CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	**Metalliferous Lease # M-1991-11**
Proposed Implementation Date:	April, 2012
Proponent:	James Ployhar
Location:	Township 18 North, Range 17 East-Section 36, Lots 13, 14, and the S1/2SW1/4
County:	Fergus County
Trust:	Common Schools

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The proponent is requesting a permit to prospect for gold using a mini excavator, hand tools and a small trammel and sluice box.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

The Montana Department of Resources and Conservation/ Trust Lands Management Division (DNRC/TLMD) – Northeastern Land Office (NELO), Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Bruce Brown - Surface Lessee (Grazing Lease #8704) all have involvement in this proposed project.

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

DEQ – Robert Cronholm – Has jurisdiction over this project. The proposed project area is within 1 mile of the proponent's existing mining operation and is thus covered by the existing -Small Miner's Exclusion Statement, (SMES) and Operating Plan

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action) – Under this alternative, the DNRC does not issue a permit to prospect for gold using a mini excavator, hand tools and a small trammel and sluice box.

Alternative B (Proposed Action) – Under this alternative, the DNRC does issue a permit to prospect for gold using a mini excavator, hand tools and a small trammel and sluice box.

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 any cumulative impacts to soils.

There are no unusual geologic features in the proposed project area.
The soil in the proposed project area has been disturbed by earlier mining operations.

No cumulative effects to the soils are anticipated.

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 cumulative effects to water resources.

There is a very small seep in the proposed project area. This seep has been trampled in by livestock and wildlife. It does not flow more than 20 feet from the source.

The stream segment from the seep to the road crossing is a Class 2, Type 2 stream segment. This segment **does not** support fish, normally **has** surface flow six months of the year or more, but **does not** contribute surface flow to another stream, lake or other body of water. In 2011, a very wet year, this segment flowed for only 1 month.

The stream segment from the road crossing on down is a Class 3, stream segment. This segment contains **no** fish, **does not** have surface flow six months of the year or more, and **rarely** contributes surface flow to another stream, lake or other body of water.

No groundwater resources are expected to be impacted.

No cumulative effects to the water resources are anticipated.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

No cumulative effects to air quality are anticipated.

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 cumulative effects to vegetation.

Plant communities in the proposed project area will be destroyed. The proponent will be responsible for reclaiming and reseeding the disturbed areas. The proponent will be required to stockpile any topsoil prior to excavation.

The proponent will be responsible for weed control and coordinate weed control measures with the lessee.

No rare plants or cover types are present.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

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

A search of the Natural Heritage Program identified 2 Species of Concern. These species (minnows) do not occur in the proposed project area.

No cumulative effects to fish and wildlife are anticipated.

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 cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

There are no known federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area.

No cumulative effects to habitat are anticipated.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

The proposed project is in Iron Gulch. This area has patented mine claims and a long history of gold mining.

A field survey was conducted in June, 2011. No historical, archeological, or paleontological resources were identified.

There are no known historical, archeological, or paleontological resources on the proposed project site.

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 cumulative effects to aesthetics.

The proposed project is not located on a prominent topographic feature.

The proposed project area is in a remote part of Fergus County. There will be very little noise, light or visual change produced.

No cumulative effects to aesthetics are anticipated.

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 cumulative effects to environmental resources.

No demands on limited resources are required for this project.

No direct or cumulative effects to environmental resources are anticipated.

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.

There are no other projects or plans being considered on the tracts listed on this EA Checklist.

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.

There are some human safety risks associated with the operation of mining equipment. The proponent accepts these risks.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:
Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

The proposed project will not add or alter industrial, commercial, or agriculture activities or production.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:
Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

No new jobs will be created.

No cumulative effects to the employment market are anticipated.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:
Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

There are no direct or cumulative effects to taxes or revenue for the proposed project.

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 cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

There will be no increases in traffic, no changes in traffic patterns, and no need for additional fire protection, or police services.

There will be no direct or cumulative effects on government services.

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.

There are no zoning or other agency management plans affecting these lands.

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 cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

No impacts to the recreational value are anticipated.

There will be no direct or cumulative effects on recreation or wilderness activities.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

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

The proposal does not include any changes to housing or developments.

No direct or cumulative effects to population or housing are anticipated.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

There are no native, unique or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity that would be impacted by the proposal.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

The proposed project will have no effect on any unique quality of the area.

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

The Metalliferous Lease returns $100/ear plus a 5% royalty for all precious minerals extracted.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:** Bill Creamer **Title:** Land Use Specialist	
Signature: /s/ Bill Creamer		**Date**: 3/27/12

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

I have selected the Proposed Alternative B, and recommend that the DNRC does issue a permit to prospect for gold using a mini excavator, hand tools and a small trammel and sluice box.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

I have evaluated the potential environment effects and have determined that no negative long-term environmental impacts will result from the proposed activity.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

[ ] EIS [ ] More Detailed EA [XXX] No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:** Barny D. Smith **Title:** Area Manager, Northeastern Land Office	
Signature: /s/ Barny D. Smith		**Date**: 3/27/12