



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: Mineral County Shooting Sports Association

2. Type of Proposed Action:

The Mineral County Shooting Sports Association (MCSSA) proposes to develop and improve the MCSSA Range by:

- Identifying and marking the property boundaries of the 236-acre range by clearing trees along the boundary
- Drilling a commercial well and installing a septic system including a drain field;
- Installing entrance gate with approximately 100' of fence on either side of the gate.

3. Location Affected by Proposed Action:

The MCSSA Range is located approximately 7 miles southeast of Superior, Montana, at Exit 55 of Interstate 90 on U.S. Highway 12; Lat. 47.111825, Long. -114.7879622; Section 29, Township 16 North, Range 25 West.

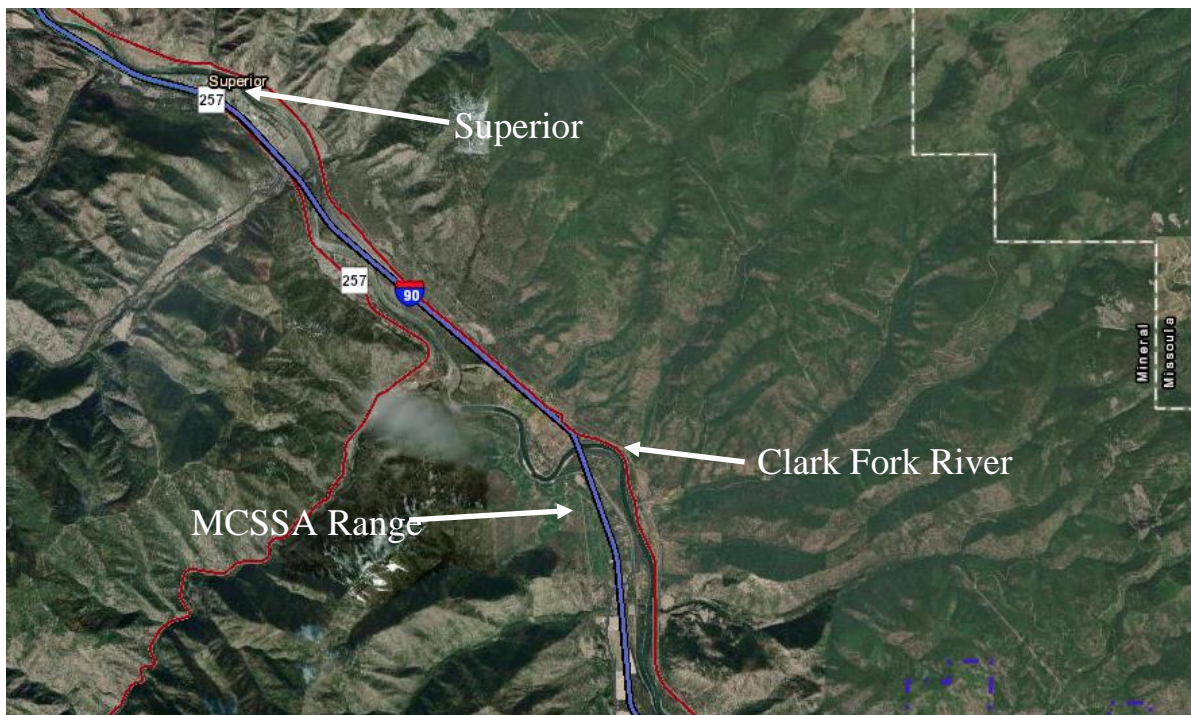


Figure 1 – Location of the Mineral County Shooting Sports Association Range, Superior, Montana

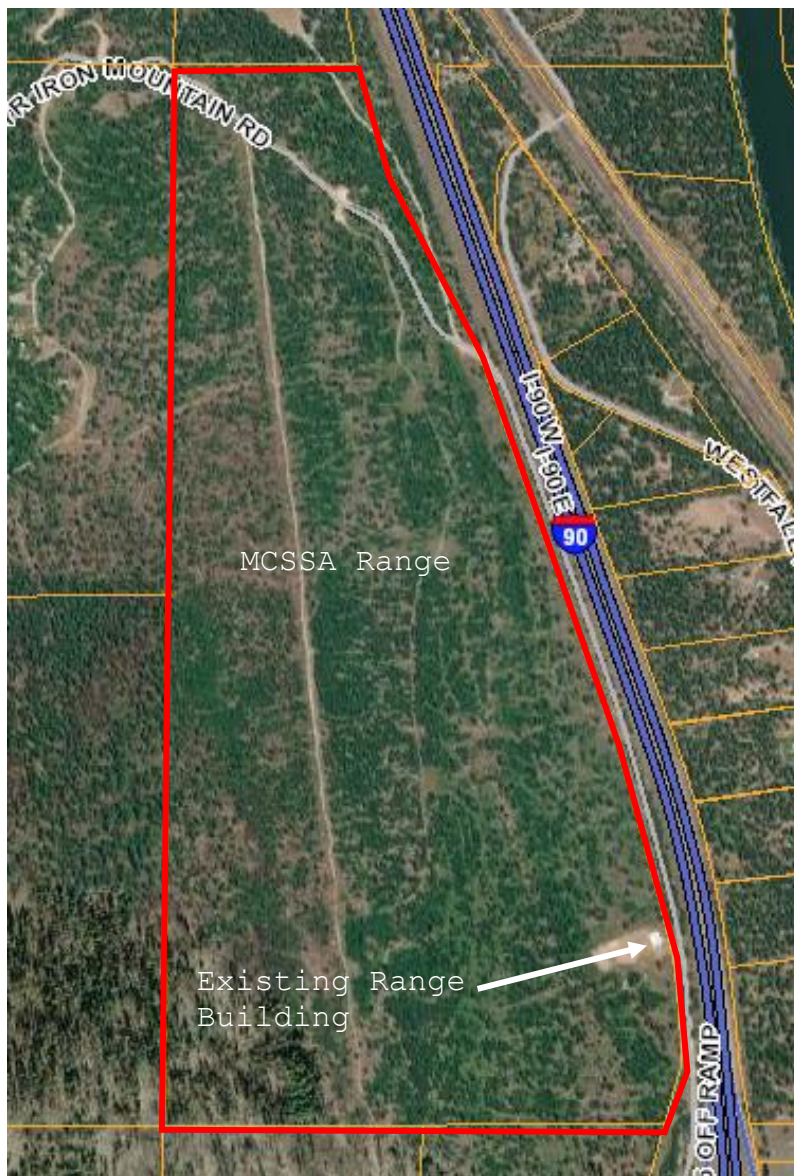


Figure 2 – Aerial view of the Mineral County Shooting Sports Association Range, Superior, Montana

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 MCSSA Range was established in 2019 after the MCSSA acquired 236 acres of private land near the Lozeau/Quartz Exit (Exit 55) of Interstate 90 southeast of Superior, Montana. At the time of purchase, the property had a rudimentary 100-yard range and an unfinished 50' X 65' building, lacking utilities and insulation. Similarly, the property itself was neither fenced nor boundaries identified. Some improvements have been made to the building and shooting range, but no water, sewer, or plumbing fixtures exist on the property. In addition, the property boundaries have not been identified or marked, and there is no entrance gate or fencing to secure the facilities. The proposed project would construct and install necessary infrastructure for development of the MCSSA Range.

6. Objectives for the Action(s):

The goal of the proposed project is to expand and improve the safety, security, and capabilities of the MCSSA Range by: identifying and marking the property boundaries of the 236-acre range; drilling a commercial well; installing a septic system including a drain field; and installing entrance gate with approximately 100' of fence on either side of the gate.

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

The proposed project would involve approximately 30 acres of the 236-acre MCSSA Range.

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

The MCSSA Range is located on 236 acres of private land owned in fee title by the Mineral County Shooting Sports Association. The property is not located within a floodplain and there are no permanent surface waters or wetlands on the property. The range currently offers shooting opportunities for rifle, pistol, indoor youth air rifle, and archery. These shooting opportunities will be enhanced by the proposed project.

9. Description of Project:

MCSSA plans to develop and improve the MCSSA Range by:

- Properly marking the boundaries of the range and reducing the chance of unintentional access. A 15' to 20' wide alley along the previously surveyed boundary will be cleared of trees and shrubs which will then be reseeded with an approved seed mix.
- Drilling a commercial well and installing a septic system with drain field to accommodate the future installation of bathrooms and kitchen facilities in the current range building.
- Installing an entrance gate to the undeveloped parking lot and range building and installing approximately 100' of fence on each side of the gate. This will be visible from Interstate 90 and will define a visible presence and entrance to the facility and provide a secure access to the undeveloped parking area.

Proposed expenses include:

- | | | |
|----|---|----------|
| 1. | Materials and installation of warning and shooting range signs for range property perimeter | \$ 1,610 |
|----|---|----------|

2.	Remove timber; clear 20' wide area along perimeter; construct access road, seed disturbed area	\$71,400
3.	Materials and installation of entrance gate with 100' of wooden fence on each side of entrance gate	\$ 5,940
4.	Drill domestic water well; install pump and fittings; install drain field, septic tank, and hookups	\$17,500
5.	Administration	<u>\$ 860</u>
	Total Project Budget	\$97,310
	Total Funding Requested from FWP	\$48,655

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	\$48,655

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

The MCSSA Range is a private, non-profit range with an annual membership fee of \$50 per year for individuals and \$75 per year for families. The range is open to visitors for a fee of \$5 per day. Several organizations use the range each year, including 4-H, Mineral County Sheriff's Office, and Montana Highway Patrol. The MCSSA hopes to develop many additional shooting sports opportunities in the future for other organizations, such as Fish, Wildlife and Parks Hunters Safety, Federal Law Enforcement, Archery organizations, and public "sight-in" days. Two to three events and various shooting and gun safety classes are held at the range every year.

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

The MCSSA Range is a private, nonprofit shooting range. The MCSSA held meetings to seek member involvement in the planning process. Proposed range development proposals have been discussed with the association 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:

Dave Brink, P.O. Box 1011, Superior, MT 59872; (406) 822-3545

15. Other Pertinent Information:

The MCSSA Range is a private, non-profit shooting range. The closest shooting range providing similar shooting opportunities is located in Missoula, Montana over 63 miles from the MCSSA Range.

Shooting range applications require the participating governing body to approve by resolution its submission of applications for shooting range-funding assistance. Resolution Date: December 16, 2020.

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): delineating the property boundaries through clearing trees and shrubs; drilling a well; installing a septic system; and installing an entrance gate and adjacent 100' of fencing. 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 determine 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,						

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
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 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 would likely temporarily leave the immediate area during construction of the proposed project.

4. 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 already 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 any disturbed areas 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 an undeveloped 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		
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		

5. The proposed projects would improve the safety for members and the public using the range.

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 MCSSA Proposed Alternative, to improve and expand the shooting facilities of the MCSSA Range, is supported by its members. 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:

1. Dave Brink, P.O. Box 1011, Superior, MT 59872; (406) 822-3545
2. MT Fish Wildlife and Parks

EA prepared by:

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

Date Completed:

April 15, 2021

Describe public involvement, if any:

This draft EA will be advertised on FWP's web site and through a legal ad in the *Clark Fork Valley Press-Mineral Independent, Plains, MT* announcing a public comment period. A press release will also announce the project and comment period.