

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST



Confluentus Corner FAS

June 16, 2023



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I. Compliance with the Montana Environmental Policy Act

Before a proposed *project* may be approved, environmental review must be conducted to identify and consider potential impacts of the proposed project on the human and physical environment affected by the project. The Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) and its implementing rules and regulations require different levels of environmental review, depending on the proposed project, significance of potential impacts, and the review timeline. § 75-1-201, Montana Code Annotated (“MCA”), and the Administrative Rules of Montana (“ARM”) 12.2.430, General Requirements of the Environmental Review Process.

FWP must prepare an EA when:

- It is considering a “state-proposed project,” which is defined in § 75-1-220(8)(a) as:
 - (i) a project, program, or activity initiated and directly undertaken by a state agency;
 - (ii) ... a project or activity supported through a contract, grant, subsidy, loan, or other form of funding assistance from a state agency, either singly or in combination with one or more other state agencies; or
 - (iii) ... a project or activity authorized by a state agency acting in a land management capacity for a lease, easement, license, or other authorization to act.
- It is not clear without preparation of an EA whether the proposed project is a major one significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. ARM 12.2.430(3)(a));
- FWP has not otherwise implemented the interdisciplinary analysis and public review purposes listed in ARM 12.2.430(2) (a) and (d) through a similar planning and decision-making process (ARM 12.2.430(3)(b));
- Statutory requirements do not allow sufficient time for the FWP to prepare an EIS (ARM 12.2.430(3)(c));
- The project is not specifically excluded from MEPA review according to § 75-1-220(8)(b) or ARM 12.2.430(5); or
- As an alternative to preparing an EIS, prepare an EA whenever the project is one that might normally require an EIS, but effects which might otherwise be deemed significant appear to be mitigable below the level of significance through design, or enforceable controls or stipulations or both imposed by the agency or other government agencies. For an EA to suffice in this instance, the agency must determine that all the impacts of the proposed project have been accurately identified, that they will be mitigated below the level of significance, and that no significant impact is likely to occur. The agency may not consider compensation for purposes of determining that impacts have been mitigated below the level of significance (ARM 12.2.430(4)).

MEPA is procedural; its intent is to ensure that impacts to the environment associated with a proposed project are fully considered and the public is informed of potential impacts resulting from the project.

II. Background and Description of Proposed Project

Name of Project: Confluentus Corner FAS Parking Lot Construction

Fish Wildlife & Parks (FWP) is proposing the construction of a 5-6 vehicle gravel parking lot, on the southwestern corner of newly acquired property on the Thompson River. The proposed project location was acquired by FWP in 2020. Based on observational data provided by the Montana Natural Heritage Program, 12 sensitive species are found in the vicinity of the proposed property acquisition including westslope cutthroat trout and bull trout. The purchase of this property prevented residential development, which would preserve sensitive fish and

wildlife habitat and allow for continued terrestrial wildlife movement. Additionally, this development allows for public access to the Thompson River.

The public is utilizing the site to access the Thompson River, but they must park either on the shoulder of the Thompson River Road (TRR) or travel north to access through United States Forest Service property. Parking on the road shoulder may degrade the integrity of the road shoulder structure, which creates a potentially hazardous situation.

The location of the proposed parking area would be inside the footprint of the former TRR, adjacent to the current road on the east side. This area was previously disturbed when the TRR was constructed and is relatively level. The old roadbed was rehabilitated with vegetation, but still has remnants of large stones on the old roadbed shoulder and a gradual slope down to the Thompson River.

The proposed action would provide a 5-6 vehicle gravel parking lot, creating a safer location for users to park their vehicles while accessing the river. This project would include regulatory and informational signage.

The proposed construction would be completed by October of 2024. The area would be inspected and maintained by FWP staff like other Fishing Access Sites (FAS).

Affected Area / Location of Proposed Project

- Legal Description
 - Latitude/Longitude: 47.58325, -115.23671
 - Section, Township, and Range: Section 18, Township 21, Range 28 W
 - Thompson Falls, Sanders County, Montana

Figure 1: Project Area – Sanders County



Proposed Project Area - Red

Map produced by: Parks and Outdoor
Recreation, Region 1
Author: Brian Schwartz
Proposed Confluentus Corner FAS Parking,
05/22/2023

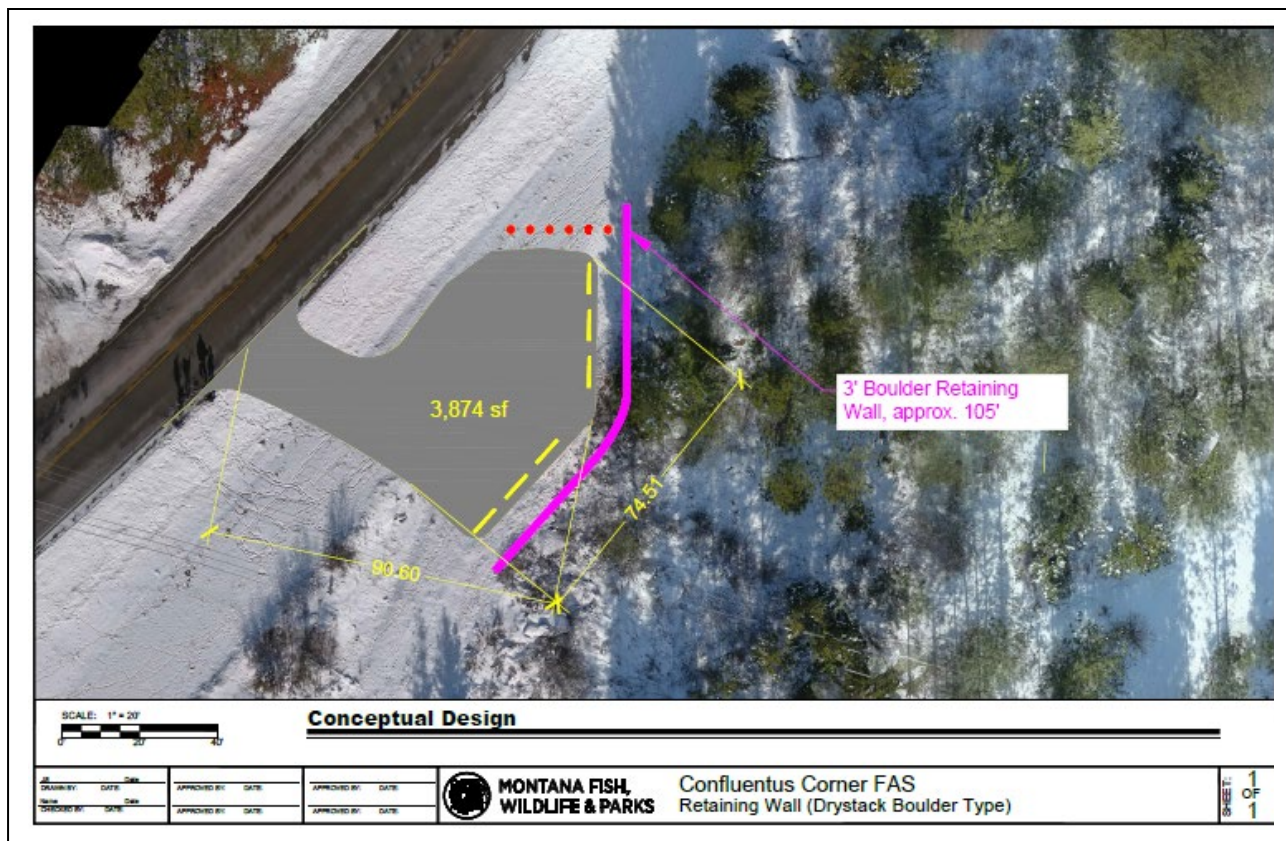
Figure 2: Project Location – East side of the Thompson River Road, Thompson Falls, Montana



Highway 200
 Thompson River Road
 Fish, Wildlife & Parks Land- Red
 Proposed 5-6 Car Parking Area for Confluentus FAS - Blue

Map produced by: Parks and Outdoor
 Recreation, Region 1
 Author: Brian Schwartz
 Proposed Confluentus Corner FAS Parking,
 05/22/2023

Figure 3: Proposed Project Concept Design



III. Purpose and Need

The EA must include a description of the benefits and purpose of the proposed project. ARM 12.2.432(3)(b). Benefits of the proposed project refer to benefits to the resource, public, department, state, and/or other. The primary intent of the proposal is to provide safe and sustainable access to the Confluentus FAS with a 5-6 vehicle, gravel parking area.

Long term goals would be as follows:

- Monitor the use patterns of visitors to the FAS and take corrective action if resource damage is observed.
- Maintain the parking area and surrounding primitive habitat following the current agency standards.
- Educate the public on the importance of the site and which partnering agencies collaborated to secure the facility.

There will be directional signage placed directing people to the river from the parking area. The indicated route will send people down the old road corridor and the rocky terrain will discourage visitors from creating social trails and subsequent erosion issues. This design plan allows for public access to the area, but discourages high use impacts such as overcrowding, excessive trail use, and overfishing, thereby protecting affected resources from further degradation.

These results are expected to: minimize the impacts to wildlife and fish species habitat and provide a designated area to park vehicles for visitor safety and resource protection.

The proposed construction would be completed by October of 2024. The area would be inspected and maintained by FWP staff like other existing FAS.

	Yes*	No
Was a cost/benefit analysis prepared for the proposed project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

* If yes, a copy of the cost/benefit analysis prepared for the proposed project is included in Attachment A to this Draft EA

IV. Other Agency Regulatory Responsibilities

FWP must list any federal, state, and/or local agencies that have overlapping or additional jurisdiction, or environmental review responsibility for the proposed project, as well as permits, licenses, and other required authorizations. ARM 12.2.432(3)(c).

A list of other required local, state, and federal approvals, such as permits, certificates, and/or licenses from affected agencies is included in **Table 2** below. **Table 2** provides a summary of requirements but does not necessarily represent a complete and comprehensive list of all permits, certificates, or approvals needed for the proposed project. Agency decision-making is governed by state and federal laws, including statutes, rules, and regulations, that form the legal basis for the conditions the proposed project must meet to obtain necessary permits, certificates, licenses, or other approvals. Further, these laws set forth the conditions under which each agency could deny the necessary approvals.

Table 1: Federal, State, and/or Local Regulatory Responsibilities

Agency	Type of Authorization (permit, license, stipulation, other)	Purpose
Montana State Highway	ROW Construction Permit (pending)	Authorize Construction within the county road right of way (ROW).
FWP Heritage Program; Montana State Preservation Office	Cultural Assessment Survey	Identify and protect any historic/archaeological sites that may be located within the project area
Department of Tourism	Department of Tourism Report	Determines if the proposed action will cause any positive or negative impact on the area tourism industry.
Montana Natural Heritage Program	Native Species Report	Determines if any plant or animal species listed as endangered or species of concern have been observed within the proposed project area
FWP	Noxious Weed Management Plan	Limit the spread of noxious weeds on state-owned lands

V. List of Mitigations, Stipulations

Mitigations, stipulations, and other *enforceable* controls required by FWP, or another agency, may be relied upon to limit potential impacts associated with a proposed Project. The table below lists and evaluates enforceable conditions FWP may rely on to limit potential impacts associated with the proposed Project. ARM 12.2.432(3)(g).

Table 2: Listing and Evaluation of Enforceable Mitigations Limiting Impacts

Are enforceable controls limiting potential impacts of the proposed action? If not, no further evaluation is needed.			Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, are these controls being relied upon to limit impacts below the level of significance? If yes, list the enforceable control(s) below			Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Enforceable Control	Responsible Agency	Authority (Rule, Permit,	Effect of Enforceable Control on	

		Stipulation, Other)	Proposed Project
Identification and Protection of Cultural Resources	State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)	Cultural Assessment and Inventory	This project will avoid any adverse effect to cultural resources eligible for the National Register of Historic Places that are within or adjacent to the project's Area of Potential Effect. The process for identifying those resources is explained further below. If avoiding adverse effect requires altering the project design or implementation, FWP will do so.
Noxious Weed Monitoring and Mitigation	FWP	FWP Noxious Weed Guidelines	Limit the spread of noxious weeds

VI. Alternatives Considered

In addition to the proposed project, and as required by MEPA, FWP analyzes the "No-Action" alternative in this EA. Under the "No Action" alternative, the proposed project would not occur. Therefore, no additional impacts to the physical environment or human population in the analysis area would occur because of the proposed project. The "No Action" alternative forms the baseline from which the potential impacts of the proposed Project can be measured.

- Alternative 1: No Action. Under the No Action alternative, the current issues resulting in the proposed project would continue, including no established vehicle parking for users to access the area and associated impacts. Anyone who wished to use the area would continue to park their vehicle on the side of the state highway, traverse a steep rocky embankment, and access through Forest Service property. This would add to erosion of the road shoulder and continue a potentially hazardous situation for pedestrians and vehicles.
- Alternative 2: Proposed Project. The proposed project would provide a 5-6 vehicle, gravel parking area removed from the shoulder of the county road with the primary intent of habitat preservation for multiple fish and wildlife species, in addition to providing safe day-use public access to the site. Reference Figure 4 to review the concept design. A summary of potential impacts to the affected physical and human environment because of the proposed project is included in Tables 3 and 4 below.

	Yes*	No
Were any additional alternatives considered and dismissed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

* If yes, a list and description of the other alternatives considered, but not carried forward for detailed review is included below

VII. Summary of Potential Impacts of the Proposed Project on the Physical Environment and Human Population

*The impacts analysis identifies and evaluates **direct**, **secondary**, and **cumulative impacts**.*

- **Direct impacts** are those that occur at the same time and place as the action that triggers the effect.
- **Secondary impacts** "are further impacts to the human environment that may be stimulated or induced by or otherwise result from a direct impact of the action." ARM 12.2.429(18).
- **Cumulative impacts** "means the collective impacts on the human environment of the proposed action when considered in conjunction with other past and present actions related to the proposed action by location or

generic type. Related future actions must also be considered when these actions are under concurrent consideration by any state agency through pre-impact statement studies, separate impact statement evaluation, or permit processing procedures.” ARM 12.2.429(7).

*Where impacts are expected to occur, the impact analysis estimates the **extent, duration, frequency, and severity** of the impact. The duration of an impact is quantified as follows:*

- **Short-Term:** *impacts that would not last longer than the proposed project.*
- **Long-Term:** *impacts that would remain or occur following the proposed project.*

The severity of an impact is measured using the following:

- **No Impact:** *there would be no change from current conditions.*
- **Negligible:** *an adverse or beneficial effect would occur but would be at the lowest levels of detection.*
- **Minor:** *the effect would be noticeable but would be relatively small and would not affect the function or integrity of the resource.*
- **Moderate:** *the effect would be easily identifiable and would change the function or integrity of the resource.*
- **Major:** *the effect would irretrievably alter the resource.*

Some impacts may require mitigation. As defined in ARM 12.2.429, mitigation means:

- *Avoiding an impact by not taking a certain action or parts of a project;*
- *Minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of a project and its implementation;*
- *Rectifying an impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment; or*
- *Reducing or eliminating an impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of a project or the time period thereafter that an impact continues.*

*A list of any mitigation strategies including, but not limited to, design, enforceable controls or stipulations, or both, as applicable to the proposed project is included in **Section VI** above.*

FWP must analyze impacts to the physical and human environment for each alternative considered. The proposed project considered the following alternatives:

- **Alternative 1: No Action. Evaluation and Summary of Potential Impacts on the Physical Environment and Human Population**

Under the “No Action” alternative, the proposed project would not occur. Therefore, no additional impacts to the physical environment or human population in the analysis area would occur. The “No Action” alternative forms the baseline from which the potential impacts of the proposed Project can be measured.

- **Alternative 2: Proposed Project. Evaluation and Summary of Potential Impacts on the Physical Environment and Human Population**

*See **Table 3** (Impacts on Physical Environment) and **Table 4** (Impacts on Human Population) below.*

Table 3 - Potential Impacts of Alternative 2: Proposed Project on the Physical Environment

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
	None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	
Terrestrial, avian, and aquatic life and habitats	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to terrestrial, avian and aquatic life and habitats would be expected because of the proposed project. Wildlife species located within or using the affected area include white-tailed deer, elk, bighorn sheep, coyote, red fox, mountain lion, moose, black bear, beaver, river otter, muskrats, small mammals, osprey, raptors, waterfowl, and migratory and neotropical songbirds. Native fish species that occur within the property include mountain whitefish, longnose suckers, largescale suckers, northern pikeminnow, various sculpin species, and longnose dace. Non-native fish species include rainbow trout, brown trout, and brook trout. This list is representative but does not constitute a complete list of wildlife species present in the affected area. The proposed project would provide a 5-6 vehicle, gravel parking area removed from the shoulder of the county road with the primary intent of habitat preservation for multiple fish and wildlife species, in addition to providing safe day-use public access to the site. Construction activities associated with the new parking area may prevent wildlife from using the affected area. However, any impacts would be short-term and minor, lasting only as long as the construction phase of the proposed project. Therefore, any impacts would be long-term, minor, and beneficial and short-term, adverse, and negligible.
Water quality, quantity, and distribution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to water quality, quantity, and distribution would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project would develop a gravel parking area. The movement of heavy equipment and materials over exposed ground to create the parking area may result in fugitive dust emissions and

									water/water-spray may be needed to control fugitive dust emissions during the construction phase of the proposed project. Local water resources would likely be used for such purposes, however, only a negligible amount of water would be required. Any impacts to water quantity and distribution from such activities would be short-term and negligible. After the project is completed, some impacts to water quality may be realized due to runoff from the new parking area. However, the parking area is relatively small, accommodating only 5-6 vehicles, and an existing road runs along the river at this location. Therefore, any impacts to water quality from the proposed project would be long-term, negligible, and consistent with existing impacts.
Geology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to geology would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project would develop a 5-6 vehicle, gravel parking area removed from the shoulder of the road. The proposed project would result in ground disturbance to develop the new parking area. However, no unique geologic formations are located within the affected area therefore, ground disturbance associated with the proposed project would not affect any geologic features and no impacts to geology would be expected because of the proposed project.
Soil quality, stability, and moisture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to soil quality, stability, and moisture would be expected because of the proposed project. Development of the proposed parking area would adversely impact soils through compaction. However, the proposed parking area is relatively small, accommodating only 5-6 vehicles, and is located just off an existing road. Therefore, any impacts would be short-term, minor, and consistent with existing impacts associated with the county road.
Vegetation cover, quantity, and quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to vegetation cover, quantity, and quality would be expected because of the proposed project. The project parcel includes a mix of

									<p>trees, grasses, and shrubs. Construction of the new parking area would have long-term, minor, and adverse impacts on existing vegetation cover by disturbing and covering with gravel the relatively small area needed to accommodate parking. Public use of the site and motor vehicle traffic would lead to increased opportunity for noxious weeds to take root. FWP would monitor and manage noxious weeds at the site according to their Noxious Weed Management Plan. The parking area would be confined to prevent motorized vehicles from disturbing the soil surface outside of the established parking to mitigate further impacts to vegetation cover. Any impacts would be</p>
Aesthetics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to aesthetics would be expected because of the proposed project. Some adverse impacts may result from construction of the parking area due to increased levels of noise, fugitive dust, and the presence of equipment and staged construction materials. Any impacts would be short-term and minor, lasting only as long as the construction phase of the proposed project. Adverse impacts may also result from the development of currently open land to support the proposed project. Any impacts would be long-term and minor, as the affected area would be relatively small, accommodating parking for just 5-6 vehicles. Creating a permanent, professionally designed parking area may also improve the visual experience of people traveling on the Thompson River Road, as vehicles would park in the parking area instead of along the road. Any such impacts would be long-term, beneficial, and minor.</p>
Air quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to air quality would be expected because of the proposed project. Air quality in the area affected by the proposed project is currently unclassifiable or in compliance with applicable National and Montana ambient air quality standards (NAAQS/MAAQS). The proposed project would provide a 5-6 vehicle, gravel parking area removed from the</p>

									<p>shoulder of the road and, when completed, would not result in additional new air quality impacts in the affected area. Further, no significant point-sources of air pollution exist in the area affected by the proposed project. Existing sources of air pollution in the area are limited and generally include unpaved county roads (fugitive dust source), vehicle exhaust emissions, and various agricultural practices (vehicle exhaust emissions and fugitive dust). Fugitive dust and vehicle exhaust emissions resulting from the movement of heavy equipment and materials for the proposed project may adversely impact air quality. However, any impacts to air quality would be short-term, mitigated by dust control practices, consistent with existing impacts within the industrial/commercial area, and negligible.</p>
Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to any unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources would be expected because of the proposed project. The presence of any animal and/or plant Species of Concern and any Threatened or Endangered species located within or using the affected area were assessed and include the following: bull trout, westslope cutthroat trout, bald eagle, Townsend's big-eared bat, golden eagle, hoary bat, grizzly bear, pygmy shrew, varied thrush, fisher wolverine peregrine falcon. A complete list of any Species of Concern and any Threatened or Endangered species that have been observed in the affected area is included in [Appendix A]. The proposed project would provide a 5-6 vehicle, gravel parking area removed from the shoulder of the county road with the primary intent of habitat preservation for multiple fish and wildlife species, in addition to providing safe day-use public access to the site. Therefore, any impacts to unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources that may be in the affected area would be long-term, beneficial, and minor.</p>
Historical and	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to historic and</p>

archaeological sites									archaeological sites would be expected because of the proposed project. In keeping with the Montana Antiquities Act and related regulations (ARM 12.8.501-12.8.510), all undertakings on state lands are assessed by a qualified archaeologist or historian for their potential to affect cultural resources. The process for this assessment may include a cultural resource inventory and evaluation of cultural resources within or near the project area, in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office. FWP also consults with all Tribal Historic Preservation Offices affiliated with each property in accordance with FWP's Tribal Consultation Guidelines. If cultural resources within or near the project area are recorded and are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, they will be protected from adverse effects through adjustments to the project design or cancellation of the project if no design alternatives are available. If cultural resources are unexpectedly discovered during project implementation, FWP will cease implementation and contact FWP's Heritage Program for further evaluation. Further, the WMA has historically been used for apiary operations. Therefore, no impacts to historical and archaeological sites would be expected because of the proposed project.
Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air, and energy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to demands on the environmental resources of land, water, air, and energy would be expected because of the proposed project. Fuel would be required to operate equipment and vehicles used for the construction phase of the proposed project. However, any impacts would be short-term and negligible as the proposed parking area is relatively small and as such the construction phase would be relatively short. As identified previously through the analyses of potential

									impacts to water quality, quantity, and distribution; soil quality, stability, and moisture; vegetation cover, quantity, and quality; and air quality; some impacts to the environmental resources of land and air may occur because of the proposed project. However, any such impacts would be short-term and negligible (see cited impacts analyses above). No other impacts to the demands on environmental resources of land, water, air, and energy would be expected because of the proposed project
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Table 4 - Potential Impacts of Alternative 2: Proposed Project on the Human Population

HUMAN POPULATION	Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
	None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	
Social structures and mores	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant impacts to social structures and mores in the affected area would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project would provide a 5-6 vehicle, gravel parking area removed from the shoulder of the county road with the primary intent of habitat preservation for multiple fish and wildlife species, in addition to providing safe day-use public access to the site. The proposed project would not impact current land use or human activities in the affected area. Therefore, the proposed project would not impact any pre-project social structures, customs, values, and conventions in the affected area.
Cultural uniqueness and diversity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant impacts to cultural uniqueness and diversity in the affected area would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project would develop a small gravel parking area to accommodate 5-6 vehicles and it is not expected this action would result in any relocation of people into or out of the affected area. Therefore, no impacts to the existing cultural

									uniqueness and diversity of the affected area would be expected because of the proposed project.
Access to and quality of recreational and wilderness activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to access or the quality of recreational and wilderness activities would be expected because of the proposed project. No Wilderness areas currently exist in the affected area; therefore, no impacts to Wilderness recreation activities would occur because of the proposed project. The proposed project would provide a 5-6 vehicle, gravel parking area removed from the shoulder of the county road with the primary intent of habitat preservation for multiple fish and wildlife species, in addition to providing safe day-use public access to the site. A designated parking area will create a safer spot for vehicles and pedestrians than on the road shoulder. It will also serve as an area to safely direct people to utilize the property. No closures of public lands would occur because of the proposed project. Construction activities could impact the quality of the recreational experience for some individuals. Once the construction phase is completed no additional impacts would occur. Therefore, any impact to access and the quality of recreational and wilderness activities in the affected area would be long-term, beneficial, and minor and short -term, adverse, and negligible.
Local and state tax base and tax revenues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to the local and state tax base and tax revenue would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project would develop a 5-6 vehicle, gravel parking area removed from the shoulder of the county road and, when completed, would not result in changes to local or state taxes. The proposed project would be expected to increase state and local tax revenues from the sale of fuel, supplies and/or equipment to complete the project. Any impacts to the local and state tax base and tax revenue would be short -term and negligible.

Agricultural or Industrial production	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant impacts to agricultural or industrial production in the affected area would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project would provide a 5-6 vehicle, gravel parking area removed from the shoulder of the county road with the primary intent of habitat preservation for multiple fish and wildlife species, in addition to providing safe day-use public access to the site. Because the affected area is not currently used for agricultural and/or industrial production the proposed project would not impact such practices.
Human health and safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to human health and safety would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project would provide a 5-6 vehicle, gravel parking area removed from the shoulder of the county road with the intent of providing safe day-use public access to the site. Providing a parking area removed from the highway shoulder will be safer for pedestrians and vehicles than the road shoulder. Affected government staff and/or contractors hired to conduct the project may realize increased risk to human health and safety; however, FWP would require affected staff and/or contractors to operate in a safe manner and utilize best management practices, including the use of available and appropriate safety precautions. Therefore, any potential direct impacts to human health and safety would be long-term, beneficial and moderate and short-term, adverse, and negligible.
Quantity and distribution of employment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to the quantity and distribution of employment in the affected area would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project would provide a 5-6 vehicle, gravel parking area removed from the shoulder of the county road and, when completed, would not impact the quantity and distribution of employment in the affected area. Short-term and negligible impacts may be realized because existing government staff or contracted services would be required to locate in the affected area to complete

									construction activities.
Distribution and density of population and housing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to the distribution and density of population and housing would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project would provide a 5-6 vehicle, gravel parking area removed from the shoulder of the county road and would use existing government staff or contractors to accomplish the proposed project and would not otherwise require or result in the movement of existing or new population into or out of the affected area. Therefore, no impacts would be expected because of the proposed project.
Demands for government services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to the demands for government services in the affected area would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project would provide a 5-6 vehicle, gravel parking area removed from the shoulder of the county road with the primary intent of habitat preservation for multiple fish and wildlife species, in addition to providing safe day-use public access to the site. The proposed project would use existing government staff or hired contractors to complete the work. Further, FWP staff would regularly monitor the area for any resource damage, litter, etc. Facilities will be maintained to FWP Fishing Access Standards. No additional demands for government services would be expected because of the proposed project. Therefore, any impacts would be short -term, long-term, and minor.
Industrial, agricultural, and commercial activity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to industrial, agricultural, and commercial activity would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project would provide a 5-6 vehicle, gravel parking area removed from the shoulder of the county road and would not disturb or otherwise impact any industrial, agricultural, or commercial properties or operations. Therefore, no impacts would be expected because of the proposed project.
Locally adopted	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to locally adopted

environmental plans and goals									environmental plans and goals would be expected because of the proposed project. FWP is unaware of any locally adopted environmental plans or goals that may be impacted by the proposed project. Therefore, no significant adverse impacts to locally adopted environmental plans and goals would be expected because of the proposed project.
Other appropriate social and economic circumstances	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to any other appropriate social and economic circumstances would be expected because of the proposed project. FWP is unaware of any other appropriate social and economic circumstances that may be impacted by the proposed project. Therefore, no impacts would be expected because of the proposed project.

Table 6: Determining the Significance of Impacts on the Quality of the Human Environment

<p>If the EA identifies impacts associated with the proposed project FWP must determine the significance of the impacts. ARM 12.2.431. This determination forms the basis for FWP's decision as to whether it is necessary to prepare an environmental impact statement.</p> <p>According to the applicable requirements of ARM 12.2.431, FWP must consider the criteria identified in this table to determine the significance of each impact on the quality of the human environment. The significance determination is made by giving weight to these criteria in their totality. For example, impacts identified as moderate or major in severity may not be significant if the duration is short-term. However, moderate or major impacts of short-term duration may be significant if the quantity and quality of the resource is limited and/or the resource is unique or fragile. Further, moderate or major impacts to a resource may not be significant if the quantity of that resource is high or the quality of the resource is not unique or fragile.</p>	
Criteria Used to Determine Significance	
1	<p>The severity, duration, geographic extent, and frequency of the occurrence of the impact</p> <p>“Severity” describes the density of the potential impact, while “extent” describes the area where the impact will likely occur, e.g., a project may propagate ten noxious weeds on a surface area of 1 square foot. Here, the impact may be high in severity, but over a low extent. In contrast, if ten noxious weeds were distributed over ten acres, there may be low severity over a larger extent.</p> <p>“Duration” describes the time period during which an impact may occur, while “frequency” describes how often the impact may occur, e.g., an operation that uses lights to mine at night may have frequent lighting impacts during one season (duration).</p>
2	The probability that the impact will occur if the proposed project occurs; or conversely, reasonable assurance in keeping with the potential severity of

	an impact that the impact will not occur
3	Growth-inducing or growth-inhibiting aspects of the impact, including the relationship or contribution of the impact to cumulative impacts
4	The quantity and quality of each environmental resource or value that would be affected, including the uniqueness and fragility of those resources and values
5	The importance to the state and to society of each environmental resource or value that would be affected
6	Any precedent that would be set as a result of an impact of the proposed project that would commit FWP to future actions with significant impacts or a decision in principle about such future actions
7	Potential conflict with local, state, or federal laws, requirements, or formal plans

VIII. Private Property Impact Analysis (Takings)

The 54th Montana Legislature enacted the Private Property Assessment Act, now found at § 2-10-101. The intent was to establish an orderly and consistent process by which state agencies evaluate their proposed projects under the "Takings Clauses" of the United States and Montana Constitutions. The Takings Clause of the Fifth Amendment of the United States Constitution provides: "nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation." Similarly, Article II, Section 29 of the Montana Constitution provides: "Private property shall not be taken or damaged for public use without just compensation..."

The Private Property Assessment Act applies to proposed agency projects pertaining to land or water management or to some other environmental matter that, if adopted and enforced without due process of law and just compensation, would constitute a deprivation of private property in violation of the United States or Montana Constitutions.

The Montana State Attorney General's Office has developed guidelines for use by state agencies to assess the impact of a proposed agency project on private property. The assessment process includes a careful review of all issues identified in the Attorney General's guidance document (Montana Department of Justice 1997). If the use of the guidelines and checklist indicates that a proposed agency project has taking or damaging implications, the agency must prepare an impact assessment in accordance with Section 5 of the Private Property Assessment Act.

Table 7: Private Property Assessment (Takings)

PRIVATE PROPERTY ASSESMENT ACT (PPAA)			
Does the Proposed Action Have Takings Implications under the PPAA?	Question #	Yes	No
Does the project pertain to land or water management or environmental regulations affecting private property or water rights?	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the action result in either a permanent or an indefinite physical occupation of private property?	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the action deprive the owner of all economically viable uses of the property?	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the action require a property owner to dedicate a portion of property or to grant an easement? (If answer is NO, skip questions 4a and 4b and continue with question 5)	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is there a reasonable, specific connection between the government requirement and legitimate state interest?	4a	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the government requirement roughly proportional to the impact of the proposed use of the property?	4b	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the action deny a fundamental attribute of ownership?	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the action have a severe impact of the value of the property?	6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the action damage the property by causing some physical disturbance with respect to the property in excess of that sustained by the public general? (If the answer is NO, skip questions 7a-7c.)	7	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the impact of government action direct, peculiar, and significant?	7a	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Has the government action resulted in the property becoming practically inaccessible, waterlogged, or flooded?	7b	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Has the government action diminished property values by more than 30% and necessitated the physical taking of adjacent property or property across a public way from the property in question?	7c	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the proposed action result in taking or damaging implications?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Taking or damaging implications exist if YES is checked in response to Question 1 and also to any one or more of the			

following questions: 2, 3, 4, 6, 7a, 7b, 7c; or if **NO** is checked in response to question 4a or 4b.

If taking or damaging implications exist, the agency must comply with MCA § 2-10-105 of the PPAA, to include the preparation of a taking or damaging impact assessment. Normally, the preparation of an impact assessment will require consultation with agency legal staff.

Alternatives:

The analysis under the Private Property Assessment Act, §§ 2-10-101 through -112, MCA, indicates no impact. FWP does not plan to impose conditions that would restrict the regulated person's use of private property to constitute a taking.

IX. Public Participation

The level of analysis in an EA will vary with the complexity and seriousness of environmental issues associated with a proposed action. The level of public interest will also vary. FWP is responsible for adjusting public review to match these factors (ARM 12.2.433(1)). Because FWP determines the proposed action will result in limited environmental impact, and little public interest has been expressed, FWP determines the following public notice strategy will provide an appropriate level of public review:

- An EA is a public document and may be inspected upon request. Any person may obtain a copy of an EA by making a request to FWP. If the document is out-of-print, a copying charge may be levied (ARM 12.2.433(2)).
- Public notice will be served on the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks website at:
<https://fwp.mt.gov/news/public-notices>
- Copies of the Draft EA will be made available to neighboring landowners and interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project and opportunity for review and comment on the proposed action.
- FWP maintains a mailing list of persons interested in a particular action or type of action. FWP will notify all interested persons and distribute copies of the EA to those persons for review and comment (ARM 12.2.433(3)).
- FWP will issue public notice in the following newspaper periodical(s) on the date(s) indicated.

Newspaper / Periodical	Date(s) Public Notice Issued
Sanders County Ledger	06/21/2023

- Public notice will announce the availability of the EA, summarize its content, and solicit public comment.
 - **Duration of Public Comment Period:** The public comment period begins on the date of publication of legal notice in area newspapers (see above). Written or e-mailed comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., MST, on the last day of public comment, as listed below:

Length of Public Comment Period: 15 days

Public Comment Period Begins: 6/16/2023

Public Comment Period Ends: 6/30/2023

Comments must be addressed to the FWP contact, as listed below.

- **Where to Mail or Email Comments on the Draft EA:**

Name: BRIAN SCHWARTZ

Email: bschwartz2@mt.gov

Mailing Address:

300 Lone Pine Road, Kalispell, MT 59901

X. Recommendation for Further Environmental Analysis

NO further analysis is needed for the proposed action	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
FWP must conduct EIS level review for the proposed action	<input type="checkbox"/>

XI. EA Preparation and Review

	Name	Title
EA prepared by:	Brian Schwartz	Recreation Manager
	Jason Blakeney	Fisheries Biologist
EA reviewed by:	Eric Merchant	MEPA Coordinator

APPENDIX A: Montana Natural Heritage Program – Species Occurrences



MONTANA STATE LIBRARY

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM

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Species Occurrences from Environmental Summary

Suggested Citation Format: Custom Field Guide from <https://mtnhp.org/MapView> for (insert the title text above to indicate the filters you selected). Retrieved on 5/17/2023.

Note: This PDF version of the Montana Field Guide is intended to assist in offline identification and field work. It is not intended to replace the online Field Guide, as that version contains more information and is updated daily. For the most up-to-date information on Montana species, please visit FieldGuide.mt.gov

The Montana Natural Heritage Program is part of the Montana State Library's Natural Resource Information System. Since 1985, it has served as a neutral and non-regulatory provider of easily accessible information on Montana's species and biological communities to inform all stakeholders in environmental review, permitting, and planning processes. The program is part of the NatureServe network that is composed of over 60 member programs across North America that work to provide current and comprehensive distribution and status information on species and biological communities.




Species of Concern
Native Species
Global Rank: G5

State Rank: S2

Agency Status
USFWS: LT; CH

USFS:
BLM: THREATENED

FWP SWAP: SGCN2

General Description

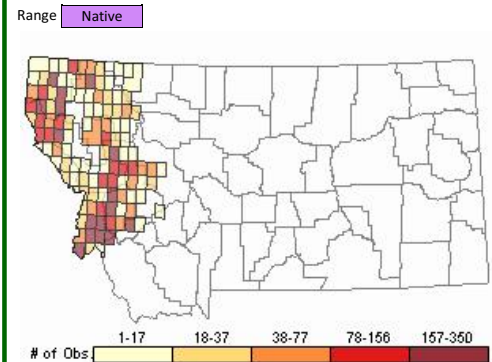
The native Bull Trout has been determined to be a separate species from the coastal Dolly Varden. Bull Trout are found in the Clark Fork and Flathead drainages of western Montana, and their slowly declining trend has led to their designation as a threatened species. Bull Trout are a sensitive species that do not tolerate high sediment levels in their spawning streams. Sediment can suffocate the developing embryos before they hatch. In Flathead Lake, where they achieve trophy sizes of up to 25 pounds, the Bull Trout life cycle has been studied extensively. Adult Bull Trout ascend the North and Middle forks of the Flathead River to spawn in small tributary streams; in some cases traveling well over 100 miles in a few months. They spawn in the fall and the adults return to the lake. Young fish may spend up to three years in the tributaries before returning to mature in Flathead Lake. In other river systems, Bull Trout may be a resident stream fish.

Often, native Bull Trout have been displaced through competitive interaction with introduced Brook Trout. Bull Trout and Brook Trout will interbreed, resulting in sterile hybrids, which leads to a further decrease in Bull Trout populations. The Bull Trout may be considered the Grizzly Bear of the fish world in relationship to its need for unaltered habitat. Young Bull Trout feed primarily on aquatic invertebrates but adults eat mostly other fish (Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks). Resident adults are 15 to 30 centimeters in length whereas migratory adults commonly exceed 60 centimeters (Rieman and McIntyre 1993).

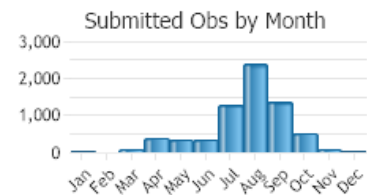
For a comprehensive review of the ecology, conservation status, threats, and management of this and other Montana fish species of concern, please see Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Species of Concern Status Reviews.

Habitat

Sub-adult and adult fluvial Bull Trout reside in larger streams and rivers and spawn in smaller tributary streams, whereas adfluvial Bull Trout reside in lakes and spawn in tributaries (Montana AFS Species Status Account). They spawn in headwater streams with clear gravel or rubble bottom (Brown 1971, Holton 1981).



Observations: 6948





Species of Concern
Native/Non-native Species
(depends on location or taxa)
Global Rank: G5T4
State Rank: S2

Agency Status
USFWS:
USFS: SENSITIVE
BLM: SENSITIVE
FWP SWAP: SGCN2

General Description

The Westslope Cutthroat Trout is one of two subspecies of native cutthroat found in the state. Together they have been designated Montana's state fish, the Blackspotted Cutthroat Trout. Cutthroat trout are so named for the red slashes near the lower jaws. The Westslope Cutthroat Trout's historical range was all of Montana west of the Continental Divide as well as the upper Missouri River drainage. This fish has been seriously reduced in its range by two primary factors: hybridization with Rainbow and/or Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout, and habitat loss and degradation. Since the Westslope is recognized as a very important part of our native fish fauna it has been designated a Montana Fish of Special Concern in Montana. Pure Westslope Cutthroat Trout have been identified by genetic analysis and form the broodstock maintained by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks at its Anaconda hatchery. The average size of these fish is 6 to 16 inches, depending on habitat, but they rarely exceed 18 inches in length.

Westslope Cutthroat Trout are common in both headwaters lake and stream environments. They feed primarily on aquatic insect life and zooplankton. Cutthroat spawn in the spring in running water, burying their eggs in a nest called a redd. The eggs hatch in a few weeks to a couple of months. The newborn fry frequently migrate back to lakes to rear after 1 to 2 years in their native stream. Westslope Cutthroat Trout is a trout with small, non-rounded spots, with few spots on the anterior body below the lateral line. Coloration varies, but generally is silver with yellowish hints, though bright yellow, orange, and especially red colors can be expressed to a much greater extent than on coastal or Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout (Behnke 1992). Hybridization between Westslope and Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout can produce a spectrum of spotting and coloration ranging between the typical patterns of each subspecies. Some populations that have been affected by hybridization show little or no phenotypic signs of hybridization (Behnke 1992). Hybridization with Rainbow Trout can be detected by the appearance of spots on the top of the head and on the anterior body below the lateral line, as well as by reduced scale counts, increased caecal counts, and loss of basibranchial teeth (Behnke 1992).

For a comprehensive review of the ecology, conservation status, threats, and management of this and other Montana fish species of concern, please see Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Species of Concern Status Reviews.

Diagnostic Characteristics

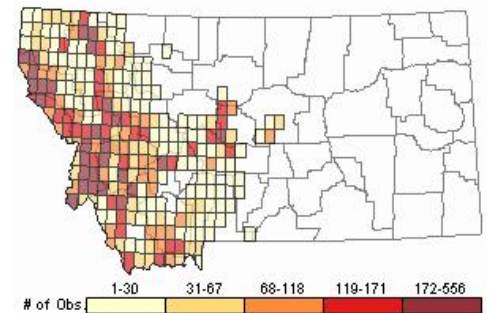
Tiny teeth are usually present on the floor of the mouth behind the tongue. The lower sides are red during spawning season (Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks). In Montana both pure and moderately hybridized populations of Westslope Cutthroat Trout have a high incidence of basibranchial teeth, whereas pure Rainbow Trout lack these teeth. The presence of basibranchial teeth in some individuals of a Rainbow Trout population indicates hybridization with Westslope Cutthroat Trout (Leary et al. 1996).

It can be difficult to visually distinguish Westslope from other cutthroat trout subspecies, but the Westslope Cutthroat Trout tends to have more small spots by the tail and none by the pectoral fin and the fish is more of a silvery or greenish color. The only way to be certain about identification of this subspecies is by genetic testing (Montana AFS Species Status Account).

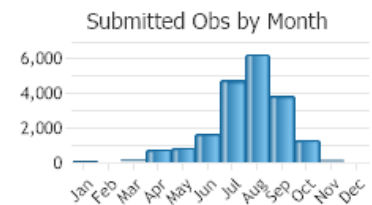
Habitat



Range: Native Non-native Historical



Observations: 19851



Spawning and rearing streams tend to be cold and nutrient poor. Westslope Cutthroat Trout seek out gravel substrate in riffles and pool crests for spawning habitat. Cutthroat trout have long been regarded as sensitive to fine sediment (generally defined as 6.3 millimeters or less). Although studies have documented negative survival as fine sediment increases (Weaver and Fraley 1991), it is difficult to predict their response in the wild (McIntyre and Rieman 1995). This is due to the complexity of stream environments and the ability of fish to adapt somewhat to changes in micro-habitat (Everest et al. 1987, Montana AFS Species Status Account).

Westslope Cutthroat Trout also require cold water, although it has proven elusive to define exact temperature requirements or tolerances. Likewise, cutthroat trout tend to thrive in streams with more pool habitat and cover than uniform, simple habitat (Shepard et al. 1984). Juvenile cutthroat trout overwinter in the interstitial spaces of large stream substrate. Adult cutthroat trout need deep, slow moving pools that do not fill with anchor ice in order to survive the winter (Brown and Mackay 1995, Montana AFS Species Status Account).

Management

Management of this species involves protecting the population strongholds and making tough decisions on restoration priorities for the depressed populations. The State of Montana has altered fishing regulations to reduce fishing mortality. Montana has also developed a Conservation Agreement signed by nine government agencies and conservation groups (Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks 1999). This agreement prioritizes protecting genetically pure populations first, then slightly introgressed populations. Recovering depressed populations will involve habitat restoration and removing non-native species. Research suggests that it is not a good idea to bolster populations with stocked fish from other watersheds due to considerable genetic variation between watersheds (Leary et al. 1998). It will be especially challenging to recover migratory life forms. Governmental agencies will need to work together to share expertise, pool financial resources and monitor progress toward restoration of this species ([Montana AFS Species Status Account](#)).



Species of Concern

Native Species

Global Rank: **G4**

State Rank: **S3**

Agency Status

USFWS:

USFS: **SENSITIVE**

BLM: **SENSITIVE**

FWP SWAP: **SGCN3**

General Description

Townsend's Big-eared Bat is a moderately sized bat found throughout the state where suitable habitat exists, primarily near caves, mines, rock outcrops, and badlands. As the common name suggests, the species has large ears compared to its overall size. Although it never appear to be common in any portion of the state, it's distribution is widespread and is among the most commonly observed species during cave surveys.

The species has large ears (30 to 39 millimeters) joined across forehead are a prominent feature in Townsend's Big-eared Bat; the tragus is long and pointed. The dorsal hairs are brownish at the tips, contrasting a little or considerably with the lighter underfur; ventral hairs are dark brownish-gray in color with brown to cinnamon tips. The hairs on the toes do not project beyond the toenails. There are two large, fleshy lumps on the snout, the basis for one of its common names, "lump-nosed bat." Total length is 90 to 113 millimeters; forearm length is 39.0 to 47.6 millimeters; adult mass is 5.0 to 13.5 grams. The greatest length of the skull is 15.2 to 17.4 millimeters; the skull has 36 teeth (Handley 1959, Kunz and Martin 1982, Nagorsen and Brigham 1993).

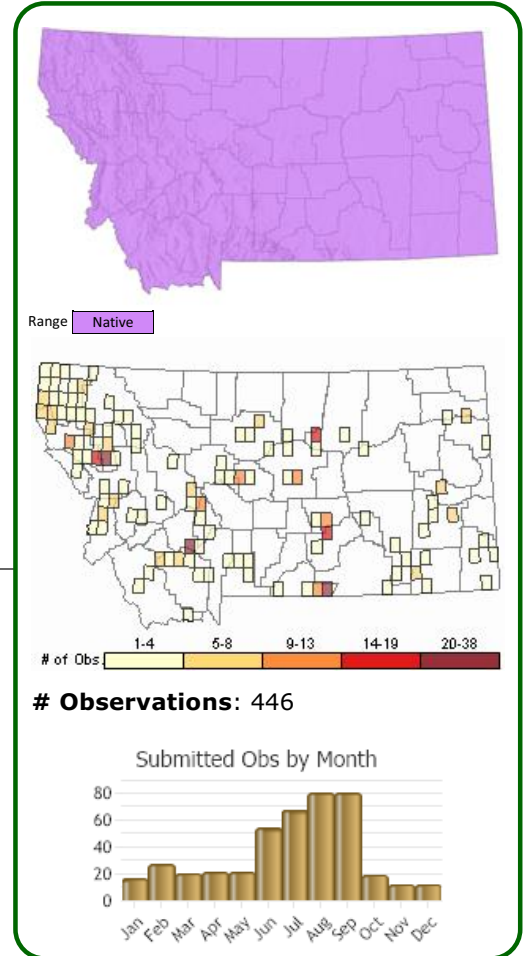
Diagnostic Characteristics

Townsend's Big-eared Bat differs from other Montana bats by its combination of extremely long, brownish ears that are joined at the base, the prominent lumps on the nose, the absence of large, white spots in the pelage (as with the Spotted Bat) and a dorsal pelage that is darker at the tips than the base (opposite that of the Pallid Bat, which is also larger-bodied).

The species is infrequently captured in mist nets. Nets set over water can be used, but captures are typically rare. The species is more frequently captured by placing nets within tight flyways in high clutter environments such as tall brush and densely forested areas. Surveys of caves and mines are an efficient way to detect the species as it is one of the most commonly encountered species within these features, particularly in the winter. Acoustic methods are effective and call sequences distinct, but echolocation is typically much quieter than other bat species and microphones must be placed close to roosts or foraging areas to ensure any individuals in the area are recorded.

Habitat

Of all of Montana's bat species, Townsend's Big-eared Bat is the most closely associated with caves, mines, and other similar features such as talus caves and erosion cavities found in badlands and river breaks. Caves and abandoned mines are used for maternity roosts and hibernacula (Worthington 1991, Hendricks et al. 1996, Hendricks 2000, Hendricks et al. 2000, Foresman 2012, Hendricks and Kampwerth 2001); use of buildings in late summer has also been reported (Swenson and Shanks 1979). In hibernacula, ambient temperatures ranged from -1.0 to 8.0 degrees (30 to 46 when torpid Townsend's Big-eared Bats were present) (Hendricks and Kampwerth 2001). Temperatures at maternity roosts are poorly documented; the temperature was 12 degrees



(54 in mid-July near a colony in an abandoned mine in Lake County), and 18 degrees (66 in August near a colony in a large and relatively open cave chamber in Lewis and Clark County). Most caves and mines in Montana appear to be too cool in summer for use as maternity roosts.



Special Status Species

Native Species

Global Rank: **G5**

State Rank: **S4**

Agency Status

USFWS: **BGEPA; MBTA**

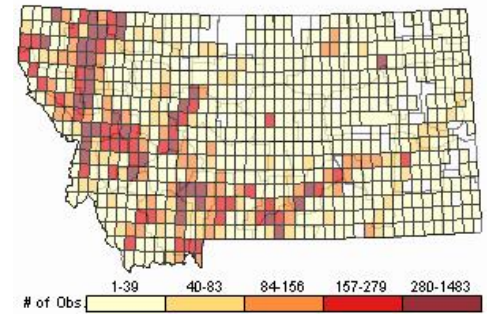
USFS: **SENSITIVE**

BLM: **SENSITIVE**

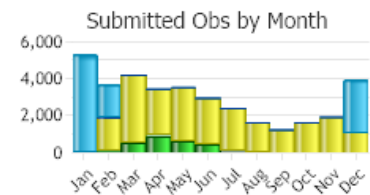
PIF: **2**



Range **Year-round**



Observations: 45822



General Description

With a white head and tail contrasting with a dark brown body and wings, the adult plumage of the Bald Eagle, attained at approximately 5 years of age, is unmistakable. In addition to the obvious white head and tail, other distinguishing features include the yellow bill, cere, iris, legs and feet. Second in size of North American birds of prey only to the California Condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*), the Bald Eagle ranges in total length from 71 to 96 cm, with an average wingspan of 168 to 244 cm and a body mass ranging from 3.0 to 6.3 kg (Buehler 2000). In general appearance the sexes are similar with females approximately 25 percent larger than males. The plumage of the juvenile birds is much less distinct, being dark brown overall. The head, body, wings, and tail are dark brown with limited mottling on the underside of the wings and on the belly. While the legs and feet of the young bird are yellow like those of adults, the bill and cere are dark gray and the iris is dark brown.

The voice of the Bald Eagle is a weak series of chirps. The vocalization is described as flat chirping, stuttering whistles, given in a halting fashion, with the immature calls generally harsher and more shrill than those of the adults (Buehler 2000, Sibley 2000).

For a comprehensive review of the conservation status, habitat use, and ecology of this and other Montana bird species, please see Marks et al. 2016, Birds of Montana.

Diagnostic Characteristics

In adult plumage, the Bald Eagle is unlikely to be confused with any other species. Juvenile Bald Eagles may be confused with Golden Eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*), especially with adult Golden Eagles. A few characteristics differentiate these two species. The Bald Eagle has unfeathered legs, while those of the Golden Eagle are feathered. During flight, the head and neck of the Bald Eagle extend to about half the length of the tail, while the Golden Eagle is considerably less. This distinction is true for all age classes of both species. The terminal tail band on the Golden Eagle is dark and well defined, especially on the juveniles. In addition, the underwing and belly of the Bald Eagle show a greater amount of white compared to the Golden Eagle, whose white feathering is restricted to the base of the flight feathers (Buehler 2000).

Habitat

In Montana, as elsewhere, the Bald Eagle is primarily a species of riparian and lacustrine habitats (forested areas along rivers and lakes), especially during the breeding season. Important year-round habitat includes wetlands, major water bodies, spring spawning streams, ungulate winter ranges and open water areas (Bureau of Land Management 1986). Wintering habitat may include upland sites. Nesting sites are generally located within larger

forested areas near large lakes and rivers where nests are usually built in the tallest, oldest, large diameter trees. Nesting site selection is dependent upon maximum local food availability and minimum disturbance from human activity (Montana Bald Eagle Working Group 1994). See the Montana Bald Eagle Management Plan (1994) for further details including home range sizes and habitat requirements of fledgling birds.



Species of Concern

Native Species

Global Rank: G5

State Rank: S3B

Agency Status

USFWS: MBTA

USFS:

BLM:

FWP SWAP: SGCN3

PIF: 3

General Description

The Varied Thrush is unmistakable with its black and orange plumage and ethereal song. Yet, its shy behavior and tendency to nest in dense mature and old-growth forests have made study of this the breeding biology of this species difficult.

For a comprehensive review of the conservation status, habitat use, and ecology of this and other Montana bird species, please see Marks et al. 2016, Birds of Montana.

Phenology

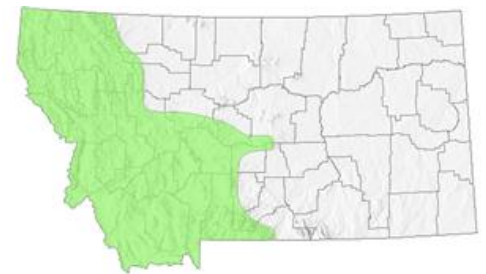
In Montana, active Varied Thrush nests have been observed beginning mid- to late-April. Nestlings and fledglings have been observed as early as mid-May. Fledglings from likely second broods observed mid- to late-August (Montana Natural Heritage Program Point Observation Database 2014).

Diagnostic Characteristics

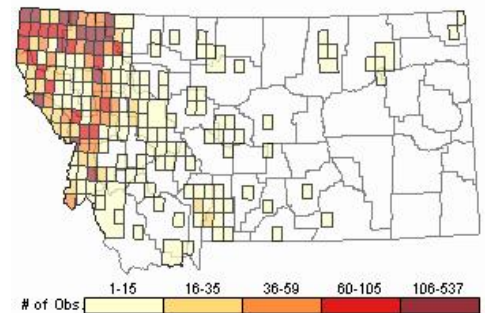
The Varied Thrush is a large, brightly colored thrush. Adult male has a burnt-orange breast and throat, gray to gray-blue rump, back, neck, and crown, a black to slate-gray V-shaped breast band, orange-buffy eyebrow and wing bars, and black to slate-gray wing and tail feathers. Female is similar to male but duller overall with brown-olive to brown-gray upperparts, brown wing and tail feathers, and brown to slate-gray breast band. Plumages are similar throughout the year. Immature birds are similar to adults except the head and neck are brown tinged with buff with an indistinct orange eyebrow. Throat and breast feathers are buff instead of orange. The song of this species is distinctive: a long, whistled tone about two seconds in length with a pause of three to 20 seconds between each tone. The song is somewhat ventriloquial. (George 2000).

Habitat

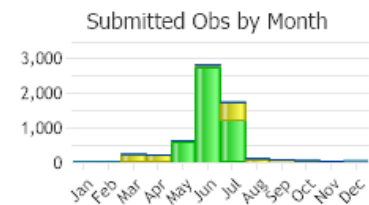
In Montana, the Varied Thrush breeds in mixed-coniferous forests with most observations occurring in western and northwestern Montana (Montana Natural Heritage Program Point Observation Database 2014). Dominant tree species include Douglas-fir and western larch. This species is more abundant in mature and old-growth forest stands than in younger forests (Tobalske et al. 1991). In winter, the Varied Thrush uses a wider variety of habitats, including suburban areas such as bird feeders and areas where fruits and berries are present (George 2000).



Range Summer Migratory



Observations: 6143




Species of Concern
Native Species
Global Rank: G5

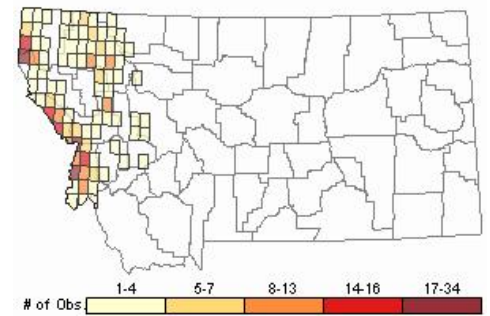
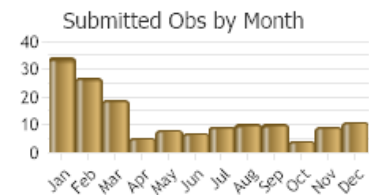
State Rank: S3

Agency Status
USFWS:
USFS: SENSITIVE

BLM: SENSITIVE

FWP SWAP: SGCN3


Range Native


Observations: 379


General Description

The Fisher is a medium-sized mammal with a long, low stocky body. The tail is relatively long and heavily furred. They have a pronounced muzzle and large rounded ears. In winter, Fishers are dark brown to black with light colored hairs around the face and shoulders (Powell 1993). The undersides are uniformly brown, however, individually unique patterns of white or cream can occur on the chest, underarms or genital region (Powell 1993). The summer pelage is more variable and lighter in color. Molt occurs once per year in late summer and early autumn (Powell 1993). The feet are large and have 5 retractable, but not sheathed, claws (Powell 1993). Fishers are highly sexually dimorphic with males averaging nearly twice the size of females. Male fishers generally weigh between 3.5 and 5.5 kilograms with females weighing between 2.0 and 2.5 kilograms (Powell 1993).

Diagnostic Characteristics

Fishers are not easily confused with other mustelids in Montana. They are much larger than the American Mink and are much darker than the slightly smaller Marten. Fisher are smaller than Wolverine and have a longer tail and a lower, longer appearance overall.

Habitat

Although they are primarily terrestrial, Fishers are well adapted for climbing. When inactive, they occupy dens in tree hollows, under logs, or in ground and rocky crevices, or they rest in branches of conifers (in the warmer months). Fishers occur primarily in dense coniferous or mixed forests, including early successional forests with dense overhead cover (Thomas 1993). They commonly use hardwood stands in summer but prefer coniferous or mixed forests in winter and avoid open areas. Optimal conditions for Fishers are forest tracts of 245 acres or more, interconnected with other large areas of suitable habitat. A dense understory of young conifers, shrubs, and herbaceous cover is important in summer.

Forest structure, which affects prey abundance and vulnerability and provides denning and resting sites for Fishers, is probably more important than tree species composition (Buskirk and Powell 1994). Forest structure can be characterized by a diversity of tree shapes and sizes, understory vegetation, snags and fallen limbs and trees, and tree limbs close to the ground (Buskirk and Powell 1994).

Young are born in a den in a tree hollow (usually), or under a log or in a rocky crevice. Large snags (greater than 20 inches diameter at breast height) are important as maternal den sites (Thomas 1993).


Species of Concern
Native Species
Global Rank: G4

State Rank: S3

Agency Status
USFWS:
USFS: Sensitive

BLM: SENSITIVE

FWP SWAP: SGCN3

General Description

The Wolverine is a bear-like mustelid with massive limbs and long, dense, dark brown pelage, paler on the head, with two broad yellowish stripes extending from the shoulders and joining on the rump. Variable white or yellowish markings are often present on the throat and chest. The tail is bushy. The feet are relatively large (6.5 to 11.3 centimeters total length) with robust claws. Wolverines weigh between 7 and 32 kilograms and range from 0.9 to 1.1 meters in length. Females average about 10% less than males in linear measurements and 30% less in mass (Ingles 1965, Hall 1981, Nowak 1991).

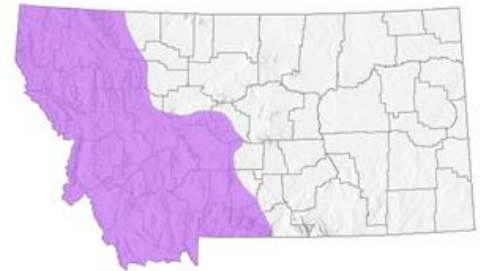
Diagnostic Characteristics

Wolverines are most similar to Fishers (*Martes pennanti*) but are nearly twice as large. Fishers also lack the light colored lateral markings of the Wolverine and the tail is less bushy. Badgers have shorter legs and are much lighter colored with a distinctive black and white pattern on the face.

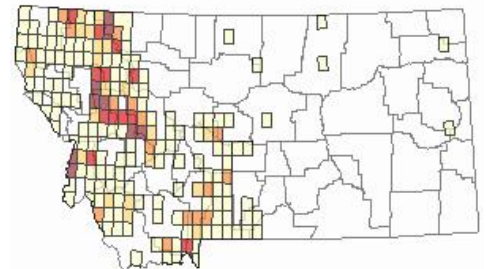
Habitat

Wolverines are limited to alpine tundra, and boreal and mountain forests (primarily coniferous) in the western mountains, especially large wilderness areas. However, dispersing individuals have been found far outside of usual habitats. They are usually in areas with snow on the ground in winter. Riparian areas may be important winter habitat. When inactive, Wolverines occupy dens in caves, rock crevices, under fallen trees, in thickets, or similar sites. Wolverines are primarily terrestrial but may climb trees.

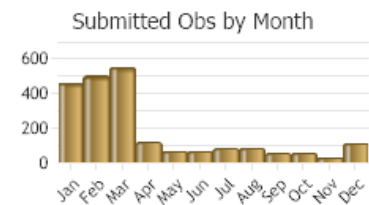
In Montana, Hornocker and Hash (1981) found most Wolverine use in medium to scattered timber, while areas of dense, young timber were used least. Wolverines avoided clearcuts and burns, crossing them rapidly and directly when they were entered at all. Hash (1987) reported Wolverines in the Northern Rocky Mountain region were associated with fir, pine, and larch. Aspen stands were also used, as were cottonwoods in riparian areas. Ecotonal areas appeared to be important habitat components (Hash 1987). Hatler (1989) believed Wolverines are not dependant on any particular vegetative habitat type. Banci (1986) reported "habitat requirements appear to be large, isolated tracts of wilderness supporting a diverse prey base, rather than specific plant associations or topography." South of the boreal forest, most habitat descriptions in the literature agree with Grove's (1988) characterization of "large, mountainous, and essentially roadless areas."



Range Native



of Obs 1-9 10-19 20-32 33-67 68-191

Observations: 2652




Species of Concern

Native Species

Global Rank: G5

State Rank: S3

Agency Status

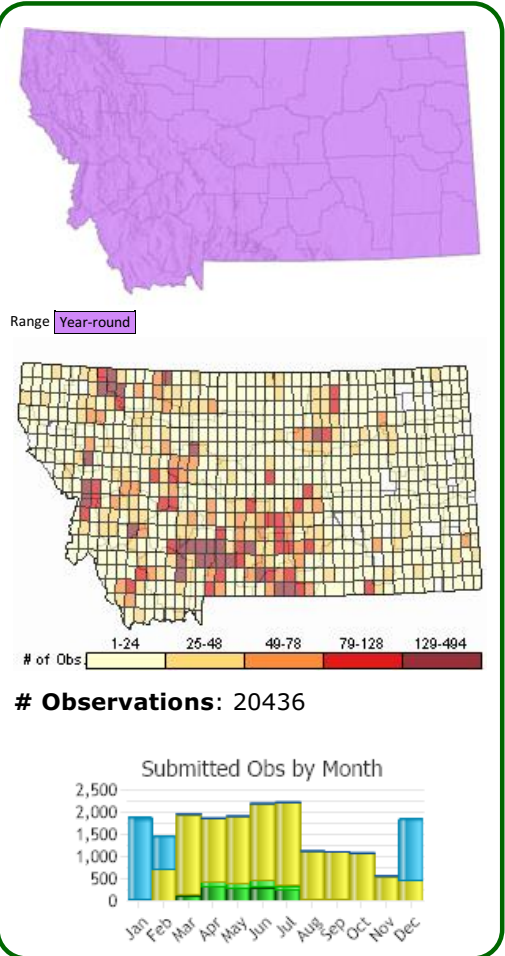
USFWS: BGEPA; MBTA

USFS:

BLM: SENSITIVE

FWP SWAP: SGCN3

PIF:



General Description

Adults are brown overall, gold on head and neck feathers, with light brown bands in the tail. Immature birds have white patches on the wings and white at the base of the tail feathers. Golden Eagles often soar with their wings held nearly flat, but slightly upturned. The legs are heavily feathered down to the tops of the toes. Golden Eagles range in length from 33 to 38 inches, and have a wingspan of 6-1/2 to 7-1/2 feet. A very large raptor with mostly brown plumage, a golden wash on the back of the head and neck, and a mostly horn-colored bill; tail is faintly banded; immatures have white at the base of the primaries and and white tail with a dark terminal band; total length 76 to 102 cm, wingspan 203 to 224 cm.

For a comprehensive review of the conservation status, habitat use, and ecology of this and other Montana bird species, please see Marks et al. 2016, Birds of Montana.

Diagnostic Characteristics

Bald Eagles have feathers only part way down the leg, and usually soar with wings held completely flat. Immature Bald Eagles usually have a strip of white along the underside of the wing, rather than in a round patch on the flight feathers like the immature Golden Eagle. Older immature Bald Eagles have irregular patches of white on their bodies, instead of the sharply defined patterns on Golden Eagles. Turkey Vultures soar with wings held in a more pronounced "V".

Habitat

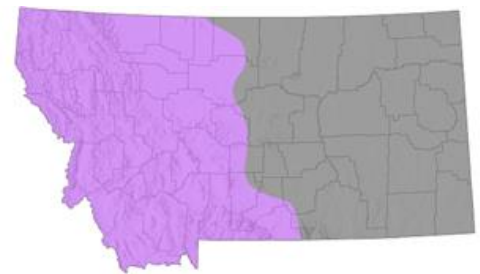
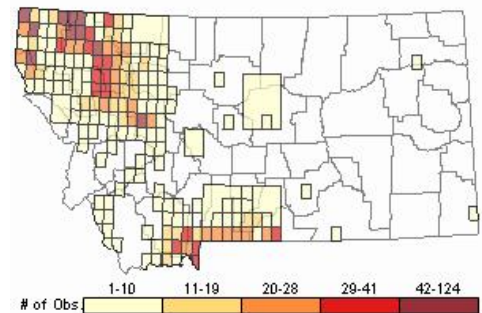
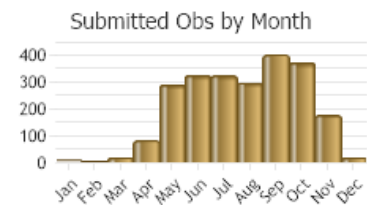
Golden Eagles nest on cliffs and in large trees (occasionally on power poles), and hunt over prairie and open woodlands; some nest sites in the Fallon area include scoracious badland pillars (Cameron 1905), another near Knowlton was in a ponderosa pine (Cameron 1907). In the Livingston area 62% of 92 nests were on cliffs, 29% in Douglas-fir, and 2-3% each in ponderosa pine, cottonwood, snags, and on the ground (McGahan 1968). About 70% of cliff nests were oriented to the south or east, most nests were found between 4000-6000 ft elevation, and sites were associated with sagebrush/grassland hunting areas (McGahan 1968). In the Bozeman area, Golden Eagles move from mountains to valleys in the winter (Skaar 1969).


Species of Concern
Native Species
Global Rank: G4

State Rank: S2S3

Agency Status
USFWS: LT

USFS:
BLM: THREATENED

FWP SWAP: SGCN2-3

Range ☒ Native ☐ Historical

Observations: 2466


General Description

Grizzly Bears have a massive head with a prominent nose, rounded inconspicuous ears, small eyes, short tail and a large, powerful body (Pasitschnaik-Arts 1993). The facial profile is concave and there is a noticeable hump above the shoulders. The claws on the front feet of adults are about 4 inches long and slightly curved. Grizzly Bears range widely in color and size. The most prevalent coloration of Grizzly Bears in Montana is medium to dark brown underfur, brown legs, hump and underparts, with light to medium grizzling on the head and back and a light patch behind the front legs. Other forms, lighter or darker with varying levels of grizzled hair patches, occur in lesser numbers. Although extremely variable depending on the season, adults are around 185 centimeters long (Foresman 2012) and weigh around 200 kilograms in males and 130 kilograms in females (Kasworm and Manley 1988).

Diagnostic Characteristics

Adult Grizzly Bears differ from American Black Bears (*Ursus americanus*) in being larger and by having a hump above the shoulders, a concave (rather than straight or convex) facial profile, shorter and more rounded ears, a rump lower than the shoulder hump, and longer, less curved claws usually evident in the tracks. Identification can be difficult at times and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks has developed an Online Bear ID Test to help people better distinguish between American Black Bears and Grizzly Bears.

Habitat

In Montana, Grizzly Bears primarily use meadows, seeps, riparian zones, mixed shrub fields, closed timber, open timber, sidehill parks, snow chutes, and alpine slabrock habitats. Habitat use is highly variable between areas, seasons, local populations, and individuals (Servheen 1983, Craighead and Mitchell 1982, Aune et al. 1984). Historically, the Grizzly Bear was primarily a plains species occurring in higher densities throughout most of eastern Montana.



Species of Concern
Native Species
Global Rank: G4G5
State Rank: S3

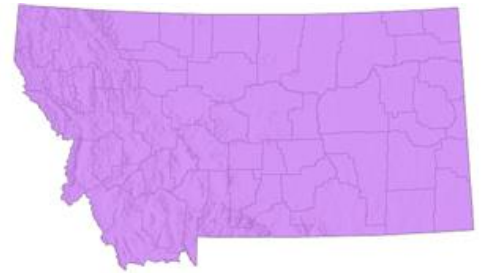
Agency Status
USFWS:
USFS:
BLM:

General Description

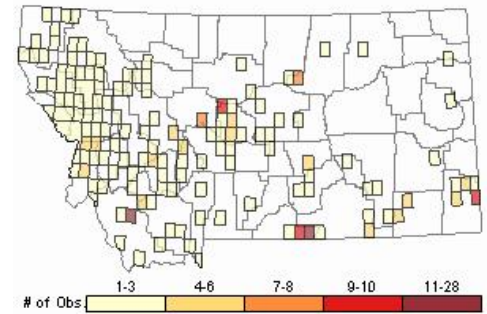
Similar in appearance to the Little Brown Myotis, but is slightly larger, fur extends from the ventral surface to the elbow on the wing underside, and the calcar is keeled. Wingspan is 10-12 inches (25-30 centimeters) and weight ranges from 0.2-0.3 ounces (6-9 grams) (Adams 2003).

Habitat

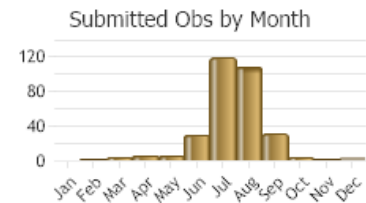
Occurs mostly in forested mountain regions and river bottoms, also at high elevations. Summer day roosts include trees, rock crevices, fissures in stream banks, abandoned buildings. Hibernacula include caves and mines.



Range **Native**



Observations: 341



Species of Concern
Native Species
Global Rank: G4
State Rank: S3

Agency Status
USFWS:
USFS:
BLM:
FWP SWAP: SGCN3

No photos are currently available

General Description

The Western Pygmy Shrew is a relatively small member of the shrew family. The upperparts in summer are reddish-brown or grayish-brown, becoming paler on the flanks (especially in winter), with whitish, grayish, or rusty-gray underparts. In winter the pelage is brighter, drab above, and paler below. Ranges in external measurements (in millimeters) are: total length 67 to 98, tail length 25 to 34, hind foot 8.5 to 11.5, and a mass of 2.2 to 6.6 grams. Condylbasal length of the skull is 13.4 to 15.8 millimeters, and maxillary breadth is 4.9 to 5.6 millimeters. The skull has 32 teeth (dental formula: I 3/1, C 1/1, P 3/1, M 3/3); the 5 upper teeth with single cusps that are posterior to the first incisor are termed the unicuspid (U), and include 2 incisors, 1 canine, and 2 premolars. The medial edge of the first incisor has a lengthy tine; U3 and U5 are small (U3 disc-like), easily overlooked upon superficial examination, and make it appear as though there are only three unicuspid. On the lower jaw, the length of the dentary is usually less than 6.1 millimeters, I1 is set at an angle more than 10 degrees from the horizontal ramus of the dentary, the length of C1-M3 is less than 4.2 millimeters, and the height of the coronoid process is usually 3.1 to 3.4 millimeters (Long 1974, Diersing 1980, Junge and Hoffmann 1981, Carraway 1995).

Previously the Western Pygmy Shrew was called the Pygmy Shrew (*S. hoyi*). However, recent analysis of the genetic structure of this species has provided support for splitting it into several species with the Western Pygmy Shrew occurring in Montana.

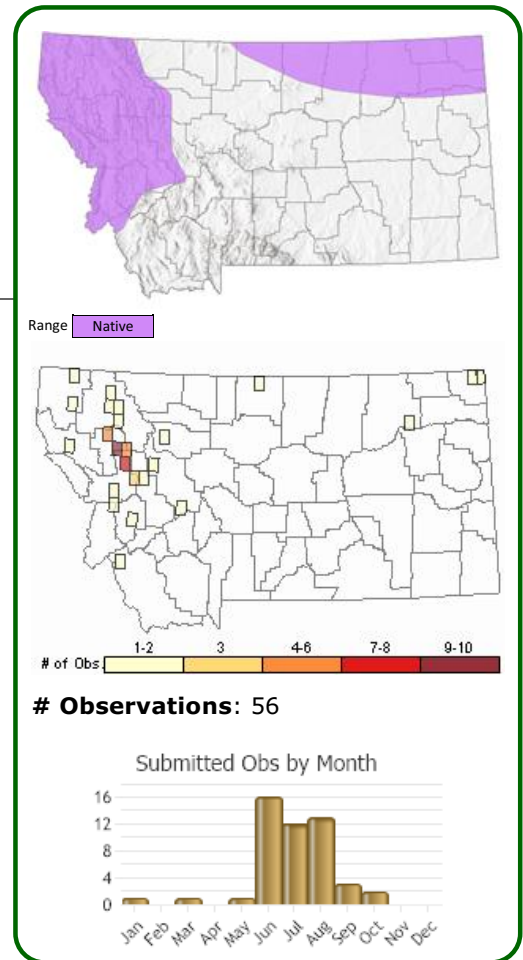
Diagnostic Characteristics

Pygmy Shrew can be distinguished from all other North American *Sorex* by its small disc-like U3 and the long medial tine on I1 (Junge and Hoffmann 1981). Upon superficial examination, there appear to be only 3 upper unicuspid teeth, instead of 4 to 5. The combination of lower jaw traits (length of the dentary usually less than 6.1 millimeters, I1 set at an angle more than 10 degrees from the horizontal ramus of the dentary, length of C1-M3 less than 4.2 millimeters, height of the coronoid process usually 3.1 to 3.4 millimeters) distinguishes *Sorex hoyi* from sympatric *S. haydeni*, *S. preblei*, and *S. merriami* using only dentaries (Carraway 1995).

Habitat

Throughout its range, the Pygmy Shrew is found in a variety of habitats. It appears to prefer grassy openings in boreal forest, with moist habitats preferred over dry areas. Mesic portions of dry, open coniferous forests (ponderosa pine, western larch) appear to be preferred by Pygmy Shrews in western Montana. Individuals have also been captured in mesic Douglas-fir-lodgepole pine forests, and sagebrush-steppe in northern Beaverhead County (Foresman 1999, 2012). Understory plants include *Amelanchier alnifolia*, *Berberis repens*, *Arnica cordifolia*, *Symphoricarpos occidentalis*, *Ribes* spp., *Equisetum* spp., and *Carex* spp. A skull recovered in Hill County (Jean and Hendricks 2001, Hendricks 2001) was found in an area largely of open prairie vegetation (*Bouteloua gracilis*, *Koeleria macrantha*, *Poa secunda*, *Stipa comata*, *Carex filifolia*, *Pascopyrum smithii*) but may have originated in one of the forested uplands nearby. However, other specimens have been captured in similar mesic prairie habitats in the pothole region of Sheridan County (Montana Natural Heritage Program Point Observation Database).

In Kentucky and Tennessee, it was much less active above ground than the Southeastern Shrew (*S. longirostris*) (Feldhamer et al. 1993). Nest sites are not well known. Habitat associations in Manitoba, Wisconsin and Minnesota include mesic forests of hemlock, white pine, aspen, black spruce-tamarack, maple, jack pine, and



sometimes in marshy areas (Long 1972, 1974, Wrigley et al. 1979). In eastern South Dakota an individual was captured in cattail-rush habitat on the edge of a slough (Jones et al. 1983). It has been captured in mesic grand fir-subalpine fir-Engelmann spruce forest in the panhandle of Idaho, and ponderosa pine-lodgepole pine-Douglas-fir forest in northeastern Washington (Stinson and Reichel 1985, Foresman 1986). Farther south, in southern Wyoming and northern Colorado, it is associated with bogs and moist spruce-fir forest meadows (Brown 1966, 1967, Armstrong 1972, Clark and Stromberg 1987).



Species of Concern

Native Species

Global Rank: G3G4

State Rank: S3B

Agency Status

USFWS:

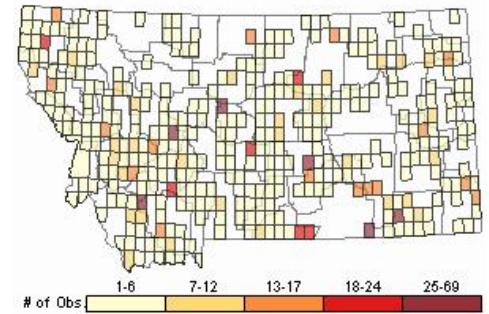
USFS:

BLM: SENSITIVE

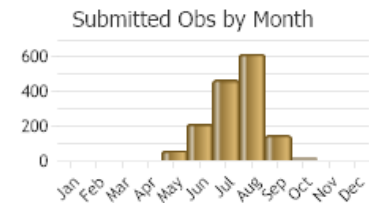
FWP SWAP: SGCN3



Range Summer Migratory



Observations: 1533



General Description

The Hoary Bat is a large lasurine (20 to 35 g) with long pointed wings and heavily-furred interfemoral membrane. Pelage overall is frosted or hoary (mixed brownish and grayish with white-tipped hairs, wrist and shoulder patches whitish), yellowish on the throat, forearm length about 46 to 55 mm. Ears are short and rounded, rimmed in dark brown or black, tragus short and broad. It has large teeth; dental formula I 1/3, C 1/1, P 2/2, M 3/3 (Shump and Shump 1982, Adams 2003).

Diagnostic Characteristics

Hoary Bat is the largest bat species found in Montana, and only one of two with an interfemoral membrane completely furred on the dorsal surface, the other being the Eastern Red Bat. The Hoary Bat has a distinctive appearance along with its large size (35 g in weight, to about 140 mm in total length): dorsal pelage in is a mixture of browns and grays, tinged with white, giving the bat a frosted or hoary appearance (Shump and Shump 1982), unlike the reddish dorsal pelage of the smaller Eastern Red Bat. Definitive Hoary Bat calls are also of lower characteristic frequency and appearance: < 23 kHz lasting up to 20 milliseconds for Hoary versus 38-50 kHz lasting > 10 milliseconds for Eastern Red.

Habitat

During the summer, Hoary Bats occupy forested areas. A female with two naked pups was found in mid-July using a wooden bridge in Stillwater County as a temporary day roost (Hendricks et al. 2005) but no other Montana roosts have been reported. Often captured foraging over water sources embedded within forested terrain, both conifer and hardwood, as well as along riparian corridors. Reported in Montana over a broad elevation range (579 to 2774 m; 1900 to 9100 ft) during August, the highest record from treeline along the Gravelly Range road (Madison County), the lowest from the Yellowstone River near Sidney (Richland County); probably most common throughout summer in Montana at lower elevations.



Bat Roost (Non-Cave)
Bat Roost (Non-Cave)

[View in Field Guide](#)

Important Animal Habitat
Native Species
Global Rank: **GNR**
State Rank: **SNR**

Observations: 1624

No photos are currently available

Agency Status
USFWS:
USFS:
BLM:

General Description

Information on this species is incomplete.