

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Land Banking Sale
Proposed Implementation Date:	2016
Proponent:	Rick Caquelin
Location:	16N 12E Sec.28
County:	Judith Basin
Trust:	Common Schools

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Rick Caquelin has submitted a land banking sale nomination for all land leased by him in 16N 12E sec. 28, which includes a home site that is also leased to Rick. The land is currently held in trust for the benefit of Common Schools.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)

Northeastern Land Office (NELO)

Rick Caquelin (Proponent)

MFWP

Neighbors: Skelton Ranch Company; James Galt; Leonard Proctor; Rodney Ridgeway, Kent Ridgeway & Lea Mitchell

All parties associated with Land Banking Scoping List (see attached)

NELO received one comment from Kent Ridgeway, see attached document for details.

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

The DNRC, and NELO have jurisdiction over this proposed project.

DNRC is not aware of any other agencies with jurisdiction or other permits needed to complete this project

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action) – The DNRC would retain all land associated with leases 6808 & 8961 (320 ac.).

Alternative B- The DNRC would request and recommend approval by the Land Board to sell all land (320 ac.) leased by the proponent in 16N 12E sec.28.

Alternative C (Preferred Alternative) – The DNRC would request and recommend approval by the Land Board to sell all land (160 ac.) leased by the proponent in the SW4 of 16N 12E sec. 28.

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.

Soils on the tract are a complex of clays and clay loams. Two soils are classified as "farmland of statewide importance."

The State owns certain minerals under this tract and would retain ownership if the surface acres are sold.

See attached documents for location and classification of specific soils.

Alternative A (No Action)- No effect anticipated.

Alternative B - No effect anticipated.

Alternative C (Preferred Alternative)- No effect anticipated.

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.

Alternative A (No Action)- No effect anticipated.

Alternative B - No effect anticipated.

Alternative C (Preferred Alternative)- No effect anticipated.

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.

Alternative A (No Action)- No effect anticipated.

Alternative B - No effect anticipated.

Alternative C (Preferred Alternative)- No effect anticipated.

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 vegetative community is native short grass prairie and tame grass fields that were once enrolled in CRP.

Alternative A (No Action) - No effect anticipated.

Alternative B – The Department would lose the management of the current vegetative community. There is 110 acres of tame grass that was once enrolled in CRP, 194 acres of native, short grass prairie with a high amount of tame grass invaders (smooth brome & Kentucky bluegrass), and 9 acres associated with the home place with tame grass and a shelterbelt.

Alternative C (Preferred Alternative) - The Department would lose the management of the current vegetative community that lies in the SW4. There is 30 acres of tame grass that was once enrolled in CRP, 121 acres of native, short grass prairie with a high amount of tame grass invaders (smooth brome & Kentucky bluegrass), and 9 acres associated with the home place with tame grass and a shelterbelt.

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.

Alternative A (No Action)- No effect anticipated.

Alternative B - No effect anticipated.

Alternative C (Preferred Alternative) - No effect anticipated.

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.

A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program for Species of Concern with a state rank of 3 or higher was conducted in the township that includes the area of potential effect. (State rank of 3 means Potentially at risk because of **limited** and/or **declining** numbers, range and/or habitat, even though it may be abundant in some areas).

Two species were listed as potentially in the area; Hoary bat and Little Brown Myotis. Both species are distributed throughout the entire state of Montana.

Alternative A (No Action)- No effect anticipated.

Alternative B - No effect anticipated.

Alternative C (Preferred Alternative)- No effect anticipated.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

An historic search was conducted on the Montana State Antiquities database on 1/13/2016. A low profile cairn is located on section 28 but it isn't located on the tract leased to the proponent. No historical sites have been found in the previous lease evaluations.

Alternative A (No Action)- No effect anticipated.

Alternative B - No effect anticipated.

Alternative C (Preferred Alternative) - No effect anticipated.

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.

Alternative A (No Action)- No effect anticipated.

Alternative B - No effect anticipated.

Alternative C (Preferred Alternative)- No effect anticipated.

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.

Alternative A (No Action)- No effect anticipated.

Alternative B - No effect anticipated.

Alternative C (Preferred Alternative)- No effect anticipated.

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.

Alternative A (No Action)- No effect anticipated.

Alternative B - No effect anticipated.

Alternative C (Preferred Alternative)- No effect anticipated.

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.

Alternative A (No Action)- No effect anticipated.

Alternative B - No effect anticipated.

Alternative C (Preferred Alternative)- No effect anticipated.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

Alternative A (No Action) - No effect anticipated.

Alternative B – Land would continue to be used for agricultural production. No effect anticipated.

Alternative C (Preferred Alternative)- Land would continue to be used for agricultural production. No effect anticipated.

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.

Alternative A (No Action)- No effect anticipated.

Alternative B - No effect anticipated.

Alternative C (Preferred Alternative)- No effect anticipated.

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.

State School Trust Lands are currently exempt from property tax. If State Trust Lands represent 6% or greater of the total acres within a county then a payment in lieu of taxes (PLT) is made to the counties to mitigate for the State Trust Land tax exempt status. This is not the case for Judith Basin County.

Alternative A (No Action) –DNRC will continue to manage all Trust Lands in 16N 12E section 28. The tax base and revenues will not be impacted as a result.

Alternative B – Judith Basin would receive additional property tax revenue for the associated home site as well as for the 320 acres sold.

Alternative C (Preferred Alternative)- Judith Basin would receive additional property tax revenue for the associated home site as well as the 160 acres sold.

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

All state and private lands in this area are protected by the Stanford Rural fire department in conjunction with the County Coop Fire Program and mutual aid agreements with adjacent county fire departments.

Alternative A (No Action)- No effect anticipated for government services regarding fire protection would occur.

Alternative B - The transfer of ownership would have no effect for government services regarding fire protection.

Alternative C (Preferred Alternative)- The transfer of ownership would have no effect for government services regarding fire protection.

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.

The Trust parcel is surrounded by private land and the DNRC is not aware of any zoning plans that would affect the parcel.

Alternative A (No Action)- No effect anticipated.

Alternative B - No effect anticipated.

Alternative C (Preferred Alternative)- No effect anticipated.

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.

The majority of hunting is mainly limited to upland game birds. Big game hunting would be minimal with occasional animals passing through.

Alternative A (No Action)- No effect anticipated. Sportsmen would still have access to 217 acres. 114 acres are unavailable due to the ¼ mile weapons restriction from a home site.

Alternative B – The entire tract (331 acres) would be lost to recreation and hunting. Money from the sale may increase access elsewhere with land banking, but there is no guarantee it would be spent locally.

Alternative C (Preferred Alternative)- A total of 160 acres would be sold. 110 Acres are under the weapons restriction buffer currently and 50 acres that are accessible would be lost to sportsman. The sale of the SW4 would make it easier for sportsmen to navigate the ¼ mile buffer with the remaining restriction zone being limited to 7 acres.

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

Alternative A (No Action)- No effect anticipated.

Alternative B - No effect anticipated.

Alternative C (Preferred Alternative)- No effect anticipated.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Alternative A (No Action)- No effect anticipated.

Alternative B - No effect anticipated.

Alternative C (Preferred Alternative)- No effect anticipated.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

Alternative A (No Action)- No effect anticipated.

Alternative B - No effect anticipated.

Alternative C (Preferred Alternative)- No effect anticipated.

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.

In the last 5 years lease 6808 & 8691 has returned \$22,214.28 to the state trust, an average of \$4,442.86 per year.

Economic Analysis for Land Banking lease 6808 & 8961

Grazing	Acres	AUMS	Rate	
2016	189.78	80	\$19.57	\$1,565.60
2015	189.78	80	\$14.41	\$1,152.80
2014	189.78	80	\$11.41	\$912.80
2013	189.78	80	\$9.94	\$795.20
2012	189.78	80	\$7.90	\$616.20

Ag

2016	115.6		\$18.00	\$2,080.80
2015	115.6		\$18.00	\$2,080.80
2014	115.6		\$18.00	\$2,080.80
2013	115.6		\$18.00	\$2,080.80
2012	115.6		CRP	\$2,296.39

Homesite

2016	9.17			\$1,436.68
2015	9.17			\$1,378.04
2014	9.17			\$1,308.00
2013	9.17			\$1,247.97
2012	9.17			\$1,181.40

Total	\$22,214.28
Avg per year	\$4,442.86

Alternative C

Grazing	68.78	29	19.57*	\$567.53
Ag	85.6		\$18.00	\$1,540.80


Total	\$2,108.33
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* Changing Rate

Alternative A (No Action)- No effect anticipated.

Alternative B – The sale of the entire tract would give no annual return to the state. The only return to the state would be the sale of leases 6808 & 8691.

Alternative C (Preferred Alternative)- In addition to the money received from the sale of the SW4, lease 6808 would return around \$2,108.33 per year under the current rate.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Brandon Sandau Title: Land Use Specialist
Signature: 	Date: April 14, 2016

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

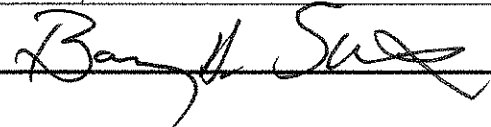
Alternative C (Preferred Alternative) – The DNRC would request and recommend approval by the Land Board to sell all land (160 ac.) leased by the proponent in the SW4 of 16N 12E section 28.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The process of completing this EA did not identify any significant potential impacts of the sale of the SW4 in 16N 12E section 28.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

<input type="checkbox"/> EIS	<input type="checkbox"/> More Detailed EA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> XXX No Further Analysis
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EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Barny D. Smith Title: Unit Manager, Northeastern Land Office
Signature: 	Date: April 14, 2016