

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Meyer Ranch Land Banking Sale
Proposed Implementation Date:	June 2021
Proponent:	Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation (DNRC)
Location:	T13N, R12W, Section 36. Approximately 5 miles southwest of Helmville, Montana
County:	Powell

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The Meyer Company Ranch has nominated a full section (640 acres) of State School Trust land 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. The State has granted a permanent easement for an electric transmission line through the parcel. The proposed sale would reserve easement rights for this use.

The nominated parcel is currently leased (Lease #1935) by the Meyer Company Ranch for grazing use. This state-owned land is held in trust for the support of the Common Schools (K-12). The parcel is entirely surrounded by private land and is 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 this parcel 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.

A thirty-day public scoping period was provided between August 5 and September 4, 2020. Scoping letters were mailed/emailed to approximately 60 interested parties on the Statewide scoping list for land banking proposals. A legal advertisement was also placed in the Silver State Post newspaper.

One comment was received. This comment was from Powell County Commissioners and stated; "The Board has no concern for isolated State lands to be sold or exchanged, and if the lessee is not allowing trespass for the public to use the land for recreation a sale will not change that."

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 the parcel for sale under Land Banking (MCA 77-2-361 through 77-2-367). The next step in this process would be to request preliminary approval from the State Board of Land Commissioners to proceed with land banking sale process.

No Action Alternative

The no action alternative would not proceed with the nomination of the parcel 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 underlying geology is Tertiary andesite and basalt flows (Lonn et al., 2010) and alluvium topped with soils derived from alluvium and stream terraces (well-drained and classified as farmland of local importance) (NRCS). No unique or unusual geologic features are documented for the site.

Should traditional management (i.e., livestock grazing) continue in the project minor direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to soil quality, stability, and moisture would be anticipated. No direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to soils are anticipated because no appreciable changes to existing land management are expected would occur immediately, however long-term management objectives would be unknown.

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

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 area drains towards Douglas Creek and contains a wetland area and an ephemeral or intermittent stream that drains to the southwest towards Douglas Creek. No change in land use or the existing condition would be expected with either the action or no-action alternative.

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.

Should traditional management (i.e., livestock grazing) continue in the project minor direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to water resources would be anticipated. No direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to water resources are anticipated because no appreciable changes to existing land management are expected to occur immediately, however long-term management objectives would be unknown.

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 selection of 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 parcel there is approximately 620 acres of non-forested native range land and approximately 20 acres of small scattered patches of forest cover dominated by Douglas-fir. The land is classified per state law (77-1-401) as Class 1-- lands which are principally valuable for grazing purposes. The parcel is leased (Agreement L1935) for livestock grazing to the Meyer Company Ranch. The lease allows the ranch to utilize (graze) up to 115 animal unit months of forage per year from the parcel.

No change in land use or existing conditions would be expected with selection of 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.

The project area drains towards Douglas Creek and contains wetland area and an ephemeral or intermittent stream that drains to the southwest towards Douglas Creek. Fish are assumed to not be present at this site and have not been sampled or analyzed for fish presence by Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks (<http://fwp.mt.gov/gis/maps/mFish>; referenced October 13, 2020). No change in land use or the existing condition would be expected with either the action or no-action alternative.

Terrestrial Wildlife

The project area includes roughly 620 acres of non-forested native range land and approximately 20 acres of small scattered patches of forest cover dominated by Douglas-fir. Past activities in the project area have included livestock grazing. The project area is surrounded by private lands dominated by agricultural activities and cattle grazing.

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. 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. 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 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.

The project area drains towards Douglas Creek and contains wetland area and an ephemeral or intermittent stream that drains to the southwest towards Douglas Creek. Fish are assumed to not be present at this site and have not been sampled or analyzed for presence by Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks (<http://fwp.mt.gov/gis/maps/mFish>; referenced October 13, 2020). No change in land use or the existing condition would be expected with either the action or no-action alternative.

Terrestrial Wildlife Resources

The project area includes roughly 620 acres of non-forested native range land and approximately 20 acres of small scattered patches of forest cover dominated by Douglas-fir. Past activities in the project area have included livestock grazing. The project area is surrounded by private lands dominated by agricultural activities and cattle grazing. 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 livestock grazing. 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 impacts 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. 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 Meyer 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 13 miles southwest of the NCDE Recovery Area (USFWS 1993), and in the 'occupied' grizzly bear habitat area as mapped by grizzly bear researchers and managers to address increased sightings and encounters of grizzly bears in habitats outside of recovery zones. (Wittinger et al. 2002). However, grizzly bears are increasingly being documented south of the recovery zone (J. Jonkel, MT FWP, personal communication, 2018). 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] No Canada lynx habitats exist in the project area. Thus no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to Canada lynx would be expected to occur as a result of either alternative.
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 nesting lakes occur in the project area. Thus, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to common loons would be expected to occur as a result of 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 cover types exist in the project area. Thus no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to fisher would be anticipated.
Flammulated owl (<i>Otus flammeolus</i>) Habitat: Late-successional ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir forest	[N] No suitable flammulated owl habitats exist in the project area. Thus, no direct, indirect or cumulative effects to flammulated owls would be expected to occur as a result of either alternative.
Gray Wolf (<i>Canis lupus</i>) Habitat: Ample big game populations, security from human activities	[N] The project area has been included in the annual home range of the Elevation Mountain wolf pack in the past. Some 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.
Harlequin duck (<i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>) Habitat: White-water streams, boulder and cobble substrates	[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.
Mountain Plover (<i>Charadrius montanus</i>) Habitat: Short-grass prairie, alkaline flats, and prairie dog towns	[N] No prairie dog colonies or other suitable shortgrass prairie habitats are known to occur in the project area. Thus, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to mountain plovers would be anticipated to occur as a result of either alternative.
Northern bog lemming (<i>Synaptomys borealis</i>) Habitat: Sphagnum meadows, bogs, fens with thick moss mats	[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.
Peregrine falcon (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>) Habitat: Cliff features near open foraging areas and/or wetlands	[N] No preferred cliff features suitable for use by peregrine falcons occur in the project area. Thus, no direct, indirect or cumulative effects to peregrine falcons would be expected to occur as a result of either alternative.

Pileated woodpecker (<i>Dryocopus pileatus</i>) Habitat: Late-successional ponderosa pine and larch-fir forest	[N] No suitable pileated woodpecker habitats exist in the project area. Thus, no direct, indirect or cumulative effects to pileated woodpeckers would be expected to occur as a result of either alternative.
Townsend's big-eared bat (<i>Plecotus townsendii</i>) Habitat: Caves, caverns, old mines	[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.
Wolverine (<i>Gulo gulo</i>) Habitat: Alpine tundra and high-elevation boreal forests, areas with persistent spring snow.	[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.

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 intensity level cultural and paleontological resources inventory of the state tract. During the course of inventory six cultural resources associated with past Native American occupants of the region were identified and formally recorded. These are 24PW833-24PW836 and Isolated Finds 1-2. All were determined ineligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. As such, the proposed land sale would 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 271. No change in land use or existing aesthetic conditions would be expected with selection of 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 human health and safety conditions would be expected with selection of either alternative.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

The parcel is currently leased for livestock grazing by Meyer Company Ranch at an annual carrying capacity of 115 AUM's. If the land was sold it would likely continue to be grazed similarly. Therefore, no change in land use or existing industrial, commercial, and agricultural activities and production would be expected with selection of 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 the quantity and distribution of employment would be expected with selection of 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 trust land is exempt from taxation. A minor increase in private property value would occur to the Powell County tax base with selection of 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

No change in the demand for government services would be expected with the selection of either alternative.

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 state-owned parcel is wholly surrounded by lands owned by the Meyer Company Ranch. None of these surrounding lands are under conservation easement. No change in land use, existing conditions or locally adopted environmental plans and goals would be expected with selection of either alternative.

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 parcel is isolated and surrounded by private land and has no legal public access. The adjacent Meyer Company Ranch deeded lands are not enrolled in a Conservation Easement. Lack of public access for hunting is expected to continue. No change to existing conditions would be anticipated with selection of the no action alternative.

Under the action alternative, this legally inaccessible trust land would be sold. The money received would be used to purchase replacement land for the trust beneficiaries. When purchasing replacement land the Department would look for parcels that; provide a higher rate of return for the trust beneficiaries; have legal public access; and have the potential for multiple uses. A minor increase in the acreage of legally accessible state trust lands would be expected with selection of the action 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, including the density and distribution of population and housing would be expected with selection of either alternative.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

No changes in social structures and mores would be expected with selection of 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, including cultural uniqueness and diversity would be expected with selection of 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 primary source of income (for the common school trust) from this parcel is from domestic livestock grazing. The current grazing lease annual carrying capacity is 115 Animal Unit Months (AUM's). The current grazing rate is at the minimum rate of \$12.92 per AUM. Total grazing revenue is \$1,485.80 for calendar year 2020.

At a base land value of \$900 per acre, the parcel (640 acres) has an estimated total value of approximately \$576,000. Annual revenue (\$1,485.80) divided by the total land value (\$576,000) equals an average annual rate of return of approximately 0.26%.

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

At a base value of \$900/acre, sale of the parcel could generate an estimated \$576,000. Under Land Banking Rules, the Department would look for parcels that; provide a higher rate of return for the trust beneficiaries; have legal public access; and have the potential for multiple uses.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Robert H Storer	Date: 10/14/2020
	Title: Trust Lands Program Manager, SW Land Office	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

I select the action alternative; to proceed with the nomination of the parcel 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, and disposes of 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.

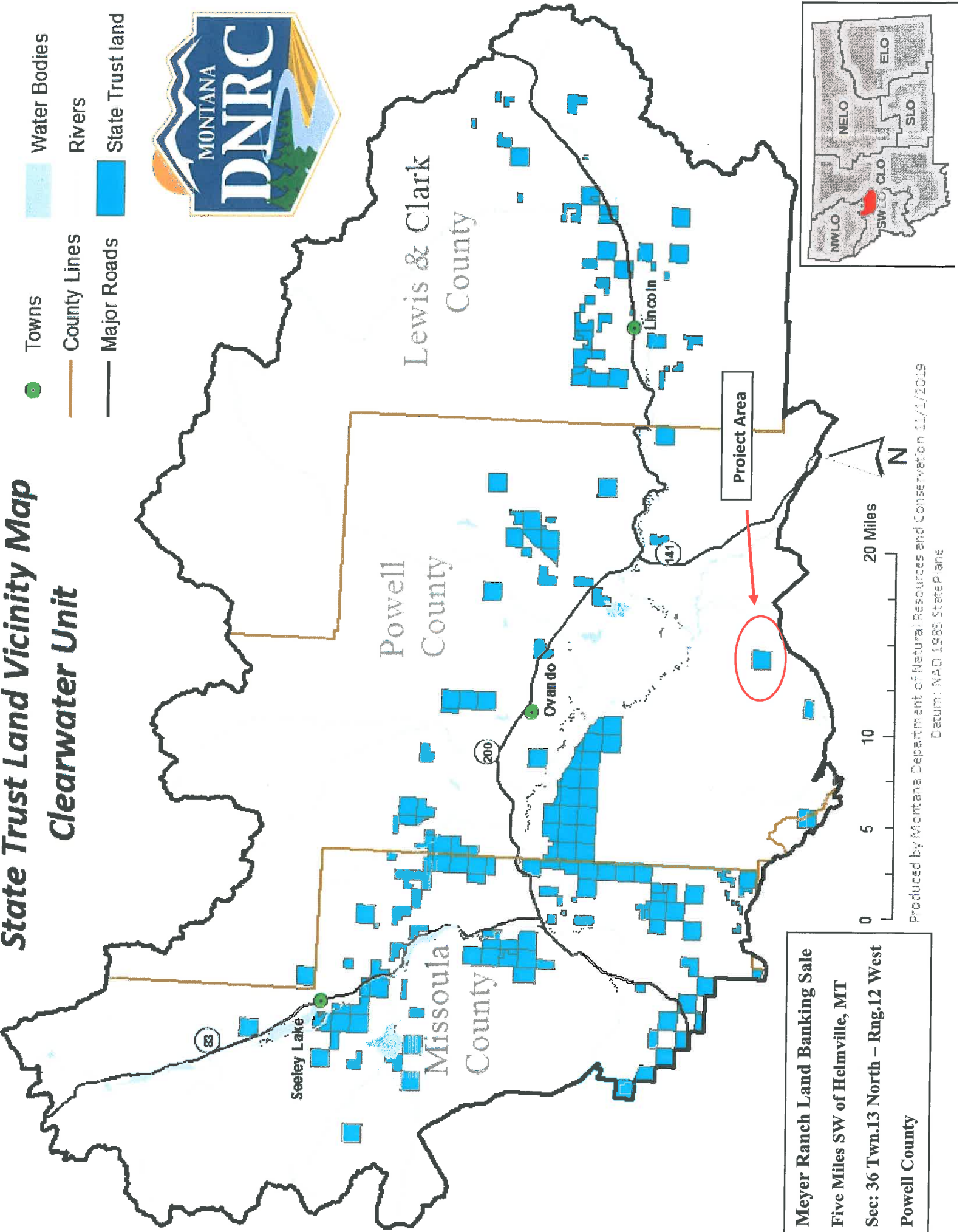
27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

☐ EIS ☐ More Detailed EA ☒ No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Kristen Baker-Dickinson
	Title: Clearwater Unit Manager
Signature: /s/ K. Baker-Dickinson	Date: 10/15/2020

State Trust Land Vicinity Map

Clearwater Unit



Meyer Ranch Land Banking Sale
 Five Miles SW of Helmville, MT
 Sec: 36 Twn.13 North – Rng.12 West
Powell County

Produced by Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation 11/1/2019
 Datum: NAD 1983 State Plane

