts would be expected to be short term, until final reclamation.

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 area is not designated as wilderness nor does it provide access to wilderness. Sections 9 and 16 border BLM managed Hamburg Spires Wilderness Study Area. Montana State Trust Lands are accessible for public use by purchasing the necessary conservation license through the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

Alternatives**No Action Alternative:**

The no action alternative is not expected to have any impact on the access to and quality of recreational and wilderness activities.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: The project area does allow for public use. The public recreation on this tract is expected to consist of hunters. Direct impacts to recreationists would be temporary while testing activities occur. An increase in noise and visual effects would occur for species in the area that sportsman may be targeting.

Secondary Impacts: No secondary impacts expected.

Cumulative Impacts: No cumulative impacts expected.

Duration: Any impacts would be expected to be short term, until final reclamation.

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 major population center to the project area is Butte, Montana.

Alternatives**No Action Alternative:**

Direct Impacts: The no action alternative is not expected to impact the density and distribution of population and housing.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: No direct impacts expected to the density and distribution of population and housing.

Secondary Impacts: No secondary impacts expected.

Cumulative Impacts: No cumulative impacts expected.

Duration: Any impacts would be expected to be short term, until final reclamation.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Current Conditions

There are no known native or traditional lifestyles near the project area.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative:

The no action alternative is not expected to impact social structures, native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Action Alternative:

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

Secondary Impacts: No secondary impacts expected.

Cumulative Impacts: No cumulative impacts expected.

Duration: Any impacts would be expected to be short term, until final reclamation.

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 impact cultural uniqueness or diversity.

Action Alternative:

Direct Impacts: No direct impacts expected.

Secondary Impacts: No secondary impacts expected.

Cumulative Impacts: No cumulative impacts expected.

Duration: Any impacts would be expected to be short term, until final reclamation.

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 return to the trust would be a one-time application fee of \$25.00 and the testing activities should not impede the existing utilization of State Lease No. 6400 or the MDT stockyard.

Upon reclamation, vegetation would be reestablished, and the area returned to grazing and agricultural ground.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Thomas Palin	Date: November 15, 2023
	Title: Mineral Resource Specialist	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

The action alternative is the selected alternative.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The granting of the requested aggregate test permit pits on this tract of State Trust Lands is not expected to result in, nor cause significant environmental impacts. The proposed action satisfies the Trust's fiduciary mandate and accounts for 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, and sage grouse requirements.
2. Topsoil/sod will be stockpiled separately from subsoil for reclamation. The licensee 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.
3. Geologic, geochemical/geophysical information (including but not limited to detailed sample site locations, areas disturbed by gravel pit testing, and sample results for each corresponding sample site) if collected for the tract will be provided to Minerals Management Bureau, TLMD MT-DNRC with a report on exploration activities. The lessee shall also concurrently provide GPS, GIS, or other data, detailed maps, and/or aerial photos associated with the associated permit to MMB. The licensee should advise the department if they consider this information confidential.
4. If any cultural or paleontological resources are encountered during mining, all operation must stop, and the proponent shall contact the DNRC.
5. Testing will be limited to occur only under dry or frozen conditions, to mitigate impacts on soils.
6. All equipment utilized in testing must be inspected prior to testing to ensure it is not leaking fluids, spreading noxious weeds, or creating an undue fire hazard.
7. The proponent will seed disturbances with the Anaconda Unit approved seed mix.
 - Brian Robbins, Missoula Unit Manager – 406-563-6078
 - Jordan Rice, Land Use Specialist, Missoula Unit – 406-542-4206
8. The proponent will contact the DNRC at least 48 hours before project activities commence.
9. If any damage to fences is incurred the proponent will fix damages.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Brian Robbins
	Title: Anaconda Unit Manager
Signature:	/s/ Brian Robbins  Date: 11/15/2023

Attachment A

