



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

PO Box 200701, Helena, MT 59620-0701
(406) 444-9947

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

PART I. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

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

2. Type of Proposed Action:

The Custer Rod and Gun Club (CRGC) proposes to install new electrical wiring and service to the main gate for their Sunday Creek Rifle Range, in addition to the pistol bay and bathroom areas. This electrical service will allow the use of a wireless connection to the HID Card gate lock, increasing the convenience of access for club members and other range users.

3. Location Affected by Proposed Action:

The Custer Rod and Gun Club's Sunday Creek Rifle Range is located on 41 acres in Custer County, approximately 8 miles north of Miles City, Montana on Wednesday Drive, approx. Lat. 46.481928, Long. - 105.869661; Section 5, Township 8 North, Range 47 East.



Figure 1. Custer Rod and Gun Club's Sunday Creek Range, Miles City, Montana.



Figure 2. Proposed location of new electrical line, dug from main gate (right side of photo) to club house (left side of photo), totalling ~.25 miles.

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 utilizes HID card controls on the access gate to their Sunday Creek Rifle Range, the headquarters of the Custer Rod and Gun Club. Currently, the volunteer who handles memberships must physically go to the

gate to upload updated membership information. To help cut down on this volunteer's time spent on this process, CRGC has typically limited the time period for renewal of memberships to January and February. The turnaround time for new memberships is a couple of weeks, to allow for the volunteer to physically download the access information to the HID card lock on the gate.

Because CRGC has members that only use the rifle range just prior to the hunting season (to get their rifles sighted in), this process is highly inefficient and impractical. If a member forgets to renew their membership in January and February, and they can no longer access CRGC's rifle range, they will often simply go to BLM or other properties to sight in their rifles. Consequently, CRGC continues to lose members every year because the process to renew memberships and receive access to the range is so tedious and long.

CRGC's proposed improvements will provide improved electrical service to gate area and the pistol bay/bathroom area. This electrical service will allow the use of a wireless connection to the HID Card gate lock, so that the volunteers handling memberships will be able to update membership cards remotely all year long. This will enable CRGC to change their membership policy and allow renewals and new memberships at any point throughout the year, and members will receive range access in a timelier manner. This will increase access to the range to the casual shooter/hunters, reduce the impact of impromptu ranges set up on BLM and other properties in the area, and create a more streamlined experience for all members moving forward. Finally, the improved electrical service will increase reliability of access to Wi-Fi-connected security cameras on site, improving the club's ability to monitor the range for vandalism and other safety standards around the range.

6. Objectives for the Action(s):

The objectives of the proposed project are to improve CRGC's ability to process memberships and grant access to the range much more efficiently. This will allow more people to conveniently use the range, especially during the pre-hunting season when range activity peaks for the casual user of the Sunday Creek Range.

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

The proposed improvements would affect less than 1 acre of the 41-acre Custer Rod and Gun Club rifle and pistol range.

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

The 41-acre Custer Rod and Gun Club Sunday Creek Rifle Range is located on private deeded land. 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 Custer Rod and Gun Club proposes to install new electrical wiring to the club's main gate, the pistol bays, and the onsite bathrooms. This updated wiring will allow CRGC to operate the main gate's HIC Card system wirelessly, increasing convenience for the club's members and other users. It will also increase reliability of access to Wi-Fi-connected security cameras on site, improving the club's ability to monitor the range for vandalism and other safety standards around the range. Updates will require trenching and laying of electrical lines, installation of sub-panels, installation of an updated Wi-Fi router and an updated HID Card Lock on the gate, and the construction of a gate guard shack to house the equipment and climate controls for the electrical area at the gate.

The CRGC's estimated budget includes:

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| Electrical Costs | \$8,660.76 |
| Licensed electrician labor | |
| Inspection | |
| State of MT Electrical Permit | |
| All other equipment and installation fees | |
| Trenching labor and equipment | \$3,850.00 |
| Metal gate update with new HID card lock | \$2,000.00 |
| In-kind labor from club members for installation included (\$200) | |
| Wi-Fi router installed by club members | \$300.00 |
| In-kind labor from club members for installation included (\$100) | |
| Construction of Guard Shack | \$1,200.00 |
| In-kind labor from club members for installation included (\$300) | |
| Total Project Budget | \$16,010.76 |
| Total Funding Requested | \$8,000.00 |

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> |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| State of Montana Electrical Permit | Not yet obtained | N/A |

Funding:

| <u>Agency Name</u> | <u>Funding Amount</u> |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks | \$8,000.00 |

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

The CRGC Range is located on 41 acres of exclusively private land deeded to the CRGC. This is a private range operated and maintained by the CRGC. Membership to the CRGC is \$50 per year for individuals and \$50 per family, with no day-use fees for guests of members. Organizations that have used the range include local law enforcement (who receive free membership), 4-H, Hunter's Education, and NRA groups. The CRGC hosts approximately 15-25 small events each year, including concealed carry education classes, 4-H Small Bore instructions, and Hunter's Education classes.

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:

Jeff Faycosh, P.O. Box 303, Miles City, MT 59301, (406) 951-2987

15. Other Pertinent Information:

The CRGC Range is located north of Miles City and serves Miles City as well as smaller communities

within easy driving distance of the range. The majority of members reside in or around Miles City. The closest range with similar shooting opportunities is 82 miles away in Glendive, 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 install new electrical wiring and service to the main gate for their Sunday Creek Rifle Range, in addition to the pistol bay and bathroom areas. This electrical service would facilitate the use of a wireless connection to the HID Card gate lock.

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.

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 and safety related issues.

There are beneficial consequences that would result from accepting the **Proposed Alternative**. CRGC's proposed improvements to their electrical service will allow the use of a wireless connection to the HID Card gate lock, so that the volunteers handling memberships will be able to update membership cards remotely all year long. This will enable CRGC to change their membership policy and allow renewals and new memberships at any point throughout the year, and members will receive range access in a timelier manner. This will increase access to the range to the casual shooter/hunters, reduce the impact of impromptu ranges set up on BLM and other properties in the area, and create a more streamlined experience for all members moving forward. The improved electrical service will also increase reliability of access to Wi-Fi-connected security cameras on site, improving the club's ability to monitor the range for vandalism and other safety standards around the range.

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 leaving unresolved some key improvements to the range, and the range could continue to lose membership due to an outdated membership approval process. The club would also fail to benefit from improved access to their security camera monitoring system.

Describe any Alternatives considered and eliminated from Detailed Study:

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

List and explain proposed mitigating measures (stipulations):

None

PART III. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

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

Table 1. Potential impact on physical environment.

| Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to: | Unknown | Potentially Significant | Minor | None | Can Be Mitigated | Comments Below |
|---|----------------|--------------------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources | | | | X | | |
| 2. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats | | | | X | | 2 |
| 3. Introduction of new species into an area | | | | X | | |
| 4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality | | | X | | | 4 |
| 5. Water quality, quantity & distribution (surface or groundwater) | | | | X | | 5 |
| 6. Existing water right or reservation | | | | X | | |
| 7. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture | | | X | | | 7 |
| 8. Air quality or objectionable odors | | | | X | | |
| 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 dig a trench for the new electrical wiring, 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.

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 | | |
| 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 CRGC Sunday Creek Range is not under agricultural production, the proposed project would have no impact on agricultural production.

7. The proposed improvements to the CRGC Sunday Creek Range will increase efficiency of the membership approval process and greatly increase the convenience and timeliness of granting members access to the range.

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 Custer Rod and Gun Club's Proposed Alternative, to provide a convenient, safe 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:

- Jeff Faycosh, P.O. Box 303, Miles City, MT 59301, (406) 951-2987
- MT Fish Wildlife and Parks

EA prepared by:

Amanda Darling, Hamilton, MT 59840

Date Completed:

June 8, 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.