Draft
Environmental Assessment

PROPOSED LAND ACQUISITION – R-3

Canyon Creek Wildlife Management Area Addition – Palmquist Property

August 2018

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

Draft Environmental Assessment
MEPA CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of proposed state action:
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) proposes to acquire ~4 to 7 acres from the Palmquist Family in the Robert E. Lee Range northwest of Canyon Creek, Montana. This property would be an addition to the existing Canyon Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA).

2. Agency authority for the proposed action:
FWP has the authority to purchase or acquire by lease, agreement, or gift, lands that are suitable for game, bird, fish or fur-bearing animal restoration, propagation or protection; for public hunting, fishing, or trapping areas; and for state parks and outdoor recreation per Montana state statute 87-1-209.

FWP requested funds to acquire this property from the Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust. The maintenance account and other costs/fees associated with acquisition would be provided by FWP with general hunting license and Habitat Montana funds.

Per state law, 87-1-201(9) MCA, FWP is required to implement programs that address fire mitigation, pine beetle infestation, and wildlife habitat enhancement giving priority to forested lands in excess of 50 contiguous acres in any state park, fishing access site, or wildlife management area under FWP's jurisdiction. FWP would develop and implement forest management plans for this property to comply with this statute.

3. Name, address and phone number of project sponsor (if other than the agency):
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Helena Area Resource Office
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620

4. Anticipated Schedule:
Public Comment Period: August 27 – September 25, 2018
Contingent on EA Decision Notice:
Submission to FWP Commission for Approval: October 2018

5. Location affected by proposed action
The property is located about 34 miles northwest of Helena, Montana near the town of Canyon Creek along Hwy 279 (Figures 1-3). The property is adjacent to the east side of Hwy 279, bounded on the other sides by the existing WMA, and is in HD 339 (Figure 4). The property being considered for acquisition is depicted in orange in Figures 1-4 on pages 3-6.

Township 14 North, Range 6 West, P.M.M.
Section 34: Portion of E1/2

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

Total acres: 4 to 7

	Acres		Acres
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	0
Residential	0		
Industrial	0	(e) Productive:	
(existing shop area)		Irrigated cropland	0
(b) Open Space/	0	Dry cropland	0
Woodlands/Recreation		Forestry	4 -7
(c) Wetlands/Riparian	0	Rangeland	0
Areas			0
		Other	0

7. Permits, Funding and Jurisdiction.

(a) Permits: None anticipated.

(b) Funding:

FWP requested funds to acquire this property from the Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust: $4,000-$8,000/acre estimated, $16,000-$55,000 total estimated. The maintenance account and other costs/fees associated with acquisition would be provided by FWP with general hunting license and Habitat Montana funds.

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

None.

Figure 1. General location of Palmquist Property northwest of Helena, MT.

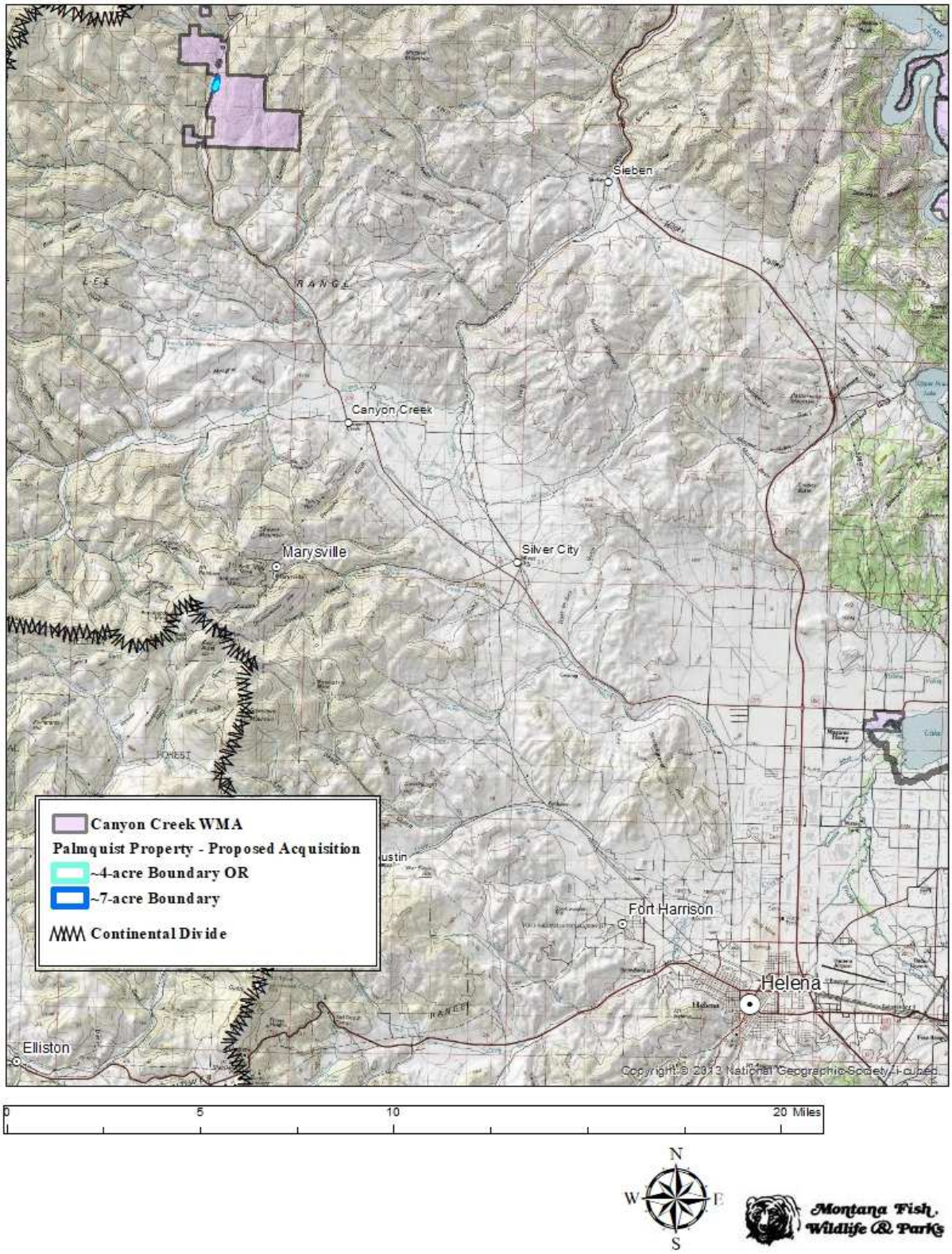


Figure 2. Palmquist Property and surrounding land ownership, including private lands with FWP conservation easements, conservation easements held by other entities, and public lands (U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, FWP, and Department of Natural Resources and Conservation [State Trust]), Lewis and Clark County, Montana (2015 imagery). Land not colored is also private land.

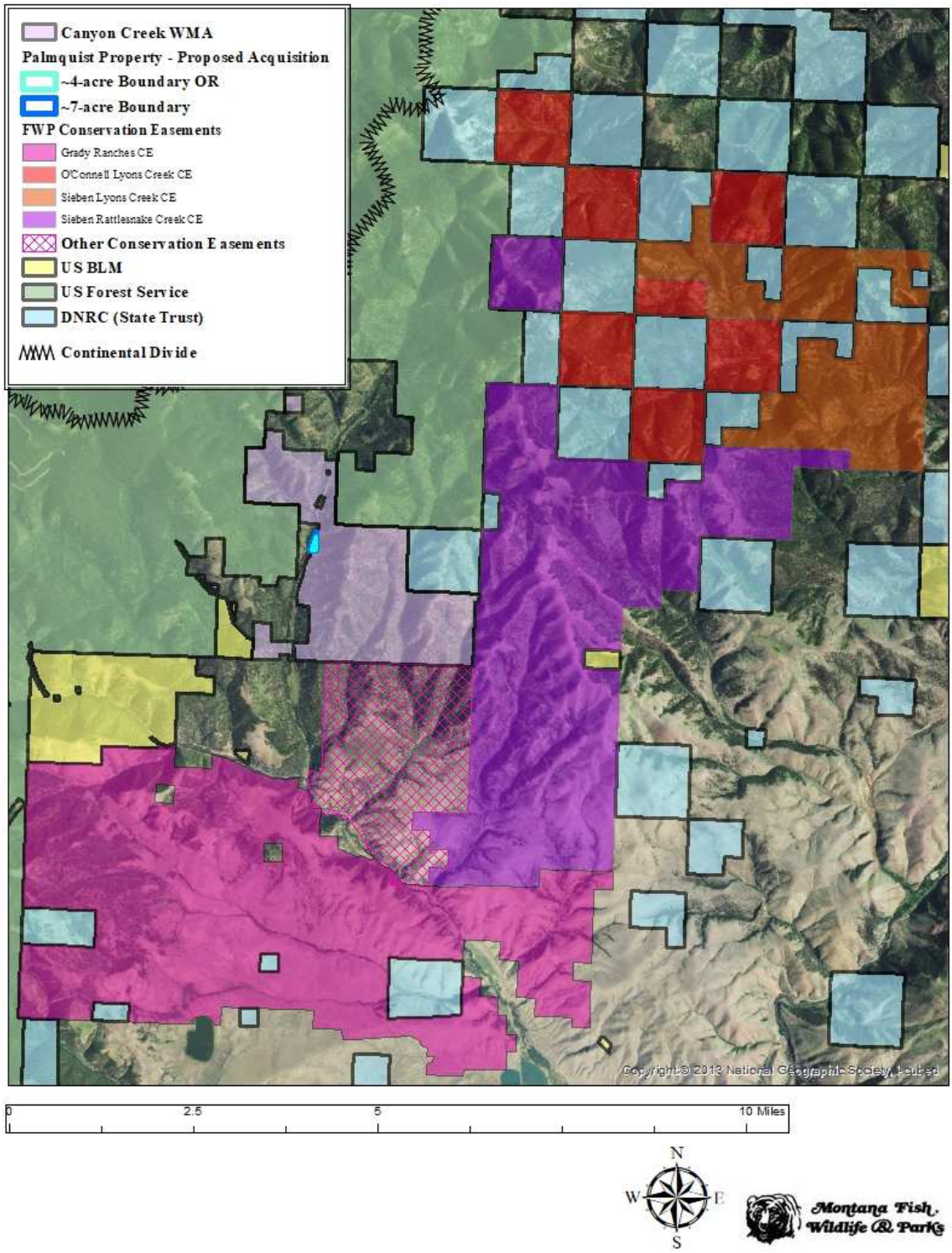


Figure 3. Palmquist Property and the existing Canyon Creek WMA, Lewis and Clark County, Montana (2015 imagery). Land not colored is also private land.

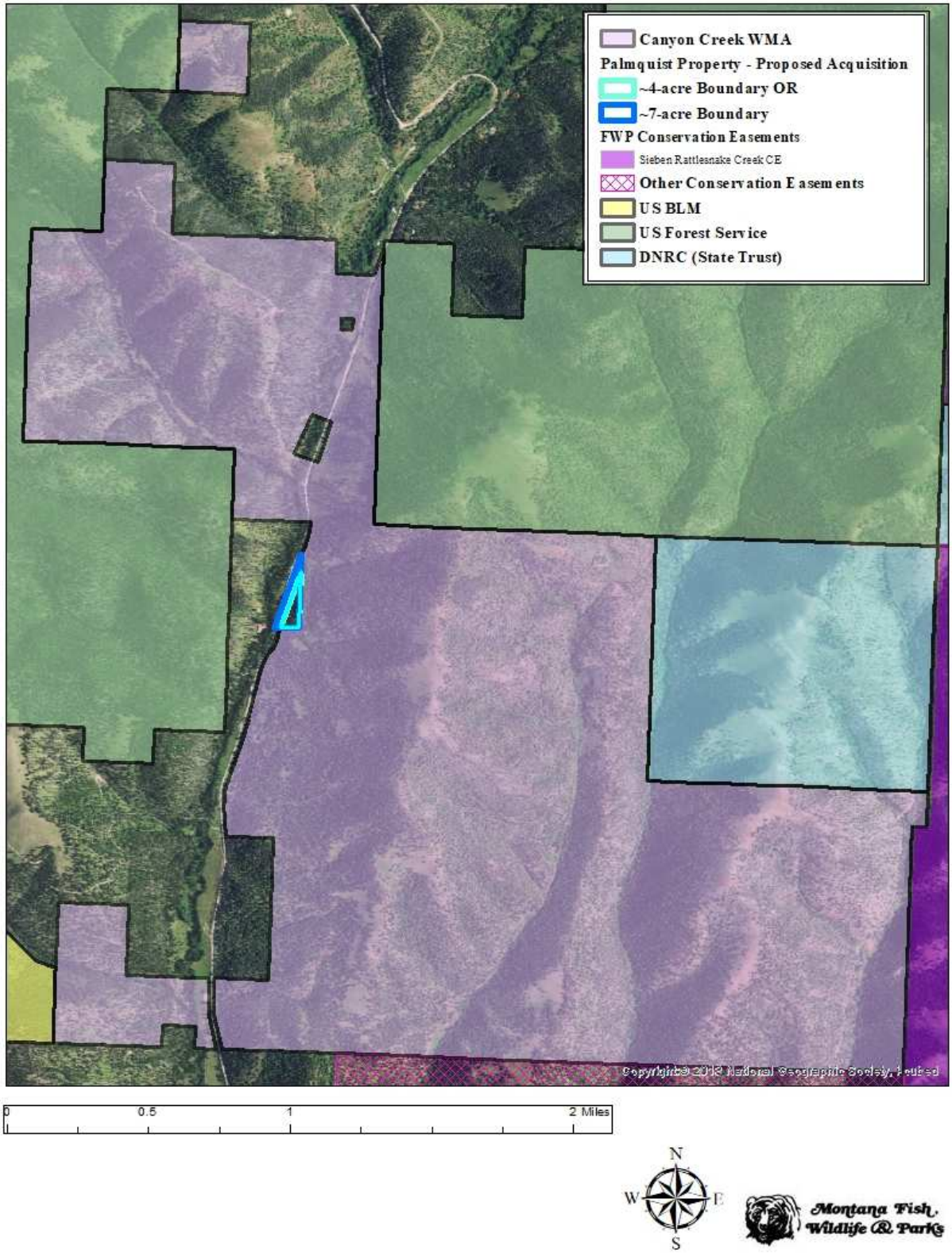
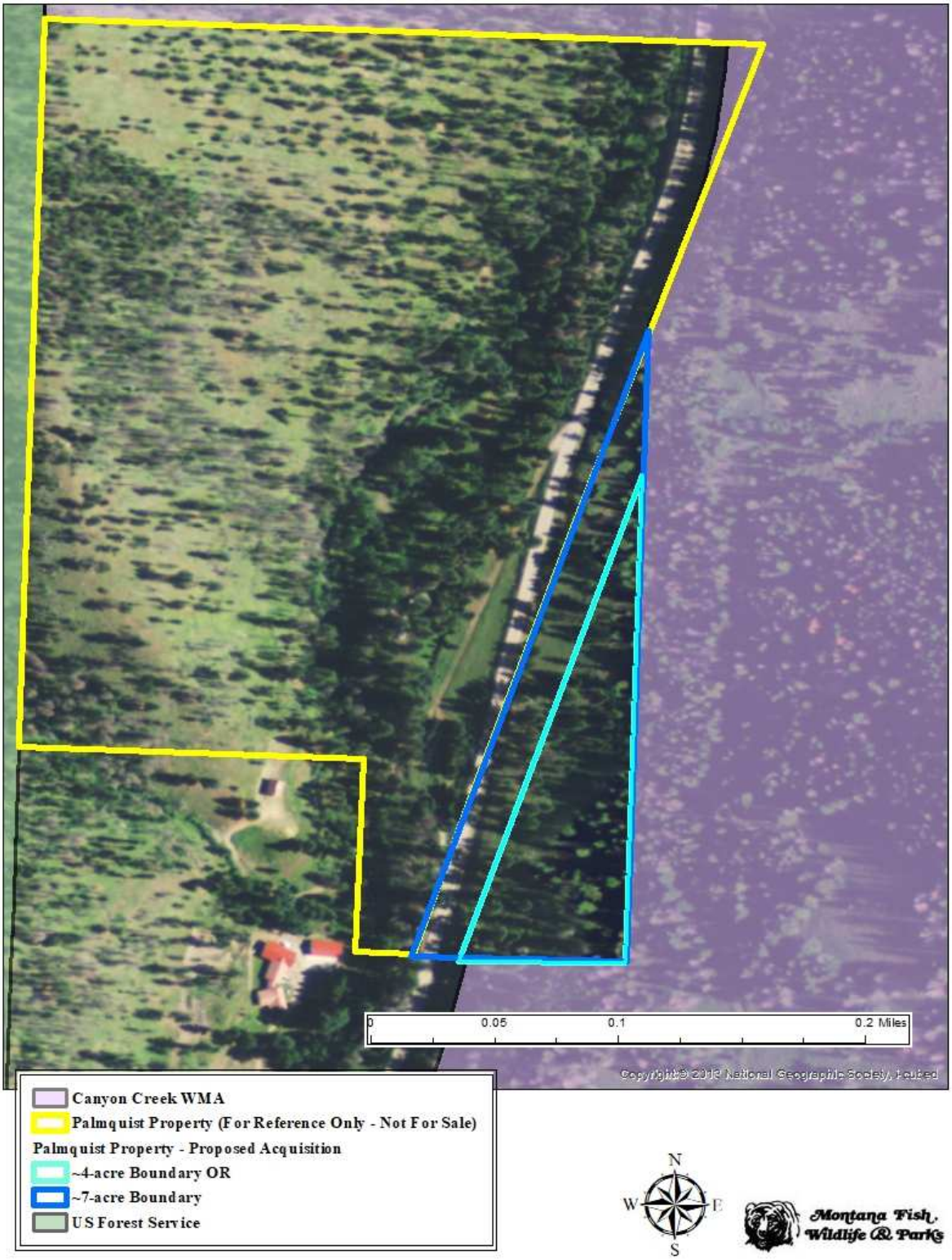


Figure 4. Detail of Palmquist Property and the existing Canyon Creek WMA, Lewis and Clark County, Montana (2015 imagery). The western boundary would be the highway; there is a mismatch between GIS layers (cadastral and FWP) and between GIS layers and imagery. Land not colored is also private land.



8. Narrative summary of the proposed action:

FWP proposes to acquire 4 to 7 acres from the Palmquist Family in the Robert E. Lee Range northwest of Canyon Creek, Montana with funds from the Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust (MFWCT). This property would be an addition to the existing Canyon Creek WMA.

FWP is concurrently proposing to acquire 232 acres from the Cartan Family in the same area also with funds from MFWCT. The Cartan Family property would also be an addition to the Canyon Creek WMA. This proposed addition will be evaluated in a separate EA.

The overall objectives of the project are to:

- Ensure the ecological integrity of the existing WMA is maintained.
- Maintain or improve the wildlife and fisheries values that exist on the property.
- Provide recreational opportunity on the property.
- Enhance the ability to achieve population management objectives of wildlife.

Property ownership adjacent to these parcels includes FWP and other private landowners (Figure 3 above). The property proposed for acquisition is adjacent to the east side of Hwy 279 and is bounded on the other sides by the existing WMA.

The project area is all private land. Mineral rights will be researched. The property is not fenced and lies entirely east of Hwy 279[1], in HD 339.

The vegetation of the targeted 4 to 7 acres is dominated by coniferous forest. Timber was logged recently on a portion of the property. Douglas fir and ponderosa pine are the predominant conifer species present. Some of the Douglas fir and ponderosa pine in the Flesher and Stemple Pass areas has died out due to insect infestations; however, the peak of the insect infestations appears to have passed. There are some dead trees on this property. These parcels provide habitat similar to the existing WMA.

The existing Canyon Creek WMA encompasses 3,090 acres and provides yearlong habitat for elk, deer, upland game birds, small mammals, and birds and seasonal habitat for moose, bear, forest carnivores, raptors, and endemic and neo-tropical migrant birds. Little Mill Creek, Big Mill Creek, and Sawmill Gulch flow through the eastern portion of the WMA and contain brook trout. These streams have been considered for westslope cutthroat trout restoration, and the fish species composition is likely similar to tributaries on the western portion of the WMA. Canyon Creek, Weino, Specimen, and Tar Head Creeks flow through the western portion of the WMA and contain mottled sculpin and rainbow, brown, brook, and native westslope cutthroat trout. Public recreation opportunities include hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, hiking, horseback riding, and picnicking. Public access to adjacent public land (USFS, United States Bureau of Land Management [BLM], and Department of Natural Resources and Conservation [DNRC]) is also provided with this WMA. The existing WMA is within hunting districts 339 as well as 343.

[1] FWP does not think fencing will be needed at this parcel.

On the existing WMA:

- Grasslands are dominated by rough fescue/Idaho fescue (*Festuca scabrella/Festuca idahoensis*) and Idaho fescue/bluebunch wheatgrass (*Festuca idahoensis*/*Agropyron spicatum*) with mountain big sagebrush (*Artemesia tridentata vaseyana*) interspersed in some areas.
- The most common forest cover type is Douglas-fir/rough fescue (*Pseudotsuga menziesii/Festuca scabrella*). This cover type occupies the majority of the WMA. Small areas of Douglas-fir/Idaho fescue (*Pseudotsuga menzesia/Festuca idahoensis*), Douglas-fir/elk sedge (*Pseudotsuga menziesii/Carex spp.*) and Douglas-fir/pinegrass (*Pseudotsuga menziesii/Calamagrostis rubescens*) also occur within the WMA.
- Riparian vegetation communities occur along the seven creek drainages and are described by cover type below. Riparian is defined as sites that have permanent water tables at or near the surface for a significant period of the growing season. The dominant riparian cover type is the Douglas-fir/red-osier dogwood (*Pseudotsuga menziesii /Cornus canadensis*) type. This type is dominated by scattered Douglas fir, black cottonwood (*Populus trichocarpa*) and aspen (*P. tremuloides*) with an understory that includes red-osier dogwood, bebbs willow (*Salix bebbiana*), sandbar willow (*S. interior*), Douglas hawthorn (*Crataegus douglasii*), woodrose (*Rosa woodsii*), snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*), water birch (*Betula occidentalis*), and alder (*Alnus spp.*). A few sites may be classified marginally as the Englemann spruce/red-osier dogwood (*Picea engelmanni*) cover type. A few small sites lack conifer trees and could be classified as willow types. Most riparian areas in these units show signs of past livestock use that has resulted in reduced coverage of riparian species, browse lines on shrubs, and invasion by non-native plants especially Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*), common tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*), houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*), and diffuse and spotted knapweed (*Centaurea diffusa, C. maculosa*).

The benefits of acquiring the additional property include increasing the amount of existing, contiguous protected wildlife habitat. The following are details of the resource values FWP intends to conserve:

- Acquisition of this property would secure additional habitat for wildlife. Species of Concern (SOC) verified to occur in this vicinity include wolverine (*Gulo gulo*), Canada lynx (*Lynx Canadensis*), grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos*), pileated woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*), golden eagle *(Aquila chrysaetos)*, and westslope cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki lewisi*). Unverified SOC for this area includes fisher (*Martes pennant*). No plant SOC were listed in the Natural Heritage Program database for this vicinity. A complete list of those species that are predicted to be present in the vicinity is included in Appendix A. This property is within an identified high-priority wildlife linkage area along the Continental Divide. In that scope, this property is part of a larger landscape effort.

- Acquisition of this property would avoid potential development that could otherwise directly impact the WMA's habitat and recreation values[2]. Hunter use of the WMA is expected to exceed 500 hunter days annually. This property would also allow hiking and wildlife viewing.

[2] The property is bound on three sides by the WMA and would establish a new WMA boundary along Hwy 279.

If the acquisition is completed, the additional 4 to 7 acres of the Canyon Creek WMA would be managed under the guidance of the Canyon Creek Wildlife Management Area Management Plan (2002[3]; see Appendix C). No development is planned in order to maintain the undeveloped, primitive nature of the area. Below is a partial list of the laws governing the WMA; additional laws apply and may be found on FWP's website, www.fwp.mt.gov (by authority of MCA codes: 87-1-303, 87-6-201, and 87-5-402).

- Area closed to all public entry from December 2nd – May 15th. Area is otherwise open to all hunting and fishing seasons established by the FWP Commission.
- Motorized vehicles allowed on parking areas, the east-side main entry road to upper parking area, and the west-side main entry road at Specimen Creek to the parking area only[4].
- Open to day-use only – No camping or overnight use is allowed.
- Cutting of standing trees or shrubs is prohibited – Gathering firewood for offsite use is prohibited.
- Damage, removal or defacing property is prohibited.
- Bear resistant food storage required.
- Weed-free feed required.
- Groups of 10 or more, and Commercial Use, require permits.
- Weapons discharge only allowed for lawful hunting purposes. Target practice and clay bird shooting prohibited.
- The use of aerial, terrestrial, or aquatic remotely controlled vehicles is prohibited.

9. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action – FWP would not acquire the Cartan Property

Under the No Action Alternative, FWP would not acquire the property from the Palmquist Family utilizing Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust Funds. The property would likely be sold to a private entity in the very near term with the intent to develop the property, which could directly impact the WMA's habitat and recreational values.

Alternative B: Proposed Action – For FWP to acquire the 232-acre Cartan Property for addition to the Canyon Creek WMA

FWP proposes to acquire 4 to 7 acres from the Palmquist Family in the Robert E. Lee Range east of Hwy 279, northwest of Canyon Creek, Montana. The property does not include any streams.

The property would be an addition to the existing Canyon Creek WMA. Therefore, the *Canyon Creek Wildlife Management Area Management Plan* (2002) would be the basis for management of the property (Appendix C). No developments are anticipated within the property. A maintenance account using general hunting license funds would fund general management activities on the property, including weed control. For the immediate future, no new FWP staff are planned to be hired to manage the property.

[3] The management plan is being updated, and that update is anticipated to be completed in 2019.

[4] The Specimen Creek parking area is planned for construction in 2019.

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 that the potential impacts of the No Action alternative are difficult to define, because the final decision regarding the potential sale of the property is left to the discretion of the current owners. If the property is sold to a private buyer, existing wildlife habitat could be negatively affected depending on the actions of the new landowner.

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				

The proposed action will have no effect on existing soil stability, geologic substructure, or any unique geologic or physical features within the new WMA area.

FWP does not plan to maintain any routes on these parcels, and no routes have been identified to date.

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				

The proposed action will have no effect on ambient air quality within the property. Motorized and wheeled vehicles will be required to travel on existing, authorized roads on the existing WMA (other than administrative use, no motorized travel will be authorized within this addition). Public use will be restricted to walk-in use only on the proposed acquisition.

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.)		N/A				
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.)		N/A				

The proposed acquisition is not expected to affect the existing quality and quantity of Canyon Creek, because no disturbance of this property is planned by FWP. Canyon Creek is not part of a mapped floodplain.

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		Yes	4.e.
f. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		N/A				
g. Other:		X				

Under FWP management, wildlife and fisheries values would be protected, and where necessary, the productivity of soils, water, and vegetation would be improved while striving for maximum vegetation diversity dependent on soil types. There is no prime or unique farmland on the land.

4.e. FWP would document compliance with 7-22-2154, MCA, on weed inspections for land acquisitions. Weed inspection by the county weed management district has already been requested. FWP would implement noxious weed management with guidance from the FWP *Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan* (June 2008) and would utilize properly prescribed chemicals on a prioritized basis. Biological agents, mowing, pulling, and/or other methods would be researched and utilized where chemical control is inappropriate. Limitations on motorized use of the property would be implemented to minimize the introduction and spread of noxious weeds. Weed-seed free feeds for pack animals would be required.

** 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				5.f.
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?			X			5.g.
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.)		N/A				
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.)		N/A				

5.f. Species of Concern (SOC) that are verified in this vicinity include wolverine, Canada lynx, grizzly bear, pileated woodpecker, golden eagle, and westslope cutthroat trout. Unverified SOC for this area include fisher. No plant species were listed in the Natural Heritage Program database for this vicinity. Under FWP management, wildlife and fisheries values, including threatened and endangered species, will be protected, and where necessary, the productivity of soils, water, and vegetation will be improved while striving for maximum vegetation diversity dependent on soil types.

5.g. The property would be open to public access, hunting, fishing, and other non-motorized recreation consistent with a wildlife management area. Therefore, wildlife may be stressed and dispersed in the immediate area. However, this impact is expected to be minor and consistent with FWP wildlife management. Furthermore, the property is located adjacent to and near a large block of public land (BLM, USFS, and FWP) and private land with FWP conservation easements, which provide additional habitat for wildlife to disperse to (see Figure 2 above).

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			6.a.
b. Exposure of people to severe 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				

6.a. Because the property would be newly open to public access and hunting, and visibly open to such access with planned signing, there is expected to be discharge of firearms on the property. Therefore, there may be "nuisance noise" during hunting seasons. It is expected that this will be intermittent and dispersed over a large area, and therefore this impact is considered minor.

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				

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	8.a. & c.
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		Yes	8.a. & c.
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		N/A				

8.a. & c. Chemical spraying is part of FWP's weed management plan to limit the infestation of noxious weeds on its properties per the guidance of the FWP *Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan* (June 2008). Weed treatment and storage and mixing of the chemicals would be in accordance with standard operating procedures. Certified professionals will utilize permitted chemicals and apply them in accordance with product labels and as provided for under law.

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 positive			9c.
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				

The proposed action may have a slight positive economic effect on local communities but would be unlikely to alter the distribution of population in the area.

9.c. Expanding the Canyon Creek WMA through this proposed addition would provide additional access for hunting and other forms of recreation, which may provide a slight positive economic benefit to area businesses.

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				10.b.
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				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?		X				
e. **Define projected revenue sources		X				
f. **Define projected maintenance costs.			X			10.f.

10.b. FWP is required by law to make tax payments to counties equal to the amount that a private landowner would be required to pay per Montana Code 87-1-603. There would be no change in taxes received by Lewis and Clark County as a result of the proposed action.

10.f. Initial projected maintenance and improvement costs of approximately $5,000 include weed management and signage.

** 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 positive			
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.)		N/A				

The proposed action would have no affect on any scenic vista or the viewshed of the area or other aesthetic character, because no major developments would be implemented on this property under FWP ownership and the viewshed would be protected in perpetuity.
11.c. The proposed action may slightly increase local recreation, because the property will be in public ownership. A Tourism Report is included in Appendix B.

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				12.a.
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.)		N/A				

12.a. No destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric, historic, or paleontological importance is anticipated while under FWP ownership. FWP's proposed acquisition would have a positive effect on any cultural or historical resources by securing and managing them in public ownership. By Montana law (22-3-433 MCA), all state agencies are required to consult with the SHPO on the identification and location of heritage properties on land owned by the state that may be adversely impacted by a proposed action or development project (construction sites). It is uncertain if unrecorded historic sites would be affected by the activities of an owner other than FWP.

C. 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				13.b.
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.)		N/A				
g. ∗∗∗∗For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		N/A				

13.b. Chemical spraying is part of FWP's weed management plan to limit the infestation of noxious weeds on its properties per the guidance of the FWP *Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan* (June 2008). Weed treatment and storage and mixing of the chemicals would be in accordance with standard operating procedures. Biological agents, mowing, pulling, and/or other methods would be researched and utilized where chemical control is inappropriate. Limitations on motorized use of the property would be implemented to minimize the introduction and spread of noxious weeds. Weed-seed free feeds for pack animals would be required.

Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:
WMA Management: The existing *Canyon Creek Wildlife Management Area Management Plan* (2002) would be used to manage this property. FWP would document compliance with 7-22-2154, MCA, on weed inspections for land acquisitions. The property will be inspected for noxious weeds by the county weed management district. FWP will implement noxious weed management with guidance from the FWP *Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan* (June 2008) and will utilize properly prescribed chemicals on a prioritized basis. Biological agents, mowing, pulling, and/or other methods would be researched and utilized where chemical control is inappropriate. Limitations on motorized use of the property would be implemented to minimize the introduction and spread of noxious weeds. Weed-seed free feeds would be required.

Historic Sites: By Montana law (22-3-433 MCA), all state agencies are required to consult with the SHPO on the identification and location of heritage properties on lands owned by the state that may be adversely impacted by a proposed action or development project (construction sites).

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The property is primarily being pursued because it would be a valuable addition to the Canyon Creek WMA, securing additional habitat for many species, including elk, mule deer, moose, bears, wolves, and wolverine. FWP ownership would secure this habitat and public access in perpetuity. No subdivision or development would occur on the land. Through noxious weed management, habitat quality may improve over time by reducing the quantity and abundance of noxious weeds that currently exist on the property.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Public involvement:

Additional opportunity for public participation was available this spring/early summer (2018), when the Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust issued a request for public comment.

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

- Two public notices in each of these papers: *Helena Independent Record* and *Bozeman Chronicle*.
- Direct mailing to adjacent landowners and interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project;
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: *http://fwp.mt.gov – Public Notices*

Copies of this EA will be available for public review at the FWP Helena Area Resource Office in Helena, the Regional Headquarters in Bozeman, and on the FWP website.

A public meeting will be held on September 20, 2018 at 6 p.m. in the FWP Commission Room at the FWP Headquarters in Helena to provide the public a venue to submit comments and have questions answered by FWP staff. This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having few limited physical and human impacts.

2. Duration of comment period:

The public comment period will extend for 30 days following the posting of this EA on the FWP website. **Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., September 25, 2018** and can be mailed to the address below:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Helena Area Resource Office
Attn: Canyon Creek WMA Addition – Palmquist Property Proposal
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620

or email comments with subject line **Canyon Creek WMA Addition – Palmquist Property Proposal** to jsika@mt.gov.

PART V. EA PREPARATION

1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? (YES/NO)? No
If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.
An EIS is not required. Based on the assessment above, which has identified a very limited number of minor impacts from the proposed action, an EIS is not required and an

environmental assessment is the appropriate level of review.

2. Person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:

Jenny Sika, FWP R3 Wildlife Biologist, Helena, MT
Adam Strainer, FWP R4 Fisheries Biologist, Helena, MT
Linnaea Schroeer, FWP MEPA Coordinator, Helena, MT

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

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:
- Fisheries Bureau, Helena Area Resource Office
- Habitat Bureau, Helena
- Lands Bureau, Helena
- Responsive Management Unit, Helena
- Wildlife Bureau: Helena Area Resource Office, Bozeman Regional Office, & Montana State Library, Helena

Montana Natural Heritage Program, Helena

APPENDICES

A – Predicted Species List

B – Tourism Report

C – *Canyon Creek WMA Management Plan* (2002) **– Please note that this is a separate document of this EA available on the FWP website:** ***AppendixC_CanyonCreekWMA_MngmntPlan.pdf.*** If you would like a printed copy, please call the Helena Area Resource Office at (406) 495-3260 to request that one be mailed to you.

APPENDIX A: PREDICTED SPECIES LIST

Table 1. List of species predicted to be present near the proposed Canyon Creek WMA Addition property. Prepared by FWP Data Services, 2010.

Common Name	**Scientific Name**
Long-toed Salamander	*Ambystoma macrodactylum*
Rocky Mountain Tailed Frog	*Ascaphus montanus*
Western Toad	*Bufo boreas*
Boreal Chorus Frog	*Pseudacris maculata*
Plains Spadefoot	*Spea bombifrons*
Northern Leopard Frog	*Rana pipiens*
Columbia Spotted Frog	*Rana luteiventris*
Harlequin Duck	*Histrionicus histrionicus*
Turkey Vulture	*Cathartes aura*
Northern Harrier	*Circus cyaneus*
Sharp-shinned Hawk	*Accipiter striatus*
Cooper's Hawk	*Accipiter cooperii*
Red-tailed Hawk	*Buteo jamaicensis*
Rough-legged Hawk	*Buteo lagopus*
Golden Eagle	*Aquila chrysaetos*
American Kestrel	*Falco sparverius*
Merlin	*Falco columbarius*
Peregrine Falcon	*Falco peregrinus*
Gyrfalcon	*Falco rusticolus*
Prairie Falcon	*Falco mexicanus*
Gray Partridge	*Perdix perdix*
Spruce Grouse	*Falcipennis canadensis*
Dusky Grouse	*Dendragapus obscurus*
Ruffed Grouse	*Bonasa umbellus*
Greater Sage-Grouse	*Centrocercus urophasianus*
Sharp-tailed Grouse (Columbian)	*Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus*
Sharp-tailed Grouse (Plains)	*Tympanuchus phasianellus jamesi*
Wild Turkey	*Meleagris gallopavo*
Mourning Dove	*Zenaida macroura*
Black-billed Cuckoo	*Coccyzus erythropthalmus*
Flammulated Owl	*Otus flammeolus*
Western Screech-Owl	*Megascops kennicottii*
Great Horned Owl	*Bubo virginianus*
Snowy Owl	*Bubo scandiacus*
Northern Pygmy-Owl	*Glaucidium gnoma*
Burrowing Owl	*Athene cunicularia*
Barred Owl	*Strix varia*

Table 1 continued.

Common Name	**Scientific Name**
Great Gray Owl	*Strix nebulosa*
Long-eared Owl	*Asio otus*
Short-eared Owl	*Asio flammeus*
Boreal Owl	*Aegolius funereus*
Northern Saw-whet Owl	*Aegolius acadicus*
Common Nighthawk	*Chordeiles minor*
Common Poorwill	*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*
Vaux's Swift	*Chaetura vauxi*
Calliope Hummingbird	*Stellula calliope*
Rufous Hummingbird	*Selasphorus rufus*
Belted Kingfisher	*Megaceryle alcyon*
Lewis's Woodpecker	*Melanerpes lewis*
Williamson's Sapsucker	*Sphyrapicus thyroideus*
Red-naped Sapsucker	*Sphyrapicus nuchalis*
Downy Woodpecker	*Picoides pubescens*
Hairy Woodpecker	*Picoides villosus*
American Three-toed Woodpecker	*Picoides dorsalis*
Northern Flicker	*Colaptes auratus*
Pileated Woodpecker	*Dryocopus pileatus*
Olive-sided Flycatcher	*Contopus cooperi*
Western Wood-Pewee	*Contopus sordidulus*
Willow Flycatcher	*Empidonax traillii*
Hammond's Flycatcher	*Empidonax hammondii*
Dusky Flycatcher	*Empidonax oberholseri*
Cordilleran Flycatcher	*Empidonax occidentalis*
Say's Phoebe	*Sayornis saya*
Western Kingbird	*Tyrannus verticalis*
Eastern Kingbird	*Tyrannus tyrannus*
Tree Swallow	*Tachycineta bicolor*
Violet-green Swallow	*Tachycineta thalassina*
Cliff Swallow	*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*
Barn Swallow	*Hirundo rustica*
Gray Jay	*Perisoreus canadensis*
Steller's Jay	*Cyanocitta stelleri*
Clark's Nutcracker	*Nucifraga columbiana*
Black-billed Magpie	*Pica hudsonia*
American Crow	*Corvus brachyrhynchos*

Table 1 continued.

Common Name	**Scientific Name**
Common Raven	*Corvus corax*
Black-capped Chickadee	*Poecile atricapillus*
Mountain Chickadee	*Poecile gambeli*
Boreal Chickadee	*Poecile hudsonica*
Red-breasted Nuthatch	*Sitta canadensis*
White-breasted Nuthatch	*Sitta carolinensis*
Pygmy Nuthatch	*Sitta pygmaea*
Brown Creeper	*Certhia americana*
House Wren	*Troglodytes aedon*
American Dipper	*Cinclus mexicanus*
Golden-crowned Kinglet	*Regulus satrapa*
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	*Regulus calendula*
Western Bluebird	*Sialia mexicana*
Mountain Bluebird	*Sialia currucoides*
Townsend's Solitaire	*Myadestes townsendi*
Swainson's Thrush	*Catharus ustulatus*
Hermit Thrush	*Catharus guttatus*
American Robin	*Turdus migratorius*
Gray Catbird	*Dumetella carolinensis*
Sage Thrasher	*Oreoscoptes montanus*
Brown Thrasher	*Toxostoma rufum*
Sprague's Pipit	*Anthus spragueii*
Bohemian Waxwing	*Bombycilla garrulus*
Cedar Waxwing	*Bombycilla cedrorum*
Northern Shrike	*Lanius excubitor*
Loggerhead Shrike	*Lanius ludovicianus*
Warbling Vireo	*Vireo gilvus*
Solitary Vireo	*Vireo solitarius*
Orange-crowned Warbler	*Vermivora celata*
Yellow Warbler	*Dendroica petechia*
Yellow-rumped Warbler	*Dendroica coronata*
Townsend's Warbler	*Dendroica townsendi*
American Redstart	*Setophaga ruticilla*
Northern Waterthrush	*Seiurus noveboracensis*
MacGillivray's Warbler	*Oporornis tolmiei*
Common Yellowthroat	*Geothlypis trichas*
Wilson's Warbler	*Wilsonia pusilla*

Table 1 continued.

Common Name	**Scientific Name**
Western Tanager	*Piranga ludoviciana*
Black-headed Grosbeak	*Pheucticus melanocephalus*
Lazuli Bunting	*Passerina amoena*
Indigo Bunting	*Passerina cyanea*
Green-tailed Towhee	*Pipilo chlorurus*
Spotted Towhee	*Pipilo maculatus*
American Tree Sparrow	*Spizella arborea*
Chipping Sparrow	*Spizella passerina*
Clay-colored Sparrow	*Spizella pallida*
Brewer's Sparrow	*Spizella breweri*
Vesper Sparrow	*Pooecetes gramineus*
Lark Sparrow	*Chondestes grammacus*
Lark Bunting	*Calamospiza melanocorys*
Savannah Sparrow	*Passerculus sandwichensis*
Grasshopper Sparrow	*Ammodramus savannarum*
Fox Sparrow	*Passerella iliaca*
Song Sparrow	*Melospiza melodia*
Lincoln's Sparrow	*Melospiza lincolnii*
White-throated Sparrow	*Zonotrichia albicollis*
Harris's Sparrow	*Zonotrichia querula*
Dark-eyed Junco	*Junco hyemalis*
McCown's Longspur	*Calcarius mccownii*
Lapland Longspur	*Calcarius lapponicus*
Chestnut-collared Longspur	*Calcarius ornatus*
Snow Bunting	*Plectrophenax nivalis*
Bobolink	*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*
Western Meadowlark	*Sturnella neglecta*
Brewer's Blackbird	*Euphagus cyanocephalus*
Brown-headed Cowbird	*Molothrus ater*
Pine Grosbeak	*Pinicola enucleator*
Purple Finch	*Carpodacus purpureus*
Cassin's Finch	*Carpodacus cassinii*
House Finch	*Carpodacus mexicanus*
Red Crossbill	*Loxia curvirostra*
White-winged Crossbill	*Loxia leucoptera*
Common Redpoll	*Carduelis flammea*
Hoary Redpoll	*Carduelis hornemanni*

Table 1 continued.

Common Name	**Scientific Name**
Pine Siskin	*Carduelis pinus*
American Goldfinch	*Carduelis tristis*
Evening Grosbeak	*Coccothraustes vespertinus*
Masked Shrew	*Sorex cinereus*
Vagrant Shrew	*Sorex vagrans*
Dusky or Montane Shrew	*Sorex monticolus*
Water Shrew	*Sorex palustris*
Little Brown Myotis	*Myotis lucifugus*
Yuma Myotis	*Myotis yumanensis*
Long-eared Myotis	*Myotis evotis*
Fringed Myotis	*Myotis thysanodes*
Long-legged Myotis	*Myotis volans*
California Myotis	*Myotis californicus*
Western Small-footed Myotis	*Myotis ciliolabrum*
Silver-haired Bat	*Lasionycteris noctivagans*
Big Brown Bat	*Eptesicus fuscus*
Hoary Bat	*Lasiurus cinereus*
Townsend's Big-eared Bat	*Corynorhinus townsendii*
Pika	*Ochotona princeps*
Mountain Cottontail	*Sylvilagus nuttallii*
Snowshoe Hare	*Lepus americanus*
White-tailed Jack Rabbit	*Lepus townsendii*
Yellow-pine Chipmunk	*Tamias amoenus*
Red-tailed Chipmunk	*Tamias ruficaudus*
Yellow-bellied Marmot	*Marmota flaviventris*
Richardson's Ground Squirrel	*Spermophilus richardsonii*
Columbian Ground Squirrel	*Spermophilus columbianus*
Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel	*Spermophilus lateralis*
Red Squirrel	*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*
Northern Flying Squirrel	*Glaucomys sabrinus*
Northern Pocket Gopher	*Thomomys talpoides*
Beaver	*Castor canadensis*
Deer Mouse	*Peromyscus maniculatus*
Northern Grasshopper Mouse	*Onychomys leucogaster*
Bushy-tailed Woodrat	*Neotoma cinerea*
Southern Red-backed Vole	*Clethrionomys gapperi*
Heather Vole	*Phenacomys intermedius*
Meadow Vole	*Microtus pennsylvanicus*

Table 1 continued.

Common Name	**Scientific Name**
Montane Vole	*Microtus montanus*
Long-tailed Vole	*Microtus longicaudus*
Water Vole	*Microtus richardsoni*
Sagebrush Vole	*Lemmiscus curtatus*
Muskrat	*Ondatra zibethicus*
Western Jumping Mouse	*Zapus princeps*
Porcupine	*Erethizon dorsatum*
Coyote	*Canis latrans*
Red Fox	*Vulpes vulpes*
Swift Fox	*Vulpes velox*
Black Bear	*Ursus americanus*
Raccoon	*Procyon lotor*
Marten	*Martes americana*
Fisher	*Martes pennanti*
Short-tailed Weasel	*Mustela erminea*
Least Weasel	*Mustela nivalis*
Long-tailed Weasel	*Mustela frenata*
Mink	*Mustela vison*
Wolverine	*Gulo gulo*
Badger	*Taxidea taxus*
Striped Skunk	*Mephitis mephitis*
Northern River Otter	*Lontra canadensis*
Canada Lynx	*Lynx canadensis*
Bobcat	*Lynx rufus*
Mountain Lion	*Puma concolor*
Elk or Wapiti	*Cervus canadensis*
Mule Deer	*Odocoileus hemionus*
White-tailed Deer	*Odocoileus virginianus*
Moose	*Alces alces*
Pronghorn	*Antilocapra americana*
Painted Turtle	*Chrysemys picta*
Greater Short-horned Lizard	*Phrynosoma hernandesi*
Rubber Boa	*Charina bottae*
Eastern Racer	*Coluber constrictor*
Gophersnake	*Pituophis catenifer*
Terrestrial Gartersnake	*Thamnophis elegans*
Common Gartersnake	*Thamnophis sirtalis*
Prairie Rattlesnake	*Crotalus viridis*

APPENDIX B: TOURISM REPORT

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:

Jan Stoddard, Tourism Development Specialist
Travel Montana-Department of Commerce
301 S. Park Ave.
Helena, MT 59601

Project Name: Canyon Creek Wildlife Management Area Addition – Palmquist Property

Project Description: The 4-7 acre Palmquist Family Property would be an addition to the Canyon Creek Wildlife Management Area northwest of Helena. The draft Environmental Assessment will be out for public review in August 2018.

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

   This project may have a slight, positive impact on the tourism economy. Once this property is in FWP ownership, it will be signed, which will raise the profile of the property and will increase use by the public.

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

   This project may have a slight, positive impact on the tourism economy. Once this property is in FWP ownership, it will be signed, which will raise the profile of the property and will increase use by the public. In addition, FWP would plan to install a parking area, which would make parking off the highway easier for most vehicle types, which increases accessibility for resident and non-resident visitor use. We are assuming the agency has determined it has necessary funding for the on-going operations and maintenance once this project is complete.

Signature *Jan Stoddard* Date: 8/15/18

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APPENDIX C: *CANYON CREEK WMA MANAGEMENT PLAN* (2002)

Please note that this is a separate document of this EA available on the FWP website: ***AppendixC_CanyonCreekWMA_MngmntPlan.pdf.*** If you would like a printed copy, please call the Helena Area Resource Office at (406) 495-3260 to request that one be mailed to you.