

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	East Boulder Road Hazardous Fuels Reduction
Proposed Implementation Date:	Spring 2012
Proponent:	Sweetgrass Conservation District
Location:	Section 16, Township 3 South, Range 13 East
County:	Sweet Grass County

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The Proponent, Sweetgrass Conservation District, is requesting to perform hazardous fuels reduction along the private road within the existing road easement. The Stillwater Mining Company has an easement from the State for the road that passes through the State Section. Hazardous fuels reduction within the right of way will increase safety, and visibility.

All of the work will be performed within the road right of way. There will be no physical intrusion into the East Boulder River.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

No formal public scoping was performed by the DNRC Southern Land Office for this proposed project.

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

None.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Proposed Alternative: Approve the request by Sweetgrass Conservation District to perform hazardous fuels reduction along the East Boulder Road easement

No Action Alternative: Deny the request to allow Sweetgrass Conservation District to perform hazardous fuels reduction along the East Boulder Road.

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.

All of the proposed work would be performed from on or alongside the existing gravel road. Minimal disruption may result from removal of fuels within the right of way. No significant impacts to geology and soil quality, stability and moisture are expected by implementing the proposed action.

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.

The proposed project is located along the East Boulder River. All of the work will be done from the road so no equipment will need to be placed in or near the creek. No significant adverse impacts to water quality, quantity or distribution are expected from implementing the proposed action

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 significant impacts to air quality are expected from implementing the proposed action.

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.

The proposed project would be completed with mechanical equipment from the road and would create minimal disturbance to vegetative cover outside of the road easement. No significant adverse impacts to vegetative cover, quantity or quality are expected as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

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 variety of fish, big game, small mammals, raptors, and birds use this area. The proposed treatment activities could temporarily disrupt wildlife movement and patterns. Due to the relatively short duration, less than two months, of the proposed project activities and minimal area of impact there are not expected to be significant adverse impacts if the proposed alternative is implemented.

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.

A proposed project area search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program database identified two species of concern, the Wolverine and the Grizzly Bear that may have habitat in the project area. The species identified may occupy lands in the area or traverse it, but the proposed action is not expected to have a significant adverse impact on them. After a thorough study of the project area and due to the proximity of the project to the busy road, it is unlikely that either species frequents or occupies the project area.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

Based on information in TLMS, there are historical and archaeological features within this section of State Trust lands however they are not located in or near the project area. The proposed project would remove hazardous fuels along the East Boulder Road. All of the work will be performed on or alongside the road easement. There will not be any physical occupation on state-owned land. No significant adverse impacts to historic or archaeological sites are expected as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

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 action would result in the removal of trees and shrubs along the road right of way. This project is intended to significantly increase visibility for traffic along this road. As a result of this thinning, views of the surrounding area will be improved. There are no significant adverse impacts to the area aesthetics.

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 significant adverse impacts to environmental resources of land, water, air or energy are expected to occur as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

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 known state actions proposed for this section.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.</i>• <i>Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.</i>• <i>Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.</i>

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

Safety for workers at the Stillwater mine and for local residents who travel this road will be improved with increased visibility and hazardous fuels reduction. No significant adverse impacts to human health and safety are expected to occur as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

No significant adverse impacts to industrial, commercial and agricultural activities and production are expected to occur as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

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.

The proposed action will not have a significant adverse impact on the quantity and distribution of employment.

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.

The proposed action will not have an adverse impact on 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 cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

The implementation of the proposed alternative will not generate any additional demands on governmental 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.

Implementation of the proposed alternative will not conflict with any locally adopted plans.

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.

The implementation of the proposed alternative is not expected to have an adverse impact on the recreational use of the East Boulder River or surrounding area.

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.

No significant adverse impacts to density and distribution of population and housing would occur as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

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 proposed alternative.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

The proposed alternative will not have a significant adverse impact on cultural uniqueness or diversity.

20. 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.

Since the work proposed is located within an approved easement area, there will be no income generated to the Common Schools Trust if the proposed action is implemented.

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V. FINDING

21. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

After review, the proposed alternative has been selected and it is recommended that the Sweetgrass Conservation District be granted authorization to perform hazardous fuels Reduction along the 100 foot East Boulder Road easement.

This alternative can be implemented in a manner that is consistent with the long-term sustainable natural resource management of the area.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The potential for significant adverse impacts to the Trust lands listed above are minimal based on the above analysis and the nature of the proposed action. There are no natural features that are expected to be impacted and produce adverse impacts if the proposed action is implemented.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

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 More Detailed EI No further analysis

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