FINAL
Environmental Assessment

Makoshika State Park
Rifle Range Project, Phase I

March 2007

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

FINAL
Environmental Assessment
MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of proposed state action: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to acquire a permanent recreational use easement for 357 acres from Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) for the purpose of future development of a rifle range within its boundaries. (See *Appendix B* for location maps.)

This proposed easement will constitute Phase I of a multi-phase project to relocate the existing rifle range from within Makoshika State Park to a location outside the park's boundaries. This action will provide shooting enthusiasts a range with greater target distances, more diversified shooting opportunities, and improved facilities. This Environmental Assessment (EA) addresses site acquisition only. Subsequent development of the site will be addressed in a future EA following the acquisition of the parcel. That EA will focus upon development actions including: location of access road, facility design, and appropriate mitigation measures for the development activities.

2. Agency authority for the proposed action:
FWP has the authority to develop outdoor recreational resources in the state per Montana Code Annotated (MCA) 23-2-101 and to acquire property or easements for outdoor recreation per MCA 87-1-209.

Furthermore, state statue 23-1-110 MCA and administrative rule ARM 12.2.433 guides public involvement and comment for the improvements at state parks, which this document provides.

3. Name of project: Makoshika State Park Rifle Range Project, Phase I

4. Name, address and phone number of project sponsor (if other than the agency):

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	
1420 East 6th Avenue	Industrial Site West, POB 1630
Helena, MT 59620	Miles City, MT 59301
406-444-2535	406-234-0900

5. Timeline (estimated):

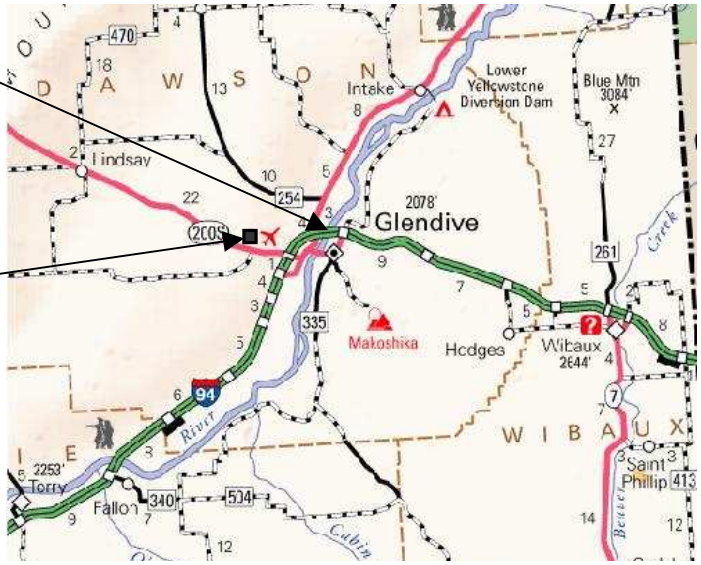
Public Comment Period Beginning:	Beginning of March
FWP Decision Notice Issued:	End of March
FWP Final Commission Approval:	March 29, 2007

Land Board Approval: April 19, 2007
Estimated Completion Date: End of April 2007

6. Location affected by proposed action (county, range and township):

Dawson County, Montana – N1/2 Section 36, T16E - R54E
See *Appendix B* for additional site maps.

Approximate location of proposed easement



7. Project size -- estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

	Acres		Acres
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	0
Residential	0		
Industrial	0	(e) Productive:	
		Irrigated cropland	0
(b) Open Space/ Woodlands/Recreation	0	Dry cropland	0
		Forestry	0
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas	0	Rangeland	357
		Other	0

8. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

(a) Permits: permits will be filed at least 2 weeks prior to project start.

Agency Name	Permit
None	

(b) Funding:

Agency Name	Funding Amount
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks - Parks Earned Revenue	$130,000

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

Agency Name	Type of Responsibility
Montana State Historical Preservation Office	Archeological & Cultural Site Protection
DNRC – State Lands	Approval of Easement Deed

9. Narrative summary of the proposed action or project including the benefits and purpose of the proposed action:

Background

Makoshika State Park is the largest park in the Montana State Park System, covering over 11,500 acres of badlands in the eastern side of the state. The park, near Glendive, was added to the state park system in 1953.

Since its inception, Makoshika has been a popular destination for residents and non-resident visitors alike. The park offers diverse amenities for visitors, including a visitor center, roads, hiking trails, scenic overlooks and vistas, campgrounds, a Frisbee Disk Golf (folf) course, an amphitheater, an archery range, and the rifle range which this EA addresses. Visitation statistics from 2003-2005 has shown a steady increase in the number of visitors to the park and in 2006, the park received over 56,000 visitors.

In 2005, after much hard work by a citizens advisory group and many public meetings, the Makoshika State Park Management Plan was completed. One of the goals identified in the plan, under the Visitor Services section, was to relocate the shooting range outside the park, without interrupting current use. This goal acknowledged the issue that the range was no longer compatible with surrounding park uses. Primarily, many park visitors felt insecure when hearing shooting while camping, hiking, or sightseeing. The existing rifle range is ½ mile

from the Glendive City limits, the park's visitor center, folf course, and hiking trailhead. The public's safety must be addressed and maintained, with the opportunity of an accident caused by accidental discharge or misfire of a firearm a possibility with the current range's location.

View of the proposed easement area

Anticipated Benefits

The proposed acquisition of a perpetual recreational use easement on this DNRC parcel would provide a secure location for FWP to meet the goals of the Makoshika State Park Management Plan to relocate the rifle range and it would ensure that a variety of shooting sports could be accommodated in the future.

The design of the existing range at Makoshika did historically provide target backboards at 25, 50, 75, and 100-yard marks and target platforms beyond these distances up to 500 yards. Currently, however, the maximum range is limited to 100 yards.

The proposed easement's location is approximately 3 miles west of Glendive on Hwy 200S and the topography of the proposed new location is similar to the range at Makoshika, which is composed of badlands. (See *Appendix B* for aerial and topography maps of the new site.) It is anticipated the new site's orientation would allow for two separate rifle ranges and one pistol range; one range could accommodate targets at up to 1,000 yards, another with a maximum distance of 300 yards, and the pistol range at 50 yards. The improved range would accommodate hunters who use the range to sight in their hunting rifles, as well as, shooting enthusiasts that need a more formal target area for long-range shooting competitions and events.

Site Acquisition

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) is obligated to manage its state school trust land to produce revenue for the trust beneficiaries (public schools). DNRC's policy is to charge full fee value of property when an applicant (in this case, FWP) seeks to acquire a permanent easement. FWP commissioned an independent appraisal of the proposed rifle range site, and the appraisal determined a fee value of $130,000 for the 357 acres. FWP proposes to pay DNRC this amount for the recreational use easement.

DNRC's current lessee was contacted by FWP regarding any potential compensation issues arising from the property rights acquired by FWP through the easement. DNRC's lessee requested no compensation.

FWP Rights and Responsibilities for Site Management

The application for a permanent recreational use easement, as submitted by FWP to DNRC, would provide FWP with the right to develop access roads on the property; to construct buildings, fences and other site improvements necessary for shooting range development, operation and public safety; to develop shooting lanes and target areas; and to manage other surface uses, including public access and livestock grazing. (As noted above, these specific site-development proposals will be brought before the public for review and comment in a future environmental assessment.) FWP would also have the ability to charge reasonable user fees, as necessary to underwrite management and maintenance costs of the shooting range facility. FWP would be responsible for maintaining all site improvements and for weed management on the property.

10. 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:

Alternative A: No Action

FWP would not pursue a recreational use easement on the 357 acres of DNRC land northwest of Glendive for the anticipated new location of the Makoshika rifle range. Status quo would be maintained at the rifle range within the boundary of Makoshika State Park.

Alternative B: FWP to pursue a perpetual recreational use easement on 357 acres from the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)

FWP would pay the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation the amount of $130,000 and would acquire a permanent recreational use easement to develop a rifle range on 357 acres of State school trust land five miles east of Glendive. This acquisition would represent the first phase of the plan to transfer the rifle range from Makoshika State Park to a new location outside of the park. Such a relocation would meet a key goal of the 2005 Makoshika State Park Management Plan, and would also better meet public needs for a quality shooting range facility near the community of Glendive.

Alternative C: Pursue another location for the rifle range's relocation

Over the past 12 years, FWP has looked for an acceptable property in the Glendive vicinity for relocation of the Makoshika rifle range. Many other sites have been investigated, but have been disqualified because of their greater distance from the Glendive community, poor topographical features, lack of shooting range potential, or proximity to an inhabited area.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

The analysis of the physical and human environments discussed on the following pages is limited to Alternative B. The reason for this is because under based on the description of Alternative A, FWP would not pursue the recreational easement and status quo would be maintained at the existing rifle range within Makoshika State Park. Also, an assessment would be impossible to complete for Alternative C since it is unknown which future property would be chosen and what its attributes might be.

3. Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. **Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?		X				
c. **Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

The proposed recreational easement will not impact any land resources. This MEPA document addresses only the acquisition of easement (Phase I). A future environmental/MEPA analysis for Phase II will address the physical development of the site (i.e. access roads, facility development).

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

2. AIR **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT ***					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
a. **Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)		X				
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. ***For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a.)		X				
f. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

The proposed action would likely have no effect on air quality on the subject property.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

3. **WATER** **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT** *					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
a. *Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		X				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?	X					
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)		X				
m. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)		X				
n. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

The proposed action would likely have no effect on water quality or flow on the subject property.

3i. DNRC file search has revealed that a well and water rights do exist on this parcel. The water rights are held by the DNRC. It is unknown at this time if the well is operational and if any dollar value exists for these improvements.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

4. VEGETATION Will the proposed action result in?	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?		X				
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?		X				
f. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		X				
g. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Vegetation (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

The proposed action would not affect the current use of the vegetation on the subject property. Grazing would be allowed to continue until development of the site begins, which will be discussed in a future environmental assessment.

A search of the Montana Natural Heritage database of species of concern found no sensitive species within the easement's boundary. Two vascular plants listed as species of concern (Bractless Mentzelia and Bittersweet) have been found just south of the easement area. However, the database's records note that the Bractless Mentzelia notation is a historical record and the Bittersweet's is limited to only one specimen. It is unlikely either exist on the proposed project area based on this historical information and on the unsuitable habitat this area has for the plants.

Per the easement deed between by FWP and DNRC, FWP will retain the right to improve the existing habitat that could include improvements to the current wetland area near the well. Additionally as another stipulation of the easement deed, FWP will development a fire management plan for the property that would define methods, such as livestock grazing and mowing, to reduce the accumulation of fuels and reduce potential wildfire risk.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

** 5. FISH/WILDLIFE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
h. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)		X				
i. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		X				
j. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Fish and Wildlife (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

The proposed easement will have no additional impact on the current wildlife in the area, which is primarily limited to mule deer, a transient population of sharp-tailed grouse, and transient antelope population. Currently, hunting is permitted on the property and would be allowed by FWP until Phase II (development phase) of the rifle range.

Furthermore, grazing is currently permitted by DNRC on the property affected by the proposed easement. FWP would allow the livestock grazing to continue at least until such time as the development phase begins.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Increases in existing noise levels?		X				
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Noise/Electrical Effects (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

The proposed action would not increase noise or electrical levels on the subject property or neighboring parcels.

7. LAND USE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Use (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

No adverse effects are expected to the land's use by the proposed easement.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?			X		Yes	8a
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		X				
e. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Risk/Health Hazards (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

8a. Chemical spraying is part of FWP's weed management plan to limit the infestation of noxious weeds on the conserved property. Only a trained licensed applicator would conduct weed treatment and chemical storage. Storage and mixing of chemicals would be in strict compliance with label instructions accordance that is current standard operating procedures.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				
f. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Community Impact (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

The proposed easement will have no effect on local commercial activities or on the growth rate in the area.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				10c
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?		X				
e. **Define projected revenue sources						10e
f. **Define projected maintenance costs.						10f
g. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Public Services/Taxes/Utilities (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

10c. The proposed action will not effect existing utility easements granted by DNRC and MT Department of Transportation across the property.

10e. The cost ($130,000) of the easement will paid by FWP's Parks Division Earned Revenue account.

10f. Anticipated maintenance costs are expected to be less than $1,000/year, which would include weed management, access gate, and repair of existing fencing.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

** 11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. **Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.)		X				
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		X				
e. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Aesthetics/Recreation (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

The proposed easement will not change the aesthetics of the sites or alter the character of the area.

See *Appendix C* for the Montana Department of Commerce Tourism Report.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. **Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.)		X				
e. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Cultural/Historical Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

The Montana State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) was contacted (See *Appendix D*) to research if any culturally significant resources had been identified with the proposed easement property. SHPO acknowledge that one site had been identified, however they concluded the proposed easement would have no effect on that site.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. ***For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)			X			13f
g. ****For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Significance Criteria (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

13f. Some public controversy is expected since the topic of the potential relocation of the rifle range outside Makoshika State Park did rouse strong opinions, both in support and opposition of the relocation goal, during the public comment period for the Park's Management Plan in 2005.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

2. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

The proposed recreational easement between FWP and DNRC will provide terms and clarification for the use and protection of the property in perpetuity.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The acquisition of this recreational easement from DNRC by FWP will provide FWP with the necessary property to move the relocation of the rifle range from within Makoshika State Park one step closer to completion.

The impact this project will have on the physical and human environment will be minimal with only minor influence to the following area:

- Management of noxious weeds on the property that may include localized, chemical spraying to decrease the potential of it spreading.

At the time of this EA, the final stipulations of the proposed easement deed between FWP and the DNRC are being finalized. However, FWP anticipates it will be granted all exclusive rights to manage the property during this phase and any future development phases.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Describe the level of public involvement for this project if any, and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on this current EA, the proposed action and alternatives:

- Two public notices in each of these papers: *Helena Independent Record, Billings Gazette,* and the *Glendive Ranger Review;*
- One statewide press release;
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: *http://fwp.mt.gov.*

Copies of this environmental assessment will be distributed to the neighboring landowners and interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project and chance to provide comment. If enough interested is shown, a public meeting maybe scheduled.

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having few minor impacts.

2. Duration of comment period, if any.

The public comment period will extend from March 7 to March 27. Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., March 27, 2007 and can be mailed to the address below:

Makoshika State Park, Rifle Range Project
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Industrial Site West, POB 1630
Miles City, MT 59301

Or email comments to: jlittle@mt.gov

PART V. EA PREPARATION

1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? (YES/NO)?
If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.

Based upon the above assessment, which has identified a very limited number of minor impacts from the proposed action, an EIS in not required and an environmental assessment is the appropriate level of review.

2. Name, title, address and phone number of the person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:

John Little
Region 7 Parks Manager
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Industrial Site West, POB 1630
Miles City, MT 59301
406-234-0923

Rebecca Cooper
MEPA Coordinator
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1420 E. 6th Ave., Helena MT 59601
406-444-4756

Ryan Sokoloski, Manager
Makoshika State Park
PO Box 1242
Glendive, MT 59330
406-377-6256

3. List of agencies consulted during preparation of the EA:

Montana Department of Commerce – Tourism
Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- Parks Division
- Wildlife Division
- Legal Bureau
- Lands Bureau

Montana Natural Heritage Program – Natural Resources Information System (NRIS)
Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)

APPENDICES

A. MCA 23-1-110 Qualification Checklist
B. Map of Property to be Leased for the New Rifle Range
C. Tourism Report – Department of Commerce
D. Clearance Letter – State Historic Preservation Office

APPENDIX A
23-1-110 MCA
PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

Date: January 9, 2007 **Person Reviewing:** Rebecca Cooper

Project Location: Makoshika State Park Rifle Range Project, Phase I
Dawson County (T16N, R54E)

Description of Proposed Work: See pages 3-5 for narrative about the proposed project. Any future site development/improvements will be addressed in separate environmental assessment.

The following checklist is intended to be a guide for determining whether a proposed development or improvement is of enough significance to fall under 23-1-110 rules. (Please check ✓ all that apply and comment as necessary.)

[ ] A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?
Comments*: n/a*

[ ] B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?
Comments*: n/a*

[ ] C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?
Comments*: n/a*

[ ] D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?
Comments*: n/a*

[ ] E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a doublewide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?
Comments*: n/a*

[ ] F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?
Comments*: n/a*

[ ] G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?
Comments*: See Appendix D for SHPO letter.*

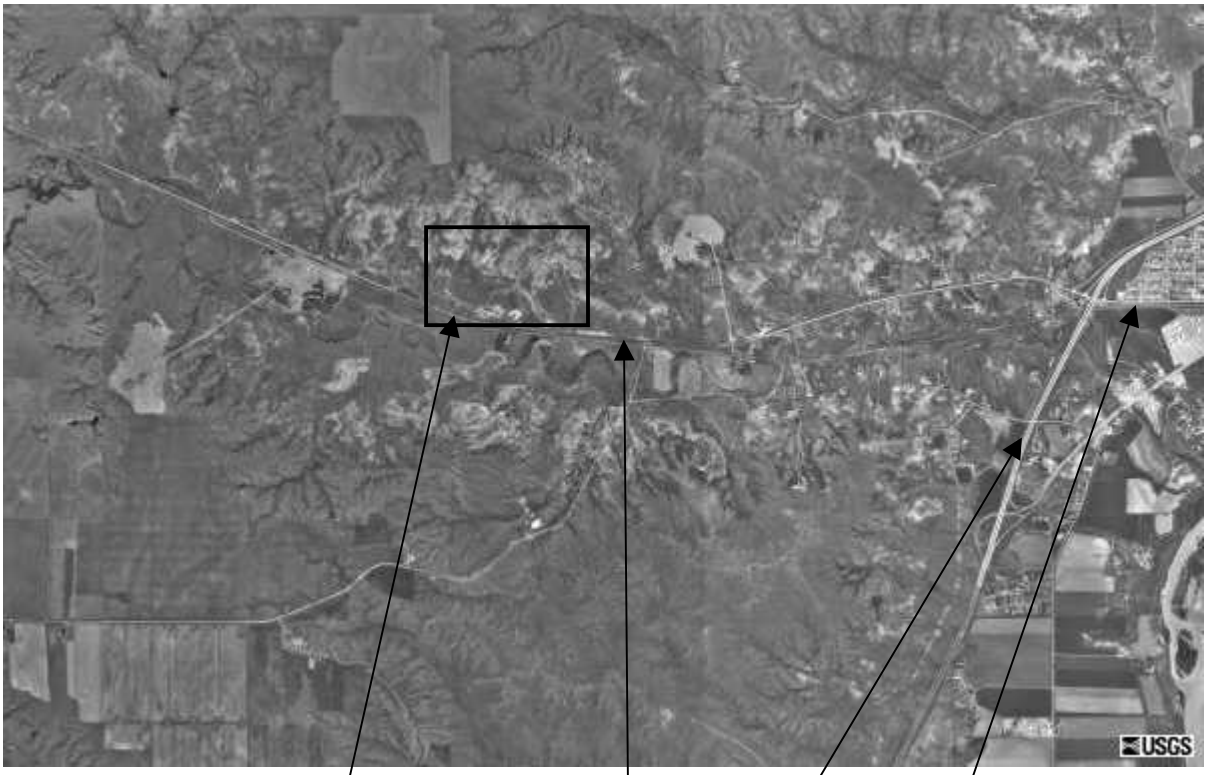
[ ] H. Any new above ground utility lines?
Comments*: No new utility lines will be added to the viewshed. Currently, a power line does transect the proposed easement area.*

[ ] I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?
Comments*: n/a*

[ ] J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern; including effects of a series of individual projects?
Comments*: n/a*

If any of the above are checked, 23-1-110 MCA rules apply to this proposed work and should be documented on the MEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST. Refer to MEPA/HB495 Cross Reference Summary for further assistance.

APPENDIX B

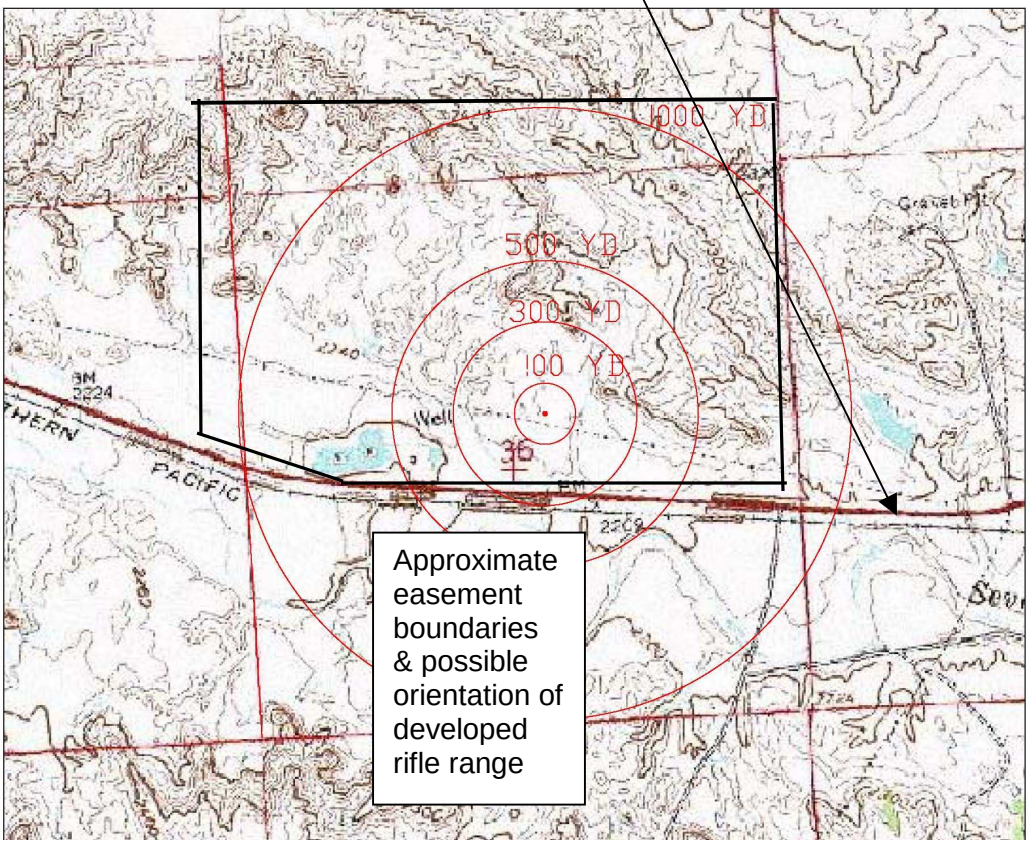


Approx. Location of proposed easement

Hwy 200

I-94

West edge of Glendive



APPENDIX C

TOURISM REPORT
MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA) & MCA 23-1-110

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has initiated the review process as mandated by MCA 23-1-110 and the Montana Environmental Policy Act in its consideration of the project described below. As part of the review process, input and comments are being solicited. Please complete the project name and project description portions and submit this form to:

Victor Bjornberg, Tourism Development Coordinator
Travel Montana-Department of Commerce
PO Box 200533
Helena, MT 59620-0533

Project Name: Makoshika State Park Rifle Range Project, Phase I

Project Description: To purchase a permanent recreational use easement from Montana Department of Natural Resources (DNRC) for 357 acres west of Glendive along Hwy 200. The property will be used as the future site of the rifle range that currently resides within Makoshika State Park. Another environmental assessment will address the anticipated improvements at the site of the easement in the future.

1. Would this site development project have an impact on the tourism economy?
   (NO) YES If YES, briefly describe:

2. Does this impending improvement alter the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings?
   (NO) YES If YES, briefly describe:

Signature Victor A Bjornberg Date 1-25-07

2/93
7/98sed

APPENDIX D

STAN
DNRC/DNT
GLENDIVE
RIFLE AND
PISTOL RANGE

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
AND CONSERVATION

DIVISION OF TRUST LAND MANAGEMENT

BRIAN SCHWEITZER, GOVERNOR

1625 ELEVENTH AVENUE

STATE OF MONTANA

DIRECTOR'S OFFICE (406) 444-2074
TELEFAX NUMBER (406) 444-2684

PO BOX 201601
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-1601

RECEIVED

OCT 11 2006

October 5, 2006

2006100603
RECEIVED
OCT 06 2006
BY: SHPO

Montana State Historic Preservation Office
Attn: Dr. Mark Baumler
P.O. Box 201202
Helena, MT 59620-1202

RE: Cultural Resources Inventory of the N1/2 of Section 36, T16N R54E: Dawson County, Montana. Report prepared by Patrick Rennie (DNRC, Helena) for the DNRC (Helena, MT). Report dated 10-2006.

Dear Mark:

Enclosed for your review and files please find a copy of the above referenced report. That report details the results of a cultural resources inventory of a 350 acre block of state land in Dawson County. Because the DNRC is considering the permitting of the Glendive Rifle and Pistol range in the area surveyed, the inventory was conducted in order to comply with Montana State Antiquities Act mandates. During the course of inventory one previously undocumented cultural resource (24DW519) was identified and subsequently evaluated and formally recorded. It is the recommendation of the DNRC that this cultural resource site is not a National Register eligible property. As such, the DNRC is seeking concurrence of the SHPO that there should be **No Effect** to heritage properties on state lands with the proposed undertaking.

Thank you in advance for your time, and if you have any questions or concerns regarding the above referenced report or project please let me know.

Sincerely,

Patrick

Patrick J. Rennie
DNRC Archaeologist

CONCUR
MONTANA SHPO
DATE 10/6/06 SIGNED

cncl.

CENTRALIZED SERVICES DIVISION (406) 444-2074 | CONSERVATION & RESOURCE DIVISION (406) 444-6697 | RESERVED WATER RIGHTS COMPACT COMMISSION (406) 444-6811 | OIL & GAS DIVISION (406) 444-6675 | TRUST LAND MANAGEMENT DIVISION (406) 444-2074