

## Environmental Assessment Checklist

**Project Name: Blanchard Creek Road Rehabilitation**  
**Proposed Implementation Date: April 15, 2026 – September 30, 2027**  
**Proponent: Clearwater, Southwest Land Office, Montana DNRC**  
**County: Missoula**

### Type and Purpose of Action

**Description of Proposed Action:**

The Clearwater Unit of the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) is proposing the Blanchard Creek Road Rehabilitation Project. The project is located 10 air miles south of Seeley Lake, Montana (refer to Attachments vicinity map A-1 and project map A-2) and includes the following sections:

Beneficiary	Legal Description	Total Acres	Treated Acres
Common Schools	15N 15W 36	620	40
Public Buildings			
MSU 2 <sup>nd</sup> Grant			
MSU Morrill			
Eastern College-MSU/Western College-U of M			
Montana Tech			
University of Montana			
School for the Deaf and Blind			
Pine Hills School			
Veterans Home			
Public Land Trust			
Acquired Land			

**Objectives of the project include:**

The objective of the project is to rehabilitate a portion of the Blanchard Creek Road, which is currently directly adjacent to Blanchard Creek in the project area. Channel avulsion and streambank erosion have threatened the road prism for approximately 1,000 linear feet. Implementation of the project would, 1) Remove existing boulder which were placed in on the streambank as preemptive riprap and deposit outside of the SMZ, 2) Relocate a portion of the Blanchard Creek Road to a more favorable location away from Blanchard Creek, 3) install a bioengineered bank structure to minimize potential future erosion of the road prism at the site, and 4) plant deciduous riparian vegetation to assist in

stabilization of streambanks in the reach of Blanchard Creek adjacent to the bioengineered streambank.

Proposed activities include:

Action	Quantity
<b>Proposed Road Activities</b>	
	Feet
New permanent road construction	0.0
Road maintenance	2,500
Road reconstruction	1,000
<b>Other Activities</b>	
Bioengineered streambank stabilization	200
Riparian planting	1,000

<b>Duration of Activities:</b>	
<b>Implementation Period:</b>	April 15, 2026 – Sept 30, 2027

The lands involved in this proposed project are held in trust by the State of Montana. (Enabling Act of February 22, 1889; 1972 Montana Constitution, Article X, Section 11). The Board of Land Commissioners and the DNRC are required by law to administer these trust lands to produce the largest measure of reasonable and legitimate return over the long run for the beneficiary institutions (Section 77-1-202, MCA).

The DNRC would manage lands involved in this project in accordance with:

- The State Forest Land Management Plan (DNRC 1996),
- Administrative Rules for Forest Management (ARM 36.11.401 through 471),
- The Montana DNRC Forested State Trust Lands Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) (DNRC 2010)
- and all other applicable state and federal laws.

## Project Development

**SCOPING:**

DNRC specialists were consulted, to evaluate the potential impacts of the proposed activities and the applicability of Forest Management Rule and state and federal law.

Issues and concerns were incorporated into project planning and design and would be implemented under contract agreements.

**OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS**

**NEEDED:** *(Conservation Easements, Army Corps of Engineers, road use permits, etc.)*

- **United States Fish & Wildlife Service-** DNRC is managing the habitats of threatened and endangered species on this project by implementing the Montana DNRC Forested Trust Lands HCP and the associated Incidental Take Permit that was issued by the

United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) in February of 2012 under Section 10 of the Endangered Species Act. The HCP identifies specific conservation strategies for managing the habitats of grizzly bear, Canada lynx, and three fish species: bull trout, westslope cutthroat trout, and Columbia redband trout. This project complies with the HCP. The HCP can be found at <http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/trust/forest-management/hcp>.

- **Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)** - A Short-term Exemption from Montana's Surface Water Quality Standards (318 Authorization) may also be required from DEQ if activities such as replacing a bridge on a stream would introduce sediment above natural levels into streams.
- **Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (DFWP)**- A Stream Protection Act Permit (124 Permit) is required from DFWP for activities that may affect the natural shape and form of a stream's channel, banks, or tributaries, including:
  - Construction of bioengineered streambanks stabilization structure.

## **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:**

**No-Action Alternative:** DNRC would not remove the existing boulders or install bioengineered streambank stabilization measures to minimize further erosion of the Blanchard Creek Road.

**Action Alternative:** DNRC would use an excavator to remove boulders which were installed on the streambank in 2024 as a preemptive measure to minimize potential erosion of the Blanchard Creek Road. Boulder removal would occur in April 2026, with all rock staged in a location outside the Streamside Management Zone. Equipment operation would largely be from the road surface, with some short travel (<25 feet) through portions of the floodplain to reach rock that was placed away from the road running surface.

Following removal of the existing rock, the portion of the road that is being impacted by streambank erosion and channel avulsion processes would be relocated to a more favorable location, increasing floodplain width for channel migration to occur, and providing some vertical relief to mitigate potential high streamflow events being entrained on the road surface. The existing location of the streambank failure would be treated with a bioengineered root wad structure, which would minimize further erosion, as well as provide some capacity for energy dissipation at the site, reducing potential likelihood of loss of the road. Road reconstruction and construction of the bioengineered streambank would be completed while operating from existing road surfaces during instream work windows identified in the 124 permit.

Riparian planting would occur adjacent to the bioengineered bank in an effort to increase the proportion of vegetated streambank in the project area. Plant stock would be collected from local sources and planted using hand equipment.

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## **Impacts on the Physical Environment**

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Evaluation of the impacts on the No-Action and Action Alternatives including **direct, secondary, and cumulative** impacts on the Physical Environment.

## **VEGETATION:**

**Vegetation Existing Conditions:**

Current Cover/DFCs: Current cover consists of: 1) Rocky Mountain Ponderosa Pine Woodland and Savanna on the hillside on which the road will be relocated, with a grassy understory and ponderosa pine as the dominant conifer overstory, and 2) Northern Rocky Mountain Lower Montane Riparian Woodland and Shrubland in the floodplain adjacent to the existing road which consists of native plants, shrubs, and deciduous trees such as willow, cottonwood, and quaking aspen as well as coniferous trees such as Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine. Current cover is degraded by the noxious weeds present.

Sensitive/Rare Plants: Howell’s Gumweed (*Grindelia howellii*), Small-headed Tarweed (*Madia minima*) have moderate suitability for the site while Northern Moonwort (*Botrychium pinnatum*), Least Moonwort (*Botrychium simplex*), Floriferous Monkeyflower (*Mimulus floribundus*), Flatleaf Bladderwort (*Utricularia intermedia*) have moderate to low suitability for the site. None have been observed.

Noxious Weeds: Spotted Knapweed (*Centaurea stoebe*), Common Hound’s-tongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*), Sulfur Cinquefoil (*Potentilla recta*), and Oxeye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) are present. Meadow Hawkweed (*Hieracium caespitosum*), Tall Hawkweed (*Hieracium piloselloides*), Yellow Toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*), Common Tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*), and Common St. John’s-wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) have moderate suitability for the site while Orange Hawkweed (*Hieracium aurantiacum*), Dalmatian Toadflax (*Linaria dalmatica*), and Tall Buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*) have moderate to low suitability for the site.

Vegetation	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
<b>No-Action</b>														
Current Cover/DFCs	x				x				x					
Age Class	x				x				x					
Old Growth	x				x				x					
Fire/Fuels	x				x				x					
Insects/Disease	x				x				x					
Rare Plants		x			x				x					V-1
Noxious Weeds	x				x				x					
<b>Action</b>														
Current Cover/DFCs		x			x				x					V-2
Age Class	x				x				x					
Old Growth	x				x				x					
Fire/Fuels	x				x				x					
Insects/Disease	x				x				x					
Rare Plants		x			x				x					V-2
Noxious Weeds		x			x				x					V-2

*Comments and Vegetation Mitigations:*

**V-1.** Implementation of the No-Action Alternative is expected to have low direct effects on rare plants present associated with the possible loss due to continued road and erosion anticipated with this alternative.

**V-2.** Implementation of the Action Alternative is expected to have low direct effects on current cover/DFCs, rare plants, and noxious weeds present. These effects are associated with possible cover type improvement, rare plant preservation as well as the noxious weed decline through native planting anticipated with this alternative. Noxious weed introduction would be mitigated through equipment cleaning prior to entry while noxious weed presence may be additionally addressed through future herbicide application.

*Vegetation reference:*

Montana Natural Heritage Program. Environmental Summary Report. for Latitude 47.00614 to 47.02769 and Longitude -113.42397 to -113.46906. Retrieved on 4/21/2026.

**SOIL DISTURBANCE AND PRODUCTIVITY:**

**Soil Disturbance and Productivity Existing Conditions:**

Missoula County soil surveys were accessed through NRCS Web Soil Survey (2026) to evaluate the risk of soil erosion, displacement, and compaction based on the project outlined in the Type and Purpose of Action. The following table shows the soil types found within the project area. Winfall soils are found along the river bottom, and is the soil in which the existing roadbed is built. Wildgen-Winkler soils are uphill from the river bottom to the north of the existing road.

Soil Symbol	Map Unit Name	Soil Description	Erosion Potential	Displacement Potential	Compaction Potential
126	Wildgen-Winkler group	Deep, well drained soils, derived from alpine till	Low	Moderate	Low
129	Winfall group	Deep, well drained soils derived from alpine and glacial till.	Low	Low	Low

Significant streambank and floodplain erosion are occurring due to a combination of the stream avulsing to a new channel, and a reduction in stabilizing riparian vegetation due to grazing pressure. The recent addition of improperly placed boulders and riprap material are now causing scour and streambank erosion at an accelerated rate.

Soil Disturbance and Productivity	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
<b>No-Action</b>														

Soil Disturbance and Productivity	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
Physical Disturbance (Compaction and Displacement)	X				X				X				N/A	
Erosion			X				X				X		N	S-1
Nutrient Cycling	X				X				X				N/A	
Slope Stability	X				X				X				N/A	
Soil Productivity	X				X				X				N/A	
<b>Action</b>														
Physical Disturbance (Compaction and Displacement)		X				X				X			Y	S-2
Erosion		X				X				X			Y	S-1
Nutrient Cycling	X				X				X				N/A	
Slope Stability	X				X				X				N/A	
Soil Productivity	X				X				X				N/A	

*Comments:*

**S-1:** Blanchard Creek is actively eroding the streambank in the reach where boulders and riprap have been placed. The stream will continue to meander north, especially during high flow events, as it scours into the floodplain and existing road prism. Removing the previously placed boulders and riprap will slow the rate of bank erosion, and installing stable bank protection will further reduce the risk of excessive future bank and floodplain erosion.

**S-2:** The excavator used to remove the in-stream boulders will be able to work primarily from the existing road surface. Tracking off the road and onto the floodplain may be required at the edges of the boulder placements, where the stream meanders away from the road. This will include a small area of native soil and will occur within approximately 25 ft of the running road surface. Minimal overall soil disturbance during boulder removal is expected.

New road construction will result in disturbance primarily in the direct vicinity of the new running road prism, though some clearing and grading may be required outside of the road surface. Disturbance will be minimized through the implementation of standard BMP and mitigation options.

*Soil Mitigations:*

- Minimize tracking on native soil wherever possible. Limit tracking to those areas required to reach in-stream boulders.
- Place the removed in-stream boulders in marked storage area. Be sure no boulders are stored within SMZ.

- Grass seed disturbed areas to minimize erosions risk.
- New road construction should include drainage structures that meet standard BMP guidelines.
- Due to the proximity of the work area to Blanchard Creek, special care should be taken to avoid exacerbating streambank erosion. This can be done by keeping excavator tracks as far away from the streambank as possible and utilizing the bucket arm to reach in and pluck out in-stream boulders from a distance.

*Soil References*

NRCS, 2026, *Web Soil Survey*. Soil Survey of the Missoula County Area, Montana.  
<https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>

**WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY**

**Water Quality and Quantity Existing Conditions:**

- This project would occur in the Blanchard Creek watershed (170102031203) in the Blackfoot River drainage (17010203)
- Blanchard Creek is the only perennial, fish-bearing stream in the project area
- Blanchard Creek is classified as B-1 water quality use class by Montana DEQ, and is suitable for drinking, culinary, and food processing purposes after conventional treatment; bathing, swimming and recreation; growth and propagation of salmonid fishes and associated aquatic life, waterfowl and furbearers; and agricultural and industrial water supply
- The lower 2.4 miles of Blanchard Creek was included on the list of impaired waters (MT DEQ 2024) due to alteration of stream-side cover, sedimentation and siltation, and altered flow regimes.

Channel avulsion and streambank erosion in the project reach has resulted in sedimentation and turbidity levels that are elevated in comparison with unimpacted conditions. Oversteepened streambanks have a low probability of stabilization long-term until stable bank angles are achieved and vegetation is reestablished on streambanks and in floodprone areas adjacent to the stream.

Water Quality & Quantity	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
<b>No-Action</b>														
Water Quality			X				X				X		N	W-1
Water Quantity	X				X				X				N/A	
<b>Action</b>														
Water Quality		X				X				X			Y	W-2
Water Quantity	X				X				X				N/A	

*Comments and Water Quality Mitigations:*

**W-1:** Channel avulsion and streambank erosion have elevated sedimentation and turbidity

above unimpacted conditions, impacting both the project reach, as well as reaches of Blanchard Creek downstream from the project reach.

**W-2:** Implementation of the Action Alternative would minimize further streambank erosion and potentially limit future channel avulsion in the project reach. Temporary increases in turbidity would likely occur during construction activities, however, Best Management Practices would be applied to construction, and the stream discharge would be isolated from the construction area to minimize the scope and scale of the potential impacts to turbidity. Long-term reductions in sedimentation and turbidity would be likely from implementation of the Action Alternative.

**FISHERIES:**

**Fisheries Existing Conditions:** Westslope Cutthroat are the primary species present in the project area. Non-native Rainbow, Brown, and Eastern Brook trout are known to be present in lower reaches of Blanchard Creek (MFWP 2026). Blanchard Creek in the project area is a C-type channel that is evolving into a D-type channel with potential for long-term development into a G-type channel (Rosgen 1996). The riparian area is lacking riparian vegetation as channel avulsion and streambank erosion processes have destabilized most banks, resulting in loss of vegetative cover. Instream habitat conditions lack complexity due to channel avulsion and lack of large wood in the reach, resulting in high velocity, shallow water habitat dominating the reach. Altered width-to-depth ratios are likely elevating solar radiation input, which in concert with reduced riparian shade had likely resulted in stream temperatures that are elevated in comparison with natural conditions. Sediment delivery from the road surface, as well as from extensive streambank erosion are likely contributing to alterations to the existing bedload and sedimentation downstream from the project reach, which may be impacting spawning and early rearing habitat. Alterations to the width-to-depth ratios and simplification of instream habitat have also likely resulted in diminished overwintering habitat in comparison with unimpacted reaches.

**No-Action:** No direct or indirect impacts would occur to affected fish species or affected fisheries resources beyond those described in Fisheries Existing Conditions. Cumulative effects (other related past and present factors; other future, related actions; and any impacts described in Fisheries Existing Conditions) would continue to occur.

**Action Alternative (see Fisheries table below):**

Fisheries	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
<b>No-Action</b>														
Sediment			X				X				X		N	W-1
Flow Regimes	X				X				X				N/A	
Woody Debris			X				X				X		N	F-1
Stream Shading			X				X				X		N	F-2
Stream Temperature			X				X				X		N	F-3
Connectivity	X				X				X				N/A	
Populations		X				X				X			N	F-4
<b>Action</b>														
Sediment		X				X				X			Y	W-2

Fisheries	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
Flow Regimes	X				X				X				N/A	
Woody Debris		X				X				X			Y	F-5
Stream Shading		X				X					X		Y	F-6
Stream Temperature		X				X				X			Y	F-6
Connectivity	X				X				X				N/A	
Populations	X					X				X			Y	F-7

*Comments and Fisheries Mitigations:*

**F-1:** Existing large woody debris loading rates are significantly lower than reference condition due to channel avulsion and streambank erosion.

**F-2:** Stream shade is significantly lower than reference condition due to channel avulsion and streambank erosion and subsequent loss of the majority of riparian vegetation in the project reach.

**F-3:** Channel avulsion and loss of riparian vegetation has led to increased solar radiation input, likely elevating project reach, and subsequent downstream temperatures over unimpacted conditions.

**F-4:** Channel avulsion and subsequent habitat simplification have likely altered local habitat conditions for Westslope Cutthroat trout in the project reach. Increased sedimentation may be impacting instream spawning and rearing habitat, and loss of habitat complexity is likely impacting overwintering habitat.

**F-5:** Construction of bioengineered streambanks would increase the large woody debris in the project reach, and likely contribute positively to habitat complexity. Improved habitat complexity may address some of the reduction in overwintering habitat that have resulted due to channel avulsion processes.

**F-6:** Construction of the bioengineered streambank, including riparian planting adjacent to the structure, would be expected to increase local shade in the project reach long-term. Short-term changes are unlikely until vegetation reaches a height that provides sufficient shade to the stream to positively impact water temperature. Changes would likely be slight, and may be immeasurable due to the small relative scope of the project.

**F-7:** Reduction in sedimentation and turbidity coming from the project site would lead to improved spawning and rearing habitat conditions downstream. Improvements in local habitat complexity may improve overwintering habitat locally. Both of these anticipated improvements would likely result in some increase locally in abundance and distribution of Westslope Cutthroat Trout in the project reach.

**WILDLIFE:**

**No-Action:** No potential for disturbance to wildlife would be anticipated. No activities would be conducted, thus no appreciable changes to existing habitats would occur.

**Action Alternative (see Wildlife table below):**

Wildlife	Impact												Can Impact be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Indirect				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
<b>Threatened and Endangered Species</b>														
<b>Grizzly bear</b> <i>(Ursus arctos)</i> Habitat: Recovery areas, security from human activity		X				X				X			Y	1
<b>Canada lynx</b> <i>(Felix lynx)</i> Habitat: Subalpine fir habitat types, dense sapling, old forest, deep snow zone	X				X				X					2
<b>Yellow-Billed Cuckoo</b> <i>(Coccyzus americanus)</i> Habitat: Deciduous forest stands of 25 acres or more with dense understories and in Montana these areas are generally found in large river bottoms	X				X				X					2
<b>Wolverine</b> <i>(Gulo gulo)</i> Habitat: Alpine tundra and high-elevation boreal forests that maintain deep persistent snow into late spring		X				X				X				3
<b>Sensitive Species</b>														
<b>Bald eagle</b> <i>(Haliaeetus leucocephalus)</i> Habitat: Late-successional forest within 1 mile of open water		X				X				X			Y	4

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Wildlife	Impact												Can Impact be Mitigated?	Comment Number	
	Direct				Indirect				Cumulative						
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High			
<b>Black-backed woodpecker</b> <i>(Picooides arcticus)</i> Habitat: Mature to old burned or beetle-infested forest	X				X				X						2
<b>Common loon</b> <i>(Gavia immer)</i> Habitat: Cold mountain lakes, nest in emergent vegetation	X				X				X						2
<b>Fisher</b> <i>(Martes pennanti)</i> Habitat: Dense mature to old forest less than 6,000 feet in elevation and riparian	X				X				X						2
<b>Flammulated owl</b> <i>(Otus flammeolus)</i> Habitat: Late-successional ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir forest		X				X				X				Y	5
<b>Fringed myotis</b> <i>(Myotis thysanodes)</i> Habitat: low elevation ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir and riparian forest with diverse roost sites including outcrops, caves, mines		X				X				X				Y	6
<b>Northern Hoary bat</b> <i>(Lasiurus cinereus)</i> Habitat: coniferous and deciduous forests and roost on foliage in trees, under bark, in snags, bridges		X				X				X				Y	7
<b>Peregrine falcon</b> <i>(Falco peregrinus)</i> Habitat: Cliff features near open	X				X				X						2

Wildlife	Impact												Can Impact be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Indirect				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
foraging areas and/or wetlands														
<b>Pileated woodpecker</b> <i>(Dryocopus pileatus)</i> Habitat: Late-successional ponderosa pine and larch-fir forest	X				X				X					2
<b>Townsend's big-eared bat</b> <i>(Plecotus townsendii)</i> Habitat: Caves, caverns, old mines	X				X				X					2
<b>Big Game Species</b>														
<b>Elk</b>		X				X				X			Y	8
<b>Whitetail Deer</b>		X				X				X			Y	8
<b>Mule Deer</b>		X				X				X			Y	8
<b>Bighorn Sheep</b>	X				X				X					2
<b>Other</b>														

**Comments:**

W-1 The project area is 11 miles southwest of the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem grizzly bear recovery area, and within 'occupied' grizzly bear habitat as mapped by grizzly bear researchers and managers to address increased sightings and encounters of grizzly bears in habitats outside of recovery zones (Wittinger et al. 2002). Individual animals likely use the vicinity throughout the non-denning period and grizzly bears have been documented in the vicinity.

Grizzly bears could be affected directly through increased road traffic, noise, and human activity, and indirectly by altering a small amount of upland vegetation in the project area. Some of the proposed activities would occur during the spring period (April 1-June 15) but would occur along an open road where additional disturbance would be minimal and would be additive to other ongoing activities in the vicinity.

Negligible changes to total amount of open roads would occur with any road relocation and/or reconstruction and no changes in open road density or motorized public access would be anticipated. No appreciable changes to non-motorized public access would occur, thus no appreciable changes in contact between humans and grizzly bears would occur. Hiding cover would be reduced in a small area with proposed road relocation. Generally negligible changes to hiding cover would occur and no appreciable changes to grizzly bear security habitats would be expected. Any unnatural bear foods or attractants (such as garbage) would be kept in a bear resistant manner. Any added risk to grizzly bears associated with unnatural bear foods or

attractants would be minimal. Continued use of the project area and cumulative effects analysis area by grizzly bears would be anticipated at levels similar to present.

W-2 The project area is either out of the range of the normal distribution for this species or suitable habitat is not present. Thus, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would be anticipated.

W-3 Generally wolverines are found in sparsely inhabited remote areas near treeline characterized by cool to cold temperatures year-round and rather deep and persistent snow well into the spring (Copeland et al. 2010). The availability and distribution of food is likely the primary factor in the large home range sizes of wolverines (Banci 1994). The project area is generally below the elevations where wolverines tend to be located. No areas of potentially deep persistent spring snow occur in the vicinity. Individual animals could occasionally use lands in the project area while dispersing or possibly foraging, and they could be displaced by project-related disturbance if they are in the area during proposed activities. However, given their large home range sizes (~150 sq. mi. -- Hornocker and Hash 1981) and the manner in which they use a broad range of forested and non-forested habitats, the proposed activities and alterations of forest vegetation on the project area would have negligible influence on wolverines.

W-4 The project area is on the edge of the home range associated with the Clearwater Junction bald eagle territory. The nest associated exists in close proximity to an open road that accesses the project area, and the pair appears habituated to traffic on the road. Additionally other potential disturbances close to the nest includes the Clearwater River and associated recreation and a FWP campground. Recent timber management around the nest by FWP has not appeared to have altered use of the nest. Proposed activities would occur during the bald eagle nesting season. Negligible disturbance to bald eagles would occur given the distance from the nest, the topography between the nest and the proposed activities, the levels of disturbance to which the pair appears habituated, and the general disturbance levels in the area. No appreciable changes in the availability of large snags or emergent trees in the project area that could be used as nest or perch trees in the home range would occur. No changes to human access to the home range would occur, thereby limiting potential for introducing additional human disturbance to the territory.

W-5 Potential flammulated owl habitats exist in the vicinity. Flammulated owls can be tolerant of human disturbance (McCallum 1994), however the elevated disturbance levels associated with proposed activities could negatively affect flammulated owls should activities occur when flammulated owls are present. Proposed activities could overlap the nestling and fledgling periods, which has the potential to disturb nesting flammulated owls. Negligible changes to existing flammulated owl habitats could occur with proposed road relocation and would be additive to ongoing and past changes in the vicinity.

W-6 Fringed Myotis are year-round residents of Montana that use a variety of habitats, including deserts, shrublands, sagebrush-grasslands, and forested habitats. They overwinter in caves, mines, crevices, or human structures. Fringed myotis forage near the ground or near vegetation. No known caves, mines, crevices, or other structures used for roosting occur in the project area or immediate vicinity. Fringed myotis have been documented to the south of the project area near Highway 200. Given relative proximity to known observations along with suitable habitat in the project area, some use is possible. Proposed activities could disturb fringed myotis should they be in the area during proposed activities. Negligible changes in vegetation structural attributes could change overall prey availability, but considerable foraging habitats would persist

in the project and cumulative effects analysis areas. Overall, negligible changes to fringed myotis use of the project area or cumulative effects analysis areas would be anticipated.

W-7 Northern hoary bats are summer residents (June-September) across a variety of forested habitats in Montana. They frequently forage over water sources near forested habitats. They are generally thought to roost alone, primarily in trees, but will also use caves, other nests, and human structures. Some use of the project area by northern hoary bats would be possible given the varied habitats present and the proximity to the Clearwater River, Elbow Lake, Salmon Lake, and numerous other smaller streams and wetlands. Individual trees and snags in the existing forested habitats could be used for roosting. No known caves or other structures used for roosting occur in the project area or immediate vicinity. Northern hoary bats have been documented in the vicinity of the project area. Proposed activities could disturb northern hoary bats should they be in the area during proposed activities. Negligible loss of potential roosting habitats could occur, but considerable amounts of trees would persist in the project and cumulative effects analysis areas. No changes in foraging habitats would be anticipated. Overall, negligible changes to northern hoary bat use of the project area or cumulative effects analysis areas would be anticipated.

W-8 The project area contains winter range for several big game species. Evidence of non-winter use by deer and elk was noted during field visits. Big game security habitats exist in the vicinity. Proposed activities would occur outside of the winter period and negligible changes to winter range habitats would occur, thus negligible effects to wintering big game would occur. Proposed activities would occur along an open road, thus no appreciable changes to big game security habitats would occur. Generally negligible effects to big game winter range, summer range, or security habitats would be anticipated.

**Wildlife Mitigations:**

- A DNRC biologist will be consulted if a threatened or endangered species is encountered to determine if additional mitigations that are consistent with the administrative rules for managing threatened and endangered species (ARM 36.11.428 through 36.11.443) are needed.
- Contractors and purchasers conducting contract operations will be prohibited from carrying firearms while on duty.
- Food, garbage, and other attractants will be stored in a bear-resistant manner.
- Should a raptor nest be identified in or near project activities, activities will cease and a DNRC biologist will be contacted. Site-specific measures will be developed and implemented to protect the nest and birds prior to re-starting activities.

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**Wildlife References**

Banci, V. 1994. Wolverine. Pp 99-127 in L. F. Ruggiero, K. B. Aubry, S. W. Buskirk, L. J. Lyon, and W. J. Zielinski, editors. The scientific basis for conserving forest carnivores: American marten, fisher, lynx, and wolverine in the western United States. USDA Forest Service

Rocky Mountain Forest and Range Experiment Station, General Tech. Report RM-254, Fort Collins, Colorado, USA.

Copeland, J. P., K.S. McKelvey, K.B. Aubry, A. Landa, J. Persson, R.M. Inman, J. Krebs, E. Lofroth, H. Golden, J.R. Squires, A. Magoun, M.K. Schwartz, J. Wilmot, C.L. Copeland, R.E. Yates, I. Kojola, and R. May. 2010. The bioclimatic envelope of the wolverine (*Gulo gulo*): do climatic constraints limit its geographic distribution? *Can. J. Zool.* 88: 233-246.

Hornocker, M. and H. Hash. 1981. Ecology of the wolverine in northwestern Montana. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 44(3):1286-1301.

McCallum, D. A. 1994. Review of technical knowledge: flammulated owls. Pages 14-46 in G. D. Hayward and J. Verner, tech eds. Flammulated, boreal, and great gray owls in the United States: a technical conservation assessment. USDA Forest Service Gen. Tech. Rep. RM-253. Fort Collins, Colorado.

Wittinger, W.T. 2002. Grizzly bear distribution outside of recovery zones. Unpublished memorandum on file at USDA Forest Service, Region 1. Missoula, Montana.2pp.

**AIR QUALITY:**

Air Quality	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
<b>No-Action</b>														
Smoke	X				X				X				N/A	
Dust	X				X				X				N/A	
<b>Action</b>														
Smoke	X				X				X				N/A	
Dust		X				X			X				Y	AQ-1

*Comments:*

**AQ-1:** Some dust may be produced during construction, however, these impacts would be expected to be limited to the immediate project area, and would only occur while equipment was operating or immediately following cessation of project activities on a daily basis. No cumulative effects to air quality would be measurable or detectable following completion of the project.

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES / AESTHETICS / DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:**

Will Alternative result in potential impacts to:	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
<b>No-Action</b>														

Will Alternative result in potential impacts to:	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
Historical or Archaeological Sites	X				X				X				N/A	
Aesthetics	X				X				X				N/A	
Demands on Environmental Resources of Land, Water, or Energy	X				X				X				N/A	
<b>Action</b>														
Historical or Archaeological Sites	X				X				X				N/A	HA-1
Aesthetics		X			X				X				N/A	A-1
Demands on Environmental Resources of Land, Water, or Energy	X				X				X				N/A	

*Comments:*

*Mitigations:* All project work would be conducted in areas that were previously disturbed.

**HA-1:** Per the March 2008 Bugchuck Salvage Timber Sale Environmental Assessment, which included a harvest unit on this footprint, 'The Montana D.N.R.C. archeologist reported that there are not any cultural resources on file for this state parcel, and no further investigation was needed.'

**A-1:** There is expected to be a low direct impact to Aesthetics associated with the Action Alternative due exposed soil caused by the road relocation and streambank stabilization work. This impact would decrease over time through revegetation efforts including riparian planting and grass seeding.

**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.*

None.

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## Impacts on the Human Population

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Evaluation of the impacts on the proposed action including **direct, secondary, and cumulative** impacts on the Human Population.

Blanchard Creek Road Rehabilitation Project  
Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation EACv2.0

Will Alternative result in potential impacts to:	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number	
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative						
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High			
<b>No-Action</b>															
Health and Human Safety		X				X				X				N	H-1
Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural Activities and Production	X				X				X					N/A	
Quantity and Distribution of Employment	X				X				X					N/A	
Local Tax Base and Tax Revenues	X				X				X					N/A	
Demand for Government Services	X				X				X					N/A	
Access To and Quality of Recreational and Wilderness Activities	X				X				X					N/A	
Density and Distribution of population and housing	X				X				X					N/A	
Social Structures and Mores	X				X				X					N/A	
Cultural Uniqueness and Diversity	X				X				X					N/A	
<b>Action</b>															
Health and Human Safety		X				X				X				Y	H-1
Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural Activities and Production	X				X				X					N/A	
Quantity and Distribution of Employment		X				X				X				N/A	H-2
Local Tax Base and Tax Revenues	X				X				X					N/A	
Demand for Government Services	X				X				X					N/A	
Access To and Quality of Recreational and Wilderness Activities	X				X				X					N/A	
Density and Distribution of population and housing	X				X				X					N/A	
Social Structures and Mores	X				X				X					N/A	

Will Alternative result in potential impacts to:	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
Cultural Uniqueness and Diversity	X				X				X				N/A	

*Comments and Mitigations:*

**H-1:** Continued erosion of the streambank in the project area would likely result in loss of the road prism and loss of direct access to private lands and indirect access to other public lands off DNRC. Realignment of the existing road prism and construction of a bioengineered streambank at this location would minimize the likelihood of the road being eroded under high streamflow events.

**H-2:** The project may have a minor, positive impact on local employment, as a contractor would have several days of employment if the Action Alternative is selected.

**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.*

- NONE

**Other Appropriate Social and Economic Circumstances:**

**No Action:** The No Action alternative would result in no improvements to the existing road system, potentially leading to loss of private access to inholdings off DNRC.

**Action:** Implementation of the project would result in protection of road infrastructure and maintenance of direct access to private and indirect access to public landownership off DNRC.

**References**

DNRC 1996. State forest land management plan: final environmental impact statement (and appendixes). Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Forest Management Bureau, Missoula, Montana.

DNRC. 2010. Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Forested State Trust Lands Habitat Conservation Plan: Final EIS, Volume II, Forest Management Bureau, Missoula, Montana.

**Does the proposed action involve potential risks or adverse effects that are uncertain but extremely harmful if they were to occur?**

NO

**Does the proposed action have impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant?**

NO

**Environmental Assessment Checklist Prepared By:**

**Name: Mike Anderson and Matt Lesiecki**  
**Title: Fisheries Biologist and Soil Scientist/Hydrologist**  
**Date: April 22, 2026**

**Finding**

**Alternative Selected**

Following a review of the document as well as the corresponding Department policies and rules, the Action Alternative has been selected because it meets the intent of the project objectives outlined in Type and Purpose of Action.

**Significance of Potential Impacts**

I find that the Action Alternative will not have significant impacts for the following reasons:

- The Action Alternative is in compliance with the existing laws, rules, policies, and standards applicable to this type of proposed action.
- Appropriate mitigations have been proposed to minimize potential impacts to resources such as soil, fisheries, and water quality.

**Need for Further Environmental Analysis**

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

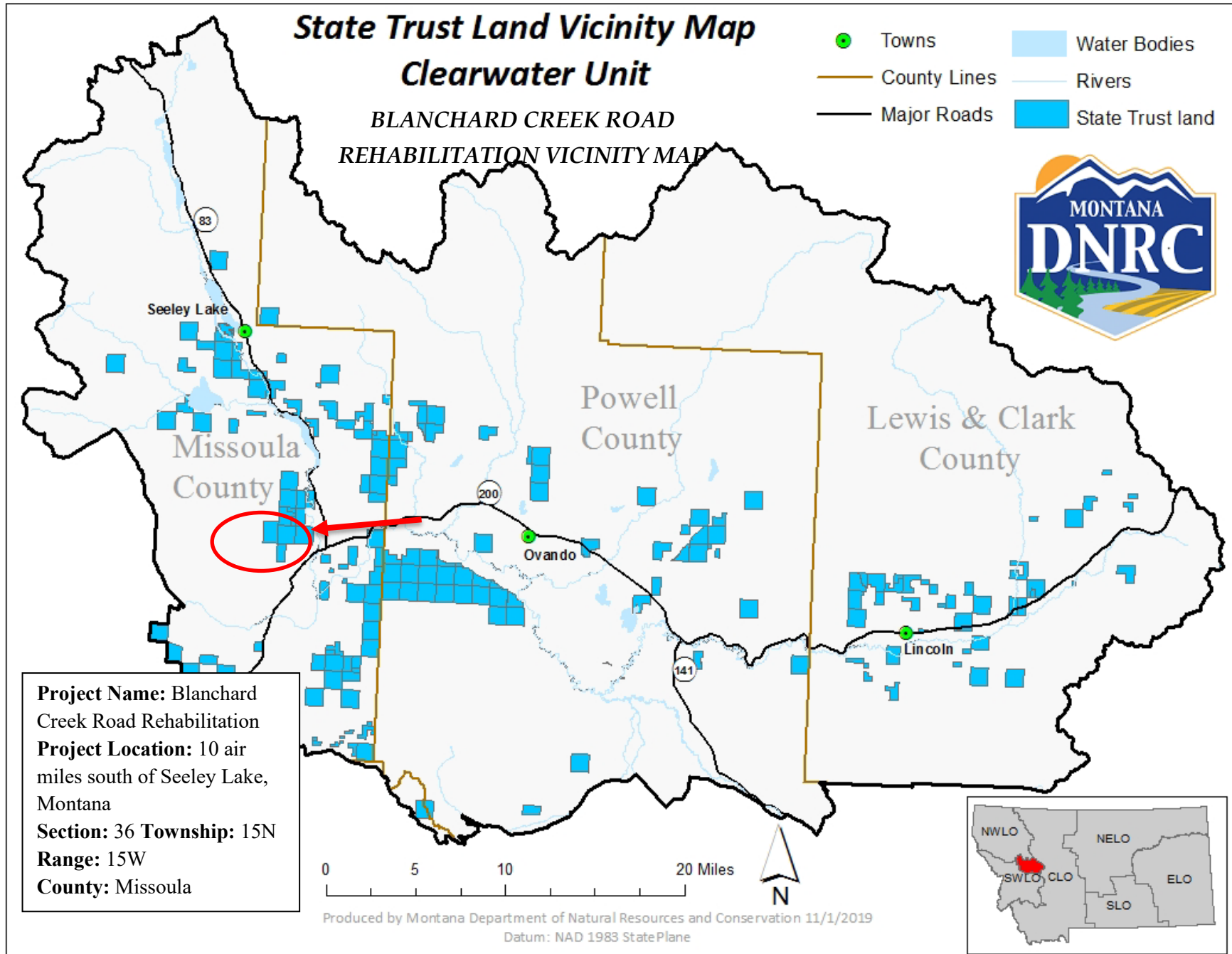
**Environmental Assessment Checklist Approved By:**

**Name: Kristen Baker-Dickinson**  
**Title: Clearwater Unit Manager**  
**Date: April 23, 2026**

**Signature: /s/ *K. Baker-Dickinson***

## **Attachment A - Maps**

A-1: Vicinity Map



A-2: Area Map

