

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Kevin Rim Seismic
Proposed Implementation Date:	Fall 2026
Proponent:	Beyond Horizon, LLC
Location:	Surface T36N, Range 3W, Section 32, SE4 Minerals T36N, Range 3W, Section 32, W2SE4 T36N, Range 4W, Section 36, All
County:	Toole
Trust:	Common Schools, Capitol Buildings

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Beyond Horizon, LLC. (Henceforth referred to as the proponent) has submitted an application to conduct a seismic survey on the Montana Trust Lands. This project would utilize heavy vibration equipment and seismic receiving equipment for the purpose of mapping the subsurface below the tract for oil and gas development potential. The seismic activities will be contracted through Explor Geoscience USA. The Montana trust lands involved, are part of a much larger seismic project that is being proposed. The proponent is proposing to utilize vibroseis only for the project. Vibroseis is the process of utilizing a large truck that “thumps” the ground and sends vibrations into the subsurface which are then reflected by the subsurface and received by the receiver lines. Upon completion of the project, the receiver lines will be removed and the project area would return to its pre-existing uses. This evaluation will focus on the impacts to Montana trust lands surface ownership (project area), as there will be no impacts to the oil and gas estate from the proposed action.

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 seismic application for the project area, along with all other necessary documents. The Conrad Unit office staff has been informed of the application. The proponent has contacted the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation’s (Department) surface lessee and has settled surface damages. The surface lessee was given an opportunity to provide comments on the proposal.

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

Geophysical exploration permit – Toole County Clerk and Recorder. This permit must be sent to the Montana Board of Oil and Gas upon approval.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

No Action Alternative: The permit to conduct a seismic survey on State of Montana Trust Lands would be denied.

Action Alternative: The permit to conduct a seismic survey on State of Montana Trust Lands would be approved.

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: The project is proposed just west of the Kevin Rim in in Toole County. The Kevin Rim is a prominent geologic feature that may be seen from miles around its vicinity.

Soil: The soil composition of section 32, T36N, Range 3W is nearly entirely comprised of one unit, the Williams Vida Loam. The applicable properties to consider for this project are listed below in Table 1.

Soil Name	Risk of Compaction	Risk of Rutting	Erosion Hazard	Reclamation suitability
Williams-Vida Loam	Medium	Severe	Slight	Well-Suited

Table 1: Soil properties in Section 32, Township 36N, Range 3W.

Alternatives

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

Action Alternative:

- **Direct Impacts:** The selection of the action alternative would not be expected to have any impact upon the geological uniqueness of the area. The project would not alter the Kevin Rim in a structural or meaningful manner.

Soils at the project site do have a potential to be impacted by the project. Table 1 shows that the soil in the project area have a severe risk of soil rutting. To mitigate the impacts to soils, if the action alternative is selected, a special stipulation shall be added to the permit which only allows activities when soils are dry. No activity shall be allowed under wet or muddy conditions. This will mitigate the potential for soil rutting and other damage during the project activities. Additionally, the vibroseis trucks are 60,000 lbs. Which can cause strain on soils particularly on slopes. If the action alternative is selected, a special stipulation shall be added to the permit that prohibits the use of vibroseis vehicles on steep slopes.

- **Secondary Impacts:** No secondary impacts are expected.
- **Cumulative Impacts:** The proposed action is not expected to have any cumulative impacts on the geology of the proposed area. The soils within the project area may be slightly displaced and compacted under dry conditions beyond their current state. These impacts would be expected to be negligible overall.
- **Duration:** The impacts are expected to be short term.

Mitigations

The potential selection of action alternative would include the following stipulations in the seismic permit:

- All activities allowed under this permit are limited to when the ground is dry. No work may be conducted when soils are wet or muddy.
- Vehicles are not allowed to travel on topography steeper than 15% grade.
- Any rutting or damages to soil created by the permittee will be reclaimed immediately upon completion of activity in the area.

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 contains several small wetlands areas .

Ground Water:

A search of the Montana GWIC shows that one water well has been drilled in section 32. It does not have a reported depth of groundwater on the GWIC website.

Alternatives

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

Action Alternative:

- Direct Impacts: The proposed activity is not expected to impact surface or groundwater quantity, quality or distribution in the project area. Seismic activities do have the ability to impact surface water, but the administrative rules of Montana and the seismic permit require a 300-foot setback from all surface water. This will mitigate the risk of impacting the surface water within the project area. No blasting activities are proposed for this project, so no impacts to surface or ground water will occur from blasting. The proposed action will not penetrate the subsurface therefore there will be no impacts to ground water.
- Secondary Impacts: No secondary impacts expected.
- Cumulative Impacts: No impacts are expected therefore no cumulative impacts are expected.
- Duration: No impacts are expected; therefore, duration is not applicable.

Mitigations

The potential selection of action alternative would include the following stipulation in the seismic permit:

- All equipment utilized in operations must be inspected and maintained daily, prior to activities to ensure it is not leaking fluids, spreading noxious weeds, or creating an undue fire hazard. Also standard setback from surface water features, springs, and riparian areas will be implemented.

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 the emission sources in the project area are fugitive dust and exhaust from residential, agricultural and oil and gas activities.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative: The no action alternative would not be expected to have any direct, secondary or cumulative impacts to air quality.

Action Alternative:

- **Direct Impacts:** An increase in airborne pollutants and particulates would occur during seismic activities from vehicles, and other associated equipment exhaust. An increase in dust particulates may occur due to seismic operations and truck traffic. Short-term, minor impacts to air quality in the project area are expected. It is difficult to estimate how much diesel fuel and gasoline will be utilized during the proposed project. Table 2 shows the estimated emissions in CO₂ equivalent (CO₂e) based upon several fuel usage scenarios.

Diesel Usage	Gasoline Usage	Total CO ₂ e emissions.
50 gallons	50 gallons	0.98 metric ton
100 gallons	100 gallons	1.96 metric ton
200 gallons	200 gallons	3.92 metric ton

Table 2: Potential emission scenarios based upon fuel usage.

The amount of CO₂e emissions expected to be created by the project are non-significant when compared to the total daily emissions of Montana, the Region and the United States. The emission of CO₂e from the project activities would be expected to have negligible impacts on air quality.

- **Secondary Impacts:** Fugitive dust and emissions may travel offsite to the surrounding area. Any particulate or pollutant would dissipate over distance. Secondary impacts are expected to be short-term and negligible.
- **Cumulative Impacts:** Minor amounts of additional dust beyond what is currently created by agriculture activities would be expected from the action alternative. The emissions created from project activities would be additive to the emissions created around the world.
- **Duration:** Impacts from dust would be expected to be short-term. Impacts from CO₂ emissions would be expected to be long term, but negligible.

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

Vegetation within section 32 is comprised of Prairie Grassland according to the Montana Natural Heritage Program.

No Action Alternative: The no action alternative would not be expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to vegetation cover, quantity and quality in the project area.

Action Alternative:

- **Direct Impacts:** Vegetative communities would be impacted in the seismic area. The use of equipment would compact plant communities within the area where vehicles have been driven and vibroseis is completed. Some plants would be damaged by the proposed action and may not be viable for animal grazing after the project's completion. It is expected that these plants will return to their normal sustenance in the following growing season. No long-term impacts to the vegetation communities are expected. Off-road vehicle travel of any kind presents an opportunity for wildfire to spark and noxious weed spreading. The proponent would be required to keep a fire extinguisher on all equipment and regularly inspect equipment for fire hazards and potential to spread noxious weeds. Overall, the impacts to vegetation on the tract are expected to be minor and localized to areas in which vibroseis is occurring. The proponent shall spread a Conrad-Unit approved native seed mixture on all vegetation disturbances and shall monitor and eliminate any noxious weed introduction or growth resulting from the project activities. Mitigations will reduce the impacts to minor.
- **Secondary Impacts:** As a result of the selection of the action alternative vegetation may be disturbed allowing for the propagation of weeds. In areas where vegetation does not come back, the proponent will be responsible for reseeding the affected areas with a seed mixture established by the Conrad Unit Office. Secondary impacts are expected to be short term and negligible.
- **Cumulative Impacts:** The disturbance of vegetation would be additive to any current disturbances. The propagation of weeds may occur without proper mitigation. The mitigations listed below ensure the proponent is responsible for mitigation and elimination of noxious weeds resulting from project activities. Cumulative impacts are expected to be minor.
- **Duration:** Any impact would be expected to be short term.

Mitigations

The potential selection of action alternative would include the following stipulation in the seismic permit:

- The permittee will be required to re-seed any disturbed areas with an approved seed mixture by the DNRC –Conrad Unit and monitor for noxious weeds.
- All equipment utilized in operations must be inspected and maintained daily, prior to activities to ensure it is not leaking fluids, spreading noxious weeds, or creating an undue fire hazard.
- Any noxious or invasive weeds created or propagated resulting from the permitted actions must be mitigated and eliminated by the permittee.
- All vehicles utilized in the permitted activities must be equipped with fire extinguishers.
- Any fire created and the associated damage resulting from the permitted activities will be the sole responsibility of the permittee.

- Prior to entering the permitted area, the permittee must wash all equipment to avoid the spread of noxious and invasive weeds.
- Off-road vehicle traffic shall be limited only to travel that is necessary for the completion of permit operations.

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 likely provides habitat to a variety of wildlife species which may include deer, antelope, and black bear. Small rodents, and other mammals including small to medium sized predators such as foxes and coyotes may also be found on the project site. A variety of birds including waterfowl may also utilize the site and the associated habitat seasonally.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative: 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 selection of the action alternative would create a temporary disruption to general wildlife throughout the duration of seismic activities. Similar habitat and forage are adjacent to the project area and could sustain the wildlife displaced during seismic activities. Short-term, minor impacts are expected to wildlife habitat from the action alternative.
- **Secondary Impacts:** Negligible impacts would be expected, animals displaced from the project area would need to utilize surrounding lands while seismic activities occur.
- **Cumulative Impacts:** The selection of the action alternative would not be expected to have cumulative impacts to wildlife in the area.
- **Duration:** Any impact would be expected to be short term.

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 (MT NHP) species of concern – species occurrences yielded multiple results. Which can be viewed in Table 1 below

Table 1: Species of concern occurrences within project area.

+ Mammals - Northern Hoary Bat	(<i>Lasiurus cinereus</i>)
+ Mammals - Silver-haired Bat	(<i>Lasionycteris noctivagans</i>)
+ Birds - Chestnut-collared Longspur	(<i>Calcarius ornatus</i>)
+ Birds - Ferruginous Hawk	(<i>Buteo regalis</i>)
+ Birds - Golden Eagle	(<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>)
+ Birds - Loggerhead Shrike	(<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>)
+ Birds - Long-billed Curlew	(<i>Numenius americanus</i>)
+ Birds - Thick-billed Longspur	(<i>Rhynchophanes mccownii</i>)

Alternatives

No Action Alternative: The no action alternative is not expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to unique endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources.

Action Alternative:

- Direct Impacts: Both Bat species are migratory and are most present during the late summer months. The proposed action is not expected to impact either of the Bat species. These Bats roost in timber, caves, under bridges, or in old barns. The project area is wholly grasslands and does not contain any roosting habitat. Project activities would occur during daylight hours when Bats are typically roosting and least active. Impacts to the Bat species listed from project activities would be negligible.

According to the MT NHP, the Chestnut-collared Longspur prefers native grass ecosystems for both habitat and nesting. This species may be present within the project area. Impacts to adults would be expected to be low, as the species would be expected to move to neighboring lands temporarily with an ability to return when the project is completed. The species nests from May until the first of August according to the MT NHP. It takes approximately 10-14 days for newly hatched birds to be able to fly. Once they are able to fly, project impacts to the species become negligible. To mitigate the potential impacts to the species a special provision should be added into the license to allow project activities to occur after September 1st. This should give any late hatches the opportunity to fledge and be able to temporarily vacate the project area if necessary.

The Golden Eagle typically utilizes elevated areas such as barren trees or cliffs to nest. It is not uncommon for the same nesting site to be utilized for decades. Golden Eagles typically nest from January until the end of August, when the juvenile birds can vacate the nest. In 2014, a nest was recorded into the MT NHP database which is adjacent to the project area. In order to protect nesting Golden Eagles and any juveniles potentially using the nest, a special stipulation will be added that no project activities may occur prior to September 1st. This should reduce the impacts of the proposed action to negligible.

The Ferruginous Hawk uses similar habitats for nesting as the Golden Eagle. The Ferruginous Hawk's nesting season is mostly completed by late July according to the MT NHP. In August, juveniles begin to migrate out of Montana, and followed shortly thereafter by the adult birds. The mitigation to be included for other species will also mitigate impacts for the Ferruginous Hawk. The impacts of the proposed action are expected to be negligible.

The Loggerhead Shrike utilizes the prairie grasslands of Montana to breed during the summer months. They arrive in Montana from the southern states in April to May of each year. During May, June and July, they complete their breeding cycle. During August and September, they begin their return migration to the southern states. The proposed action will occur during a time when the adolescents of this species should be able to fly. Therefore, the impacts to them, like the previous species would be negligible.

The Long-Billed Curlew also utilizes Montana's prairie grasslands as a breeding grounds. They prefer wetland areas with nearby native range. They arrive in Montana during April and May. The females depart Montana during late June and the males follow approximately one month behind, in late July. It is likely that any Long-Billed Curlew will have departed from the project area prior to the proposed action. Therefore, no impacts are expected.

The Thick-Billed Longspur is similar to many of the other bird species evaluated in this document. It also utilizes Montana's prairie grasslands for breeding. The species arrives in Late April and departs in September and October. The proposed action would be expected to have negligible impacts on the species.

- Secondary Impacts: Any individuals of the species of concern would likely seek suitable habitat elsewhere during project activities. This may cause the density of the species on neighboring habitats to increase temporarily, but would not be expected to have anything more than minor and short-term impacts to the associated species and their habitat.
- Cumulative Impacts: The impacts created by the selection of the action alternative is not expected to meaningfully change the cumulative impacts to any of the species of concern listed.
- Duration: Any impacts would be expected to be short term.

Mitigations

The potential selection of action alternative would include the following stipulation in the seismic permit:

- Permitted activities shall not occur prior to September 1, 2026.

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 formally recorded 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 no action alternative is not expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to historical and archaeological sites.

Action Alternative:

- Direct Impacts: Considering the low-impact nature of work proposed, seismic activities are expected to 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.
- Secondary Impacts: No secondary impacts expected.
- Cumulative impacts: No cumulative impacts expected.
- Duration: No impacts are expected; therefore duration is not applicable.

Mitigations

The potential selection of action alternative would include the following stipulation in the seismic permit:

- If any cultural or paleontological resources are encountered during seismic 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 proposed project area is in a very rural setting. There is a windfarm nearby that creates local traffic. The Kevin Rim is a prominent feature that is easily visible from I-15.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative: The no action alternative is not expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to aesthetics.

Action Alternative:

- Direct Impacts: An increase in noise from trucks and heavy equipment may be heard adjacent to the project area. Local traffic such as wind farm employees and ranchers may hear or see project operations. The project operations will not be visible from I-15 or any other major travel corridor. The impacts to aesthetics are likely to be minor and only last during project operations.
- Secondary Impacts: No secondary impacts expected.
- Cumulative Impacts: The cumulative impacts in the form of added noise and visual disturbance would be expected to be negligible.
- Duration: Any impacts would be expected to be short term.

Mitigations

The potential selection of action alternative would include the following stipulation in the seismic permit:

- Work shall be limited to daylight hours only.

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 composition of land, water and air is described within other sections of this document. The project would require the use of diesel fuel and gasoline for equipment.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative: The no action alternative is not expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to the demands of environmental resources of land, water, air or energy.

Action Alternative:

- Direct Impacts: The impacts to land, water, and air have been evaluated in each of their respective resource sections. The energy resources needed to complete the project would be diesel fuel and gasoline. Both are abundant and readily available near the project area. The impacts to energy resources by the proposed action are expected to be negligible.
- Secondary Impacts: No secondary impacts expected.
- Cumulative Impacts: No cumulative impacts expected.
- Duration: Any impacts would be 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

This tract has an active Ag & Grazing lease which is held by Simmes Ranch, Inc. All of Mineral ownership involved in the project has active oil and gas leases. The lessee for section 36 is the proponent, and the lease for section 32 has a pending assignment to the proponent.

No Action Alternative: The no action alternative is not expected to have direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to other environmental documents or projects pertinent to the area.

Action Alternative:

- Direct Impacts: The grazing lessee would realize a short-term minor loss in available forage in their leased area. The surface damages have been settled between the surface lessee and the proponent, a signed surface damages settlement has been received by the Department. Upon reclamation the impacted areas would return to native rangeland. The oil and gas lessee would be expected to benefit from the proposed activity, as it would provide critical information relating to the subsurface underlying the tract. This would be utilized to determine potential drilling targets and could lead to significant future development of oil or gas resources on the tract.
- Secondary Impacts: If seismic activities show favorable results for the exploration of oil and gas, there may be future development on this tract in the form of a well, its pad and access road. If

future development does occur, another assessment will be conducted evaluating the impacts of the proposed action and the surface lessee would be compensated for any damages resulting from such action.

- **Cumulative Impacts:** The cumulative impacts from the proposed activity to the surface lessee are expected to be negligible. The cumulative impacts of the proposed activity to the oil and gas lessee could be significant in a positive manner.
- **Duration:** Any impacts to the surface lessee would be expected to be short term. Impacts to the oil and gas lessee may be long term.

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 conditions at the site pose little risk to human health and safety. There is some uneven ground that may present risks for trips, slips or falls to anyone that is on the tract.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative: The no action alternative is not expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to human health or safety.

Action Alternative:

- **Direct Impacts:** The proposed action utilizes heavy equipment and machinery. The activities do not pose any risk to the general public, but they do contain risks for the individuals conducting the seismic activity. The company conducting seismic activity is solely responsible for the training, health and safety of their employees. Proper training and personal protective equipment mitigate the impacts to human health and safety to minor impacts. If the action alternative is selected it should contain an indemnification stipulation stating that any injury or death caused by project activities is the sole responsibility of the permittee and that the permittee shall hold the Department harmless for any injuries, losses, damages, deaths or liabilities.
- **Secondary Impacts:** No secondary impacts expected.
- **Cumulative Impacts:** No changes to cumulative impacts would be expected.
- **Duration:** Impacts may be short-term or long-term.

Mitigations

The potential selection of action alternative would include the following stipulation in the seismic permit:

- The permittee shall indemnify and hold harmless the State of Montana from any claims, damages, injuries, losses, deaths or liabilities resulting from the permitted activities.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

Current Conditions

The project area is currently utilized for agricultural production, the surface lessee utilizes the area to graze livestock.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative: The no action alternative would not be expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to industrial, commercial, and agriculture activities and production.

Action Alternative:

- Direct Impacts: Seismic activities are commercial in nature. If seismic results are favorable, it could lead to future commercial oil and gas production. The proposed activity would have minor impacts on the current agricultural activities which have already been evaluated in this document.
- Secondary Impacts: No secondary impacts would be expected.
- Cumulative Impacts: No changes to cumulative impacts would be expected.
- Duration: No impacts are expected; Therefore duration is not applicable.

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

Most individuals who are employed in the project are farmers or ranchers. There is some legacy oil and gas production that employs some people in the area.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative: The no action alternative is not expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impact 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: No secondary impacts expected.
- Cumulative Impacts: No cumulative impacts could be expected.
- Duration: No impacts are expected; Therefore duration is not applicable.

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 impacts 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 is expected from the selection of the action alternative.
- Secondary Impacts: No secondary impacts expected.
- Cumulative Impacts: No cumulative impacts expected.
- Duration: None

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 project area is in a rural portion of Toole County where the traffic is limited to local ranchers, and windfarm employees.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative: The no action alternative is not expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impact on the demand for government services.

Action Alternative:

- Direct Impacts: During seismic activities an increase in local traffic may occur. The action alternative would have short-term and negligible impacts to traffic patterns. There will be no changes to fire protection, police, schools or other government services resulting from the selection of the action alternative.
- Secondary Impacts: No secondary impacts expected.
- Cumulative Impacts: No cumulative impacts expected.
- Duration: No impacts are expected; therefore duration is not applicable.

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 the project area.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative: The no action alternative is not expected to have any direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to 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: No impacts are expected; Therefore, duration is not applicable.

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 proposed project area receives minimal amounts of public recreation. It does not provide access to wilderness areas.

Alternatives

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

Action Alternative:

- Direct Impacts: The proposed action may have short-term minor impacts to recreation during project activities.
- Secondary Impacts: No secondary impacts expected.
- Cumulative Impacts: No cumulative impacts expected.
- Duration: Any impact would be expected to be 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

There are very few houses near the project area, the closest towns are Kevin and Sunburst.

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: The selection of the action alternative would not be expected to have any impact upon the density and distribution of population and housing.
- Secondary Impacts: No secondary impacts expected.
- Cumulative Impacts: No cumulative impacts expected.
- Duration: No impacts are expected; Therefore duration is not applicable.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Current conditions

The Blackfoot Reservation is located approximately 15 miles west of the project area.

Alternatives

No Action Alternative: The no action alternative is not expected to have 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: No secondary impacts expected.
- Cumulative Impacts: No cumulative impacts expected.
- Duration: No impacts are expected; Therefore, duration is not applicable.

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 direct, secondary, or cumulative impacts to cultural uniqueness or diversity.

Action Alternative:

- Direct Impacts: No direct impacts are expected to unique qualities of the area.
- Secondary Impacts: No secondary impacts expected.
- Cumulative Impacts: No cumulative impacts expected.
- Duration: No impacts are expected; Therefore, duration is not applicable.

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.

A seismic application has been filed with the appropriate \$10.00 fee. If the action alternative is selected, the permittee would pay \$100 per mile of vibroseis. In the preliminary plan submitted by the proponent there were approximately 1.06 miles of vibroseis lines. This equates to \$106 total, which the proponent shall submit prior to authorization of the permit. If actual work completed differs from the preliminary plan, expenses shall be reconciled by the Department and permittee.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Zack Winfield	Date: 7/29/2026
	Title: Petroleum Engineer	

V. FINDING**25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:**

After reviewing this document, the project file and the applicable statutes, rules and policies that govern seismic activities on Montana Trust Lands, I have decided to select the action alternative, and the Department will issue a seismic permit to the proponent.

Through the utilization of the special stipulations listed below, the impacts to the respective resources from seismic activities will be non-significant. The issuance of the seismic permit advances the mission of Montana Trust Lands by generating revenue for the school trust beneficiary of the tract. The future income-generating capacity of the land will be protected by the provisions of the seismic license and the associated special stipulations included within.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

I conclude all identified potential impacts will be mitigated by utilizing the stipulations listed below and no significant impacts will occur by implementing the selected alternative.

- All activities allowed under this permit are limited to when the ground is dry. No work may be conducted when soils are wet or muddy.
- Vehicles are not allowed to travel on topography steeper than 15% grade.
- Any rutting or damages to soil created by the permittee will be reclaimed immediately upon completion of activity in the area.
- All equipment utilized in operations must be inspected and maintained daily, prior to activities to ensure it is not leaking fluids, spreading noxious weeds, or creating an undue fire hazard.
- The permittee will be required to re-seed any disturbed areas with an approved seed mixture by the DNRC –Conrad Unit and monitor for noxious weeds.
- All equipment utilized in operations must be inspected and maintained daily, prior to activities to ensure it is not leaking fluids, spreading noxious weeds, or creating an undue fire hazard.

- Any noxious or invasive weeds created or propagated resulting from the permitted actions must be mitigated and eliminated by the permittee.
- All vehicles utilized in the permitted activities must be equipped with fire extinguishers.
- Any fire created and the associated damage resulting from the permitted activities will be the sole responsibility of the permittee.
- Prior to entering the permitted area, the permittee must wash all equipment to avoid the spread of noxious and invasive weeds.
- Off-road vehicle traffic shall be limited only to travel that is necessary for the completion of permit operations.
- Permitted activities shall not occur prior to September 1, 2026.
- If any cultural or paleontological resources are encountered during seismic activities, all operations must stop and the proponent shall contact DNRC.
- Work shall be limited to daylight hours only.
- The permittee shall indemnify and hold harmless the State of Montana from any claims, damages, injuries, losses, deaths or liabilities resulting from the permitted activities.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

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EIS

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More Detailed EA

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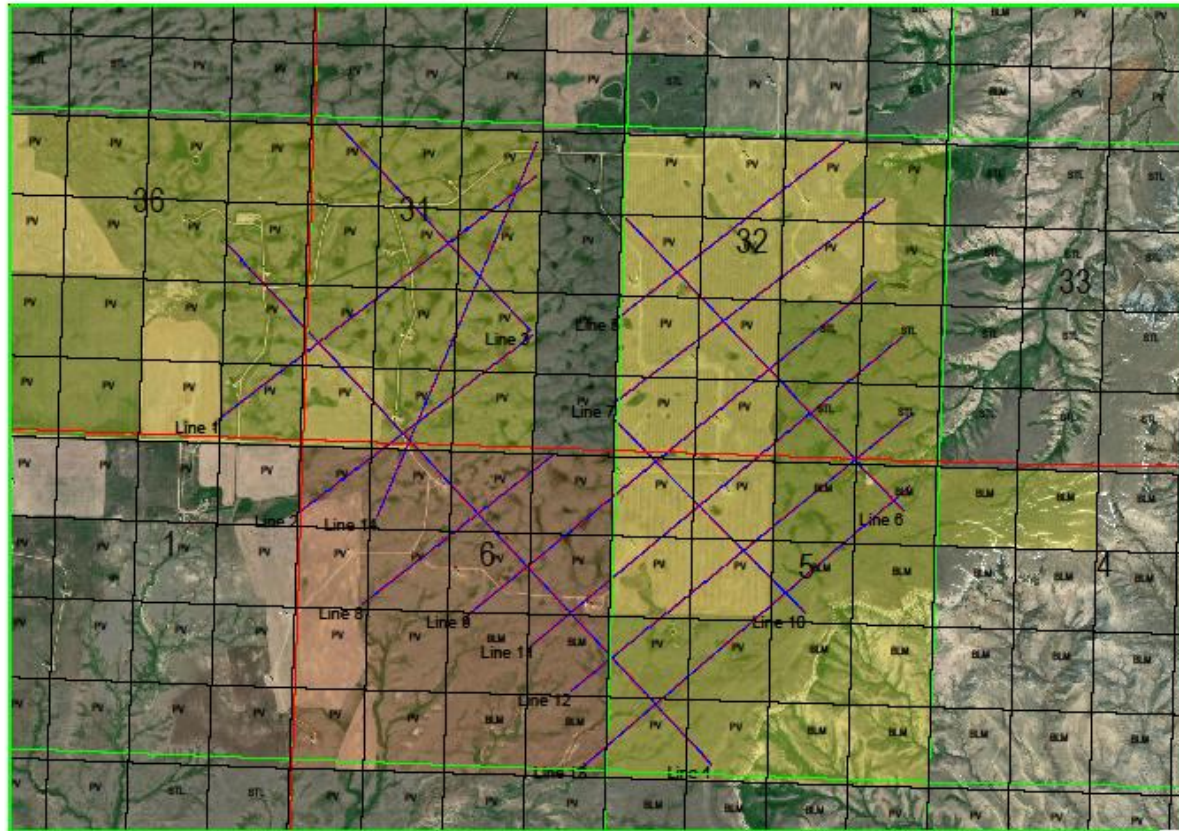
No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Erik Eneboe
	Title: Conrad Unit Manager
Signature:  Date: 8/11/2026	

Map of the proposed project area



Toole 2D
Nielsen Exploration
June 10, 2028
Version 3.07
Grid Plot



0 1000 2000 3000
Scale - 1:25000 (Feet)

Parameters
Receiver Line Interval
Source Line Interval
Receiver Interval
Source Interval
Patch
Line