Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
1420 E 6th Ave, PO Box 200701 Helena, MT 59620-0701
(406) 444-2452

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

PART I. Purpose of and Need for Action

1. Project Title: East Poplar Shooting Facility
P.O. Box 1027
Poplar, Montana 59255

2. Type of Proposed Action: Firearms Range, Archery Range & Hunter Safety Confidence Course Construction & Site Improvement: Construct 25, 100, and 200 yard firearms range with single firing line, archery range and ten station safety confidence course.

3. Location Affected by Proposed Action:

The proposed range is on Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes property in Roosevelt County 5 miles east of Poplar, MT, on the NW ¼, NW ¼, Sec. 11, T.27N., R.51E.

4. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action: MCA87-1-276 through 87-1-279 (Legislative established policies and procedures for the establishment and improvement of shooting ranges) MCA87-2-105 (Departmental authority to expend funds to provide training in the safe handling and use of firearms and safe hunting practices)

5. Need for the Action(s): Currently, firearms and archery shooters are limited to undesignated private or other tribal properties which are not controlled nor designed with safety in mind. Recreational shooters on uncontrolled areas often become a nuisance to residents and landowners both from the standpoint of safety and the increased litter it often generates. Local law enforcement organizations throughout the county and surrounding areas also have no developed shooting/training ranges within the area. Additionally the local hunter education and bow-hunter safety training courses have no controlled outdoor areas available for the outdoor portions of their courses. There are no firearms or archery ranges within the tribal lands nor anywhere in Roosevelt

county or the surrounding areas.

6. Objectives for the Action(s): To provide safe controlled firearms and archery shooting ranges for public, hunter education, bow-hunter education and law enforcement use. Additionally to build a hunter/firearms safety confidence course for use by hunter education and bow-hunter education courses.

7.Map:

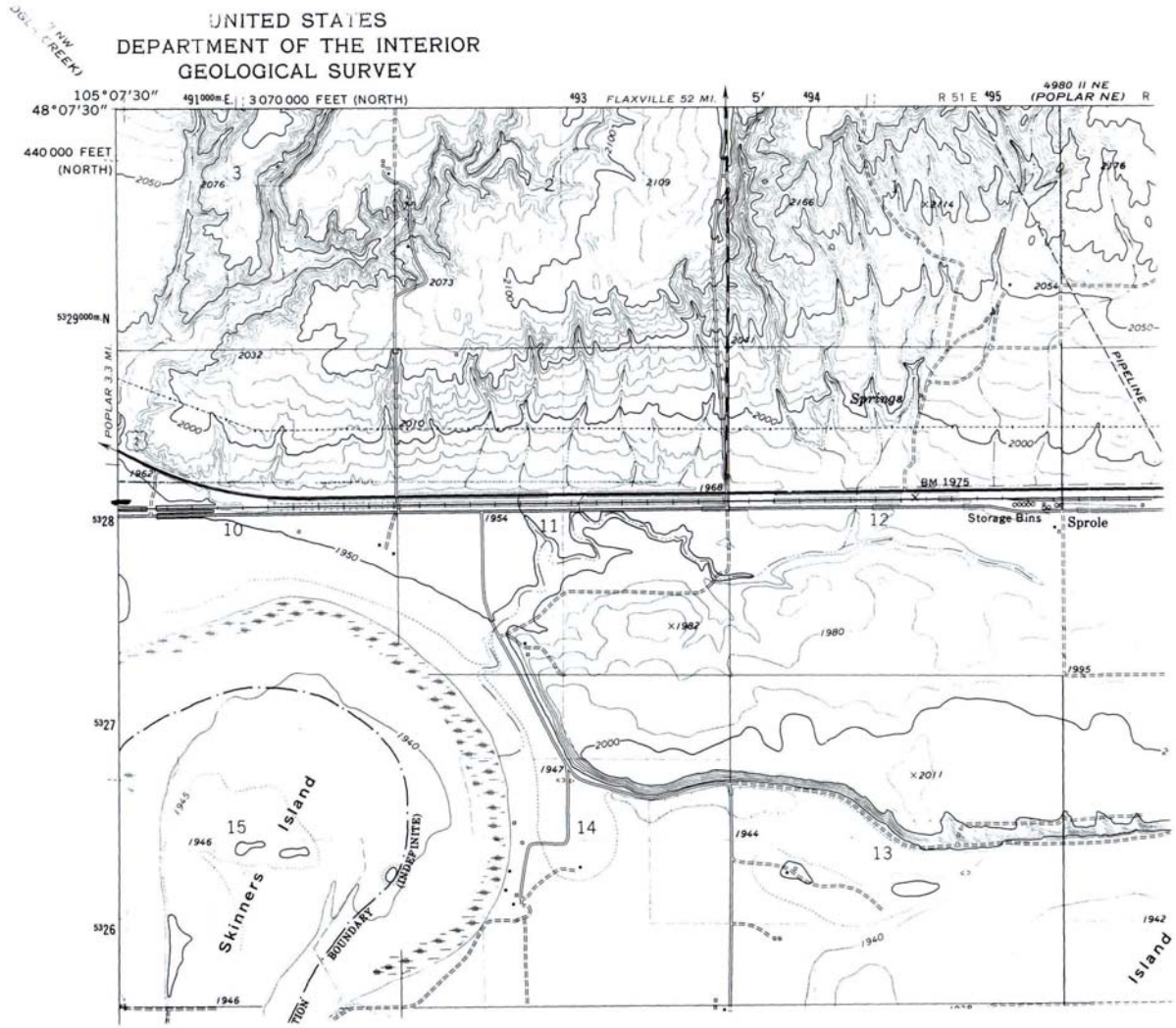

Figure 1 – Area Map of proposed range site.

Figure 2 - Aerial Photo of proposed range on old landfill (Light area in photo). Highway 2 running east & west along bottom of photo.

8. Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected:

Approximately 40 acres located on abandoned landfill.

9. Affected Environment (A brief description of the affected area of the proposed project):

The 40 acres of the proposed ranges are on an old landfill which had been closed since about 1983. Former landfill had been properly re-mediated and fenced. The site is currently used by tribal law enforcement as an unimproved pistol range. The surrounding area is agricultural primarily used for grazing. Prior to the landfill the site had a previous history of grazing. Grazing will continue on the surrounding area and it is anticipated that the 40 acre range complex will be hayed to maintain vegetation.

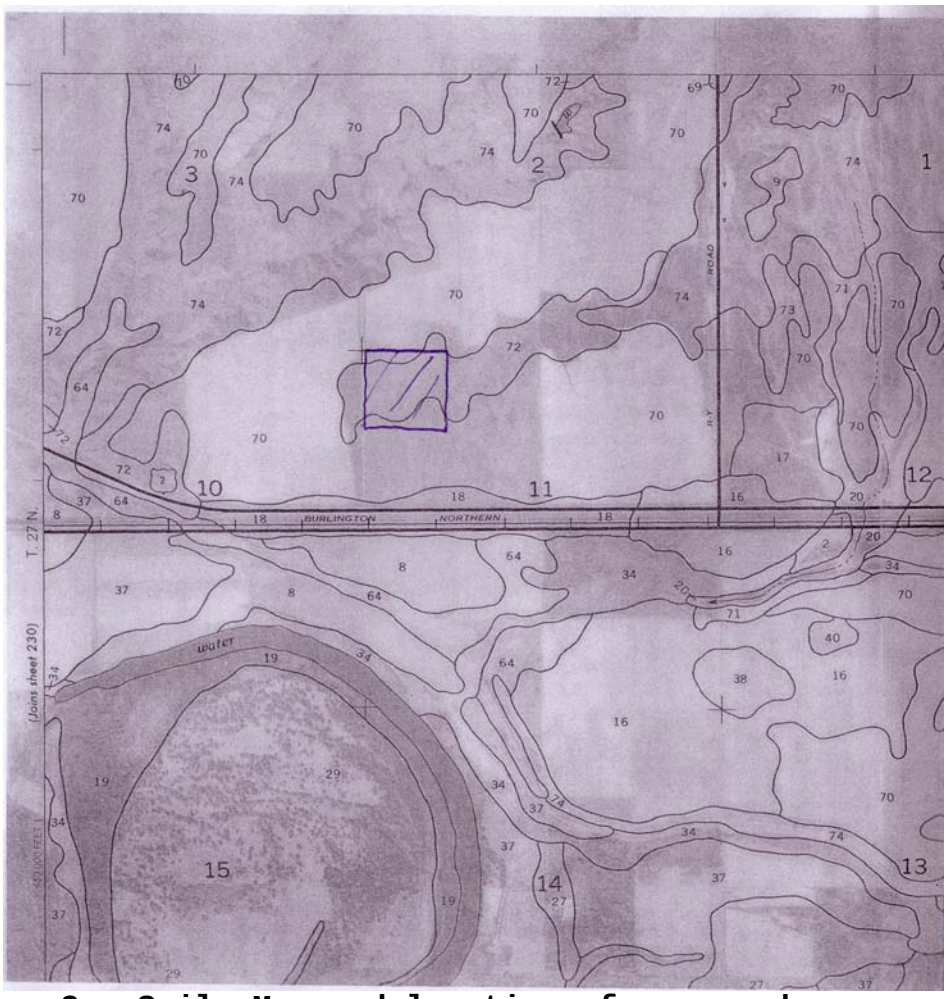

Figure 3 – Soils Map and location of proposed range site.

The soils of the area of the proposed range site, depicted on the above map, are shown as Williams (70) and Zahill (72). Williams soil predominates on the site and is surrounded by Zahill soils. Williams soil textures are defined as predominantly Clay loam, loam. The percentages of clay in the Williams soils ranges from 10-35% with the majority of the soil at 18-35%. The Zahill soils are also texturally classified as Clay loam, loam.

Williams Soils – have 0% fragments >10 inches and 0-5% fragments of 3-10 inches. These percentages give some indication for the probability for ricochets of projectiles from the firearms ranges. The cation-exchange capacity of the Williams soils ranges from 10-30 meq/100g with the average range for the majority at 10-25 meq/100g and a pH range of 6.6-8.4 with the majority of the soil between 7.9-8.4 pH. The cation-exchange capacity is the total amount of extractable bases that can be held by the soil, expressed in terms of milliequivalents per 100 grams of soil at neutrality (pH 7.0) or at some other stated pH value. "Soils having a low cation-exchange capacity hold fewer cations. The ability to retain cations reduces the hazard of ground-water pollution.

The range of pH for the above two soil types is:

Soil Type	Depth Inches	Soil Reaction pH
Williams	0-7	6.6-7.3
	7-12	6.6-7.8
	12-31	7.9-8.4
	31-60	7.9-8.4
Zahill	0-7	7.4-8.4
	7-24	7.4-8.4
	24-60	7.4-8.4

Average Annual rainfall at Fort Peck is 11".

10. Description of Project: This is a two phase project with only phase 1 being funded and evaluated at this time: Phase 1 (1) Excavating dirt for target area for the proposed courses (long gun, handgun, archery) including backstops, berms and course dividers. (2) Excavation and dirt work for septic system. (3) Additional projects include the purchasing of water (well) equipment (pump and casing), septic system (pipes, etc.), electrical equipment (fuse box, miscellaneous electrical supplies, and miscellaneous shooting related equipment (backboards, backstops, shooting benches). target area, concrete slab, and firing line. (2) Concrete Slab (3) Log shed (4) Roofing – shed and firing line (5) Benches (6) Fences – jackleg, log rails (7) Targets. The jack leg fence and shed will be rail and log, in keeping with the rustic and period concept. All top soil removed in excavation will be set aside and replaced on disturbed areas, then replanted with compatible prairie type grasses suitable to the area. Area within the confines of the range will be "hayed" to maintain vegetation levels and inhibit noxious weeds.

In Accordance With (IAW) contracts agreements with Fish, Wildlife & Parks, and all projects are to be completed by June 30, 2007.

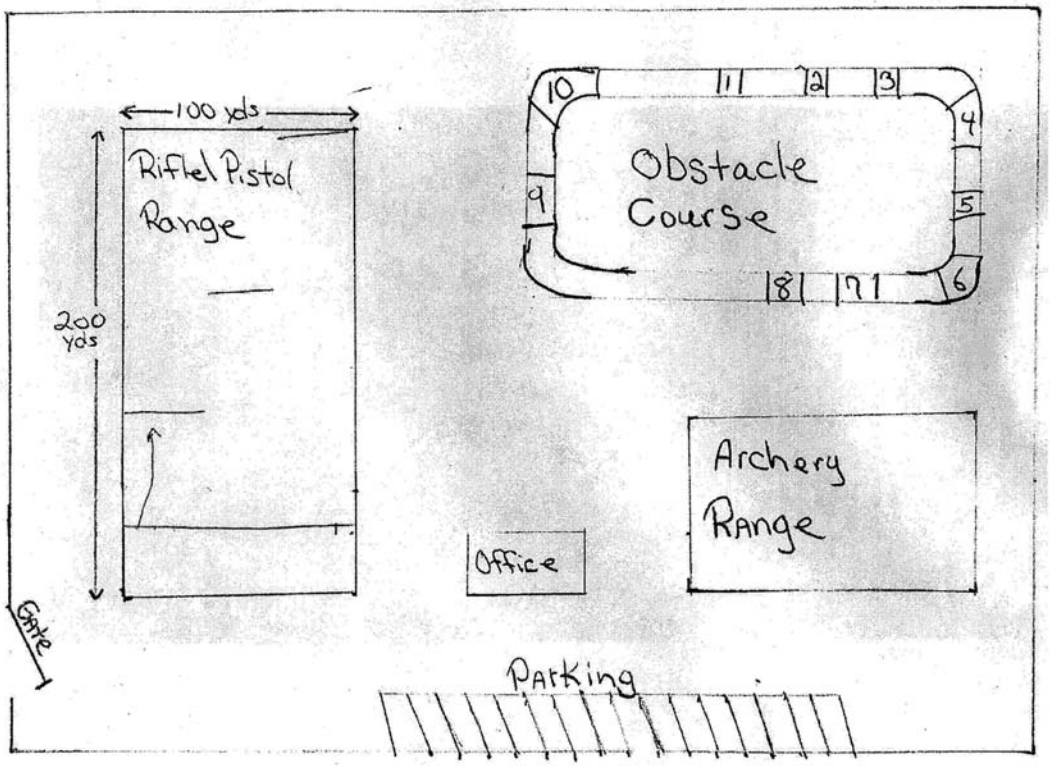

Figure 3 – Range Development Proposals

11. List any Other Local, State, or Federal Agency that has Overlapping or Additional Jurisdiction:

(a) Permits, Licenses and/or Authorizations:

Agency Name	Permit
*Bureau of Indian Affairs, Real Estate Services	Business Lease for Land
*Fort Peck Tribes	Well Permit
*Fort Peck Tribes	Septic Permit

*Site approval for both of these permits is contingent upon a successfully completed range EA and the meeting all the site criteria for the permitting authority.

Funding:

Agency Name	Funding Amount
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	$15,000
Fort Peck Tribe, Tribal in-kind	$ 6,000
Fort Peck Tribe, Fish & Game Dept.	$12,000
Fort Peck Tribe, Property & Supplies, Insurance Premiums (U.S. Risk, Inc.)	

12. Affiliations, Cooperating Agencies, User Groups and/or Supporting Groups: (See Funding Agencies above). Fort Peck Tribal Executive authorized the Law Enforcement and the Fish & Game Department to submit a grant proposal to the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks for a shooting range and to use the 40 acres of tribal land as an in-kind contribution for matching funds at $10.00 per acre per year for 15 years for a total match of $6,000 in-kind match.

13. History of the Planning and Scoping Process, and Any Public Involvement: Proposed ranges and development of the 40 acres had been advertised in the tribal newspaper the Wotanin Wowapi in 2005. Additionally the item had been presented to the Tribal Executive Board of the Assiniboine & Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation and the proposal was discussed and approved with no dissenting votes on June 27, 2005.

14. List of Agencies Consulted/Contacted During Preparation of the EA:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Fort Peck Tribes Fish and Game Department
Fort Peck Tribes Environmental Protection
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 8

15. Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor:

Robert Magnum
P.O. Box 1027
Poplar, MT 59255
(406) 768-5305
robertm@nemontel.net

16. Other Pertinent Information:

Shooting range applications require the participant's governing body to approve by resolution its submission of applications for shooting range funding assistance. Resolution Date: June 27, 2005

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Abbreviated Checklist – The degree and intensity determines extent of Environmental Review. An abbreviated checklist may be used for those projects that are not complex, controversial, or are not in environmental sensitive areas)

Table 1. Potential impact on physical environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				X		
2. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats				X		#2
3. Introduction of new species into an area				X		
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality				X		
5. Water quality, quantity & distribution (surface or groundwater)				X		#5
6. Existing water right or reservation				X		
7. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture				X		#7
8. Air quality or objectionable odors				X		
9. Historical & archaeological sites				X		#9
10. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
11. Aesthetics				X		

Comments (A description of potentially significant, or unknown, impacts and potential alternatives for mitigation must be provided.)

2. & 5. There are no live streams or ponds on the site and no delineated wetlands.

7. See soils under paragraph 9 Affected Environment. Lead from bullets will be deposited on or in the soil of the backstops or berms. The amount of lead that may be dissolved in water is determined primarily by the pH of the water. If lead is dissolved in water, the amount of lead that attaches to the soil and the amount that enters the ground water are determined by several major factors, including:

A. *How acidic or alkaline the soil is.* Lead tends to become more mobile at pHs below 6.5 and above 8.5. Lead tends to be relatively inactive at pH ranges between 6.5 and 8.5. According to the NRCS the soils in the area are pH 6.6 – 7.3 at 0-7" and at a depth of 31"-60" are pH 7.9-8.4.

B. *Amount of clay in the soil.* More lead attaches to clay soil than to other soil types. Solid clay layers block water from penetrating deeply into the ground, and thus prevent dissolved lead from reaching the groundwater beneath the clay layer. The soils on the proposed site are classified by NRCS as predominantly clay loam.

C. *Depth to ground water.* The closer the ground water is to the surface, the higher potential for contamination. Ground water depths in much of this area are relatively deep.

D. *Annual precipitation.* The greater the annual precipitation the greater potential for lead to be dissolved in the surface waters. The area of the Fort Peck Tribes is considered arid with a low annual rainfall of 11". This lower precipitation level further slows the dissolving of lead into the water and decreases the potential of either runoff or migration of dissolved lead through the soil.

All these factors on the Fort Peck Tribes work favorably together to minimize the potential for lead to enter the ground water.

9. Since this project is being proposed on an old landfill with a history of disturbance, no historical and/or archeological site evaluation was undertaken.

Table 2. Potential impacts on human environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Social structures and cultural diversity				**X**		
2. Changes in existing public benefits provided by wildlife populations and/or habitat				**X**		
3. Local and state tax base and tax revenue				**X**		
4. Agricultural production				**X**		#4
5. Human health				**X**		#5
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income				**X**		
7. Access to & quality of recreational activities				**X**		#7
8. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals (ordinances)				**X**		
9. Distribution & density of population and housing				**X**		
10. Demands for government services				**X**		
11. Industrial and/or commercial activity				**X**		

Comments (A description of potentially significant, or unknown, impacts and potential alternatives for mitigation must be provided.)

4. The site is adjacent to surrounding agricultural land primarily used for grazing. It is the intent of the range to lease the 40 acre range site for hay to help control vegetation on the area.

5. Range site plans, construction and the ongoing operational and maintenance plans meet the standards of safety for the range participants and the public at large. The area is enclosed with a chain link fence and locked gate. Posted range and safety signs are planned for the area.

7. Range will provide year round controlled access and fulfils a need for a range to accommodate law enforcement training, hunter education, bow-hunter safety, and public shooting.

Part III. Environmental Consequences

Does the proposed action involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely harmful if they were to occur? NO

Does the proposed action have impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant? This proposed action has no impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant. Cumulative impacts have been assessed considering any incremental impact of the proposed action when they are combined with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, and no significant impacts or substantially controversial issues were found. There are no extreme hazards created with this project and there are no conflicts with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan.

Identification of the Preferred Alternatives:
The proposed alternative A, alternative B and the no action alternative were considered.

- **Alternative A** is as described in paragraph 10 (Description of Project) where dirt for the backstops/berms will be "pushed" up from overburden on site.

- **Alternative B (Proposed Alternative)** is as described in paragraph 10 (Description of Project), however, based on concerns for the security of the landfill cap, dirt will need to be brought in from elsewhere for backstop and berm construction. This action will protect the landfill cap.

- **Alternative C (No Action Alternative)** area will remain as an abandoned landfill and no range(s) will be built.

Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented: Three alternatives have been considered, **A**, **B** (Proposed Alternative) and **C** (No Action Alternative). There were no other alternatives that were deemed reasonably available, nor prudent.

Neither the proposed alternative (**B**) nor the no action alternative (**C**) would have any significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences.

There are beneficial consequences to Acceptance of alternatives **A** & **B** to provide a safe environment for pistol, rifle, black powder and archery shooting, law enforcement, hunter, and bow-hunter education, and the realistic hunter education training on the confidence course.

- **Alternative A** has the potential to expose refuse from the old landfill in the process of moving dirt from the overburden cap of the landfill for the construction of the backstops/berms.
- **Alternative B** would have dirt for the backstops/berms being brought in from elsewhere to minimize possible exposure of the landfill refuse. Although more expensive this alternative is the prudent alternative.
- **No Action Alternative** would be not to develop the range and continue on with present activities. Land use would remain the same. Present activities include shooting activities on unsupervised or uncontrolled temporary areas. Therefore the proposed alternative is the prudent alternative.

Describe any Alternatives considered and eliminated from Detailed Study:
NONE

List and explain proposed mitigative measures (stipulations):
NONE

Individuals or groups contributing to, or commenting on, this EA:
Robert Magnum, Director Fort Peck Tribes Fish & Game Department
Andrew McKean, Information Officer, Region 6, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

PART IV NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

All of the pertinent or potential impacts of the project have been reviewed, discussed, and analyzed. None of the project reviewed were complex, controversial, or located in an environmentally sensitive area. The projects being implemented are on properties owned by the Fort Peck and will be developed by them keeping with the historic and environmental significance of the area in mind for all future activities and developments. The low impact activities proposed and the increased recreational opportunity indicates that this should be considered the final version of the environmental assessment. There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative (**B**). The long history of the Fort Peck Tribes in providing opportunities for tribal members and the public at indicates support of the proposed alternative. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks should approve the proposed alternative (**B**) for the Fort Peck Tribes' range proposals.

EA prepared by: GENE R. HICKMAN
Ecological Assessments
Helena, MT 59602

Date Completed: March 29, 2006

PART IV. EA CONCLUSION SECTION

Recommendation and justification concerning preparation of EIS:

None required.

Describe public involvement, if any: The proposal had been presented at an open Tribal Executive Board of the Assiniboine & Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, the proposal was on the public agenda, and it was discussed and approved with no dissenting votes on June 27, 2005.