



# Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

1400 South 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Bozeman, MT 59718

October 5, 2005

To: Governor's Office, Mike Volesky, State Capitol, Room 204, P.O. Box 200801, Helena, MT 59620-0801  
Environmental Quality Council, State Capitol, Room 106, P.O. Box 201704, Helena, MT 59620-1704  
Dept. of Environmental Quality, Metcalf Building, P.O. Box 200901, Helena, MT 59620-0901  
Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation, P.O. Box 201601, Helena, MT 59620-1601  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:

Director's Office	Parks Division	Lands Section	FWP Commissioners
Fisheries Division	Legal Unit	Wildlife Division	Design & Construction

MT Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, P.O. Box 201202, Helena, MT 59620-1202  
MT State Parks Association, P.O. Box 699, Billings, MT 59103  
MT State Library, 1515 E. Sixth Ave., P.O. Box 201800, Helena, MT 59620  
Silver Bow County Commissioners, 155 West Granite, Butte, MT 59701  
James Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, P.O. Box 1184, Helena, MT 59624  
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624  
George Ochenski, P.O. Box 689, Helena, MT 59624  
Jerry DiMarco, P.O. Box 1571, Bozeman, MT 59771  
Montana Wildlife Federation, P.O. Box 1175, Helena, MT 59624  
Wayne Hurst, P.O. Box 728, Libby, MT 59923  
Glenn Hockett, Gallatin Wildlife Association, 745 Doane Road, Bozeman, MT 59715  
Tom Sathers, Headwaters Fish & Game Association, P.O. Box 1941, Bozeman, MT 59771-1941  
John Gatchell, Montana Wilderness Association, P.O. Box 635, Helena, MT 59624  
William Fairhurst, Public Lands Access Association, P.O. Box 247, Three Forks, MT 59752  
Skyline Sportsman Association, P.O. Box 173, Butte, MT 59701  
Anaconda Sportsman Club, #2 Cherry, Anaconda, MT 59711  
State Land Coalition, Jack Atcheson President, 3210 Ottawa Street, Butte, MT 59701  
Bill Tash, 1200 Hwy 178, Dillon, MT 59725  
N. Clark Wheeler, P.O. Box 1053, Bozeman, MT 59715  
Steve Egeline, USDA Forest Service, 1820 Meadowlark Lane, Butte, MT 59701  
Bill Peterson, 1055 Durant Canyon Road, Opportunity, MT 59711  
Mrs. Juanita Periman, German Gulch Road, Opportunity, MT 59711  
Dori Skrukud, Community Development Office, 155 West Granite, Butte, MT 59701  
Carol Fox, Natural Resource Damage Program, PO Box 201425, Helena, MT 59620-1425  
Walter Johnston, 1604 German Gulch Road, Opportunity, MT 59711  
Percy and Mark Craddock, P.O. Box 26, Ramsay, MT 59748  
Kent and Belinda Fargher, P.O. Box 89, Ramsay, MT 59748  
BP-ARCO, Attn: Rob Jordan, 317 Anaconda Road, Butte, MT 59701  
Toby and Stacy Schelin, P.O. Box 46, Ramsay, MT 59748  
Irene, James and Sidney Atkins, P.O. Box 67, Ramsay, MT 59748  
Walter and Linda Erickson, 119490 German Gulch Road, Butte, MT 59701  
Ken, Joan and Kris Duhamel, 501 Browns Gulch, Butte, MT 59701

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The enclosed Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared for the proposed acquisition of the Duhamel property adjacent to the Mount Haggin Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The acquisition strategy is to have the Greenway Service District (GSD) acquire the Duhamel property with funding from the Natural

Resource Damage Program (NRDP). The Property would then be held in fee title by MFWP as an addition to Mount Haggin WMA and would be under the same management plan.

This Draft EA is available for review in Helena at FWP's Headquarters, the State Library, and the Environmental Quality Council. It also may be obtained from FWP at the address provided above, or viewed on FWP's Internet website: <http://www.fwp.mt.gov>.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks invites you to comment on the attached proposal. Public comment will be accepted until 5:00 p.m. on November 4, 2005. Comments should be sent to the following: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Mt.Haggin Acquisition Comments, 1820 Meadowlark Lane, Butte, MT 59701 or emailed to [vboccardori@mt.gov](mailto:vboccardori@mt.gov). (Please include Duhamer EA in the subject heading.)

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Flowers  
Region Three Supervisor  
Attachment

**Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
Wildlife Division**

**Draft Environmental Assessment**

**MOUNT HAGGIN WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA  
PROPOSED ACQUISITION**

**Incorporating:  
Duhome Properties**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

In the early 1990's, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) approached the Duhome family about either a conservation easement or fee title acquisition of 1,745 contiguous acres of their property that lie adjacent to the northeast corner of Mount Haggin and Fleecer Wildlife Management Areas (WMA). FWP was interested in acquiring this Property because it is intermountain grassland habitat that provides a variety of landscapes for critical winter range and year-round wildlife habitat. The Property contributes to the support of as many as 300 mule deer and over 330 elk that winter on and adjacent to the existing WMAs in the vicinity of the Property. At the time of these initial conversations the family was not in a position to consider either option.

In 2002, Warren and Kris Duhome, principals of the Duhome Brothers Limited Partnership, contacted the Greenway Service District (GSD) regarding the potential acquisition of these 1,745 acres in Butte-Silver Bow County. The GSD obtained a \$25,000 planning grant from the Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP) in 2003 to conduct the steps necessary for acquisition of the property in cooperation with FWP. In March 2003, the GSD applied to the NRDP for \$1,643,809 in grant funds to acquire the property and fund initial fencing, surveying, and weed control efforts. The Governor will make a decision on the funding of this project in December 2005.

The acquisition strategy is that once GSD acquires the Property with funding from NRDP, the Property will then be held in fee title by FWP as an addition to Mount Haggin WMA and will be under the same management plan.

**II. AUTHORITY AND DIRECTION**

FWP is authorized by statute (87-1-201) to protect, enhance and regulate the use of Montana's fish and wildlife resources for public benefit now and in the future. In 1987, the Montana Legislature passed HB526 that authorized the acquisition of wildlife habitat leases, conservation easements, and/or fee title acquisition (87-1-241 and 242). This is known as the Habitat Montana program, which was reauthorized permanently by the 2005 Legislature. In addition, ARM 12.9.511 requires that Habitat Montana acquisition procedures be applied to all wildlife acquisitions including "properties acquired in mitigation for habitat lost... ." The Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission and the Board of State Land Commissioners must approve this acquisition of land in accordance with MCA 87-1-209. This Environmental Assessment is part of the FWP decision-making process.

The project is subject to approval of the NRDP process including final recommendations by the Advisory Council and Trustee Restoration Council to Governor Schweitzer.

### III. LOCATION OF PROJECT and PHYSIOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The proposed Property is 1,745 acres located south of Durant Canyon along Silver Bow Creek (see maps Appendix I). It adjoins the Mount Haggin and Fleecer Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) on the west boundary and the west half of the south boundary. The east half of the south boundary borders one private landowner and a half-mile is common boundary with the Beaverhead - Deerlodge National Forest. The north boundary follows Silver Bow Creek. The east boundary borders a parcel of state land and a number of private landowners. Access to the Property is from adjoining public lands and from adjoining private land with landowner permission. Future access may also occur via the Silver Bow Creek Greenway. The property lies entirely within Butte-Silver Bow County.

The elevation ranges from 5,340 to 6,709 feet. The average annual maximum temperature is 57 degrees F, the average annual minimum temperature is 27 degrees and the average annual precipitation is 14 inches.

Legal description of the proposed project property:

Silver Bow County

Township 3 North, Range 9 West

All of the Warren Placer Mineral Survey, Mineral Survey No. 270, in Sections 16, 17, and 18 which lies south of the southern most railroad right-of-way boundary;

Section 17: All of Lots 12, 13, 14, 15, 22, 23, 24 and 25;

Section 18: All of Lots 2, 3 and 4 which lie south and west of the western most railroad right-of-way boundary of the Butte, Anaconda & Pacific Railroad right-of-way;  
All of Lot 7 which lies south and east of the southern most railroad right-of-way boundary of the Butte, Anaconda & Pacific Railroad right-of-way;

Section 19: Lots 1, 2, 3, 4 and NE1/4, E1/2W1/2, N1/2SE1/4, and the SE1/4SE1/4;

Section 20: Lots 1, 2, 3, 4 and S1/2N1/2;

Township 3 North, Range 10 West

Section 13: All of Lot 7 which lies south and east of the southern most railroad right-of-way boundary of the Butte, Anaconda & Pacific Railroad right-of-way;

All of Lots 8, 11, 12, 13, 14;

All of E1/2NE1/4 which lies south of the southern most railroad right-of-way boundary of the Butte, Anaconda & Pacific Railroad right-of-way;

All of the SW1/4NE1/4 which lies south of the southern most railroad right-of-way boundary of the Butte, Anaconda & Pacific Railroad right-of-way;

All of the SW1/4SW1/4, the E1/2SW1/4, and the SE1/4.

Total deeded = 1,744.58 acres

### IV. PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROJECT

The proposed Property is intermountain grassland habitat, consisting of two major vegetative types. Rabbitbrush/Rough fescue meadows make up about 60% of the Property. The other 40% is forested with a Douglas fir / Lodgepole pine type (78% Douglas fir, 22% Lodgepole pine). The western boundary and half

of the southern boundary of the Property are contiguous with FWP Mount Haggin and Fleecer Wildlife Management Areas (WMA).

Because the Property has alternately steep and gentle terrain with several aspects, it provides a variety of landscapes for critical winter range and year-round wildlife habitat. Shrublands, side hills and south-facing slopes provide year-round mule deer forage areas, while top slopes contain grassy meadows that provide winter-long elk forage. North-facing, forested slopes provide security in hiding cover and bedding areas for big game. Consequently, the Property contributes to the support of as many as 300 mule deer and over 330 elk that winter on and adjacent to the existing WMAs in the vicinity of the Property. Maps showing winter density surveys for both elk and mule deer depict high densities of these species on the Duhome Property (Appendix II). Moose, black bear, mountain lion, bobcat, coyote, fox, badger and mountain grouse use the Property, as do a diverse group of small mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles. A list of wildlife species potentially using this area is contained in Appendix III.

The Property directly adjoins the Silver Bow Creek Greenway Corridor and is in close proximity to German Gulch, home to a population of native westslope cutthroat trout. Public acquisition would complement restoration activities on German Gulch and the Silver Bow Creek Greenway.

The primary value of public ownership of the 1,745 acres of Duhome Property is inherent, derived from the quality of the resource itself. The main benefit of this acquisition results from the opportunities it will offer the public who are interested in a variety of outdoor recreation activities in a high-quality natural environment. The Property, which stretches about four miles along the southern side of Durant Canyon, is mid-way between Butte and Anaconda. The public from both communities and Montana as a whole will benefit from public ownership of the Property.

Major public benefits attributable to the project include:

- Public access to lands that provide an array of opportunities, including hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, hiking, bird watching, and other general recreational activities, sustained by access from adjoining public lands, the Silver Bow Creek Greenway and/or from adjoining private land with landowner permission;
- Establishing long-term maintenance and enhancement of existing wildlife habitat by conserving high quality forested wildlife habitat adjacent to FWP Mount Haggin and Fleecer WMAs;
- Reducing the burden on nearby landowners who suffer game damage from elk and deer feeding on haystacks and in fields where cattle are to be wintered. FWP will be able to minimize these burdens if FWP owns the Duhome Property and manages it as part of the Mount Haggin and Fleecer WMAs.
- Preserving options for management of the grassland and forested habitats that would be lost with residential development;
- Creating buffer lands to decrease conflicts between wildlife and developing suburban lands;
- Protecting the Durant Canyon area from potential detrimental impacts associated with the sale and residential development of the Property; and
- Preserving high quality open space areas and scenic views between Anaconda and Butte.

The Property is most worthy of public acquisition and conservation-oriented long-term management by FWP for the following reasons:

- ❖ The Property is of the intermountain grassland type, which is classified by Habitat Montana as an important and/or threatened habitat in Montana;

- ❖ The Property has unique characteristics to the ecological community (year-round mule deer range, critical elk winter range, connectivity that keeps large expanses of habitat intact);
- ❖ The Property has a probable threat status that the land is likely to change ownership, resulting in land uses that may conflict with the conservation of wildlife habitat; and
- ❖ The Property is adjacent to state land that is managed to meet FWP objectives.

## V. SCOPE FOR THE PROJECT

### **Conserve and enhance land, water, and wildlife:**

(1) The Property consists of 1,745 acres. It will be managed in perpetuity to enhance soils, water, vegetation, and wildlife species' habitat for the benefit of the general public as part of the larger Mount Haggin and Fleecer WMAs.

(2) This project involves the acquisition of unimpaired resources that are near the injured Silver Bow Creek floodplain corridor. While the project will not directly address restoration of wildlife habitat along Silver Bow Creek, the acquisition may enhance wildlife populations whose range might extend to the nearby-injured areas once the restoration of Silver Bow Creek is initiated along Durant Canyon in 2007.

(3) Acquisition of the Property will protect existing resources by preserving conservation-based habitat management options and practices along lands that drain into the Silver Bow Creek Corridor and German Gulch, in addition to providing a buffer of lands to decrease conflicts between wildlife and developing suburban lands to the east.

(4) The current condition of the habitat is fair to good. Portions of the Property have been utilized heavily by livestock and/or have had inadequate weed control in the past. Vegetation condition is better in more remote, steep areas.

(5) Wildlife species of major interest are: mule deer and elk. The Property, which has elevations varying from 5,300 to 6,700 feet, provides critical winter range for both species and year-round range for mule deer. Species that are seasonally on the Property and/or are not as abundant are moose, black bear, mountain lion, bobcat, coyote, fox, badger, mountain grouse, and a variety of non-game birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians.

### **Contribute to hunting opportunity:**

(1) This Property is accessible to the general public via foot travel from adjacent private lands with landowner permission and via the adjoining Fleecer and Mount Haggin WMAs.

(2) The harvest objective for elk and mule deer will be driven by the larger WMAs and hunting district-specific objectives. These species' populations, and their harvest, will be surveyed and monitored annually. Harvest objectives may be changed accordingly.

(3) Over time, as game populations respond to increased forage quantity and quality, hunting recreation should improve accordingly. Big game numbers will likely stabilize at some social threshold. Hunting recreation for big game species alone is anticipated to reach 400 hunter days per year on Mount Haggin and Fleecer WMAs combined.

**Contribute to non-hunting recreation:**

- (1) Hiking, picnicking, camping, bird watching, wildlife observing, horseback riding, and antler and flower picking will be available to the general public from May 15 through November 30.
- (2) The number of non-hunting recreation days provided is anticipated to be 200 days annually as on both Mount Haggin and Fleecer WMAs.

**Protect open space and scenic areas:**

The vegetation and topographic features on the Property provide diverse and unique examples of native habitats threatened by suburban homesite development. The lands due north of the Duhome Property have been divided into numerous smaller parcels that are likely to see development in the near future. While the Duhome family supports the public acquisition of their Property, there is the potential that the Property may be subdivided and developed if this acquisition does not go through. If acquired by FWP, the Property will remain accessible to the general recreating public at no additional cost.

**Maintain local tax base, while demonstrating productive wildlife habitat is compatible with agriculture and other land uses:**

- (1) The current annual tax revenue for the Property is \$800. If FWP were to acquire the Property, FWP would pay the same amount as would be generated under private ownership pursuant to MCA 87-1-603. Although this amount would be less than the tax revenue that would be likely under a development scenario, the cost of county services for a rural subdivision would exceed that required by FWP.
- (2) The primary goal for the Property will be to improve the condition and productivity of all vegetative plant communities reflected on FWP Mount Haggin and Fleecer WMAs. This will increase the carrying capacity for elk, mule deer, and livestock. Cattle grazing will be used as a tool to enhance the vegetation for wildlife.
- (3) Timber harvest on the Property may occur if such action would benefit wildlife.

**Other Management Implications:**

- (1) The subject Property has been managed as livestock grazing pasture. Initially, FWP will keep livestock off the Property to allow for recovery of the vegetation. After this recovery period, FWP will consider incorporating the Property into an existing grazing lease on the Mount Haggin WMA. This practice will supplement the local agricultural economy.
- (2) Several species of noxious weeds are found on the Property. FWP will endeavor to stop the spread and reduce the occurrence of noxious weeds by incorporating the Property into its active weed control program that exists on the adjacent WMAs. Biological and chemical treatments will be used.
- (3) A minimal increase in FWP manpower needs is expected relative to the Duhome acquisition and management of the proposed Property. Management practices will dovetail with the existing Mount Haggin and Fleecer WMAs. If NRDP funding is awarded, FWP will use part of the grant funds to make physical improvements within the first five years of acquisition, such as five miles of new fence and maintenance of existing fences. FWP often contracts with private local businesses for materials and labor when fencing or other on-ground improvements are necessary.

**VI. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT CHECKLIST**

Table 1. Potential impact on physical environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Potentially Significant	Moderate	Minor	None	Unk.	Comments Provided
1. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				X		
2. Terrestrial & aquatic life & habitats		X				X
3. Introduction of new species into an area				X		
4. Vegetation cover, quantity, & quality		X				X
5. Water quality, quantity, & distribution		X				X
6. Existing water right or reservation				X		
7. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture		X				X
8. Air quality				X		
9. Historical & archaeological sites				X		
10. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
11. Aesthetics		X				X

**VII. EXPLANATION OF IMPACTS TO THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

TERRESTRIAL AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS

Positive impacts to elk, mule deer, other native species' habitats and aquatic habitats will occur as a result of management emphasis directed to improve vegetation communities for the benefit of mule deer and elk. This project will conserve multiple resources such as forested and grassland habitat that support ungulate populations as well as provide a continuous connecting habitat protected area with the bordering FWP Mount Haggin and Fleecer WMAs. Additionally, this project will provide a positive and major impact to the broader ecosystem since it is aimed at further protecting the lands surrounding Silver Bow Creek, which are the headwaters of the Upper Clark Fork River Basin.

**VEGETATION COVER, QUALITY, AND QUANTITY**

Portions of the Property have been heavily grazed by livestock and infested with weeds, and the native vegetation communities have been negatively impacted. Positive impacts to elk, mule deer, other native species' habitats and aquatic habitats will occur as a result of management emphasis directed to improve vegetation communities for the benefit of mule deer and elk. Such efforts will include, but are not limited to, livestock grazing treatments and both chemical and biological control of weeds.

**WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY, AND DISTRIBUTION**

Water quality and quantity will improve with controlled livestock grazing that leaves more residual cover in the uplands and riparian areas. Site-specific water impoundments may receive additional fenced protection from livestock use.

A restrictive covenant or “non build” easement exists on the portion of the property stretching along Silver Bow creek in the Durant canyon viewshed, consisting of about 270 acres, or about 15% of the entire parcel. The covenant does not allow residential development or other building in the area and restricts the uses of the area to agricultural uses. While it thus provides for protection of the areas closest to the floodplain, the majority of the property does not have such protection.

This project will conserve the entire property and the existing resources by controlling potentially detrimental land use practices along lands that drain into the Silver Bow Creek Corridor and German Gulch. Additionally, acquisition of this Property would complement restoration activities on German Gulch and the Silver Bow Creek Greenway.

**GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY, AND MOISTURE**

Positive impacts to soil conditions will occur due to increased forage remaining following grazing treatments. Increased amounts of residual vegetation over the entire area will improve soil fertility, quality, stability, and moisture retention.

**AESTHETICS**

Improvement of the visual quality of the area will occur as a result of improved vegetative composition, quantity, and quality.

**VIII. HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST**

Table 2. Potential impacts on human environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Potentially Significant	Moderate	Minor	None	Unk.	Comments Provided
1. Social structures and cultural diversity				X		
2. Changes in existing public benefits provided by wildlife populations and/or habitat		X				X
3. Local and state tax base and tax revenue			X			X

4. Agricultural production			X			X
5. Human health			X			X
6. Quantity and distribution of community and personal income				X		
7. Access to and quality of recreational activities		X				X
8. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals (ordinances)				X		
9. Distribution and density of population and housing				X		
10. Demands for government services			X			
11. Industrial and/or commercial activity				X		

**IX. EXPLANATION OF IMPACTS TO THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

**CHANGES IN PUBLIC BENEFITS PROVIDED BY WILDLIFE AND HABITAT**

This project will have a positive impact on public benefits provided by wildlife and habitat. FWP will employ a management emphasis that will be directed toward improving vegetation communities for the benefit of mule deer and elk. Ultimately, this should lead to an increase in local populations of both species and therefore an increase in hunting opportunities for the public.

**LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUE**

FWP will make annual tax payments to Silver Bow County in a sum equal to the amount of taxes which would be payable on county assessment of the Property were it taxable to a private citizen (MCA 87-1-603). Having the Property open to public recreation will increase income to local merchants and businesses. Cumulatively, this will be a minor positive effect on tax revenues.

**AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION**

The anticipated improvement in range condition and production will allow continued livestock production while simultaneously improving wildlife production.

Timber harvest may occur on the property if such action would benefit wildlife. Impacts to local economy as a result of changes in timber management from the present landowners to public ownership are unknown at this time.

## HUMAN HEALTH

A small portion (3-4 acres) of the property has contaminated tailings that will be removed by Montana Department of Environmental Quality as part of the Silver Bow Creek remediation anticipated to occur in 2007.

## ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Improved recreational opportunities will occur as a result of public ownership of the project area that will ensure permanent public access. This land was previously not open to the public and public ownership will ensure access from nearby public lands via foot travel only since no existing roads go directly to the Property. The planned measures such as weed control and conservation-oriented management by FWP will mitigate any negative impacts from increased public access.

## DEMANDS FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES

This project will have a minor impact on demands for government services since it will increase land under FWP ownership and management. The impact will be minimal since management of this Property will be incorporated into the overall management of the Mount Haggin and Fleecer WMAs. Additionally, the demand for local government services would likely be less under FWP ownership than under a development scenario.

## **X. DISCUSSION AND EVALUATION OF REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES**

### **1. No Action Alternative:**

The "No Action" alternative would not preserve or enhance the wildlife and wildlife habitats on the Property for perpetuity. The "No Action" would not preserve or enhance the general public's recreational opportunities in perpetuity. The "No Action" alternative would leave the Property in private ownership, which would most likely result in private land ownership that would not accommodate public recreational uses and likely be subdivided and developed. Also, by not securing a purchase of this land, coordination with FWP management strategies with the surrounding game range would be lost.

### **2. Conservation Easement Alternative:**

The Greenway Service District considered this alternative, but this option was not acceptable to the landowner.

### **3. Fee Title Acquisition Alternative: (Preferred Alternative)**

The Greenway Service District desires to transfer fee title and management of the property to FWP. The "Preferred" alternative would grant this transfer, and the property would be incorporated into the existing Fleecer and Mount Haggin WMAs. It would be managed for wildlife with an emphasis on big game winter range and both hunting and non-hunting opportunities. This alternative also meets important habitat objectives of FWP.

## **XI. EVALUATION OF NEED FOR AN EIS**

Based on the environmental assessment (EA), there will not be any significant negative impacts from the proposed action. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required and an EA is the appropriate level of review. The overall impact from the successful completion of the proposed action would provide substantial long-term benefits to both the physical and human environment.

## **XII. SCHEDULED PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

A public comment period will begin 6 October 2005 and end **4 November 2005**. Duration of the comment period for the Draft Environmental Assessment is 30 days. A public hearing is not scheduled. Written comment should be delivered to the following:

Vanna Boccadori, Wildlife Biologist  
Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks  
1820 Meadowlark Lane  
Butte, MT 59701

Or

Email: [vboccadori@mt.gov](mailto:vboccadori@mt.gov) (Please include "Duhamé EA" in the subject heading.)

In addition to the above-comment period, several opportunities for public comment on the funding of this acquisition have been provided under the NRDP grant process. They include the opportunity for public comment provided at the April, July and August 2005 meetings of the Upper Clark Fork River Basin Remediation and Restoration Education Advisory Council and the August meeting of the Trustee Restoration Council, a public comment period from September 7, 2005 to October 7, 2005, and a public hearing on October 7, 2005. An opportunity for additional comment will occur at the November meetings of the Advisory Council and Trustee Restoration Council.

### **XIII. Individuals or groups contributing to, or commenting on, this EA:**

#### **EA prepared by:**

Vanna Boccadori, Wildlife Biologist, Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks, 1820 Meadowlark Lane, Butte, MT 59701; phone (406) 494-2082; email [vboccadori@mt.gov](mailto:vboccadori@mt.gov).

Kriss Douglass, Wildlife Technician, Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks, 1820 Meadowlark Lane, Butte, MT 59701; phone (406) 494-2082; email [kdouglass@mt.gov](mailto:kdouglass@mt.gov).

The above two people were primarily involved with writing initial drafts and assimilating information into a final draft. This draft E.A. was prepared with an interdisciplinary approach.

Those involved in providing pertinent information and editing included:

Pat Flowers, FWP Region Three Supervisor; Kurt Alt, FWP Region Three Wildlife Manager; Carol Fox, Program Chief, Natural Resource Damage Program; Greg Mullen, Environmental Scientist, Natural Resource Damage Program; Dori Skrukud, Director, Greenway Service District; Gina Biere, FWP Region Three Office Manager; Don Childress, FWP Wildlife Division Administrator; Steve Knapp, FWP Habitat Bureau Chief; Brandi Fisher, FWP Legal Counsel; Debbie Dils, FWP Lands Section Supervisor; Hugh Zackheim, FWP Land Agent; Craig Fager, FWP Region Three Wildlife Biologist; Fred King, FWP Region Three Game Range Manager.

Information and text was used from the following documents:

Greenway Service District, 2005. Duhamé Property Grant Application, UCFRB Restoration Grants Program, 2005 Grant Cycle, March 2005.

Natural Resource Damage Program, 2005. 2005 Pre-Draft UCFRB Restoration Work Plan, August 2005.

#### **Date Completed:**

Expected date of completion for the Final E.A. is 11/9/05.

# APPENDIX I

Figure 1. Duham Property proposed acquisition.

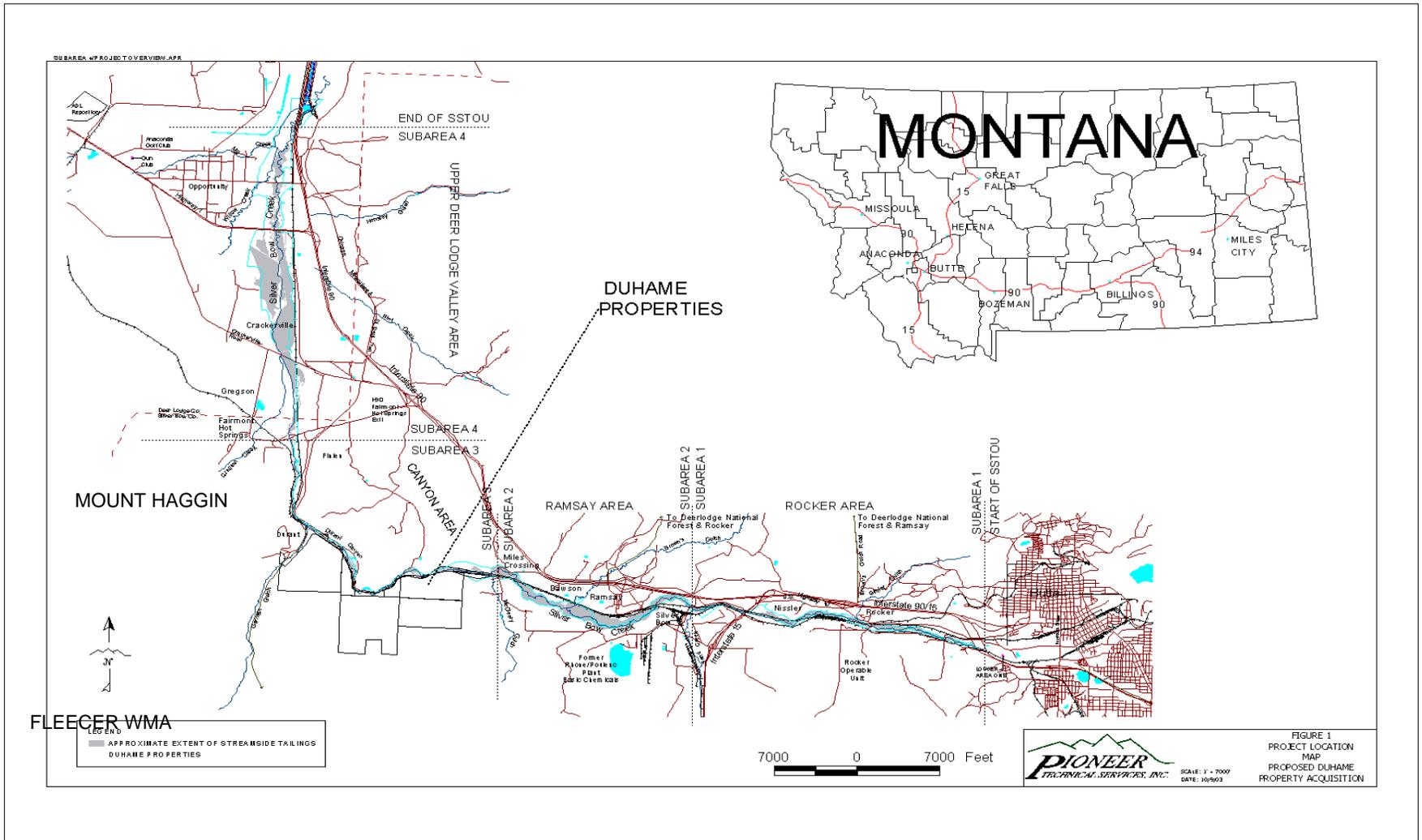
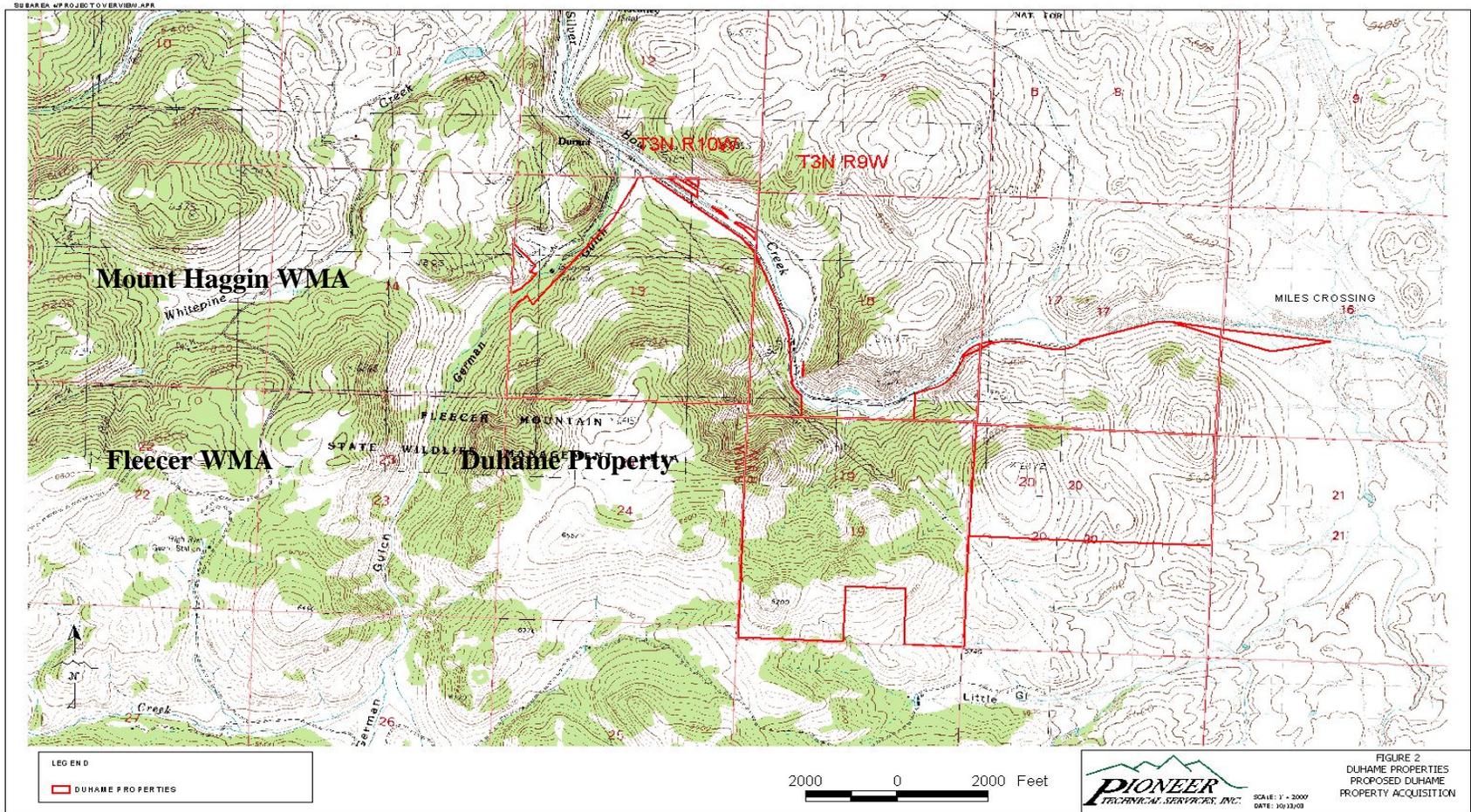


Figure 2. Local proximity map for Mount Haggin and Fleecer WMAs and the Duhame Property.



## APPENDIX II

Figure 1. Elk winter population density in the Silver Bow Creek area.

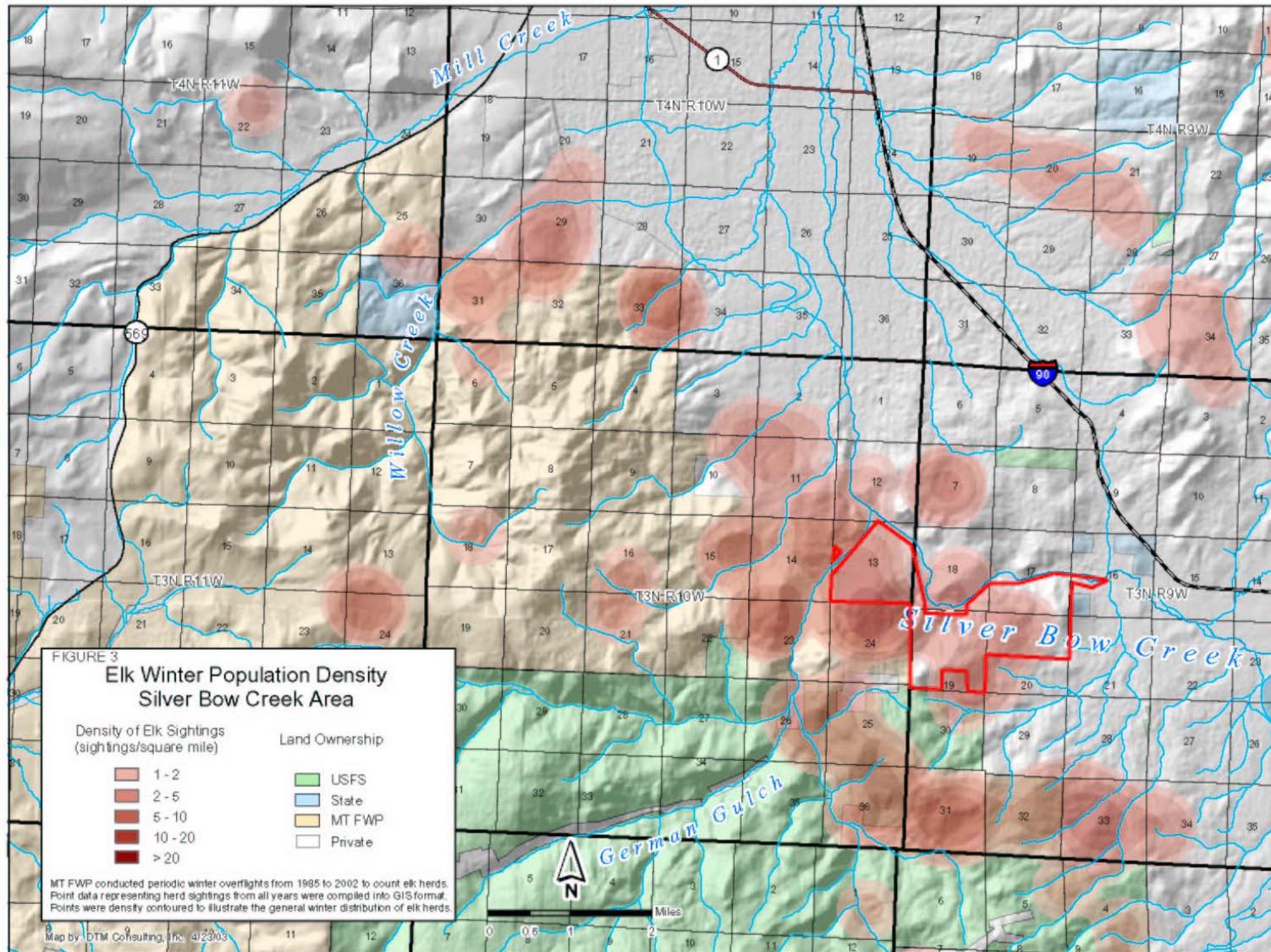
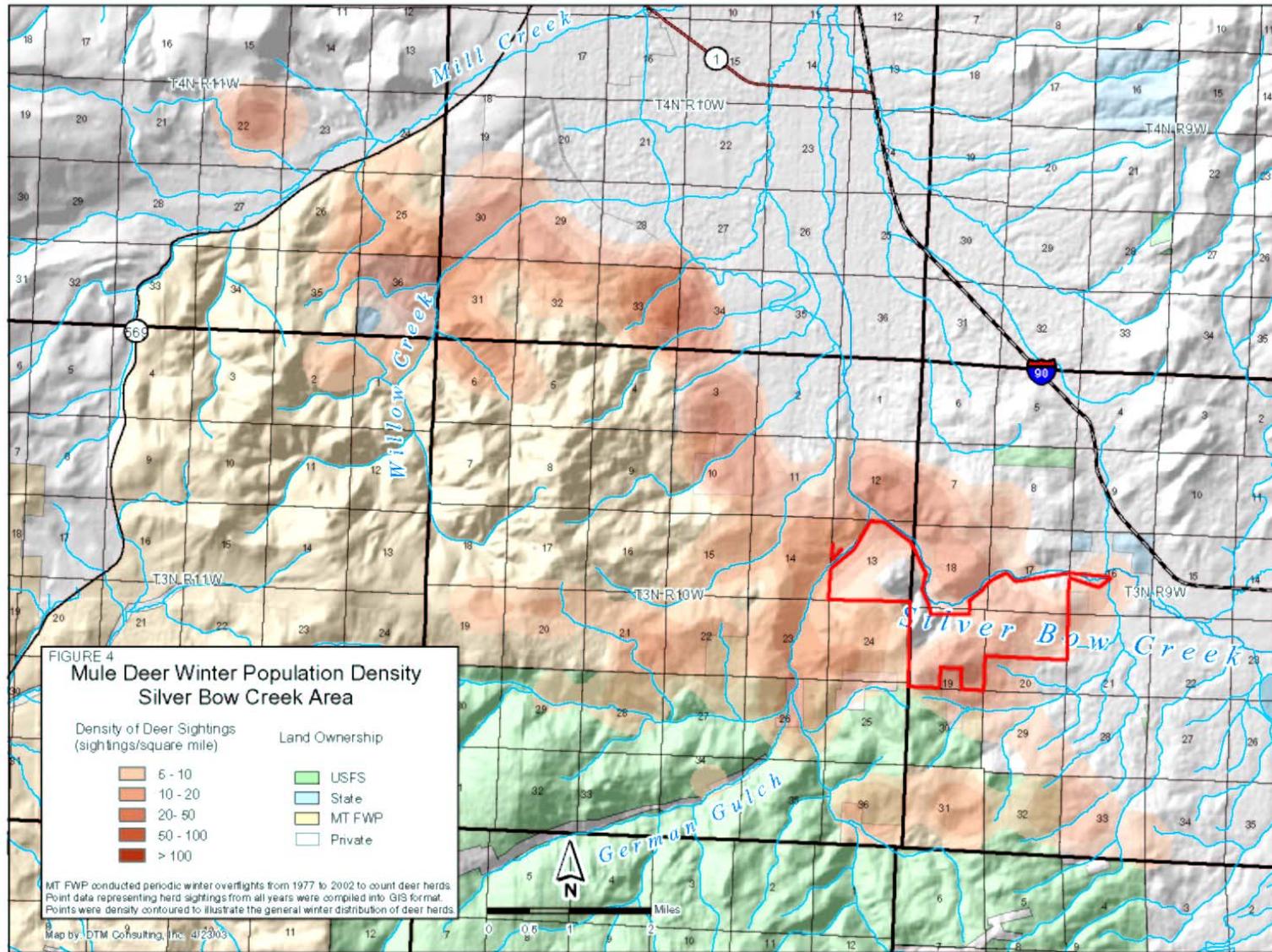


Figure 2. Mule deer winter population density in the Silver Bow Creek area.



### APPENDIX III

Species listed below occur on the Mount Haggin Wildlife Management Area, to include the Duhamel Property:

#### UNGULATES

Rocky Mountain Elk	Whitetail Deer
Moose	Antelope
Mule Deer	

#### CARNIVORES/FURBEARERS/PREDATORS

Black Bear	Marten	Long-Tailed	Raccoon
Mountain Lion	Wolverine	Weasel	Striped Skunk
Bobcat	Fisher	Least Weasel	Badger
Coyote	Mink	Short-tailed	
Red Fox	Grey Wolf	Weasel	
Canada Lynx		Beaver	

#### NON-GAME

Porcupine	Golden Mantle Ground	Water Shrew
Deer Mice	Squirrel	Common Shrew
Meadow Vole	Columbian Ground	Montane Shrew
Montane Vole	Squirrel	
Red Backed Vole	Red Squirrel	Yellow Bellied Marmot
Bog Lemming	Flying Squirrel	Pika
Heather Vole	Bushy-tailed Woodrat	Snowshoe Hare
Jumping Mice		Mountain Cottontail
Yellow Pine Chipmunk	<i>Sorex vagrans</i>	
Pocket Gopher	Long-tailed Shrew	

#### BATS

Little Brown Bat	Least Bat
Yuma Bat	Long-eared Bat

#### UPLAND GAME BIRDS

Blue Grouse	Spruce Grouse
Ruffed Grouse	Hungarian Partridge

#### MIGRATORY WATERFOWL

Sandhill Crane	Widgeon
Blue Winged Teal	Gadwall
Cinnamon Teal	Mallard

**Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
Wildlife Division**

## **Draft Management Plan**

**Duham Property Proposed Acquisition  
Incorporating Into Management Of:**

**MOUNT HAGGIN WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA**

### **I. INTRODUCTION.**

The Property consists of 1,745 acres. It will be managed in perpetuity to enhance soils, water, vegetation, and wildlife species' habitat for the benefit of the general public as part of the larger Mount Haggin and Fleecer Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs).

This project involves the acquisition of unimpaired resources that are near the injured Silver Bow Creek floodplain corridor. While the project will not directly address restoration of wildlife habitat along Silver Bow Creek, the acquisition may enhance wildlife populations whose range might extend to the nearby-injured areas once the restoration of Silver Bow Creek is initiated along Durant Canyon in 2007.

Acquisition of the Property will protect existing resources by preserving conservation-based habitat management options and practices along lands that drain into the Silver Bow Creek Corridor and German Gulch.

The current condition of the habitat is fair to good. Portions of the Property have had inadequate weed control in the past. Vegetation condition is better in more remote, steep areas.

Because the Duham Property borders both the Mount Haggin and Fleecer WMAs, its management will be incorporated into the existing and on going management of the adjacent FWP lands. Both WMA's have existing management plans and the proposed management and monitoring of Duham property as outlined below is consistent with these plans.

The proposed Property is intermountain grassland habitat, consisting of two major vegetative types. Rabbitbrush/Rough fescue meadows make up about 60% of the Property. The other 40% is forested with a Douglas fir / Lodgepole pine type (78% Douglas fir, 22% Lodgepole pine). The western boundary and half of the southern boundary of the Property are contiguous with FWP's Mount Haggin and Fleecer WMAs.

Because the Property has alternately steep and gentle terrain with several aspects, it provides a variety of landscapes for critical winter range and year-round wildlife habitat. Shrublands, side hills and south-facing slopes provide year-round mule deer forage areas, while top slopes contain grassy meadows that provide winter-long elk forage. North-facing, forested slopes provide security in hiding cover and bedding areas for big game. Consequently, the Property contributes to the support of as many as 300 mule deer and over 330 elk that winter on and adjacent to the existing WMAs in the vicinity of the Property. Maps showing winter density

surveys for both elk and mule deer depict high densities of these species on the Duhome Property (Appendix II, Draft EA). Moose, black bear, mountain lion, bobcat, coyote, fox, badger and mountain grouse use the Property, as do a diverse group of small mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles. A list of wildlife species potentially using this area is contained in Appendix III, Draft EA).

The Property directly adjoins the Silver Bow Creek Greenway Corridor and is in close proximity to German Gulch, home to a population of native westslope cutthroat trout. FWP management will complement restoration activities on German Gulch and the Silver Bow Creek Greenway.

The primary value of public ownership of the 1,745 acres of Duhome Property is inherent, derived from the quality of the resource itself. The main benefit of this acquisition results from the opportunities it will offer the public who are interested in a variety of outdoor recreation activities in a high-quality natural environment. The Property, which stretches about four miles along the southern side of Durant Canyon, is mid-way between Butte and Anaconda. The public from both communities and Montana as a whole will benefit from FWP management of the Property.

## **II GOAL.**

Conserve, protect and enhance in perpetuity the wildlife habitat and agricultural values of the Duhome property, while providing public recreational opportunities with hunting as a primary management tool.

### **1. STRATEGIES FOR MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING OF WILDLIFE HABITAT.**

Grass/shrub habitat:

Initially, FWP will keep livestock off the Property to allow time both for vegetative rest and to develop and implement grazing approaches that could be incorporated into existing grazing leases on the Mount Haggin WMA.

Livestock management tool:

One of the objectives for the Property will be to improve the condition and productivity of all vegetative plant communities reflected on FWP's Mount Haggin and Fleecer WMAs. Cattle grazing (as applied on the Mount Haggin WMA and following FWP's minimums for rest) will be considered an important tool to enhance the soil and vegetative resource for wildlife. The application of properly designed grazing prescriptions could increase the carrying capacity for elk, mule deer, and meet other soil/vegetative objectives.

Physical improvements:

Management practices will dovetail with the existing Mount Haggin and Fleecer WMAs. If NRDP funding is awarded, FWP will use part of the grant funds to make physical improvements within the first five years of acquisition, such as five miles of new fence and maintenance of existing fences.

Weeds:

Several species of noxious weeds are found on the Property. FWP will actively address the spread and reduce the occurrence of noxious weeds by incorporating the Property into its active weed control program that exists on the adjacent WMAs. Biological and chemical treatments will be used.

Silviculture:

Timber harvest on the Property may occur if such action would benefit wildlife.

Monitoring:

Permanent photo plots will be established prior to any vegetation management to monitor ecological conditions over time. If grazing is implemented, these photo plots will be established and run in relation to livestock movement patterns within the grazing system.

In addition, at least one permanent soil/vegetation transect will be established to monitor ecological trend in accordance with techniques established by FWP's plant ecologist.

## **2. STRATEGIES FOR MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING OF WILDLIFE POPULATIONS.**

Wildlife species of major interest are: mule deer and elk. The Property, which has elevations varying from 5,300 to 6,700 feet, provides critical winter range for both species and year-round range for mule deer. Species that are seasonally on the Property and/or are not as abundant are moose, black bear, mountain lion, bobcat, coyote, fox, badger, mountain grouse, and a variety of non-game birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians.

This area will be open to public hunting during all of FWP's established hunting seasons. Population objectives for elk and mule deer will be driven by the larger WMAs and hunting district-specific objectives.

This property is located in deer and elk Hunting District 341, within the Fleecer Elk Management Unit. Hunting seasons for both mule deer and elk will be directed by the statewide deer (Adaptive Harvest Management Plan) and elk plans.

These species' populations, and their harvest, will be surveyed and monitored annually. Harvest objectives may be changed accordingly as directed by the statewide management plans.

## **3. STRATEGIES FOR MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING OF HUNTER/RECREATIONAL ACCESS.**

This Property is accessible to the general public via foot travel from adjacent private lands with landowner permission and via the adjoining Fleecer and Mount Haggin WMAs.

Over time, as game populations respond to increased forage quantity and quality, hunting recreation should improve accordingly. Big game numbers will likely stabilize at some social threshold. Hunting recreation for big game species alone is anticipated to reach 400 hunter days per year on Mount Haggin and Fleecer WMAs combined.

Hiking, picnicking, camping, bird watching, wildlife observing, horseback riding, and antler and flower picking will be available to the general public from May 15 through November 30.

The number of non-hunting recreation days provided is anticipated to be 200 days annually as on both Mount Haggin and Fleecer WMAs.

**DUHAME PROPERTIES**  
**FEE TITLE ACQUISITION**  
**SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT**

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS

Prepared by:  
Rob Brooks  
September, 2005

## I. INTRODUCTION

House Bill 526, passed by the 1987 Legislature (MCA 87-1-241 and MCA 87-1-242), authorizes Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) to acquire an interest in land for the purpose of protecting and improving wildlife habitat. These acquisitions can be through fee title, conservation easements, or leasing. In 1989, the Montana legislature passed House Bill 720 requiring that a socioeconomic assessment be completed when wildlife habitat is acquired using Habitat Montana monies. These assessments evaluate the significant social and economic impacts of the purchase on local governments, employment, schools, and impacts on local businesses.

This socioeconomic evaluation addresses the fee title transfer of the Duhamé Brothers Limited Partnership property to FWP using funding provided by the Montana Department of Justice Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP) through a proposed project sponsored by the Greenway Service District. The report addresses the physical and institutional setting as well as the social and economic impacts associated with the proposed fee title acquisition.

## II. PHYSICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

### A. Property Description

The Duhamé property is located between Butte and Anaconda, Mt. in Butte – Silver Bow County. The property is adjacent to the Mt. Haggin and Fleecer Wildlife Management Areas and encompasses 1745 acres. A detailed description of this property is included in the environmental assessment (EA).

### B. Habitat and Wildlife Populations

This 1745-acre parcel is mainly intermountain grasslands, a habitat type identified as important in Habitat Montana's classification. This property provides important habitat for a large number of wildlife species both seasonally and year-round. The EA provides a list of the species that utilize this land.

### C. Current Use

The Duhamé property is predominately intermountain grassland and provides for cattle grazing. While there is some timber on the property there has not been any current commercial timber activities.

### D. Management Alternatives

- 1) Purchase the property fee using NRDP funds.
- 2) No purchase

## **MFWP Fee Title Purchase**

The intent of the Duhamel land purchase is to protect and enhance the intermountain grassland habitat, enhance the overall integrity of the Mt. Haggin and Fleecer WMA's and potentially reduce wildlife conflicts with landowners to the east of these lands.

## **No Purchase Alternative**

The no purchase alternative requires some assumptions since use and management of the property will vary depending on what future owners decide to do with the property. There is potential for subdivision of this land which would impact the habitat, access opportunities for the public, and the adjacent Wildlife Management Areas.

## **III. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS**

Section II identified the management alternatives this report addresses. The fee title purchase will provide long term protection of important wildlife habitat and consistent management of this land. Section III quantifies the social and economic consequences of the two management alternatives following two basic accounting stances: financial and local area impacts.

Financial impacts address the cost of the fee title transfer to MFWP and discuss the impacts on tax revenues to local government agencies including school districts.

Expenditure data associated with the use of the property provides information for analyzing the impacts these expenditures may have on local businesses (i.e. income and employment).

### **A. Financial Impacts**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks will acquire fee title to this property with funding provided by the Natural Resource Damage Program. These lands will be managed as part of the Mt Haggin and Fleecer WMA's, however the management costs have not been estimated.

The financial impacts to local governments are the potential changes in tax revenues resulting from the fee title purchase. The sale of this land and subsequent title transfer to MFWP will not change the tax revenues that Butte-Silver Bow County currently collects on this property. MFWP is required by Montana Code 87-1-603 to pay "to the county a sum equal to the amount of taxes which would be payable on county assessment of the property were it taxable to a private citizen." Current taxes on this land amount to approximately \$800.00.

### **B. Economic Impacts**

There will not be any significant financial impacts to local businesses associated with the fee title purchase of this land and subsequent ownership by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Grazing will be done in a manner that enhances the habitat for wildlife and any timber harvest that occurs will also be done in a manner that improves the habitat for wildlife.

## **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

The fee title purchase and title transfer to Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks will provide long term protection for wildlife habitat, maintain the open space integrity of the land, enhance public recreation opportunities and simplify management on the Mt. Haggin and Fleecer Mountain WMA's.

The fee title purchase and title transfer to MFWP will not cause a reduction in tax revenues on this property from their current levels to Butte Silver Bow County under Montana Code 87-1-603. Overall financial impacts to local business will be minimal in terms of the agricultural and timber activities. Recreational opportunities will be enhanced resulting in small yet positive impacts for local businesses that service recreationists.