

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	PT Energy Transitions Environmental Survey LUL
Proposed Implementation Date:	Winter 2022/2023
Proponent:	PT Energy Transitions LLC.
Location:	T2N-R37E-Sec 16, T2N-R38E-Sec 12 & 16, T3N-R37E-Sec 16 & 36, T3N-R38E-Sec 36, T4N-R36E-Sec 16, T4N-R37E-Sec 36, T5N-R35E-Sec 24 & 36, T5N-R36E-Sec 16 & 36, T5N-R37E-Sec 16 & 36, T6N-R36E-Sec 36, T6N-R37E-Sec 36, T4N-R40E-Sec 16, T5N-R38E-Sec 10, 16 & 36, T5N-R39E-Sec 16 & 36, T6N-R38E-Sec 36, T2N-R39E-Sec 16 & 18, T2N-R40E-Sec 16 & 36, T2N-R41E-Sec 5, T3N-R39E-Sec 36, T3N-R40E-Sec 36, T4N-R40E-Sec 36
County:	Treasure and Rosebud

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

PT Energy Transitions (Henceforth referred to as proponent) has requested a Land Use License from the DNRC Southern and Eastern Land Office to conduct archeological, wetland, avian use, wildlife, geotechnical and related environmental surveys upon the tracts of State Trust Land listed above. Also, vehicle and foot access across and upon these tracts has been requested.

The requested time frame for these surveys, begins in the winter months of 2022 and extend through the end of 2025. The purpose of these surveys is to determine potential for wind energy development in the area, and to support agency reviews of potential future development.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:
Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

The proponent has submitted a DS-401 application for Land Use License to the DNRC Trust Land Management Division. Due to the limited impact of the requested use, no public comment has been sought.

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

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks; Wildlife Survey Guidelines
Montana State Historic Preservation Office, in conjunction with Montana DNRC State Archeologist

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

No Action Alternative: Survey would not be conducted upon or across these tracts of State Trust Land. Potential for future development of wind resources may not be pursued upon Trust Land. Survey information may not be completed to the extent necessary. Increased revenue to the School Trust would not be realized from the issuance of the requested LUL.

Action Alternative: A Land Use License would be granted to the proponent for access to and across these tracts of State Trust Land for the purposes of environmental surveys and studies. The proponent would compensate the associated trusts for this use.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

The requested survey covers a wide area spread across two counties and 31 separate tracts of State Trust Land. The geology, and soil structures will vary greatly across the requested tracts. Due to the limited impact of these surveys and studies no significant impact to geology or soils are expected from these activities.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

Based on the survey and studies requested, it is unlikely there would be any measurable effects to surface or ground water.

6. AIR QUALITY:

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

No impacts expected

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

Most of the tracts requested for this survey are generally located within Great Plains Mixed Grass Prairie and Sagebrush Steppe. Native species on site include Western Wheatgrass (*Agropyron smithii*), Green Needlegrass (*Stipa viridula*), Needle and Thread (*Stipa comata*), Prairie Junegrass (*Koeleria pyramidata*), Blue Grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), Sandberg Bluegrass (*Poa secunda*), Big Sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), Silver Sagebrush (*Artemisia cana*), and various forb species. Invasive species

could include Downy Brome (*Bromus tectorum*) and Japanese Brome (*Bromus japonicus*), Fringed Sagewort (*Artemisia frigida*), Broom Snakeweed (*Gutierrezia sarothrae*) and others.

No significant impact to vegetation is expected from the issuance of this license.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

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

No significant impact to terrestrial, avian, or aquatic wildlife is expected through the issuance of this license. Wildlife surveys would be a part of this license, the proponent would be required to follow all Montana FWP guidelines and regulations for wildlife surveys.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

A search was conducted using the Montana Natural Heritage Program database to identify point observations of species of concern in the area of the proposed activity. The following species were noted within the general project area. While these species may be present in and around the proposed activity, no significant impact to these species is expected.

Mammals

Black-tailed Prairie Dog - *Cynomys ludovicianus*

Fringed Myotis - *Myotis thysanodes*

Hoary Bat - *Lasiurus cinereus*

Little Brown Myotis - *Myotis lucifugus*

Long-eared Myotis - *Myotis evotis*

Long-legged Myotis - *Myotis Volans*

Spotted Bat - *Euderma maculatum*

Swift Fox - *Vulpes velox*

Townsend's Big-eared Bat - *Corynorhinus townsendii*

Birds

American White Pelican - *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*

Bald Eagle - *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

Black-billed Cuckoo - *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*

Bobolink - *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*

Brewer's Sparrow - *Spizella breweri*

Burrowing Owl - *Athene cunicularia*

Caspian Tern - *Hydroprogne caspia*

Evening Grosbeak - *Coccothraustes vespertinus*

Ferruginous Hawk - *Buteo regalis*

Golden Eagle - *Aquila chrysaetos*

Great Blue Heron - *Ardea Herodias*

Greater Sage-Grouse - *Centrocercus urophasianus*

Lewis's Woodpecker - *Melanerpes lewis*

Loggerhead Shrike - *Lanius ludovicianus*
Long-billed Curlew - *Numenius americanus*
Mountain Plover - *Charadrius montanus*
Northern Goshawk - *Accipiter gentilis*
Pinyon Jay - *Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*
Red-headed Woodpecker - *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*
Sharp-tailed Grouse - *Tympanuchus phasianellus*
White-faced Ibis - *Plegadis chihi*

Reptiles

Greater Short-horned Lizard - *Phrynosoma hernandesi*
Plains Hog-nosed Snake - *Heterodon nasicus*
Spiny Softshell - *Apalone spinifera*
Western Milksnake - *Lampropeltis gentilis*

Amphibians

Great Plains Toad - *Anaxyrus cognatus*
Northern Leopard Frog - *Lithobates pipiens*

Fish

Blue Sucker - *Cycleptus elongatus*
Sauger - *Sander canadensis*

Parts of the proposed activity are located within Greater Sage Grouse general habitat. Surveys of this type are generally exempt activities under EO-12-2015 and EO-21-2015. Eastern Land Office Staff contacted the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program to confirm this. The proponent will be required to follow all applicable guidelines and regulations regarding these surveys.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

Issuing the requested license will allow the proponent to conduct the appropriate cultural surveys on these tracts and the surrounding area. Any site findings will be reported to the DNRC staff archeologist for his review and coordination with MSHPO.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

No significant impacts expected

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

None.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

None.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

No human and health safety risks were identified as a result of the proposed project other than the typical occupational hazards that coincide with these types of surveys.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

The proposed project is not expected to alter current or future industrial, commercial, and agricultural activities and production.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

The proposed project would have the ability to create or move jobs to the area for at least a temporary basis. The number of jobs is unknown at this time

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

This project could increase tax revenues at least temporarily. The amount is unknown at this time.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services.

No impact.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

No known zoning or management plans exist for this area.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

No impact.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

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

No impact.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

No impact.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

No impact.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

The trust would receive revenue in the form of a land use license fee for the requested use. That fee will be determined at a later date...

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Scott Aye	Date: 11-7-2022
	Title: ELO Land Program Manager	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

After reviewing the Environmental Assessment, I have selected the Action Alternative, to issue a land use license for access across and upon these State Trust Land parcels for the purpose of environmental, cultural, and geotechnical surveys. I believe this alternative can be implemented in a manner that is consistent with the long-term sustainable natural resource management of the area and generate revenue for the associated trusts.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

I conclude all identified potential impacts can be mitigated by utilizing the standards and procedures associated with projects of this type and no significant impacts will occur as a result of implementing the selected alternative.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS More Detailed EA No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Chris Pileski
	Title: ELO Area Manager
Signature: /s/ Chris Pileski	
Date: 11-29-2022	