



MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

PART I. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

1. Project Title: Thompson Falls Trap Club Proposed Improvement Project

2. Type of Proposed Action:

The objective of this project will be to repair and enlarge the backstop berms for the 25- and 50-yard handgun shooting ranges, in addition to constructing a covered shooting area for shooters. The funds will go toward purchasing material for the berms and the labor required for moving that material, along with materials and labor required for constructing a covered handgun shooting area where shooters can shoot and be out of the weather. Shooting benches will also be installed within this structure.

3. Location Affected by Proposed Action:

The Thompson Falls Trap Club (TFTC) Range is located on Montana Highway 200 approximately 5 miles east of Thompson Falls, Montana at 5661 Montana Highway 200, Thompson Falls, MT; latitude 47.651202, longitude -115.393718; Section 18, Township 21 North, Range 28 West (Figure 1 and 2).

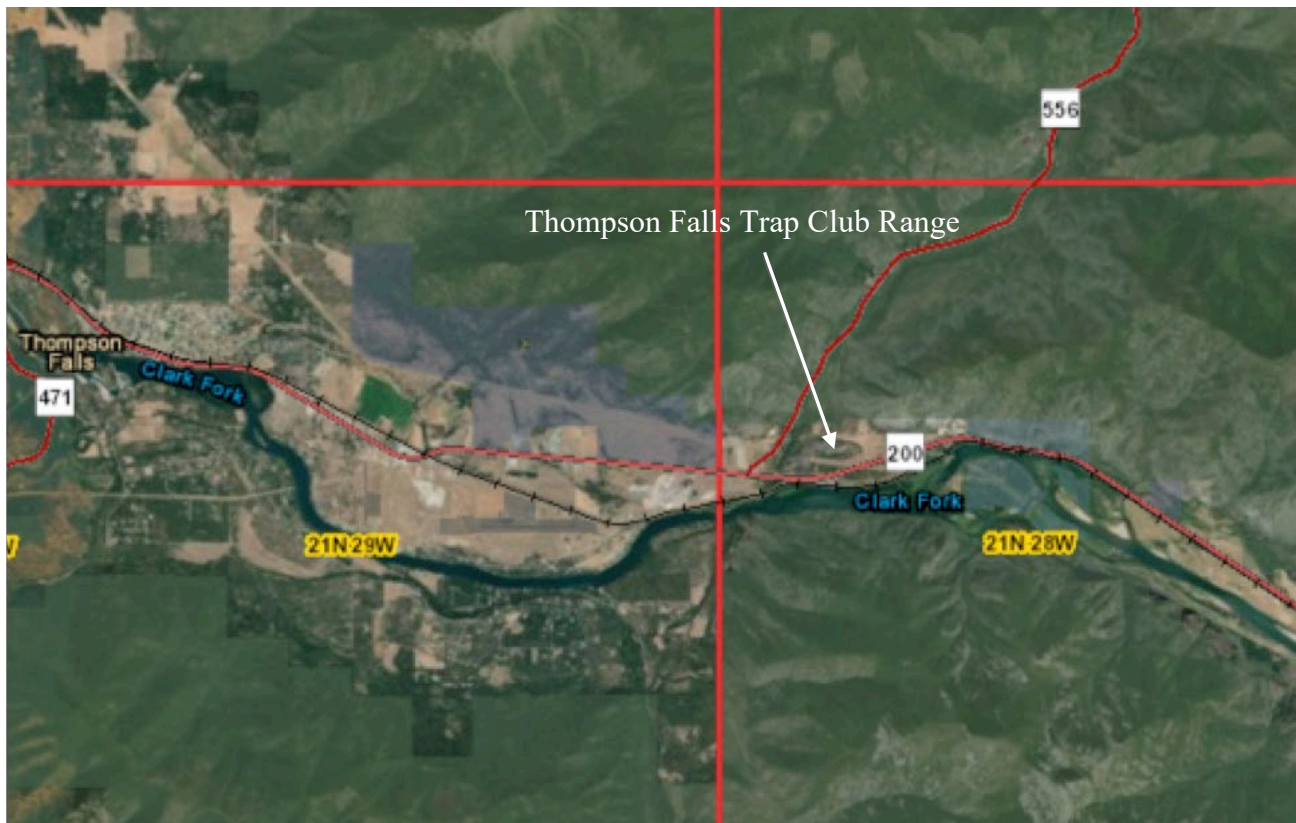


Figure 1. General Location of TFTC Range, Thompson Falls, MT.

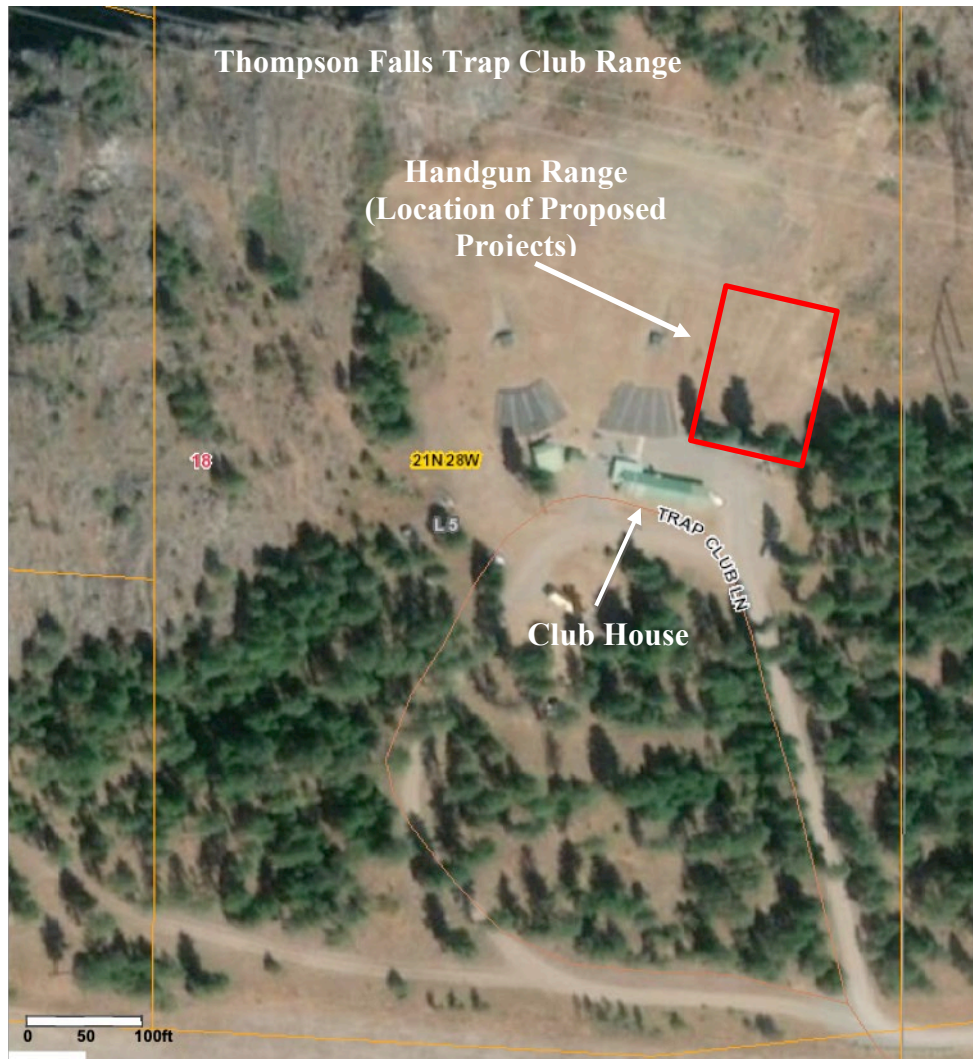


Figure 2 – Thompson Falls Trap Club Proposed Project, Thompson Falls, Montana.

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):

TFTC's pistol and small arms shooting area has deteriorated over the years, and the safety berms need to be repaired and enlarged to meet basic safety standards. TFTC would also like to create a more comfortable, protected shooting experience for their pistol and small arms shooters. To address this need, they will install new covered shooting stations benches included.

6. Objectives for the Action(s):

The objective for these improvements is to improve the overall safety and shooter experience at TFTC. Repairing the berms will ensure downrange safety standards are met. And the new sheltered shooting stations will help TFTC's newly formed women's training group and other guests have a much better experience using their facilities on a regular basis.

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

The proposed project would involve approximately 2.5 acres of the 19-acre TFTC Range.

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

The TFTC Range is located on 19 acres of public land leased from Sanders County. The TFTC signed a 10-year Addendum to the 2011 Lease Agreement with Sanders County on April 20, 2020. The TFTC lease of county-owned land will now be effective through April 19, 2030. The property is not located within a floodplain, and there are no permanent surface waters or wetlands on the property. The range offers shooting opportunities for rifle, pistol, shotgun, and black powder shooting.

9. Description of Project:

The objective of this project is to repair and enlarge the backstop berms for the 25- and 50-yard handgun shooting range, in addition to establishing a covered area for shooters. TFTC will purchase gravel and other materials, along with renting heavy equipment, to build up safety berms for said ranges. The funds will also help TFTC to purchase the lumber and other materials necessary for constructing a covered handgun shooting area where shooters can seek shelter from the elements. Shooting benches will also be installed in this structure.

Estimated costs include:

▪ Volunteer Labor	\$ 6,020
▪ Concrete - Labor and Materials	\$ 2,140
▪ Excavation	\$ 1,700
▪ Gravel - Labor and Materials	\$ 2,350
▪ Lumber Package (completed building)	\$4,434.20
▪ Grant Administration	\$ 600
▪ Total Project Budget	\$17,244.20
▪ Total Funding Requested from FWP	\$ 8,662.10

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	\$8,662.10

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

The TFTC Range is located on 19 acres of public land lease to the TFTC by Sanders County. This is a private range with a membership fee of \$10 for individuals and \$15 for families, though the range is open to visitors and guests of members for free. The TFTC hosts approximately 11 events each year and approximately 8 organizations use the range each year, including: 4-H Shooting Sports, FWP Hunter's Education, Thompson Falls Trap Club, Sanders County Sheriff's Department, Thompson Falls Police Department, Retired Law Enforcement, Social Card games, Operation Healing Forces, Private Pistol Instructors, and Youth Shotgun. In addition, other activities sponsored by the Thompson Falls Shooting Club are held at the range.

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

Because the TFTC is a nonprofit 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:

Digger Powell, PO Box 17, Heron, MT 59844, (406) 847-0080

15. Other Pertinent Information:

The TFTC is a private nonprofit shooting club. The closest shooting range providing similar shooting opportunities is in Plains, Montana, about 5 miles from the Thompson Falls Shooting Club.

Shooting range applications require the participating governing body to approve by resolution its submission of applications for shooting range-funding assistance. Resolution Date: January 2, 2022.

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 repair eroded safety berms along TFTC's pistol and small arms shooting range and construct new covered shooting stations in that same area. There are beneficial consequences to acceptance of the **Proposed Alternative**.

Alternative B (No Action Alternative) would result from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Shooting Range Development Grant money being denied, in which case the area would remain an active shooting range without the proposed improvements.

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:

Neither the **Proposed Alternative** nor the **No Action Alternative** would have significant negative environmental consequences, however the No Action Alternative would leave unresolved the safety issues that may arise from eroded safety berms.

There are beneficial consequences that would result from accepting the **Proposed Alternative**. The proposed changes would enhance basic safety measures for the small arms shooting range and all adjacent ranges. The new covered shooting areas would improve guests' experience of using TFTC's facilities for small arms shooting practice.

The **No Action Alternative** would have no significant negative environmental consequences; the range would continue on with present conditions, and land use would remain the same. Potential negative consequences for the No Action alternative include a lack of adherence to basic safety standards for existing safety berms, and less-than-ideal shooting conditions for the TFTC's members and guests.

Describe any Alternatives considered and eliminated from Detailed Study:

Only the Proposed Alternative and the No Action Alternative were considered. There was no other alternative that were deemed reasonably available, or prudent.

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, 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		

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
9. Historical & archaeological sites				X		9
10. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
11. Aesthetics				X		

2. & 5. There are no delineated wetlands or natural water sources within the area proposed for development. No critical wildlife habitat is located on the site and, therefore, would not be affected by the proposed project. The proposed project would have only minor and short-term impacts on wildlife and native plant species. Resident or transient wildlife may temporarily leave the area during construction but would return upon project completion.

4. The proposed project will have little to no impact on 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 some 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 areas will be reseeded.

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

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. The site is not under agricultural production.

5. The proposed developments will improve the safety of the small arms shooting range.

7. The proposed developments will improve 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. The project reviewed is not complex, controversial, or located in an environmentally sensitive area. The project being implemented is already on an existing range or altered area 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 TFTC's Proposed Alternative 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 cumulative 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:

- Digger Powell, PO Box 17, Heron, MT 59844, (406) 847-0080
- MT Fish Wildlife and Parks

EA prepared by:

Amanda Darling, Prairie Goat Enterprises, Hamilton, MT 59840

Date Completed:

June 4, 2022

Describe public involvement, if any:

This draft EA will be advertised on FWP's web site announcing the public comment period. A press release will also announce the project and comment period.