DRAFT

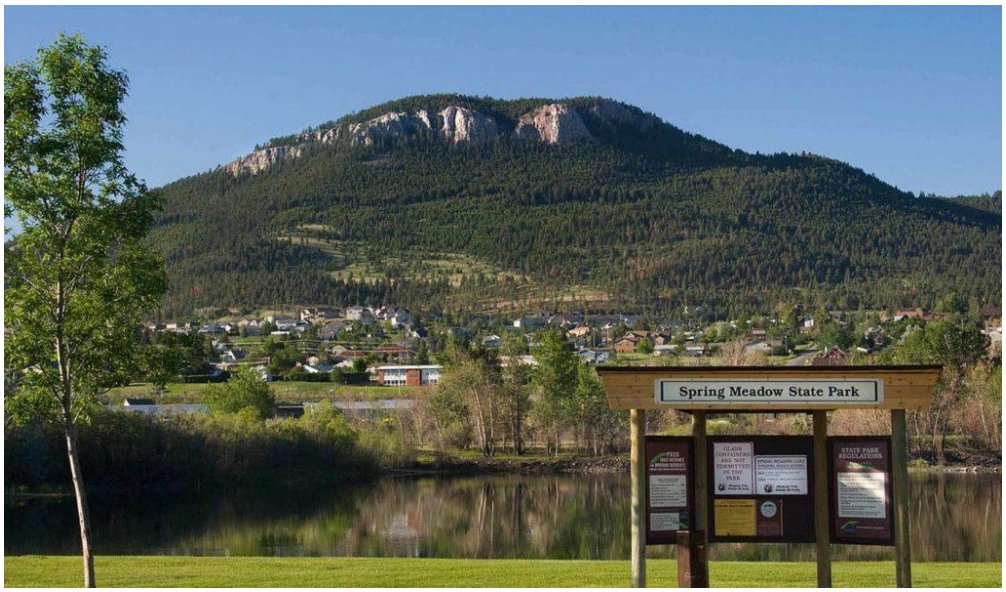
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Spring Meadow Lake State Park

Osprey Nest Camera Project

(FWP-CEA-POR-R4-26-002)

06/16/2026



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Checklist Environmental Assessment

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) has prepared this Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) in accordance with the requirements of the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). The purpose of an EA is to identify, analyze, and disclose the impacts of a proposed state action. This document may disclose impacts that have no required mitigation measures, or over which FWP, more broadly, has no regulatory authority.

Local governments and other state agencies may have authority over different resources and activities under separate regulations. FWP actions will only be approved if the proposed action complies with all applicable regulations. FWP has a separate obligation to comply with any federal, state, or local laws and to obtain any other permits, licenses, or approvals required for any part of the proposed action.

I. Compliance with the Montana Environmental Policy Act

Before a proposed project may be approved, environmental review must be conducted to identify and consider potential impacts of the proposed project on the human and physical environment affected by the project. The Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) and its implementing rules and regulations require different levels of environmental review, depending on the proposed project, significance of potential impacts, and the review timeline. § 75-1-201, Montana Code Annotated ("MCA"), and the Administrative Rules of Montana ("ARM") 12.2.430, General Requirements of the Environmental Review Process.

FWP must prepare an EA when:

- *It is considering a "state-proposed project," which is defined in § 75-1-220(8)(a) as:*
  (i) a project, program, or activity initiated and directly undertaken by a state agency;
  (ii) … a project or activity supported through a contract, grant, subsidy, loan, or other form of funding assistance from a state agency, either singly or in combination with one or more other state agencies; or
  (iii) … a project or activity authorized by a state agency acting in a land management capacity for a lease, easement, license, or other authorization to act.
- *It is not clear without preparation of an EA whether the proposed project is a major one significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. ARM 12.2.430(3)(a));*
- *FWP has not otherwise implemented the interdisciplinary analysis and public review purposes listed in ARM 12.2.430(2) (a) and (d) through a similar planning and decision-making process (ARM 12.2.430(3)(b));*
- *Statutory requirements do not allow sufficient time for the FWP to prepare an EIS (ARM 12.2.430(3)(c));*
- *The project is not specifically excluded from MEPA review according to § 75-1-220(8)(b) or ARM 12.2.430(5); or*
- *As an alternative to preparing an EIS, prepare an EA whenever the project is one that might normally require an EIS, but effects which might otherwise be deemed significant appear to be mitigable below the level of significance through design, or enforceable controls or stipulations or both imposed by the agency or other government agencies. For an EA to suffice in this instance, the agency must determine that all the impacts of the proposed project have been accurately identified, that they will be mitigated below the level of significance, and that no significant impact is likely to occur. The agency may not consider compensation for purposes of determining that impacts have been mitigated below the level of significance (ARM 12.2.430(4)).*

MEPA is procedural; its intent is to ensure that impacts to the environment associated with a proposed project are fully considered and the public is informed of potential impacts resulting from the project.

II. Background and Description of Proposed Project

Name of Project: Spring Meadow Lake State Park Osprey Nest Camera Project

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) is proposing the Spring Meadow Lake State Park (SMLSP) Osprey Nest Camera Project. SMLSP is one of Montana's most popular urban parks with an average of 172,935 annual visitors over the last five years and the site often ranks in the top five most visited parks in the state. In the spring of 2025, a nesting pole was installed at SMLSP to mitigate issues associated with osprey nesting on nearby cell phone towers and power poles. This nesting pole was utilized by the local osprey during the 2025 nesting season, and it is anticipated that it will be utilized again in the future. The osprey nest camera project would further build on the nesting pole by installing a wildlife camera on the nesting pole. This project would be collaborative in nature and involve multiple divisions of FWP (Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Montana Wild and the Wildlife Division), NorthWestern Energy and the Last Chance Audubon Society. The camera would allow individuals, schools, wildlife groups, or anyone who is interested and has an internet connection to observe the daily lives of these birds thru the nesting season. The proposed project would allow the public to witness all aspects of the birds lives from nest building to fledging. This camera would replicate the successful wildlife camera on the osprey nest in the city of Missoula. FWP would work with NorthWestern Energy to get power to the site by trenching a line, roughly 230 feet, from an existing power line on Country Club Avenue to the nesting pole. If the project moves forward, the video feed of the nest would be available for the public to view via FWP's YouTube channel.

Figure 1: Nesting pole installed during the early spring of 2026

Figure 2: Red line is the proposed trenching path of the electric line off an existing pole on Country Club Ave.

Affected Area / Location of Proposed Project:

- Legal Description
    - Latitude/Longitude: 46.61193501345847, -112.07563666975325
    - Section, Township, and Range: Section 23, Township 10 N, and Range 4 W
    - Town/City, County, Montana: Helena, Montana, Lewis and Clark County,
- Location Map

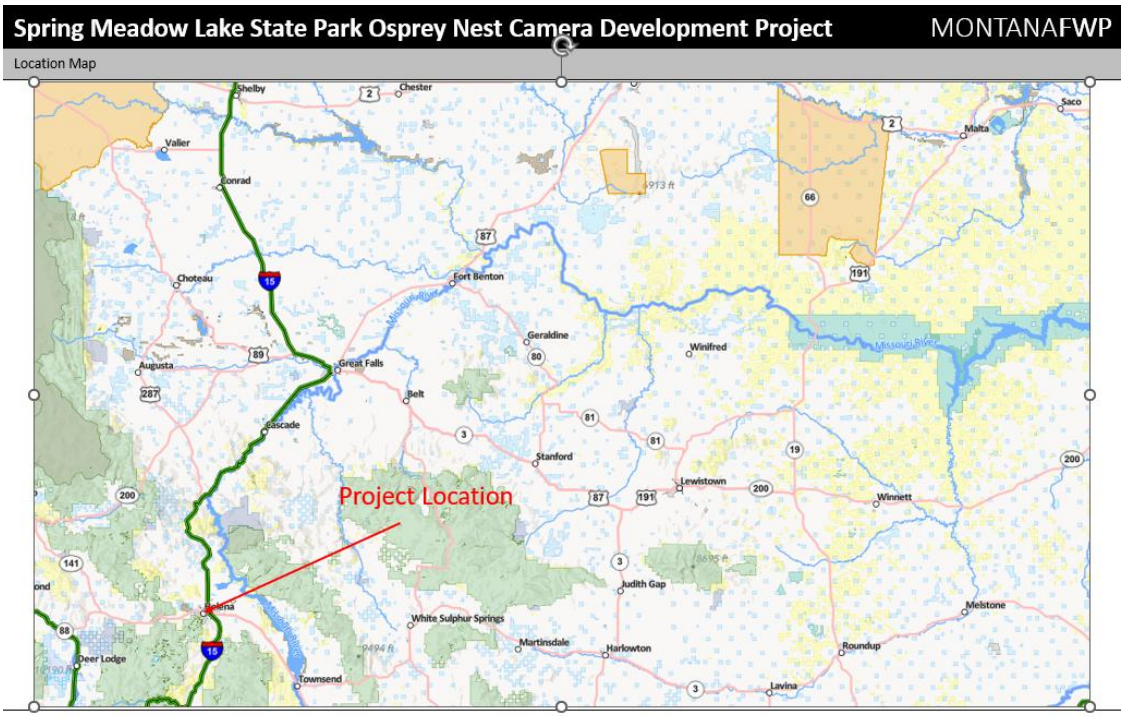

Figure 3: Location Map

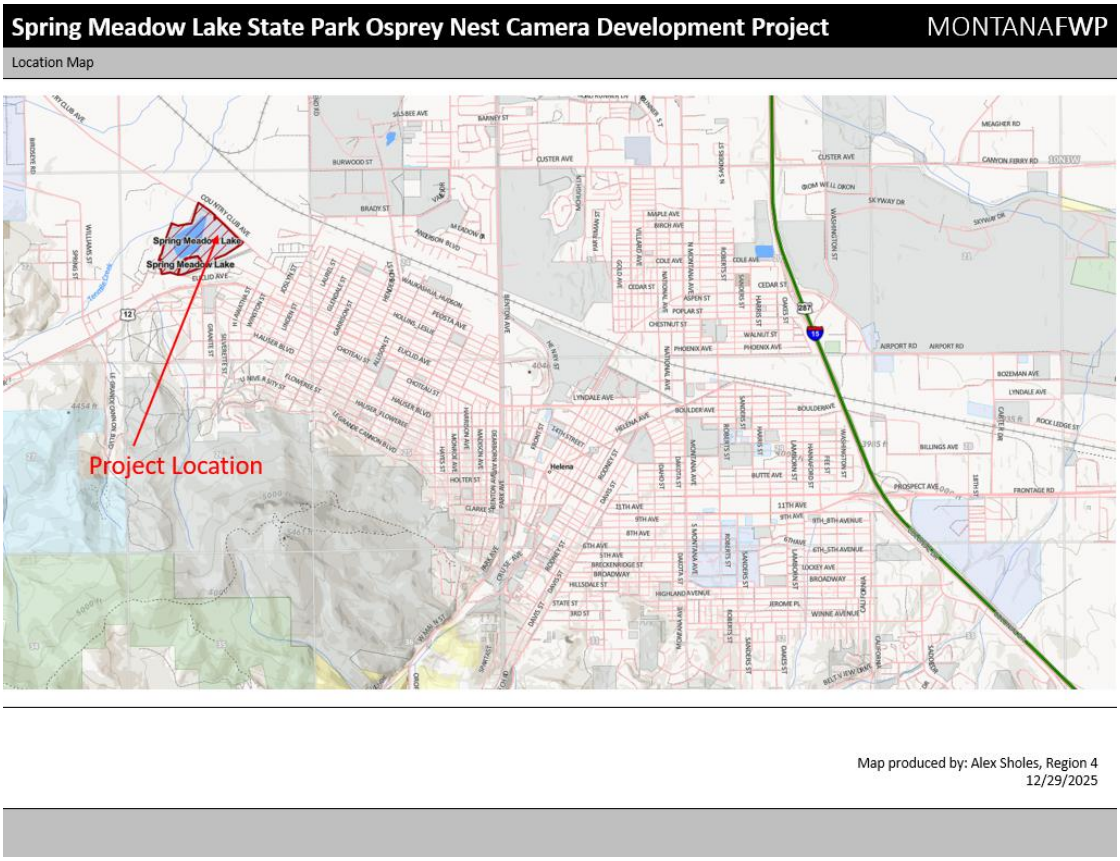

Figure 4: Location Map (zoomed)

III. Purpose and Need

The EA must include a description of the purpose and need or benefits of the proposed project. ARM 12.2.432(3)(b). Benefits of the proposed project refer to benefits to the resource, public, department, state, and/or other.

The purpose of the proposed Spring Meadow Lake State Park Osprey Nest Camera Project would be to provide the opportunity for the public to view and learn more about the osprey that utilize the nesting pole. The proposed project would be a collaboration between FWP, NorthWestern Energy and the Last Chance Audubon Society.

The benefits of the proposed project include providing the opportunity for the public to view an osprey nest via a video feed as well as providing a learning opportunity for local students or anyone interested in osprey or birds in general.

FWP anticipates that if the proposed project moves forward, the camera would be installed before the next nesting season begins, in March of 2026.

If FWP prepared a cost/benefit analysis before completion of the EA, the EA must contain the cost/benefit analysis or a reference to it. ARM 12.2.432(3)(b).

	Yes*	No
Was a cost/benefit analysis prepared for the proposed project?	☐	☒

* If yes, a copy of the cost/benefit analysis prepared for the proposed project is included in Attachment A to this Draft EA

IV. Other Agency Regulatory Responsibilities

FWP must list any federal, state, and/or local agencies that have overlapping or additional jurisdiction, or environmental review responsibility for the proposed project, as well as permits, licenses, and other required authorizations. ARM 12.2.432(3)(c).

*A list of other required local, state, and federal approvals, such as permits, certificates, and/or licenses from affected agencies is included in **Table 1** below. **Table 1** provides a summary of requirements but does not necessarily represent a complete and comprehensive list of all permits, certificates, or approvals needed for the proposed project. Agency decision-making is governed by state and federal laws, including statutes, rules, and regulations, that form the legal basis for the conditions the proposed project must meet to obtain necessary permits, certificates, licenses, or other approvals. Further, these laws set forth the conditions under which each agency could deny the necessary approvals.*

Table 1: Federal, State, and/or Local Regulatory Responsibilities

Agency	Type of Authorization (permit, license, stipulation, other)	Purpose

V. List of Mitigations, Stipulations

Mitigations, stipulations, and other enforceable controls required by FWP, or another agency, may be relied upon to limit potential impacts associated with a proposed Project. The table below lists and evaluates enforceable conditions FWP may rely on to limit potential impacts associated with the proposed Project. ARM 12.2.432(3)(g).

Table 2: Listing and Evaluation of Enforceable Mitigations Limiting Impacts

Are enforceable controls limiting potential impacts of the proposed action? If not, no further evaluation is needed.			**Yes ☒**	**No ☐**
If yes, are these controls being relied upon to limit impacts below the level of significance? If yes, list the enforceable control(s) below			**Yes ☒**	**No ☐**
Enforceable Control	**Responsible Agency**	**Authority (Rule, Permit, Stipulation, Other)**	**Effect of Enforceable Control on Proposed Project**	
Montana Antiquities Act	Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	MCA 22-3-421-442	Identify and develop methods and procedure and protection of heritage properties and paleontological remains on lands owned by the state are given appropriate consideration in state agency decision making.	

VI. Alternatives Considered

In addition to the proposed project, and as required by MEPA, FWP analyzes the "No-Action" alternative in this EA. Under the "No Action" alternative, the proposed project would not occur. Therefore, no additional impacts to the physical environment or human population in the analysis area would occur. The "No Action" alternative forms the baseline from which the potential impacts of the proposed Project can be measured.

If no action alternative is selected, the camera would not be installed, the collaboration between multiple partner groups would not be realized and the many interested people/groups would not be able to view the osprey nest via a live feed.

	Yes*	No
Were any additional and reasonable alternatives considered?	☐	☒

* If yes, a list and description of the other alternatives considered, but not carried forward for detailed review is included below

In addition to the proposed project and the No Action alternative, FWP analyzed the following alternatives:

	Yes*	No
Were any additional alternatives considered and dismissed for cause?	☐	☒

* If yes, a list and description of the other alternatives considered, but not carried forward for detailed review, is included below

VII. Summary of Potential Impacts of the Proposed Project on the Physical Environment and Human Population

*The impacts analysis identifies and evaluates **direct**, **secondary**, and **cumulative impacts**.*

- ***Direct impacts** are those that occur at the same time and place as the action that triggers the effect.*
- ***Secondary impacts** "are further impacts to the human environment that may be stimulated or induced by or otherwise result from a direct impact of the action." ARM 12.2.429(18).*
- ***Cumulative impacts** "means the collective impacts on the human environment of the proposed action when considered in conjunction with other past and present actions related to the proposed action by location or generic type. Related future actions must also be considered when these actions are under concurrent consideration by any state agency through pre-impact statement studies, separate impact statement evaluation, or permit processing procedures." ARM 12.2.429(7).*

*Where impacts are expected to occur, the impact analysis estimates the **extent, duration, frequency,** and **severity** of the impact. The duration of an impact is quantified as follows:*

- ***Short-Term**: impacts that would not last longer than the proposed project.*
- ***Long-Term**: impacts that would remain or occur following the proposed project.*

The severity of an impact is measured using the following:

- ***No**: there would be no change from current conditions.*
- ***Negligible**: an adverse or beneficial effect would occur but would be at the lowest levels of detection.*
- ***Minor**: the effect would be noticeable but would be relatively small and would not affect the function or integrity of the resource.*
- ***Moderate**: the effect would be easily identifiable and would change the function or integrity of the resource.*
- ***Major**: the effect would irretrievably alter the resource.*

Some impacts may require mitigation. As defined in ARM 12.2.429, mitigation means:

- *Avoiding an impact by not taking a certain action or parts of a project.*
- *Minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of a project and its implementation.*
- *Rectifying an impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment; or*
- *Reducing or eliminating an impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of a project or the time period thereafter that an impact continues.*

*A list of any mitigation strategies including, but not limited to, design, enforceable controls or stipulations, or both, as applicable to the proposed project is included in **Section VI** above.*

FWP must analyze impacts to the physical and human environment for each alternative considered. The proposed project considered the following alternatives:

- **Alternative 1: No Action. Evaluation and Summary of Potential Impacts on the Physical Environment and Human Population**

  Under the "No Action" alternative, the proposed project would not occur. Therefore, no additional impacts to the physical environment or human population in the analysis area would occur. The "No Action" alternative forms the baseline from which the potential impacts of the proposed Project can be measured.

  If no action alternative is selected, the camera would not be installed, the collaboration between multiple partner groups would not be realized and the many interested people/groups would not be able to view the osprey nest via a live feed.

- **Alternative 2: Proposed Project. Evaluation and Summary of Potential Impacts on the Physical Environment and Human Population**

See *Cumulative Impacts Analysis: Bannack State Park Accessibility Improvements*; *Table 3*, *Impacts on Physical Environment*; and *Table 4, Impacts on Human Population*, below.

If no action alternative is selected, the camera would not be installed, the collaboration between multiple partner groups would not be realized and the many interested people/groups would not be able to view the osprey nest via a live feed.

VIII. Cumulative Impacts Analysis

For the purposes of MEPA, "cumulative impact" means the collective impacts on the human environment of the proposed action when considered in conjunction with other past and present actions related to the proposed action by location or generic type. Related future actions must also be considered when such actions are under concurrent consideration by any state agency through pre-impact statement studies, separate impact statement evaluation, or permit processing procedures. ARM 12.2.429(7).

"Action" means a project, program or activity directly undertaken by the agency; a project or activity supported through a contract, grant, subsidy, loan or other form of funding assistance from the agency, either singly or in combination with one or more other state agencies; or a project or activity involving the issuance of a lease, permit, license, certificate, or other entitlement for use or permission to act by the agency, either singly or in combination with other state agencies. ARM 12.2.429(1).

Under the “No Action” alternative, the proposed project would not occur. Therefore, no cumulative impacts to the affected human environment would occur. The “No Action” alternative forms the baseline from which the potential impacts of the proposed project are measured. Past and present actions are accounted for as part of the existing, or “baseline,” environmental conditions of the affected human environment prior to approval and implementation of the proposed project, and any known future related project(s).

FWP is unaware of any future related actions that would cumulatively impact the affected human environment with consideration for the proposed project and/or any past and present actions. For the purposes of the proposed project, the cumulative impacts analysis applies to all resources analyzed under Alternative 2, Proposed Project. See Tables 3 and 4 of this Draft EA.

Table 3 - Potential Impacts of Proposed Project on the Physical Environment

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					
Resource	None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
Terrestrial, avian, and aquatic life and habitats	☐	☒	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	No significant adverse impacts to terrestrial, avian, and aquatic life and habitats would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project constitutes trenching a power line to the nesting pole located in Spring Meadow Lake State Park and installing a camera to view the nest. The trenching of the power line from Country Club Avenue to the nesting pole would result in ground disturbance as well as noise and emissions from workers and equipment. Therefore, impacts to terrestrial, avian, and aquatic life and habitats would be short-term, negligible and adverse, lasting only as long as the construction phase.
Water quality, quantity, and distribution	☒	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	No significant adverse impacts to water quality, quantity, and distribution would be expected with this proposed project. The proposed project constitutes trenching a power line to the nesting pole located in Spring Meadow Lake State Park and installing a camera to view the nest. During the construction phase, impacts would be mitigated with best construction practices. The project area is not located directly adjacent to water and the trenching should not result in any impacts to water quality, quantity, and distribution.
Geology	☒	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	No significant adverse impacts to local geology would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project constitutes trenching a power line to the nesting pole located in Spring Meadow Lake State Park and installing a camera to view the nest. The proposed project would not affect any known geologic features in the project area; therefore, no impacts to geology would be expected because of the proposed project.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					
Resource	None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
Soil quality, stability, and moisture	☐	☒	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	No significant adverse impacts to soil quality, stability, and moisture would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project constitutes trenching a power line to the nesting pole located in Spring Meadow Lake State Park and installing a camera to view the nest. The trenching of the power line from Country Club Avenue to the nesting pole would result in ground disturbance, therefore, the impacts to soil quality, stability and moisture from the proposed project would be short-term, negligible and adverse, lasting only as long as the construction phase.
Vegetation cover, quantity, and quality	☐	☒	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	No significant adverse impacts to vegetation cover, quality, and quantity would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project constitutes trenching a power line to the nesting pole located in Spring Meadow Lake State Park and installing a camera to view the nest. The trenching of the power line from Country Club Avenue to the nesting pole would result in ground disturbance that would impact vegetation along the trench. Therefore, the impacts to vegetation cover, quantity, and quality would be short-term, negligible and adverse.
Aesthetics	☐	☒	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	No significant adverse impacts to area aesthetics would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project constitutes trenching a power line to the nesting pole located in Spring Meadow Lake State Park and installing a camera to view the nest. During the construction phase workers and equipment would adversely impact area aesthetics. The trenching of the power line from Country Club Avenue to the nesting pole would result in ground disturbance that would impact aesthetics until the vegetation is re-established. The camera itself should not significantly impact area

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					
Resource	None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
									aesthetics. Therefore, the impacts to area aesthetics would be short-term, negligible and adverse.
Air quality	☐	☒	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	No significant adverse impacts to air quality would be expected because of the proposed project. Air quality in the project area is currently unclassifiable or in compliance with/attainment for the applicable National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). Existing sources of air pollution in the area are limited and generally include fugitive dust associated with high wind events and exposed ground, vehicle travel on unpaved roads (fugitive dust), vehicle exhaust emissions, and various agricultural practices (vehicle exhaust emissions and fugitive dust). No significant point-sources of air pollution exist in the area affected by the proposed project. Fugitive dust and vehicle exhaust emissions resulting from the construction phase may adversely impact air quality. However, no air quality restrictions exist for the affected area and the proposed project would not be expected to cause or contribute to a violation of the applicable NAAQS for particulate matter (fugitive dust). Additionally, FWP does not anticipate that the use of the site would increase because of the proposed project. Therefore, any impacts from the proposed project to air quality would be short-term, negligible, and adverse, lasting only as long as the construction phase.
Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	No significant adverse impacts to unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project constitutes trenching a power line to the nesting pole located in Spring Meadow Lake State Park and installing a camera to view the nest. According to the Montana Natural Heritage Program database, 28 species of concern, 4 potential species of concern and 1 special

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					
Resource	None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
									status species have been identified within the site or are likely to be in the area (see appendix A for a full list). FWP does not anticipate visitation numbers to increase or use patterns to change because of the proposed project. The camera itself should not significantly impact these resources. During the construction phase of the project, the use of heavy equipment would create noise and ground disturbance. Therefore, impacts to unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources from the proposed project would be short-term, minor and adverse, occurring during the construction phase and mitigated with best construction practices.
Historical and archaeological sites	☒	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	No significant adverse impacts to historic and archaeological sites would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project constitutes trenching a power line to the nesting pole located in Spring Meadow Lake State Park and installing a camera to view the nest. In keeping with the Montana Antiquities Act and related regulations (ARM 12.8.501-12.8.510), all undertakings on state lands are assessed by a qualified archaeologist or historian for their potential to affect cultural resources. The process for this assessment may include a cultural resource inventory and evaluation of cultural resources within or near the project area, in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office. FWP also consults with all Tribal Historic Preservation Offices affiliated with each property in accordance with FWP's Tribal Consultation Guidelines. If cultural resources within or near the project area are recorded and are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, they will be protected from adverse impacts through adjustments to the project designs or cancellation of the projects if no design alternatives are available. If cultural

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					
Resource	None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
									resources are unexpectedly discovered during project implementation, FWP would cease implementation and contact FWP's Heritage Program for further evaluation.
Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air, and energy	☐	☒	☒	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	No significant adverse impacts to the demands on the environmental resources of land, water, air, and energy would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project constitutes trenching a power line to the nesting pole located in Spring Meadow Lake State Park and installing a camera to view the nest. Fuel would be required to operate the equipment and vehicles used to develop the proposed project and energy would be required to operate the camera. Therefore, any impacts from the proposed project to demands on environmental resources of land, water, air, and energy resources would be short-term, long-term, negligible, and adverse.

Table 4 - Potential Impacts of Proposed Project on the Human Population

HUMAN POPULATION	Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					
Resource	None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
Social structures and mores	☒	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	No significant adverse impacts to social structures and mores would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project constitutes trenching a power line to the nesting pole located in Spring Meadow Lake State Park and installing a camera to view the nest. FWP does not anticipate visitation numbers to increase or use patterns to change because of the proposed project. Therefore, no impacts to social structures and mores would be expected because of the proposed project.
Cultural uniqueness and diversity	☒	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	No significant adverse impacts to cultural uniqueness and diversity would be expected because of the proposed

HUMAN POPULATION	Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					
Resource	None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
									project. The proposed project constitutes trenching a power line to the nesting pole located in Spring Meadow Lake State Park and installing a camera to view the nest. The proposed project would not be expected to result in any relocation of people into or out of the affected area. Therefore, no impacts to existing cultural uniqueness and diversity of the affected area would be expected because of the proposed project.
Access to and quality of recreational and wilderness activities	☐	☒	☒	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	No significant adverse impacts to the access to and quality of recreational and wilderness activities would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project constitutes trenching a power line to the nesting pole located in Spring Meadow Lake State Park and installing a camera to view the nest. No wilderness areas exist within the proposed project area; therefore, no impacts to access to and quality of wilderness activities would occur. Noise, odors, and fugitive dust resulting from construction activities could adversely impact the quality of the recreational experience for some users of the state park. Any adverse impacts would be short-term and minor, and once the construction phase is completed, no additional adverse impacts would be expected. Once the project is completed, there would be increased opportunity to view and learn about the osprey nest and its inhabitants. Therefore, any impacts from the proposed project to the access to and quality of recreational and wilderness activities would be short-term, long-term, negligible, adverse, and beneficial.
Local and state tax base and tax revenues	☐	☒	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	No significant adverse impacts to local and state tax base and tax revenues would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project constitutes trenching a power line to the nesting pole located in Spring Meadow Lake State Park and installing a camera to

HUMAN POPULATION	Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					
Resource	None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
									view the nest. The proposed project would be expected to slightly increase state and local tax revenues from the sale of fuel, supplies and/or equipment needed to complete the project. Therefore, any impacts from the proposed project to local and state tax base and tax revenues would be short-term, negligible and beneficial.
Agricultural or Industrial production	☒	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	No significant adverse impacts to agricultural or industrial production would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project constitutes trenching a power line to the nesting pole located in Spring Meadow Lake State Park and installing a camera to view the nest. No agricultural or industrial production currently occurs in the state park and no change in land use would occur because of the proposed project. Therefore, no impacts to agricultural or industrial production would be expected because of the proposed project.
Human health and safety	☐	☒	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	No significant adverse impacts to human health and safety would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project constitutes trenching a power line to the nesting pole located in Spring Meadow Lake State Park and installing a camera to view the nest. During the construction phase of the project, there could be safety risks associated with the construction workers however, once construction is finished, there would be no risk to human health and safety. Therefore, impacts to human health and safety associated with the proposed project would be short-term, negligible and adverse, lasting only as long as the construction phase and mitigated with best construction practices.
Quantity and distribution of employment	☐	☒	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	No significant adverse impacts to the quantity and distribution of employment would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project constitutes trenching a power line to the nesting pole located in

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Resource	None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
									Spring Meadow Lake State Park and installing a camera to view the nest. Some impacts to the local quantity and distribution of employment may be realized because non-state workers would be used to trench the power line. Therefore, any impacts from the proposed project on the quantity and distribution of employment would be short-term, negligible and beneficial.
Distribution and density of population and housing	☒	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	No significant adverse impacts to the distribution and density of population and housing would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project constitutes trenching a power line to the nesting pole located in Spring Meadow Lake State Park and installing a camera to view the nest. The proposed project would not be expected to result in the movement of existing or new populations into or out of the affected area. Therefore, no impacts to the distribution and density of population and housing needs would be expected because of the proposed project.
Demands for government services	☐	☐	☒	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	No significant adverse impacts to the demand for government services would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project constitutes trenching a power line to the nesting pole located in Spring Meadow Lake State Park and installing a camera to view the nest. The proposed project would not be expected to result in the need for additional government services however the proposed project would place additional burden on the State of Montana regarding maintaining the camera system, paying for energy costs associated with the camera as well as hosting the video feed. Therefore, impacts to the demands for government services associated with the proposed project would be long-term, negligible and adverse.

HUMAN POPULATION	Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					
Resource	None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
Industrial, agricultural, and commercial activity	☒	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	No significant adverse impacts to industrial, agricultural, and commercial activity would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project constitutes trenching a power line to the nesting pole located in Spring Meadow Lake State Park and installing a camera to view the nest. The proposed project area is owned and managed by FWP as a state park and no industrial or agricultural activity occur at the site. Therefore, no impacts to industrial, agricultural, and commercial activity would be expected because of the proposed project.
Locally adopted environmental plans and goals	☒	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	No significant adverse impacts to locally adopted environmental plans and goals would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project constitutes trenching a power line to the nesting pole located in Spring Meadow Lake State Park and installing a camera to view the nest. The affected property is currently, and would remain, a designated state park. FWP is unaware of any other locally adopted environmental plans or goals that might be impacted by the proposed project.
Other appropriate social and economic circumstances	☒	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	No significant adverse impacts to other appropriate social and economic circumstances would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project constitutes trenching a power line to the nesting pole located in Spring Meadow Lake State Park and installing a camera to view the nest. FWP is unaware of any other appropriate social and economic circumstances that might be impacted by the proposed project.

Table 6: Determining the Significance of Impacts on the Quality of the Human Environment

If the EA identifies impacts associated with the proposed project FWP must determine the significance of the impacts. ARM 12.2.431. This determination forms the basis for FWP's decision as to whether it is necessary to prepare an environmental impact statement. An impact may be adverse, beneficial, or both. If none of the adverse effects of the impact are significant, an EIS is not required. An EIS is required if an impact has a significant adverse effect, even if the agency believes that the effect on balance will be beneficial. ARM 12.2.431.

According to the applicable requirements of ARM 12.2.431, FWP must consider the criteria identified in this table to determine the significance of each impact on the quality of the human environment. The significance determination is made by giving weight to these criteria in their totality. For example, impacts identified as moderate or major in severity may not be significant if the duration is short-term. However, moderate or major impacts of short-term duration may be significant if the quantity and quality of the resource is limited and/or the resource is unique or fragile. Further, moderate or major impacts to a resource may not be significant if the quantity of that resource is high or the quality of the resource is not unique or fragile.

	Criteria Used to Determine Significance
1	The **severity, duration, geographic extent,** and **frequency** of the occurrence of the impact **"Severity"** describes the density of the potential impact, while **"extent"** describes the area where the impact will likely occur, e.g., a project may propagate ten noxious weeds on a surface area of 1 square foot. Here, the impact may be high in severity, but over a low extent. In contrast, if ten noxious weeds were distributed over ten acres, there may be low severity over a larger extent. **"Duration"** describes the time period during which an impact may occur, while **"frequency"** describes how often the impact may occur, e.g., an operation that uses lights to mine at night may have frequent lighting impacts during one season (duration).
2	The probability that the impact will occur if the proposed project occurs; or conversely, reasonable assurance in keeping with the potential severity of an impact that the impact will not occur
3	Growth-inducing or growth-inhibiting aspects of the impact, including the relationship or contribution of the impact to cumulative impacts
4	The quantity and quality of each environmental resource or value that would be affected, including the uniqueness and fragility of those resources and values
5	The importance to the state and to society of each environmental resource or value that would be affected
6	Any precedent that would be set as a result of an impact of the proposed project that would commit FWP to future actions with significant impacts or a decision in principle about such future actions
7	Potential conflict with local, state, or federal laws, requirements, or formal plans

IX. Private Property Impact Analysis (Takings)

The 54th Montana Legislature enacted the Private Property Assessment Act, now found at § 2-10-101. The intent was to establish an orderly and consistent process by which state agencies evaluate their proposed projects under the "Takings Clauses" of the United States and Montana Constitutions. The Takings Clause of the Fifth Amendment of the United States Constitution provides: "nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation." Similarly, Article II, Section 29 of the Montana Constitution provides: "Private property shall not be taken or damaged for public use without just compensation..."

The Private Property Assessment Act applies to proposed agency projects pertaining to land or water management or to some other environmental matter that, if adopted and enforced without due process of law and just compensation, would constitute a deprivation of private property in violation of the United States or Montana Constitutions.

The Montana State Attorney General's Office has developed guidelines for use by state agencies to assess the impact of a proposed agency project on private property. The assessment process includes a careful review of all issues identified in the Attorney General's guidance document (Montana Department of Justice 1997). If the use of the guidelines and checklist indicates that a proposed agency project has taking or damaging implications, the agency must prepare an impact assessment in accordance with Section 5 of the Private Property Assessment Act.

Table 7: Private Property Assessment (Takings)

PRIVATE PROPERTY ASSESMENT ACT (PPAA)			
Does the Proposed Action Have Takings Implications under the PPAA?	**Question #**	**Yes**	**No**
Does the project pertain to land or water management or environmental regulations affecting private property or water rights?	1	☐	☒
Does the action result in either a permanent or an indefinite physical occupation of private property?	2	☐	☒
Does the action deprive the owner of all economically viable uses of the property?	3	☐	☒
Does the action require a property owner to dedicate a portion of property or to grant an easement? (If answer is NO, skip questions 4a and 4b and continue with question 5)	4	☐	☒
Is there a reasonable, specific connection between the government requirement and legitimate state interest?	4a	☐	☒
Is the government requirement roughly proportional to the impact of the proposed use of the property?	4b	☐	☒
Does the action deny a fundamental attribute of ownership?	5	☐	☒
Does the action have a severe impact of the value of the property?	6	☐	☒
Does the action damage the property by causing some physical disturbance with respect to the property in excess of that sustained by the public general? (If the answer is NO, skip questions 7a-7c.)	7	☐	☒
Is the impact of government action direct, peculiar, and significant?	7a	☐	☒
Has the government action resulted in the property becoming practically inaccessible, waterlogged, or flooded?	7b	☐	☒
Has the government action diminished property values by more than 30% and necessitated the physical taking of adjacent property or property across a public way from the property in question?	7c	☐	☒
Does the proposed action result in taking or damaging implications?		☐	☒

Taking or damaging implications exist if **YES** is checked in response to Question 1 and also to any one or more of the following questions: 2, 3, 4, 6, 7a, 7b, 7c; or if **NO** is checked in response to question 4a or 4b.
If taking or damaging implications exist, the agency must comply with MCA § 2-10-105 of the PPAA, to include the preparation of a taking or damaging impact assessment. Normally, the preparation of an impact assessment will require consultation with agency legal staff.
Alternatives: The analysis under the Private Property Assessment Act, §§ 2-10-101 through -112, MCA, indicates no impact. FWP does not plan to impose conditions that would restrict the regulated person's use of private property to constitute a taking.

X. Public Participation

The level of analysis in an EA will vary with the complexity and seriousness of environmental issues associated with a proposed action. The level of public interest will also vary. FWP is responsible for adjusting public review to match these factors (ARM 12.2.433(1)). Because FWP determines the proposed action will result in limited environmental impact, and little public interest has been expressed, FWP determines the following public notice strategy will provide an appropriate level of public review:

- *An EA is a public document and may be inspected upon request. Any person may obtain a copy of an EA by making a request to FWP. If the document is out-of-print, a copying charge may be levied (ARM 12.2.433(2)).*
- *Public notice will be served on the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks website at: https://fwp.mt.gov/news/public-notices. Public notice will announce the availability of the Draft EA, summarize its content, and solicit public comment.*
- *Copies will be distributed to neighboring landowners to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project and opportunity for review and comment on the proposed action.*
- *FWP maintains a mailing list of persons interested in a particular action or type of action. FWP will notify all interested persons and distribute copies of the Draft EA to those persons for review and comment (ARM 12.2.433(3)).*
- *FWP issues a biweekly press release containing all FWP public commenting opportunities.*

    - ***Duration of Public Comment Period:*** *The public comment period begins on the date the Draft EA is published on FWP's website. Written or e-mailed comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., MST, on the last day of public comment period, as listed below:*

      Length of Public Comment Period: 15 days
      Public Comment Period Begins: 01/16/2026
      Public Comment Period Ends: 01/30/2026

      Comments must be addressed to the FWP contact, as listed below.

    - ***Where to Mail or Email Comments on the Draft EA:***
      Name: Craig Putchat - Helena Area Recreation Manager
      Email: cputchat@mt.gov

      Mailing Address:
      Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
      Attn: Spring Meadow Lake State EA
      P.O. Box 200701

FWP Annex, Parks, 1625 11th Ave
Helena, MT 59620-0701

XI. Recommendation for Further Environmental Analysis

NO further analysis is needed for the proposed action	☒
FWP must conduct **EIS** level review for the proposed action	☐

XII. EA Preparation and Review

	Name	Title
EA prepared by:	Craig Putchat	FWP Recreation Manager
EA reviewed by:	Alex Sholes	FWP Region 4 Regional Recreation Manager
	Lindsey Parsons	FWP Wildlife Biologist

Appendix A. Sensitive Species of Occurrence list for project area

Species Group	Common Name	Scientific Name	Species of Concern
Mammals	Black-tailed Prairie Dog	Cynomys ludovicianus	SOC
Mammals	Grizzly Bear	Ursus arctos	SOC
Mammals	Little Brown Myotis	Myotis lucifugus	SOC
Mammals	Northern Hoary Bat	Lasiurus cinereus	SOC
Mammals	Silver-haired Bat	Lasionycteris noctivagans	SOC
Mammals	Spotted Bat	Euderma maculatum	PSOC
Birds	Bald Eagle	Haliaeetus leucocephalus	SSS
Birds	Bobolink	Dolichonyx oryzivorus	SOC
Birds	Brewer's Sparrow	Spizella breweri	SOC
Birds	Brown Creeper	Certhia americana	SOC
Birds	Cassin's Finch	Haemorhous cassinii	SOC
Birds	Clark's Nutcracker	Nucifraga columbiana	SOC
Birds	Evening Grosbeak	Coccothraustes vespertinus	SOC
Birds	Flammulated Owl	Psiloscops flammeolus	SOC
Birds	Golden Eagle	Aquila chrysaetos	SOC
Birds	Great Blue Heron	Ardea herodias	SOC
Birds	Green-tailed Towhee	Pipilo chlorurus	SOC
Birds	Lewis's Woodpecker	Melanerpes lewis	SOC
Birds	Loggerhead Shrike	Lanius ludovicianus	SOC
Birds	Long-billed Curlew	Numenius americanus	SOC
Birds	Pileated Woodpecker	Dryocopus pileatus	SOC
Birds	Pinyon Jay	Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus	SOC
Birds	Sage Thrasher	Oreoscoptes montanus	SOC

Birds	Veery	Catharus fuscescens	SOC
Fish	Westslope Cutthroat Trout	Oncorhynchus lewisi	SOC
Invertebrates	Suckley's Cuckoo Bumble Bee	Bombus suckleyi	SOC
Invertebrates	Monarch	Danaus plexippus	SOC
Vascular Plants	Lesser Rushy Milkvetch	Astragalus convallarius	SOC
Vascular Plants	Wedge-leaf Saltbush	Atriplex truncata	SOC
Vascular Plants	Small Yellow Lady's-slipper	Cypripedium parviflorum	PSOC
Vascular Plants	Mat Buckwheat	Eriogonum caespitosum	SOC
Vascular Plants	Hare's-foot Locoweed	Oxytropis lagopus var. conjugans	PSOC
Vascular Plants	Slender Wedgegrass	Sphenopholis intermedia	PSOC
Other	Bat Roost (Non-Cave)	Bat Roost (Non-Cave)	IAH