

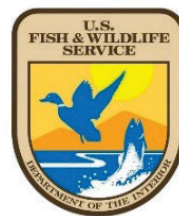
Finding of No Significant Impact And Final Environmental Assessment

Fort Peck Dry Prairie Rural Water Project Pines Segment

**U.S. Bureau of Reclamation – Montana Area Office
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Charles M. Russell NWR**



— BUREAU OF —
RECLAMATION



Mission Statement

The U.S. Department of the Interior protects and manages the Nation's natural resources and cultural heritage; provides scientific and other information about those resources; and honors its trust responsibilities or special commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and affiliated Island Communities.

Fort Peck Dry Prairie Rural Water Project Pines Segment Finding of No Significant Impact

Introduction

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), Montana Area Office, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge has prepared this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act on 1969 (NEPA) as amended (Public Law 91-190) and the Department of Interior's Implementing Procedures (516 DM 1).

The Fort Peck Dry Prairie Rural Water Project Pines Segment Environmental Assessment (EA) documents the Proposed Federal Action, alternatives considered, a summary of the environmental effects, and any minimization measures aimed at reducing potential impacts of the Proposed Action Alternative.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) was involved in the development of the EA. However, due to internal processes and requirements, BLM will be signing their own FONSI separate from Reclamation and FWS.

Purpose and Need

The purpose and need of the Proposed Project is to get a dependable supply of clean good-quality water to 73 cabin owners in the Pines Recreation Area. Currently, the 73 cabin owners pump raw water out of Fort Peck Reservoir which cannot be safely used for domestic daily purposes such as cooking or cleaning.

The BLM's purpose is to make a determination on whether to approve a ROW across 79,990 feet (ft) of BLM administered lands for the proposed water pipeline and associated structures. The need for the action is to respond to and consider a Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) ROW application submitted by DPRWA to construct, operate, and maintain a water line across public lands administered by the BLM Glasgow Field Office. The BLM would respond to DPRWA's application for a new ROW authorization and consider approval of the request in a manner that avoids or reduces impacts on sensitive resource values and prevents unnecessary or undue degradation of the public lands. The BLM's responsibility to process land use applications is detailed in 43 CFR 2804.25.

The USFWS' purpose is to determine whether or not the proposed project complies with the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge and UL Bend Nation Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan approved in July 2012 (USFWS 2012).

Proposed Action Alternative

The Proposed Federal Action is to allow the construction of a 33-mile water pipeline that would cross BLM and USFWS administered lands to service 73 private cabins in the Pines Recreation Area. The project would include the construction of an 85,000-gallon below grade Ground Storage Reservoir (GSR) and booster pump station located on BLM administered land. The treated water would also be provided to grazing associations through pasture taps, the local fire department, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) recreation facilities (campground and fish cleaning station).

Reclamation would authorize the use of Federal funding for the construction of the Pines Project. The estimated amount of federal funding for the project is approximately \$3.5 million. The BLM and USFWS would issue rights-of-way (ROW) for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the waterline and associated infrastructure located on Federally administered lands.

Summary of Environmental Effects/Conservation Measures

Water Quality

The 73 privately owned cabins located in the Pines Recreation Area would receive clean, treated drinking water year-round that could be used for domestic purposes such as cleaning and cooking. Water would be provided year-round, making it more feasible to live in the cabins year-round. Overall, this would improve the quality of life for the 73 cabin owners.

Conservation Measures:

- No conservation measures identified.

Geology and Soils

Temporary disturbance of 120 acres of land due to the construction of the project. Impacts to soils would include physical disturbance, removal of vegetation, exposure of soil, soil compaction and rutting, and increased susceptibility to wind and water erosion during high intensity rainfall or snowmelt runoff events. Dry Prairie Rural Water Authority has committed to a robust reclamation plan that will include monitoring up to five years after construction.

Conservation Measures:

- Implementation of the Reclamation Plan (Appendix E)
- Construction and other activities must be performed during periods when the soil is dry enough to adequately support equipment and vehicles. If equipment or vehicles create ruts in excess of 3 inches deep, activity must stop as the soil is deemed too wet to adequately support equipment or vehicles.
- Landscape will be reconstructed to original contour, where possible.

Vegetation

Temporary disturbance of 120 acres of grassland and sagebrush steppe habitat would occur during the construction of the pipeline. The permanent loss of 1 acre of habitat would occur with the construction of the GSR (0.5 acres) and booster pump station (0.5 acres). After construction is complete, the entire corridor would be reclaimed and reseeded per the Reclamation Plan (Appendix E).

Conservation Measures:

- All ground disturbance would be minimized to the extent possible.
- All disturbed areas would be reseeded within six months of site rehab and cleanup.
- Native grasses and forbs would be used to reseed disturbed areas.
- Noxious weeds would be monitored and sprayed (if necessary) prior to the establishment of native grass.
- All vehicles and construction equipment would be power washed prior to construction.
- All materials used during construction would be certified weed free.
- DPRWA shall be responsible for weed control within the limits of the right-of-way for the life of the ROW plus 3 years. All vehicles shall be power washed free of dirt and plant seeds prior to being brought onto the right-of-way to prevent the spread of noxious weeds. DPRWA would be responsible for consulting with the authorized officer and/or local authorities for acceptable weed control methods.
- Adopt best practices for pesticide labeling, application, and coordination and restrict the use of pesticides known to be harmful to bees, including neonicotinoids, where feasible.
- To the extent possible, construction crews are required to utilize large construction mat or low ground pressure vehicles when crossing or working within delineated wetlands.

Wetlands

All wetlands would be avoided by either routing the pipeline around or boring under existing wetlands. No effects are anticipated as all wetlands would be avoided.

Conservation Measures:

- All wetlands would be avoided to the extent possible.
- DPRWA would be responsible for applying for and receiving all necessary permits, including, MTDEQ SWPPP, Valley County 310 permit, Clean Water Act 404 permits from the USACE prior to the start of construction if necessary.
- Vehicle and equipment servicing and refueling shall not be performed within 500 feet of wetland areas.

General Wildlife Species including BLM Sensitive Species

The 33-mile pipeline and associated infrastructure would be constructed through Priority and General sage grouse habitat. The proposed pipeline alignment would follow the existing Willow Creek and Pines Roads, reducing impacts and new disturbances in the area. The proposed alignment would be within 2-miles of seven known leks located on BLM administered lands. Due to the close proximity of the leks, construction of the project in these areas and on BLM administered lands would be restricted to July 15 – March 15. Once the construction of the pipeline

is completed, the entire alignment would be revegetated and stabilized to reduce long-term habitat impacts. The revegetation plan includes planting Wyoming Big Sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata ssp. wyomingensis*) to replace any lost sagebrush due to construction activities (Appendix E).

Conservation Measures:

- Construction of the pipeline on BLM administered lands, the booster pump station, and the GSR would be restricted to July 15 – March 15.
- All disturbed areas would be reseeded and reclaimed following the Reclamation Plan (Appendix E).
- Seed mix on BLM land would include Wyoming Big Sage plugs or seeds.
- Indaziflam would be applied to disturbed areas and reapplied to the ROW as needed to control annual invasive grasses.

Endangered Species Act – Threatened, Endangered and Candidate Species

No construction activities would take place on or affect the shoreline of the Missouri River or Fort Peck reservoir, so there would be no effect to pallid sturgeon and piping plover.

The majority of the construction would take place along existing roads and already disturbed areas. This project would not further dissect existing grassland habitat. The proposed project is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the Suckley's Cuckoo Bumble Bee or Monarch Butterfly.

Conservation Measures:

- Monarch Butterfly
 - Use native, insecticide-free plants for habitat restoration.
- Suckley's Cuckoo Bumble Bee
 - Re-seed with native mixes containing a diversity of floral resources.
 - Avoid habitat fragmentation. Preserve large habitat patches with connected grasslands, wet meadows, and forest edges.
 - Adopt best practices for pesticide labeling, application, and coordination and restrict the use of pesticides known to be harmful to bees, including neonicotinoids, where feasible.

Cultural Resources

The pipeline and permanent infrastructure were designed to avoid all the identified resources. Avoidance was achieved by either rerouting the pipeline around a site or boring under the site. No impacts to cultural resources would take place under the proposed action.

Conservation Measures:

- All cultural resources would be avoided during design and construction of the project.

Indian Trust Assets

Reclamation consulted with the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes and the Fort Belknap Indian Community on the Proposed Project. No Indian Trust Assets were identified in the project area.

Conservation Measures:

- All cultural resources would be avoided during design and construction of the project.

Visual Resources

The Project would not excessively alter the existing character of the landscape, and any structural developments would repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

Conservation Measures:

- Permanent above ground infrastructure would consist of natural earth tone colors to match the surrounding landscape.
- The pipeline would be aligned along existing disturbances (roads, corridors, fence lines) to reduce new visual contrast.
- Trench line would be contoured to match adjacent natural landforms, avoiding straight, unnatural edge
- Use native seed mixes for reclamation so revegetation blends with existing vegetation patterns (Appendix E).

Consultation, Coordination, and Public Involvement

Reclamation, FWS, and BLM coordinated on the joint EA to meet the needs of all Department of Interior (DOI) Federal Agencies. BLM is responsible for issuing ROW approvals on BLM lands and FWS is responsible for issuing ROW approvals on FWS Lands.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) must also issue ROW approvals on USACE land on the shoreline of Fort Peck Reservoir. The USACE chose not to participate with the other agencies and completed their own National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and National Historic Properties Act (NHPA) compliance efforts.

This Environmental Assessment was not released for public review and public meetings were not held due to the limited effects of the Proposed Action and the nature of the action being considered under these documents. However, once finalized the final document will be made available on Reclamation's Montana Area Office webpage: <https://www.usbr.gov/gp/mtao/>. This is consistent with DOI's NEPA handbook (516 DM 1).

Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) – The SHPO was consulted with for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. A consultation letter was sent to SHPO on June 10, 2026 and SHPO responded with a concurrence letter.

Fort Belknap Indian Community – The Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) was consulted for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act regarding Cultural Resources and Tribal Trust responsibilities. A consultation letter was sent on June 10, 2026, but no response letter was received. In accordance with Section 106 guidelines, the absence of a response is

interpreted as no objection to the proposed activities; however, follow-up actions may be required to ensure full compliance.

Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes – Per the Cultural Resource Programmatic Agreement (Reclamation 2002), the Assiniboine and Sioux tribes were consulted with for Cultural Resources and Tribal Trust responsibilities. A consultation letter was sent on June 10, 2026, but no response letter was received. In accordance with Section 106 guidelines, the absence of a response is interpreted as no objection to the proposed activities; however, follow-up actions may be required to ensure full compliance.

Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program (MSGHCP) – The proposed project crosses sage grouse Core and General habitat, which requires consultation with the MSGHCP. Several meetings were held with the MSGHCP and a final determination letter on sage grouse effects and mitigation was received on July 6, 2026.

Finding

Based on the analysis of the environmental impacts as described in the EA, Reclamation and the FWS, finds that all potentially significant issues and resource impacts have been identified, evaluated, addressed and resolved. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, and the U.S. Department of Interior Handbook of Implementing Procedures (516 DM 1), Reclamation and the FWS have determined that the proposed action will not have significant impacts on the quality of the human environment and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. Implementation of the Proposed Action may take place following approval of this decision document and completion of the required contracting actions. No further environmental compliance is needed.

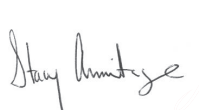
Approved:

**RYAN
NEWMAN**



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**Ryan Newman
Area Manager – Montana Area Office
Bureau of Reclamation**



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**Stacy Armitage
Assistant Regional Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

Final Environmental Assessment

Fort Peck Dry Prairie Rural Water Project Pines Segment

MT-2026-01



U.S. Bureau of Reclamation - Montana Area Office
U.S. Bureau of Land Management – Glasgow Field Office
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Charles M. Russell NWR

July 2026



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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The Fort Peck Dry Prairie (FPDP) Rural Water System is a municipal, rural, and industrial water project that serves the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in northeastern Montana and adjacent Dry Prairie service area (Figure 1). The rural water system is the result of a successful joint venture between the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Reservation, nontribal individuals, and communities adjacent to the Reservation in Sheridan, Roosevelt, Daniels and Valley Counties. The FPDP Rural Water System was authorized by Congress in 2000 with construction beginning in 2003. The completed system will have over 3,200 miles of pipeline and will deliver clean drinking water to more than 20 communities and nearly 4,000 farms, ranches, and rural homes in northeastern Montana (DNRC 2026)

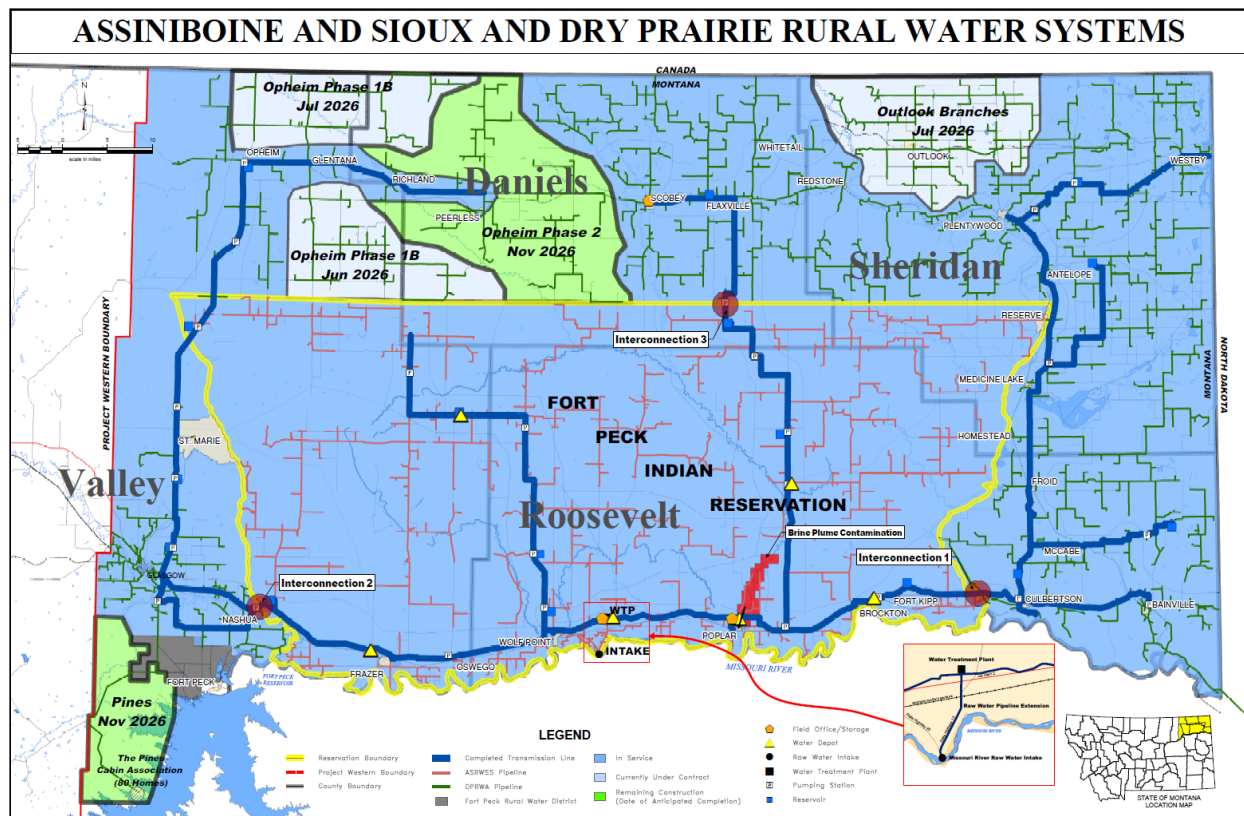


Figure 1: Map of the Fort Peck Dry Prairie Rural Water System

The FPDP Rural Water System is nearing completion with most of the work wrapping up by 2027-2028. Currently, Dry Prairie Rural Water Association (DPRWA) is proposing to construct the “Pines Segment” of the project.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) in cooperation with the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), have partnered together to complete environmental compliance activities associated with the Pines Segment of the Project. This Environmental Assessment (EA) will analyze effects of the proposed project consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA; 1969) as amended, and the U.S. Department of Interior's Handbook on National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Procedures (DOI 2026; 516 DM 1).

1.2 Proposed Federal Action

The Proposed Federal Action is to allow the construction of a 33-mile water pipeline that would cross BLM and USFWS administered lands to service 73 private cabins in the Pines Recreation Area. The project would include the construction of an 85,000-gallon below grade Ground Storage Reservoir (GSR) and booster pump station located on BLM administered land. The treated water would also be provided to grazing associations through pasture taps, the local fire department, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) recreation facilities (campground and fish cleaning station).

Reclamation would authorize the use of Federal funding for the construction of the Pines Project. The estimated amount of federal funding for the project is approximately \$3.5 million. The BLM and USFWS would issue rights-of-way (ROW) for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the waterline and associated infrastructure located on Federally administered lands.

1.3 Purpose and Need

The purpose and need of the Proposed Project is to get a dependable supply of clean good-quality water to 73 cabin owners in the Pines Recreation Area. Currently, the 73 cabin owners pump raw water out of Fort Peck Reservoir which cannot be safely used for domestic daily purposes such as cooking or cleaning.

The BLM's purpose is to make a determination on whether to approve a ROW across 79,990 feet (ft) of BLM administered lands for the proposed water pipeline and associated structures. The need for the action is to respond to and consider a Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) ROW application submitted by DPRWA to construct, operate, and maintain a water line across public lands administered by the BLM Glasgow Field Office. The BLM would respond to DPRWA's application for a new ROW authorization and consider approval of the request in a manner that avoids or reduces impacts on sensitive resource values and prevents unnecessary or undue degradation of the public lands. The BLM's responsibility to process land use applications is detailed in 43 CFR 2804.25.

The USFWS' purpose is to determine whether or not the proposed project complies with the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge and UL Bend Nation Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan approved in July 2012 (USFWS 2012).

1.4 Decisions to be Made

Reclamation will decide whether to provide federal funding for the construction of the Pines Segment of the FPD Rural Water System. The estimated amount of federal funding for the project is approximately \$3.5 million.

The BLM will decide whether to grant a ROW to the DPRWA for construction and maintenance of approximately 79,990 ft of water pipeline, one below grade GSR (0.5 acres) and a booster pump station building (0.5 acres) located on BLM administered land.

The USFWS will decide whether to grant a ROW to the DPRWA for construction and maintenance of approximately 7,250 ft of water pipeline located on USFWS administered land located within the Charlie M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge boundary.

1.5 Conformance with Land Use Plans

BLM

The BLM administered lands in the project area are managed according to decisions in the HiLine Resource Management Plan (HiLine RMP) approved in 2015 (BLM 2015). The HiLine RMP states that “Requests for land use authorization (rights-of-way, leases, or permits) will be analyzed and mitigation measures applied on a case-by-case basis through the environmental review process. Terms and conditions for rights-of-way, corridors, and development areas (oil and gas) will incorporate applicable Best Management Practices (BMPs), current professional practice, and recent scientific findings (BLM 2015).

Portions of the proposed project fall within the Priority Habitat Management Area (PHMA) and General Habitat Management Area (GHMA) for sage grouse, as identified by Montana’s Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy. The HiLine RMP designates these areas as avoidance areas for infrastructure ROWs but may be available with special stipulations. A description of the Minor ROW authorization criteria are included below.

Minor Rights-of-Way Avoidance Criteria in PHMA

Authorizations for minor ROWs may be granted for projects that are neutral or beneficial to Greater Sage Grouse (GRSG). Applications and the environmental analysis must clearly demonstrate to the Authorized Officer that the avoidance measure has been met. Projects may reach this measure if at least one of the criteria below are met and development of the ROW includes applicable measures and additional required GRSG management (e.g., disturbance cap, predation, mitigation framework, RDFs):

1. The project is neutral or beneficial to GRSG habitat through application of avoidance and minimization measures, including co-location, described in the mitigation framework.
2. The project can be co-located with an existing ROW and the new disturbance results in minimal impacts to those already associated with the existing infrastructure, including indirect disturbance to or disruption of adjacent seasonal habitats.
3. The ROW can be routed through, or located within, non-habitat as defined by the Criteria Based Management for Non-Habitat management direction.

4. The ROW can be routed through, or located within, non-habitat or unsuitable habitat. Unsuitable habitat will be determined by a wildlife biologist and confirmed by the BLM using criteria such as the HAF and coordinated with state wildlife agencies and other appropriate state authority. ROWs shall minimize disruption of connectivity between habitat areas and should be designed to prevent indirect disturbance to or disruption of adjacent seasonal habitats as disclosed in the environmental analysis.
5. The ROW will not otherwise be feasible in an area that is “open” to ROWs, including existing corridors or ROWs, and in areas outside lek buffer distances (e.g., Manier et al. 2014).
6. Environmental analysis demonstrates the proposed location on public lands will be undertaken as an alternative to a similar action occurring on a nearby parcel (e.g., due to landownership patterns), and development on the public parcel in question will be less impactful on GRSG habitat.

The proposed project was reviewed by the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program (MSGHCP) and evaluated against the disturbance cap and Habitat Quality Tool (Appendix D). Using these values, special stipulations were developed to reduce impacts to sage grouse including timing limitations for disturbing activities within priority and general habitat areas. Because of these efforts, the proposed project would meet the criteria for minor ROWs and is in conformance with the BLM Land Use Plan.

USFWS

The USFWS administered lands in the project area are managed according to decisions in the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge and UL Bend National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan approved in July 2012 (USFWS 2012). The comprehensive conservation plan directs the management of Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge and UL Bend National Wildlife Refuge to meet the purposes of the refuges, address issues, and guide management to meet the refuge vision. The plan is a broad umbrella of general concepts and goals, with specific objectives for habitat, wildlife, research, fire, public use, wilderness, cultural and paleontological resources, refuge operations, and partnerships for the next 15 years.

1.6 Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Other NEPA Documents

NEPA Documents

This EA tiers to and incorporates by reference the original Programmatic EA and Finding of No Significant Impact for the Fort Peck Dry Prairie Rural Water System that was completed by Reclamation in October of 2002 (Reclamation 2002). The analysis in this EA is site specific and more detailed than the 2002 Programmatic EA.

This project would cross a small portion of USACE administered land near the shoreline of Fort Peck Reservoir. The USACE would have to issue a ROW agreement for the pipeline and would also need to comply with NEPA. The USACE will be completing NEPA separately for this action.

The project would have power supplied by NorVal Electric Cooperative, Inc. with the Pines Buried Powerline and Fiber Optic EA (DOI-BLM-MT-L020-2026-003-EA). The nearest existing overhead

powerline is approximately 0.5 miles from the proposed pump station and 0.2 miles from the proposed storage tank. The buried powerline would be next to both facilities.

During the design of the project, geotechnical investigations were required to determine soil properties and compaction rates at the booster pump station and GSR. This required some geotechnical boring prior to the completion of this EA. That action was covered under a Categorical Exclusion (DOI-BLM-MT-L020-2026-002-CE).

Laws and Regulations

Section 501 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) (1976), as amended (43 U.S.C. 1715), provides the Secretary, with respect to the public lands, the authority to grant, issue, or renew rights-of-ways over, upon, under, and through such lands.

Fort Peck Rural Water System Act of 2000 (PL 106-382). Congress authorized and provided planning appropriations for the proposed FPDP Rural Water System. It also authorized the construction of a water project that would bring safe drinking water from a regional treatment plant on the Missouri River to the Fort Peck Indian Reservation and to all parts of Roosevelt, Sheridan, Daniels and Valley Counties in Montana.

1.7 Scoping and Issues

The proposed waterline and infrastructure would cross BLM, USACE, and USFWS administered lands. The primary concern in the area is the Greater Sage-grouse. This project cuts through Priority and General sage-grouse habitat. How would this project affect the long-term condition of the existing sage-grouse population?

1.8 Issues Dismissed from Further Analysis

Noise – Noise would occur during the initial construction of the project through the operation of heavy equipment to place the pipe and build the infrastructure. This would displace wildlife species in the immediate for a short amount of time. Post construction, excess noise would not occur with the operation of the pipeline.

Air quality – The project would have no effect on air quality.

Hydrology – The project would have no effect on hydrology in the area.

Fisheries – The project would have no effect on fishery resources in the area.

2 Alternatives

2.1 No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, DPRWA would not construct a 33-mile water pipeline to the Pines Area. The cabin owners would continue to utilize raw water that is pumped seasonally from Fort Peck Reservoir. The grazing associations would continue using existing livestock watering pits, reservoirs and well water. Additionally, the BLM and FWS would not issue right-of-way grants for the use of BLM and FWS administered lands, and Reclamation would not provide federal funding for construction purposes. No ground disturbing activities would take place.

2.2 Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action the following actions would occur:

- DPRWA would construct a 33-mile long water pipeline for the purpose of serving clean drinking water to the Pines Recreation Area on Fort Peck Reservoir. The waterline would include a total of 87 user services including 12 pasture taps along the pipeline route, 73 Pines Area cabins, and 2 services to a USACE campground and fish cleaning station (Appendix A).
- The pipeline would include an 85,000-gallon below grade GSR and booster pump station with a backup generator located on BLM administered land.
- The BLM and USFWS would grant a ROW to DPRWA for the portions of the project that crosses BLM and USFWS administered lands.
- DPWRA would implement the procedures and measures specified in the Reclamation Plan (Appendix E).
- Reclamation would provide approximately \$3.5 million in Federal funding for the construction of the water pipeline consistent with Fort Peck Rural Water Act of 2000.

Below is a more detailed description of each component.

Main Water Pipeline:

The pipeline would be 33 miles in length with segments of 2-inch, 4-inch, and 6-inch pipe diameters. The waterline would be buried 8 ft deep which is below the frost line so water service can be provided year-round. The majority of the pipeline would be installed by first removing all topsoil within the alignment and digging a 4 ft wide by 8 ft deep trench. The pipe would be laid in the trench then covered by 8 ft of backfill material. Once the trench is backfilled, it would be covered with topsoil. Small segments of the pipeline would be bored to avoid roads, driveways, wetlands, difficult terrain, coulees, cultural resources, and areas of high erosion where ground disturbance

needs to be limited. All areas would be reseeded with the approved seed mix and stabilized to ensure long-term erosion is not a problem (Reclamation Plan - Appendix E).

The pipeline would service 73 cabins located in the Pines Recreation Area. These are privately owned cabins and lots within USACE administered lands. Historically these cabins were used for summer recreation only. However, since the transfer into private ownership some have turned into year-round residences that would benefit from reliable clean water. Water would also be provided to the local volunteer fire department, a USACE fish cleaning station, and a USACE campground.

Valves, Hydrants, and Meter Pits

The pipeline would have mainline valves located approximately every 2 miles and a flushing hydrant between each valve. This allows for segments of the pipeline to be isolated if a break were to occur. All appurtenances including flushing hydrants, valves, and meter pits as well as road crossings along the pipeline alignment would be labeled with blue pipeline markers. Meter pits would be located at each individual service, allowing DPRWA to measure the amount of water each service uses for billing purposes.

Pasture Taps

Twelve pasture taps would be included in the construction of the pipeline. These are like other user services, and their purpose is to supply water to pastures for cattle grazing purposes. These user services would be located adjacent to the main line and include a meter pit. The customer would be required to construct a pipeline extending away from the main line and to the point of use (holding tank). The customer would also be required to complete the final connection to the meter pit.

Ground Storage Reservoir (GSR)

In order to maintain demand and adequate water pressure, an 85,000-gallon GSR would be constructed at the highest point on the alignment on BLM administered land. The tank would be approximately 40 ft in diameter and 12 ft tall. To reduce sage grouse impacts, the tank would be mostly buried with only the top two feet above ground. The exposed portion of the GSR would be painted with earth tone colors such as Covert Green to help blend with the existing landscape. The proposed temporary easement for construction of the tank is 1.0 acre, and the permanent easement is 0.5 acre.

Booster Pump Station

To get water to the GSR, a booster pump station with a backup generator would be constructed along the alignment on BLM administered land. The booster pump station building would be 28 ft long by 12 ft wide by 11.5 ft tall. The roof would include anti-perch measures, such as spike strips. Permanent above ground infrastructure would consist of natural earth tone colors to match the surrounding landscape. The booster station would sit on a cast in place concrete clear well that is 13 ft wide by 36 ft long by 12 foot tall. The clearwell stores water for the station to boost to the GSR. The backup generator would only be used in the case of a power outage. The proposed temporary easement for construction of the booster station is 1.0 acre, and the permanent easement is 0.5 acres.

Proposed Construction Schedule

DPRWA is proposing a 12 – 15-month construction schedule. Construction would begin in August of 2026 where easements have been acquired and would be completed by the end of 2027. Construction would not occur on BLM administered land from March 15 – July 15 to avoid impacts to wildlife resources.

Land Ownership (Appendix A)

The proposed project crosses the following landowners:

- Private Property – 61,645 ft
- BLM – 79,990 ft
- USFWS – 7,250 ft
- USACE – 26,070 ft

Permitting

BLM Land-Use Authorization

Under the Proposed Action, a large portion of the proposed water pipeline (79,990 ft), the 85,000-gallon GSR, and the booster pump station would be located on BLM administered land. This would require the BLM to issue a ROW authorization to DPRWA for the construction, operation, and maintenance of these components of the water delivery system.

FWS Land-Use Authorization

Under the Proposed Action, a portion of the proposed water pipeline (7,250 ft) would cross FWS administered land in the Charlie M. Russel National Wildlife Refuge, which would require the FWS to issue a ROW authorization to DPRWA for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the water delivery system.

Funding

Reclamation would provide approximately \$3.5 million dollars in federal funding for the construction of the Pine Segment. The long-term O&M of the project would be the responsibility of DPRWA as Reclamation has no authority beyond the initial construction of the project.

2.3 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated

During the development of this project Reclamation, BLM, USACE, and DPRWA engaged with the MSGHCP on different alternatives associated with the GSR and the booster pump station to reduce potential impacts to sage grouse. Each alternative resulted in different mitigation requirements. The below alternatives were eliminated from consideration due to construction costs, hydraulic/design constraints, or required mitigation costs.

Alternative 1: Original Locations within Core Habitat – Tall Structures

The GSR would be located on BLM administered land and would be 24 ft tall and 25 ft in diameter. It would sit on a two-acre site with a tall chain-link security fence around the entire two-acres. The booster pump station would also be constructed on BLM administered land and would sit on a one-acre site with a tall chain-link security fence around the entire one-acre. The booster pump building would be 28 ft long by 12 ft wide by 11.5 ft tall. Both the GSR and the booster station building would be located within the Sage Grouse Core Habitat Area.

Alternative 2: Edge of Core Habitat – Tall Structures

The buildings would be the same as Alternative 1. Both the GSR and the booster station building would be located near the boundary/edge the Sage Grouse Core Habitat Area.

Alternative 3: Outside of Core Habitat – Tall Structures

The buildings would be the same as Alternative 1. The GSR would be located in the Sage Grouse Core Habitat while and the booster station building would be outside the Sage Grouse Core Habitat Area.

Alternative 5: Edge of Core Habitat – Short Structures

The GSR would be located on BLM administered land and would be 12 ft tall and 40 ft in diameter. All but two feet of the GSR would be buried underground. It would sit on a two-acre site with a short, barbed wire fence around the entire two-acres. The booster pump station would also be constructed on BLM administered land and would sit on a one-acre site with a short, barbed wire fence around the entire one-acre. The majority of the booster pump station would be buried with only 1-2 ft above ground. Both the GSR and the booster station building would be located near the boundary/edge the Sage Grouse Core Habitat Area.

Alternative 6: Outside of Core Habitat – Short Structures

The buildings would be the same as Alternative 5. The GSR would be located in the Sage Grouse Core Habitat while and the booster station building would be outside the Sage Grouse Core Habitat Area.

Alternative 7: Booster Pump Station Alternative Location

The booster pump station cannot be buried due to safety concerns with confined spaces. The proposed pump station location is on a knob at 2293' elevation and is visible from 21,687 acres, including a large sage grouse lek approximately 2 miles away. Moving the pump station ~250 meters southeast along the pipeline route would reduce its visibility to 8,306 acres at a 2280' elevation. The alternate location would not be visible from the large sage grouse lek and would further increase the effectiveness of the perch deterrents. This proposed location was provided to the MSGHCP for analysis to determine affects to existing sage grouse habitat. The MSGHCP determined that the alternative location is in better sage grouse habitat, and any line of site benefits would be negated, and mitigation requirements would have increased by \$1,600. Considering this information, the alternative location was not pursued further.

3 Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

This section includes the affected environment and the environmental consequences. The affected environment is considered the existing conditions on the ground and the environmental consequences analyze the environmental impacts of implementing the Proposed Action. Not all factors of the existing environment are discussed in this section. Only those which might influence or be significantly affected by the Proposed Action Alternative are discussed.

The study area for the analysis below varies by species and topic. The direct impacts of the project footprint are limited to the following:

- Proposed 33-mile waterline route and the potential disturbances could be as wide as 30 ft (approximately 120 acres).
- The GSR and booster pump station could potentially impact up to one-acre of land each (2 acres total).

3.1 Water Quality

Currently the 73 privately owned cabins located in the Pines Recreation Area use raw, untreated water from Fort Peck Reservoir. Water is pumped directly from the reservoir and dispersed to the cabins for use in the summer months. In the winter months the pump is removed from the reservoir and no water is available from October – April unless it is trucked in and stored in a holding tank. The raw water from Fort Peck Reservoir cannot be used for domestic purposes such as cooking and cleaning due to being untreated.

There are several grazing associations on the western side of Fort Peck Reservoir, with several grazing leases located on BLM administered land. Water is provided to livestock by pumping directly from Fort Peck Reservoir, hauling water and storing in a holding tank, existing livestock watering pits, reservoirs and wells.

3.1.1 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action, the 73 privately owned cabins located in the Pines Recreation Area would continue to use raw, untreated water from Fort Peck Reservoir during the summer months. This water cannot be used for domestic purposes such as cleaning and cooking. The local grazing associations would continue to utilize existing water sources.

3.1.2 Proposed Action Alternative

Under the Proposed Action, the 73 privately owned cabins located in the Pines Recreation Area would receive clean, treated drinking water year-round that could be used for domestic purposes such as cleaning and cooking. Water would be provided year-round, making it more feasible to live in the cabins year-round. Overall, this would improve the quality of life for the 73 cabin owners.

The proposed project would include the installation of twelve pasture taps for local grazing associations. Once all the infrastructure and holding tanks are built, it would provide reliable clean water from grazing operations.

3.1.3 Conservation Measures

- No conservation measures identified.

3.2 Geology and Soils

Soils were identified and evaluated using the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Web Soil Survey (2026). The proposed pipeline would cross 7 Soil Map Units (SMUs). Appendix C provides Summary Tables of approximate footages, limitations, and suitability ratings for each SMU on BLM and FWS, and it provides a description of the major soils in each SMU. Descriptions of non-soil (miscellaneous areas) and minor components are not included.

The dominant Soil Map Units (SMUs) on BLM are Vaeda silty clay (76) and Bascovy-Neldore clays, 4 to 15 percent slopes (68). Vaeda silty clay is a very deep, well-drained soil type found in alluvial fans and stream terraces, formed from alluvium derived mainly from shale. These soils tend to be strongly saline and/or sodic, which limits seed germination, vegetation vigor and production and slow revegetation. Bascovy and Neldore soils formed in alluvium and residuum from semi-consolidated shale and mudstone, developed on sedimentary plains, hills, alluvial fans, and stream terraces (NRCS 2026). They are moderately deep, well-drained, and have a smectitic clay texture.

The dominant SMUs on USFWS and USACE are Lisam-Dilts clays (34), 5 to 35 percent slopes and Bascovy-Neldore clays, 4 to 15 percent slopes (68). Lisam-Dilts clays are clayey, smectitic, frigid, shallow Aridic Ustorthents that formed in clayey material weathered from shale or claystone (NRCS 2026). They are found on the undulating to very steep slopes that range from 3% up-to 40%.

3.2.1 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action, there would be no effects to soil resources because there would be no surface disturbance.

3.2.2 Proposed Action Alternative

Under the Proposed Action, pipeline construction activities, including clearing, grading, trench excavation, backfilling, directional boring, equipment/vehicle traffic, and reclamation along the construction corridor, would affect soil resources. The excavation, burying, and installation of the GSR and booster pump station would also affect soil resources. Impacts to soils would include physical disturbance, removal of vegetation, exposure of soil, soil compaction and rutting, and increased susceptibility to wind and water erosion during high intensity rainfall or snowmelt runoff events. Soil horizon mixing could occur which could impact soils and vegetation by moving organic material and nutrients to a depth unreachable by surface plants. Such mixing could also bring salts and/or sodium to the surface which would affect soil characteristics, plant health, and slow or prevent revegetation. If a spill occurred, soils would be affected in the localized area by the liquid which could be drilling fluids, hydrostatic testing fluids, engine oil, hydraulic oil, or fuel (gasoline or diesel). An excessive concentration of liquid may be capable of soil sterilization.

Soil stabilization and revegetation success are a concern on BLM lands in P.M.M., T. 25N., R. 39E., secs. 7 and 18, and T. 26N., R. 39E., secs. 9, 10, 16, 17, 20 and 29 because construction would occur on severely erodible soils and soils that are poorly suited for reclamation. DPWRA's Reclamation Plan (Appendix E), along with conservation measures design features, would minimize potential impacts to soil resources by minimizing/controlling erosion and spills during construction, creating conditions for revegetation success after construction, and reducing erosion during long-term operations.

3.2.3 Conservation Measures

In addition to the design features summarized in Section 2.2 and procedures described in the Reclamation Plan (Appendix E), the following measures would be included as stipulations of the ROW:

- Construction and other activities must be performed during periods when the soil is dry enough to adequately support equipment and vehicles. If equipment or vehicles create ruts in excess of 3 inches deep, activity must stop as the soil is deemed too wet to adequately support equipment or vehicles.
- Landscape will be reconstructed to original contour, where possible.

3.3 Lands and Vegetation

3.3.1 Vegetation

The Project Area lies in the Missouri River breaks in southern Valley County. The cold, semi-arid climate area encompasses mixed grass prairie/sagebrush steppe ecosystems, each with varying amounts of native warm- and cool-season graminoids. The type and amount of plant species present depend on the topography, soil type, growing season weather conditions, and disturbances. Ecological sites in the evaluation area often differ at small scales, thus, at landscape scales, a wide array of plant species may be observed. Most ecological site descriptions used for this area are represented under the dry grassland-shrubland climate zone of the Northern Rolling High Plains, Northern Part Major Land Resource Area 58A (MLRA 58A), with some occurrence of semi-arid grassland climate zone in the Brown Glaciated Plains MLRA 52 (MLRA 52).

3.3.1.1 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action, no new infrastructure would be constructed, and no vegetation resources would be affected.

3.3.1.2 Proposed Action Alternative

Under the Proposed Action, temporary disturbance of 120 acres of grassland and sagebrush steppe habitat would occur during the construction of the pipeline. The permanent loss of 1 acre of habitat would occur with the construction of the GSR (0.5 acres) and booster pump station (0.5 acres). After construction is complete, the entire corridor would be reclaimed and reseeded per the Reclamation Plan (Appendix E).

3.3.1.3 Conservation Measures

- All ground disturbance would be minimized to the extent possible.

- All disturbed areas would be reseeded within six months of site rehab and cleanup.
- Native grasses and forbs would be used to reseed disturbed areas.
- Noxious weeds would be monitored and sprayed (if necessary) prior to the establishment of native grass.
- All vehicles and construction equipment would be power washed prior to construction.
- All materials used during construction would be certified weed free.
- DPRWA shall be responsible for weed control within the limits of the right-of-way for the life of the ROW plus 3 years. All vehicles shall be power washed free of dirt and plant seeds prior to being brought onto the right-of-way to prevent the spread of noxious weeds. DPRWA would be responsible for consulting with the authorized officer and/or local authorities for acceptable weed control methods.
- Adopt best practices for pesticide labeling, application, and coordination and restrict the use of pesticides known to be harmful to bees, including neonicotinoids, where feasible.

3.3.2 Wetlands

Catena Consulting (2026) completed a wetland survey along the proposed pipeline corridor. This corridor was 33 miles in length by 75 ft wide and covered approximately 302 acres of land. This survey identified 29 wetland-dominated delineations (3.19 acres) including 9 wetlands (non-ditches, 0.95 acres), 23 wetland ditches (2.37 acres), and 10 riverine features with minor wetlands (0.95 acres). All the identified wetlands were delineated and GIS data was collected and provided to the DPRWA designers to incorporate into the final pipeline design and alignment.

3.3.2.1 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action, no ground disturbing activities would occur, and no wetlands would be disturbed.

3.3.2.2 Proposed Action Alternative

Under the Proposed Action, all wetlands would be avoided by either routing the pipeline around or boring under existing wetlands. No effects are anticipated as all wetlands would be avoided.

3.3.2.3 Conservation Measures

- All wetlands would be avoided to the extent possible.
- DPRWA would be responsible for applying for and receiving all necessary permits, including, MTDEQ SWPPP, Valley County 310 permit, Clean Water Act 404 permits from the USACE prior to the start of construction if necessary.
- Vehicle and equipment servicing and refueling shall not be performed within 500 feet of wetland areas.

3.4 Wildlife, Species of Special Concern, Endangers Species Act

3.4.1 General Wildlife Species including BLM Sensitive Species

In the Project Area, it is common to see the following wildlife species: greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*; sage grouse), pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*), mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), elk (*Cervus canadensis*), bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*).

The primary species of concern in the Project Area is the sage grouse. The sage grouse is a medium sized bird species that requires large areas of undisturbed sagebrush habitat to complete its life cycle. Habitat loss due to fragmentation and alteration has resulted in significant population declines since the 1950s when regular monitoring of the species began (USFWS 2026). Noise and human disturbance during the mating season near leks are also known to have a negative effect on sage grouse.

Sage grouse are only found in the sagebrush steppe of the intermountain west (USFWS 2026). In early spring males and females gather on leks, where males make displays to females seeking out a breeding partner. Leks are located in areas clear of sagebrush such as, ridgetops, grassing swales, dry lake beds and sometimes burned areas (USFWS 2026).

The Greater Sage-Grouse Rangewide Planning Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment for Montana/Dakotas (sage grouse RMPA), describes the allowable actions within Priority Habitat and mitigation framework (BLM 2025). The proposed ROW, GSR, and booster pump station are all in BLM Priority Habitat. The proposed route and locations are not within 0.6 miles of an active sage grouse lek. Within the Project Area there are 7 known leks within 2 miles of the Willow Creek and Pines Roads.

3.4.1.1 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action, no ground disturbing or construction related activities would occur. No wildlife, including sage grouse habitat or leks would be affected.

3.4.1.2 Proposed Action Alternative

Under the Proposed Action, DPRWA would construct a 33-mile pipeline through Priority and General sage grouse habitat. The proposed pipeline alignment would follow the existing Willow Creek and Pines Roads, reducing impacts and new disturbances in the area. The proposed alignment would be within 2-miles of seven known leks located on BLM administered lands. Due to the close proximity of the leks, construction of the project in these areas and on BLM administered lands would be restricted to July 15 – March 15. Once the construction of the pipeline is completed, the entire alignment would be revegetated and stabilized to reduce long-term habitat impacts. The revegetation plan includes planting Wyoming Big Sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata ssp. wyomingensis*) to replace any lost sagebrush due to construction activities (Appendix E).

Due to hydraulic constraints and requirements of the system, the GSR and booster pump station would be located on BLM administered land within Core sage grouse habitat. Like the pipeline, these two structures would only be constructed during July 15 – March 15 to reduce impacts to sage grouse leks and breeding activities. To further reduce potential impacts to sage grouse, the GSR would be buried with only the top two feet above ground. With the GSR mostly buried, it would not provide a perching location for raptors that could prey on sage grouse. The booster pump station would be above ground; however anti-perch measures would be added to the roof to discourage perching of raptors. Each facility would require approximately 0.5 acres of land.

The Proposed Action is subject to BLM minor ROW avoidance criteria from the BLM sage grouse RMPA (2025): “Authorizations for minor ROWs may be granted for projects that are neutral or beneficial to GRSG. Applications and the environmental analysis must clearly demonstrate to the Authorized Officer that the avoidance measure has been met. Projects may reach this measure if at least one of the criteria below are met and development of the ROW includes applicable measures

and additional required GRSG management (e.g., disturbance cap, predation, mitigation framework, RDFs).

5. The ROW will not otherwise be feasible in an area that is “open” to ROWs, including existing corridors or ROWs, and in areas outside lek buffer distances (e.g., Manier et al. 2014).”

The 2025 BLM sage grouse RMPA specifically established mitigation framework: “In all GRSG habitat management areas and consistent with valid existing rights and applicable law, BLM will apply the mitigation framework when authorizing internal and third-party actions resulting in GRSG habitat loss and degradation (including indirect impacts) to achieve the no net habitat loss objective. BLM will apply mitigation in accordance with current mitigation related policy and, as applicable, comply with the most recent state agency and/or state regulatory requirements expressed by state mitigation policies, regulations, and/or authorities.”

There are no reasonable alternatives to avoid the ROW in sage grouse Priority Habitat, and the proposed action meets criteria 5 for minor rights-of-way. The proposed action is incorporating some minimization criteria by minimizing impacted areas, reducing the height of the GSR, incorporating perch deterrents on the pump station, and limiting construction to the non-breeding season.

A description of the project with minimization measures and the shapefiles of the permanent infrastructure was provided to the MSGHCP for review. With the minimization measures MSGHCP calculated the project would result in 9,365.02 debits or \$85,972.89. To make the project neutral/beneficial for sage grouse compensatory mitigation as either credits to meet/exceed the debits or paying the amount to MSGHCP must occur for the project to proceed (Appendix D).

3.4.1.3 Conservation Measures Common for all Wildlife Species

- Construction of the pipeline on BLM administered lands, the booster pump station, and the GSR would be restricted to July 15 – March 15.
- All disturbed areas would be reseeded and reclaimed following the Reclamation Plan (Appendix E).
- Seed mix on BLM land would include Wyoming Big Sage plugs or seeds.
- Indaziflam would be applied to disturbed areas and reapplied to the ROW as needed to control annual invasive grasses.

3.4.2 Endangered Species Act – Threatened, Endangered and Candidate Species

The Endangered Species Act seeks to recover, and conserve listed species and the ecosystems on which they depend. The area defined for this section includes a 33 mile by 30ft wide corridor for the pipeline installation.

The species list below was provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through the Information for Planning and Consultation (IPAC) website: <https://ipac.ecosphere.fws.gov/>. This information was accessed on May 4, 2026.

Table 1: ESA Species in the Project Area

ESA Listed Species – Threatened and Endangered			
<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Effect Determination</u>
<i>Charadrius melodus</i>	Piping Plover	Threatened	No effect
<i>Scaphirhynchus albus</i>	Pallid Sturgeon	Endangered	No effect
<i>Danaus plexippus</i>	Monarch Butterfly	Proposed Threatened	Not likely to jeopardize
<i>Bombus suckleyi</i>	Suckley's Cuckoo Bumble Bee	Proposed Endangered	Not likely to jeopardize

The piping plover is a small shorebird that's pale brown in color with a distinctive black band across its forehead and white rump. It feeds and nests on sand and gravel beaches along the mainstem Missouri River. Primary threats to the species include destruction and modification of habitat from channelization of rivers and modifications of river flows. In addition, nesting success can be limited by high water, predation, and human disturbance.

The pallid sturgeon is a long-lived scaleless fish that is native to the mainstem Missouri River and larger tributaries such as the Milk, Yellowstone, Powder, Tongue and Platte rivers. Once mature, pallid sturgeon migrate long distances to spawn. After hatching, pallid sturgeon free embryos can drift downstream several hundred miles before settling out of the main river channel. Recruitment in the upper Missouri River has not occurred since the construction of Fort Peck and Garrison Dams on the upper Missouri River.

Monarch butterflies are pollinators that make large migrations (up to 2,000 miles) each spring and fall. The monarch is known for its distinctive bright coloring that warns predators that it could be toxic. Monarchs rely exclusively on milk weed plants for reproduction as they are the only plant caterpillars can eat. Loss of milk weed plants and habitat destruction are the main drivers of the reduced monarch butterfly numbers.

Suckley's Cuckoo Bumble Bee is a parasitic bee species that relies on the western bumble bee as its primary host. To reproduce the Suckley's Cuckoo takes over an existing hive killing the queen and using the workers to rear her young. They are found primarily in the western north America in grassland and meadow habitats.

3.4.2.1 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action, no construction activities would occur. This would not result in any disturbances or destruction of habitat in the area. There would be no effect to any of the four species.

3.4.2.2 Proposed Action Alternative

Under the Proposed Action, temporary disturbance of 120 acres would occur during the construction of the pipeline. The permanent loss of 1 acre of grassland and sage brush habitat would occur with the construction of the GSR (0.5 acres) and booster pump station (0.5 acres). After construction is complete, the entire corridor would be reclaimed and reseeded per the

Reclamation Plan (Appendix E). The majority of the pipeline would follow existing roads and disturbed areas.

No construction activities would take place on or affect the shoreline of the Missouri River or Fort Peck reservoir, so there would be no effect to pallid sturgeon and piping plover.

The majority of the construction would take place along existing roads and already disturbed areas. This project would not further dissect existing grassland habitat. The proposed project is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the Suckley's Cuckoo Bumble Bee or Monarch Butterfly.

3.4.2.3 Conservation Measures

- Monarch Butterfly
 - Use native, insecticide-free plants for habitat restoration.
- Suckley's Cuckoo Bumble Bee
 - Re-seed with native mixes containing a diversity of floral resources.
 - Avoid habitat fragmentation. Preserve large habitat patches with connected grasslands, wet meadows, and forest edges.
 - Adopt best practices for pesticide labeling, application, and coordination and restrict the use of pesticides known to be harmful to bees, including neonicotinoids, where feasible.

3.5 Cultural and Paleontological Resources

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) requires Federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties and afford the Council a reasonable opportunity to comment on such undertakings.

As defined in 36 CFR § 800.16 (l)(1), historic property means any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included in, or eligible for inclusion in, the National Register of Historic Places maintained by the Secretary of the Interior. This term includes artifacts, records, and remains that are related to and located within such properties. The term includes properties of traditional religious and cultural importance to an Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization and that meet the National Register criteria.

As defined in 16 USC 470aaa. Sec. 6301(4) of Paleontological Resources Preservation Act (PRPA), paleontological resource means any fossilized remains, traces, or imprints of organisms, preserved in or on the earth's crust, that are of paleontological interest and that provide information about the history of life on earth. The PRPA requires Federal Agencies to manage and protect paleontological resources on Federal land using scientific principles and expertise.

In compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA, cultural resource file searches were conducted with the Montana SHPO, and onsite cultural resource inventories were completed by Ethnoscience, Inc. (2026). The onsite inventories included everything in the Area of Potential Effects (APE), which included the areas of the GSR, booster pump station and the water pipeline corridor.

During the cultural resource survey eight sites were identified within the APE. Below are a list of the sites and their eligibility determinations.

Table 2: List of Resources found during the cultural resource survey

Smithsonian Number	Site Type	Eligibility Determination
Site 24VL0052	Pre-contact Rock Alignment	Undetermined
Site 24VL1776	Traditional Cultural Place	Eligible
Site 24VL2127	Historic Industrial Development	Unresolved
Site 24VL2134	Pre-contact Lithic Material	Undetermined
Site 24VL2336	Pre-contract Rock Cairns	Undetermined
Site 24VL2342	Historic Irrigation	Not Eligible
Site 24VL2343	Historic Road	Eligible
Site 24VL2354	Historic Road	Not Eligible

3.5.1 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action, no historic properties would be affected as there would be no ground disturbing activities. Prehistoric and paleontological sites are likely in a stable environment and would remain undisturbed. Historic sites would continue to deteriorate due to natural and non-project related forces over time.

3.5.2 Proposed Action Alternative

Under the Proposed Action, approximately 120 acres of land would be disturbed through the installation of the 33-mile pipeline, GSR, and booster pump station. The locations of the cultural resources were provided to the designers of the project. The pipeline and permanent infrastructure were all designed to avoid all the identified resources. Avoidance was achieved by either rerouting the pipeline around a site or boring under the site. No impacts to cultural resources would take place under the proposed action.

Reclamation consulted with the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO), the Fort Belknap Indian Community THPO, BLM, USFWS and USACE. The SHPO, BLM, USFWS, USACE, and the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes concurred with Reclamation's determination of No Adverse Effect to Historic Properties. No response was received from the Fort Belknap Indian Community THPO. In accordance with Section 106 guidelines, the absence of a response is interpreted as no objection to the proposed activities; however, follow-up actions may be required to ensure full compliance.

3.5.3 Conservation Measures

- All cultural resources would be avoided during design and construction of the project.

3.6 Indian Trust Assets

Indian Trust Assets (ITAs) are legal interests in property held in trust by the United States for Indian tribes or individuals, or property that the United States is otherwise charged by law to protect. That is consistent with the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 CFR Part 900.6) which defines a trust resource as “an interest in land, water, minerals, funds, or other assets or property which is held by the United State in trust for an Indian tribe or an individual Indian or which is held by an Indian tribe or Indian subject to a restriction on alienation imposed by the United States.”

Reclamation has an existing Programmatic Agreement associated with the Fort Peck Dry Prairie Rural Water Project (Reclamation 2002). In compliance with that document, Reclamation sent a consultation letter to the Assiniboiné and Sioux Tribes on June 10, 2026. It was also determined that the Fort Belknap Indian Community may have interest in the project, so they were also sent a consultation letter. Reclamation received concurrence from the Assiniboiné and Sioux Tribes on July 24, 2026, but did not receive a response from the Fort Belknap Indian Community. In accordance with Section 106 guidelines, the absence of a response is interpreted as no objection to the proposed activities; however, follow-up actions may be required to ensure full compliance.

3.6.1 No Action Alternative and Proposed Action

There have been no ITAs identified in the project area. Neither the No Action or the Proposed Action would have an effect on ITAs.

3.6.2 Conservation Measures

- All cultural resources would be avoided during design and construction of the project.

3.7 Visual Resources

The objective of Visual Resource Management (VRM) is to manage public lands in a manner which would protect the quality of the scenic (visual) values of those lands. The VRM objectives are established in conformance with land-use allocations. The VRM objectives are area specific and provide visual standards for designing and evaluating proposed development projects. Proper implementation of VRM helps prevent environmental degradation and maintain important resource values.

The Project Area is designated as VRM Class II. The objective of this class is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be low. Management activities may be seen but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. Any changes must repeat the basic elements of form, line, color, and texture found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape

The project area is visually dominated by Fort Peck Reservoir and the Missouri River Breaks.

3.7.1 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action, no new infrastructure would be constructed, and no visual resources would be affected.

3.7.2 Proposed Action

The proposed action would not excessively alter the existing character of the landscape, and any structural developments would repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape. The infrastructure including pipeline, in-ground GSR, and booster pump station would be built alongside an existing improved road. The in-ground GSR would be mostly buried with only the top two feet above ground. The exposed portion of the GSR should be painted with earth tone colors such as Covert Green to help blend with the existing landscape. The booster pump station building would be 28 ft long by 12 ft wide by 11.5 ft tall and will be covered in earth tone colors.

3.7.3 Conservation Measures/Design Features

- Permanent above ground infrastructure would consist of natural earth tone colors to match the surrounding landscape.
- The pipeline would be aligned along existing disturbances (roads, corridors, fence lines) to reduce new visual contrast.
- Trench line would be contoured to match adjacent natural landforms, avoiding straight, unnatural edge
- Use native seed mixes for reclamation so revegetation blends with existing vegetation patterns (Appendix E).

4 Consultation and Coordination

4.1 Website – Public Notice

The completed EA is posted on the Reclamation's Montana Area Office website at: <https://www.usbr.gov/gp/mtao/>

4.2 Persons, Groups, and Agencies Consulted

Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) – The SHPO was consulted with for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. A consultation letter was sent to SHPO on June 10, 2026 and SHPO responded with a concurrence letter.

Fort Belknap Indian Community – The THPO was consulted for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act regarding Cultural Resources and Tribal Trust responsibilities. A consultation letter was sent on June 10, 2026, but no response letter was received.

In accordance with Section 106 guidelines, the absence of a response is interpreted as no objection to the proposed activities; however, follow-up actions may be required to ensure full compliance.

Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes – Per the Cultural Resource Programmatic Agreement (Reclamation 2002), the Assiniboine and Sioux tribes were consulted with for Cultural Resources and Tribal Trust responsibilities. A consultation letter was sent on June 10, 2026, but no response letter was received. In accordance with Section 106 guidelines, the absence of a response is interpreted as no objection to the proposed activities; however, follow-up actions may be required to ensure full compliance.

Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program (MSGHCP) – The proposed project crosses sage grouse Core and General habitat, which requires consultation with the MSGHCP. Several meetings were held with the MSGHCP and a final determination letter on sage grouse effects and mitigation was received on July 6, 2026.

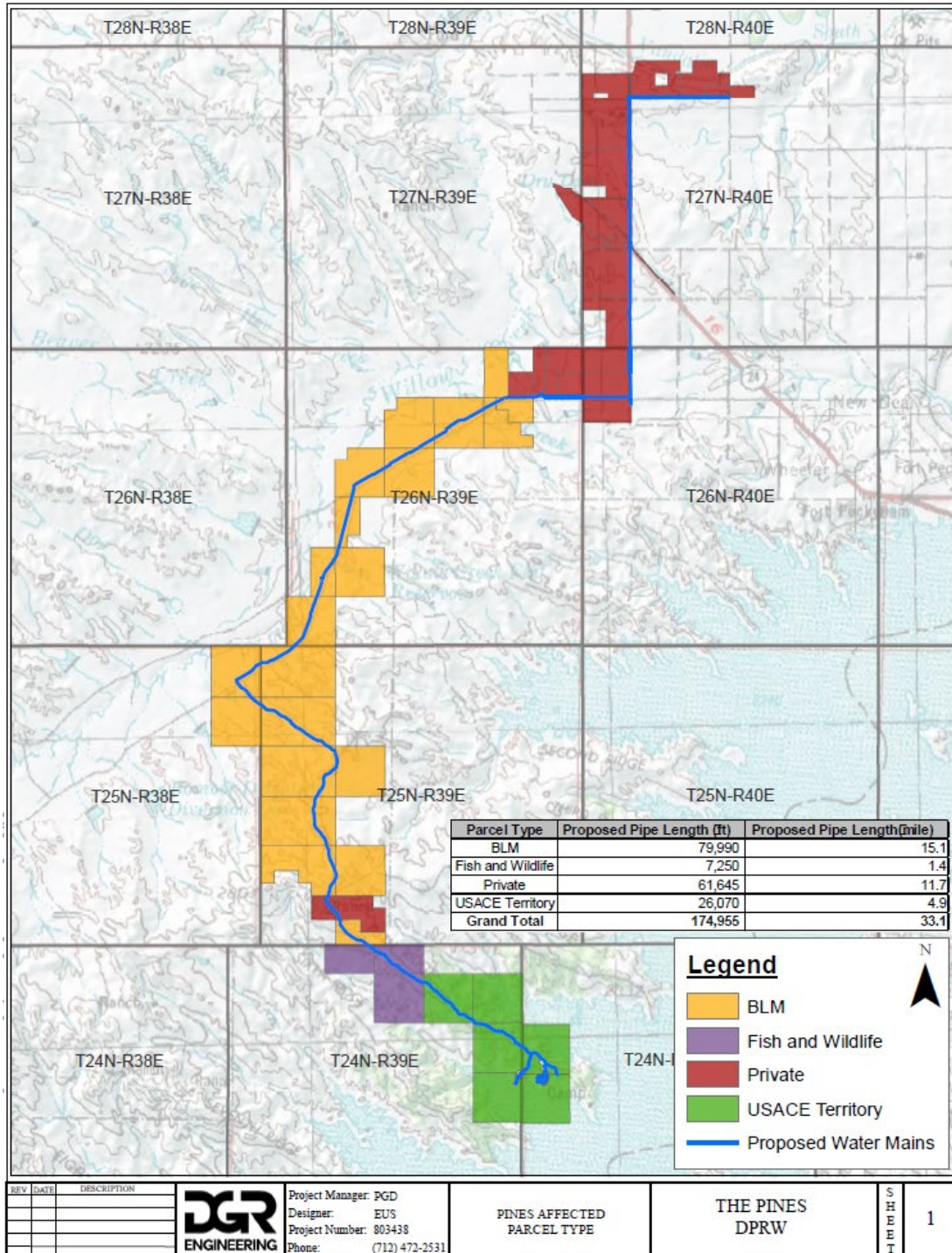
4.3 List of Preparers

Name	Title	Office
David Trimpe	Sup. Natural Resource Specialist	Reclamation – Montana Area Office
Robert Thompson	Natural Resource Specialist	Reclamation – Montana Area Office
Emily Meick	Archeologist	Reclamation – Montana Area Office
Josh Sorlie	Soil Scientist	BLM – Malta Field Office
Michael Borggreen	Field Manager	BLM – Glasgow Field Office
Micah R Lee	Reality Specialist	BLM – Havre Field Office
Ryan Russell Allen	Noxious and Invasive Species	BLM – Glasgow Field Office
Kailey Smidt	Range and Vegetation	BLM – Glasgow Field Office
Jason Snellman	Recreation, Visuals, Special Designations	BLM – Malta Field Office
Matt Comer	Project Manager	BLM – Glasgow Field Office

5 Literature Cited

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- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2012. Comprehensive Conservation Plan: Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge, UL Bend National Wildlife Refuge, Montana

6 Appendix A – Pipeline Alignment/Land Ownership



7 Appendix B – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Species Letter



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Montana Ecological Services Field Office
585 Shephard Way, Suite 1
Helena, MT 59601-6287
Phone: (406) 449-5225



In Reply Refer To:

08/29/2026 20:11:25 UTC

Project Code: 2026-0085183

Project Name: Dry Prairie Rural Water Project - Pines Segment

Subject: List of threatened and endangered species that may occur in your proposed project location or may be affected by your proposed project

To Whom It May Concern:

The enclosed species list identifies threatened, endangered, proposed and candidate species, as well as proposed and final designated critical habitat, that may occur within the boundary of your proposed project and/or may be affected by your proposed project. The species list fulfills the requirements of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) under section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

New information based on updated surveys, changes in the abundance and distribution of species, changed habitat conditions, or other factors could change this list. Please feel free to contact us if you need more current information or assistance regarding the potential impacts to federally proposed, listed, and candidate species and federally designated and proposed critical habitat. Please note that under 50 CFR 402.12(e) of the regulations implementing section 7 of the Act, the accuracy of this species list should be verified after 90 days. This verification can be completed formally or informally as desired. The Service recommends that verification be completed by visiting the IPaC website at regular intervals during project planning and implementation for updates to species lists and information. An updated list may be requested through the IPaC system by completing the same process used to receive the enclosed list.

The purpose of the Act is to provide a means whereby threatened and endangered species and the ecosystems upon which they depend may be conserved. Under sections 7(a)(1) and 7(a)(2) of the Act and its implementing regulations (50 CFR 402 *et seq.*), Federal agencies are required to utilize their authorities to carry out programs for the conservation of threatened and endangered species and to determine whether projects may affect threatened and endangered species and/or designated critical habitat.

A Biological Assessment is required for construction projects (or other undertakings having similar physical impacts) that are major Federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment as defined in the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4332(2) (c)). For projects other than major construction activities, the Service suggests that a biological

evaluation similar to a Biological Assessment be prepared to determine whether the project may affect listed or proposed species and/or designated or proposed critical habitat. Recommended contents of a Biological Assessment are described at 50 CFR 402.12.

If a Federal agency determines, based on the Biological Assessment or biological evaluation, that listed species and/or designated critical habitat may be affected by the proposed project, the agency is required to consult with the Service pursuant to 50 CFR 402. In addition, the Service recommends that candidate species, proposed species and proposed critical habitat be addressed within the consultation. More information on the regulations and procedures for section 7 consultation, including the role of permit or license applicants, can be found in the "Endangered Species Consultation Handbook" at:

<https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/endangered-species-consultation-handbook.pdf>

Migratory Birds: In addition to responsibilities to protect threatened and endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), there are additional responsibilities under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) to protect native birds from project-related impacts. Any activity resulting in take of migratory birds, including eagles, is prohibited unless otherwise permitted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (50 C.F.R. Sec. 10.12 and 16 U.S.C. Sec. 668(a)). For more information regarding these Acts, see <https://www.fws.gov/program/migratory-bird-permit/what-we-do>.

It is the responsibility of the project proponent to comply with these Acts by identifying potential impacts to migratory birds and eagles within applicable NEPA documents (when there is a federal nexus) or a Bird/Eagle Conservation Plan (when there is no federal nexus). Proponents should implement conservation measures to avoid or minimize the production of project-related stressors or minimize the exposure of birds and their resources to the project-related stressors. For more information on avian stressors and recommended conservation measures, see <https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/threats-birds>.

In addition to MBTA and BGEPA, Executive Order 13186: *Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds*, obligates all Federal agencies that engage in or authorize activities that might affect migratory birds, to minimize those effects and encourage conservation measures that will improve bird populations. Executive Order 13186 provides for the protection of both migratory birds and migratory bird habitat. For information regarding the implementation of Executive Order 13186, please visit <https://www.fws.gov/partner/council-conservation-migratory-birds>.

We appreciate your concern for threatened and endangered species. The Service encourages Federal agencies to include conservation of threatened and endangered species into their project planning to further the purposes of the Act. Please include the Consultation Code in the header of this letter with any request for consultation or correspondence about your project that you submit to our office.

Attachment(s):

- Official Species List

- USFWS National Wildlife Refuges and Fish Hatcheries
- Bald & Golden Eagles
- Migratory Birds
- Wetlands

OFFICIAL SPECIES LIST

This list is provided pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, and fulfills the requirement for Federal agencies to "request of the Secretary of the Interior information whether any species which is listed or proposed to be listed may be present in the area of a proposed action".

This species list is provided by:

Montana Ecological Services Field Office

585 Shephard Way, Suite 1

Helena, MT 59601-6287

(406) 449-5225

PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Code: 2026-0085183
Project Name: Dry Prairie Rural Water Project - Pines Segment
Project Type: Water Supply Pipeline - New Constr - Above Ground
Project Description: Thirty-two mile underground water pipeline that will service 73 users in the Pines Recreation Area and will provide water to local grazing associations. Project also includes a booster pump station and 85,000 water storage tank. Most of the project would occur on BLM administered land, however it will also cross USACE, and USFWS lands as well. Reclamation is providing federal funding for the construction of the project.

Project Location:

The approximate location of the project can be viewed in Google Maps: <https://www.google.com/maps/@47.9303332,-106.73198009309195,14z>



Counties: Valley County, Montana

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT SPECIES

There is a total of 4 threatened, endangered, or candidate species on this species list.

Species on this list should be considered in an effects analysis for your project and could include species that exist in another geographic area. For example, certain fish may appear on the species list because a project could affect downstream species.

IPaC does not display listed species or critical habitats under the sole jurisdiction of NOAA Fisheries¹, as USFWS does not have the authority to speak on behalf of NOAA and the Department of Commerce.

See the "Critical habitats" section below for those critical habitats that lie wholly or partially within your project area under this office's jurisdiction. Please contact the designated FWS office if you have questions.

-
1. [NOAA Fisheries](#), also known as the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), is an office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration within the Department of Commerce.

BIRDS

NAME	STATUS
Piping Plover <i>Charadrius melodus</i> Population: [Atlantic Coast and Northern Great Plains populations] - Wherever found, except those areas where listed as endangered. There is final critical habitat for this species. Your location does not overlap the critical habitat. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/6039 General project design guidelines: https://ipac.ecosphere.fws.gov/project/PZNVLHPDHRAPVDY4HBR6POZSZQ/documents/generated/12574.pdf	Threatened

FISHES

NAME	STATUS
Pallid sturgeon <i>Scaphirhynchus albus</i> No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/7162 General project design guidelines: https://ipac.ecosphere.fws.gov/project/PZNVLHPDHRAPVDY4HBR6POZSZQ/documents/generated/12574.pdf	Endangered

INSECTS

NAME	STATUS
Monarch butterfly <i>Danaus plexippus</i> There is proposed critical habitat for this species. Your location does not overlap the critical habitat. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9743 General project design guidelines: https://ipac.ecosphere.fws.gov/project/PZNVLHPDHRAPVDY4HBR6POZSZQ/documents/generated/12574.pdf	Proposed Threatened
Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee <i>Bombus suckleyi</i> Population: No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/10885 General project design guidelines: https://ipac.ecosphere.fws.gov/project/PZNVLHPDHRAPVDY4HBR6POZSZQ/documents/generated/12574.pdf	Proposed Endangered

CRITICAL HABITATS

THERE ARE NO CRITICAL HABITATS WITHIN YOUR PROJECT AREA UNDER THIS OFFICE'S JURISDICTION.

YOU ARE STILL REQUIRED TO DETERMINE IF YOUR PROJECT(S) MAY HAVE EFFECTS ON ALL ABOVE LISTED SPECIES.

USFWS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE LANDS AND FISH HATCHERIES

Any activity proposed on lands managed by the [National Wildlife Refuge](#) system must undergo a 'Compatibility Determination' conducted by the Refuge. Please contact the individual Refuges to discuss any questions or concerns.

The following FWS National Wildlife Refuge Lands and Fish Hatcheries lie fully or partially within your project area:

FACILITY NAME	ACRES
CHARLES M. RUSSELL NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE <a %5c%22charles+m.+russell+national+wildlife+refuge%5c%22\""="" href="https://www.fws.gov/our-facilities?\$keywords=\">https://www.fws.gov/our-facilities?\$keywords=\"%5C%22CHARLES+M.+RUSSELL+NATIONAL+WILDLIFE+REFUGE%5C%22\"	924,071.172

BALD & GOLDEN EAGLES

Bald and Golden Eagles are protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act ² and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) ¹. Any person or organization who plans or conducts activities that may result in impacts to Bald or Golden Eagles, or their habitats, should follow appropriate regulations and consider implementing appropriate avoidance and minimization measures, as described in the various links on this page.

1. The [Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act](#) of 1940.
2. The [Migratory Birds Treaty Act](#) of 1918.
3. 50 C.F.R. Sec. 10.12 and 16 U.S.C. Sec. 668(a)

There are Bald Eagles and/or Golden Eagles in your [project](#) area.

Measures for Proactively Minimizing Eagle Impacts

For information on how to best avoid and minimize disturbance to nesting bald eagles, please review the [National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines](#). You may employ the timing and activity-specific distance recommendations in this document when designing your project/activity to avoid and minimize eagle impacts. For bald eagle information specific to Alaska, please refer to [Bald Eagle Nesting and Sensitivity to Human Activity](#).

The FWS does not currently have guidelines for avoiding and minimizing disturbance to nesting Golden Eagles. For site-specific recommendations regarding nesting Golden Eagles, please consult with the appropriate Regional [Migratory Bird Office](#) or [Ecological Services Field Office](#).

If disturbance or take of eagles cannot be avoided, an [incidental take permit](#) may be available to authorize any take that results from, but is not the purpose of, an otherwise lawful activity. For assistance making this determination for Bald Eagles, visit the [Do I Need A Permit Tool](#). For

assistance making this determination for golden eagles, please consult with the appropriate Regional [Migratory Bird Office](#) or [Ecological Services Field Office](#).

Ensure Your Eagle List is Accurate and Complete

If your project area is in a poorly surveyed area in IPaC, your list may not be complete and you may need to rely on other resources to determine what species may be present (e.g. your local FWS field office, state surveys, your own surveys). Please review the [Supplemental Information on Migratory Birds and Eagles](#), to help you properly interpret the report for your specified location, including determining if there is sufficient data to ensure your list is accurate.

For guidance on when to schedule activities or implement avoidance and minimization measures to reduce impacts to bald or golden eagles on your list, see the "Probability of Presence Summary" below to see when these bald or golden eagles are most likely to be present and breeding in your project area.

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
Bald Eagle <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i> This is not a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) in this area, but warrants attention because of the Eagle Act or for potential susceptibilities in offshore areas from certain types of development or activities. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1626	Breeds Dec 1 to Aug 31
Golden Eagle <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i> This is not a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) in this area, but warrants attention because of the Eagle Act or for potential susceptibilities in offshore areas from certain types of development or activities. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1680	Breeds Jan 1 to Aug 31

PROBABILITY OF PRESENCE SUMMARY

The graphs below provide our best understanding of when birds of concern are most likely to be present in your project area. This information can be used to tailor and schedule your project activities to avoid or minimize impacts to birds. Please make sure you read ["Supplemental Information on Migratory Birds and Eagles"](#), specifically the FAQ section titled "Proper Interpretation and Use of Your Migratory Bird Report" before using or attempting to interpret this report.

Probability of Presence (■)

Green bars; the bird's relative probability of presence in the 10km grid cell(s) your project overlaps during that week of the year.

Breeding Season (■)

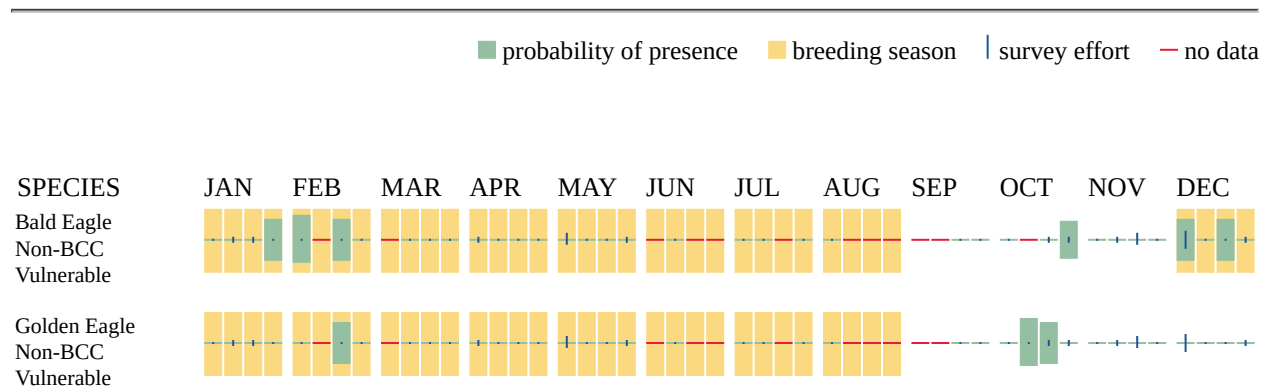
Yellow bars; liberal estimate of the timeframe inside which the bird breeds across its entire range.

Survey Effort (|)

Vertical black lines; the number of surveys performed for that species in the 10km grid cell(s) your project area overlaps.

No Data (—)

A week is marked as having no data if there were no survey events for that week.



Additional information can be found using the following links:

- Eagle Management <https://www.fws.gov/program/eagle-management>
- Measures for avoiding and minimizing impacts to birds <https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/avoiding-and-minimizing-incident-take-migratory-birds>
- Nationwide avoidance and minimization measures for birds <https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/nationwide-standard-conservation-measures.pdf>
- Supplemental Information for Migratory Birds and Eagles in IPaC <https://www.fws.gov/media/supplemental-information-migratory-birds-and-bald-and-golden-eagles-may-occur-project-action>

MIGRATORY BIRDS

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) ¹ prohibits the take (including killing, capturing, selling, trading, and transport) of protected migratory bird species without prior authorization by the Department of Interior U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service).

-
1. The [Migratory Birds Treaty Act](#) of 1918.
 2. The [Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act](#) of 1940.
 3. 50 C.F.R. Sec. 10.12 and 16 U.S.C. Sec. 668(a)

For guidance on when to schedule activities or implement avoidance and minimization measures to reduce impacts to migratory birds on your list, see the "Probability of Presence Summary" below to see when these birds are most likely to be present and breeding in your project area.

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
American Golden-Plover <i>Pluvialis dominica</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/10561	Breeds elsewhere
Baird's Sparrow <i>Centronyx bairdii</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/5113	Breeds May 20 to Aug 15
Bald Eagle <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i> This is not a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) in this area, but warrants attention because of the Eagle Act or for potential susceptibilities in offshore areas from certain types of development or activities. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1626	Breeds Dec 1 to Aug 31
Bobolink <i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9454	Breeds May 20 to Jul 31
California Gull <i>Larus californicus</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/10955	Breeds Mar 1 to Jul 31
Chestnut-collared Longspur <i>Calcarius ornatus</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9437	Breeds May 1 to Aug 10
Ferruginous Hawk <i>Buteo regalis</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/6038	Breeds Mar 15 to Aug 15
Franklin's Gull <i>Leucophaeus pipixcan</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/10567	Breeds May 1 to Jul 31
Golden Eagle <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i> This is not a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) in this area, but warrants attention because of the Eagle Act or for potential susceptibilities in offshore areas from certain types of development or activities. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1680	Breeds Jan 1 to Aug 31
Grasshopper Sparrow <i>Ammodramus savannarum perpallidus</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/8329	Breeds Jun 1 to Aug 20

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
Lark Bunting <i>Calamospiza melanocorys</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9451	Breeds May 10 to Aug 15
Lesser Yellowlegs <i>Tringa flavipes</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9679	Breeds elsewhere
Long-billed Curlew <i>Numenius americanus</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/5511	Breeds Apr 1 to Jul 31
Long-eared Owl <i>asio otus</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/3631	Breeds Mar 1 to Jul 15
Marbled Godwit <i>Limosa fedoa</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9481	Breeds May 1 to Jul 31
Northern Harrier <i>Circus hudsonius</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/8350	Breeds Apr 1 to Sep 15
Pectoral Sandpiper <i>Calidris melanotos</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9561	Breeds elsewhere
Prairie Falcon <i>Falco mexicanus</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/4736	Breeds Mar 1 to Jul 31
Sprague's pipit <i>Anthus spragueii</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/8964	Breeds May 10 to Aug 31
Thick-billed Longspur <i>Rhynchophanes mccownii</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/11901	Breeds May 1 to Aug 15

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
Western Grebe <i>Aechmophorus occidentalis</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/6743	Breeds Jun 1 to Aug 31
Willet <i>Tringa semipalmata</i> This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/10669	Breeds Apr 20 to Aug 5

PROBABILITY OF PRESENCE SUMMARY

The graphs below provide our best understanding of when birds of concern are most likely to be present in your project area. This information can be used to tailor and schedule your project activities to avoid or minimize impacts to birds. Please make sure you read "[Supplemental Information on Migratory Birds and Eagles](#)", specifically the FAQ section titled "Proper Interpretation and Use of Your Migratory Bird Report" before using or attempting to interpret this report.

Probability of Presence (■)

Green bars; the bird's relative probability of presence in the 10km grid cell(s) your project overlaps during that week of the year.

Breeding Season (■)

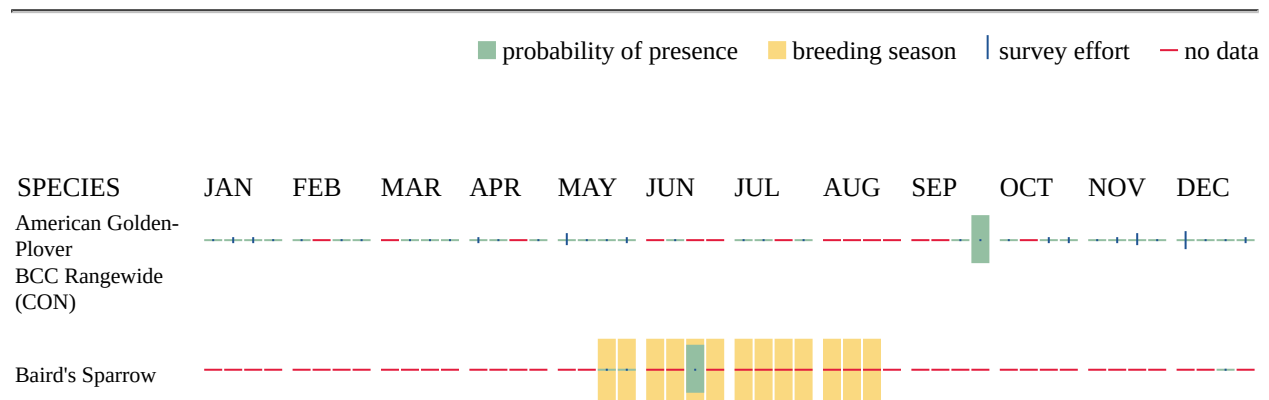
Yellow bars; liberal estimate of the timeframe inside which the bird breeds across its entire range.

Survey Effort (|)

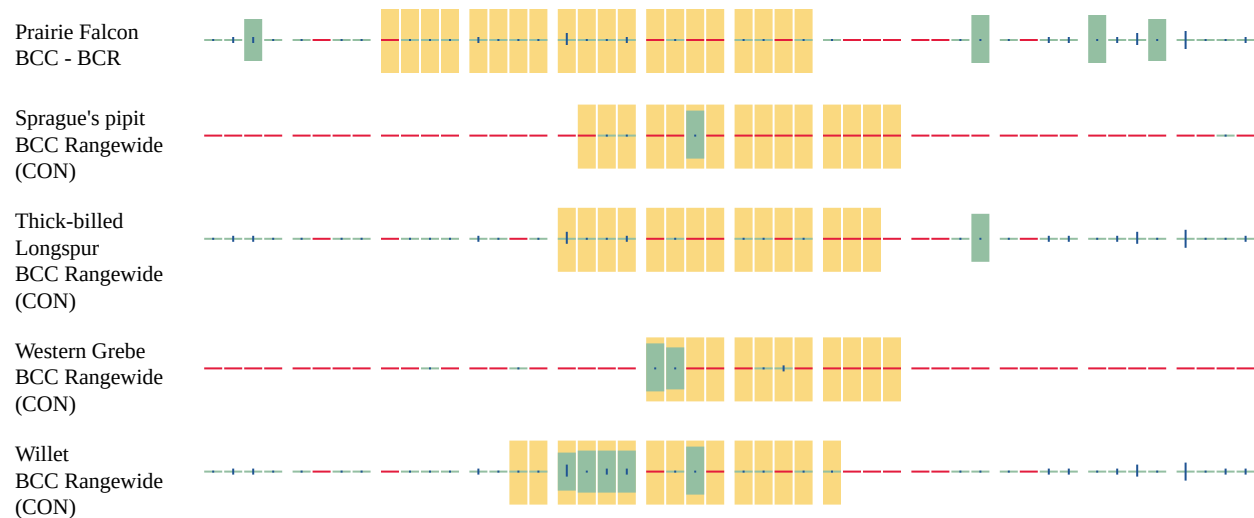
Vertical black lines; the number of surveys performed for that species in the 10km grid cell(s) your project area overlaps.

No Data (—)

A week is marked as having no data if there were no survey events for that week.







Additional information can be found using the following links:

- Eagle Management <https://www.fws.gov/program/eagle-management>
- Measures for avoiding and minimizing impacts to birds <https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/avoiding-and-minimizing-incidental-take-migratory-birds>
- Nationwide avoidance and minimization measures for birds
- Supplemental Information for Migratory Birds and Eagles in IPaC <https://www.fws.gov/media/supplemental-information-migratory-birds-and-bald-and-golden-eagles-may-occur-project-action>

WETLANDS

Impacts to [NWI wetlands](#) and other aquatic habitats may be subject to regulation under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, or other State/Federal statutes.

For more information please contact the Regulatory Program of the local [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers District](#).

Please note that the NWI data being shown may be out of date. We are currently working to update our NWI data set. We recommend you verify these results with a site visit to determine the actual extent of wetlands on site.

FRESHWATER EMERGENT WETLAND

- PEM1A
- PEM1Ah
- PEM1Cx
- PEM1Ch
- PEM1Af

RIVERINE

- R4SBA
- R5UBH
- R4SBC

LAKE

- L2USA

IPAC USER CONTACT INFORMATION

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8 Appendix C – Soils

Soil Map Unit	Approx. Footage Crossed by Pipeline (Feet)	Inherent Erosion Hazard	Soil Compaction Resistance	Reclamation Suitability	
		Rating	Rating	Rating	Limiting Feature
BLM Lands					
6	1857	Moderate	Low	Poor	Water Erosion Wind Erosion Droughtiness Rooting Depth
34	7471	Moderate	Low	Poor	Droughtiness Rooting Depth Wind Erosion Precipitation Water Erosion
35	1932	High	Low	Poor	Vegetation Not Supported Wind Erosion Water Erosion Precipitation Droughtiness Rooting Depth
47	1221	Moderate	Low	Well	
55	3729	N/A	N/A	Poor	Vegetation Not Supported Wind Erosion Water Erosion Precipitation Droughtiness Rooting Depth Salt Content
68	35626	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Wind Erosion Droughtiness Rooting Depth
76	27957	Moderate	Low	Poor	Sodium Content Wind Erosion Salt Content Precipitation

USACE/FWS Lands					
34	25264	Moderate	Low	Poor	Droughtiness Rooting Depth Wind Erosion Precipitation Water Erosion
68	6744	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Wind Erosion Droughtiness Rooting Depth

Map Unit: 6—Hillon-Cabbart loams, 15 to 60 percent slopes

Component: Hillon (40%)

The Hillon component makes up 40 percent of the map unit. Slopes are 15 to 60 percent. This component is on hillslopes on till plains. The parent material consists of fine-loamy till. Depth to a root restrictive layer is greater than 60 inches. The natural drainage class is well drained. Water movement in the most restrictive layer is moderately high. Available water to a depth of 60 inches (or restricted depth) is moderate. Shrink-swell potential is low. This soil is not flooded. It is not ponded. There is no zone of water saturation within a depth of 72 inches. Organic matter content in the surface horizon is about 2 percent. This component is in the R052XN168MT Silty-Steep (SiStp) 10-14" p.z. ecological site. Nonirrigated land capability classification is 7e. This soil does not meet hydric criteria. The calcium carbonate equivalent within 40 inches, typically, does not exceed 10 percent. The soil has a slightly saline horizon within 30 inches of the soil surface. The soil has a maximum sodium adsorption ratio of 7 within 30 inches of the soil surface.

Component: Cabbart (35%)

The Cabbart component makes up 35 percent of the map unit. Slopes are 15 to 60 percent. This component is on hillslopes on till plains. The parent material consists of residuum weathered from sandstone and siltstone. Depth to a root restrictive layer, bedrock, paralithic, is 10 to 20 inches. The natural drainage class is well drained. Water movement in the most restrictive layer is moderately high. Available water to a depth of 60 inches (or restricted depth) is very low. Shrink-swell potential is low. This soil is not flooded. It is not ponded. There is no zone of water saturation within a depth of 72 inches. Organic matter content in the surface horizon is about 2 percent. This component is in the R052XN178MT Shallow (Sw) 10-14" p.z. ecological site. Nonirrigated land capability classification is 7e. This soil does not meet hydric criteria. The calcium carbonate equivalent within 40 inches, typically, does not exceed 20 percent. The soil has a slightly saline horizon within 30 inches of the soil surface. The soil has a maximum sodium adsorption ratio of 7 within 30 inches of the soil surface.

Map Unit: 34—Lisam-Dilts clays, 5 to 35 percent slopes

Component: Lisam (45%)

The Lisam component makes up 45 percent of the map unit. Slopes are 5 to 35 percent. The parent material consists of residuum weathered from clayey shale. Depth to a root restrictive layer, bedrock, paralithic, is 10 to 20 inches. The natural drainage class is well drained. Water movement in the most restrictive layer is moderately low. Available water to a depth of 60 inches (or restricted depth) is very low. Shrink-swell potential is high. This soil is not flooded. It is not ponded. There is no zone of water saturation within a depth of 72 inches. Organic matter content in the surface horizon is about 1 percent. This component is in the R058AE199MT Shallow Clay (SwC) RRU 58A-E 10-14" p.z. ecological site. Nonirrigated land capability classification is 7e. This soil does not meet hydric criteria. The calcium carbonate equivalent within 40 inches, typically, does not exceed 3 percent. The soil has a very slightly saline horizon within 30 inches of the soil surface.

Component: Dilts (40%)

The Dilts component makes up 40 percent of the map unit. Slopes are 5 to 35 percent. This component is on hillslopes. The parent material consists of residuum weathered from acid shale. Depth to a root restrictive layer, bedrock, paralithic, is 10 to 20 inches. The natural drainage class is well drained. Water movement in the most restrictive layer is moderately low. Available water to a depth of 60 inches (or restricted depth) is very low. Shrink-swell potential is high. This soil is not flooded. It is not ponded. There is no zone of water saturation within a depth of 72 inches. Organic matter content in the surface horizon is about 1 percent. This component is in the R058AE199MT Shallow Clay (SwC) RRU 58A-E 10-14" p.z. ecological site. Nonirrigated land capability classification is 7e. This soil does not meet hydric criteria.

Map Unit: 35—Lisam-Dilts-Rock outcrop complex, 9 to 35 percent slopes

Component: Rock outcrop (40%)

Generated brief soil descriptions are created for major soil components. The Rock outcrop is a miscellaneous area.

Component: Lisam (30%)

The Lisam component makes up 30 percent of the map unit. Slopes are 9 to 35 percent. The parent material consists of residuum weathered from clayey shale. Depth to a root restrictive layer, bedrock, paralithic, is 10 to 20 inches. The natural drainage class is well drained. Water movement in the most restrictive layer is moderately low. Available water to a depth of 60 inches (or restricted depth) is very low. Shrink-swell potential is high. This soil is not flooded. It is not ponded. There is no zone of water saturation within a depth of 72 inches. Organic matter content in the surface horizon is about 1 percent. This component is in the R058AE199MT Shallow Clay (SwC) RRU 58A-E 10-14" p.z. ecological site. Nonirrigated land capability classification is 7e. This soil does not meet hydric criteria. The calcium carbonate equivalent within 40 inches, typically, does not exceed 3 percent. The soil has a very slightly saline horizon within 30 inches of the soil surface.

Component: Dilts (20%)

The Dilts component makes up 20 percent of the map unit. Slopes are 9 to 35 percent. This component is on hillslopes. The parent material consists of residuum weathered from acid shale. Depth to a root restrictive layer, bedrock, paralithic, is 10 to 20 inches. The natural drainage class is well drained. Water movement in the most restrictive layer is moderately low. Available water to a depth of 60 inches (or restricted depth) is very low. Shrink-swell potential is high. This soil is not flooded. It is not ponded. There is no zone of water saturation within a depth of 72 inches. Organic matter content in the surface horizon is about 1 percent. This component is in the R058AE199MT Shallow Clay (SwC) RRU 58A-E 10-14" p.z. ecological site. Nonirrigated land capability classification is 7e. This soil does not meet hydric criteria.

Map Unit: 47—Phillips-Elloam complex, 2 to 8 percent slopes

Component: Phillips (45%)

The Phillips component makes up 45 percent of the map unit. Slopes are 2 to 8 percent. This component is on moraines on till plains. The parent material consists of clayey till. Depth to a root restrictive layer is greater than 60 inches. The natural drainage class is well drained. Water movement in the most restrictive layer is moderately low. Available water to a depth of 60 inches (or restricted depth) is high. Shrink-swell potential is moderate. This soil is not flooded. It is not ponded. There is no zone of water saturation within a depth of 72 inches. Organic matter content in the surface horizon is about 2 percent. This component is in the R052XY712MT Loamy (Lo) Dry Grassland, Loamy (Lo) Dry Shrubland, Silty (Si) 10-14" p.z. ecological site. Nonirrigated land capability classification is 3e. Irrigated land capability classification is 3e. This soil does not meet hydric criteria. The calcium carbonate equivalent within 40 inches, typically, does not exceed 10 percent. There are no saline horizons within 30 inches of the soil surface. The soil has a maximum sodium adsorption ratio of 1 within 30 inches of the soil surface.

Component: Elloam (25%)

The Elloam component makes up 25 percent of the map unit. Slopes are 2 to 8 percent. This component is on moraines on till plains. The parent material consists of clayey till. Depth to a root restrictive layer, natric, is 2 to 4 inches. The natural drainage class is well drained. Water movement in the most restrictive layer is low. Available water to a depth of 60 inches (or restricted depth) is very low. Shrink-swell potential is moderate. This soil is not flooded. It is not ponded. There is no zone of water saturation within a depth of 72 inches. Organic matter content in the surface horizon is about 2 percent. This component is in the R052XY731MT Claypan (Cp) 10-14" p.z., Thin Claypan (Tcp) Dry Grassland, Thin Claypan (Tcp) Dry Shrubland ecological site. Nonirrigated land capability classification is 6s. Irrigated land capability classification is 6s. This soil does not meet hydric criteria. The calcium carbonate equivalent within 40 inches, typically, does not exceed 8 percent. The soil has a slightly saline horizon within 30 inches of the soil surface. The soil has a maximum sodium adsorption ratio of 12 within 30 inches of the soil surface.

Map Unit: 68—Bascovy-Neldore clays, 4 to 15 percent slopes

Component: Bascovy (45%)

The Bascovy component makes up 45 percent of the map unit. Slopes are 4 to 15 percent. This component is on hillslopes on till plains. The parent material consists of residuum weathered from shale. Depth to a root restrictive layer, bedrock, paralithic, is 20 to 39 inches. The natural drainage class is well drained. Water movement in the most restrictive layer is low. Available water to a depth of 60 inches (or restricted depth) is low. Shrink-swell potential is very high. This soil is not flooded. It is not ponded. There is no zone of water saturation within a depth of 72 inches. Organic matter content in the surface horizon is about 2 percent. This component is in the R052XY702MT Clayey (Cy) Dry Grassland, Clayey (Cy) Dry Shrubland ecological site. Nonirrigated land capability classification is 6s. This soil does not meet hydric criteria. The soil has a very slightly saline horizon within 30 inches of the soil surface. The soil has a maximum sodium adsorption ratio of 10 within 30 inches of the soil surface.

Component: Neldore (40%)

The Neldore component makes up 40 percent of the map unit. Slopes are 4 to 15 percent. This component is on hillslopes on till plains. The parent material consists of residuum weathered from shale. Depth to a root restrictive layer, bedrock, paralithic, is 10 to 20 inches. The natural drainage class is well drained. Water movement in the most restrictive layer is low. Available water to a depth of 60 inches (or restricted depth) is very low. Shrink-swell potential is high. This soil is not flooded. It is not ponded. There is no zone of water saturation within a depth of 72 inches. Organic matter content in the surface horizon is about 2 percent. This component is in the R052XY724MT Shallow Clay (Swc) Dry Grassland, Shallow Clay (Swc) Dry Shrubland ecological site. Nonirrigated land capability classification is 6s. This soil does not meet hydric criteria. The soil has a very slightly saline horizon within 30 inches of the soil surface. The soil has a maximum sodium adsorption ratio of 10 within 30 inches of the soil surface.

Map Unit: 76—Vaeda silty clay

Component: Vaeda (95%)

The Vaeda component makes up 95 percent of the map unit. Slopes are 0 to 3 percent. This component is on fans, terraces. The parent material consists of alluvium. Depth to a root restrictive layer is greater than 60 inches. The natural drainage class is well drained. Water movement in the most restrictive layer is low. Available water to a depth of 60 inches (or restricted depth) is moderate. Shrink-swell potential is high. This soil is rarely flooded. It is not ponded. There is no zone of water saturation within a depth of 72 inches. Organic matter content in the surface horizon is about 1 percent. This component is in the R058AE014MT Dense Clay (DC) RRU 58A-E 10-14" p.z. ecological site. Nonirrigated land capability classification is 7s. This soil does not meet hydric criteria. The calcium carbonate equivalent within 40 inches, typically, does not exceed 3 percent. The soil has a moderately saline horizon within 30 inches of the soil surface. The soil has a maximum sodium adsorption ratio of 15 within 30 inches of the soil surface.

9 Appendix D - Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program Letter

MONTANA SAGE GROUSE HABITAT CONSERVATION PROGRAM



GREG GIANFORTE, GOVERNOR

1539 ELEVENTH AVENUE

STATE OF MONTANA

PHONE: (406) 444-0554
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PO BOX 201601
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-1601

Project No. 6994
Governor's Executive Orders 12-2015 and 21-2015
The Pines Project

Eric Stearns
DGR Engineering
1302 South Union Street
Rock Rapids, Iowa 51246

July 6, 2026

Dear Mr. Stearns,

The Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program (Program) received a request for consultation and review of your proposed project on April 10, 2025. Additional information necessary for Program review was received on June 29, 2026. Based on the information provided, portions of this project are located within a Core Area and General Habitat for sage grouse. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) classifies portions of this area as a Priority Habitat Management Area and a General Habitat Management Area (PHMA and GHMA).

Executive Orders 12-2015 and 21-2015 set forth Montana's Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy. Montana's goal is to maintain viable sage grouse populations and conserve habitat so that Montana maintains flexibility to manage our own lands, our wildlife, and our economy and ensure that a listing under the federal Endangered Species Act is not warranted in the future. Similarly, the BLM has incorporated sage grouse conservation measures into their Resource Management Plans.

The Program has completed its review, including:

Project Description:

Project Type: Infrastructure - Pipeline (Major)

Project Disturbance: 32.56-Mile-Long Buried Pipeline; 0.01 Acre Pump Station; 0.01 Acre Ground Storage Reservoir



Hosted by the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Director's Office: (406) 444-2074



Construction Timeframe: August 3, 2026 to November 12, 2027; Short Term (1-5 Years)

Operations Timeframe: November 13, 2027; Permanent (>25 Years)

Project Location:

Legal: Township 24 North, Range 39 East, Sections 3, 4, 10

Township 25 North, Range 38 East, Sections 1, 12

Township 25 North, Range 39 East, Sections 6, 7, 17, 18, 19, 29, 30, 31, 32

Township 26 North, Range 39 East, Sections 1, 2, 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 20, 29, 30, 31

Township 26 North, Range 40 East, Section 6

Township 27 North, Range 40 East, Sections 19, 30, 31

County: Valley

Ownership: Private, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service

Project Description and Executive Orders 12-2015 and 21-2015 Consistency:

The Pines Project proposes to install a water pipeline in both a designated Core Area and in General Habitat for sage grouse.

DGR Engineering, on behalf of Dry Prairie Regional Water Authority (DPRWA), proposes installing a buried water pipeline south of Glasgow, Montana in Valley County. See Figure 1 in the enclosed Mitigation Plan (The Pines Project Location Map). The purpose of this project is to deliver potable water to customers both at The Pines housing development and customers along the pipeline route.

The Pines Project includes a total of 32.56 miles of proposed pipeline installation with an accompanying pump station and ground storage reservoir. Of the 32.56 miles of proposed line, 18.68 miles occur within a Core Area, and 1.97 miles occur within General Habitat for sage grouse. The remaining 11.88 miles are located outside of designated sage grouse habitat. This Program review applies only to the 20.65 miles of proposed pipeline and associated infrastructure within designated sage grouse habitat.

Included in this project are a pump station to assist in pushing water uphill to The Pines development, and a storage reservoir outside of the housing development to store water. Both pieces of infrastructure have a construction easement and permanent footprint included in this consultation.

To implement the project, DPRWA will excavate the trench, install the pipeline, backfill the excavated soil, construct both the pump station and ground storage reservoir, and reclaim the site. Construction equipment may include excavators, trenching equipment, loaders, haul trucks, and support vehicles. Methods such as directional boring may be used where trenching is not possible (roads, waterways, etc). No new roads or the upgrading of existing roads is anticipated for this project.



At the conclusion of the project, disturbed areas will be reseeded with a seed mix comprised of various native grass and shrub species. Reclamation will occur in October 2027.

Based on the information you provided, your project is 0.92 miles from the nearest active sage grouse lek in a Core Area. The project is also within four miles of six additional Core Area leks. The project is not within two miles of any leks in General Habitat for Sage Grouse. See Figure 2 in the enclosed Mitigation Plan (The Pines Project Lek Location Map). DPRWA has voluntarily agreed to the seasonal use timeframe set forth by Executive Order 12-2015. No project activities will occur between March 15 and July 15 within four miles of any active sage grouse lek in a Core Area. Work shall stop during seasonal use timeframes in 2027 beginning March 15 and only continue after July 15 anywhere within four miles of an active sage grouse lek in a Core Area.

Density Disturbance Calculation Tool (DDCT) Analysis

The proposed project is to occur in a designated Core Area for sage grouse. The Program has calculated the density and disturbance levels within the project area using a Density Disturbance Calculation Tool. The results were compared to allowable thresholds set forth in the Executive Order 12-2015. Your project results are as follows. See Figure 3 (The Pines Project DDCT Analysis Area Map) and the Density Disturbance Calculation Tool Explanation and Results Summary in the enclosed Mitigation Plan.

DDCT Analysis Area Acres: 118,600.23
Total Preliminary Disturbance Acres: 115.07
Total Disturbed Acres in Analysis Area: 2,659.53
DDCT Result: 2.24%
New Disturbed Acres: 83.47
Affected Leaks Within the DDCT Analysis Area: 11

Mitigation:

For the Pines Project, the Program calculated mitigation for the 20.65 miles of proposed pipeline in designated sage grouse habitat, the construction easement for both the pump station and ground storage reservoir, and the permanent footprint of the pump station and ground storage reservoir.

Estimated Functional Acres Lost Over the Life of the Project and Total Debit Obligation

The Program has calculated functional acres lost within the project area using the Habitat Quantification Tool (HQT) December 2023 v1.1, and Policy Guidance Document October 2018 v1.0. The HQT was calculated on June 16, 2026. The model was calculated with two years of construction, a 48-year operations phase, and the default 75 years of reclamation. The results for this project are described as follows.



HQT Functional Acres Lost: 5,588.81
Reserve Account (20%): 1,117.76
Advance Payment (10%): 558.88
Federal Net Gain (10%): 476.50
Site Specific Deviations from Executive Order 12-2015: 8

- Net Gain: 1
- Seasonal Use: 4
- Noise: 3

Total Debit Obligation: 9,365.01

The direct footprint, indirect impact area, and applicable policy multipliers for this project will result in a total of 9,365.01 debits. See Figure 3 in the enclosed Mitigation Plan (The Pines Project HQT Map). DPRWA provided a mitigation plan outlining project specific avoidance, minimization, reclamation and compensatory mitigation to address project impacts. DPRWA chose to fulfill the mitigation obligation by making a contribution to the Stewardship Account.

Eight site specific multipliers were included in the HQT calculations. The Project has committed to observing the seasonal timing stipulations during the construction phase of the project and will not conduct work between March 15 and July 15. However, the permanent structures will impact three sage grouse leks for the first structure and one sage grouse lek for the second, in a Core Area. Therefore, four seasonal use multipliers were added to the HQT for the operations phase of the project. Additionally, the noise from the pump station will impact three sage grouse leks in a Core Area. Therefore, three noise multipliers were added to the operations phase of the HQT. The project will occur on federally managed ground. Therefore, a net gain multiplier was added for any portion of the project occurring on federally managed land.

Mitigation Plan

The Mitigation Plan describes avoidance, minimization, reclamation, and compensatory mitigation measures DPRWA will implement to address and mitigate for unavoidable impacts from Executive Order 12-2015. DPRWA has voluntarily committed to this Mitigation Plan (including compensatory mitigation).

The Mitigation Plan:

- describes the Infrastructure – Pipeline (Major) project and summarizes activities that would occur within it;
- explains Project activities will occur during seasonal stipulation periods for the operations phase of the project; deviating from Executive Orders 12-2015 and 21-2015;
- describes project mitigation in accordance with Executive Orders 12-2015 and 21-2015,
- summarizes potential impacts to sage grouse and sage grouse habitats;



- describes where the project adheres to the mitigation hierarchy through avoidance, minimization, reclamation; and
- explains DPRWA will make a contribution to the Stewardship Account to fulfill the mitigation debit obligation.

DPRWA chose to fulfill the mitigation obligation by making a contribution to the Stewardship Account. Instructions for making a contribution to the Stewardship Account are enclosed and require your signature. The Payment Cover Memo is intended to assist with the Program's recordkeeping. The Stewardship Account Donation Form includes instructions for wire transfer or check payments, found at the bottom of the form. Let us know what form of payment you would like to use when you return the signed forms. Payment should be made **after** you obtain your necessary permits but **before** initiating the project activity.

Program Recommendations:

The State of Montana appreciates and welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with BLM to implement Executive Orders 12-2015 and 21-2015 and the BLM land use plans, respectively. We have a shared goal to conserve sage grouse and the habitats upon which they depend, consistent with the "all lands, all hands, all threats" approach.

The following stipulations are taken from Montana Executive Order 12-2015. These stipulations are designed to maintain existing levels of suitable sage grouse habitat by managing uses and activities in sage grouse habitat to ensure the maintenance of sage grouse abundance and distribution in Montana. Development should be designed and managed to maintain populations and sage grouse habitats.

- Seasonal Use: (Core Area) As authorized by permitting agency or agencies, activities will be prohibited from March 15 through July 15 outside of the perimeter of an active lek in Core Areas where breeding, nesting, and early brood-rearing habitat is present.
- Seasonal Use: (General Habitat) Activities will be prohibited from March 15 through July 15 within 2.0 miles of an active lek where breeding, nesting, and early brood-rearing habitat is present.
- Reclamation should re-establish native grasses, forbs, and/or shrubs during interim and final reclamation. The goal of reclamation is to achieve cover, species composition, and life form diversity commensurate with the surrounding plant community or desired ecological condition to the benefit of sage grouse and replace or enhance sage grouse habitat to the degree that environmental conditions allow.



- Weed management is required within both a Core Area and General Habitat for sage grouse. Reclamation of disturbed areas must include control of noxious weeds and invasive plant species, including cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) and Japanese brome (*Bromus japonicas*).
- Implementation of the Mitigation Plan is binding, and the signed Program letter and Mitigation Plan package shall be attached to any permit the State issues. It is the Program's and MSGOT's expectation that the Mitigation Plan will be an integral part of any associated project permits.

I encourage BLM to give full consideration to guidance within its own land use plans with respect to sage grouse and implement any special considerations or stipulations consistent with Montana Executive Order 12-2015 as appropriate.

Subject to the stipulations described above and voluntarily agreed to by DPRWA in the enclosed Mitigation Plan, your activities are consistent with the Montana Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy. Your proposed project or activity may need to obtain additional permits or authorization from other Montana state agencies or possibly federal agencies. They are very likely to request a copy of this consultation letter, so please retain it for your records.

If the location or boundaries of your proposed project or activity change in the future, or if new activities are proposed within one of the designated sage grouse habitat areas, please visit <https://sagegrouse.mt.gov/> and submit the new information.

Thanks for your interest in sage grouse and your commitment to taking the steps necessary to ensure Montana's Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy is successful.

Sincerely,



Therese Hartman
Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program Manager



Enclosures:

1. The Pines Project Mitigation Plan
2. Stewardship Account Donation Instructions

cc: David J.A. Wood, PhD
Conservation Biologist
Bureau of Land Management
Montana/Dakotas State Office
(406) 896-5246
djwood@blm.gov



The Pines Project
Project 6994

July 6, 2026

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1.0 Introduction and Project Description

The Pines Project proposes to install a water pipeline in both a designated Core Area and in General Habitat for sage grouse.

DGR Engineering, on behalf of Dry Prairie Regional Water Authority (DPRWA), proposes to install a new water pipeline south of Glasgow, Montana in Valley County. See Figure 1 in the enclosed Mitigation Plan (The Pines Project Location Map). The purpose of this project is to deliver potable water to customers both at The Pines housing development and customers along the pipeline route.

The Pines project includes a total of 32.56 miles of proposed pipeline installation with an accompanying pump station and ground storage reservoir. Of the 32.56 miles of proposed line, 18.68 miles occur within a Core Area, and 1.97 miles occur within General Habitat for sage grouse. The remaining 11.88 miles are located outside of designated sage grouse habitat. This Program review applies only to the 20.65 miles of proposed pipeline and associated infrastructure within designated sage grouse habitat.

Included in this project are a pump station to assist in pushing water uphill to the Pines development, and storage reservoir outside of the housing development to store water. Both pieces of infrastructure have a construction easement and permanent footprint included in this consultation.

To implement the project, DPRWA will excavate the trench, install the pipeline, backfill the excavated soil, and reclaim the site. Construction equipment may include excavators, trenching equipment, loaders, haul trucks, and support vehicles. Methods such as directional boring may be used where trenching is not possible (roads, waterways, etc). No new roads or the upgrading of existing roads is anticipated for this project.

1.1 Vegetative Community

The Montana Spatial Data Infrastructure Land Use/Land Cover database (MSDI LULC, 2023) classifies the vegetation within the direct footprint as Mat Saltbrush Shrubland, Greasewood Flat, Great Plains Wooded Draw and Ravine, Other Road, Great Plains Open Freshwater Depression Wetland, Open Water, Pasture/Hay, Cultivated Crops, Great Plains Mixed Grass Prairie, and Big Sagebrush Steppe. The habitat adjacent to the proposed project is classified similarly.

1.2 Sage Grouse Populations Affected

The project is located within four miles of seven active sage grouse leks in a Core Area. See Figure 2 (The Pines Project Lek Locations Map).

The Pines Project is 0.92 miles from the SG20-023 lek. The Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MTFWP) lek database shows the confirmed active lek was first counted in 1999. The high male count of the lek has varied from 8 to 63.

The Pines Project is 2.02 miles from the SG20-030 lek. The Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MTFWP) lek database shows the Confirmed Active lek was first counted in 1999. The high male count of the lek has varied from 1 to 19.

The Pines Project is 1.61 miles from the SG20-031 lek. The Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MTFWP) lek database shows the confirmed active lek was first counted in 1999. The high male count of the lek has varied from 11 to 80.

The Pines Project is 2.88 miles from the SG20-035 lek. The Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MTFWP) lek database shows the confirmed active lek was first counted in 1982. The high male count of the lek has varied from 3 to 26.

The Pines Project is 1.94 miles from the SG20-066 lek. The Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MTFWP) lek database shows the confirmed active lek was first counted in 1999. The high male count of the lek has varied from 1 to 25.

The Pines Project is 1.78 miles from the SG20-086 lek. The Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MTFWP) lek database shows the confirmed active lek was first counted in 1999. The high male count of the lek has varied from 1 to 36.

The Pines Project is 3.16 miles from the SG20-111 lek. The Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MTFWP) lek database shows the confirmed active lek was first counted in 2022. The high male count of the lek has varied from 2 to 5.

2.0 Executive Order 12-2015 Consistency Review

The Pines Project is located completely within both a Core Area and General Habitat. Stipulations recommended in Executive Order 12-2015 (EO) are designed to maintain existing sage grouse populations and levels of suitable sage grouse habitat, and guide development activities in Core Areas and General Habitat in a manner that sustains sage grouse abundance and distribution in Montana.

Delineated Core Areas are important for maintaining the abundance and distribution of sage grouse across Montana. Development scenarios in General Habitat are more flexible than in Core Areas but must still be designed and managed to maintain sage grouse populations and habitats.

2.1 Montana EO 12-2015 Stipulations That Apply to Projects in Designated Habitat

The entire Pines Project is in both a Core Area and General Habitat. Projects located in either a Core Area or General Habitat may be subject to the following stipulations per Executive Order 12-2015.

- **Surface Disturbance:** Surface disturbance will be limited to 5% of suitable sage grouse habitat averaged across the area affected by the project
- **Surface Occupancy:** Within 0.6 miles of the perimeter of active sage grouse leks in a Core Area or 0.25 miles of the perimeter of active sage grouse leks in General Habitat, there will be no surface occupancy (NSO) for new activities.
- **Seasonal Use:** (GH language) As authorized by permitting agency or agencies, activities will be prohibited from March 15 through July 15 within 2.0 miles of an active lek where breeding, nesting, and early brood-rearing habitat is present.
- **Seasonal Use:** (Core Area) As authorized by permitting agency or agencies, activities will be prohibited from March 15 through July 15 outside of the NSO perimeter of an active lek in Core Areas where breeding, nesting, and early brood-rearing habitat is present.

- **Vegetation Removal:** Limited to the minimum disturbance required by the project. All soil stripping and vegetation removal in suitable habitat will occur between July 16 and March 14 in areas within 4 miles of an active lek.
- **Noise:** New project noise levels, either individual or cumulative, should not exceed 10dBA (as measured by L50) above baseline noise at the perimeter of an active lek from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. during the breeding season (March 1 through July 15).

2.2 Deviations That Apply to The Pines Project

The entire Pines Project is within four miles of an active sage grouse lek in a Core Area. Therefore, activities associated with the Project are expected to deviate from Executive Order 12-2015 guidance and stipulations.

- **Surface Disturbance:** The Density Disturbance Calculation Tool (DDCT) for the project is 2.24%. This does not exceed the disturbance threshold allowed.
- **Seasonal Use:** The project will be operational year-round, and therefore will not be consistent with Executive Order 12-2015 for the seasonal use stipulations during the operational phase of the project.
- **Noise:** New project noise levels, either individual or cumulative, should not exceed 10dBA (as measured by L50) above baseline noise at the perimeter of an active lek from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. during the breeding season (March 1 through July 15).

2.3 Adherence to the Mitigation Hierarchy

The Pines Project is located within both a designated Core Area and General Habitat for sage grouse.

2.3.1 Avoidance

The Pines Project is located in both a Core Area and General Habitat. Therefore, it does not avoid impacts to sage grouse habitat.

2.3.2 Minimization

The Pines Project pipeline will be buried. Construction activities will be temporary and will be conducted completed outside of seasonal timing limitations for sage grouse. The project will also adhere to all seasonal timing limitations during construction period.

2.3.3 Reclamation

At the conclusion of the project, disturbed areas will be reseeded with a seed mix comprised of various native grass and shrub species. Reclamation will occur in October 2027.

3.0 Compensatory Mitigation

The Program ran the Habitat Quantification Tool (HQT) using HQT v1.1 December 2023. The HQT models direct and indirect impacts from a project, and overlays those impacts on the HQT Basemap to calculate the total amount of functional acres lost due to the project (Table 1). The HQT was calculated on June 16, 2026. The model was calculated with two years of construction, a 48-year operation phase, and the default 75 years of reclamation. See Figure 3 (The Pines Project HQT Map). The Raw HQT Score is 5,588.81 functional acres lost.

3.1.1 Habitat Quantification Tool Results

Table 1. Raw HQT Score Applied to The Pines Project.

Raw HQT Score - Preliminary Results			
Habitat Type	Project Phase	Impact Area	Raw HQT Score
Core Area	Construction	Direct Impact	29.76
		Indirect Impact	2,909.18
	Operations	Direct Impact	6.96
		Indirect Impact	2,311.70
	Reclamation	Direct Impact Only	283.40
	All Phases	Direct Impact	320.12
		Indirect Impact	5,220.88
General Habitat	Construction	Direct Impact	0.37
		Indirect Impact	47.04
	Operations	Direct Impact	0.00
		Indirect Impact	0.00
	Reclamation	Direct Impact Only	0.40
	All Phases	Direct Impact	0.77
		Indirect Impact	47.04
Total Raw HQT Score			5,588.81

3.1.2 Application of Policy Modifiers

The Mitigation System Policy Guidance v1.0 October 2018 document was applied to The Pines Project. The Policy outlines specific multipliers to incentivize consistency with the EO stipulations. Multipliers also ensure that mitigation is timely and effective throughout the life of the project.

Risk and The Reserve Account Contribution is accounted for through the Reserve Account multiplier. It is mandatory. Twenty percent of the Raw HQT Score is calculated and added to the Raw HQT Score. This accounts for the fact that impacts are estimated. The Reserve Account also functions as a shared insurance pool so that credits may be replaced if credit sites do not produce as many credits as predicted or credits are lost due to an Act of God, such as a wildfire.

Advance Payment of 10% is applied to the total Raw HQT Score for direct and indirect impacts for the life of the project where the proponent will not undertake permittee responsible mitigation and would make a contribution to the Stewardship Account.

Federal Net Gain of 10% is applied when the project involves a federal nexus. Calculations are based on only the portion of the project having a federal nexus.

Site-Specific Impacts are addressed through a multiplier of 10% for a Core Area, or 5% for General Habitat for each aspect of a proposed project that is not consistent with the EO 12-2015 stipulations during either construction or operations phase of a project.

Programmatic Multipliers for all phases of The Pines Project are shown on Table 2. The Raw HQT Score (5,588.81) was multiplied by 20% to calculate Reserve Account debits of 1,117.76. A 10% Advance Payment of 558.88 debits is added because here the State assumes responsibility to find offsets in that DPRWA opted to make a contribution instead of undertaking a permittee responsible mitigation project. Four seasonal use multipliers were added for the operations phase because the project will have permanent infrastructure impacting three leks for one structure and one lek for the other structure. Additionally, three noise multipliers were added because the noise from the pump station will impact three sage grouse leks in a Core Area. Finally, a net gain multiplier was added to all portions of the project occurring on federally managed land. The Policy Multipliers resulted in 3,776.20 debits.

Table 2. Policy Multipliers Applied to The Pines Project.

Policy Multiplier			
Policy Application (conversion from Functional Acres Lost to Debits)			
Multiplier Type	Specific Multiplier	Core Area	Debits
Programmatic Multipliers (Construction Operation and Reclamation)	Reserve Account (20%)	1	1,117.76
	Adv. Payment (10%)	1	558.88
Federal Portion Only	Net Gain	1	476.50
	Seasonal Use	4	927.46
	Noise	3	695.60
Total Policy Multiplier Debits			3,776.20

3.1.3 Total Mitigation Debit Obligation

The total mitigation debit obligation is based on the total Raw HQT Score (5,588.81) plus the total Policy Multiplier debits (3,776.20), applicable to The Pines Project (Table 3). The final total mitigation debit obligation for the project is 9,365.01 debits.

Table 3. Total Debits Applied to The Pines Project.

Total Debits	
Total Raw HQT Score	5,588.81
Total Policy Multiplier Debits	3,776.20
Total Debit Obligation	9,365.01

To fulfill the 9,365.01 mitigation debit obligation, DPRWA elected to make a contribution to the Stewardship Account. Credits obtained through the Stewardship Account are currently \$13 per debit. The total mitigation debit obligation of 9,365.01 is multiplied by \$13. The total is then discounted by 3% over the life of the project using a discounting method. The final total for The Pines Project is \$85,972.89 (Table 4).

Table 4. Total When Making Contribution to Stewardship Account.

Total	
Total Debit Obligation	9,365.01
Contribution After Applying Credit Discount Method	\$85,972.89

4.0 Mechanism Selected to Fulfill the Compensatory Mitigation Obligation

DPRWA has committed to a compensatory mitigation obligation of \$85,972.89 to be deposited in the Montana Sage Grouse Stewardship Fund (see MCA 87-5-911((1)(b)(ii)). Funds would be deposited after confirmation of approval for permits but before construction begins.

The MSGOT and Program would disburse these funds through the Stewardship Account granting process to conserve habitat and sage-grouse populations through offsite mitigation. Any benefit of onsite mitigation would be negated until such activities were completed and disturbed lands fully reclaimed. The Pines Project is in the North Central Service Area. MSGOT will be encouraged to apply these funds to mitigation within the project's same Service Area so that greater conservation benefits to sage-grouse can be secured offsite.

Figure 1

6994_The Pines Project Location

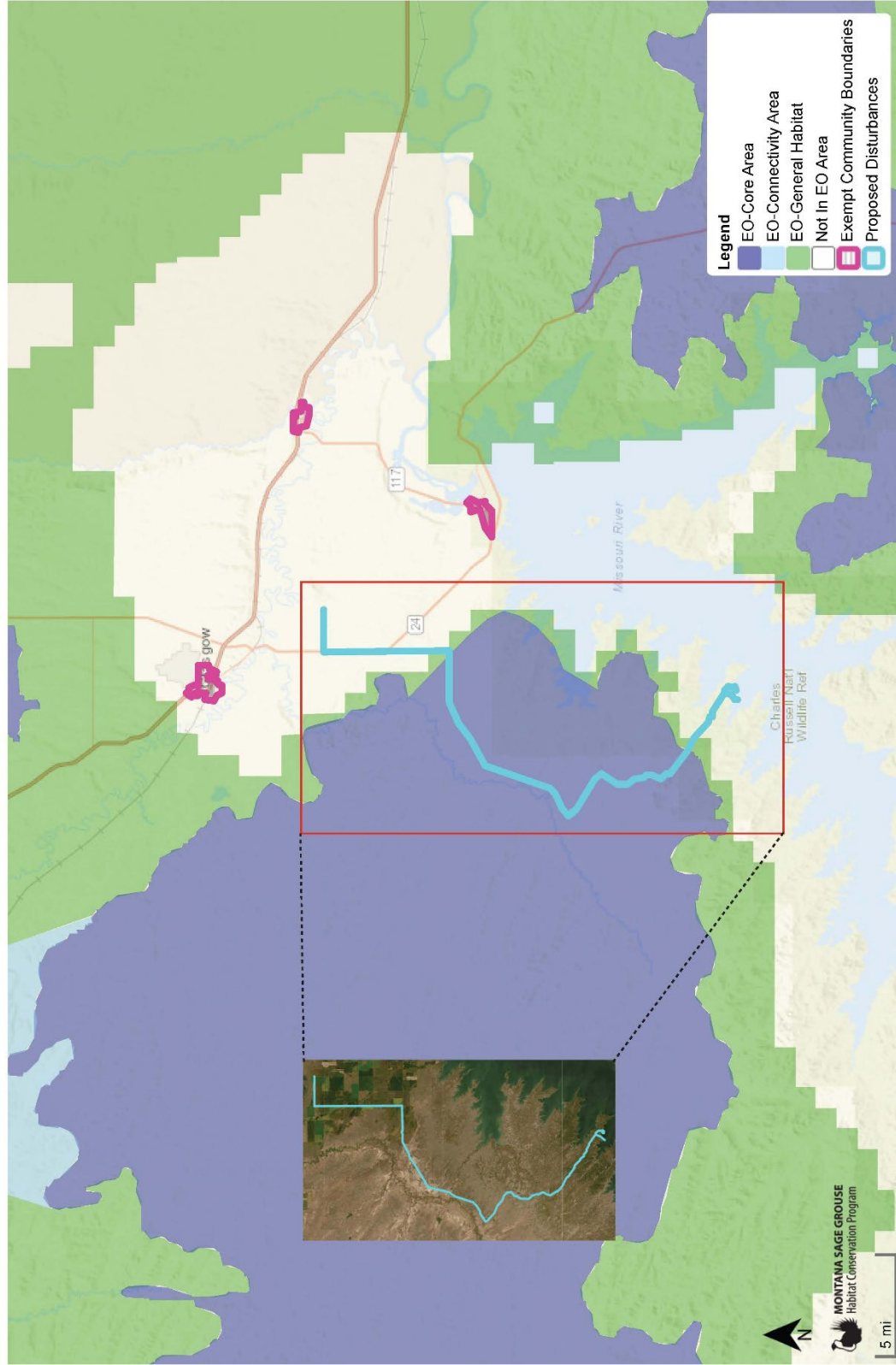


Figure 2

6994_The Pines Project Lek Location

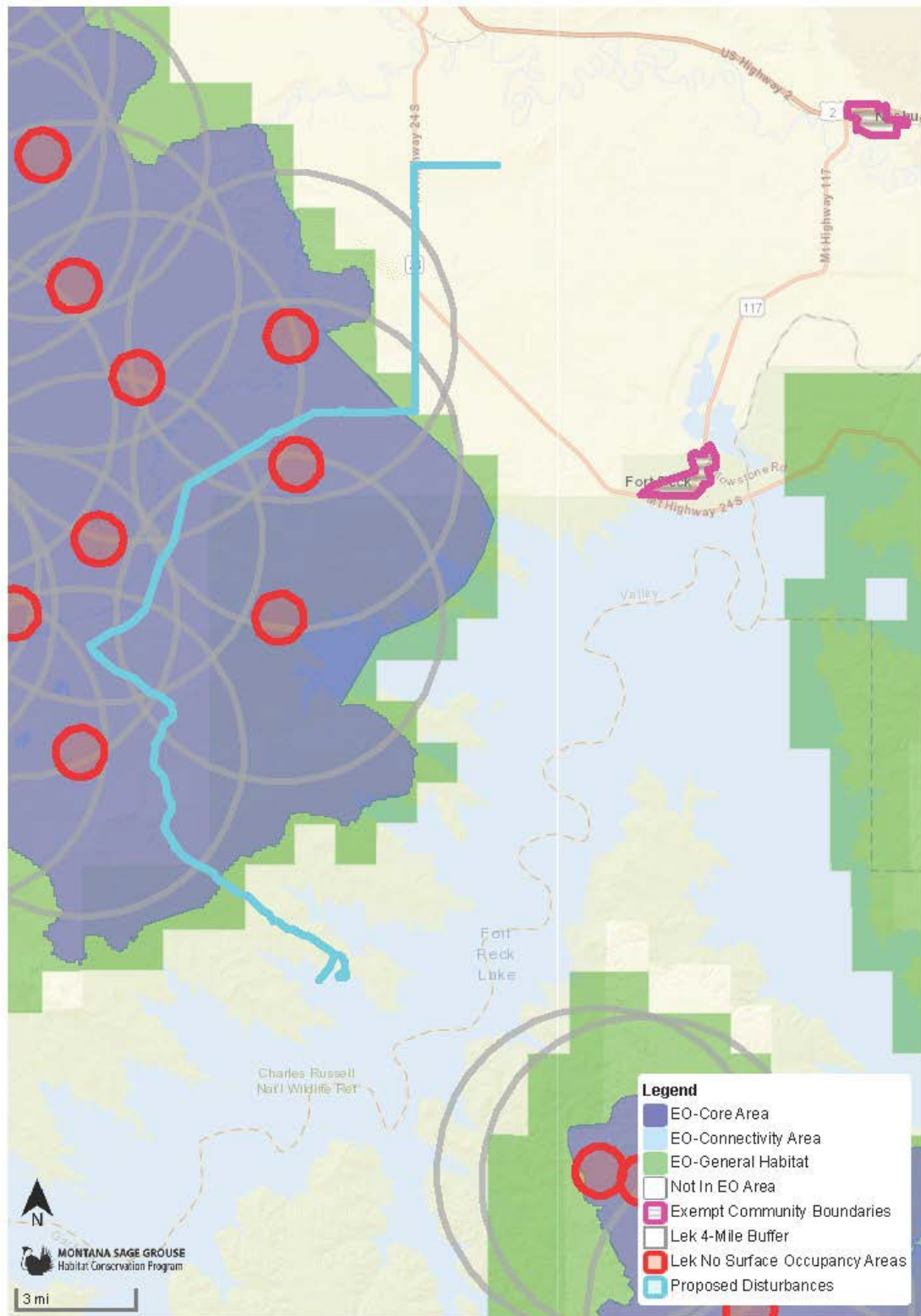
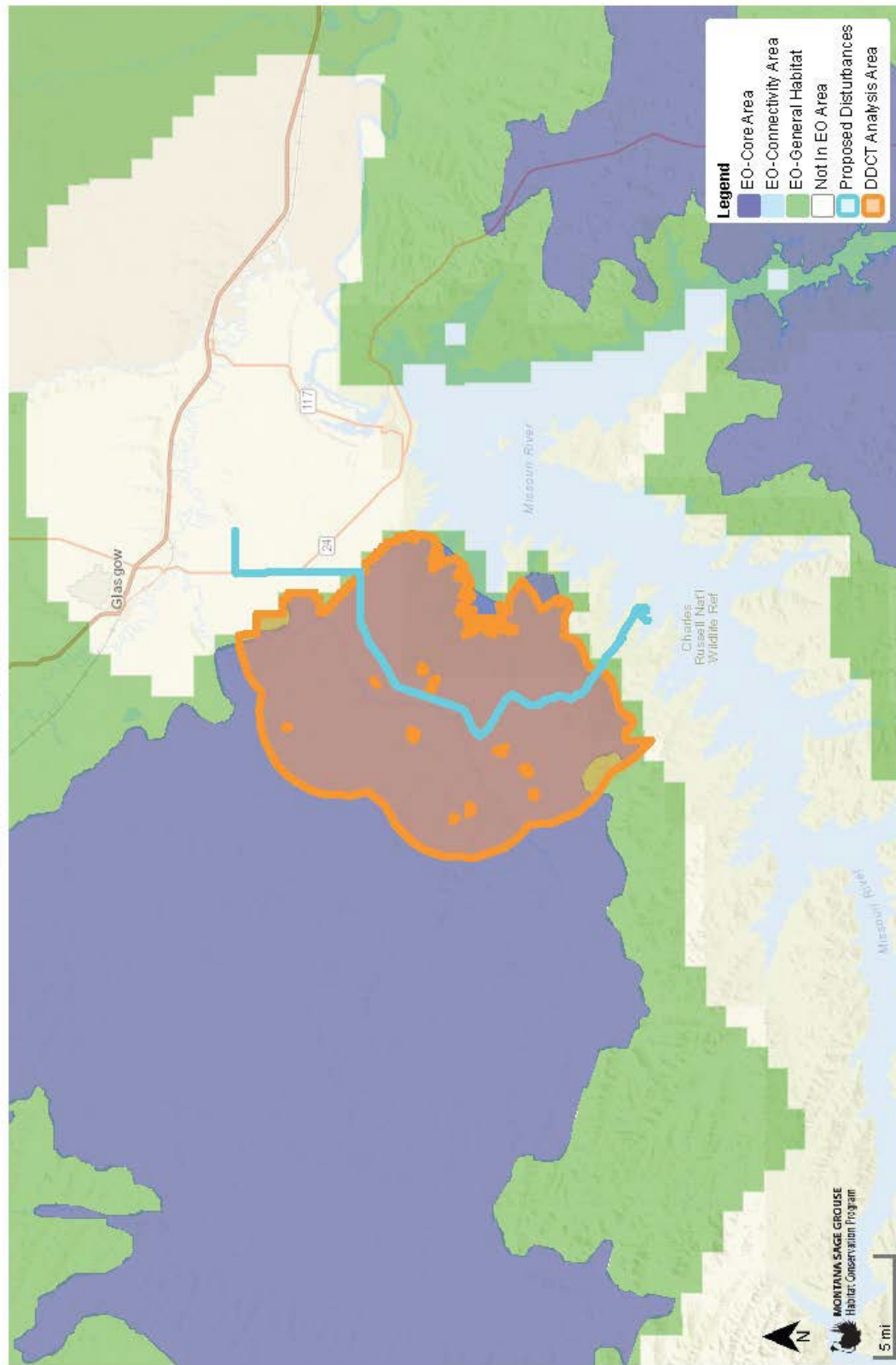


Figure 3

6994_The Pines Project DDCT Map



Density Disturbance Calculation Tool Explanation and Results

[#6994] The Pines Project

Created on 07/01/2026 3:30 PM

Project stage changed from Due Diligence to Information Request.

Results are based on the data submitted by the proponent. DDCT calculation results are as follows.

DDCT Analysis Area	Proposed Disturbances Area	Existing + Proposed Disturbances Area within DDCT Analysis Area	DDCT Result	New disturbed acres	Affected Leks within the DDCT Analysis Area
118,600.23 acres	115.07 acres	2,659.53 acres	2.24%	83.47 acres	11

Result calculated on 07/01/2026 3:30 PM

Analysis Process and General Definitions

Existing Disturbances: All surface disturbances existing on the ground prior to any Proposed Disturbances that would be created by a new project.

Preliminary Disturbances: All surface disturbances associated with this project, as submitted to the Projects On-line Tool.

Total Preliminary Disturbance Acres: The number of acres contained within the entire polygon(s) delineating the disturbance area of this proponent's project.

Previously Proposed Disturbances: All Preliminary Disturbances proposed by other people prior to the current Preliminary Disturbance being submitted. Once a Preliminary Disturbance is finalized, the disturbance becomes an Existing Disturbance.

DDCT Analysis Area Acres: The number of acres within a polygon created by the following steps:

1. Map the *Preliminary Disturbance* polygon submitted by proponent.
2. Classify the habitat where proposed *Preliminary Disturbance* would occur: core area, general habitat, connectivity area, outside the Executive Order (none of the above). May include unsuitable habitat.
3. Buffer *Preliminary Disturbance/s* that would only occur in core habitat by four miles.
4. Look to see if the 4-mile buffer includes any active leks.
5. If yes, buffer those leks by four miles and add the acres to the polygon.
6. Remove any portion of the polygon that is not classified as core habitat so the DDCT Analysis Area only contains acres in core habitat.
7. Finalize the polygon. This is the DDCT Analysis Area polygon.
8. Calculate the number of acres in the DDCT analysis area polygon.

Total Disturbed Acres in DDCT Analysis Area: The total number of acres of disturbance within the DDCT Analysis Area polygon: all Existing Disturbances + Previously Proposed Disturbances + current Preliminary Disturbance.

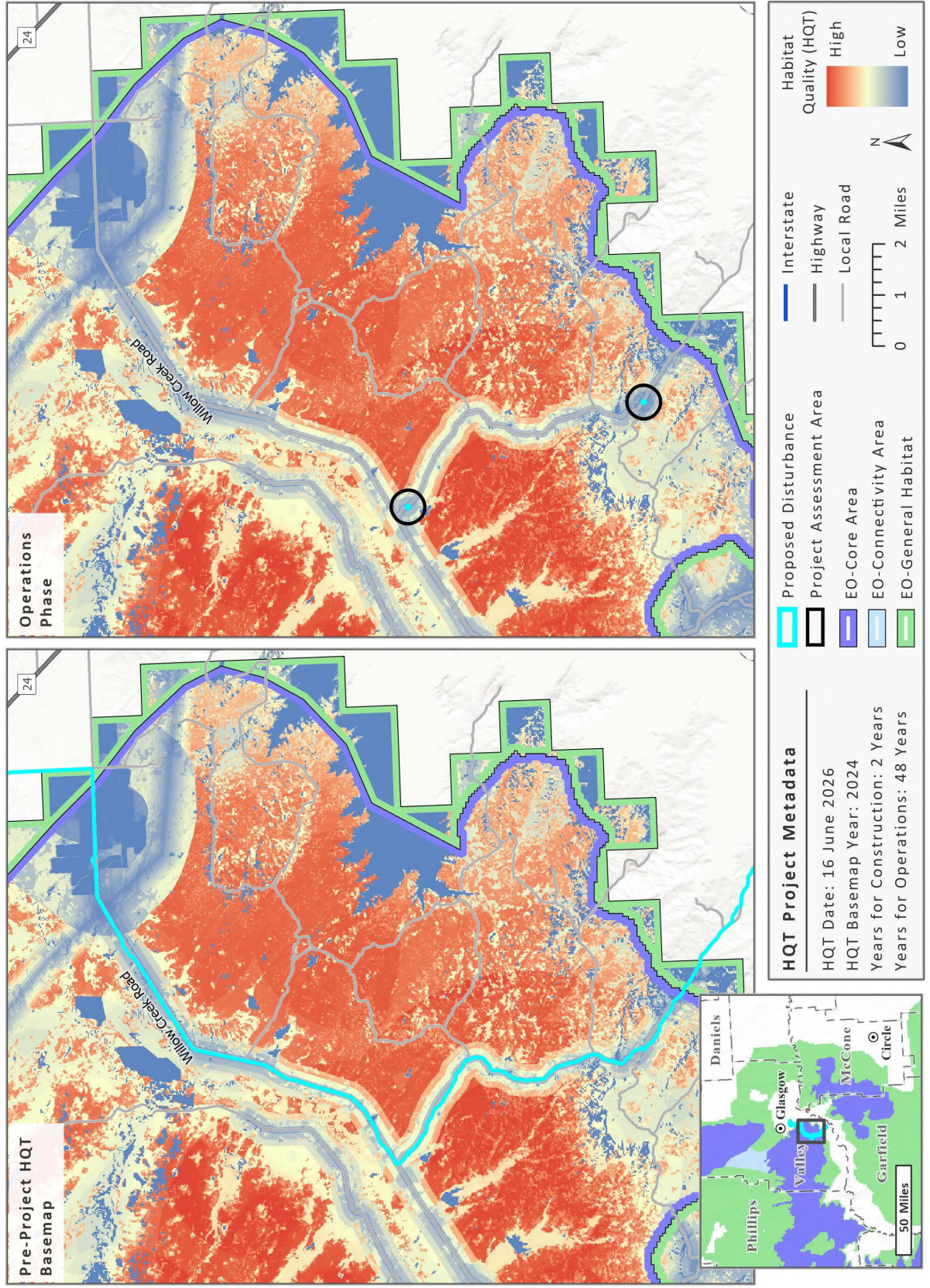
DDCT Result: The Total Disturbed in DDCT Analysis Area acres divided by the DDCT Analysis Area acres x 100 to determine the percent disturbance which is compared to Executive Order 12-2015 5% disturbance threshold for core areas.

New Disturbed Acres: the total of new ground disturbance as a result of the project. This is portion of Preliminary Disturbances that do not overlap with already Existing Disturbances or Previously Proposed Disturbances. Acres are calculated from the resulting polygon, which is all new ground disturbance.

Affected Leks within DDCT Analysis Area: The total number of leks where any portion of the No Surface Occupancy area is within the DDCT Analysis Area.

Lek Distances: The shortest distance between the Preliminary Disturbance and any active leks with 4 miles of the Preliminary Disturbance.

6994 - The Pines Project



10 Appendix E – Stabilization and Revegetation Plan

Reclamation Plan
FOR
DRY PRAIRIE REGIONAL WATER AUTHORITY
THE PINES PROJECT

Overview

Dry Prairie Regional Water Authority (DPRWA) proposes construction of approximately 33 miles of potable water transmission pipeline and two facilities, a pump station and a below grade concrete GSR, to the Pines Development area on Fort Peck Lake in Valley County Montana. 15.1 miles of the pipeline and the two facilities are proposed to be built on property administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). In addition, 11.4 miles of pipeline will be constructed on privately owned land, 6.1 miles will be constructed on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) land, and 0.2 miles will be constructed on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) land. The project will provide reliable potable water service to existing and future customers in southern Valley County, Montana. Portions of the project will cross BLM administered lands within the HiLine Resource Management Plan (RMP) planning area. Due to regional geography and the lack of alternative access corridors, no feasible alternate routes were identified.

The plan is written to align with HiLine RMP Appendix M. The reclamation plan procedures are intended to apply to all publicly administered lands. Temporary erosion and sediment controls will be installed immediately following initial ground disturbance and maintained until permanent stabilization is achieved. Permanent erosion controls and final grading will be completed promptly after trench backfill, followed by seeding during approved seeding season. The plan includes slope-based water diversion berm (slope breaker) spacing and defines timelines for installation and maintenance of temporary and permanent controls, as well as monitoring and corrective actions.

A communications and electrical improvements project by NorVal Electric and Nemont is expected to occur on a similar schedule as DPRWA's Pines Project. If the NorVal/Nemont project is completed after this project, DPRWA will not be responsible for long-term reclamation of areas within the DPRWA ROW that were disturbed by the NorVal/Nemont contractor. DPRWA is also not responsible for disturbances outside the approved ROW.

Reclamation Success Criteria

Erosion will be equal to or less than similar adjacent undisturbed areas. Soil stability will be assessed by looking for indicators of accelerated erosion such as rills, waterflow patterns, gullies, pedestalling, trenchline subsidence, and/or slumping/sliding. Within 2 growing seasons of the initial construction, vegetative cover will be at least 30% or more of that on similar adjacent undisturbed areas of desirable species. Desirable species are those species specified in the seed mix. Within 3 to 5 years, vegetative cover will be at least 70% of that on similar adjacent undisturbed areas. If these performance measures are not met, DPRWA in coordination with the

Authorized Officer, will implement further reclamation actions - such as re-seeding, adding soil amendments, and/or installing additional erosion or sediment control measures.

Project Description and Construction Methods

The project includes installation of buried transmission main at an approximate depth of 96 inches. The pipeline will be constructed using an excavator with approximately 4'-wide bucket. All trenching activities will remain within the 30' construction right-of-way (ROW). Permanent surface facilities include an above-grade pump station and a below-grade GSR. The permanent ROW for the pump station and GSR will be approximately 0.5 acres, with a temporary construction ROW of approximately 1 acre. The pump station will be constructed off site and set in place when the below grade concrete foundation and clear well are constructed. Construction of the GSR will be completed on site. Concrete for both the GSR and pump station will be delivered to the site from a local ready mix concrete plant. Construction on BLM lands is expected to generally proceed using the following methods, but may vary by contractor or site constraints:

- DPRWA will provide survey staking and marking of limits of disturbance; installation of highly visible boundary flagging/signage at the construction ROW edges and at sensitive resource buffers. Center line stakes and cut stakes will be provided for pipeline construction.
- Temporary silt fencing will be installed around the pump station and GSR site prior to any construction taking place.
- Minimum ground disturbance will occur during pipe stringing and assembly above ground.
- Vegetation clearing/grubbing is limited to the minimum necessary for safe construction and access.
- Topsoil will be stripped from the facility sites and from the pipeline trench to the depth present.
- Trench excavation will occur at the same time as the topsoil is stripped from the trench area. Subgrade will be stockpiled separately from the topsoil. Trench line dewatering will be performed as needed using discharge controls to prevent erosion and sedimentation. Dewatering will be completed using a trash pump and diffuser.
- Trench backfill and rough grading will occur immediately after pipeline installation and below grade facility construction to restore drainage patterns and prevent concentrated flow along the ROW. Trench backfill will be compacted to 85% standard proctor. Compaction testing will be completed periodically throughout construction. Topsoil will be placed following placement of subsoil and will not be compacted. Frozen soil, soil mixed with snow, or saturated soil will not be used when backfilling.
- Temporary erosion and sediment controls will be installed immediately following initial disturbance and after trench backfill on steep slopes, ephemeral drainageways, or riparian areas.
- Pipeline installed across streams and wetlands will be installed using horizontal directional drilling.

- Final grading and installation of permanent erosion controls; seedbed preparation and seeding during approved seeding season; mulch or soil surface protection where required.
- DPRWA will perform post-construction monitoring, maintenance, and corrective actions until reclamation success is achieved.

Supervision and Inspection

Prior to construction, DPRWA will perform a preconstruction survey to document existing site conditions to help establish a baseline for revegetation. Survey results will be documented in a field journal and digital pictures and video. During construction, DPRWA staff will provide daily supervision and inspection to monitor the construction of the project as well as erosion control installation and maintenance provided by the contractor. DPRWA staff will meet with the construction foreman daily to discuss activities that violate applicable conditions and will document compliance, deficiencies and corrective actions. DPRWA staff will have stop-work authority for reclamation plan compliance. All temporary erosion and sediment control measures will be inspected at the following frequencies:

- At least once daily in areas of active construction or equipment operation.
- Weekly in areas without active work.
- Within 24 hours after a significant rainfall event of 0.5 inches or greater.

Any ineffective erosion control or sediment containment measures will be repaired or replaced as promptly as practicable to prevent soil loss.

Stabilization and Rehabilitation

Immediately following ground disturbance, temporary erosion and sediment control measures will be installed, including water diversion berms and sediment barriers to ensure sediment stays captured within the ROW and not onto adjacent undisturbed areas. Temporary controls will remain in place until permanent stabilization is achieved. Within 20 days following trench backfill, final grading and permanent erosion control installation will be completed.

DPRWA will use the following default diversion berm spacing (temporary and permanent) on disturbed upland slopes. Closer spacing will be used where necessary to avoid excessive erosion or where field conditions warrant. DPRWA proposes to use earthen water diversion berms as permanent slope breakers.

Ground Slope (%)	Default Spacing (feet)
5–15	300
>15–30	200
>30	100

At a minimum, install diversion berms at the base of slopes that exceed 5% and at the spacing directed in the table above. Direct outfalls to stable vegetated areas or energy dissipators positioned to prevent sediment delivery to sensitive resources. Diversion berms will be installed across the trench and extend 5' on each side of the trench.

No more than 300' of trench will remain open at any one time. Trenches will be backfilled completely at the end of each day. Water diversion berms, silt fence, and straw waddles may be used as temporary erosion control and sediment containment on the pipeline trench and any disturbance areas. However, silt fence and straw waddles will not be used as permanent erosion control. Earthen water diversion berms and revegetation are planned to be used as the only permanent erosion control, except for areas with slopes greater than 20% which will require erosion control blankets.

Wetlands and streams will be crossed via directional drilling methods and therefore, will not be disturbed. Bores will extend to a minimum of 50' on either side of the waterway or wetland.

Minimal grading will occur on facility sites. Silt fences will be used for temporary erosion control, and seeding will be used for permanent control.

Seeding and Revegetation

Disturbed areas will be seeded with BLM-approved native seed mixes as provided in Exhibit A. Seeding will occur during approved season, generally from October 1 through May 15, unless otherwise approved by BLM. Seeding will not occur on frozen soil.

Seeding will be completed using a drill with a cultipacker during the seeding season. Broadcast seeding will only be employed where the terrain does not allow the use of a drill. Broadcast seeding will be completed at double the rate prescribed for drill seeding. Cultivation prior to seeding will only be performed where the ground surface is too compacted to promote strong seed to soil contact. Seed rates are specified on a pure live seed (PLS) basis and will be certified weed free by the contractor.

DPRWA will implement invasive and noxious weed prevention and control measures. Equipment will arrive on site clean and will be cleaned as needed to prevent introduction/spread. Disturbed areas will be monitored during construction and after seeding. If treatment is needed, DPRWA will coordinate with BLM on acceptable methods. Herbicides/pesticides will not be used in or within 100 feet of wetlands or waterbodies except as allowed by the appropriate authority.

Post Construction Operation, Maintenance, and Annual Reporting

A 30-foot ROW will be maintained for operation and maintenance activities. Any future ground disturbance associated with maintenance will be reclaimed to pre-disturbance conditions using the same standards described herein.

DPRWA will submit annual reports to BLM until all Reclamation Success Criterion, as described above, have been met. Reports will describe the achievement of meeting the Reclamation Success Criterion or progress being made towards meeting them, and any implemented or proposed corrective actions taken or to be taken.

Reports will include maps of all monitoring locations and photos. GPS coordinates from each monitoring location will be stored and used to produce maps in the annual monitoring reports. Photos should be named and stored in a manner that ties photos to monitoring data and allows observers to relocate monitoring locations each year.

Exhibit A – Seed Mix

The following seed mix is proposed for all constructed areas not currently in cropland. The mix shall be approved by BLM prior to seeding.

BLM Land Seed Mix:

Plant Species	PLS lbs/ac
Prairie Coneflower	0.2
Needle-and-Thread Grass	3.0
Green Needlegrass	3.0
Bluebunch Wheatgrass	2.5
Western Wheatgrass	6.0
Inland Saltgrass	5.0
Alkali Sacaton	1.0
Wyoming Big Sagebrush	3.0
Quickguard Sterile Triticale	20.0

Private Land and other Public Lands Seed Mix:

Plant Species	PLS lbs/ac
Prairie Coneflower	0.2
Needle-and-Thread Grass	3.0
Green Needlegrass	3.0
Bluebunch Wheatgrass	2.5
Western Wheatgrass	6.0
Inland Saltgrass	5.0
Quickguard Sterile Triticale	20.0

The contractor is required to provide a seed test analysis and seeding plan prior to completing the work.