



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

PART I. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

1. Project Title: Gallatin Sporting Clays (GSC) Improvements Project

2. Type of Proposed Action:

The Gallatin Sporting Clays proposes to improve their shooting range by purchasing and installing 6 new clay target traps. These traps will be mounted on wheeled carts and installed on the Main, Five-Stand, and Hunter (Short) Courses.

3. Location Affected by Proposed Action:

The Gallatin Sporting Clays range is located on 233 acres 4 miles northeast of Three Forks, Montana at 1300 Little Coulee Road, Three Forks, Montana 59752, Section 12, Township 02 North, Range 02 East.

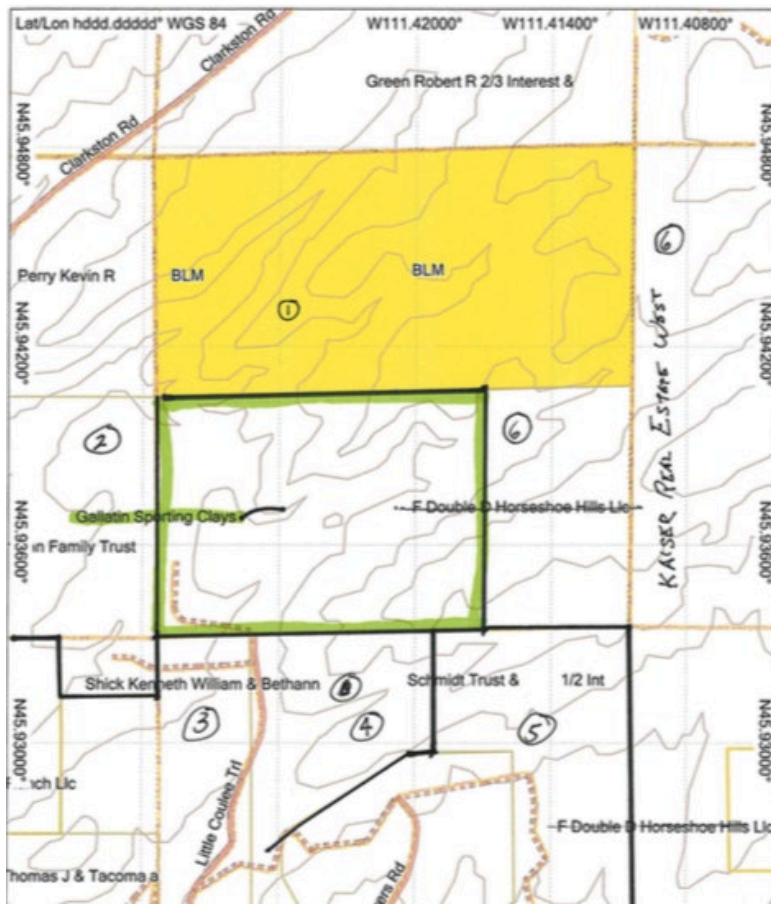


Figure 1. Gallatin Sporting Clays, Three Forks, Montana.

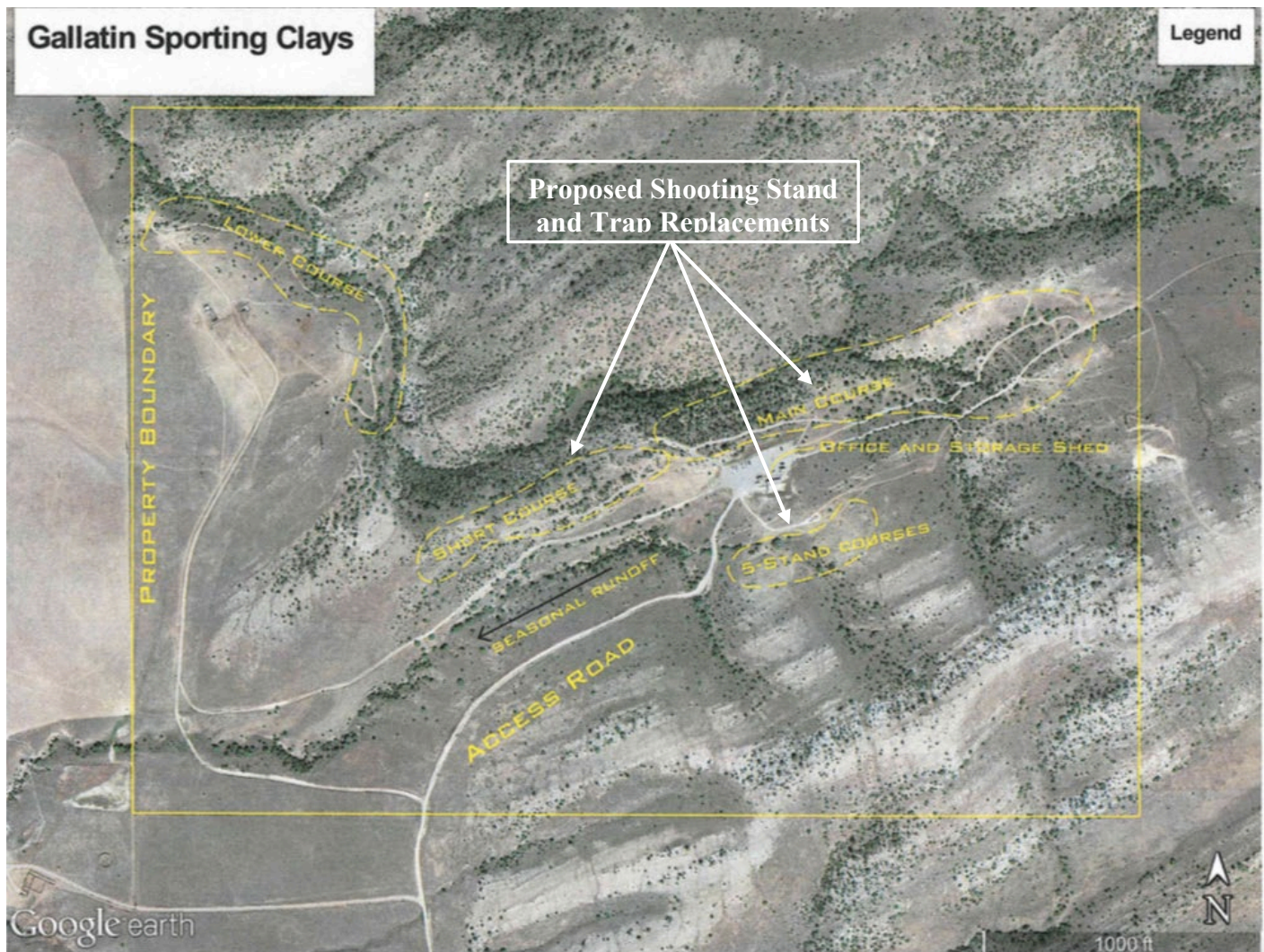


Figure 2. Locations of Proposed New Clay Targets for Gallatin Sporting Clays

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):

The Gallatin Sporting Clays (GSC) range hosts the largest sporting clays event in the state each year, as well as providing shooting opportunities for members and non-members during the open season. The GSC proposes to improve their shooting range by purchasing and installing 6 new clay target traps — four tiltable "Chondel" traps and two tiltable "Battue" traps. These traps will be mounted on wheeled carts and so that they are easily moveable and shooters can change up their target presentations.

The new Chondel traps will enable shooters to have a greater variety of shooting experiences, which would include throw arcing (something the current traps are not able to do). Similarly, the Battue traps will allow GSC to provide additional Battue target presentations. Both of these trap types will create new challenging target presentations for GSC's competitive shoots, and will also provide non-competitive shooters with new hunting-type target presentations. The new traps will be installed prior to the State Championship/Western Challenge shoot in August.

The proposed project will enhance the shooting experience for both experienced and novice shotgun shooters. The club gets significant use from member and non-member shooters who want to sharpen their wing-shooting skills for bird hunting, as well as from competitive clay target shooters and recreational non-competitive shooters.

Finally, with regards to safety, the new traps will replace several older traps which need to be retired for safety reasons.

6. Objectives for the Action(s):

The proposed improvements will enhance the safety and shooting experience for both experienced and novice shotgun shooters who want to sharpen their wing-shooting skills for bird hunting, as well as for competitive clay target shooters and recreational non-competitive shooters. The new traps will have tiltable bases, enabling them to throw a wide variety of target presentations, compared to the old fixed-head traps (which would be replaced). This increased flexibility will allow GSC to set easy targets for beginners and difficult targets for competitions using the same trap.

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

The proposed new traps and replacement stands will be located on the Main Course, Hunter Course, and Five-stand Courses, comprising a combined area of approximately 20 acres (not including shot fall zones).

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

The 233.69-acre Gallatin Shooting Clays Range is located on land owned in fee title by Gallatin Shooting Clays. The property is located on high, hilly terrain that 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 GSC proposes to improve their shooting range by purchasing and installing 6 new clay target traps — four tiltable "Chondel" traps and two tiltable "Battue" traps. These traps will be mounted on wheeled carts and installed on the Main, Five-Stand, and Hunter (Short) Courses.

The estimated budget includes:

Chondel traps (4)	\$15,580.00
Battue traps (2)	\$4,950.00
Two-wheeled carts (6), shipping and handling	\$3,600.00
Total Project Budget	\$24,130.00
Total Funding Requested	\$12,065.00

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</u>	<u>Date Filed/#</u>
N/A		

Funding:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	\$12,065.00

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

The Gallatin Sporting Clays range is located on 233.69 acres of exclusively private land deeded to the Gallatin Sporting Clays. This is a private range with a membership fee (annual fee of \$125 for individuals and \$400 for families), though visitors are welcome and are charged \$50 per 100 targets on all ranges, and the club also provides free targets, ammunition, loaner guns, and mentoring to all non-member youth under the age of 18 (up to 300 targets per year). GSC hosts 15 to 25 charity, training, and competitive events per year, and in August 2023, they will host the State Championship/Western Challenge, which will likely draw around 200 participants. Organizations that have used the range in the past include: Young Life, Pheasants Forever Youth, 4-H Club, Boy Scouts, Scholastic Clay Target Program, Southwest Montana Builders Association, Kenyon Noble, TD&H Engineering, Yellowstone Club, Headwaters Gundog Club, Sitka Gear, DA Davidson, ASHRAE, Foley & Lardner, Mountain Hot Tub, Edward Jones, Montana Contractors Association, Intrinsik Architects, Meateater Film Crew, Glock Corporation, and numerous other private parties.

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

Because the Gallatin Sporting Clays Range is a private range for members, there has been no 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:

Frank Stewart, 3250 Prairie Smoke Road, Bozeman, MT 59715, (406) 539-0954.

15. Other Pertinent Information:

Gallatin Sporting Clays is a nonprofit private organization. The range is located between Bozeman, Butte, and Helena and serves these communities as well as smaller communities within easy driving distance of the range including Three Forks, Whitehall, Townsend, Belgrade, and Manhattan. The majority of members reside in or around Bozeman. The range offers various types of shotgun activities, including sporting clays, five-stand, FITASC, a coin-operated practice range, and pattern testing. The closest range providing similar shooting experiences is the Z Bar Z Sporting Clays in Lincoln, Montana, located approximately 145 miles from the Gallatin Sporting Clays Range.

Shooting range applications require the participating governing body to approve by resolution its submission of applications for shooting range-funding assistance. Resolution Date: January 17, 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 GSC's shooting range by purchasing and installing 6 new clay target traps — four tiltable "Chondel" traps and two tiltable "Battue" traps. These traps will be mounted on wheeled carts and installed on the Main, Five-Stand, and Hunter (Short) Courses. There are beneficial consequences to acceptance of the **Proposed Alternative**.
- **Alternative B (No Action Alternative)** would result from the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Shooting Range Development Grant money being denied. In this case, the area would remain as an active shooting range without the proposed improvements.

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 various safety issues, due to old and failing equipment.

There are beneficial consequences that would result from accepting the **Proposed Alternative**. The proposed changes would replace old equipment — which are beginning to create inefficiencies and even pose safety hazards — with new equipment that will facilitate a greater variety of safe experiences at 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 less-than-ideal safety standards for existing traps.

Describe any Alternatives considered and eliminated from Detailed Study:

None. 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 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
3. Introduction of new species into an area				X		
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality				X		
5. Water quality, quantity & distribution (surface or groundwater)				X		5
6. Existing water right or reservation				X		
7. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture				X		
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.

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 new equipment would likely improve the aesthetics of the range's facilities, though the overall aesthetic of the range will not change significantly.

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		
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		

5. The proposed replacement of worn-out equipment would improve the safety for members and the public using the range.

7. The installation of new traps will improve the quality and increase the variety of shooting experiences offered at 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 proposed projects are located on an existing range or on 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 Gallatin Shooting Clays Associations' 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, generally positive 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:

- Frank Stewart, 3250 Prairie Smoke Road, Bozeman, MT 59715, (406) 539-0954
- MT Fish Wildlife and Parks

EA prepared by:

Amanda Darling, Hamilton, MT 59840

Date Completed:

June 22, 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.