



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

PART I. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

1. Project Title: Chinook Rod and Gun Club Improvements Project

2. Type of Proposed Action:

The Chinook Rod and Gun Club (CRGC) proposes to 1) construct a new archery range, 2) install lighting for the trap range to increase safety and create more opportunities for use, and 3) install ADA-accessible seating for the pistol range where none currently exists.

3. Location Affected by Proposed Action:

The Chinook Rod and Gun Club is located on 80 acres in Blaine County 3.4 miles southwest of Chinook, Montana on Clear Creek Road, Lat. 48.54889, Long. -109.31111; Section 7, Township 32 North, Range 19 East.

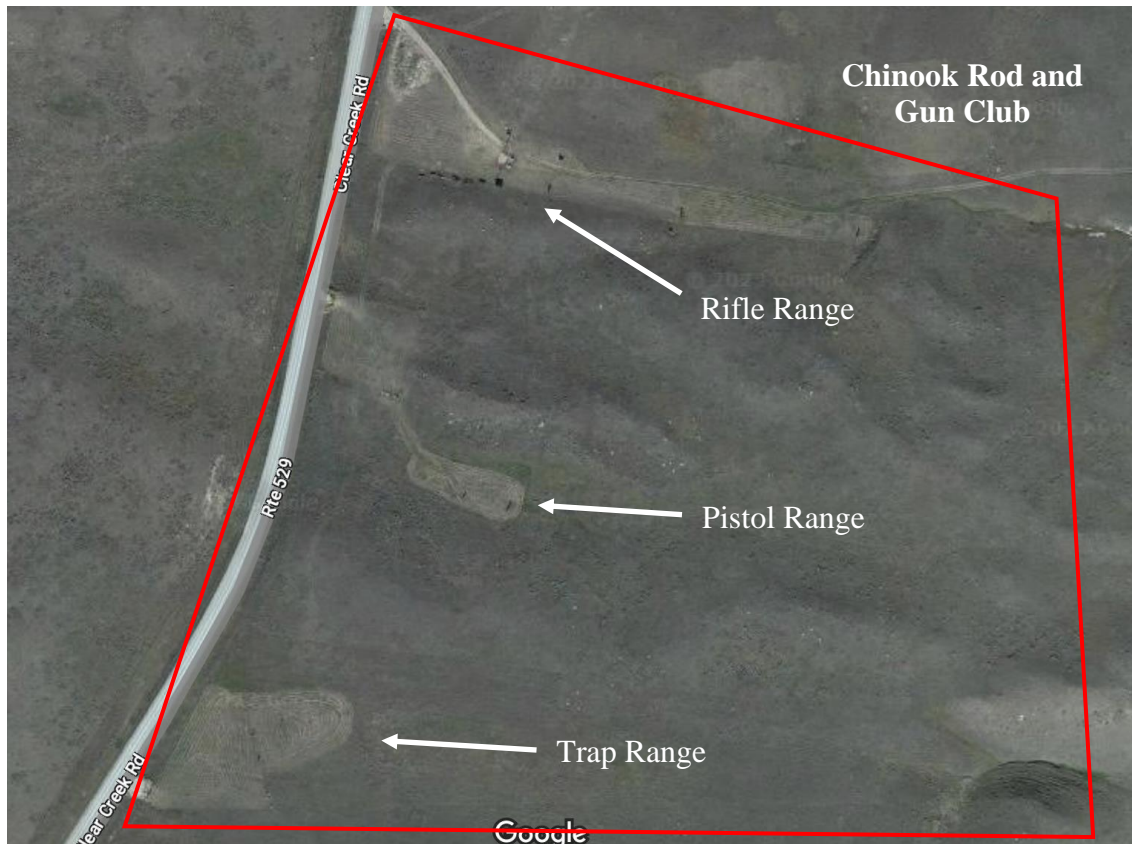


Figure 1. Chinook Rod and Gun Club Range, Chinook, Montana.

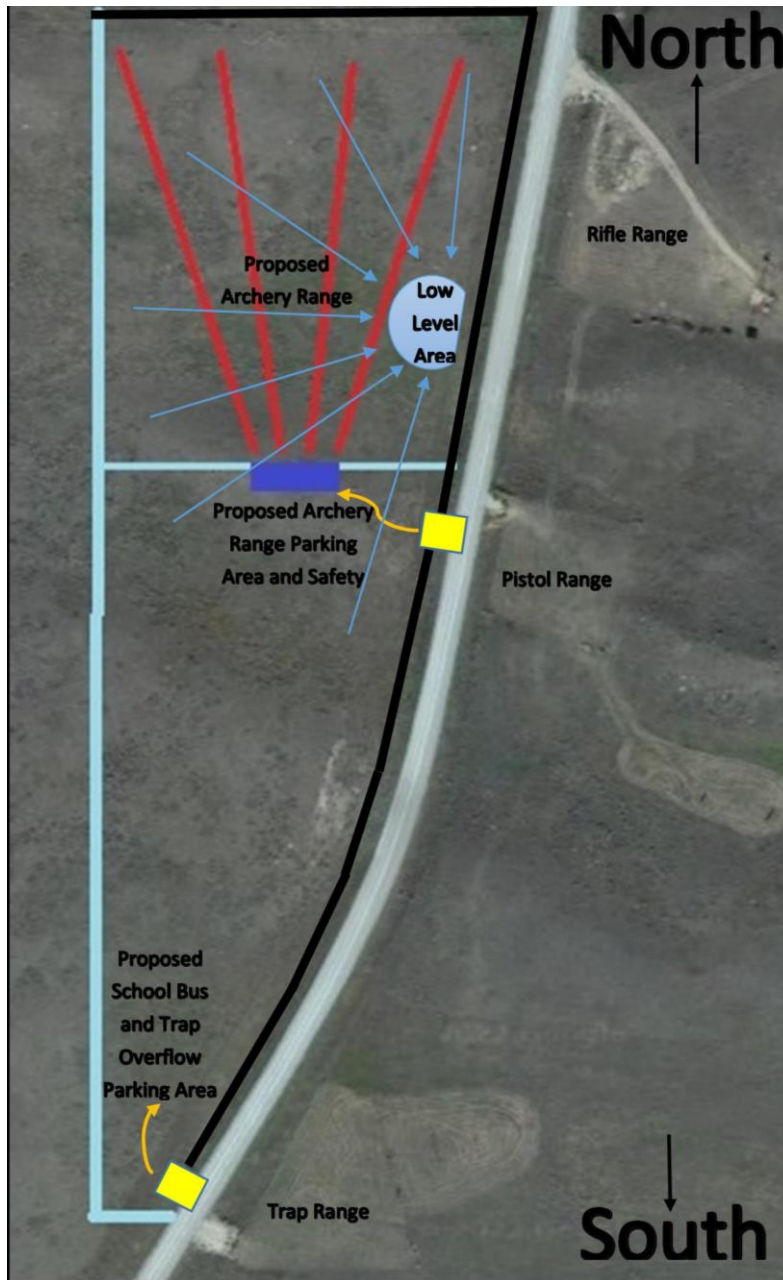


Figure 2. Proposed location and layout of new Archery Range at the Chinook Rod and Gun Club

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):

CRGC's local community does not currently have an archery range available to the public, which has led to a lot of back yard shooting, as well as individuals that have, at times, set up small targets in the local park and on other small parcels of property around the community. None of these areas have sufficient back stops to catch misfired or stray arrows, nor fencing or other barriers to prevent other individuals from unknowingly being down range of where someone has set up temporarily to practice archery. While the community is fortunate to have avoided any accidents or injuries to this date, it is only a matter of time before something does happen with archery being practiced in areas that do not have any safety features or protocols in place to protect the general public as well as the shooter.

Further, the local 4H Shooting Sports group offers an archery program, and while they do currently have their own very small indoor facility, it only allows for one or two children to shoot at a time. CRGC's proposed facility would offer the 4H group much more space, providing more youth participants an opportunities to practice, reducing distractions from idle children who are waiting their turn, and increasing the time each child gets to shoot.

The picnic tables for the archery range will provide a place for all shooters to set their bow cases and equipment, as well as provide seating for any individuals who are there observing or supervising. Two to three of the picnic tables will be wheelchair accessible, so that each end of the row of tables will be ADA accessible. In addition to the tables are the archery range, CRGC plans to place one wheelchair accessible table at the pistol range, where there is currently no seating available at all, and the very small table currently there is not wheelchair accessible.

At the trap range, CRGC are seeking to install a power pole with lights to allow for shooting after dark for the local trap league, open shoots, meat shoots, and 4H Shooting Sports. The facility currently has no outdoor lighting at all, and in the spring and fall, 4H Shooting Sports, league shoots, and other events have been cut short due to lack of daylight. Further, with no outdoor lighting and the completion of these various events — in addition to other meetings and events held at the club unrelated to shooting (e.g. hunters education and other local group meetings) — often ending around dusk, there is a safety risk of trips and fall for those packing up their things and trying to get to their vehicles after dark.

Finally, any gravel not used at the archery range (if any) will be used to level parking areas and access roads at the pistol, rifle, and trap ranges.

6. Objectives for the Action(s):

The objectives of the proposed project are to provide more safe shooting opportunities for the community with a new archery range, to increase ADA accessible seating options on their ranges, and to improve the overall safety of the range facilities in lowlight scenarios by installing lighting in a central location.

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

The proposed improvements would affect less than approximately 15 acres of the 80-acre Chinook Rod and Gun Club Shooting Range.

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

The 80-acre Chinook Rod and Gun Club Range is located on private leased land. The CRGC holds a 25-year lease, running from January 1, 2014 through December 31, 2038, for the entire 80 acres. The land is not within or adjacent to any floodplain. There are no permanent surface waters or wetlands on the property. Waterways on the property comprise only intermittent seasonal runoff.

9. Description of Project:

The Chinook Rod and Gun Club proposes to install a new archery range, which will consist of fencing, a shipping container for storage of 4H equipment and targets, as well as extra targets for the range itself, picnic tables for seating and to unpack bow cases and equipment, gravel for approaches, and access roads into the property.

Improvements to the existing ranges will include installation of a power pole and lighting at the trap range to allow for shooting in low light and after dusk, as well as to address safety concerns with low lighting causing trips and falls when the clubhouse is being used after dark for trap and other activities. The existing range improvements would also include a wheelchair accessible picnic table for the pistol range, as there is currently no seating there at all, and one small tabletop that is there is too low for wheelchair accessibility.

The CRGC's estimated budget includes:

Archery Range	
Fencing materials and labor	\$9,945.20
Site prep and gravel work	\$2,675.00
Other materials and equipment (targets, storage container, picnic tables, etc.)	\$14,225.00
Trap Range	
Power pole, lights, wiring, installation labor	\$4,330.00
Pistol Range	
ADA-accessible picnic tables (and delivery)	\$1,535.00
Grant Administration	\$500.00
Total Project Budget	\$33,210.20
Total Funding Requested	\$16,605.10

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

None

Permits, Licenses and/or Authorizations:

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

Funding:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	\$16,605.00

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

The CRGC Range is located on 80 acres of exclusively private land leased to the CRGC. This is a private range operated and maintained by the CRGC. Membership to the CRGC is \$35 per year for individuals and \$50 per family, with a \$5 per day non-member day use fee. Organizations that have used the range include 4H Shooting Sports, Hunters Education, FFA, Spring and Fall League, Chinook Rod and Gun Club's members. The CRGC hosts an increasing number of events each year, such as trap leagues, Hunter's Education, and meat shoots.

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

The CRGC Range is a private range operated and maintained by the CRGC, a non-profit organization. Because it is a private range, there has not been public involvement in the planning process. Proposed range improvement 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:

Joe Kennedy, P.O. Box 432, Chinook, MT 59523, (406) 879-9280

15. Other Pertinent Information:

The CRGC Range is located southwest of Chinook and serves Chinook as well as smaller communities within easy driving distance of the range. The majority of members reside in or around Chinook. The closest range with similar shooting opportunities is 27 miles away in Havre, 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 29, 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 1) construct a new archery range, 2) install lighting for the trap range to increase safety and create more opportunities for use, and 3) install ADA-accessible seating for the pistol range where none currently exists.

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 limited visibility on the premises in lowlight conditions, and a lack of ADA-accessible seating. In this scenario, it would also fail to fill a community need for a place to practice archery under safe and controlled conditions.

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

community, accessibility, and safety related issues.

There are beneficial consequences that would result from accepting the **Proposed Alternative**. The proposed changes would improve the range's overall offerings, accessibility, and safety for members and guests of CRGC. Improved seating for guests will allow more community members — especially those in need of ADA accommodations — to comfortably participate in the club's offerings. The installation of a trap range will allow for safe shooting in low light and after dusk, as well as to address safety concerns with low lighting causing trips and falls when the clubhouse is being used after dark for trap and other activities. And finally, the addition of an archery range will provide numerous additional, safe opportunities to shoot for community members who have already demonstrated a desire for this resource.

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 and accessibility standards for the range's existing facilities, especially with regards to ADA accessibility. And the club would fail to meet a need demonstrated by community members for a safe place to practice archery shooting.

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 was deemed reasonably available, or prudent.

List and explain proposed mitigating measures (stipulations):

None

PART III. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

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

Table 1. Potential impact on physical environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				X		
2. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats				X		2
3. Introduction of new species into an area				X		
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality			X			4
5. Water quality, quantity & distribution (surface or groundwater)				X		5
6. Existing water right or reservation				X		
7. Geology & soil			X			7

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
quality, stability & moisture						
8. Air quality or objectionable odors				X		8
9. Historical & archaeological sites				X		9
10. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
11. Aesthetics			X			11

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

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. Due to prior land use, native vegetation has already been disturbed in the area of the proposed project. Thus, while there will be some vegetation displaced to construct the new archery range, the proposed project will likely have a minor impact on native vegetation in the area.

7. The proposed project will cause limited displacement of soils, but the developments will not substantially affect geological features or establish new erosion patterns. Soil disruption for this site is localized. Erosion control measures will be in effect and disturbed areas are expected to be reseeded.

8. Minor and temporary dust and vehicle emissions would be created during installation of the storage container and power pole. However, the construction time is short, and human effects will be limited due to the sparse population in the surrounding area.

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.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Social structures and cultural diversity				X		

2. Changes in existing public benefits provided by wildlife populations and/or habitat				X		
3. Local and state tax base and tax revenue				X		
4. Agricultural production				X		4
5. Human health			X			5
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income				X		
7. Access to & quality of recreational activities		X				7
8. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals (ordinances)				X		
9. Distribution & density of population and housing				X		
10. Demands for government services				X		
11. Industrial and/or commercial activity				X		

4. Because the Chinook Rod and Gun Club Range is not under agricultural production, the proposed project would have no impact on agricultural production.

5. The proposed installation of ADA-accessible seating, improved lighting, and a brand new archery range would improve the opportunities, convenience, and safety for members and the public using the range.

7. The proposed improvements to the Chinook Rod and Gun Club range will improve the quality and safety of shooting sports within the community, in addition to providing a safer option for those practicing archery.

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 Chinook Rod and Gun Club's Proposed Alternative, to provide a safe, regulated shooting opportunity, 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 cumulatively impacts. Cumulative impacts have been assessed considering any incremental impact of the proposed action when they are combined with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, and no significant impacts or substantially controversial issues were found. There are no extreme hazards created with this project and there are no conflicts with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan.

Recommendation and justification concerning preparation of EIS:

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

PART VI. EA CONCLUSION SECTION

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

- Joe Kennedy, P.O. Box 432, Chinook, MT 59523, (406) 879-9280
- MT Fish Wildlife and Parks

EA prepared by:

Amanda Darling, Hamilton, MT 59840

Date Completed:

June 5, 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.