

FROM DIRECTOR - RECLAMATION



Jack Dalrymple, Governor
Mark A. Zimmerman, Director

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Date: _____

Action: _____

Info. Only: _____

Info & File: _____

Public Service Commission
State Capitol
Bismarck, ND 58505-0480

RE: Falkirk Mining Company Renew and Revise Surface Coal Mining Permit NAFK-9503

Dear Sir or Madam:

The North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department (the Department) has reviewed the above referenced proposal from the Falkirk Mining Company to revise reclamation plans on lands located in Sections 7,8,18,19, and 30, T145N, R82W, Sections 10-15, 21-28, 33-35 and 36 T145N, R83W, Sections 4,5, and 9 T144N, R83W, McLean County.

Our agency scope of authority and expertise covers recreation and biological resources (in particular rare plants and ecological communities). The project as defined does not affect state park lands that we manage or Land and Water Conservation Fund recreation projects that we coordinate.

The North Dakota Natural Heritage biological conservation database has been reviewed to determine if any plant or animal species of concern or other significant ecological communities are known to occur within an approximate one-mile radius of the project area. Based on this review, several significant ecological communities have been identified within or adjacent to the project area. Please see attached spreadsheet and map for more specific information on this occurrence. We defer further comments regarding animal species to the North Dakota Game and Fish Department and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

Because this information is not based on a comprehensive inventory, there may be species of concern or otherwise significant ecological communities in the area that are not represented in the database. The lack of data for any project area cannot be construed to mean that no significant features are present. The absence of data may indicate that the project area has not been surveyed, rather than confirm that the area lacks natural heritage resources.

The Department recommends that the project be accomplished with minimal impacts and that all efforts be made to ensure that critical habitats not be disturbed in the project area to help secure rare species conservation in North Dakota. Regarding any reclamation efforts, we recommend that any impacted areas be revegetated with species native to the project area.

We appreciate your commitment to rare plant, animal and ecological community conservation, management and inter-agency cooperation to date. For additional information please contact Kathy Duttonhefner (701-328-5370 or kgduttonhefner@nd.gov) of our staff. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposed project.

Sincerely,

Jesse Hanson, Coordinator
Planning and Natural Resources Division

R.USNDNHI*2010-23
KD1/24/11DL3.7.11

North Dakota Natural Heritage Inventory
Rare Animal and Plant Species and Significant Ecological Communities

State Scientific Name	State Common Name	State Rank	Global Rank	Federal Status	Township Range Section	County	Last Observation	Estimated Representation Accuracy	Precision
<i>Stipa comata</i> - <i>bouteloua</i> <i>gracilis/carex filifolia</i> prairie	Needle-and-thread Mixed Grass Prairie	S2	GNR		144N083W - 22; 144N083W - 15; 144N083W - 16	McLean	2007-07-19	Medium	
<i>Shepherdia argenta</i> shrubland	Buffaloberry Shrubland	S4	GNR		144N083W - 20; 144N083W - 17; 144N083W - 18	McLean	2007-07-19	Medium	
<i>Stipa comata</i> - <i>bouteloua</i> <i>gracilis/carex filifolia</i> prairie	Needle-and-thread Mixed Grass Prairie	S2	GNR		144N083W - 29; 144N083W - 17; 144N083W - 20	McLean	2007-07-19	Low	
<i>Symphoricarpos</i> <i>occidentalis</i> shrubland	Buckbrush Shrubland	S4	GNR		144N083W - 17; 144N083W - 20; 144N083W - 18	McLean	2007-07-19	Medium	
<i>Pascopyrum smithii</i> - <i>bouteloua</i> <i>gracilis/carex filifolia</i> prairie	Western Wheatgrass Prairie	S3S4	GNR		144N083W - 13; 144N083W - 23; 144N083W - 10; 144N083W - 14; 144N083W - 11	McLean	2007-07-19	Medium	
<i>Fraxinus</i> <i>pennsylvanica</i> - (<i>ulmus</i> <i>americana</i>)/ <i>prunus</i> <i>virginiana</i> woodland	Green Ash Upland Woodland	S3	GNR		144N083W - 10; 144N083W - 14; 144N083W - 13; 144N083W - 02; 144N083W - 11; 144N083W - 03	McLean	2007-07-19	Medium	
<i>Shepherdia argenta</i> shrubland	Buffaloberry Shrubland	S4	GNR		144N083W - 22; 144N083W - 15; 144N083W - 16	McLean	39282	Medium	

North Dakota Natural Heritage Inventory Biological and Conservation Data Disclaimer

The quantity and quality of data collected by the North Dakota Natural Heritage Inventory are dependent on the research and observations of many individuals and organizations. In most cases, this information is not the result of comprehensive or site-specific field surveys; many natural areas in North Dakota have never been thoroughly surveyed, and new species are still being discovered. For these reasons, the Natural Heritage Inventory cannot provide a definite statement on the presence, absence, or condition of biological elements in any part of North Dakota. Natural Heritage data summarize the existing information known at the time of the request. Our data are continually upgraded and information is continually being added to the database. This data should never be regarded as final statements on the elements or areas that are being considered, nor should they be substituted for on-site surveys.

Estimated Representation Accuracy

Value that indicates the approximate percentage of the Element Occurrence Representation (EO Rep) that was observed to be occupied by the species or community (versus buffer area added for locational uncertainty). Use of estimated representation accuracy provides a common index for the consistent comparison of EO reps, thus helping to ensure that aggregated data are correctly analyzed and interpreted.

Very high (>95%)

High (>80%, <= 95%)

Medium (>20%, <= 80%)

Low (>0%, <= 20%)

Unknown

(null) - Not assessed

Precision

A single-letter code for the precision used to map the Element Occurrence (EO) on a U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' (or 15') topographic quadrangle map, based on the previous Heritage methodology in which EOs were located on paper maps using dots.

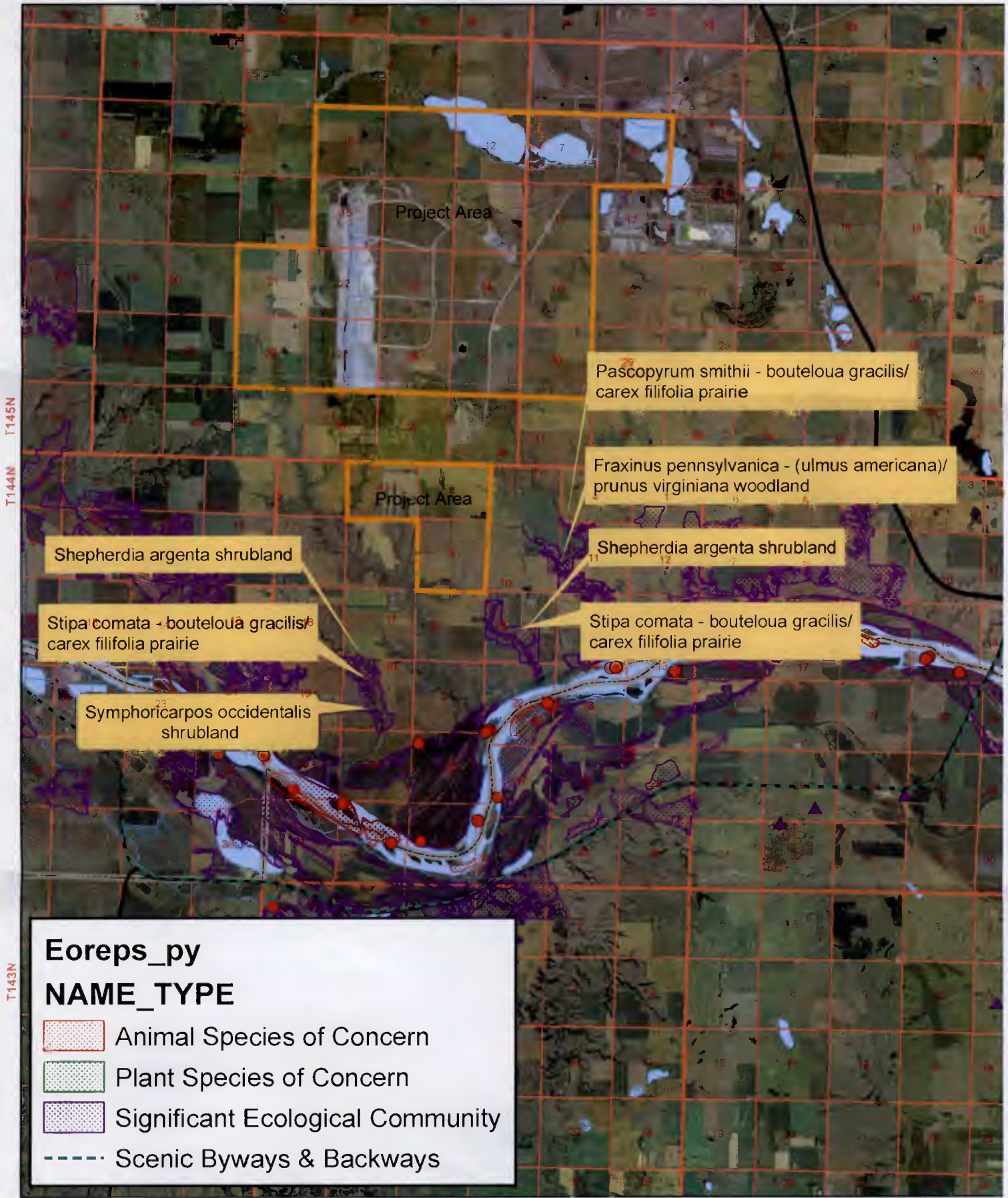
S - Seconds: accuracy of locality mappable within a three-second radius; 100 meters from the centerpoint

M - Minute: accuracy of locality mappable within a one-minute radius; 2 km from the centerpoint

G - General: accuracy of locality mappable to map or place name precision only; 8 km from centerpoint





U - Unmappable

North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department
 North Dakota Natural Heritage Inventory



Eoreps_py

NAME_TYPE

-  Animal Species of Concern
-  Plant Species of Concern
-  Significant Ecological Community
-  Scenic Byways & Backways

R84W

R83W

R82W

January 2011