DRAFT

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
490 North Meridian Road, Kalispell, MT 59901
(406) 752-5501

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Fur Farm, Game Bird Farm, Zoo/Menagerie, Shooting Preserve

PART 1. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

Project Title: Coles Shooting Preserve

Application Date: February 4, 2002

Name, Address, and Phone Number:

James E. Coles (Dan Slezak, Montana contact on the property)
P.O. Box 1051
Whitefish, MT 59937
(406) 862-3633 (days)
(406) 261-7869 (nights)

Project Location: T31N, R23W, Portions of Sections 3, 4, & 10; Flathead County
Description of Project:

Birds would be released for private shooting on approximately 700 acres of private land that straddles the Stillwater River. The site is approximately 12 miles northwest of Whitefish near the mouth of Logan Creek and borders Flathead National Forest to the west. The shooting preserve would be utilized by members and their guests and would not be open to the public. Birds to be released include up to 100 Ring-necked Pheasants and 50 each of Chukars, Hungarian Partridge, and Bobwhite Quail. September 1 to October 30 would be the primary period of use. Approximately 30% of the land area is tilled and would be planted to small grains and food plots for wildlife. The remaining portions outside the river corridor consist of meadow and managed forestland that would be utilized for cover for released birds. The perimeter of the preserve will be clearly marked with signs every 250 feet alerting the public of the preserve's presence. Landowners adjoining the shooting preserve will also be alerted individually by FWP as to the preserve's presence.
Other groups or agencies contacted or which may have overlapping jurisdiction: None.

PART 2. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

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 or on Attached Pages
a. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources.				X		
b. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats.	X				YES	1(b)
c. Introduction of new species into an area.			X		N/A	1(c)
d. Vegetation cover, quantity, & quality.				X		
e. Water quality, quantity, & distribution (surface or groundwater).				X		
f. Existing water right or reservation.				X		
g. Geology & soil quality, stability, & moisture.				X		
h. Air quality or objectional odors.				X		
i. Historical & archaeological sites.				X		
j. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air, & energy.				X		
k. Aesthetics.			X		Unknown	1(k)

Comments

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

1(b). The use of lead shot in the shooting of birds on this preserve may result in higher than normal occurrences of lead-contaminated, crippled birds that are later ingested by eagles and other raptors. The ingestion of lead pellets by eagles has been shown to be a source of lead poisoning. This is one of the reasons that steel shot is now required on all national wildlife refuges and in the hunting of all waterfowl. Due to the number of Bald Eagles that migrate through this area, it is recommended that steel shot be utilized on this preserve to avoid possibly contaminating eagles and other raptors.

1(c). Ring-necked Pheasants, Chukars, Hungarian Partridge, and Bobwhite Quail are all nonnative species to this area. Ring-necked Pheasants and Hungarian Partridge were introduced to the Flathead in the late 1800s and are now established in agricultural areas. The site of this proposed shooting preserve is near the northern occurrence of these species in Flathead County. Bobwhite Quail and Chukars may also have been introduced, but are not known to be successfully reproducing. No known conflicts with native wildlife by these introduced species are known to exist, particularly in this portion of Flathead County. Chukars and quail that are released as a result of this proposal are not expected to overwinter. Pheasants and partridge that are released have a small chance of reproducing and establishing populations.

1(k). The effects of this proposal on aesthetics will depend upon the individual. Many people may enjoy seeing a variety of game bird species. Others may appreciate that the area is being managed for wildlife and not being subdivided. Still others may be annoyed by the increased number of gunshots during the fall months. Any

negative consequences of this proposal on aesthetics are expected to be minor.

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 Or On Attached Pages
a. Social structures and cultural diversity.				X		
b. Changes in existing public benefits provided by wildlife populations and/or habitat.				X		
c. Local and state tax base and tax revenue.				X		
d. Agricultural production.				X		2(d)
e. Human health.				X		
f. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income.				X		
g. Access to & quality of recreational activities.				X		
h. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals (ordinances).				X		
i. Distribution & density of population and housing.				X		
j. Demands for government services.			X			2(j)
k. Industrial and/or commercial activity.				X		

Comments

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

2(d). While some portions of the shooting preserve will be planted to small grains for wildlife, the amount of grain harvested for livestock use will not change appreciably from previous years.

2(j). Demands on government services will be increased slightly due to the monitoring requirements of this license by FWP.

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? No

Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no-action alternative) to the proposed action, when alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider. Include a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:

A "No Action" alternative would prevent the owners of the property from using their land as they desire. Because environmental risks are minimal, only these two alternatives (the proposed action and the no-action alternative) are reasonable and should be considered.

List proposed mitigative measures (stipulations) for license:

To avoid the potential of lead poisoning in eagles and other raptors, use of steel shot only should be considered.

Individuals or groups contributing to, or commenting on, this EA: None

Date EA completed: April 25, 2002

Duration of comment period: Twenty-one days, from April 30, 2002, through May 21, 2002.

EA prepared by: Tim Thier, FWP Wildlife Biologist, P. O. Box 507, Trego, MT 59934; please direct questions and/or comments to Tim at this address or e-mail to tthier@interbel.net.

PART 3. DECISION

Recommendation and justification concerning preparation of EIS:

Describe public involvement, if any:

Recommendation for license approval: _____

_____

Wildlife Manager Date

_____

Warden Captain Date