Section III. Acronyms and Definitions

This section offers guidance to readers in understanding the abbreviations and technical terms used in this document.[14]

Acronyms

ASD = Alternative Subdivision Design
CAPS = Crucial Areas Planning System
CMZ = Channel Migration Zone
EA = Environmental Assessment
FWIA = Fish & Wildlife Impact Assessment
FWP = Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks
MCFWCS = Montana's Comprehensive Fish and Wildlife Conservation Strategy
MCA = Montana Code Annotated
SPI = Summary of Probable Impacts

Definition of Terms

Associated uplands. Grasslands, shrub-steppe, or agricultural lands near or adjacent to wetlands or wetland complexes that are used by wetland-associated birds for nesting or foraging.

Big game. The following native ungulate species: white-tailed deer, mule deer, elk, antelope, bighorn sheep, moose, and mountain goat. These species commonly make annual migrations to and/or use specific winter range areas.

Braided river. A river channel that contains a network of smaller channels separated by small islands.

Building envelope. On a lot within a subdivision, a specified area within which any and all residential, commercial, or industrial buildings can be located. The building envelope includes all buildings, driveways, outbuildings, and areas with lawns and other non-native landscaping.

Building setback (as it relates to water bodies). An area beyond the outer boundary of the vegetated buffer, where lawns can be planted, but permanent structures are prohibited.

Channel migration zone (CMZ). The area where it is reasonably foreseeable that an active channel of a river or stream could migrate, over a designated period of time, because of erosion or avulsion.[15]

[14] Cautionary Note: The preceding recommendations were developed with the following definitions in mind. Using different definitions may alter the intended effect of the recommendations.

[15] The term "zone" in this case bears no relation to the process of zoning.

Connectivity. A measure of the ability of animals to move among separated patches of suitable habitat.

Cropland. Agricultural land used to grow and harvest plant crops for food, livestock fodder, fuel, or other economic purposes.

Development. A planned or unplanned area of structures, roads, and/or other infrastructure.

Existing development. An area where structures, roads, and/or other infrastructure are already in place to support human activities. The term also includes platted subdivisions and certificates of survey that created lots that have not yet been developed.

Floodplain. The area adjoining a watercourse or drainage that would be covered by the floodwater of a flood of 100-year frequency [76-5-103 (10), MCA].

Grasslands. See native grasslands.

Habitat. The physical features (e.g., topography, geology, stream flow) and biological characteristics (e.g., vegetation cover and other species) needed to meet the food, shelter, and reproductive needs of animal or plant species.

Habitat fragmentation, habitat patch. The division of large, contiguous areas of wildlife habitat into smaller areas (called habitat patches), isolated from one another such that animals can no longer access portions of otherwise suitable habitat or, over time, the remaining habitat can no longer maintain viable populations of some wildlife species.

Habituation. A learned behavioral response of wildlife to human developments and activities, whereby animals stop responding to repeated activities that are not accompanied by positive or negative reinforcement.

Intermittent stream. A stream or reach of a stream that is below the water table for at least some part of the year and that obtains its flow from both groundwater discharge and surface runoff (82-4-203, MCA). An intermittent stream has a defined stream bank and scoured stream bottom.

Lek. A sagebrush or grassland opening where male Greater Sage-grouse or Sharp-tailed Grouse gather for the purpose of competitive courtship displays.

Line of sight. An imaginary straight line along which an observer looks with unobstructed view. When two objects (e.g., an animal and a structure) have no topographical, vegetative, or other visual barrier between them, then they are in "line of sight" of each other.

Linkage. Suitable habitat that allows animal movement within a winter range patch, between isolated patches of winter range, or between summer range (or other seasonal habitat) and winter range. Linkages are sufficiently wide to allow natural movement of animals without being impeded by disturbances associated with development.

Migratory game birds. Migratory birds that are classified as game animals in the State of Montana, including wild ducks, geese, brant, swans, cranes, rails, coots, and snipes (87-2-101, MCA).

Native grasslands. Vegetation communities where native grass is predominant. They include native prairie grasslands in eastern Montana and intermountain/foothill grasslands in western Montana. Native prairie grasslands in eastern Montana are dominated by native bunchgrass and rhizomatous (having a horizontal stem that produces roots and shoots) grass species. Annual precipitation varies widely but averages 10 to 14 inches, and vegetation is relatively short. Intermountain/foothill grasslands in western Montana are broad mountain valleys containing primarily native bunchgrasses. Annual precipitation averages 15 inches per year, and grassland vegetation is of moderate height in average precipitation years. Prairie or intermountain grassland communities can occur adjacent to sagebrush steppe and/or riparian communities.

Native shrub habitats. Vegetation communities where sagebrush is predominant: sagebrush shrub-steppe and sagebrush shrublands. Sagebrush shrub-steppe is scattered primarily throughout western and central Montana and is co-dominated by shrubs (5 to 20 percent shrub cover, primarily sagebrush) and perennial grasses. Sagebrush shrublands are dominated by sagebrush (20 to 80 percent sagebrush cover) and are found primarily in mountain valleys of the southwestern corner and along the southern border of the state.

Nesting site. The location where a bird has laid and incubated its eggs within the last 12 months. Many birds build nests (e.g., Common Loon, Great Blue Heron, Trumpeter Swan, eagles and hawks); some birds use burrows (e.g., Burrowing Owl) or a shallow depression on the ground (e.g., Long-billed Curlew).

Ordinary high-water mark. The line that surface water impresses on land by covering it for sufficient periods to cause physical characteristics that distinguish the area below the line from the area above it. Characteristics of the area below the line may include, but are not limited to, deprivation of the soil of substantially all terrestrial vegetation and destruction of the soil's agricultural vegetative value. A floodplain adjacent to surface waters is not considered to lie within the surface waters' high-water mark (23-2-301, MCA).

Other water bodies. An intermittent stream, lake, reservoir, wetland, or pond. The term does not include perennial streams and rivers.

Perennial stream. A stream or part of a stream that, under normal precipitation conditions, flows throughout the year. Streams dewatered during part of the year by irrigation or other withdrawals, but which would flow throughout the year without said withdrawals, are perennial streams.

Problematic concentrations. In subdivisions, unnaturally dense assemblies of big game animals for an unnaturally extended period of time, such that they become habituated to human presence, more vulnerable to disease, less wild, unavailable for population control via hunting, and/or a potential nuisance, problem, or threat to subdivision residents and/or their neighbors.

Professionally trained biologist. An individual with a minimum of a bachelor's degree in a fisheries or wildlife-related field and professional experience in applying current biological knowledge to on-the-ground stewardship and management of the resource and its environment, or an individual meeting the requirements of a Certified Wildlife Biologist (by The Wildlife Society) or a Certified Fisheries Professional (by the American Fisheries Society).

Qualified wetland professional. An individual with a minimum of a bachelor's degree in a water resource–related field and practical field experience with wetlands, or an individual meeting the requirements of Professional Wetland Scientist certification (by the Society of Wetland Scientists).

Reservoir. A lake or pond (natural or human made) where water is collected and used for storage. The term includes water stored behind a dam on a river or stream.

Resource inventory. A survey conducted in a given area to identify its wildlife species, wildlife habitats, and habitat conditions.

Riparian area. A riparian area is an area of transition between a water body (e.g., stream or wetland) and upland area. Riparian areas have one or both of the following characteristics: (1) distinctly different vegetative species than adjacent areas; and (2) species similar to adjacent areas but exhibiting more vigorous or robust growth forms.

River. A perennial flowing stream identified on a U.S. Geological Survey map as a river. The term does not include any lake or reservoir located on a river.

Shorebirds. Various wading bird species in the order Charadriiformes that frequent the shores of coastal or inland waters, wetlands, mudflats, or plains, including sandpipers, plovers, avocets, curlews, killdeer, or stilts.

Shrub habitats. See native shrub habitats.

Species of Concern. Native wildlife species that are considered to be "at risk" due to declining population trends, threats to their habitats, and/or restricted distribution. A list of such species,

called the Montana Animal Species of Concern, is produced jointly by the Montana Natural Heritage Program and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. This list includes Threatened & Endangered Species. A current list can be obtained at **http://mtnhp.org/about/daily_news.asp**.

Stream. A body of water with a current, confined within a bed and stream banks. Depending on its locale or certain characteristics, a stream may be referred to as a branch, channel, creek, river, or tributary. See intermittent stream and perennial stream for definitions of those terms.

Subdivision design features. The physical elements of a subdivision development, including houses and other buildings, roads, and other infrastructure.

Suitable habitat. Habitat that meets the survival and reproductive needs of a species, allowing for a stable or growing population over time.

Summer range. Areas where big game tend to concentrate during late spring, summer, and early fall, commonly May through October. These areas are considered a subset of overall year-round big game habitat.

Surface water. Any water located above the surface of the land, or the bed of any stream, lake, reservoir, wetland, or other body of surface water. All other water is considered groundwater.

Threatened & Endangered Species. Species that are "listed" by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for protection under the Endangered Species Act. An endangered species is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range; a threatened species is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range. A current list can be downloaded at **http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/species/**.

Trumpeter Swan overwintering site. Lakes, ponds, or streams where Trumpeter Swans are viewed regularly between December 15 and February 15.

Vegetated buffer (as it relates to water bodies and Species of Concern).

- **From a water body.** A natural, undisturbed strip or "greenbelt" along the shorelines of a river, stream, or other water body. The term does not include lawns and non-native landscaping.
- **From a bird nesting site, Trumpeter Swan overwintering area, or lek.** A natural, undisturbed strip or "greenbelt" separating the nesting site, Trumpeter Swan overwintering site, or lek from the proposed building envelopes and other subdivision design features (e.g., roads and power lines). Agricultural land (cropland and rangeland) may count toward the vegetated buffer of bird nesting sites, Trumpeter Swan overwintering areas, and leks.

Water body. A river, perennial or intermittent stream, lakes, reservoir, wetland, or pond.

Water-dependent use. An activity that must physically be located in, on, over, or adjacent to water in order to conduct its primary purpose and which, therefore, cannot be located inland (e.g., boat ramp, fishing access site, etc.). A proposed use will not be considered water-dependent if either the use can function away from the water or if the water body proposed is unsuitable for the use. Uses, or portions of uses, that can function on sites not adjacent to the water are not considered water-dependent regardless of the economic advantages that may be gained from a waterfront location (e.g., houses, motels, long-term parking).

Wetland. An area that is inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and which under normal circumstances does support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas.

Wetland complex. A grouping of wetlands of different sizes and permanence that are in close proximity, and the uplands between and adjoining these wetlands.

Wildlife. A mammal, bird, reptile, amphibian, fish, mollusk, crustacean, or other animal that is not domesticated or tamed.[16] The term does not include feral animals, which are animals and any offspring that have escaped captivity and become wild (including dogs, cats, and Eurasian ferrets).

Winter range. Areas where big game tend to concentrate during winter, commonly November through April. These areas are considered a subset of overall year-round big game habitat.

[16] This definition is consistent with Section 87-1-801, MCA, which defines wildlife as "all species of animals including but not limited to mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians, mollusks, and crustaceans."