



## **ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST**

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

**1. Project Title:** Boone and Crockett Club Palmer Shooting Range Improvement Project

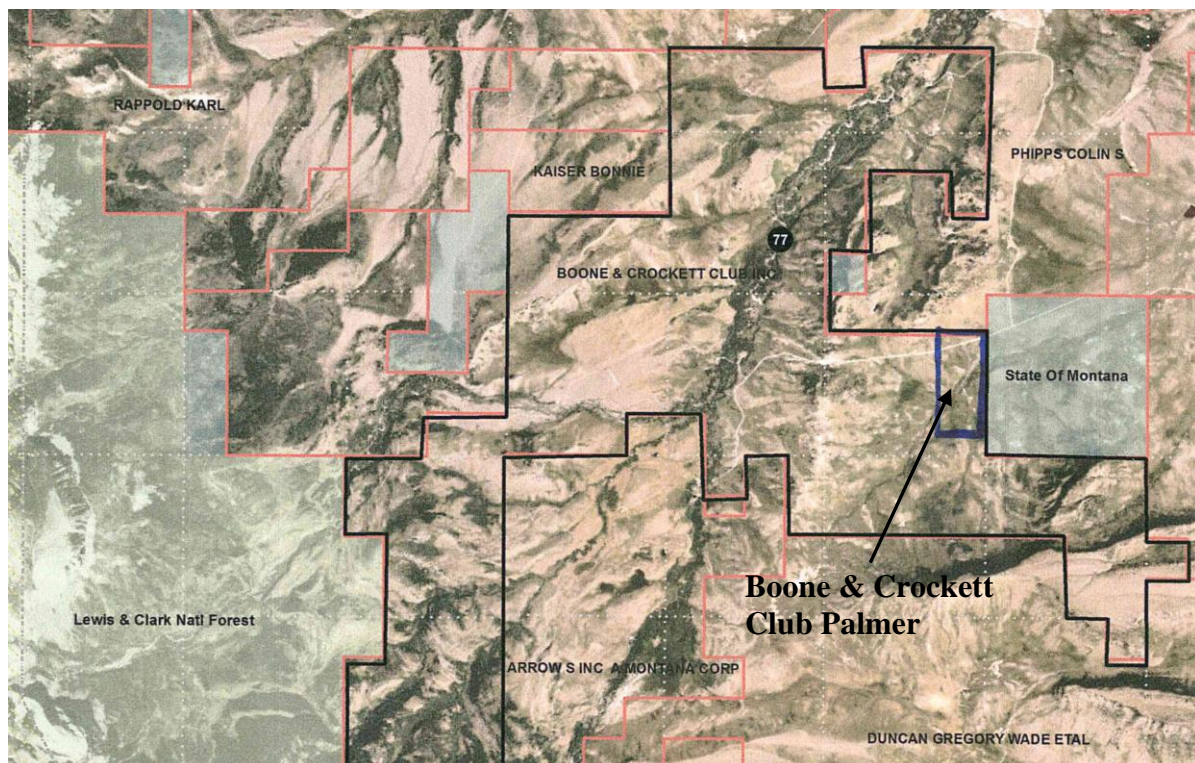
**2. Type of Proposed Action:**

The Boone and Crockett Club (BCC) seeks grant funding to improve the accessibility and safety of the range and associated facilities at the Palmer Shooting Range. Proposed improvements will include:

- Smoothing out unlevel ground and obstacles and placing fine grade, compacted gravel in parking areas and near shooting stages, benches and target locations.
- Installation of permanent target stands (wooden posts), which will decrease the number of times folks must walk downrange.
- Installation of a fiber optic communications cable underground to the classroom building, which will allow users to access the internet to make emergency phone calls when needed.

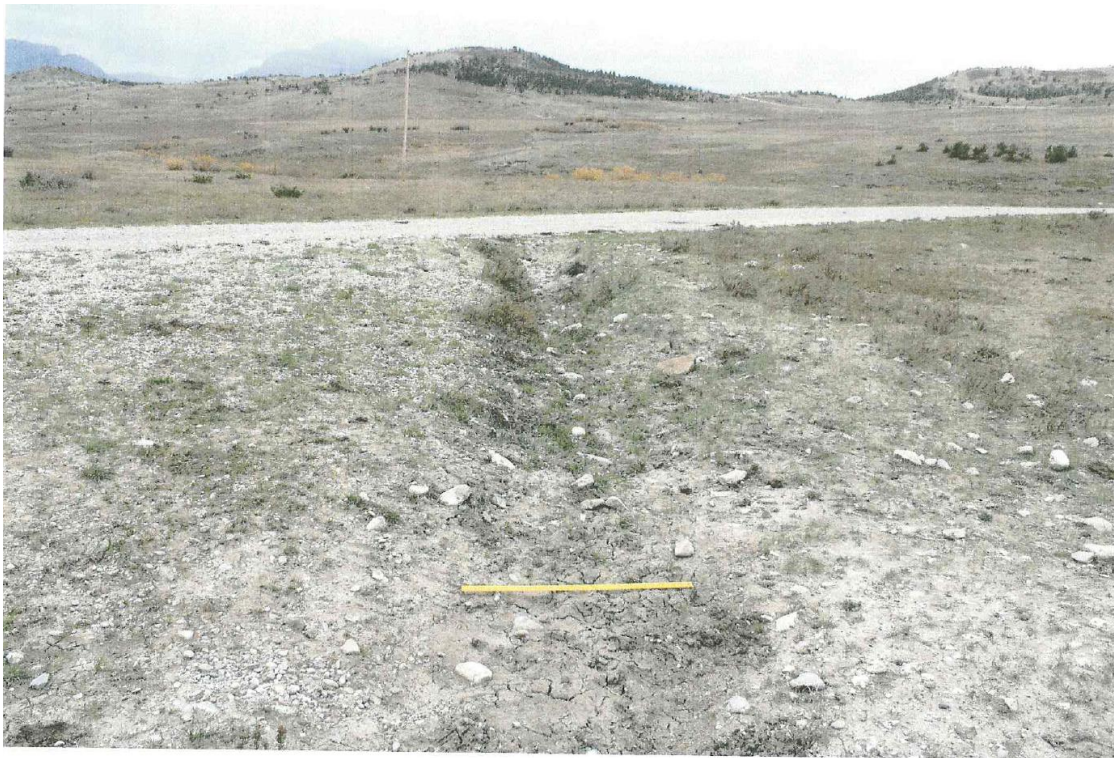
**3. Location Affected by Proposed Action:**

The Boone and Crockett Club (BCC) Palmer Shooting Range is located approximately 12 miles southwest of Dupuyer, Montana, off West Pendroy Road, Lat. 48.0943, Long. -112.6561, SE1/4 Section 17, Township 27 North, Range 8 West.



**Figure 1. Location of Boone and Crockett Club Palmer Shooting Range**





**Figure 2. Example of a problem spot in parking area, where more gravel and dirt is needed to level area and improve accessibility.**



**Figure 3. Example of a problem spot in target area, where more gravel and dirt is needed to eliminate tripping hazards and improve accessibility.**





**Figure 4. Example of a mobile target stand currently in use. These are lightweight and easy to move but do not hold up well in the wind.**

**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):**

Accessibility and safety are two of the most important pieces of any shooting range design. Currently, the range runs up against multiple accessibility issues. Starting at the parking area, next to the shooting bench staging area (cement pad), and all the way out to where the target stands are located at the 100-yard berm,

tripping hazards, uneven ground, ledges, and loose, soft gravel "pits" exist. If one cannot safely and efficiently access down range to see their target, frustrations are sure to build. If a range user is injured or simply feels unsafe or uncomfortable while using the necessities of the range, this may deter them from becoming a lifelong shooting enthusiast or hunter. Thus, the need for these improvements are paramount. The benefits are many — a safer range, more accessibility to all areas, and a feeling of comfort and security that will promote lifelong learners in the arena of recreational shooting and hunting safety.

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

The objective of the proposed project is to improve the accessibility and safety of the Palmer Shooting Range by 1) improving walking/wheelchair accessible and driving surfaces around the range, 2) increasing the convenience of the target stands by installing permanent posts, and 3) installing fiber optic communications cable underground to the classroom building, which will allow users to access the internet to make emergency phone calls when needed.

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

The proposed project would involve approximately 1 acre of the 3.5-acre BCC Palmer Shooting range.

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

The BCC Palmer Shooting range is located on 30 acres of private land owned in fee title by the Boone and Crockett Club. The range is not located within a floodplain, and there are no permanent surface waters or wetlands on the property. The BCC Palmer Shooting range offers shooting opportunities for rifle, pistol, shotgun, archery, long-range, and Cowboy Action.

#### **9. Description of Project:**

The BCC proposal involves 3 major projects:

- 1) BCC plans to grade out uneven areas within the current parking area footprint, add road-mix gravel, and compact the area to provide a level and accessible route for vehicles, pedestrians, and wheelchairs entering the shooting range building classroom and staging area. They will also add gravel off the front edge of the cement pad (shooting line) to remove any ledge or tripping hazard associated with the pad-to-ground drop-off. Currently, two low spots (ditches) exist in the parking area that prohibit full vehicle or wheelchair movement across the entirety of the parking area. These could easily immobilize a vehicle or wheelchair, creating a significant safety concern.
- 2) The ledge drop-off and the uneven ground (see photos) near the firing line and in front of the 100-yard berm, respectively, are also tripping and therefore a safety concern. BCC proposes to add gravel and fill material, grade, compact, and level with fine gravel to all these areas. A smooth, gradual, and even surface is the desired result at both of these sites.
- 3) Lastly, communication is key to safety at any range, and currently BCC's range complex has no means of communication to emergency services if such a need arose. No land line or other tele-communications system currently exists at this range, and the nearest hospital is about one hour away. BCC has secured a bid from a local telephone company to install fiber-optic cables underground to the site, which would enable those on the premises to use WiFi calling in case of an emergency.

#### **Estimated budget for the projects described above:**

Dirt work, gravel, compaction	\$21,600
Target stand posts and installation	\$3,750
Fiber-optic cable installation	\$3,264
Layout, design, misc. expenses, & volunteer hours	\$6,386

Total Project Budget	\$35,000
<b>Total Funding Requested from FWP</b>	<b>\$17,500</b>

**10. List any Other Local, State, or Federal Agency that has Overlapping or Additional Jurisdiction:**  
None

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

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

**Funding:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	\$17,500

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

The BCC Palmer range is located on 30 acres of private land deeded to the BCC. This is a non-profit, private shooting club with no annual membership fee for individuals or families and a day use fee of \$4 for guests and members. The BCC Palmer Range hosts around 8 events each year. Approximately 10 organizations utilize the range, including: Boone and Crockett Club, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), Boy Scouts, National Rifle Association, Outdoor Life, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, University of Montana, Montana State University, OneMontana Master Hunter Program, Special Forces, and more.

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

Because the BCC 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:**

Luke Coccoli, P.O. Box 230, Dupuyer, MT 59432, (406) 472-3311

**15. Other Pertinent Information:**

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

Shooting range applications require the participating governing body to approve by resolution its submission of applications for shooting range-funding assistance. Resolution Date: January 31, 2023.

**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 the accessibility and safety of the Palmer Shooting Range by 1) improving walking/wheelchair accessible and driving surfaces around the range, 2) increasing the convenience of the target stands by installing permanent posts, and 3) installing fiber optic communications cable on the premises. 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 or potentially negative environmental 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 uneven surfaces creating vehicle and ADA accessibility issues, and the range's current inability to contact emergency services, should the need arise.

**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 accessibility and safety for members and guests of BCC. Improved surfaces throughout the facility's parking and shooting areas will provide a safer and more pleasant experience for all range users, especially those in need of ADA accommodations. The proposed changes would also improve the range's safety protocols in the event of an emergency, with fiber optic cable creating a line of communication to emergency services that currently does not exist on site.

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 ADA accessibility and safety protocols in the event of an emergency on site.

**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 determines extent of Environmental Review. An abbreviated checklist may be used for those projects that are not complex, controversial, or are not in environmentally sensitive areas.

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

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				X		
2. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats				X		2

<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>
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 proposed project will generally only apply to areas already disturbed/established as roads and pathways. Due to prior land use, native vegetation has been disturbed in the area of the proposed project. This project will not change the overall abundance and diversity of plant species within the area.

**7.** The proposed project will cause limited displacement of soils, but the developments will not substantially effect geological features or establish new erosion patterns. Soil disruption for this site is localized to areas already established as roads and pathways.

**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>
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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 BCC Palmer range is adjacent to surrounding agricultural land used for grazing and hay production, the range is not in agricultural production. The proposed project will have no affect on agricultural production.

**5.** The proposed project will improve the safety and accessibility of the BCC Palmer Range.

**7.** The proposed developments will increase the safety and accessibility of 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 Boone and Crockett Club's Proposed Alternative, to improve the safety and accessibility of its facilities, 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:**

- Luke Coccoli, P.O. Box 230, Dupuyer, MT 59432, (406) 472-3311.
- MT Fish Wildlife and Parks

**EA prepared by:**

Amanda Darling, Hamilton, MT 59840

**Date Completed:**

May 30, 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.