

WILDLIFE HABITAT LAND PROJECT PROPOSAL – vers. 1/2018

1. Applicant Name: Mark Deleray
2. Date: Jan. 31, 2018
3. Project Name: Cartan Addition to Canyon Creek WMA Type of Acquisition: *Fee*
4. Size: 233 acres, 2 parcels: A ~59-acre parcel adjoins the Canyon Creek WMA. A ~174-acre parcel is ~1.25 miles south of the WMA. Canyon Creek and Virginia Creek flow in and out of this larger parcel.
5. Location: 25 miles northwest of Helena, Lewis & Clark County, FWP R3

Map(s): See attached:

- Figure 1. General Overview Cartan Property Location
- Figure 2. Cartan Property Relative to Public Land & Conservation Easements
- Figure 3. ~59-acre Parcel
- Figure 4. ~174-acre Parcel
- Figure 5. Project Location
- Figure 6. Detail of Streams at ~174-acre Parcel

6. Project Need (Application Overview – limit to 1,500 characters) – **up to 10 pts.**

The Cartan property would be an addition to the existing Canyon Creek WMA. The benefits of this property include increasing the amount of existing, contiguous protected wildlife habitat, hunting opportunity, stream access, and further protection of stream corridors¹ within native westslope cutthroat trout range.

This property, like the existing WMA, would provide hunting opportunity for mule deer and elk, winter range for mule deer and possibly moose, and spring, summer and fall range for all three of these big game species. In addition, the entire suite of carnivores, grizzly and black bear, wolves, Canada lynx, wolverine, bobcat, etc., utilize the area, and this property falls within the continental divide wildlife movement corridor between the NCDE and areas further south.

From GIS, it is uncertain how much of either Virginia Creek or Canyon Creek is the boundary of the property, just outside the boundary, or within the property. Therefore, what fisheries management opportunities may exist are unknown at this time. Both streams are within westslope cutthroat trout range. If habitat conditions for westslope cutthroat trout are favorable in these streams, then they could be candidates for cutthroat reintroduction. This property would also provide additional points of public access to Virginia and Canyon Creeks. Angler access would increase, and there would be additional fishing opportunity for brook trout and rainbow trout, both of which occur in Canyon Creek.

Under FWP ownership and management as a WMA, the property would remain undeveloped.

¹ Extent of stream corridors unknown at present. See additional fisheries information in this proposal.

7. Broad Terrestrial and Aquatic Habitat Criteria – up to 10 pts.

- 0% Intermountain Grassland
- **<3% Riparian/Wetland** (This is a very rough estimate. From GIS, it is uncertain precisely how much of either Virginia Creek or Canyon Creek is the boundary of the property, just outside the boundary, or within the property, (see Figure 6, Detail of Streams...). We will provide updates about the reaches of both streams on or constituting the boundary of the property when known, as well as an updated estimate of acres of riparian habitat.)
- 0% Shrub Grassland
- **>97% Montane Forests**
- 0% Cropland

8. Project Level Criteria

a) **Habitat Values – up to 10 pts.**

- The habitat has unique characteristics to the biological/ecological community:
 - Would expand an existing WMA and would prevent development adjacent to that portion of the existing WMA;
 - Wildlife movement corridor;
 - Winter range for mule deer and moose; spring, summer and fall range for elk;
 - Grizzly bear, wolverine, and Canada lynx confirmed in the area;
 - Streams are within westslope cutthroat trout range. If habitat conditions for westslope cutthroat trout are favorable in these streams, then they could be candidates for cutthroat reintroduction.

b) **Threat Status: PICK ONE**

- **IMMINENT - 10 pts:** *the land is proposed for activity within five years which will cause irreversible impacts.*
- **PROBABLE - 5 pts:** *strong trends in the vicinity of project have been toward conversion of the habitat (e.g., subdivision; cropland conversion), but no specific threat is underway.*
- **The property was recently passed on to the next generation, and they both live out of state. POSSIBLE- 2 pts:** *sporadic occurrences for habitat conversion, which may happen to the property, particularly as it changes ownership.*
- **UNLIKELY – 0 pts**

c) **Focal Priority – up to 10 pts.**

Is this project area identified as a priority in a species or multi-species conservation plan? (3 pts)

This area is within Zone 2 for grizzly bear conservation, and it is occupied range. Additionally, Peck et al (2017)² identified this area as important for genetic connectivity between the NCDE and GYE populations of grizzly bears. This property is within the continental divide wildlife movement corridor, which grizzly bears are utilizing to disperse from the NCDE.

d) **Geographic Effectiveness – up to 10 pts.**

The ~59-acre parcel is surrounded by the existing WMA on three sides, with a highway on the west side and private property across the highway. The ~174-acre parcel is ~1.25 miles

² Peck, C. P., F. T. van Manen, C. M. Costello, M. A. Haroldson, L. A. Landenburger, L. L. Roberts, D. D. Bjornlie, and R. D. Mace. 2017. Potential paths for male-mediated gene flow to and from an isolated grizzly bear population. *Ecosphere* 8(10):e01969. 10.1002/ecs2.1969

south of the WMA and is adjacent to an FWP conservation easement and another conservation easement. See Figures 1-3 at the end of this document.

e) **Contribute to hunting and fishing opportunity and other recreation – up to 10 pts.**

The property would provide additional hunting and fishing opportunities. The property would provide additional points of access to both Canyon and Virginia Creeks—perhaps the only public access to Virginia Creek within its lower reach. Given the location, the property will see high use by the public during fall hunting seasons. This addition would further disperse hunters in the area. There is consistent elk harvest success on the existing WMA, because of the location and the closure to motorized use. Hiking, wildlife viewing, horseback riding, and other uses compatible with a wildlife management area would also be possible on the property. It would be closed during winter for wintering ungulates.

Both parcels are accessible from Highway 279, and the larger parcel is also accessible from Stemple Pass Road. The smaller parcel is surrounded on three sides by the existing WMA. The larger parcel is adjacent to an FWP conservation easement, the Grady Ranches CE, which provides substantial public use for hunting and some public use for other pursuits.

f) **Management Considerations – 10 pts.**

- Initial obligations would include some signage along the highway. Parking at the larger parcel may already exist, and we would consider fencing that in. There is no infrastructure, etc., and because the property is adjacent to the existing WMA, no additional staffing or equipment needs are anticipated.
- One of the parcels is not contiguous with the existing WMA. However, it is only ~1.25 miles away from the existing WMA, and it is accessible from two major roads. Other than the additional acreage, it will not add significant travel time for management purposes (weeds, monitoring). (The existing WMA straddles the highway in two places, and we access it from three different points for weed management.)
- There is a home on the larger parcel. However, FWP and the landowner agree that the parcel could be split, with the landowner retaining ownership of the home and a small footprint around it. An easement may be needed for septic maintenance across the road (Stemple Pass Road) from the home—This area may also be a good location for public parking.
- A full reconnaissance of the property will be completed once the snow is out. At this time, we are unaware of what weed issues may exist on either parcel or what fencing needs may be on the larger parcel. However, we don't think that these parcels have been grazed for quite some time. The smaller parcel will not require fencing.

Figure 1. General Overview Cartan Property Location

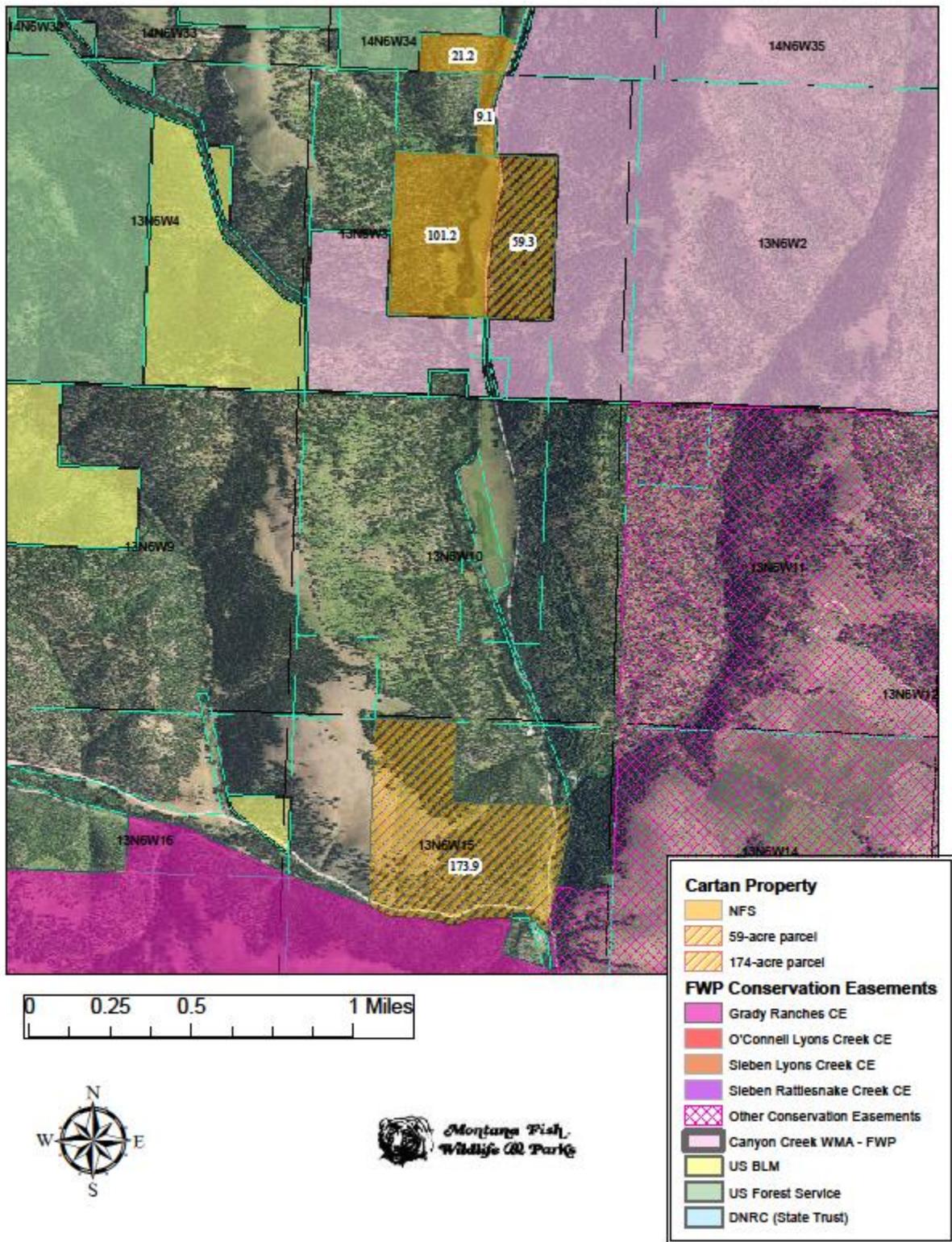


Figure 2. Cartan Property Relative to Public Land & Conservation Easements

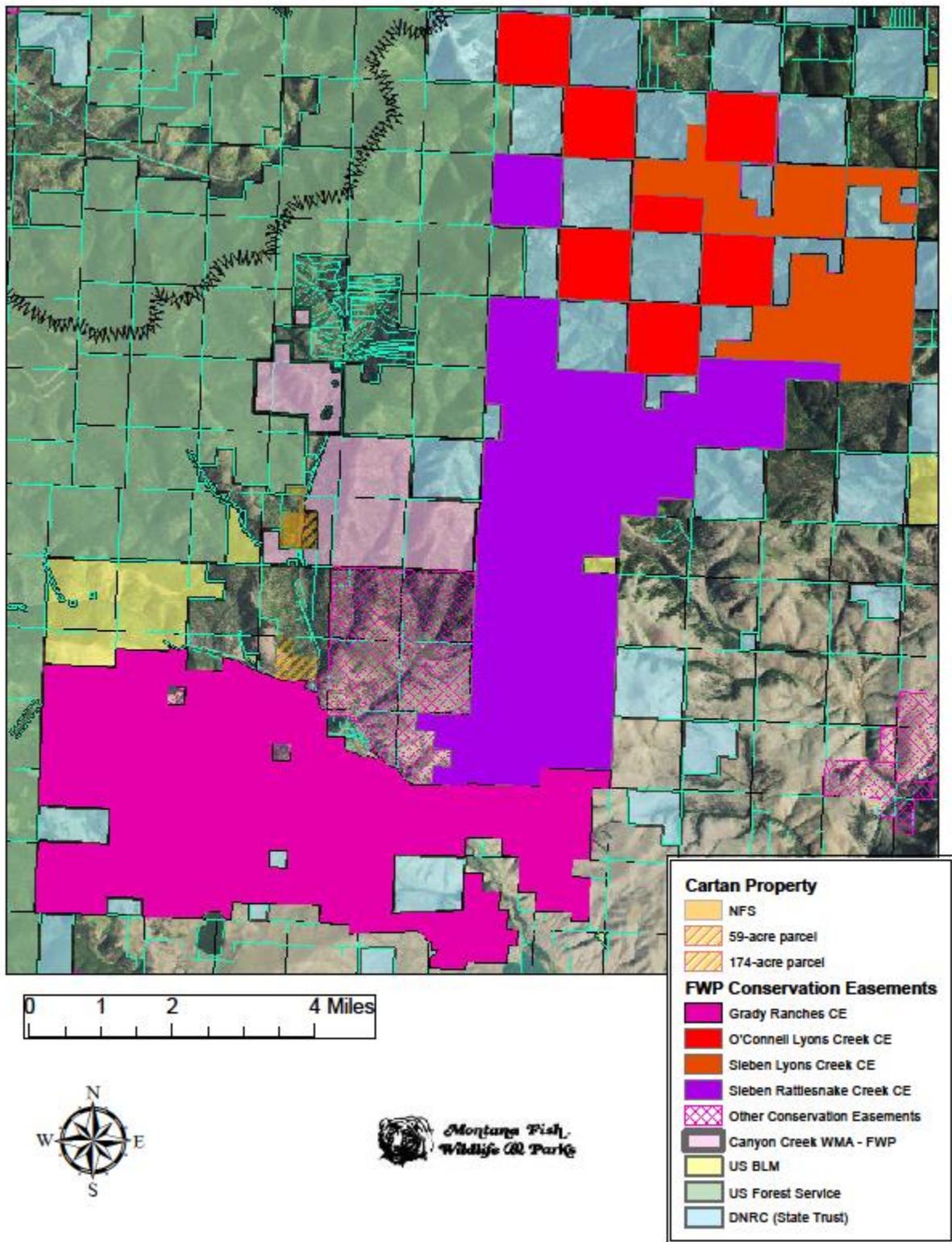


Figure 3. ~59-acre Parcel

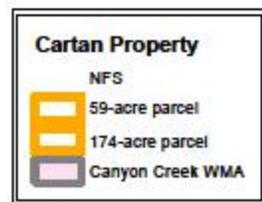
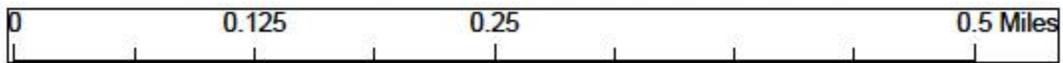
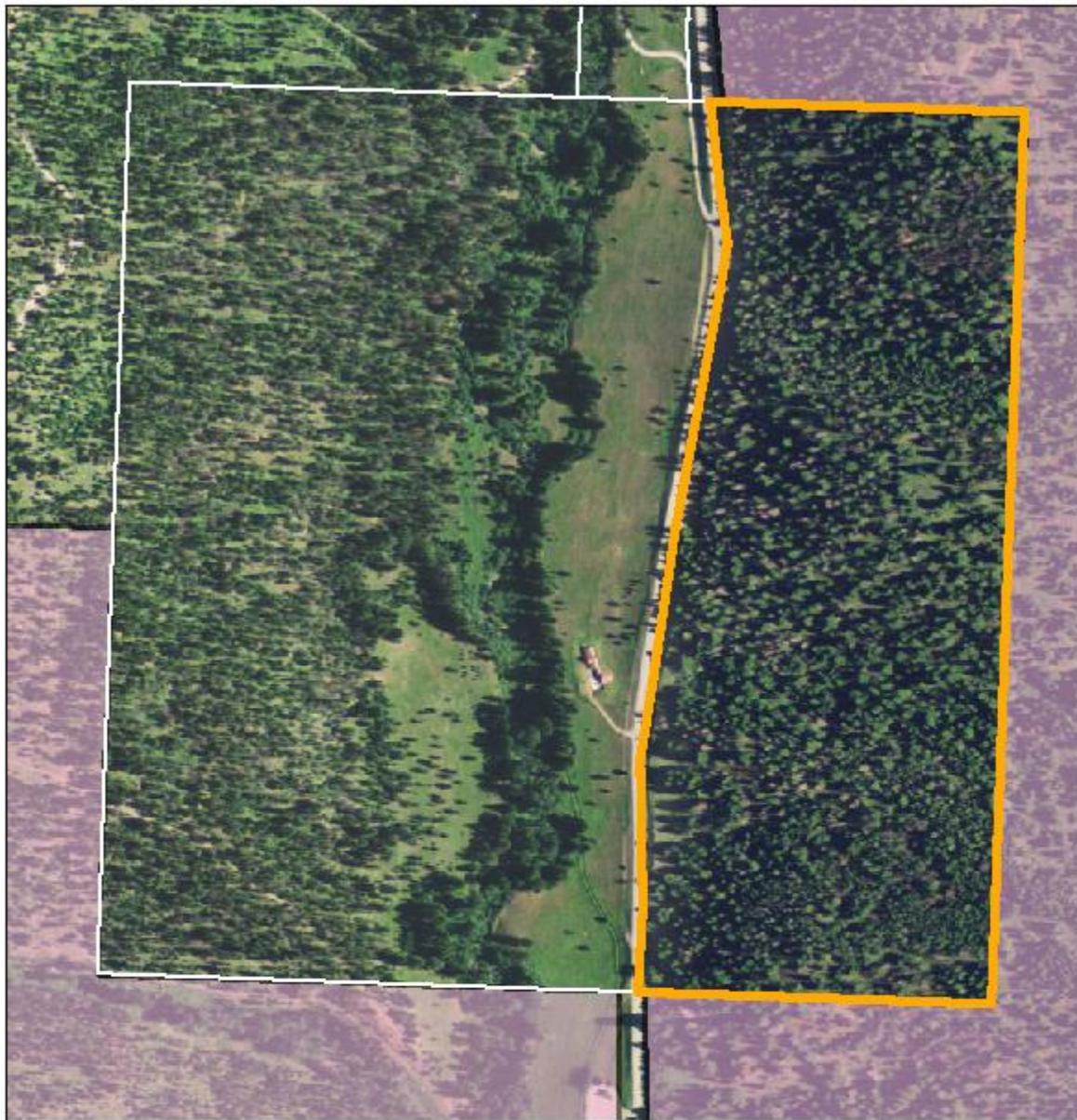


Figure 4. ~174-acre Parcel

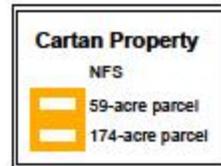
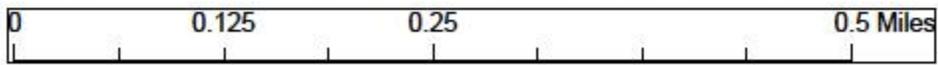
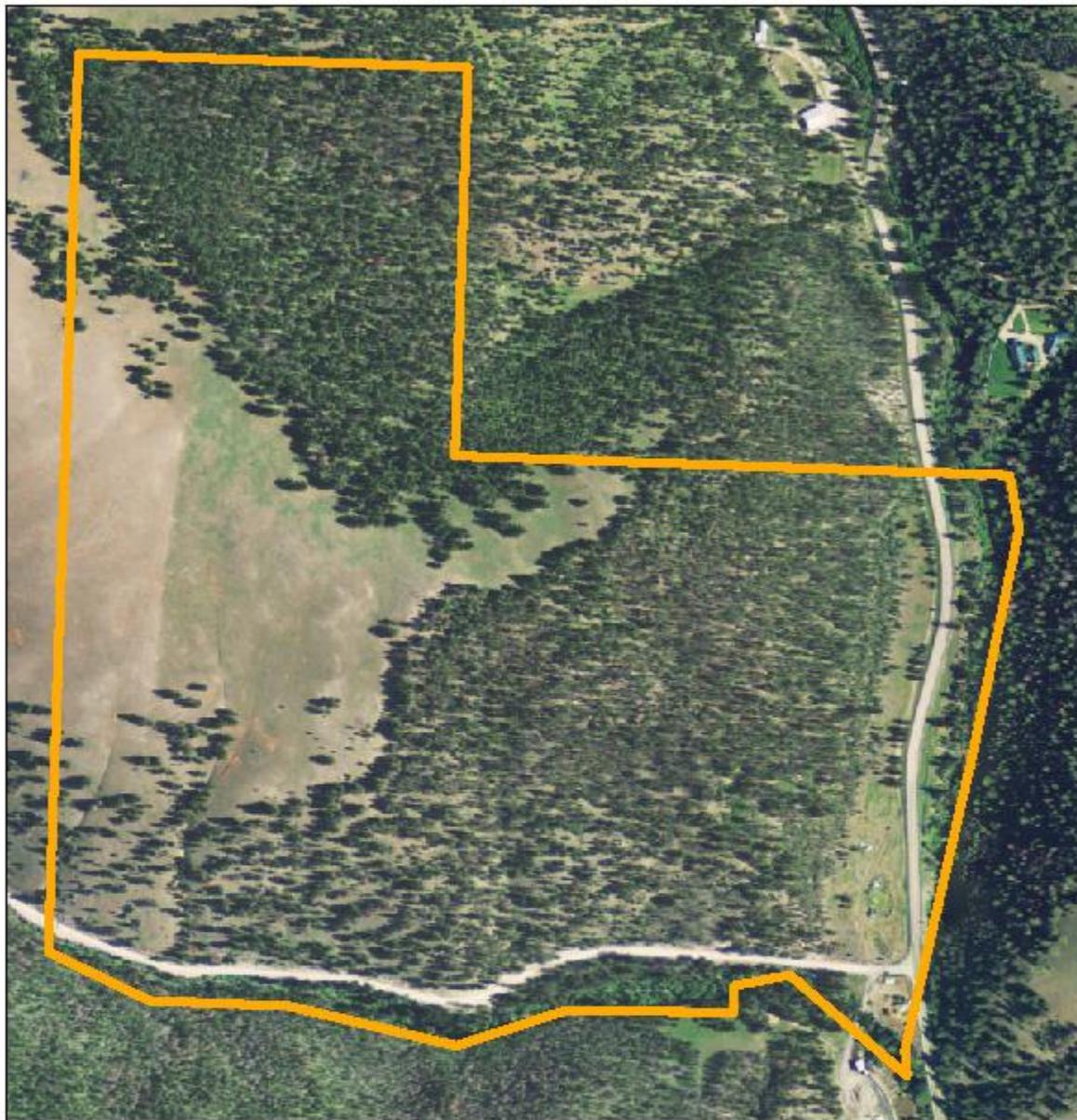
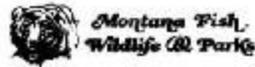
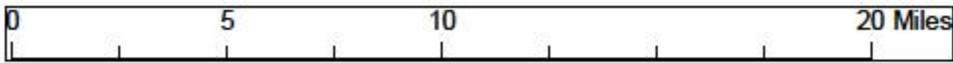
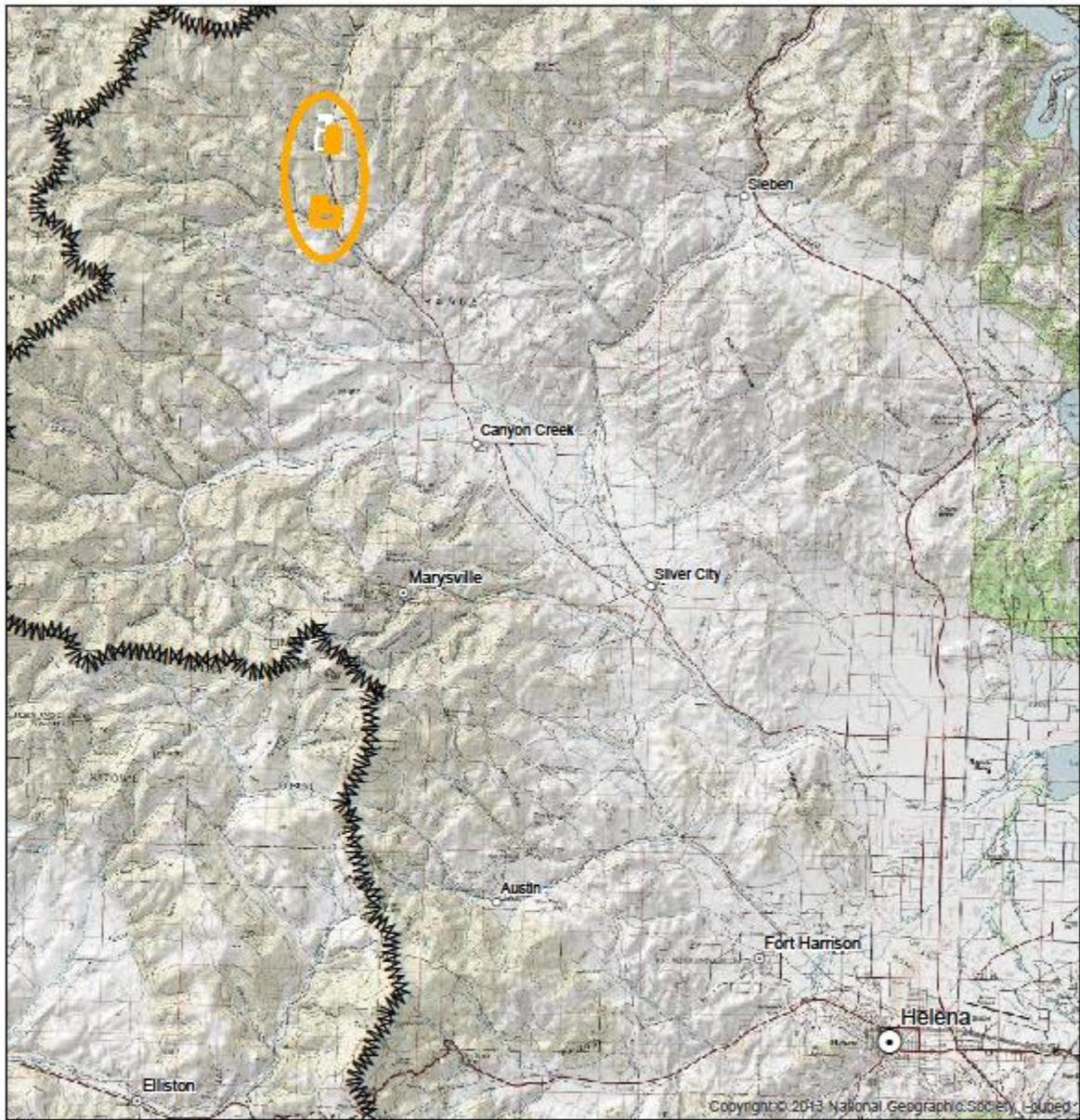


Figure 5. Project Location



Cartan Property
NFS
 59-acre parcel
 174-acre parcel

Figure 6. Detail of Streams at ~174-acre Parcel

