



## II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

<p><i>If any lands are proposed for breaking, what are the soil types &amp; capability classes, texture, "T" factor, Wind Erodibility Group (WEG), and slopes? What crops will be grown and what are their potential yields? Will there be any mitigation measures implemented to address identified soil limitations?</i></p>	<p>that restrict the choice of plants and require moderate conservation practices. Class 3 soils have severe limitations that restrict the choice of plants and require special conservation practices. The letter "e" shows that there is an erosion hazard unless close-growing plant cover is maintained. This ground has a relatively high productivity with small grains and should yield more than 60 bu/acre as irrigated agricultural land. This ground is susceptible to wind and water erosion but these concerns will be mitigated due to the amount of residue produced through irrigated small grain production. Clearly, the soils on this tract meet DNRC's land break requirements. Jane Holzer, MT Salinity Control Association, commented on this proposal and could see no adverse effects on soils or salinity in this area, see attached E-mail.</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>[ N ] There is two irrigation canals that cut through the grass area, but care will be taken not to disturb the grass border along the canal. Bridges will be utilized to allow the pivot to cross the canal and this will mitigate any concerns due to the pivot crossing or disturbance of the irrigation ditch. Adequate irrigation water shares are in place in order to irrigate this tract.</p>
<p>6. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?</p>	<p>[ N ] The reclassification as agricultural land will not affect air quality.</p>
<p>7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present? <i>What is the existing vegetation?</i></p>	<p>[ N ] The existing vegetation is primarily introduced species including Slender Wheatgrass, Western Wheatgrass, Tall Wheatgrass, Kentucky Bluegrass, Crested Wheatgrass, Smooth Brome, Creeping Foxtail, Reed Canary Grass, and Redtop. There are also annual cropland weeds present. This field was once farmed and is currently seeded to irrigated tame pasture. The vegetative community will be altered by the reclassification and it will increase the overall productivity of the area and the residue produced by small grains production will increase the food and habitat available for wildlife.</p>
<p>8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish? <i>What wildlife resources use or occupy the area?</i></p>	<p>[ N ] The area is used by various wildlife for grazing. Reclassification to agricultural land will not greatly impact the amount of habitat and forage available for wildlife. Gary Olson, Wildlife Biologist for the MT Fish, Wildlife, and Parks commented on this proposal and could see no adverse effects on wildlife, see attached E-mail. Comments were solicited from the MT Audubon Society and no comments were received.</p>

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<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>[ N ] There are no species of special concern or any other sensitive habitat types associated with the proposed project area.</p>
<p>10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: <i>Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?</i></p>	<p>[ N ] Since the pasture was previously broke, and there is no record of cultural resources on the tract, I see no cultural resource concerns with this proposed project per Patrick Rennie, DNRC archeologist.</p>
<p>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? <i>Are there notable aesthetic features on the tract?</i></p>	<p>[ N ] Since the field is currently in irrigated pasture, reclassification as agricultural land will not affect the aesthetics of the area.</p>
<p>12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? <i>Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?</i></p>	<p>[ N ] The demand on environmental resources such as land, water, air, or energy will not be affected by the proposed project. The proposed project will not consume resources that are limited in the area. There are no other projects in the area that will affect the proposed project.</p>
<p>13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?</p>	<p>[ N ] Currently, there are no other studies, plans, or projects associated with the proposed project area.</p>

## III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS & CAPABILITY CHARACTERISTICS
<p>14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?</p>	<p>[ N ] The proposed project will not affect human health or human safety in the area.</p>
<p>15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?</p>	<p>[ Y ] The reclassification of this to irrigated agricultural land will increase the productivity of this field. The estimated irrigated WW yield is 60 bu/ac X \$4.92/bu X .25%=\$73.80/acre vs. 104 AUM's X \$6.12/AUM=\$636.48/69.00ac=\$9.22. The Common Schools trust would see an estimated return increase of \$64.57/ac.</p>
<p>16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.</p>	<p>[ N ] The proposed action will not significantly affect long-term employment in the surrounding communities.</p>
<p>17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?</p>	<p>[ N ] The proposed action will not affect tax revenue.</p>

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18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed?	[ N ] There will be no excessive stress placed of the existing infrastructure of the area.
19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	[ N ] The proposed project is in compliance with Federal, State, and County laws. No other management plans are in effect for the area.
20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is the land legally accessible and is there recreational potential within the tract?	[ N ] This tract is not legally accessible and the proposed project is not expected to impact general recreation activities on this State Land.
21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?	[ N ] The proposed project will not change the human population distribution or the housing requirements in the area.
22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	[N] The proposed project will not alter the social structure of the surrounding native communities.
23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	[N] The proposed project will not impact the cultural uniqueness and/or cultural diversity of the area.
24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:	[Y] The proposed conversion of irrigated grazing land to irrigated agricultural land will greatly improve the productivity on the tract and increase the return to the trust. The current grazing revenue is \$9.22/acre and the estimate WW return is \$73.80/ac. An addition \$64.57/ac would be generated at a total dollar amount of \$4,455.33 for this 69.00 acre tract. No other unique circumstances exist.

**IV. ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS FINDING**

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Approve the break request and reclassify 69 acres to agriculture land.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Acres requested to be broke meet current Departmental breaking policy. The area is currently in irrigated tame pasture and has been previously broke. Soils are highly suitable for small grain production. The break area is surrounded by highly productive irrigated cropland. This acreage will be irrigated with Pondera Canal & Reservoir Co water shares that are owned by DNRC. The lessee's are excellent farmers with a good production record on other state leases. No archaeological sites were identified within the project area. DNRC staff archaeologist (Patrick Rennie) cleared this project. Breaking these acres will help meet TLMD objectives by increasing revenue to the school trust. No negative comments were received from scoping letters which included Montana Saline Seep Control Association, Montana Audubon and Montana FWP. Breaking this acreage and reclassifying it to irrigated agricultural land will increase revenue from \$9.22 per acre to an over \$70.00 per acre.

27. Need for Further Environmental Analysis:

EIS       More Detailed EA       No Further Analysis

ERIK ENEBOE

Name

Conrad Unit Manager, CLO

Title

/S/ ERIK ENEBOE

Signature

March 19, 2010

Date

**V. RECLASSIFICATION RECOMMENDATION AND APPROVAL**

28. Land Office Recommendation, including Highest and Best Use:

Approve the break request and reclassify 69 acres to agriculture land. The highest and best use of this parcel is irrigated agricultural land

29. Recommendation by Bureau Chief:

Reasons for Recommendation:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Bureau Chief Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

30. Final Decision on Reclassification by Trust Land Management Division Administrator:

Approve

Deny

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



**Nickol, Tony**

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**From:** Jane Holzer [msca@3rivers.net]  
**Sent:** Friday, February 19, 2010 9:44 AM  
**To:** Nickol, Tony  
**Cc:** Scott Brown; Tera Ryan  
**Subject:** Trust land breaking

Tony Nickol

In regards to the request for comments on Trust Land breaking in T28N R2W Section 11: this site is east of Conrad and north of Pondera Creek and to date MSCA has not completed any field work in this area and none specific to this section. This area is served by PCCRC with the P-canal. MSCA has an active watershed project associated with the P-canal east of Conrad - but the severe saline conditions are south of Pondera Creek.

The watershed line was arbitrarily drawn in 2005 because little or no saline problems were presented north of Pondera Creek. Therefore - 'site unseen' MSCA would not have any objections to converting irrigated pasture to irrigated cropland, especially if forage production is low. Rotations are good crop management. However, if there are specific concerns on low production that may be due to saline issues, then MSCA is willing to conduct an initial field review with the lessee and/or DNRC staff.

Thank you for the inquiry.

Jane Holzer, Program Director  
MT Salinity Control Association

**Nickol, Tony**

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**From:** Gary Olson [grolson@3rivers.net]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 02, 2010 2:39 PM  
**To:** Nickol, Tony  
**Subject:** Break request - Pondera County

Hi Tony: I have reviewed the break proposal for T28N, R2W, Section 11 and see no particular adverse effects on wildlife. Thanks for the opportunity to comment.

Gary Olson  
Wildlife Biologist  
MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
514 S. Front St., Suite C  
Conrad, MT 59425  
406-271-7033

