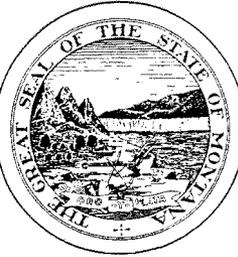


DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL
RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION

NORTHEASTERN LAND OFFICE

DNRC - Trust Land Management Division



STATE OF MONTANA

(406) 265-5236 Telephone
(406) 265-5236 FAX

HAVRE UNIT OFFICE
PO BOX 868
210 SIXTH AVENUE
HAVRE, MONTANA 59501-0868

November 24, 2004

MEMORANDUM

TO: Clive Rooney, Area Manager, Northeastern Land Office
Wanda J. Walks, Mineral Leasing Section, Minerals Management Bureau

FR: Dan Dobler, Havre Unit Manager, Northeastern Land Office *Dan Dobler*

RE: Seismic Permit No. 1446
Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. / Chinook 2-D
Township 33.0 North, Range 21.0 East
Section 36: All
Township 33.0 North, Range 22.0 East
Section 16: Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, W $\frac{1}{2}$, W $\frac{1}{2}$ E $\frac{1}{2}$
Section 36: All
Township 33.0 North, Range 23.0 East
Section 33: E $\frac{1}{2}$
Section 34: All
Blaine County, Montana

RECEIVED

NOV 24 2004

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. is proposing to conduct a large 2-D seismic project across the above referenced tracts of state land. Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. has been hired on behalf of Montana Land & Exploration, Inc. to complete this seismic project. Montana Land & Exploration, Inc. holds the oil and gas leases with the State of Montana on these tracts of land. This type of project will create low impact energy sources by using vibroseis equipment. This equipment is used to locate shallow natural gas producing formations below the surface.

This project will take place on three tracts of state surface and mineral owned lands along with two other tracts, in which the surface is privately owned and the state owns the minerals. This project will encompass approximately 6 miles of seismic line across these tracts of state and private land. The project will take place on native rangeland. Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. will be required to contact the state's surface lessee(s); Joseph F. Brummer, Thomas E. Green, and George Baldik, in order to inform them of the proposed seismic project on each of their respected surface leases with the State of Montana. Polaris Explorer will settle all surface damages within a reasonable time period following the completion of the seismic project. The surface impacts will be minimal and consist mainly from limited motorized vehicular travel across the surface, soil compaction from the vibrating platform and thumper truck tires, and matted down vegetation. This project will not have any long-term negative impacts to the native grazing land, if the proponent conducts this project during dry or frozen surface conditions and complies with the Departments terms and conditions for seismic activity on state land.

I have attached an Environmental Assessment Checklist for your review. Please review the EA, sign and date it, and return a finalized copy to the Havre Unit Office. Please forward a copy of the executed EA Checklist to Connie Daruk, so that she may forward it onto the Environmental Quality Council. I'm recommending that the Department issue Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. a seismic permit to conduct this 2-D seismic project across the above referenced tracts of state land.

I have prepared several maps using aerial photographs that indicate the proposed seismic lines on each individual tract of land. I used a yellow highlighter to indicate the areas that will be "off limits" to the recording crew vehicles for this project. All receiver lines will be placed by hand crews in those areas containing steep slopes, coulees, and irrigation ditches. I have added the following stipulations for Seismic Permit No. 1446.

STIPULATIONS

1. Permittee shall contact the Havre Unit Office, 48 hours prior to conducting any surface activities at: PO Box 868, Havre, MT 59501, phone (406) 265-5236.
2. The permittee shall be responsible for controlling any noxious weeds introduced by permittee's activity on state owned land and shall prevent or eradicate the spread of those noxious weeds onto land adjoining the leased premises.
3. These tracts of state land contain several significant archaeological and historical resources. If any of these resources are located in the direct route of the proposed seismic line, the permittee shall cease all activity and contact the Havre Unit Office and the Department Archaeologist in Helena immediately.
4. It is the responsibility of the permittee to make sure that the seismic company that has been contracted to do the seismic work under this permit has a valid permit with the county and has registered their bond with the Secretary of State's Office.
5. In order to prevent the introduction of noxious weeds on state lands, vehicles and ATV's used on state land must be power washed prior to use on the project.
6. The permittee shall contact the state's surface lessee(s); Joseph F. Brummer, Thomas E. Green, and George Baldik, 48 hours prior to any surface activity in order to notify them about the commencement of the seismic project.
7. Seismic activity will occur on dry ground only. **No activity will be allowed during muddy conditions.**
8. No vehicle oil changes or petroleum disposal shall occur on these tracts of state land.
9. **There will be no off-road traffic other than necessary to accomplish the seismographic goals.**
10. **Vehicles will not be allowed to traverse steep slopes that are 25% or greater, or areas with very thin soils that may be rutted and left open to erosion. All receiver lines will be placed on steep slopes by hand crews.**
11. **All gates will be closed, and all fences that are taken down will be repaired as soon as possible. All flagging tape will be removed from the roads and fences leading into the site, along designated routes, and fence lines indicating where gates are located, once the project is completed.**

12. There are woody species present on these tracts of state land like snowberry, woods rose, buffaloberry, silver sagebrush, big sagebrush, and chokecherry. **All seismic equipment will avoid these species by going around them. If woody draws are present, these areas must be avoided.** If the permittee wants to cross a woody draw they must receive written permission from the Havre Unit Office on the agreed upon crossing location.
13. The permittee shall settle all surface damages with the state's surface lessee(s) within a reasonable time period following the completion of the 2-D seismic project.
14. **The seismic company is prohibited from all seismic activity within 300 feet of any springs, water wells, streams, lakes or water storage reservoir facilities to maintain the integrity of these water resources.**
15. **The areas that have been highlighted in yellow on the attached aerial photographs are "Off-Limits" to all seismic recording vehicles. All receiver lines in these areas must be laid out by hand crews.**
16. **The seismic company is prohibited from crossing the Zurich Canal located in the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, Section 36, T33N, R21E. All seismic equipment must go around the canal to resume recording activities on this tract of state land.**

Enclosures: EA Checklist/Aerial Photographs

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Seismic Permit No. 1446	Proposed Implementation Date: November 30, 2004
Proponent: Polaris Explorer USA, Inc., C/o Cella Meek, Bear Paw Motel, 114 Montana Street, Chinook, MT 59523	
Type and Purpose of Action: Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. is proposing to conduct a 2-D seismic project across several tracts of state land. Polaris Explorer will be conducting the seismic project on behalf of Montana Land & Exploration, Inc. Montana Land & Exploration, Inc. holds the oil and gas leases with the State of Montana on these tracts of land. This seismic project will cross approximately 6 miles of state surface and mineral owned lands over five different tracts.	
Location: (See Attached Page For Legal Descriptions)	County: Blaine

I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

<p>1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED: Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.</p>	<p>The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) has been petitioned by Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. to conduct a 2-D seismic project across five different tracts of state surface and mineral owned lands (See attached page for complete legal descriptions). The Montana DNRC sent out scoping letters to state surface lessee(s), Joseph F. Brummer, Thomas E. Green, and George Baldik, identifying the proposed seismic lines across their individual surface leases with the State of Montana. The project involves two tracts of land in which, the State of Montana owns the mineral rights and the surface is privately owned.</p>
<p>2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:</p>	<p>The Montana DNRC's; Havre Unit Office, Minerals Management Bureau, and the Montana Board of Oil & Gas are the only governmental agencies with jurisdiction for this type of project on state lands. The permittee must notify the state's surface lessee(s) and the private surface owners included in this project, about their intentions to conduct a seismic project across these tracts of land. The State of Montana owns the mineral rights on all these tracts of land and the Montana DNRC Trust Land Management Division (TLMD) is the agency that administers all seismic activity on state mineral owned lands. Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. will need to obtain a seismic permit from the Montana DNRC, prior to conducting any seismic activity on these tracts of land. The seismic company that has been contracted to do the seismic work under this permit (Polaris Explorer USA, Inc.) must have a valid permit with the county and has to have registered their bond with the Secretary of State's office.</p>

Legal Descriptions
for
Seismic Permit No. 1446
Polaris Explorer USA, Inc.
Montana Land & Exploration, Inc.
Chinook 2-D

Township 33 North, Range 21 East, MPM

Section 36: All (State Does Not Own the Surface of the SE4)

Township 33 North, Range 22 East, MPM

Section 16: Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, W $\frac{1}{2}$, W $\frac{1}{2}$ E $\frac{1}{2}$

Section 36: All

Township 33 North, Range 23 East, MPM

Section 33: E $\frac{1}{2}$ (Minerals Only)

Section 34: All (Minerals Only)

<p>3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:</p>	<p>Action Alternative: Grant Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. permission to conduct a 2-D seismic project across these tracts of state and fee owned surface lands for the exploration of shallow natural gas formations. The Montana DNRC/TLMD will issue Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. a seismic permit to conduct this project across these tracts of state and fee owned surface lands.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Deny Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. permission to conduct this 2-D seismic project across these tracts of state and fee owned surface lands. The Montana DNRC/TLMD will not issue Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. a seismic permit for the exploration of shallow natural gas producing formations across these tracts of state and fee owned surface lands.</p>
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II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS
<p>4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE: Are fragile, compactible or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The soils will receive a minimal disturbance with this type of activity. Soil compaction will be the main type of disturbance on these tracts of land. Seismic activity will only take place while the ground is frozen or dry. There are unusual geological features present across these tracts of state land. The soils on these tracts of state land are suitable for this type of activity in most areas. However, there are certain areas that are susceptible to erosion. The shallow clay soils found on the hills and in the coulees within the project area will be "off-limits" to the recording crew vehicles for this project. All seismic recording vehicles will be prohibited from traversing steep slopes that are 25% or greater, or areas of very thin soils that may be rutted and left open to erosion. All receiver lines will be placed by hand crews on the slopes that are 25% or greater. Site specific stipulations have been added to ensure that the steep slopes and drainages will not be traversed by the seismic crew vehicles. The Havre Unit Office has included aerial photographs of the project area and highlighted the areas that will be "off-limits" to the recording crew vehicles for this project.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: The soils located on these tracts of land will not be altered. The soils found on these tracts of land will not become compacted with this project. The Montana DNRC will not issue Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. a seismic permit to conduct this 2-D seismic project across these tracts of land.</p>
<p>5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The location of the proposed seismic project does contain important surface and groundwater resources during different times of the year. The seismic company is prohibited from all vehicle recording activities within 300 feet of any springs, water wells, streams, lakes or water storage reservoir facilities to maintain the integrity of these water resources. This type of activity does not have the potential to contaminate drinking water or degrade the present water quality that is found in these areas.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: The water quality, quantity, and distribution will not be impacted on these tracts of land. The Montana DNRC will not issue Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. a seismic permit for this project.</p>

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

6. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?

Action Alternative: The project is expected to have a minimal impact on the air quality in the surrounding area. Traffic across the designated roads in these areas will produce additional dust particulates. However, after the seismic company completes the project traffic will return to normal in these areas. No pollutants will be produced by this seismic project. There are no air quality regulations or zones proposed for this project.

No Action Alternative: The air quality found on these tracts of state and fee owned surface lands will not be altered. No pollutants or particulates will be produced in these areas. The Montana DNRC/TLMD will not issue Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. a seismic permit for the exploration of shallow natural gas producing formations across these tracts of state and fee owned surface lands.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?

The vegetative communities found throughout the native rangeland include the following plants: western wheatgrass (*Agropyron smithii*), needle-and-thread (*Stipa comata*), blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), green needlegrass (*Stipa viridula*), sedges (*Carex spp.*), sandberg bluegrass (*Poa secunda*), cudweed sagewort (*Artemisia ludoviciana*), fringed sagewort (*Artemisia frigida*), dense clubmoss (*Selaginella densa*), silver sagebrush (*Artemisia cana*), woods rose (*Rosa woodsii*), snowberry (*Symphoricarpos occidentalis*), plains cottonwood (*Populous deltoids*), chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*) and American elm (*Ulmus Americana*).

Action Alternative: The proposed project is expected to have a moderate impact on the vegetative cover, quantity, and quality. The vegetative communities in the immediate area of disturbance will be matted down with this type of activity. No rare plants or cover types are present in the direct route of the proposed project. There will be no vehicular activity, other than specified on the plat map. The seismic company will not be allowed to traverse up, down, or across the steep slopes that are found within the proposed project area. Woody draws are present in this area and will be avoided by the seismic company during this project. Site specific stipulations have been added to ensure that the steep slopes and drainages will not be traversed by the seismic crews recording vehicles. The Havre Unit Office has included aerial photographs of the project area and highlighted the areas that will be "off-limits" to the recording crew vehicles for this project.

No Action Alternative: The vegetative communities found throughout the proposed project area will not be disturbed. Rare plants and cover types will not be altered. The Montana DNRC/TLMD will not issue Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. a seismic permit for the exploration of shallow natural gas producing formations across these tracts of state and fee owned surface lands.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

<p>8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The area of the proposed activity is used by many different types of wildlife and bird species. Wildlife and bird species will be temporarily displaced across this area, throughout the entire course of the seismic project. Wildlife and bird species found in this area will not be permanently relocated as a result of this type of activity. Once the project is completed, wildlife and bird species will return to normal activities on these tracts of land.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: The terrestrial and avian life and their associated habitats will not be altered on these tracts of land. Wildlife and bird species will not be temporarily displaced in these areas. The Montana DNRC/TLMD will not issue Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. a seismic permit for the exploration of shallow natural gas producing formations across these tracts of state and fee owned surface lands.</p>
<p>9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Sensitive Species or Species of special concern?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The timing of this project will take place while the ground is frozen or dry. This should minimize the overall disturbance to existing habitat types and the overall ecosystem. Federally listed, threatened, and endangered species will be able to migrate through this area with minimal disturbances. There are sensitive species and species of special concern known to use these areas as habitat. These species will not be impacted by the seismic activity on these tracts of land. The seismic company will complete their work within one week and they will leave the area completely. All species found in this area will return to normal everyday activities once the seismic company completes this project.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: The unique, endangered, fragile and/or limited environmental resources found within the area of the proposed project will not be altered. The Montana DNRC/TLMD will not issue Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. a seismic permit for the exploration of shallow natural gas producing formations across these tracts of state and fee owned surface lands.</p>

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?

Action Alternative: The Montana DNRC has surveyed the project area for existing cultural resources. Surface features have been observed within the area of the proposed project during previous field evaluations conducted by Land Use Specialists from the Montana DNRC/TLMD. The Montana DNRC Archaeologist, Patrick Rennie, has been contacted for his input on possible cultural resource concerns in this area with this type of activity. He has seen no evidence that 2-D seismic activity can impact cultural resources as long as the proponent conducts this type of activity during dry or frozen conditions.

No Action Alternative: The historical and archaeological resources found on these tracts of land will not be impacted. The Montana DNRC's, Trust Land Management Division, Minerals Management Bureau will not issue Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. a seismic permit to conduct this 2-D seismic project across these tracts of state and fee owned surface lands.

11. AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light?

Action Alternative: The location of the proposed project is very spread out. This project will be visible to the public on certain tracts and not visible on others. These areas will have recovered from this project within a year and they will not be visible to the general public, if the seismic company conducts this project in accordance with the terms and conditions outlined within the stipulations of the seismic permit. The project will create some excessive noise during the initial stages of the project. However, the noise levels will return to normal once the seismic project is completed and the proponent leaves the area.

No Action Alternative: This project will not impact the aesthetic character that is associated with these tracts of state and fee owned surface lands. The Montana DNRC/TLMD will not issue Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. a seismic permit for the exploration of shallow natural gas producing formations across these tracts of state and fee owned surface lands.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?

Action Alternative: The native grazing land will receive minimal impacts with the proposed project. The project will take place while the ground is frozen or dry to limit the impact to the native rangeland and soil resources. The project will not use resources that are limited in the area. There are no other activities in the area that will affect the project. The grass will be matted down from the tires on the thumper trucks and the vibrating platform that is used to send a shock wave through the earth to find natural gas formations in the soil below.

No Action Alternative: There will be no demands on the environmental resources of land, water, air or energy. The project will not use resources that are limited in this area. The Montana DNRC will not issue Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. a seismic permit to conduct this 2-D seismic project across these tracts of state and fee owned surface lands.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?

Action Alternative: The Montana DNRC/TLMD will continue to monitor mineral and surface management activities on these tracts of state owned surface and subsurface lands. The Montana DNRC will assess the impacts from this type of project on the surrounding ecosystem and use those results to determine whether or not future permits such as this will be issued in this type of area. The Montana DNRC will continue to administer all the licensed activities that are currently taking place on these tracts of state owned surface and subsurface lands.

No Action Alternative: No further studies, plans, or projects will be needed if this project is denied. The Montana DNRC Trust Land Management Division will continue to perform field evaluations on these tracts of state land every ten years to monitor surface management activities and to increase the future income-generating capacity of the land, while considering environmental factors. The Montana DNRC/TLMD will not issue Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. a seismic permit for the exploration of shallow natural gas producing formations across these tracts of state and fee owned surface lands.

III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION	
RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
<p>14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: Polaris Explorer USA, Inc., their subcontractors, and/or their employees understand the risks involved with this type of project. They assume the risks involved in a seismic project as occupational hazard. The project will have no short-term or long-term impacts on the human health and safety risks found in this area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: The human health and safety risks found in this area will continue to remain minimal. There will be no human health or safety risks to the seismic company, subcontractors, and/or its employees, if this project is not permitted by the Montana DNRC. The Montana DNRC/TLMD will not issue Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. a seismic permit for the exploration of shallow natural gas producing formations across these tracts of state and fee owned surface lands.</p>
<p>15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The Montana DNRC has set up stipulations for Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. to ensure that the industrial, commercial, and agricultural activities will not be permanently altered with this type of project. The native rangeland will be impacted with this type of activity. The impact to the native grass communities will be short-term and the vegetative species will return to normal production next year, providing ample precipitation falls in this area. Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. will settle all surface damages with the state's surface lessee(s) within a reasonable time period following the completion of the seismic project.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: The industrial, commercial, and agricultural activities currently found on these tracts of land will not be altered. Native forage production will not be matted where the seismic company has completed their activities. The Montana DNRC/TLMD will not issue Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. a seismic permit for the exploration of shallow natural gas producing formations across these tracts of state and fee owned surface lands.</p>

<p>16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will not alter the quantity and distribution of employment in this area. The project will create short-term jobs for the seismic company's employees, but will have no impact on the local quantity and distribution of employment in this area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: The quantity and distribution of employment will not be impacted in the surrounding area. The seismic company may have to eliminate jobs if they cannot find enough work for their employees throughout the summer. The Montana DNRC/TLMD will not issue Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. a seismic permit for the exploration of shallow natural gas producing formations across these tracts of state and fee owned surface lands.</p>
<p>17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will not create or eliminate tax revenue within Blaine County. The local and state tax base will remain the same in this area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: The local and state tax base will not be altered. Tax revenue in Blaine County will continue to remain the same. The Montana DNRC/TLMD will not issue Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. a seismic permit for the exploration of shallow natural gas producing formations across these tracts of state and fee owned surface lands.</p>
<p>18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will increase traffic on the existing designated roads throughout the entire course of the project. Traffic will return to normal, once the seismic company has completed the project. The project will not require other services from police, fire departments, and/or schools.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no demand for additional government services on these tracts of state and private surface owned lands. The Montana DNRC will not issue Polaris Explorer a seismic permit for the exploration of shallow natural gas producing formations across these tracts of state and fee owned surface lands.</p>

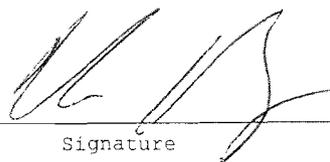
<p>19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The goal of the Montana DNRC/TLMD is to manage the State of Montana's trust land resources to produce revenue for the trust beneficiaries, while considering environmental factors and protecting the future income-generating capacity of the land. There are no other locally adopted environmental plans or goals for this project that the Montana DNRC is aware of.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no negative impacts on the locally adopted environmental plans or goals that the Montana DNRC/TLMD has for these tracts of state and fee owned surface lands within this Environmental Assessment Checklist. The Montana DNRC/TLMD will not issue Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. a seismic permit for the exploration of shallow natural gas producing formations across these tracts of state and fee owned surface lands.</p>
<p>20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The location of the proposed seismic project does have recreational potential. Some of these tracts of state land have legal access for recreational opportunities via adjacent county roads or legally accessible state or federally owned lands. Upland game bird hunting, big game hunting, bird watching, and hiking are just some of the types of recreational activities that take place on these tracts of state land that have legal access. Recreational activities are limited this time of year, but this project will not alter the environment for future recreational opportunities.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: The access to and quality of the wilderness and recreational activities found in this area will continue to remain the same. The Montana DNRC will not issue Polaris Explorer a seismic permit for the exploration of shallow natural gas formations across these tracts of state and fee owned surface lands.</p>

<p>21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The density and distribution of population and housing will not be impacted with the proposed project. The proposed activity will increase traffic on the designated roads into the area of the project. Once Polaris Explorer USA, Inc. has completed this project they will pull out of the area. The areas located within the project primarily consist of grazing lands and farming lands with very little housing. No additional housing will be required in this area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: The density and distribution of population and housing will not change in this area. The project will not add to the density and/or distribution of population or housing in this area. The Montana DNRC will not issue Polaris Explorer a seismic permit to conduct a 2-D seismic project across these tracts of state and fee owned surface lands.</p>
<p>22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: This project will have a minimal impact on the traditional lifestyles found in this area. The social structures and mores will not be altered with the proposed seismic project.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: The social structures and mores will continue to stay the same. The native and traditional lifestyles found in this area will not be disrupted. The Montana DNRC will not issue Polaris Explorer a seismic permit to conduct a 2-D seismic project across these tracts of state and fee owned surface lands.</p>
<p>23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The proposed activity will not cause a shift in any of the unique qualities that are found within the surrounding area. The seismic project will not change the cultural uniqueness and/or the diversity found on these tracts of land. The proposed project will not be visible to the general public within a year, once native vegetation has begun new growth in the spring of 2005.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: The cultural uniqueness and diversity of the land will remain the same. The Montana DNRC will not issue Polaris Explorer a seismic permit to conduct a 2-D seismic project across these tracts of state and fee owned surface lands.</p>

IV. FINDING	
25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:	Actions
26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:	N.S.I
27. Need for Further Environmental Analysis: <input type="checkbox"/> EIS <input type="checkbox"/> More Detailed EA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Further Analysis	

EA Checklist Approved By: Clive Rooney
Name

Area Manager, Northeastern Land Office
Title


Signature

11/30/4
Date