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(406) 444-9947

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

PART I. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

1. Project Title: Helena Trap Club

2. Type of Proposed Action:
The Helena Trap Club (HTC) proposes to construct and equip a permanent 5-Stand Sporting Clays field at the Helena Trap Club range.

3. Location Affected by Proposed Action:
The HTC range is located approximately 3 miles north of Helena, Montana, 1/3 mile west of Interstate 15, at 5505 N. Montana Avenue, Helena, MT 59601, Lat. 46.654596, Long. -112.017903, Section 5, Township 10 North, Range 3 West.

Figure 1 – Aerial View of the Helena Trap Club (HTC) Range, Helena, Montana

Figure 2. Location of New Sporting Clays Field at HTC Range

4. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action: MCA 87-1-276 through 87-1-279 (Legislative established policies and procedures for the establishment and improvement of shooting ranges) and MCA 87-2-105 (Departmental authority to expend funds to provide training in the safe handling and use of firearms and safe hunting practices). The Montana Legislature has authorized funding for the establishment of a Shooting Range Development Program providing financial assistance for the development of shooting ranges. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) has responsibility for the administration of the program, including the necessary guidelines and procedures governing applications for funding assistance under the program.

To be eligible for grant assistance, a private shooting club or a private organization:
(a)(i) Shall accept in its membership any person who holds or is eligible to hold a Montana hunting license and who pays club or organization membership fees;
(ii) May not limit the number of members;
(iii) May charge a membership fee not greater than the per-member share of the club's or organization's reasonable cost of provision of services, including establishment, improvement, and maintenance of shooting facilities and other membership services; and
(iv) Shall offer members occasional guest privileges at no cost to the member or invited guest and shall make a reasonable effort to hold a public sight-in day each September, when the general public may use the shooting

range for a day-use fee or at no cost; or
(b) Shall admit the general public for a reasonable day-use fee.

5. Need for the Action(s):
A formal survey of the HTC membership conducted in Fall 2016 indicated a strong desire to have additional shotgun shooting opportunities besides just trap shooting, offered at the club. Similar feedback was received from the general public also.

6. Objectives for the Action(s):
The objective of the HTC proposed project is to construct and equip a permanent 5-Stand Sporting Clays field at the HTC range.

7. Project Size: estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected:
The proposed project would involve less than five acres of the 70-acre HTC range.

8. Affected Environment (A brief description of the affected area of the proposed project):
The HTC range is located on 70 acres of privately owned land owned in fee title by the Helena Gun Club. The property is located within the 100-year floodplain. The effective Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) for this area is Zone B, which is defined by FEMA as "Area of moderate flood hazard, usually the area between the limits of the 100-year and 500-year floods. B Zones are also used to designate base floodplains of lesser hazards, such as areas protected by levees from the 100-year flood, or shallow flooding areas with average depths of less than one foot or drainage areas of less than one square mile." There are no permanent or seasonal surface waters on the property. The only standing water would be the result of heavy precipitation, snowmelt, or flooding. Though water is seasonally present on the property adjacent to the HTC range, properly discharged projectiles do not land in this area.

The National Wetland Inventory (NWI) database was reviewed in the project area. The Historic NWI database identifies that the Helena Trap Club pit is delineated as a Palustrine Emergent Wetland-Constructed, influence by man-made flood control structures. However, more recent wetland mapping by the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MTNHP) Wetland and Riparian Mapping Program does not delineate any wetlands on the 70-acre HTC range. The ditches, which are part of Lewis and Clark County's flood management plan, are not likely considered "waters of the U.S.". Figure 3 shows the full pool at the peak of the 2011 flood. The estimated area of the shot drop is indicated on this figure.

9. Description of Project:
The proposed project, to construct and equip a permanent 5-Stand Sporting Clays field at the HTC range, involves: constructing a 8' X 40" concrete shooting pad and a 3' X 60' concrete connecting sidewalk; installing five shooting stands; and installing eight portable specialty traps and progressive controller. The estimated budget includes:

▪ Concrete Work for Shooting Pad and Sidewalk	$ 2,350
▪ Shooting Stands	$ 600
▪ Portable Specialty Traps and Progressive Controller	$20,650
Total Project Budget ` `	$23,600
Total Funding Requested from FWP	**$11,800**

This map shows the full pool at the peak of the 2011 flood. The pond surface was 16.6 acres. As you can see, the existing pit occupies a broad and irregular area in the center and NW part of the property.

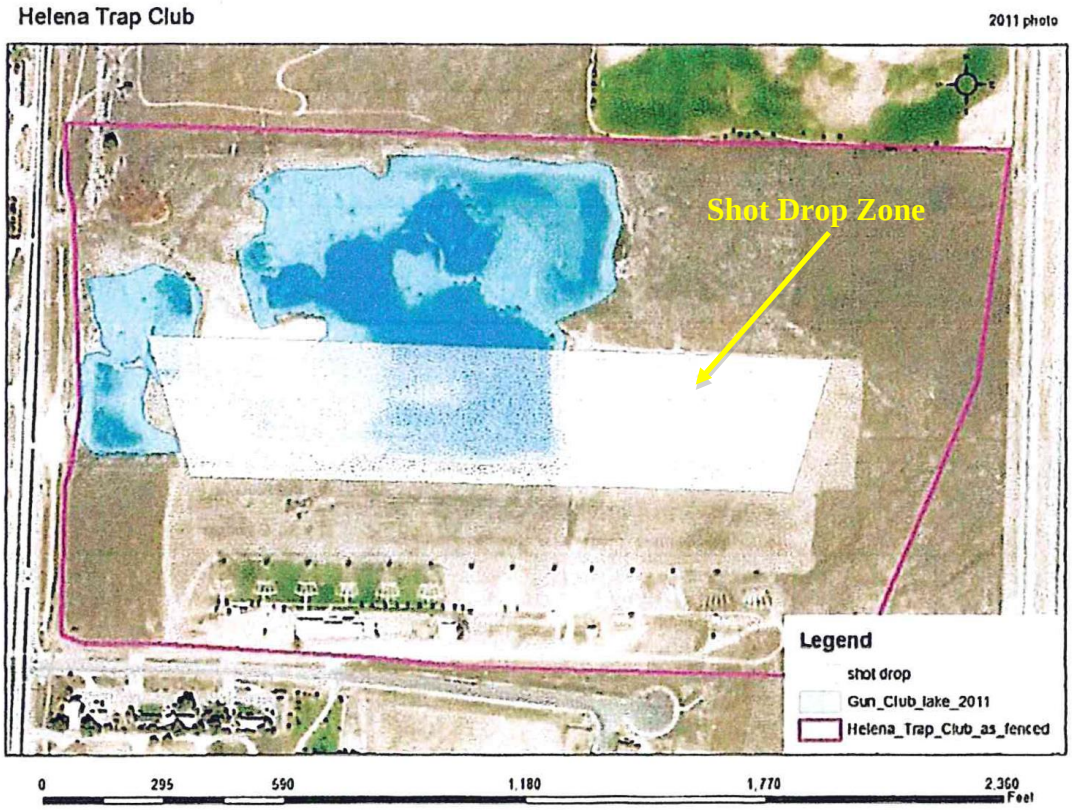

Figure 3. The Full Pool During the 2011 Flood in Relation to Shot Drop Zone at HTC Range

10. List any Other Local, State, or Federal Agency that has Overlapping or Additional Jurisdiction:
None

Permits, Licenses and/or Authorizations:

Agency Name	Permit	Date Filed/#
N/A		

Funding:

Agency Name	Funding Amount
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	$11,800

11. Affiliations, Cooperating Agencies, User Groups and/or Supporting Groups:
The HTC range is located on 70 acres of private land deeded to the HTC. This is a private range with an annual membership fee of $50 for individuals and families, with a day use fee of $4 per round for members and $5 for non-members and guests. The HTC range hosts approximately 18 events during the eight months the range is open each year. Approximately 15 organizations utilize the range, including: Capital and Helena High Schools; 4-H and Helena Hot Shot youth shooting programs; Helena Building Industries and Helena Home Builders; MT Auto Dealers Association; Pheasants Forever; Leadership Helena; Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Hunter groups and individual businesses as part of employee functions.

12. History of the Planning and Scoping Process, and Any Public Involvement:
Because the HTC is a non-profit, private shooting club for members, there has been no public involvement in the planning process. Proposed range development proposals have been discussed with the club members and the associated project vendors and contractors.

13. List of Agencies Consulted/Contacted During Preparation of the EA:
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

14. Names, Address, and Phone Number of Project Sponsor:
Chuck Brooke, 2542 Primrose Lane, Helena, MT59601. (406) 502-1369.

15. Other Pertinent Information:
The HTC is a non-profit, private shooting club. The closest shooting range providing similar shooting opportunities is in Townsend, Montana, 41 miles from the HTC range. HTC offers shooting opportunities for shotgun shooting only.

Shooting range applications require the participating governing body to approve by resolution its submission of applications for shooting range-funding assistance. Resolution Date: January 27, 2017.

PART II. IDENTIFICATION OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVES

Alternative A, the **Proposed Alternative,** and **Alternative B**, the **No Action Alternative**, were considered.

Alternative A (Proposed Alternative) is as described in Part I, paragraph 9 (Description of Project), to construct and equip a permanent 5-Stand Sporting Clays field at the HTC range. There are beneficial consequences to acceptance of the **Proposed Alternative**.
Alternative B (No Action Alternative) Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Shooting Range Development Grant money would be denied and the area will remain as an active shooting range without the proposed improvements. The no action alternative would have no significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences. The range will continue on with present conditions. Land use would remain the same.

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: Only the proposed alternative and the no action alternative were considered. There were no other alternatives that were deemed reasonably available, nor prudent. Neither the proposed alternative nor the no action alternative would have significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences.

Describe any Alternatives considered and eliminated from Detailed Study:
None. Only the proposed alternative and the no action alternative were considered. There was no other alternative that were deemed reasonably available, or prudent. Neither the **Proposed Alternative** nor the **No Action Alternative** would have significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences.

List and explain proposed mitigating measures (stipulations): None

PART III. 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 environmentally 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		4
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		8
9. Historical & archaeological sites				X		9
10. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
11. Aesthetics				X		11

2. & 5. There are no permanent natural water sources within the area proposed for development. Historic NWI wetland mapping delineated a portion of the 70-acre HTC range as a Palustrine Emergent Wetland- Controlled, partially as a result of man-made flood control structures. More recent wetland mapping by the MTNHP did not delineate any wetlands on the HTC range. See Figure 3 for the location of flooding during the 2011 flood in relation to the HTC range boundaries and the shot drop zone. It is unlikely that the proposed project will have any impact on wetlands. No critical wildlife habitat would be affected. Any resident or transient wildlife may temporarily leave the area during construction.

4. The elimination of vegetation for the implementation of the proposed project will not change the overall abundance and diversity of plant species within the area. The proposed project occupies a small portion of the property. Due to prior land use, native vegetation has been disturbed in the area

of the proposed project. Therefore, the proposed project will have a minor impact on native vegetation in the area.

7. The proposed project will cause limited displacement of soils but the developments will not substantially effect geological features or establish new erosion patterns. Soil disruption for this site is localized. Erosion control measures will be in effect and disturbed area will be reseeded.

8. Minor and temporary dust and vehicle emissions would be created by construction equipment during construction. However, the construction time is short and human effects will be limited due to the sparse population near the property.

9. This project uses no federal funds nor does it take place on state owned or controlled property; therefore, the Federal 106 Regulations and the State Antiques Act do not apply.

11. The property is already used as a shooting range so the proposed project will have no additional impact on the aesthetics of the property.

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**		
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**		

4. The HTC range is adjacent to surrounding agricultural land used for grazing and hay production and residential development, but the range has not been in agricultural production for years. The proposed project will have no affect on agricultural production

7. The proposed developments will increase shooting opportunities within the community.

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 projects reviewed were complex, controversial, or located in an environmentally sensitive area. The projects being implemented are already on an existing range or altered areas that together with the insignificant environmental effects of the proposed action, 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.

The Helena Trap Club's Proposed Alternative, to provide a safe, regulated shooting opportunity, is supported by its members and the public. Therefore, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks should approve the Proposed Alternative (A) for the improvements as outlined in Part I, Paragraph 9.

PART V. 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? Individually, the proposed actions have minor impacts. However, it was determined that there are no significant or potentially significant cumulatively impacts. 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.

Recommendation and justification concerning preparation of EIS:
There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative; therefore, an EIS is not required.

PART VI. EA CONCLUSION SECTION

Individuals or groups contributing to, or commenting on, this EA:

- Chuck Brooke, 2542 Primrose Lane, Helena, MT59601. (406) 502-1369.
- MT Fish Wildlife and Parks

EA prepared by:
Andrea Darling, Darling Natural Resource Consulting, Montana City, MT 59634

Date Completed:
June 21, 2017

Describe public involvement, if any:
This draft EA will be advertised on FWP's web site and through a legal ad in the ***Independent Record, Helena, MT*** announcing a public comment period. A press release will also announce the project and comment period.