

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Land Banking – Helena Unit – CLO – Leach Holdings LP

Proposed

Implementation Date: 2026

Proponent: This tract was nominated by the lessee, Jon Leach C/O of Leach Holdings LP, and brought forward now by DNRC.

Location: T16N, R1W, Section 16, N2NW4, E2, NE4SW4, S2SW4

County: Cascade County

Trust: Common Schools

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The possible sale of 520 acres of state land currently held in trust for the benefit of Common Schools was recently nominated for the DNRC's Land Banking Program by Jon Leach C/O of Leach Holdings LP (current lessee). If sold, revenue from the sale would be deposited in a special account, with monies from other sales around the State, to purchase replacement lands meeting acquisition criteria related to legal access, productivity, potential income, and proximity to existing state ownership which would then be held in trust for the benefit of the same beneficiary Trust in relative proportion. The 2003 Legislature passed statutes (77-2-361 through 367 MCA) authorizing the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) to sell State School Trust Lands and utilize those funds to purchase replacement lands for the school trust through a process called Land Banking. The intent of the program is for the state to dispose of scattered tracts of land that generally do not have legal access, generate substantially less income for the trust than their relative value, or are difficult for the DNRC to manage. The funds generated from sales are then used to purchase property that is blocked or contiguous to state land, has legal access, has potential for increased Trust revenue, and consequently is more efficient to manage. In 2005, the Department began accepting nominations from lessees and DNRC personnel for state tracts to be considered for sale under the program. Nominations were evaluated and the State Board of Land Commissioners (Board) prioritized parcels to sell. A tract described as:

**Part N2NW4, E2, NE4SW4, S2SW4 Township 16 North, Range 1 West, Section 16
520 acres
Common Schools Trust**

was recently nominated, evaluated, and is now being considered for sale. Please refer to **Appendix A** for a map of the tract described above.

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.

- Legal notices were published in the Great Falls Tribune (in print and online) on March 26, 2026, and April 15, 2026.
- Direct mailings were made to lessees, adjacent landowners, County Commissioners, State Legislators (from the involved Districts and who were associated with the legislation), and a host of organizations and individuals who had expressed interest in this process. A full listing of contacts is attached as **Appendix B**.
- Agencies involved in the land banking process include DNRC – Trust Land Management Division – Real Estate Bureau.
- Surface lessee includes Jon Leach C/O of Leach Holdings LP.

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.

There are no known other governmental agencies that have jurisdiction over this proposal.

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.

Alternatives were developed in accordance with the Department's obligation to manage state trust lands for the long-term financial benefit of the trust beneficiaries, as well as applicable statutory requirements governing the sale of state land. The range of alternatives considered reflects both the option to retain the land in state ownership and the option to dispose of the land in a manner that could improve long-term revenue generation. Alternatives were screened for legal feasibility, consistency with trust management objectives, and the potential to meet fiduciary responsibilities.

Under the **No Action Alternative**, the State would retain the existing land ownership pattern and would not sell the 520 acres of state land currently held in trust for the benefit of the Common Schools. The parcel would continue to be managed under existing conditions and uses, and no immediate revenue would be generated from a land sale. Long-term revenue generation would remain dependent on the parcel's current productivity and management.

Under the **Action Alternative**, the Department would request and recommend approval by the Land Board to sell the 520 acres of state land currently held in trust for the benefit of the Common Schools. If approved, the sale would occur at public auction in accordance with the requirements of Title 77, Chapter 2, Part 3 of the Montana Codes Annotated. Revenue generated from the sale would be deposited into the appropriate trust account and pooled with other land sale receipts to support the acquisition of other lands, easements, or improvements that have the potential to generate increased long-term income for the trust beneficiaries. Any future acquisition would undergo separate public review and analysis; therefore, this EA does not include parcel-to-parcel comparisons.

Additional alternatives were considered but eliminated from further analysis. These included retaining the parcel and increasing management intensity to enhance revenue, as well as pursuing a negotiated or private sale. Increasing management intensity was dismissed because it was not expected to substantially improve revenue generation relative to the parcel's existing characteristics. A negotiated or private sale was eliminated because it is not consistent with statutory requirements that state trust lands be sold at public auction. No other reasonable alternatives were identified that would meet the purpose and need while remaining legally and economically feasible.

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.

Section 16, Township 16N, Range 1W has minor to moderate hard rock mineral potential. According to the MRDS, a titanium-iron occurrence was mapped in 1983 near the southeastern corner of the tract. The site also contains numerous dikes or sills indicative of igneous intrusions, which can be associated with ore-bearing formations.

While these geologic features suggest some mineral potential, no significant historic mining activity is known to have occurred in the vicinity. In addition, the Earth MRI dataset, which identifies areas with potential for hard-rock mineral resources, classifies this area as low potential. The tract also has low potential for oil, gas, and coal resources.

Under the **No Action Alternative**, the mineral estate would remain in its current status and would not be sold or further encumbered by Department action. Existing conditions would remain unchanged, and no additional federal authorization or leasing activity would occur because of this decision.

Geologic conditions, including the presence of minor to moderate hard rock mineral potential, mapped titanium-iron occurrence, and igneous intrusive features, would remain undisturbed. The Earth MRI dataset continues to indicate low potential for hard-rock mineral resources in the area, and the tract would continue to have low potential for oil, gas, and coal development.

No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to soil quality, stability, or moisture would be expected under the No Action Alternative, as no new surface disturbance or mineral-related activity would occur.

Under the **Action Alternative**, the mineral estate would not be sold and would instead be retained by the Department on behalf of the beneficiary. Any future mineral development or mining activity would generate revenue that would directly benefit the beneficiary through mineral leasing or related agreements. No direct impacts to soils are anticipated from the action itself; however, any future authorized mineral development could result in localized soil disturbance, which would be subject to applicable reclamation requirements and permitting conditions.

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 project tract is in Cascade County, Montana. The parcel occurs within a mixed grassland foothill environment typical of central Montana. Surface hydrology on or immediately adjacent to the tract is limited and no perennial streams or mapped surface water features are present within the parcel boundaries. Any surface water flow is expected to be ephemeral in nature, occurring only in direct response to precipitation or snowmelt events.

Groundwater resources in the general area are typical of shallow alluvial and bedrock aquifer systems associated with foothill and prairie landscapes. No community public water supply wells are associated with the tract.

A review of the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) Water Rights Query System identified one water right associated with the parcel:

Table 1 – Known Water Rights Associated with the Tract

Water Rights No.	Type	Source	Owner	Purpose
41QJ 30111661	Place of Use	Surface	Montana State Board of Land Commissioners	Stock

This water right is associated with stock water use and is presumed to be utilized in support of livestock grazing on the tract or historically associated state trust management. Any transfer or continued use of the water right following a potential land transaction would be subject to applicable DNRC water right ownership transfer and beneficial use requirements.

Under the **Action Alternative**, ownership of the tract may transfer from the State of Montana to a private party. The associated water right (41QJ 30111661) would be subject to DNRC review and approval for any change in ownership or place of use, as applicable.

Potential indirect effects could include minor changes in grazing management; however, these are expected to remain consistent and would not result in measurable impacts to water quality or quantity.

Under the **No Action Alternative**, current land management and associated stock water use would continue under existing conditions. No changes to surface or groundwater resources, water quality, or water right administration would be expected. Existing low-intensity livestock grazing use is anticipated to continue to have minimal influence on localized surface runoff or soil moisture conditions. No impacts to water quality standards or beneficial uses of downstream waters are anticipated.

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.

The parcel is located within a Class II airshed. Under both the Action and No Action alternatives, the proposal itself does not involve any ground disturbance, construction, vegetation treatment, or other activities that would generate air emissions. Therefore, no direct or indirect impacts to air quality are anticipated as a result of the proposed land banking action.

Under the **Action Alternative**, if the land is sold, future use of the property could change depending on ownership objectives and local land use practices. Any potential future development or management activities would be subject to applicable state and federal air quality regulations, including permitting requirements and compliance with the Montana/Idaho Airshed Group if applicable. However, such future activities are speculative at this time and cannot be reasonably quantified or assumed as part of this analysis.

Under the **No Action Alternative**, the parcel would remain under current ownership and management, and existing conditions would continue. No changes in land use or management are proposed; therefore, no air quality effects would occur.

Overall, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to air quality are anticipated under either alternative, as the proposed action does not authorize activities that would result in emissions or particulate generation.

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.

The vegetation within the project area is typical of the surrounding ecological site and consists primarily of native grassland and shrub species. Dominant species include western wheatgrass (*Agropyron smithii*), green needlegrass (*Stipa viridula*), bluebunch wheatgrass (*Agropyron spicatum*), needle and thread (*Stipa comata*), big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), silver sagebrush (*Artemisia cana*), cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), and a variety of native forbs. No known rare plant species or unique vegetative communities have been documented within the project area.

Under the **Action Alternative**, no direct impacts to vegetation would occur because of the sale itself, since no ground-disturbing activities are proposed. Vegetation conditions would remain unchanged at the time of sale. However, indirect effects could occur in the future depending on subsequent ownership and land use decisions. Potential future uses such as development, changes in grazing management, or other land uses could result in localized alterations to vegetative cover, species composition, or distribution. These effects are speculative at this time and would be subject to applicable local, state, and federal regulations.

Under the **No Action Alternative**, vegetation communities would remain under current management and existing conditions would continue. No changes to vegetative cover, composition, or quality would be expected. Cumulatively, because the proposed action does not involve any immediate ground disturbance or management change, no measurable cumulative effects to vegetation are anticipated under 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.

A variety of wildlife species utilize the project area at different times of the year, including elk, mule deer, pronghorn antelope, mountain lion, bobcat, coyote, and a range of non-game bird species. No known seasonal concentration areas, migration bottlenecks, or critical habitats have been identified within the tract. No aquatic habitat is present within the project area.

Under the **Action Alternative**, no direct impacts to fish or wildlife habitat would occur because of the sale itself, as no ground-disturbing or habitat-altering activities are proposed. Wildlife use of the area would be expected to continue under current conditions at the time of sale. Any indirect effects would be dependent on future land ownership and management decisions. Potential future land uses could alter habitat availability, disturbance levels, or wildlife use patterns; however, such outcomes are speculative at this time and would be subject to applicable state and federal regulations.

Under the **No Action Alternative**, current wildlife habitat conditions and land use patterns would remain unchanged, and existing wildlife use of the area would be expected to continue.

Overall, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to terrestrial, avian, or aquatic species or habitats are anticipated under either alternative, as the proposed action does not involve physical alteration of habitat or management changes.

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.

A review of regional datasets, including the Montana Natural Heritage Program and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, indicates that no federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat are documented within the project area. The parcel is characterized as upland rangeland, and no mapped wetlands, riparian corridors, or jurisdictional waters are known to occur within the project footprint.

Grassland and sagebrush habitats in Cascade County may support several Montana Species of Concern. Species with potential to occur in or near the project area include the greater sage-grouse, Sprague's pipit, chestnut-collared longspur, burrowing owl, and ferruginous hawk. These species are generally associated with intact native grasslands, sagebrush-steppe, or prairie dog colony complexes. No prairie dog colonies or key habitat features (e.g., leks, nesting cliffs, or riparian areas) were identified within the project area. Habitat is typical of managed grazing lands and does not represent a unique or fragile ecological resource within the region.

Under both the **Action** and **No Action Alternatives**, no direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to threatened, endangered, or sensitive species are anticipated, as no ground disturbance or habitat alteration would occur.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) staff conducted an inventory of cultural and paleontological resources in response to a proposed sale of a state trust land tract in Cascade County. A 520-acre parcel of land legally described as the N1/2NW1/4, E1/2, NESW1/4, and the S1/2SW1/4 of Section 16, T16N R1W was inventoried to Class III standards in response to proposed sale of this parcel through the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation's Land Banking Program. The area of potential effect (APE) is tantamount to the area inventoried.

While no paleontological resources were identified, a stone arc (24CA2015) was documented during the inventory work reported on here. It is recommended here to be ineligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Proposed sale of the subject state parcel will have No Effect to *Antiquities* as defined in the Montana State Antiquities Act because it is highly unlikely that any form of ground disturbing development will occur in the site locality. No additional archaeological investigative work is recommended for the proposed action to proceed.

An inventory report has been prepared and is on file with the DNRC and the Montana State Historic Preservation Office.

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.

The parcel is completely landlocked, is not publicly accessible, and is not visible from any public roads or commonly used viewing areas. The tract is not located on a prominent topographic feature and does not contribute to identified scenic vistas or designated scenic corridors.

Under the **Action Alternative**, no direct impacts to aesthetics would occur as a result of the sale itself, as no ground-disturbing activities, structural development, or changes in land use are proposed at the time of sale. The visual character of the parcel and surrounding landscape would remain unchanged immediately following the action. Any potential future aesthetic impacts would be dependent on subsequent ownership and land use decisions and are speculative at this time.

Under the **No Action Alternative**, existing visual conditions would remain unchanged, and the parcel would continue to have no public visibility or influence on scenic resources. Given the lack of visibility and absence of proposed on-the-ground activities, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to aesthetics are anticipated under either alternative.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the number 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.

Under the **Action Alternative**, there would be no direct resource consumption resulting from the sale itself. However, if the property is conveyed into private ownership, future land use could result in indirect resource demands depending on subsequent development or management decisions. Such potential future uses could include limited increases in demand for land, water, energy, or other resources; however, these outcomes are speculative and cannot be reasonably quantified at this time. Any future development would be subject to applicable local, state, and federal permitting and resource regulations.

There are no known nearby activities that would be measurably affected by the proposed action, as no physical changes to the landscape or resource use patterns are proposed.

Under the **No Action Alternative**, existing conditions and resource use would remain unchanged, and no additional demands on environmental resources would occur.

Overall, no direct or cumulative effects to land, water, air, or energy resources are anticipated under either alternative as a result of the proposed action itself.

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.

No other projects or plans are currently being considered for the tract included in this Environmental Assessment. The surrounding lands are privately owned and are primarily used for grazing and rural residential purposes. No known federal or state actions are currently under MEPA review or permitting review within the immediate analysis area that would interact with the proposed action.

Future development in the surrounding area is anticipated to remain consistent with existing land uses, primarily grazing and residential development, and is expected to follow the policies outlined in the Cascade County Growth Policy. While future development could occur incrementally over time, such changes are speculative and are subject to local planning and regulatory processes.

Because the proposed action does not include ground disturbance or changes in current land use, and because no overlapping state or federal projects are identified, no cumulative impacts are anticipated in combination with other reasonably foreseeable actions in the area.

Overall, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects are expected from the proposed action when considered in conjunction with other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions.

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.

Under the **Action Alternative**, the transfer of ownership would not, in and of itself, result in any direct impact on human health or safety. Any future health and safety considerations would be dependent on subsequent land use decisions by the new owner. These potential future uses are speculative at this time and would be subject to applicable local, state, and federal laws and safety regulations.

Under the **No Action Alternative**, existing conditions would remain unchanged, and no new health or safety risks would be introduced.

Overall, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to human health or safety are anticipated as a result of the proposed action.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

Under the **Action Alternative**, the transfer of ownership would not directly alter existing agricultural use at the time of sale, as no ground-disturbing activities or changes in land use are proposed. Grazing activities on surrounding private lands would be expected to continue as current conditions allow. However, future use of the property following sale could change depending on the new owner's objectives. Potential future uses could include continued agricultural production, residential development, or other permitted land uses consistent with local zoning and the Cascade County Growth Policy. Any such changes are speculative at this time and would be subject to applicable local, state, and federal regulations.

Under the **No Action Alternative**, existing land use patterns, including agricultural grazing, would remain unchanged, and no new industrial or commercial activities would be introduced as a result of the proposed action.

Overall, no direct or cumulative effects to industrial, commercial, or agricultural activities and production are anticipated from the proposed action itself.

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.

Under the **Action Alternative**, no direct employment impacts are anticipated as a result of the transaction itself. Any potential future changes in employment would depend on how the property is ultimately used following transfer of ownership. Possible future uses could include continued agricultural activity, residential development, or other permitted land uses; however, these outcomes are speculative at this time and cannot be reasonably quantified for the purposes of this analysis.

Under the **No Action Alternative**, current land use and management would remain unchanged, and no changes to employment levels or distribution would occur as a result of the proposed action.

Overall, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to the quantity or distribution of employment are anticipated under 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.

State School Trust Lands are currently exempt from property taxes. If State Trust Lands represents 6% or greater of the total acres within a county, a Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PLT) are made to the county to mitigate the State Trust Land tax-exempt status.

Upon sale, the parcel would become subject to property taxation, replacing the current PLT. This change is not expected to negatively impact on the overall county tax revenue.

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

The parcel is currently undeveloped and does not generate measurable traffic or require ongoing public services such as fire protection, law enforcement response, or school services beyond those already provided to the surrounding rural area.

Under the **Action Alternative**, no direct effects to government services are anticipated because of the transaction itself. However, if the property is conveyed into private ownership, future land use could change depending on the new owner's plans. Potential future development could result in increased demand for services such as road maintenance, emergency response, fire protection, and potentially school enrollment. These impacts are speculative at this time and would depend on the type, intensity, and timing of any future development, which would also be subject to local permitting and regulatory review.

Under the **No Action Alternative**, existing conditions would remain unchanged, and no additional demand for government services would be expected.

Cumulatively, because the proposed action does not directly authorize development or land use changes, no measurable cumulative effects to government services are anticipated at this time in combination with other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions.

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 project does not conflict with any known state, county, or local environmental plans or goals. Because the proposed action does not include ground disturbance or immediate land use change, it would not affect implementation of existing planning documents.

Overall, the proposed action is consistent with applicable local and state land use plans, and no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to locally adopted environmental plans and goals are 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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

Under the **Action Alternative**, no direct impacts to recreational or wilderness activities would occur at the time of sale, as no changes to physical conditions or access are proposed. The parcel would remain inaccessible to the public unless future ownership establishes access. Any potential future effects to recreational opportunity would be indirect and dependent on subsequent land use decisions by the new owner, which are speculative at this time.

Under the **No Action Alternative**, existing conditions would remain unchanged, and the parcel would continue to be inaccessible to public recreation. No changes to recreational or wilderness use would occur.

Cumulatively, because the proposed action does not alter access, develop facilities, or change land use at the time of sale, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to recreational or wilderness activities are anticipated under 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.

The project area is currently undeveloped and does not contain any existing housing or resident population. As such, it does not contribute to local population density or housing demand under existing conditions.

Under the **Action Alternative**, no immediate changes to population or housing would occur as a result of the sale itself, as no development or land use changes are proposed at the time of action. However, if the parcel is conveyed into private ownership, future use could potentially include residential development depending on local zoning, market conditions, and landowner objectives. Any resulting population growth or housing demand would be indirect and speculative at this time, and would be subject to county land use planning, permitting requirements, and infrastructure availability.

Under the **No Action Alternative**, the parcel would remain under current ownership and management, and no changes to population or housing would occur.

Cumulatively, because the proposed action does not directly authorize development or population growth, no measurable direct or cumulative effects to population or housing are anticipated. Any future changes would be dependent on independent land use decisions outside the scope of this analysis.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Under the **Action Alternative**, no immediate changes to land use, access, or physical conditions would occur as a result of the transaction itself. Therefore, no direct impacts to existing social structures or community character are anticipated. Any potential future effects would depend on subsequent ownership and land use decisions, which could include continued agricultural use or rural residential development consistent with surrounding land use patterns. These potential changes are currently speculative.

Under the **No Action Alternative**, existing land use patterns and rural community character would remain unchanged.

Cumulatively, because the proposed action does not directly alter land use or access, no direct or measurable indirect effects to social structures or mores are anticipated. Any future changes would be the result of independent, site-specific decisions outside the scope of this analysis.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

Under the **Action Alternative**, no ground-disturbing activities or changes to existing conditions would occur at the time of sale. Therefore, no direct impacts to cultural resources or cultural uniqueness are anticipated. Any potential future effects would depend on subsequent land use decisions by future ownership, which are speculative at this time and would be subject to applicable cultural resource protection laws and review requirements.

Under the **No Action Alternative**, existing conditions would remain unchanged, and no effects on cultural resources or the cultural character of the area would occur.

Cumulatively, because the proposed action does not introduce physical disturbance or alter land use, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to cultural uniqueness or diversity are anticipated under 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.

An appraisal of the property value has not been completed to date. Under DNRC rules, an appraisal would be conducted if preliminary approval to proceed is granted by the Board of Land Commissioners. The Department is conducting more detailed evaluations currently to decide whether to offer the tract for sale. The revenue generated from the sale of this parcel would be combined with other revenue in the Land Banking Account to purchase replacement property for the benefit of the Trust. It is anticipated that the replacement property would have legal access and be adjacent to other Trust lands which would provide greater management opportunities and income. If replacement property was not purchased prior to the expiration of the statute, the revenue would be deposited into the permanent trust for investment.

One public comment was received from the extensive scoping list, published public notice, and the public at large. That comment can be found in **Appendix D**.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Kasydi Lucas	Date: May 4, 2024
	Title: Land Use Specialist	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Upon Review of the checklist EA and attachments, I find the proposed Action Alternative meets the intent of the project goals and objectives, as stated in Section 1 – Type and Purpose of Action, addresses the public comments received during scoping, and complies with DNRC administrative rules and all pertinent laws.

The lands involved in the project are held by the state of Montana in trust for the support of specific beneficiary institutions and DNRC, as directed by the land board of commissioners, is required to administer these trust lands to produce the largest measure of reasonable and legitimate return over the long run (Enabling Act of February 22, 1889; 1972 Montana Constitution, Article X Section 11; and, 77-1-202 MCA)

For these reasons I have selected Alternative B (Action Alternative) to be implemented on this project.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

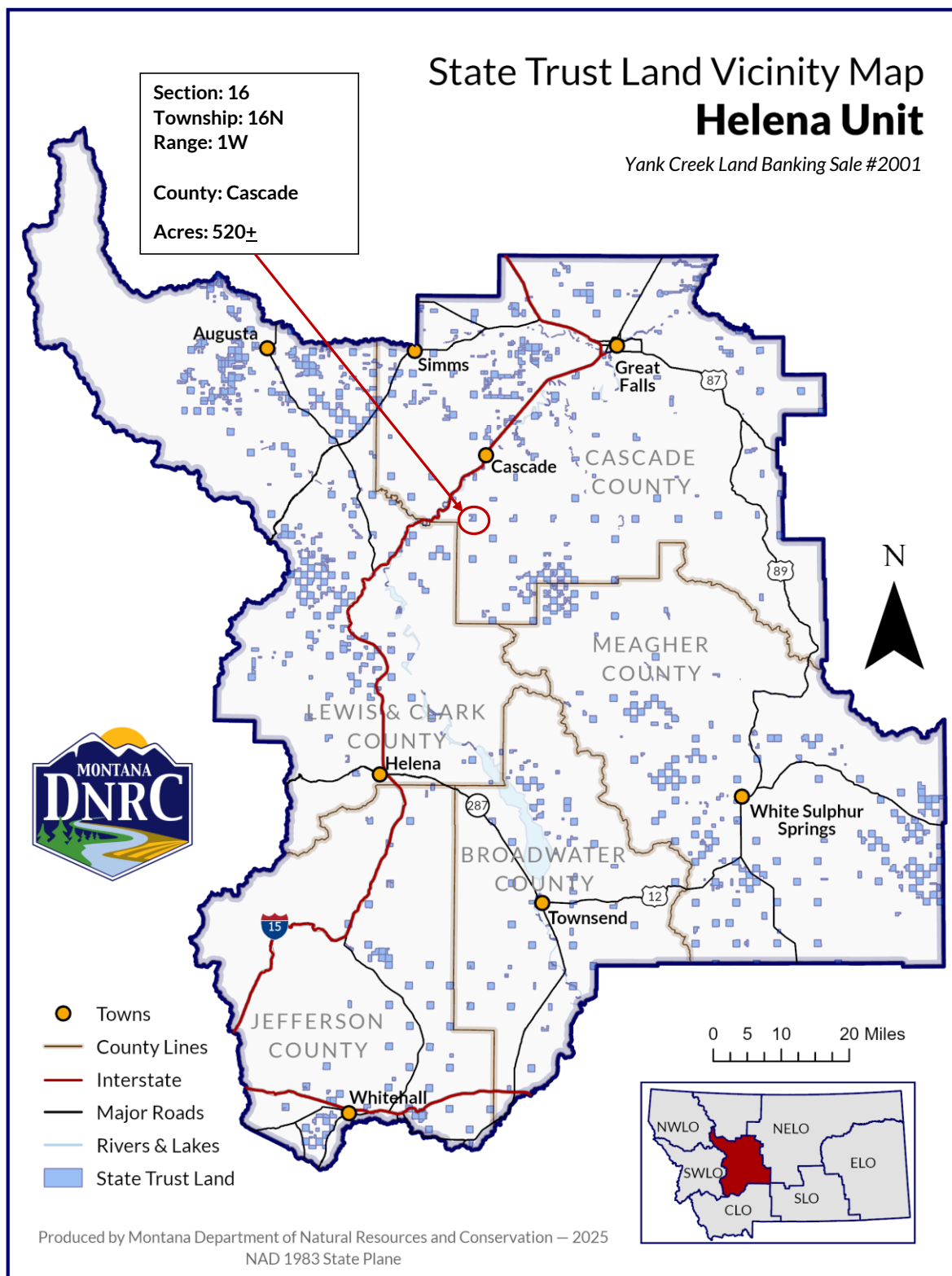
I have evaluated the potential social, economic, and environmental effects and have determined significant impacts would not result from the proposed 520-acre land sale. The tract does not have any unique characteristics, critical habitat, or environmental conditions indicating the tract should remain under DNRC ownership and management. There are no indications the tract would produce substantially greater revenue or have substantially greater value to the trust in the future.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

☐ EIS ☐ More Detailed EA ☒ No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Adam Blythe
	Title: Helena Unit Manager, Central Land Office
Signature: 	Date: 5/28/26

Appendix A
Lease 2649 Vicinity Map



Appendix B
Scoping/Contact List

Name	Address	City	State	ZIP Code
Anne Hedges	Po Box 1184	Helena	MT	59624
Frank Szollosi	Po Box 1175	Helena	MT	59624
Bob Vogel	863 Great Northern Blvd., Ste 301	Helena	MT	59601 -3398
Lola Raska	Po Box 1165	Great Falls	MT	59403
Julia Altemus	Po Box 1967	Missoula	MT	59806
Eric Bryson	2715 Skyway Drive	Helena	MT	59601
Janet Ellis	Po Box 595	Helena	MT	59624
Jake Cummins	502 S 19th, Ste 104	Bozeman	MT	59718
Kyle Hardin	9500 Blacktail Rd.	Dillon	MT	59725
Raylee Honeycutt	420 N. California Street	Helena	MT	59601
Ellie Brighton	420 N. California Street	Helena	MT	59601
Kyle Weaver	5705 Grant Creek	Missoula	MT	59808
Amy Croover	32 South Ewing	Helena	MT	59601
Susie Hedalen	Po Box 202501	Helena	MT	59601 -2501
Lucy France	32 Campus Dr.	Missoula	MT	59812 -0001
Kellie Peterson	Po Box 172440	Bozeman	MT	59717 -0001
Kellie Peterson	Po Box 172440	Bozeman	MT	59717 -0001
Donna Schmidt	3911 Central Ave	Great Falls	MT	59405
Dr. Johnny Maclean	1300 W Park Street	Butte	MT	59701
Tricia Fiscus	710 South Atlantic St	Dillon	MT	59725
Stefani Hicswa	1500 N 30th Street	Billings	MT	59101
Budget Director	Po Box 200802	Helena	MT	59620 -0802
Charlie Brereton	Po Box 4210	Helena	MT	59620 -4210
Brian Gootkin	Po Box 201301	Helena	MT	59620 -1301
James Fehr	Po Box 200901	Helena	MT	59620 -0901
Dept. Transportation	Po Box 201001	Helena	MT	59620 -1001
Dan Rogers	2705 Spurgin Road	Missoula	MT	59804
Trevor Taylor	Po Box 201601	Helena	MT	59620
Kelly Motichka	Po Box 201601	Helena	MT	59620
Deidra Klobberdanz	Po Box 201601	Helena	MT	59620
Seth Goodwin	Po Box 201601	Helena	MT	59620
Patrick Rennie	Po Box 201601	Helena	MT	59620
Pat Bousliman	Po Box 892	Helena	MT	59624
John Murray	850 Government Square	Browning	MT	59417

Michael J. Blackwolf	656 Agency Main Street	Harlem	MT	59526
Dyan Youpee	Po Box 1027	Poplar	MT	59255
Teanna Limpy	Po Box 128	Lame Deer	MT	59043
Pieloch Mark J	Po Box 120489	Melbourne	FL	32912 -0489
7 Bar S Ranch Company	2606 3rd Avenue North	Great Falls	MT	59401
Makuakane Christopher K & Shannon M Etal	1930 Arena Ct	West Linn	OR	97068 -4817
Robinson Brooks A	24216 Undine Rd	Valencia	CA	91355 -2429
Jeffrey Glenn R	300 28th Ave Nw	Great Falls	MT	59404 -1332
Ulmer Gary & Beverly Family Trust	529 27th Ave Ne	Great Falls	MT	59404 -1627
Wilson Scott W Etal	2618 Central Ave W	Great Falls	MT	59404 -2544
Gray Kerry E	2424 Old Havre Hwy	Black Eagle	MT	59414 -1091
Oatman Lynn Ulmer	633 36th Ave Ne	Great Falls	MT	59404 -1121
Kitterman Frederick G	28206 N Quartz Dr	San Tan Valley	AZ	85143 -4561
Wilson Del	3216 Meadowood Ln	Great Falls	MT	59404 -5616
Lewis Darla Jean	3211 5th Ave S	Great Falls	MT	59405 -3339
Mcintosh Larry John	2110 Central Ave	Great Falls	MT	59401 -3923
Pribyl James D & Marjorie F	379 Sheep Creek Rd	Cascade	MT	59421 -8209
Don G Harland Revocable Living Trust	25 Sunrise Ln	Cascade	MT	59421 -8386
Leach Holdings Lp	1900 32nd Ave	Black Eagle	MT	59414 -1310
Gray Kerry E Etal	2424 Old Havre Hwy	Black Eagle	MT	59414 -1091
Kelman Darla J Etal	3211 5th Ave S	Great Falls	MT	59405 -3339
Woodcock Jack M	5143 Peak Climb Dr	Las Vegas	NV	89135 -9100
Bureau Of Land Management	812 14th St N	Great Falls	MT	59401 -1257
Brooks C Merle	737 Ouray Ave	Grand Jct	CO	81501 -3325
Brooks Patricia M	737 Ouray Ave	Grand Jct	CO	81501 -3325
Ha Tandy Etal	841 E Wisteria Pl	Santa Ana	CA	92701 -6229
Bureau Of Land Management	Montana State Office 5001 Southgate Dr	Billings	MT	59101 -4669
Josh Kassmier	Po Box 876	Fort Benton	MT	59442
Steve Gist	339 1st St N	Cascade	MT	59421
Board Of County	325 Second Ave. North, Courthouse	Great Falls	MT	59401

Commissioners Cascade County	Annex, Room 111			
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