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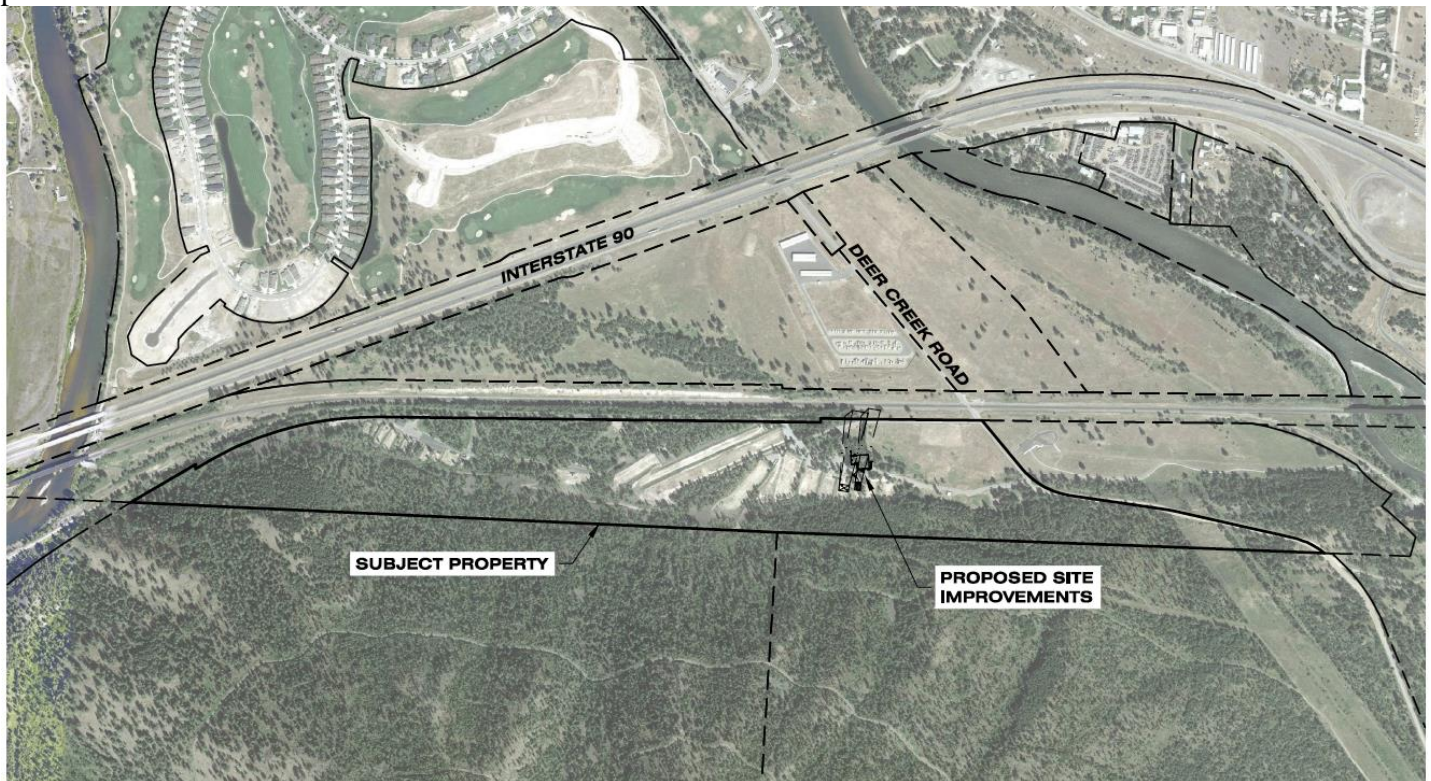
## **ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST**

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

**1. Project Title:** Western Montana Fish and Game Association Improvements Project

**2. Type of Proposed Action:**

The Western Montana Fish and Game Association (WMFGA) is requesting funding to help pay for the concrete for the Youth Shooting Sports Complex. This multi-use facility will be a designated area for youth shooting sports programs. This new two-story facility will be built on the current DCSC property. The main level of the 19,568 square foot facility will include a meeting room/lobby area, storage, bathrooms, changing rooms, kitchenette, an armory, a 6,000 square foot shooting area, and an elevated scoring platform. The indoor shooting area is designed so that it can accommodate up to thirty (30) 10m Air Rifle/Pistol, or Archery lanes. Conversely it can be configured to provide ten (10) shooting lanes (20 shooters) for 20m & 25m Indoor Archery competition. The indoor range will provide space dedicated to youth shooting sports programs to safely practice and compete. It will allow for year-round indoor access and offer a permanent place for youth to participate in shooting sports; a place for youth to make friends, learn new skills, firearms safety, and be a part of a team.



**Figure 1. WMFGA's Deer Creek Shooting Center, Missoula, Montana.**



**Figure 2. Rendering of Proposed Youth Shooting Sports Complex at Deer Creek Shooting Center, Missoula, Montana.**

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

The Western Montana Fish and Game Association's Deer Creek Shooting Center (DCSR) is located just over one mile east of East Missoula, Montana, ¼ mile south of Interstate 90 at Shooting Center Lane, Missoula, MT 59802; Lat. 46.87254, Long. -113.91281; Section 19, Township 13 North, Range 18 West.

**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):**

In Missoula County, there is only one shooting range that can accommodate indoor shooting activities. At that range, there is just one Junior Rifle program (12-18 kids) that competes in air rifle, air pistol, and small-bore

shooting activities. These kids compete for limited range time with a variety of indoor adult shooting leagues in the area. This leaves only a couple hours of practice time a week and limited support for a youth air rifle team. Other air rifle teams in the area, such as the American Legion air rifle teams, disbanded due to the lack of practice space in the area. In addition to the Jr. Rifle Program, there are 78 archers and 38 shooters currently registered in the Missoula County 4-H Shooting Sports program. It is the second most registered 4-H project (second only to market hog). Unfortunately, the 4-H kids have only outdoor practice options due to the lack of an indoor practice facility in the area. This prohibits them from participating in the traditional air rifle season which is during the winter months. Some 4-H groups can find an empty garage or shop to practice in, however this option is not as safe as a designated indoor range would be and does not provide a consistent practice facility. A fundamental need of a shooting team is a place to shoot.

The WMFGA recognizes there is a need for an indoor range in the Missoula area — one that prioritizes youth shooting activities. In order to fulfill their mission of protecting hunting heritage, WMFGA aims to promote youth shooting sports and provide youth shooting opportunities. The National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) found that “youth who are introduced to the sport of recreational shooting at a younger age are more likely to continue shooting into adulthood, which is essential to maintaining and further increasing the number of hunters and shooters in the United States.”

Although the main goal of the facility is to provide an indoor space for youth, as a multipurpose facility, it will also provide an indoor space for adult archers. When not being used by the youth programs, the DCSC will provide access for adults and families. This would be the only archery range in Missoula available for indoor use, and would serve as a place where people of all ages can practice and perfect their archery skills.

The WMFGA has worked diligently over the years on upgrades and improvements to its Deer Creek Shooting Center to offer new shooting opportunities to its members and the Community, and they feel that building a Youth Shooting Sports Complex is the logical next step for the organization.

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

The objective of the WMFGA’s proposed addition of an indoor range to their DCSC shooting range is to provide space dedicated to youth shooting sports programs to safely practice and compete. It will allow for year-round indoor access and offer a permanent place for youth to participate in shooting sports; a place for youth to make friends, learn new skills, firearms safety, and be a part of a team. It will also provide additional space and shooting opportunities for adults when not in use by local youth groups.

The new Youth Shooting Sports Complex will also enhance range safety by offering a safe place for youth shooters to learn basic and advanced marksmanship. There will be designated shooting lanes and firing lines painted on the floor. Teams will be able to practice at the same time independently of one another. The armory will provide a place for safe storage of equipment and to maintain equipment to make sure it is functioning safely. The facility will also offer an educational area where youth and adults alike can learn about firearms safety. This facility will hopefully move groups practicing in makeshift shooting facilities to a space designed for those specific purposes with safety features built in.

Finally, the new indoor range will comply with and often exceed ADA requirements in an effort to provide a safe and accessible shooting opportunity for shooters of all abilities.

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

The proposed project would involve four acres of WMFGA’s 97-acre range.



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

The DCSC is located on 129 acres of private land owned in fee title of the Western Montana Fish and Game Association. The property is not located within a floodplain and there are no permanent surface waters or wetlands on the property. The range offers shooting opportunities for rifle, pistol, shotgun, archery, cowboy action, and black powder.

**9. Description of Project:**

WMFGA plans to construct a new Youth Shooting Sports Complex, which will serve as a multi-use facility designated for youth shooting sports programs. This new two-story facility will be built on the current DCSC property.

Phase 1 of the WMFGA's proposed project will include the excavation, concrete (walls, foundations, & floors), metal building, steel erection, HVAC, plumbing, electrical, and interior finishes for the building to operate as a Youth Shooting Sports Complex. Once Phase 1 is completely paid off, the WMFGA will start on Phase 2 of the project which will include finishing out the lower level indoor shooting range for pistol caliber and small-bore rifles. It is expected we will begin phase 2 of the project in 3-5 years, depending on the amount of funds the association is able to raise through grants and fundraising activities over the next few years.

Funds requested through this grant will specifically be applied towards the cost of concrete for the building. Budgetary bids from Whetzel Concrete came in at \$455,000 for the concrete walls, foundations, and floors. The concrete is not only the largest dollar amount of the overall project, but also an important part of the overall construction. By having a concrete floor with a load rating of 125lbs / sq. foot, the floor of the shooting range will not move or bounce, providing a solid foundation for the precise shooting of air rifle and air pistol competition. The concrete will also allow for WMFGA to use in-floor heating, which will a more efficient way to heat the main level of the building than traditional options.

Another benefit of having concrete floors throughout the main level and lower level of the facility is that it will allow for shooters in wheelchairs and other adaptive equipment to easily get around the facility and participate in shooting sports activities.

The estimated budget includes:

Concrete - materials & heavy equipment	\$455,000.00
Total Project Budget	\$455,000.00
<b>Total Funding Requested from FWP</b>	<b>\$90,907.00</b>

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

Missoula County

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

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>	<u>Date Filed/#</u>
Construction Permit	N/A (not necessary for the purposes of this assessment)	
Sewer Permit		
Plumbing Permit		
Electrical Permit		
All associated inspections		

**Funding:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	\$90,907.00

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

The DCSC is a private range with an annual membership fee of \$75 for individuals and \$20 for each additional family member. The range is open to visitors at no charge during organized matches and public sight-in days. Members are welcome to bring guests at no charge. Several organizations use the range each year, including Big Sky Practical Shooters, Missoula Police Department, US Army ROTC, 4-H Shooting Program, Montana Department of Corrections, Boy Scouts, the Appleseed Project, US Marshall Service, FWP Wardens, FWP Hunters Education, Venery, Artemis/Montana Wildlife Federation, Missoula Speed Steel, Bob Wards and Sons and more. In addition, 20 events, sponsored by the WMFGA, are held at the range, as well as various shooting and gun safety classes.

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

Because the Western Montana Fish and Game Association 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:**

Annie Bahm, P.O. Box 4294, Missoula, MT 59806, (406) 214-7296.

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

The DCSC is a private, nonprofit shooting range. The closest shooting range providing similar shooting opportunities is located in Missoula, Montana, 35 miles from the Deer Creek Shooting Center.

Shooting range applications require the participating governing body to approve by resolution its submission of applications for shooting range-funding assistance. Resolution Date: January 12, 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 construct a new Youth Shooting Sports Complex, which will serve as a multi-use facility designated for youth shooting sports programs. 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, the WMFGA would likely move forward with the plans to build without the funding assistance from this grant.

#### **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 result in the range failing to fill a community need for a place for youth to practice shooting sports under safe and controlled conditions.

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 DCSC, and the addition of an indoor shooting facility catered to youth 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 likely result in the WMFGA moving forward with the plans to build, without the funding assistance from this grant. Potential negative consequences for the No Action Alternative include WMFGA not being able to garner the funds for this project, in which case 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. Neither the Proposed Alternative nor the No Action Alternative would have significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences.

**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.**

<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>			<b>8</b>
9. Historical & archaeological sites				<b>X</b>		<b>9</b>

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
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. The proposed project will occupy a somewhat significant area of the range, but due to prior land use, native vegetation has already 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 significant 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 area will be reseeded.

**8.** Temporary dust and vehicle emissions would be created by construction equipment during construction. However, the human effects will be limited due to the sparse population near the property.

**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, but due to the large scale of the project which will result in a new structure on the property, the proposed project will have a minor to significant 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		
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		

7. The proposed developments will increase accessibility to 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 WMFGA'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 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:**

- Annie Bahm, P.O. Box 4294, Missoula, MT 59806, (406) 214-7296.
- MT Fish Wildlife and Parks

**EA prepared by:**

Amanda Darling, Hamilton, MT 59840

**Date Completed:**

June 27, 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.