

DNR - LAND USE PERMITS SECTION

## CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

<b>Project Name:</b>	Miner Lake Road Snowmobile Parking Area
<b>Proposed Implementation Date:</b>	December 200 <del>6</del> <sup>5</sup>
<b>Proponent:</b>	Big Hole Snowmobile Club
<b>Location:</b>	SE ¼, SE ¼, SE ¼, Section 36, Township 5 South, Range 16 West
<b>County:</b>	Beaverhead

### I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The proponent has requested the DNRC to issue a Land Use License for a 300-foot by 300-foot (approximately 2 acres) portion of School Trust land for a parking area for snowmobile users.

### II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

**1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:**  
*Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.*

Dillon Unit Fire Supervisor Donald Copple, Fire Team Leader Lee Hahnkamp, Dillon Unit Forester Chuck Barone, and Dillon Unit Manager Richard Moore conducted a field review in November 2005. Scoping notices were sent to lessees, adjacent landowners, DNRC Archaeologist Patrick Rennie, Montana Natural Heritage Program, USFS, Wisdom R.D, and the BLM, Dillon Field Office.

**2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:**

None

**3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:**

No Action Alternative: A Land Use License would not be granted. Current recreational use, grazing leasing, and wildland fire suppression activities would continue.

Action Alternative: A Land Use License would be granted to the Big Hole Snowmobile Club.

**RECEIVED**

MAR 08 2006

LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL  
POLICY OFFICE

### III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES* potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.
- Explain *POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS* following each resource heading.
- Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.

#### 4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

*Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.*

Slopes in the proposed project area are less than 1%. No soil erosion effects are expected. Use of the parking area will be limited to the winter months when the ground is covered with snow. Soil compaction and rutting may occur when thawing conditions are present. Motorized vehicle traffic will be limited to the parking area, and Miner Lake road. All other roads in this section are signed and closed to motorized vehicle traffic. Big Hole Snowmobile Club would repair any rutting, or other soil damage, at the end of each snowmobile season. The club shall also seed the parking area with native grass seed after use.

#### 5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

*Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.*

None.

#### 6. AIR QUALITY:

*What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.*

Some particulates would be produced by snowmobile exhaust. Minimal impact is expected due to this project.

#### 7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

*What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.*

Due to the flat terrain and lack of vehicle-limiting vegetation within the proposed project area, the potential for vehicles and ATVs leaving the existing roads and utilizing cross-country travel exist. Rutting and soil compaction may occur during thawing conditions. This activity could reduce the vegetative cover in the proposed project area and increase the likelihood of introducing noxious weeds to the area. Motorized vehicles potentially carrying noxious weed seed from other locations would also increase the likelihood of noxious weeds being introduced into the proposed project area. Minimal impacts are anticipated. Appropriate signing could minimize any impacts. The Big Hole Snowmobile Club would seed the parking area with native grasses in the spring; the club would also spray the parking area for noxious weeds after each season of use.

#### 8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

*Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.*

A variety of big game, small mammals, raptors, songbirds, and grouse use this area. Increased motorized travel in the proposed project area may alter wildlife movement and patterns. No significant impacts are anticipated. No fisheries are present within the proposed project area. Montana arctic grayling do inhabit Miner Creek, which is located approximately one mile from the proposed project area. No impacts are expected to occur to the stream as a result of the project.

**9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:**

*Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.*

The Montana Natural Heritage Program identified lynx, a federally listed threatened animal, west of the proposed project area in the Beaverhead Mountain Range. East of the Continental Divide lynx occur at higher elevations (5,413 to 7,874 feet) and in habitats mostly composed of sub alpine fir. Secondary habitat is intermixed Engelmann spruce and Douglas-fir where lodgepole pine is a major seral species (Reudiger et al. 2000). This type of habitat exists approximately ¾ of a mile to the west of the proposed project area. The proposed project would be in mixed sagebrush and grass, therefore, no impact to lynx habitat is expected as a result. The MNHP also identified two species of concern near the project area. Lemhi Beardtongue has been identified approximately 1 mile to the southwest of the project area, and Miner Creek (1 mile west) is identified as an Arctic Grayling stream. The proposed area will be primarily be used during snowy and frozen conditions. No impacts to either sensitive species are expected as a result of the proposed project.

**10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:**

*Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.*

No cultural resources have been identified in the project area. The DNRC archaeologist recommends no additional archaeological investigative work provided all project activities remain within the current area. No significant impacts are anticipated.

**11. AESTHETICS:**

*Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.*

The proposed project area is not visible to any populated areas. Due to the location and nature of the proposed project, aesthetics should not be adversely affected.

**12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:**

*Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.*

None.

**13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:**

*List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.*

The Dillon Unit conducted a DNRC range evaluation in 2003 on Section 36-T5S-R16W. An EAC was completed for the Miner Creek Post and Rail harvest in 1996 and EAC was completed for the Roberts Post and Rail Timber Permit in 2005. Numerous small timber sale permits have been granted since 1982. Beaverhead County has Right-of-Way for the county road along the southern edge of the section. Currently Section 36-T5S-R16W is leased for grazing by Thomas and David Mitchell of Dillon, MT.

#### IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES* potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.
- Explain **POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS** following each resource heading.
- Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.

#### 14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

*Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.*

The Big Hole Snowmobile Club would be responsible for any signing to slow traffic for public safety. No known health concerns exist.

#### 15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

*Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.*

Currently Section 36-T5S-R16W is leased for grazing by Thomas and David Mitchell of Dillon, MT. Production of the area is 137 AUMs. Reduction of grazing acreage on the two acre proposed parking area could affect AUMs, however, impact is predicted to be for a short time period, and minimal. The Big Hole Snowmobile Club will seed the parking area with native grass to reduce any potential impacts to grazing.

#### 16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

*Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.*

None.

#### 17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

*Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.*

None.

#### 18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

*Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services.*

Beaverhead County road department would include plowing the parking area with plowing the Miner Lake Road. No likely cumulative effects will occur as a result.

#### 19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

*List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.*

The DNRC Administrative Rules for State Land Leasing ARM 36.25.101 through 36.25.141

#### 20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

*Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.*

The main purpose of this project is to provide access to US Forest Service snowmobile trails. Some snowmobile riding would likely occur illegally within Section 36. The area may see more snowmobile traffic due to this parking area.

**21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:**

*Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.*

None.

**22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:**

*Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.*

None.

**23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:**

*How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?*

None.

**24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:**

*Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.*

The proposed action has provided \$25 via a Land Use License application fee and would provide \$100 annual revenue to the Trust over the course of the 10-year Land Use License. Existing grazing lease in Section 36 would continue to provide \$909.68 annual revenue to the Trust (2005 rates).

<b>EA Checklist Prepared By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Donald E. Copple	<b>Date:</b> November 16, 2005
	<b>Title:</b> Dillon Unit Fire Supervisor	

**V. FINDING**

**25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:**

After reviewing the EAC, I have selected the Action Alternative, to issue a Land Use License to the Big Hole Snowmobile Club. I believe this alternative can be implemented in a manner that is consistent with the long-term sustainable natural resource management of the area and generating revenue for the school trust.

**26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:**

I conclude all identified potential impacts will be avoided by utilizing the mitigations listed below and no significant impacts will occur as a result of implementing the selected alternative.

Mitigations:

1. Soil rutting in parking area: The Big Hole Snowmobile Club will repair any soil damage as a result of the parking area.
2. Use of closed roads: The Big Hole Snowmobile Club will inform members of closed roads on the rest of State section 36-T5S-R16W. They will further insure that State road closure signs remain in place. Current roads shall not be blocked with snow or vehicles to allow for timber harvesting activities occurring on the State section. The snowmobile club shall sign these roads with a "Do not block road" sign.
3. Noxious weeds: The Big Hole Snowmobile Club shall spray for noxious weeds in the spring.
4. Loss of forage for grazing lease: The Big Hole Snowmobile Club will seed the parking area with native grass seed.

**27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:**

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

<b>EA Checklist Approved By</b>	<b>Name:</b> Richard A. Moore
	<b>Title:</b> Dillon Unit Manager
<b>Signature:</b> <i>Richard A. Moore</i>	<b>Date:</b> December 6, 2005