

Notice of Habitat Conservation Lease Proposal

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) is proposing a habitat conservation lease. Conservation leases are incentive-based, voluntary agreements offered by FWP to help conserve priority wildlife habitats on private lands while also supporting working agricultural lands and public hunting and recreation opportunity.

The basic intent of the Conservation Lease Program is to retain substantial blocks of high priority native or restored wildlife habitats while keeping working agricultural lands as working lands. There are five priority focal habitats that qualify for enrollment: sagebrush grasslands, mixed grasslands, intermountain grasslands, riparian/floodplain, and wetland-grassland complexes. The overarching goal of the Program is to enroll 500,000 acres over a 5-year timeframe.

Private landowners can enroll their land into a 30- or 40- year conservation lease in return for a one-time per-acre lease payment. Funding for the Program is generally derived from state hunting license fees and federal Pittman Robertson Wildlife Restoration funds.

For more information, please refer to the Habitat Conservation Lease Program web page:
<https://fwp.mt.gov/conservation/habitat/habitat-conservation/lease-program>

A programmatic environmental analysis (PEA) and supplemental environmental analysis (SEA) were completed by FWP at the start of the Habitat Conservation Lease Program. This Notice serves to 1) inform the public and adjacent landowners of a proposed habitat conservation lease, providing an opportunity for review and comment (as required by MCA 87-1-241) and 2) document if the programmatic environmental analysis is consistent with the circumstances of individual proposed conservation leases.

Proposed Lease Information:

Project Name: Gjerde Habitat Conservation Lease

Location of Property: Grass Range, Fergus County, Montana

Legal Description:

S15, T14 N, R24 E, SE/4NE/4, E/2SE/4

S13, T14 N, R24 E, S/2

S24, T14 N, R24 E, ALL

S22, T14 N, R24 E, E/2

S28, T14 N, R24 E, S/2NE/4, SE/4SW/4, SE/4

S35, T14 N, R24 E, SW/4NE/4, W/2, W/2SE/4

S04, T13 N, R24 E, S/2S/2

S26, T14 N, R24 E, ALL 1999 BADGER MOBILE HOME SET DOWN PERM

S02, T13 N, R24 E, LOTS 3, 4, SW/4NW/4

S25, T14 N, R24 E, ALL

S05, T13 N, R24 E, ACRES 40, NE4SE4

S34, T14 N, R24 E, ALL LESS COS 956

S33, T14 N, R24 E, NE4, E2NW4 LESS COS 956

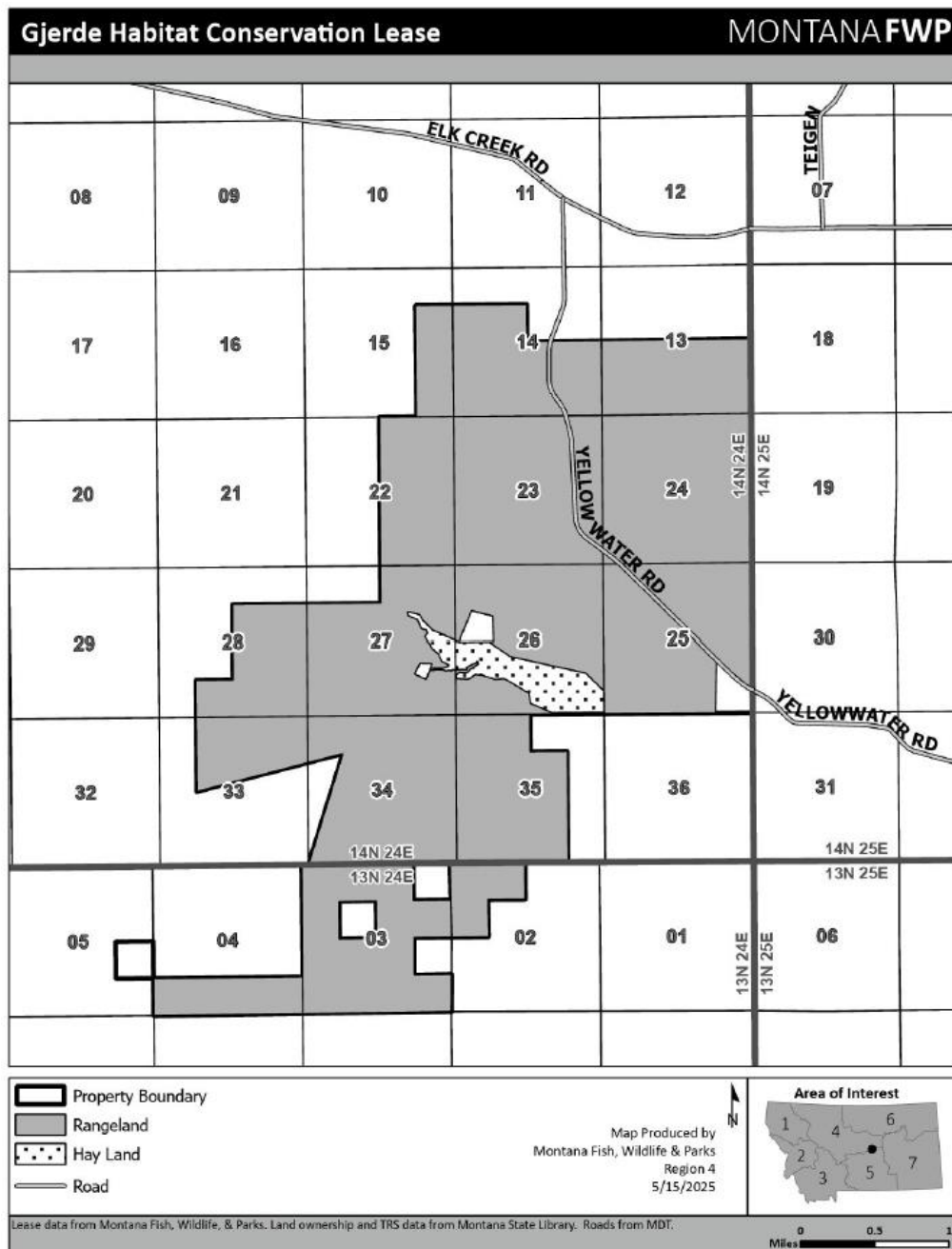
S14, T14 N, R24 E, S/2NW/4, S/2

S23, T14 N, R24 E, ALL

S27, T14 N, R24 E, S/2NW/4, NE/4, S/2

S03, T13 N, R24 E, LOTS 2, 3, 4, SW/4, W/2SE/4, SE/4SE/4, S/2NE/4, SW/4NW/4

Less and excepting therefrom the excluded areas shown on the following map.



Duration of Lease: 40 years

Approximate Acres Proposed To be Enrolled: 6,515

Approximate Acres of Priority Habitat: 5,052

Approximate Acres by Land Type:

Rangeland	6,335
Hay land	179
Total	6,514

Public Access details:

As part of this Habitat Conservation Lease, **Russell & Betty Gjerde** agrees to allow **208** recreation days to the public each year. At least **69** of those recreation days will be for hunting from September 1-January 1. **Russell & Betty Gjerde** may also choose to offer the **139** remaining recreation days for hunting during that time. **Russell & Betty Gjerde** will provide a contact name and phone number for the public to obtain permission for access.

Public comment period details:

Duration of Public Comment Period: The public comment period begins on the date of publication on the FWP website. Written or e-mailed comments will be accepted through the last day of the public comment period, as listed below:

Date Listed: May 20th, 2025

Length of Public Comment Period: **30 days**

Public Comment Period Begins: May 20th, 2025

Public Comment Period Ends: June 19th, 2025

Comments must be addressed to the FWP contact, as listed below.

Where to submit Comments on the Proposed lease:

Name: Esther Rodriguez Peterson

Email: erodriguezpeterson@mt.gov

Mailing Address:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

ATTN: Gjerde Habitat Conservation Lease

P.O. Box 938

Lewistown, MT 59457

Public Meeting Date: June 16th, 2025 at 6:00 PM MDT

Public Meeting Location: Wesley Room at the Petroleum County Community Center, Winnett, MT

Virtual Link: <https://mt-gov.zoom.us/j/84371931953?pwd=l8qqy4Zb4jqdQkZJ8DwHVrj1WDtTlv.1>

Checklist pertaining proposed habitat conservation lease:

Checklist	Yes	No*
Conservation lease is being made available to adjacent landowners for review and comment?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The habitat conservation lease meets the requirement of at least 50% Priority Habitat?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Landowner agrees to meet Conservation Requirements listed in PEA and as laid out in the standard lease agreement?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Landowner agrees to provide at least the minimum Public Access Requirement?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physical Environment impacts of this proposed habitat conservation lease, including to wildlife habitats and associated ecological functions for soil, water, and air are consistent with conclusions analyzed in the PEA (pages 18-20)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Environment impacts of this proposed habitat conservation lease, including to land uses, profitability, community, and public service are consistent with conclusions analyzed in the PEA (pages 20-23)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Impacts and anticipated benefits of this proposed habitat conservation lease are consistent with the Narrative Evaluation and Comment in the PEA (page 24).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*For any of the above criteria, if "No" was selected, provide explanation and additional information:
None.