



# MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

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## **ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST**

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

**1. Project Title:** Billings Rod and Gun Club (BRGC)

**2. Type of Proposed Action:**

The Billings Rod and Gun Club (BRGC) is seeking funding assistance to construct a new five stand facility, including a small clubhouse, electrical power, parking lot, and vault toilet, in addition to constructing a new skeet field adjacent to the existing sporting clays north course. Phase 1, partially funded by a FY23 Fish, Wildlife, and Parks grant, is planned for construction over the winter of 2022-2023. Phase 1 includes construction of the new five stand shelter and a storage shed. Phase 2, expected to be constructed in 2023, includes the proposed meeting building, site improvements including site grading and parking lot, and an onsite wastewater system. A future phase will construct a new skeet field adjacent to the five stand facility. This application is only for Phase 2.

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

The Billings Rod and Gun Club range is located approximately 1 mile north of Billings, Montana, at 2931 Rod and Gun Club Road, Billings, MT 59106, Lat. 45.8248, Long. -108.5840, SW1/4 Section 23, Township 1 North, Range 25 East. (See Figures 1-6 on the following pages.)



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



**Figure 2. Aerial View of the BRGC, Billings, Montana**



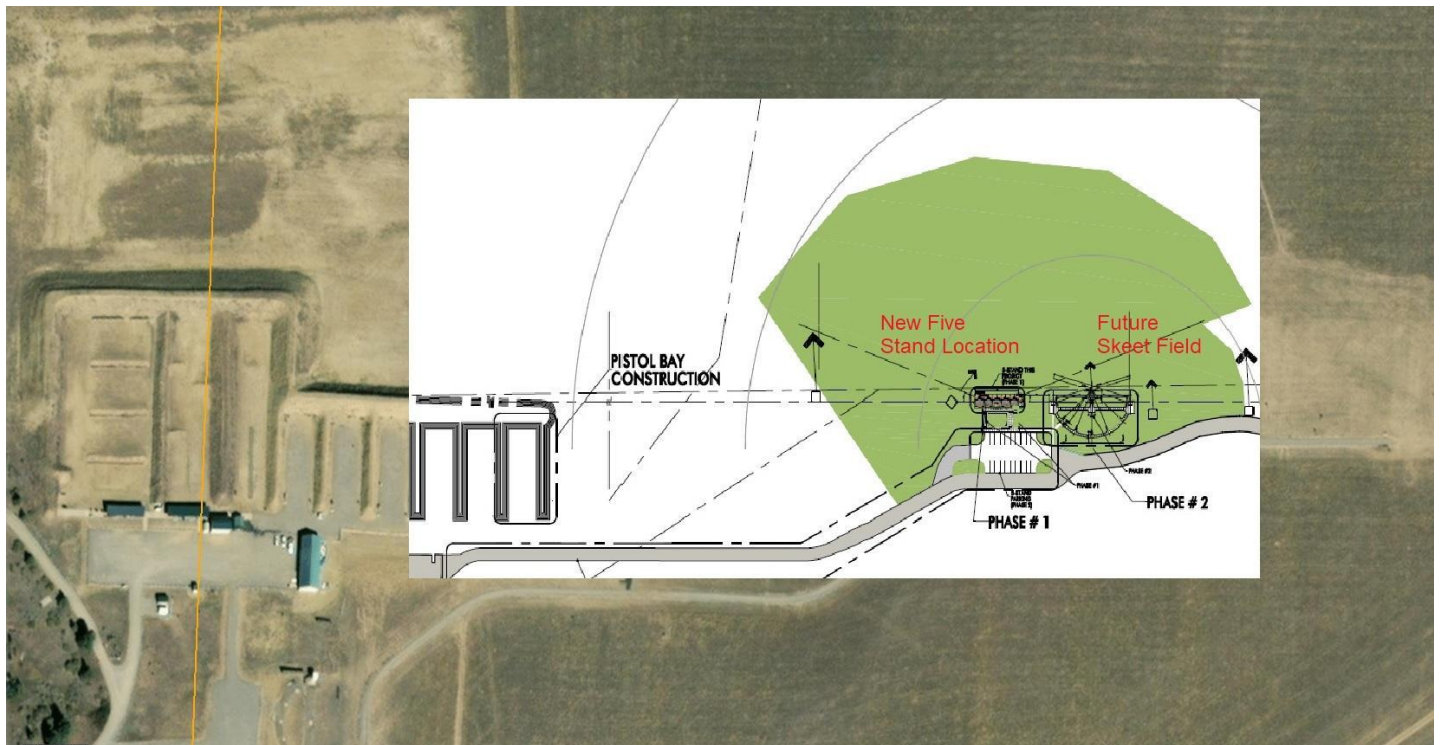


**Figure 3. Large Scale Aerial View of BRGC's Proposed Project Location(s)**

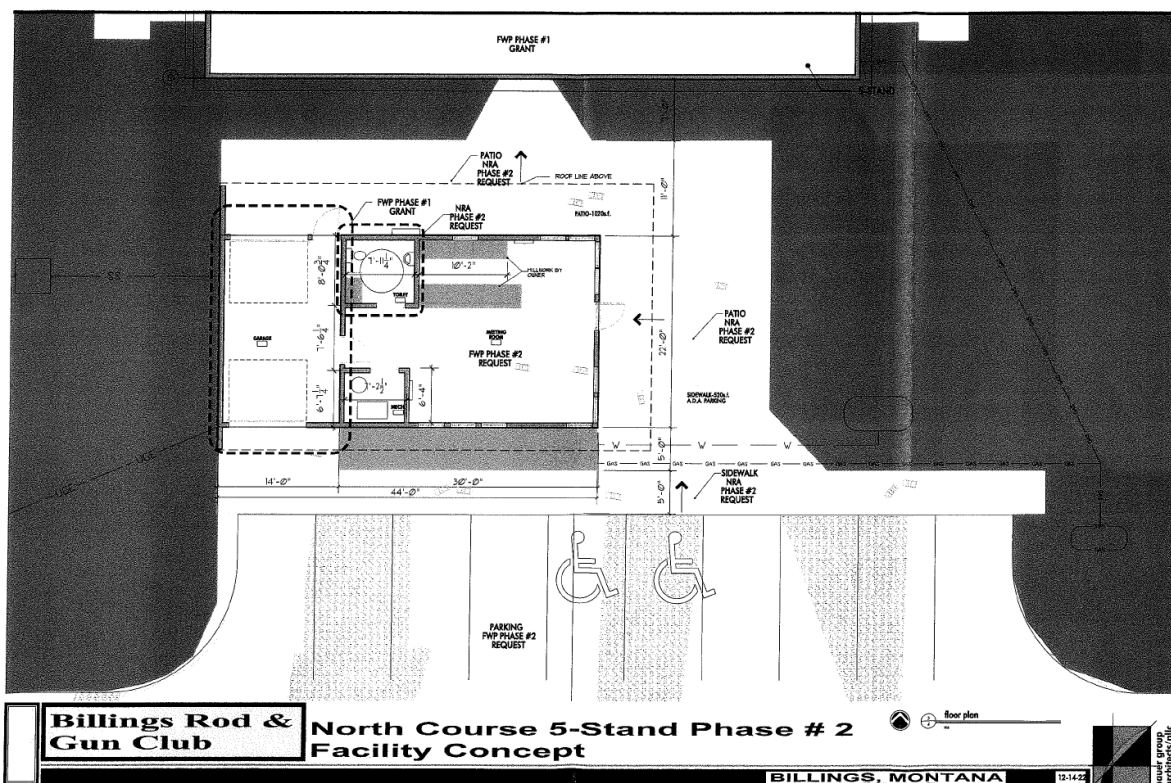




**Figure 4. Location of Existing Five Stand (to be moved to new location) at BRGC**



**Figure 5. Location of the Proposed Reconstructed Five Stand at BRGC**



**Figure 6. Blueprints of the Proposed Construction of the Meeting Building and Parking Lot at BRGC**

**4. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action:** MCA 87-1-276 through 87-1-279 (Legislative established policies and procedures for the establishment and improvement of shooting ranges) and MCA 87-2-105 (Departmental authority to expend funds to provide training in the safe handling and use of firearms and safe hunting practices). The Montana Legislature has authorized funding for the establishment of a Shooting Range Development Program providing financial assistance for the development of shooting ranges. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) has responsibility for the administration of the program, including the necessary guidelines and procedures governing applications for funding assistance under the program.

To be eligible for grant assistance, a private shooting club or a private organization:

*(a)(i) Shall accept in its membership any person who holds or is eligible to hold a Montana hunting license and who pays club or organization membership fees;*

*(ii) May not limit the number of members;*

*(iii) May charge a membership fee not greater than the per-member share of the club's or organization's reasonable cost of provision of services, including establishment, improvement, and maintenance of shooting facilities and other membership services; and*

*(iv) Shall offer members occasional guest privileges at no cost to the member or invited guest and shall make a reasonable effort to hold a public sight-in day each September, when the general public may use the shooting range for a day-use fee or at no cost; or*

*(b) Shall admit the general public for a reasonable day-use fee.*

#### **5. Need for the Action(s):**

These new developments will address the range's need for additional facilities to accommodate the increasing number of youth and adult clay shooters in the Billings, south central Montana, and north central Wyoming areas. BRGC anticipates increased use of their facilities by the Scholastic Clay Target Program's youth shooting program (for junior and high school aged youth), and by college-sponsored clay shooting teams, who would use the five stand and the possible future bunker trap facility. The new five stand would provide an all-weather facility where instruction can be more easily and safely provided for new shooters of all ages, as well as for new instructors. The updated facility would conveniently offer its members and guests eight different basic target types all in one place. Five-stand competitions and registered shoots could also be held at BRGC for all types and levels of shotgun shooters.

Perhaps most importantly, there is a compelling need for a new five stand facility due to encroachment of the fallout zone of the existing facility by a neighboring property which limits the types of targets and zone of fire the range can safely offer. The new five stand (and skeet ranges in the project's second phase) will face to the north and be oriented to prevent shot fallout from landing on occupied parts of the range. The existing five-stand course (which will be dismantled and reconstructed in the new location as noted in the maps above) is oriented facing east and can result in shot fallout onto adjacent property (owned by BRGC) when the wind is from the west.

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

The objective of the BRGC proposed project is to improve the range's existing five stand range offerings and overall safety by constructing a new five stand facility — including a small clubhouse, electrical power, parking lot, and vault toilet — in a better location on the premises, using the existing five stand's trap machines. This new location will reorient the line of fire to the north (rather than to the east), which will create safer conditions and zones for shot fallout during windy conditions. It will also include updated facilities which will be more conducive as year-round practice space for members.

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

The proposed project would involve approximately 2 acre of the 205-acre BRGC range.

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

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

**9. Description of Project:**

The BRGC proposed project involves constructing a new five stand and all associated facilities, including a small clubhouse, electrical power, parking lot, and vault toilet. BRGC will dismantle and utilize the trap machines and other equipment from the existing five stand (see maps above), but will leave all other existing facilities in that area intact.

The estimated budget includes:

Building Materials, Fixtures, & Equipment	\$65,896.16
Site Work	\$30,632.29
Contractor Margins	\$12,954.12
<u>Other Misc. Costs (Travel, etc.)</u>	<u>\$1,930.57</u>
Total Project Construction Budget	\$111,413.14
Total Funding Requested from FWP	<b>\$55,706.57</b>

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

None

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

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>	<u>Date Filed/#</u>
MT Dept of Environmental Quality	Discharge of Storm Water Associated w/ Construction Activity	N/A

**Funding:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	\$55,706.00

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

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

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

Because the BRGC is a non-profit, private shooting club for members, there has been no public involvement in the planning process. Proposed range development proposals have been discussed with the club members and the associated project vendors and contractors.

### **13. List of Agencies Consulted/Contacted During Preparation of the EA:**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

### **14. Names, Address, and Phone Number of Project Sponsor:**

Matthew Waite, 3208 Turnberry Circle, Billings, MT 59101, (406) 208-3440.

### **15. Other Pertinent Information:**

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

Shooting range applications require the participating governing body to approve by resolution its submission of applications for shooting range-funding assistance. Resolution Date: December 20, 2022.

## **PART II. IDENTIFICATION OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVES**

**Alternative A**, the **Proposed Alternative**, and **Alternative B**, the **No Action Alternative**, were considered.

**Alternative A (Proposed Alternative)** is as described in Part I, paragraph 9 (Description of Project), to improve and expand the BRGC five stand range by constructing improved facilities in a new location on BRGC's leased property. There are beneficial consequences to acceptance of the **Proposed Alternative**.

**Alternative B (No Action Alternative)** would result from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Shooting Range Development Grant money being denied, in which case the area will remain as an active shooting range without the proposed improvements. The No Action Alternative would have no significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences. The range would continue on with present conditions, and land use would remain the same. The No Action Alternative could leave unresolved some key safety improvements to the range, namely the relocation of the five stand course to an area where shot fallout does not infringe on other courses at the range.

### **Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the No Action Alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:**

Neither the Proposed Alternative nor the No Action Alternative would have significant negative environmental consequences; however, the No Action Alternative would leave unresolved potential safety issues.

There are beneficial consequences that would result from accepting the **Proposed Alternative**. The proposed changes would improve the range's overall offerings for members and guests of BRGC. Improved five stand facilities will provide better practice opportunities for all groups who use the facilities, including those in need of ADA accommodations. The proposed changes would also improve the safety of BRGC's five stand (and eventually skeet) course, as the new course will face north in a location where there is less likelihood of unwanted shot fallout in other courses at the club.

The **No Action Alternative** would have no significant negative environmental consequences; the range would continue on with present conditions, and land use would remain the same. Potential negative consequences for the No Action Alternative include less-than-ideal safety standards for the range's existing facilities, especially with regards to unwanted shot fallout in other ranges/courses as a result of windy conditions and a less-than-ideal orientation for the five stand course.

### **Describe any Alternatives considered and eliminated from Detailed Study:**

Only the Proposed Alternative and the No Action Alternative were considered. There was no other alternative

that were deemed reasonably available, or prudent.

**List and explain proposed mitigating measures (stipulations):**

None

**PART III. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

Abbreviated Checklist – The degree and intensity determine extent of Environmental Review. An abbreviated checklist may be used for those projects that are not complex, controversial, or are not in environmentally sensitive areas.

**Table 1. Potential impact on physical environment.**

<b>Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:</b>	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Can Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comments Below</b>
1. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				<b>X</b>		
2. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats				<b>X</b>		<b>2</b>
3. Introduction of new species into an area				<b>X</b>		
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality			<b>X</b>			<b>4</b>
5. Water quality, quantity & distribution (surface or groundwater)				<b>X</b>		<b>5</b>
6. Existing water right or reservation				<b>X</b>		
7. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture			<b>X</b>			<b>7</b>
8. Air quality or objectionable odors				<b>X</b>		
9. Historical & archaeological sites				<b>X</b>		<b>9</b>
10. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				<b>X</b>		
11. Aesthetics				<b>X</b>		<b>11</b>

**2. & 5.** There are no delineated wetlands and no natural water sources within the area proposed for development. No critical wildlife habitat would be affected. Any resident or transient wildlife may temporarily leave the immediate area during construction activities.

**4.** The elimination of vegetation for the implementation of the proposed project will not change the overall abundance and diversity of plant species within the area. The proposed project occupies a small portion of the property which is already developed as a shooting range. Due to prior land use, native vegetation has been disturbed in the area of the proposed project. Therefore, the proposed



project will have a minor impact on native vegetation in the area.

**7.** The proposed project will cause limited displacement of soils but the developments will not substantially affect geological features or establish new erosion patterns. Soil disruption for this site is localized.

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

**11.** The property is already used as a shooting range so the proposed project will have no additional impact on the aesthetics of the property.

**Table 2. Potential impacts on human environment.**

<b>Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:</b>	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Can Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comments Below</b>
1. Social structures and cultural diversity				<b>X</b>		
2. Changes in existing public benefits provided by wildlife populations and/or habitat				<b>X</b>		
3. Local and state tax base and tax revenue				<b>X</b>		
4. Agricultural production				<b>X</b>		<b>4</b>
5. Human health			<b>X</b>			<b>5</b>
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income				<b>X</b>		
7. Access to & quality of recreational activities			<b>X</b>			<b>7</b>
8. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals (ordinances)				<b>X</b>		
9. Distribution & density of population and housing				<b>X</b>		
10. Demands for government services				<b>X</b>		
11. Industrial and/or commercial activity				<b>X</b>		

4. Even though the BRGC range is adjacent to agricultural land used for grazing and hay production, the range has not been in agricultural production for years. The proposed project will have no affect on agricultural production.
5. The proposed project will improve the safety of the BRGC range and the surrounding residential community.
7. The proposed developments will increase shooting opportunities within the community.

#### **PART IV. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT**

All of the pertinent or potential impacts of the project have been reviewed, discussed, and analyzed. None of the projects reviewed were complex, controversial, or located in an environmentally sensitive area. The projects being implemented are already on an existing range or altered areas that, together with the insignificant environmental effects of the proposed action, indicates that this should be considered the final version of the environmental assessment. There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the Proposed Alternative.

The Billings Rod and Gun Club's Proposed Alternative, to improve and expand the pistol range, is supported by its members and the public. Therefore, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks should approve the Proposed Alternative (A) for the improvements as outlined in Part I, Paragraph 9.

#### **PART V. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

**Does the proposed action involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely harmful if they were to occur?**

No

**Does the proposed action have impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant?**

Individually, the Proposed Actions have minor impacts. However, it was determined that there are no significant or potentially significant cumulative impacts. Cumulative impacts have been assessed considering any incremental impact of the Proposed Action when they are combined with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, and no significant impacts or substantially controversial issues were found. There are no extreme hazards created with this project and there are no conflicts with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan.

**Recommendation and justification concerning preparation of EIS:**

There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the Proposed Alternative; therefore, an EIS is not required.

#### **PART VI. EA CONCLUSION SECTION**

**Individuals or groups contributing to, or commenting on, this EA:**

- Matthew Waite, 3208 Turnberry Circle, Billings, MT 59101, (406) 208-3440
- MT Fish Wildlife and Parks

**EA prepared by:**

Amanda Darling, Hamilton, MT 59840

**Date Completed:**

May 17, 2023

**Describe public involvement, if any:**

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