



# MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

PO Box 200701 Helena, MT 59620-0701  
(406) 444-9947

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

### PART I. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

**1. Project Title:** Billings Rod and Gun Club

**2. Type of Proposed Action:**

The Billings Rod and Gun Club (BRGC) proposes to expand the capacity and convenience of the BRGC Range facilities by: constructing an eighth pistol bay and expanding the parking lot at the pistol range.

**3. Location Affected by Proposed Action:**

The Billings Rod and Gun Club range is located approximately 1 mile north of Billings, Montana, at 2931 Rod and Gun Club Road, Billings, MT 59106, Lat. 45.8248, Long. -108.5840, SW1/4 Section 23, Township 1 North, Range 25 East.



**Figure 1. Location of Billings Rod and Gun Club Range**





**Figure 2– Aerial View of the Billings Rod and Gun Club Range, Billings, Montana**



**Figure 3. Location of the Proposed Project at the Billings Rod and Gun Club 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):**

The construction of the additional pistol bay is necessary for the BRGC to continue to grow and support shooting sports. The BRGC hosts several events throughout the spring, summer, and fall, and many of these events utilize one more of the existing bays. On some weekends, none of the bays are available due to scheduled events or heavy member use. The additional bay would enhance the facilities so that more member use is possible. Constructing an additional parking area and extending the access road will accommodate the addition of an eighth pistol bay. Approximately ten years ago, the BRGC prepared a master plan which identified a total of eight pistol bays. This project will complete the master planned expansion of the bays.

**6. Objectives for the Action(s):**

The objective of the BRGC proposed project is to improve and expand the existing pistol range by: constructing an eighth pistol bay; developing an additional parking lot at the pistol range; and extending the access road to the new pistol range parking area and future parking area at the Sporting Clays north course.

**7. Project Size: estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected:**

The proposed project would involve approximately 1 acre of the 205-acre BRGC range.

**8. Affected Environment (A brief description of the affected area of the proposed project):**

The BRGC range is located on 205 acres of private land owned in fee title by the Billings Rod and Gun Club. The property is not located within a floodplain and there are no permanent surface waters or wetlands on the property. The BRGC range offers shooting opportunities for rifle, pistol, shotgun, archery, black powder, cowboy action, and long-range rifle.

**9. Description of Project:**

The BRGC proposed project involves constructing an eighth pistol bay; expanding the parking lot at the pistol range; and extending the access road to the new pistol range parking area and future parking area at the Sporting Clays north course.

The estimated budget includes:

Phase I- Pistol Range Improvements	\$100,440
Phase II- Parking Area Improvements	\$ 27,500
Total Project Budget	\$127,940
<b>Total Funding Requested from FWP</b>	<b>\$ 63,970</b>

**10. List any Other Local, State, or Federal Agency that has Overlapping or Additional Jurisdiction:**

None

**Permits, Licenses and/or Authorizations:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>	<u>Date Filed/#</u>
N/A		

**Funding:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	\$63,970

**11. Affiliations, Cooperating Agencies, User Groups and/or Supporting Groups:**

The BRGC range is located on 205 acres of private land deeded to the BRGC. This is a non-profit, private shooting club with an annual membership fee of \$125 for individuals and families, with a day use fee of \$5 for guests and visitors. The BRGC hosts over 50 events each year. Over 10 organizations utilize the range, including: Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Hunter Education, Boy Scouts, Scholastic Shooting Sports Foundation, local high school organizations, Magic City Action Shooters, Territorial Peacemakers, The Well-Armed Woman, NSSA Skeet events, NSCA Sporting Clays events, NFAA Archery events, USPSA Action Pistol, and Big Sky State Games.

**12. History of the Planning and Scoping Process, and Any Public Involvement:**

Because the BRGC 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:**

Matthew Waite, 3209 Turnberry Circle, Billings, MT 59101. (406) 208-3440.

**15. Other Pertinent Information:**

The BRGC is a non-profit, private shooting club. The closest shooting range providing similar shooting opportunities is located 8 miles from the BRGC range in Billings, Montana.

Shooting range applications require the participating governing body to approve by resolution its submission of applications for shooting range-funding assistance. Resolution Date: January 25, 2021.

## **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 improve and expand the BRGC pistol range by adding an eighth pistol bay, expanding the adjacent parking lot, and constructing an access road to the new pistol bay and parking lot. 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.**

<b>Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:</b>	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Can Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comments Below</b>
1. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				<b>X</b>		
2. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats				<b>X</b>		<b>2</b>
3. Introduction of new species into an area				<b>X</b>		
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality				<b>X</b>		<b>4</b>
5. Water quality, quantity & distribution (surface or groundwater)				<b>X</b>		<b>5</b>
6. Existing water right or						

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
reservation				X		
7. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture				X		7
8. Air quality or objectionable odors				X		
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 delineated wetlands and no natural water sources within the area proposed for development. No critical wildlife habitat would be affected. Any resident or transient wildlife may temporarily leave the immediate area during construction activities.

**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 affect 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.

**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		5
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. Even though the BRGC range is adjacent to agricultural land used for grazing and hay production, the range has not been in agricultural production for years. The proposed project will have no affect on agricultural production.

5. The proposed project will improve the safety of the BRGC range and the surrounding residential community.

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 Billings Rod and Gun Club's Proposed Alternative, to improve and expand the pistol range, 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:**

- Matthew Waite, 3209 Turnberry Circle, Billings, MT 59101. (406) 208-3440.
- MT Fish Wildlife and Parks

### **EA prepared by:**

Andrea Darling, Darling Natural Resource Consulting, Montana City, MT 59634

### **Date Completed:**

April 16, 2021

### **Describe public involvement, if any:**

This draft EA will be advertised on FWP's web site and through a legal ad in the *Billings Gazette, Billings, MT* announcing a public comment period. A press release will also announce the project and comment period.