

DRAFT

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

CHECKLIST

(FWP-FCEA-PARKS-R8-2025-10)

Whittecar Shooting Range

08December2025



Table of Contents

I.	Compliance with the Montana Environmental Policy Act	3
II.	Background and Description of Proposed Project	3
III.	Purpose and Need	6
IV.	Other Agency Regulatory Responsibilities	6
V.	List of Mitigations, Stipulations	7
VI.	Alternatives Considered	8
VII.	Summary of Potential Impacts of the Proposed Project on the Physical Environment and Human Population ...	8
VIII.	Private Property Impact Analysis (Takings).....	21
IX.	Public Participation	22
X.	Recommendation for Further Environmental Analysis	23
XI.	EA Preparation and Review	23

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: Whittecar Rifle & Pistol Range

With this action, Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks (FWP) proposes to utilize Pittman Robertson funds to remove and rebuild the firing line shelter at the Whittecar Rifle & Pistol Range. Whittecar Rifle & Pistol Range, located in Hamilton, Montana, is a premier shooting range offering a wide range of facilities and services to both qualified members and the general public. Whittecar Rifle & Pistol Range has multiple ranges, including a dedicated rimfire range and is run by a Board of Directors and staffed by on-site caretakers. The board conducts monthly meetings, maintains a calendar of events, and offers classes. The Whittecar Rifle & Pistol Range provides a safe and welcoming environment for shooting enthusiasts of all levels. The range offers affordable

day use fees and various membership options, including individual and family memberships. They are committed to safety and require participants to watch a safety video to qualify for the rimfire range.

Whittecarr Rifle & Pistol Range is located on a 25-acre parcel owned by FWP. Although many of the facilities have been updated throughout the years, the shelter covering the 300-yard firing line needs replacement. This project would include removing the existing structure, benches, and concrete pad. FWP would then facilitate the construction of a proper foundation and new updated structure.

FWP is also proposing an updated lease agreement with Whittecarr Rifle & Pistol Club (Club). The current leasing and sub-leasing structure is inadequate for efficient communication and management of the shooting range. The proposed lease update would simplify communications between FWP and the Club. There would not be significant changes to the daily operations of the shooting range.

Affected Area / Location of Proposed Project:

- Legal Description
 - Latitude/Longitude: 46°16'24.6"N 114°12'50.5"W
 - Section, Township, and Range: S15, T06 N, R21 W, S 990' OF NWSW
 - Town/City, County, Montana: Hamilton, Ravalli, Montana
- Location Map

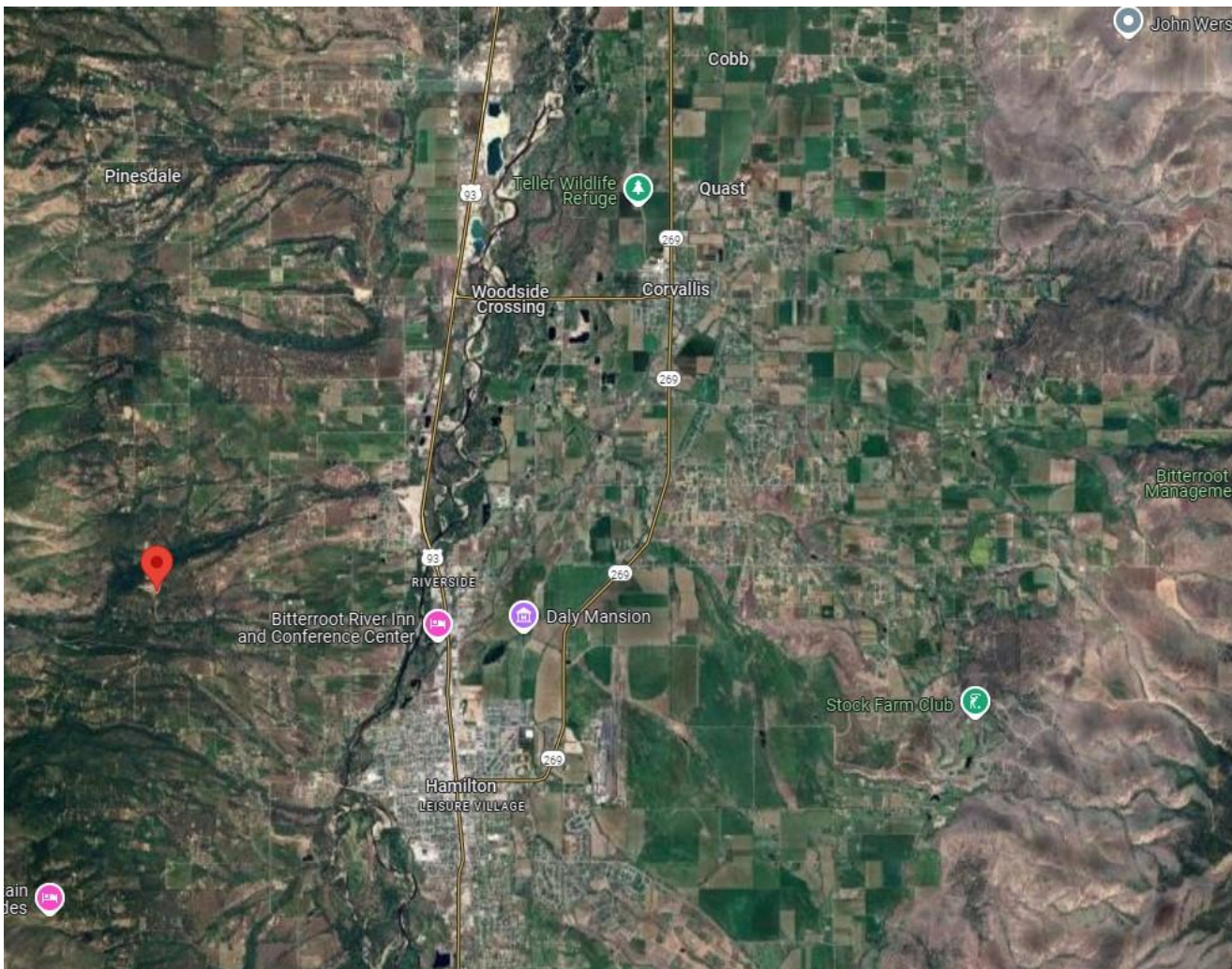


Figure 1. Whittecarr Rifle & Pistol Range Vicinity Map

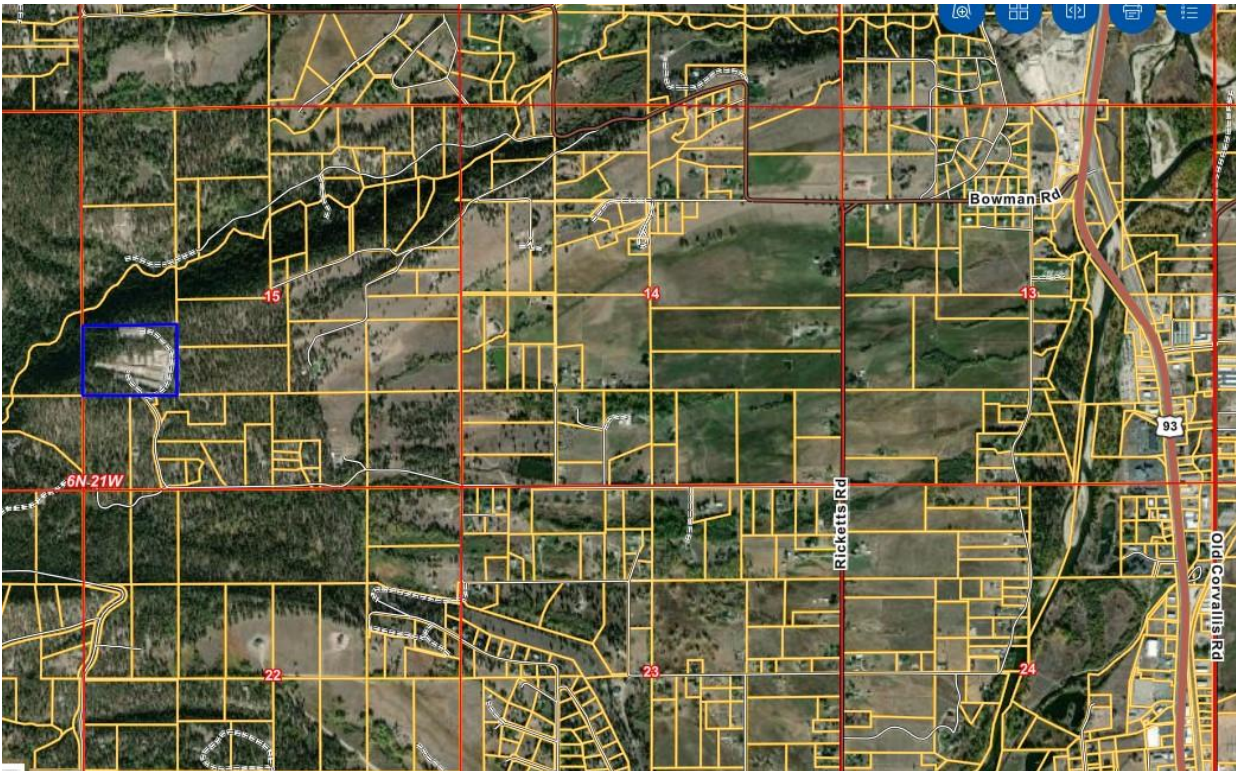


Figure 2. Whittecar Rifle & Pistol Range Location



Figure 3. Whittecar Rifle & Pistol Range Layout



Figure 4. Firing Line Shelter

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.

FWP proposes to demolish and rebuild the current firing line shelter at Whittecar Rifle & Pistol Range. The current shelter and concrete pad have been repaired over the years but have reached a point where reconstruction is necessary. The structure has multiple safety concerns and needs to be replaced. The unstable ground beneath the structure has uplifted the concrete and needs to be replaced. The demolition and rebuilding of the current structure is necessary for the following reasons:

- The current structure is unstable, which creates safety concerns for people using the firing line shelter.
- If the structure is not rebuilt, the firing line shelter would be closed reducing access to shooting for an increasing number of recreational shooters using this site.

The shooting range is currently sub-leased by the Club through Ravalli County who is the primary lessee from FWP. Under this proposed action, the Club will enter a new, direct lease with FWP to clarify each entities roles, responsibilities and duties. An updated lease and structure will provide better communication and more efficient management.

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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

* 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
FWP	Building Permit	Construction of the firing line building.
FWP	Cultural Survey	Identification of historic and/or archaeological sites located within or near the proposed project area.

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

<i>Are enforceable controls limiting potential impacts of the proposed action? If not, no further evaluation is needed.</i>		Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>If yes, are these controls being relied upon to limit impacts below the level of significance? If yes, list the enforceable control(s) below</i>		Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Enforceable Control	Responsible Agency	Authority (Rule, Permit, Stipulation, Other)	Effect of Enforceable Control on Proposed Project
Cultural Resource Protection	Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPO), FWP Heritage Program	Cultural Assessment and Inventory; Tribal Consultation Guidelines	In alignment with the Montana Antiquities Act and related regulations, FWP would complete a cultural resource assessment prior to any development. Where indicated, cultural resource inventories including pedestrian survey and/or subsurface testing will occur through consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office. The process for cultural resource inventory and consultation is outlined in Administrative Rules 12.8.501-12.8.510. FWP also consults with all Tribal Historic Preservation Offices affiliated with each park in accordance with FWP's tribal consultation guidelines. The cultural resource inventory and consultation with the SHPO and relevant Tribal Historic Preservation Offices will determine whether cultural resource monitoring is required during implementation.

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.

Under the "No Action" alternative, the proposed rebuilding of the firing line shelter would not occur and the structure would remain in its current condition.

	Yes*	No
Were any additional alternatives considered and dismissed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

* 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 Impact:** 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 rebuilding of the firing line shelter would not occur and the structure would remain in its current condition.

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

See **Table 3** (Impacts on Physical Environment) and **Table 4** (Impacts on Human Population) below.

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

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
	None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	
Terrestrial, avian, and aquatic life and habitats	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts would be expected because of the proposed development. With the proposed development, FWP would replace an existing structure not exceeding the existing footprint. Replacing the existing structure will only require minimal ground disturbance. Construction activities, specifically heavy equipment operation, may adversely impact some wildlife species. These activities may result in the temporary displacement of terrestrial and avian species as this work would be outside of the typical activity that occurs on the property. Any direct impacts to terrestrial, avian life, and habitats associated with development of the property would be short-term, minor, and not significantly adverse.</p> <p>No significant adverse impacts to terrestrial, avian, and aquatic life and habitats would be expected because of the proposed lease.</p>
Water quality, quantity, and distribution	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to water quality, quantity, and distribution would be expected because of because of the proposed development. The nearest water resource is Blodgett Creek, which is located approximately a quarter mile west of the property. The shooting range is located on the opposite side of a hill; therefore, construction will not have direct impacts on the creek. If necessary, during construction, the contractor will have runoff mitigations in place to prevent erosion.</p> <p>No significant adverse impacts to water quality, quantity, and distribution would be expected because of because of the proposed lease.</p>

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
Resource	None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	
Geology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to geology would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project would not affect any geologic features in the project area; therefore, no impacts to geology would be expected because of the proposed project.</p> <p>No significant adverse impacts to geology would be expected because of the proposed lease.</p>
Soil quality, stability, and moisture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to soil quality, stability, and moisture would be expected because of the proposed development. Any soil disturbance will be minimal and mitigated by replacing and grading disturbed soil.</p> <p>No significant adverse impacts to soil quality, stability, and moisture would be expected because of the proposed lease.</p>
Vegetation cover, quantity, and quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to vegetation cover, quantity, and quality would be expected because of the proposed development. There is not currently vegetation in the affected area of the project. The project area is mainly concrete, dispersed rock, or asphalt.</p> <p>No significant adverse impacts to vegetation cover, quantity, and quality would be expected because of the proposed lease.</p>
Aesthetics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to aesthetics would be expected because of the proposed development. The project area is an existing shooting range. The proposed development for replacing the firing line shelter would improve aesthetics.</p> <p>No significant adverse impacts the aesthetics would be expected because of the proposed lease.</p>

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
	None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	
Air quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts would be expected because of the proposed development. The proposed project constitutes rebuilding an existing structure and when completed, would not result in additional new air quality impacts in the affected area. Further, no significant point sources of air pollution exist in the area affected by the proposed project. Existing sources of air pollution in the area are limited and generally include unpaved county roads (fugitive dust source), vehicle exhaust emissions, and various agricultural practices (vehicle exhaust emissions and fugitive dust). Fugitive dust and vehicle exhaust emissions resulting from the movement of heavy equipment and materials for the proposed project may adversely impact air quality. However, any impacts to air quality would be short-term, mitigated by dust control practices and negligible.</p> <p>No significant adverse impacts to air quality would be expected because of the proposed lease.</p>
Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to any unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources would be expected because of the proposed development. The presence of any animal and/or plant species of concern and/or any threatened or Endangered species located within or using the affected area were assessed using the Montana Natural Heritage Program resources. Because the proposed project would occur within an existing shooting range, any adverse impacts to affected species that may be located within or use the affected area would be short-term, negligible, and consistent with existing and historic impacts.</p>

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
	None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	
									No significant adverse impacts to any unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources would be expected because of the proposed lease.
Historical and archaeological sites	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to historical and archaeological sites would be expected because of the proposed development. In keeping with the Montana Antiquities Act and related regulations (12.8.501 - 12.8.510), all undertakings on state lands are assessed by a qualified archaeologist 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 that are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, they will be protected from adverse effects through adjustments to the project design or cancellation of the project if no design alternatives are available. If cultural resources are unexpectedly discovered during project implementation, FWP contact FWP's Heritage Program for further evaluation.</p> <p>No significant adverse impacts to historical and archaeological sites would be expected because of the proposed lease.</p>
Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air, and energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to demands on environmental resources of land, water, air, and energy would be expected because of the proposed development. Fuel would be required to operate equipment and vehicles used to develop the proposed

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
Resource	None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	
									<p>project. Any impacts would be short-term and negligible as the proposed building is relatively small and the construction phase would be relatively short. As identified previously through the analyses of potential impacts to water quality, quantity, and distribution; soil quality, stability, and moisture; vegetation cover, quantity, and quality; and air quality; some adverse impacts to the environmental resources of water, land, and air may occur because of the proposed project. Any such impacts would be short-term, minor and/or negligible, and adequately mitigated (see cited impacts analyses above). No other demands on the environmental resources of land, water, air, and energy would be expected because of the proposed project.</p> <p>No significant adverse impacts to demands on environmental resources of land, water, air, and energy would be expected because of the proposed lease.</p>

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

HUMAN POPULATION	Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
Resource	None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	
Social structures and mores	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to social structures and mores would be expected because of the proposed development. During construction, this specific rifle range will need to be closed until the building is complete and approved for re-opening. FWP will work with the club on scheduling and public notice for the closure of this range. While construction is being conducted, the remaining areas of the range will remain open to the public. This will</p>

HUMAN POPULATION		Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
Resource		None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	
										<p>temporarily put pressure on other parts of the range, however, the effects will be short-term and negligible.</p> <p>No significant adverse impacts to social structures and mores would be expected because of the proposed lease.</p>
Cultural uniqueness and diversity		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to cultural uniqueness and diversity would be expected because of the proposed development. The proposed project constitutes the rebuilding of an existing structure within the exact footprint of the previous building. This action would not likely result in the relocation of people into or out of the affected area. Therefore, no impacts to the existing cultural uniqueness and diversity of the affected area would be expected because of the proposed development.</p> <p>No significant adverse impacts to cultural uniqueness and diversity would be expected because of the proposed lease.</p>
Access to and quality of recreational and wilderness activities		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to access and quality of recreational and wilderness activities would be expected because of the proposed development. The 300-yard rifle range will need to be closed until the new shelter is complete and approved for re-opening. FWP will work with the club on scheduling and public notice for the closure of this range. While construction is underway, the remaining areas of the range will remain open to the public.</p> <p>No significant adverse impacts to access and quality of recreational and wilderness activities would be expected because of the proposed lease.</p>

HUMAN POPULATION		Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
Resource		None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	
Local and state tax base and tax revenues		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to local and state tax base and tax revenues would be expected because of the proposed development. FWP would remain the property owner, and the property would continue to be used as a shooting range so this project would not likely affect property tax revenue.</p> <p>No significant adverse impacts to local and state tax base and tax revenues would be expected because of the proposed lease.</p>
Agricultural or Industrial production		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to agricultural or industrial production would be expected because of the proposed development. Because the affected land is not currently used for, or classified as, agricultural, no impacts to agricultural production would occur because of the proposed project. Further, no existing industrial operations would be displaced by the proposed project.</p> <p>No significant adverse impacts to agricultural or industrial production would be expected because of the proposed lease.</p>
Human health and safety		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to human health and safety would be expected because of the proposed development. Contractors hired to develop the proposed project may realize increased risk to human health and safety associated with construction and development activities. However, affected contractors would operate in a safe manner using best management practices. While under construction, the 300-yard rifle range will be closed to shooting and therefore recreational shooting activities will only be allowed in areas where workers are not present. Whittecar Rifle & Pistol Range is staffed daily and</p>

HUMAN POPULATION		Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
Resource		None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	
										<p>will have an employee and Range Safety Officer on staff during business hours.</p> <p>No significant adverse impacts to human health and safety would be expected because of the proposed lease.</p>
Quantity and distribution of employment		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to quantity and distribution of employment would be expected because of the proposed development. The project would result in contracted services, which would temporarily create employment opportunities. The proposed project is not expected to attract additional visitors to the area or create additional, long-term new employment opportunities in the affected area.</p> <p>No significant adverse impacts to quantity and distribution of employment would be expected because of the proposed lease.</p>
Distribution and density of population and housing		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to distribution and density of population and housing would be expected because of the proposed development. The project would not result in a change in use of the property that would affect population. Therefore, the proposed project would not impact distribution and density of population and housing in the affected area.</p> <p>No significant adverse impacts to distribution and density of population and housing would be expected because of the proposed lease.</p>
Demands for government services		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to demands for government services would be expected because of the proposed development.</p>

HUMAN POPULATION		Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
Resource		None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	
										No significant adverse impacts to demands for government services would be expected because of the proposed lease.
Industrial, agricultural, and commercial activity		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to industrial, agricultural, and commercial activity would be expected because of the proposed development. This parcel is not currently used for industrial, agricultural, or commercial activity and the proposed project would not change that use. There are no industrial, agricultural, or commercial activities in the immediate area.</p> <p>No significant adverse impacts to industrial, agricultural, and commercial activity would be expected because of the proposed lease.</p>
Locally adopted environmental plans and goals		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to locally adopted environmental plans and goals would be expected because of the proposed development. The property is in the jurisdiction of Ravalli County. While the county does not have a growth policy, they do have the 2012 Bitterroot Valley Natural Resources Use Policy. This project aligns with the goal to “establish, maintain and improve developed recreation areas on public land” (p. 13).</p> <p>No significant adverse impacts to locally adopted environmental plans and goals would be expected because of the proposed lease.</p>
Other appropriate social and economic circumstances		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to any other appropriate social and economic circumstances would be expected because of the proposed development. FWP is unaware of any other appropriate social and economic circumstances that may be impacted by the proposed project. Therefore,

HUMAN POPULATION	Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
Resource	None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	
									<p>no additional social and economic impacts would be expected because of the proposed project.</p> <p>No significant adverse impacts to any other appropriate social and economic circumstances would be expected because of the proposed lease.</p>

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

<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	
Criteria Used to Determine Significance	
1	<p>The severity, duration, geographic extent, and frequency of the occurrence of the impact</p> <p>“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.</p> <p>“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).</p>
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

VIII. 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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the action result in either a permanent or an indefinite physical occupation of private property?	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the action deprive the owner of all economically viable uses of the property?	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is there a reasonable, specific connection between the government requirement and legitimate state interest?	4a	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the government requirement roughly proportional to the impact of the proposed use of the property?	4b	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the action deny a fundamental attribute of ownership?	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the action have a severe impact of the value of the property?	6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the impact of government action direct, peculiar, and significant?	7a	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the government action resulted in the property becoming practically inaccessible, waterlogged, or flooded?	7b	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the proposed action result in taking or damaging implications?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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.

IX. 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-notice>*
 - *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 EA to those persons for review and comment (ARM 12.2.433(3)).*
 - *Public notice will announce the availability of the EA, summarize its content, and solicit public comment.*
- ***Duration of Public Comment Period:*** *The public comment period begins on the date of publication of legal notice in area newspapers (see above). Written or e-mailed comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., MST, on the last day of public comment, as listed below:*

Length of Public Comment Period: 30 days

Public Comment Period Begins: 12/08/2025

Public Comment Period Ends: 01/08/2026

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

- ***Where to Mail or Email Comments on the Draft EA:***

Name: SAMUEL HOGGATT

Email: Samuel.hoggatt@mt.gov

Mailing Address:

Attn: Samuel Hoggatt

1420 E. 6th Ave

Helena, MT 59601

X. Recommendation for Further Environmental Analysis

NO further analysis is needed for the proposed action	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
FWP must conduct EIS level review for the proposed action	<input type="checkbox"/>

XI. EA Preparation and Review

	Name	Title
EA prepared by:	Samuel Hoggatt	Program Manager
EA reviewed by:	Renee Lemon	Division Administrator