



Region 4 Headquarters  
4600 Giant Springs Road  
Great Falls, MT 59401  
(406) 454-5840  
2/7/2023

Raina Leavens  
Cascade County Planner  
121 4<sup>th</sup> St. N, Suite 2 H/I  
Great Falls, MT 59401

RE: Special Use Permit Application #003-2023

Dear Raina Leavens,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments regarding the Special Use Permit Application #003-2023 for a gravel pit on parcel #4715200.

We recommend that you ensure adequate Best Management Practices are employed to control runoff and prevent sediment from reaching the Sun River. Because existing agricultural practices appear to result in irrigation returns to the Sun River from this general area, it is important to ensure that sediment and stormwater from the gravel pit be prevented from reaching the Sun River in order to maintain existing water quality. Further, it is important to maintain a vegetated buffer between the gravel pit and the Sun River to prevent the gravel pit from being captured by the river if lateral migration occurs.

The legal description for this Special Use Permit Application intersects a golden eagle Species Occurrence. Golden eagle is a Species of Concern (SOC) in Montana and a BLM and USFS Sensitive Species. This species is federally protected by The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940 (16 U.S.C. 668-668c) and The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (6 U.S.C. §§ 703-712, July 3, 1918, as amended 1936, 1960, 1968, 1969, 1974, 1978, 1986 and 1989). We recommend following the guidelines outlined in these acts, as well as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recommendations on the Golden Eagle Conservation Website ([https://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/migbirds/species/birds/golden\\_eagle/](https://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/migbirds/species/birds/golden_eagle/)). We would also note that active raptor nests and all inactive eagle nests should be identified prior to development. FWP recommends a 0.5-mile buffer around any active or inactive Golden Eagle nest to protect birds from human disturbances associated with development.

Please refer to the Montana Natural Heritage Program for additional details on Species Occurrences. If you have further questions specific to potential threats to wildlife resources at the proposed gravel pit site, please contact Nongame Wildlife Biologist, Shannon Hilty, (406-590-3426).

Sincerely,

Jason Rhoten  
Acting Regional Supervisor