

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Elliston Land Banking Sale
Proposed Implementation Date:	May 2020
Proponent:	Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) and RV Ranch
Location:	T9N, R6W, Section 16. Approximately 4 miles southeast of Elliston, Montana
County:	Powell

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The State of Montana and RV Ranch Inc are jointly nominating 2 parcels of State School Trust land containing a total of 165.39 acres for proposed sale under the DNRC Land Banking program (77-2-361 through 77-2-367 MCA). Consistent with state law (77-2-304) only the surface acreage would be sold with the State retaining ownership of the underlying mineral estate.

Both state parcels are currently authorized for grazing use by the RV Ranch Inc. Grazing Lease #7458 involves 125.39 acres in Government Lots 1,2,3, and 4, less RR R/W, and Forest Grazing License #3062743 is for 40 acres in SE4SE4 of T9N, R6W, Section 16. This land is currently held in trust for the support of the Common Schools (K-12). The parcels are surrounded entirely by private land and are not legally accessible to DNRC and the general public..

The purpose of the state Land Banking Program is to allow DNRC to dispose of parcels that are primarily isolated and produce low income, and to allow the Department to purchase land with legal public access that can support multiple uses and will provide a rate of return equal to or greater than the parcels that are sold. Revenue generated from the sale of these parcels would be deposited in a special account used to purchase replacement lands meeting acquisition criteria related to legal access, productivity, potential income generation and potential for multiple use.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project. List number of individuals contacted, number of responses received, and newspapers in which notices were placed and for how long. Briefly summarize issues received from the public.

Scoping letters were mailed to interested parties on the Statewide scoping list for land banking proposals. A legal advertisement was also placed in the Helena Independent Record and the Powell County Silver State Post. newspapers. No comments were received.

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

Examples: cost-share agreement with U.S. Forest Service, 124 Permit, 3A Authorization, Air Quality Major Open Burning Permit.

None

3. ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT:

Describe alternatives considered and, if applicable, provide brief description of how the alternatives were developed. List alternatives that were considered but eliminated from further analysis and why.

Action Alternative

The Action alternative would proceed with the nomination of both parcels for sale under Land Banking (MCA 77-2-361 through 77-2-367).

No Action Alternative

The no action alternative would not proceed with the nomination of both parcels for sale under Land Banking (MCA 77-2-361 through 77-2-367).

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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to soils.

The area in grazing lease #7458 follows approximately 1 mile of perennial stream (Mike Renig Gulch) where adjacent soils are associated with wet meadow and floodplain environments (e.g., poorly-drained, fine-grained, and on shallow slopes).

The area in grazing license #3062743 is generally located on a north-facing slope with well-drained stony loam soil on 15-35% slopes.

RV Ranch Inc currently holds a grazing lease and license on the two parcels nominated for sale. Under existing conditions neither area is effectively managed separately from the surrounding ranch as there is no enclosure fencing that separates the state parcels from those owned by RV Ranch Inc. (Barb wire fencing is located along the north and western boundary of grazing lease #7458; however, this fencing does not continue to the south and eastern boundaries of the parcel.)

Changes in soil quality, stability, and moisture would not change from the existing condition with the proposed action. Land use would not be expected to change from the existing condition with the proposed action, therefore the risk of direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to soils from the proposed action is low. Further, RV Ranch Inc has expressed a likely inclusion of the two parcels in an existing Conservation Easement that has been effective since 2008 on surrounding RV Ranch Inc property.

No unique or unusual geologic features are present.

Changes to site geology would not vary with action or no action. The State would retain ownership of the underlying mineral estate.

Noxious weeds are present at both parcels, including Knapweed and Canadian Thistle. The management of these weeds have been the responsibility of RV Ranch Inc as the license and lease holder and management is expected to no change from the existing condition with the proposed action.

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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to water resources.

The area in Grazing Lease #7458 follows approximately 1 mile of Mike Renig Gulch. No surface waters or wetlands are present in Grazing License #3062743.

Mike Renig Gulch is a class 1 perennial stream that joins the Little Blackfoot River approximately 1.5 miles downstream of the current State ownership boundary. As is described in #4 of this EA, no effective riparian fencing is located along this stream and cattle watering at the stream banks is assumed. Riparian health was assessed to be fair during the last field evaluation completed by DNRC staff in 2015. The grazing condition of the riparian zone was also assessed to be fair, while the condition of upland areas was assessed to be good.

The riparian area is assumed to be receiving heavy use by cattle due the presence of water and desirable grazing vegetation in the riparian area; and due to the absence of improvements including riparian fencing and off-stream cattle watering.

The existing risk to water quality due to grazing pressure and channel access by cattle are expected to not change with the selection of a no action or action alternative. There is moderate risk that water quality may degrade due to a potential increase in grazing pressure and channel access by cattle under private ownership with the action alternative. RV Ranch Inc has expressed a likely inclusion of the two parcels in an existing Conservation Easement that has been effective since 2008 on surrounding RV Ranch Inc property; however, the existing Conservation Easement does not stipulate limitations or management of riparian grazing and on channel cattle watering.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced (i.e. particulate matter from road use or harvesting, slash pile burning, prescribed burning, etc)? Identify the Airshed and Impact Zone (if any) according to the Montana/Idaho Airshed Group. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to air quality.

No change in land use or existing conditions would be expected with either alternative.

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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to vegetation.

Within the two parcels there is 66 acres of non-forested native range land, 72 acres of forest cover dominated by Douglas-fir and Lodgepole pine, and 27 acres of stream/riparian habitat. The DNRC conducted forest management activities in 2008 to salvage harvest Lodgepole pine killed by Mountain Pine Beetle. Approximately 75,000 board feet of Douglas-fir sawlog material remains standing within the two parcels.

No change in land use or existing conditions would be expected with either alternative.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

Approximately 1 mile of Mike Renig Gulch (tributary to Little Blackfoot River) lies within the project area. In 2008, Montana FWP conducted surveys and found Westslope Cutthroat, Brook Trout and Long-Nose Sucker in the stream.

No change in land use or existing conditions would be expected with either alternative.

Terrestrial Wildlife

The project area includes roughly 72 acres of Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine, along with 66 acres of native grassland plant communities and 27 acres of stream/riparian habitats. Past activities in the project area have included livestock grazing and timber management. The project area is surrounded by private lands dominated by agricultural activities, cattle grazing, and timber management.

No Action Alternative: Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects

The project area would remain in DNRC ownership and the foreseeable predominant land uses would be livestock grazing timber management. Habitat-altering land uses could occur under normal DNRC management. No changes to the existing habitats would be anticipated. Wildlife use of the project area would be expected to be similar to present levels. No changes in recreational use would be anticipated; existing levels of human disturbance would not appreciably change. No appreciable changes to the existing big game winter range, summer range, or security habitats would be anticipated. No direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to wildlife would be anticipated since: 1) no appreciable changes to existing habitats would occur; 2) human disturbance levels would not be anticipated to change; and 3) no changes in wildlife use would be expected to occur.

Action Alternative: Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects

DNRC would relinquish ownership of the project area under the Land Banking process and a private party would purchase the property. Beyond this expectation, one must speculate on further outcomes regarding future land uses that would occur outside of DNRC control following purchase by a buyer. Transferring ownership of the parcels to another party would not have any direct or indirect effects on any wildlife species or habitats, however, under the action alternative continued management, and/or future development that may erode wildlife habitat values could occur outside of the DNRC's public environmental review process.

Should traditional management (i.e., livestock grazing and timber management) continue in the project area, minor direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to wildlife would be anticipated. Should more intensive activities, such as development or subdivision, occur, this alternative could have more effects to wildlife by contributing to temporary loss of and/or more permanent habitat loss for a number of wildlife species in the future, most of which are currently relatively common in Montana. Given the RV Ranch has a conservation easement on the surrounding parcels, intensive activities would be unlikely and traditional management would most likely occur in the project area in the future with an anticipated minor effect on wildlife. Any activities that may occur on the project area would be additive to other cumulative effects that may be associated with historic land uses on nearby properties (e.g. livestock grazing, logging, and existing human developments etc.). Wildlife use of the project area would not immediately change but could be subject to additional disturbance and/or displacement depending on the ultimate uses of the parcel by the new owners.

No direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to wildlife would be anticipated since: 1) no appreciable changes to existing habitats would occur immediately, however long-term management objectives would be unknown and persistence of any given habitat condition would not be certain; 2) human disturbance levels would not be anticipated to change in the immediate future, however uncertainty associated with future use could introduce additional human disturbance and displacement; and 3) no appreciable changes in wildlife use would be expected to occur unless major changes in land use were to undertaken by the new owner.

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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

Approximately 1 mile of Mike Renig Gulch (tributary to Little Blackfoot River) lies within the project area. In 2008, Montana FWP conducted surveys and found Westslope Cutthroat, Brook Trout and Long-Nose Sucker in the stream.

No change in land use or existing conditions would be expected with either alternative.

Terrestrial Wildlife Resources

The project area includes roughly 72 acres of Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine, along with 66 acres of native grassland plant communities and 27 acres of stream/riparian habitats. Past activities in the project area have included livestock grazing and timber management. The project area is surrounded by private lands dominated by agricultural activities, cattle grazing, and timber management. See Table 9-1 for a full review of existing habitats for terrestrial threatened, endangered, and sensitive wildlife species.

No Action Alternative: Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects

The project area would remain in DNRC ownership and the foreseeable predominant land use would be a combination of livestock grazing and timber management. No further habitat-altering land uses would occur with this alternative, thus no changes to the existing habitats or levels of use by any of the terrestrial threatened, endangered, or sensitive wildlife species would be anticipated. Existing levels of human disturbance would not appreciably change. No direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to terrestrial threatened, endangered, or sensitive wildlife species would be anticipated since: 1) no appreciable changes to existing habitats would occur; 2) human disturbance levels would not be anticipated to change; and 3) no changes in wildlife use would be expected to occur.

Action Alternative: Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects

DNRC would relinquish ownership of the project area under the Land Banking process and a private party would purchase the property. Beyond this expectation, one must speculate on further outcomes regarding future land uses that would occur outside of DNRC control following the disposal. Transferring ownership of the parcel to another party would not have any direct or indirect effects on any terrestrial endangered, threatened, or sensitive wildlife species or habitats, however, under the action alternative continued management, and/or future development that may erode wildlife habitat values could occur outside of the DNRC's public environmental review process. See Table 9-1 for a full review of anticipated to terrestrial threatened, endangered, and sensitive wildlife species.

Should traditional management (i.e., livestock grazing and timber management) continue in the project area, minor direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to terrestrial threatened, endangered, or sensitive wildlife species would be anticipated. Should more intensive activities, such as development or subdivision, occur, this alternative could have slightly more effects to terrestrial threatened, endangered, or sensitive wildlife species by contributing to temporary loss of and/or more permanent habitat loss for a number of wildlife species in the future. Given the RV Ranch has a conservation easement on the surrounding parcels, intensive activities would be unlikely and traditional management would most likely occur in the project area in the future with an anticipated minor effect on wildlife. Any activities that may occur on the project area would be additive to other cumulative effects that may be associated with historic land uses on nearby properties (e.g. livestock grazing, logging, and existing human developments etc.). Wildlife use of the project area would not immediately change, but could be subject to additional disturbance and/or displacement depending on the ultimate uses of the parcel by the new owners.

No direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to terrestrial threatened, endangered, or sensitive wildlife species would be anticipated since: 1) no appreciable changes to existing habitats would occur immediately, however long-term management objectives would be unknown and persistence of any given habitat condition would not be certain; 2) human disturbance levels would not be anticipated to change in the immediate future, however uncertainty associated with future use could introduce additional human disturbance and displacement; and 3) no appreciable changes in wildlife use would be expected to occur unless major changes in land use were to undertaken by the new owner.

Table 9-1 –Anticipated Effects of the RV Ranch Land Banking Project on wildlife species

Threatened and Endangered Species	[Y/N] Potential Impacts and Mitigation Measures N = Not Present or No Impact is Likely to Occur Y = Impacts May Occur (Explain Below)
THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES	
Grizzly bear (<i>Ursus arctos</i>) Habitat: Recovery areas, security from human activity	[N] The project area is approximately 31 miles south of the NCDE Recovery Area (USFWS 1993), and 6 miles south of occupied grizzly bear habitat (Wittinger et al. 2002). However, grizzly bears are increasingly being documented south of the recovery zone (J. Jonkel, MT FWP, personal communication, 2013). Transferring ownership of the parcel would not have any direct or immediate indirect effect on any wildlife species or their habitat. Should traditional uses (i.e., livestock grazing and timber management) continue, negligible direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to grizzly bears would be anticipated. However, the proposed action could allow for greater future cumulative risk of development and loss of wildlife habitat that could occur outside of the DNRC's public environmental review process.

Canada lynx (<i>Felis lynx</i>) Habitat: Subalpine fir habitat types, dense sapling, old forest, deep snow zone	[N] Approximately 64 acres of potential Canada lynx habitats exist in the project area. These habitats are somewhat discontinuous and non-suitable types are interspersed. Extensive use by lynx would not be expected. Transferring ownership of the parcel would not have any direct or immediate indirect effect on any wildlife species or their habitat. Should traditional uses (i.e., livestock grazing and timber management) continue, negligible direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to Canada lynx would be anticipated. However, the proposed action could allow for greater future cumulative risk of development and loss of wildlife habitat that could occur outside of the DNRC's public environmental review process.
Yellow-Billed Cuckoo (<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	[N] No suitable deciduous riparian habitats are in the project area. Thus, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to yellow-billed cuckoos would be expected to occur as a result of either alternative.
DNRC Sensitive Species	[Y/N] Potential Impacts and Mitigation Measures N = Not Present or No Impact is Likely to Occur Y = Impacts May Occur (Explain Below)
Bald eagle (<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>) Habitat: Late-successional forest less than 1 mile from open water	[N] The proposed project area is outside of any home range associated with bald eagle territories in the vicinity. Thus, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to bald eagles would be expected to occur as a result of either alternative.
Black-backed woodpecker (<i>Picoides arcticus</i>) Habitat: Mature to old burned or beetle-infested forest	[N] No recently (less than 5 years) burned areas are in the project area. Thus, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to black-backed woodpeckers would be expected to occur as a result of either alternative.
Coeur d'Alene salamander (<i>Plethodon idahoensis</i>) Habitat: Waterfall spray zones, talus near cascading streams	[N] No moist talus or streamside talus habitat occurs in the project area. Thus, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to Coeur d'Alene salamanders would be expected to occur as a result of either alternative.
Columbian sharp-tailed grouse (<i>Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus</i>) Habitat: Grassland, shrubland, riparian, agriculture	[N] Although grassland/shrubland communities occur in the project area, recent research indicates Columbian sharp-tailed grouse likely never inhabited western Montana (Montana Natural Heritage Program and Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, 2018). Thus, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to Columbian sharp-tailed grouse would be expected to occur as a result of either alternative.
Common loon (<i>Gavia immer</i>) Habitat: Cold mountain lakes, nest in emergent vegetation	[N] No suitable lakes occur in the project area. Thus no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to common loons would be expected under either alternative.
Fisher (<i>Martes pennanti</i>) Habitat: Dense mature to old forest less than 6,000 feet in elevation and riparian	[N] No suitable fisher coverts exist in the project area. Given the lack of habitat, the limited area, the proximity to human developments, and the surrounding landscape, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to fisher would be anticipated.

<p>Flammulated owl (<i>Otus flammeolus</i>) Habitat: Late-successional ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir forest</p>	<p>[N] Approximately 14 acres of potential flammulated owl habitats exist in the project area. Transferring ownership of the parcel would not have any direct or immediate indirect effect on any wildlife species or their habitat. Should traditional uses (i.e., livestock grazing and timber management) continue, negligible direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to flammulated owls would be anticipated. However, the proposed action could allow for greater future cumulative risk of development and loss of wildlife habitat that could occur outside of the DNRC's public environmental review process.</p>
<p>Gray Wolf (<i>Canis lupus</i>) Habitat: Ample big game populations, security from human activities</p>	<p>[N] Wolves have not been documented in the project area or vicinity. Little use of the project area would be anticipated. Transferring ownership of the parcel would not have any direct or immediate indirect effect on any wildlife species or their habitat. Should traditional uses (i.e., livestock grazing and timber management) continue, negligible direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to gray wolves would be anticipated. However, the proposed action could allow for greater future cumulative risk of development and loss of wildlife habitat that could occur outside of the DNRC's public environmental review process.</p>
<p>Harlequin duck (<i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>) Habitat: White-water streams, boulder and cobble substrates</p>	<p>[N] No suitable high-gradient stream or river habitats occur in the project area. No direct, indirect or cumulative effects to harlequin ducks would be expected to occur as a result of either alternative.</p>
<p>Mountain Plover (<i>Charadrius montanus</i>) Habitat: Short-grass prairie, alkaline flats, and prairie dog towns</p>	<p>[N] No prairie dog colonies or other suitable shortgrass prairie habitats are known to occur in the project area. The project area is on the edge of the known range of Mountain plovers in Montana. Thus, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to mountain plovers would be anticipated to occur as a result of either alternative.</p>
<p>Northern bog lemming (<i>Synaptomys borealis</i>) Habitat: Sphagnum meadows, bogs, fens with thick moss mats</p>	<p>[N] No suitable sphagnum bogs or fens occur in the project area. Thus, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to northern bog lemmings would be expected to occur as a result of either alternative.</p>
<p>Peregrine falcon (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>) Habitat: Cliff features near open foraging areas and/or wetlands</p>	<p>[N] No preferred cliff features suitable for use by peregrine falcons occur in the project area. Transferring ownership of the parcel would not have any direct or immediate indirect effect on any wildlife species or their habitat. Should traditional uses (i.e., livestock grazing and timber management) continue, negligible direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to peregrine falcons would be anticipated. However, the proposed action could allow for greater future cumulative risk of development and loss of wildlife habitat that could occur outside of the DNRC's public environmental review process.</p>
<p>Pileated woodpecker (<i>Dryocopus pileatus</i>) Habitat: Late-successional ponderosa pine and larch-fir forest</p>	<p>[N] Approximately 16 acres of potential pileated woodpecker habitats exist in the project area. Transferring ownership of the parcel would not have any direct or immediate indirect effect on any wildlife species or their habitat. Should traditional uses (i.e., livestock grazing and timber management) continue, negligible direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to pileated woodpeckers would be anticipated. However, the proposed action could allow for greater future cumulative risk of development and loss of wildlife habitat that could occur outside of the DNRC's public environmental review process.</p>
<p>Townsend's big-eared bat (<i>Plecotus townsendii</i>) Habitat: Caves, caverns, old mines</p>	<p>[N] DNRC is unaware of any mines or caves within the project area or close vicinity that would be suitable for use by Townsend's big-eared bats. Thus, no direct, indirect or cumulative effects to Townsend's big-eared bats would be expected to occur as a result of either alternative.</p>
<p>Wolverine (<i>Gulo gulo</i>) Habitat: Alpine tundra and high-elevation boreal forests, areas with persistent spring snow.</p>	<p>[N] No suitable wolverine habitats occur in the project area. Thus, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to wolverines would be expected to occur as a result of either alternative.</p>

Literature Cited:

- Montana Natural Heritage Program and Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks. 2018. Sharp-tailed Grouse — Tympanuchus phasianellus. Montana Field Guide. Montana Natural Heritage Program and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Retrieved on February 27, 2018, from <http://FieldGuide.mt.gov/speciesDetail.aspx?elcode=ABNLC13030>
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1993. Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan, revised. U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, University of Montana, Missoula MT. 181pp.
- Wittinger, W.T. 2002. Grizzly bear distribution outside of recovery zones. Unpublished memorandum on file at USDA Forest Service, Region 1. Missoula, Montana.2pp.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

The DNRC archaeologist conducted a Class III cultural and paleontological resources inventory of the two state parcels in Section 16, T9N R6W. Despite a detailed examination of the area of potential effect, no cultural or paleontologic resources were identified. As such, disposal of the state parcels will have *No Effect* to *Antiquities* as defined under the Montana State Antiquities Act. A formal report of findings has been prepared and is on file with the DNRC and the Montana State Historic Preservation Officer.

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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to aesthetics.

Portions of the project area are visible from State Highway 12. However, no change in land use or existing conditions would be expected with either alternative.

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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to environmental resources.

None

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.

None

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.

No change in land use or existing conditions would be expected with either alternative.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

The parcels are currently leased by RV Ranch at a capacity of 38 AUM's. The lands would likely to continue to be grazed similarly. Therefore, no change in land use or existing conditions would be expected with either alternative.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to the employment market.

No change in land use or existing conditions would be expected with either alternative.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

A minor amount of tax revenue would be added to the Powell County tax base under the action alternative.

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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

None

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 Powell County Zoning and Development Regulations (2009) outline the development requirements for the six land use districts designated within the County. The property is within District #3, designated at a 160 acre minimum lot size.

The adjacent RV Ranch has enrolled their lands into a Conservation Easement.

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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

The State parcels are isolated and surrounded by private land with no legal public access. The RV Ranch deeded land is enrolled in a Conservation Easement and the ranch currently allows access for public hunting. Public access for hunting is likely to continue. Therefore, no change to existing conditions are anticipated with either alternative.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to population and housing.

No change in land use or existing conditions would be expected with either alternative.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

No change in land use or existing conditions would be expected with either alternative.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

No change in land use or existing conditions would be expected with either alternative.

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 direct, indirect, and cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

The two primary sources of income (for the common school trust) from these parcels are grazing and forest management. The current grazing lease & license carrying capacity is 38 Animal Unit Months (AUM's). The current grazing rate is at the minimum rate of \$13.10 per AUM. Total grazing revenue is \$497.80 per year. The 72 acres of forested land is estimated to produce approximately 90 board feet of sawtimber per acre per year, or approximately 6,500 board feet per year. At a rate of \$125.00 per thousand board feet, the estimated value of sawtimber growth is approximately \$812 per year.

Total revenue from these two sources is approximately \$1,310 per year.

At a base land value of \$900 per acre the parcels (165.39 acres) have an estimated total value of approximately \$149,000. Annual revenue (\$1,310) divided by the total land value (\$149,000) equals an average annual rate of return of approximately 0.9%.

The historic average rate of return from parcels acquired through land banking to date exceeds 2% (more than double) the rate of return from the parcels proposed for sale.

At a base value of \$900/acre, sale of the parcels could generate an estimated \$149,000. Under Land Banking Rules, these funds would be used to purchase other lands which could generate a considerably higher rate of return.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Brian Robbins	Date: 9/1/2019
	Title: Unit Manager	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:


I select the action alternative; to proceed with the nomination of both parcels noted above for sale under Land Banking (MCA 77-2-361 through 77-2-367).. This alternative best meets the fiduciary responsibility for management of trust lands by disposing of low revenue producing lands, disposes of land that is not legally accessible (although currently accessible for hunting under block management), and disposes of small isolated parcels of land that are difficult to manage.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

I find there are no significant impacts with selection of the action alternative.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

☐ EIS ☐ More Detailed EA ☒ No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Robert Storer
	Title: Trust Lands Program Manager, Southwestern Land Office
Signature: /s/ Robert Storer 	Date: 9/25/2019