



ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

MEPA NEPA Checklist

MISSION. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, through its employees and citizen commission, provides for the stewardship of the fish, wildlife, parks and recreational resources of Montana, while contributing to the quality of life for present and future generations

All Montanans have the right to live in a clean and healthful environment. This environmental analysis is intended to provide an evaluation of the likely impacts to the human environment from proposed actions of the project cited below. This analysis will help Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks to fulfill its oversight obligations and satisfy rules and regulations of both the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Please provide a discussion for each section. If no impacts are likely, be sure to discuss the reasoning that led to your determination.

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of proposed action.

- Development _____
- Renovation _____
- Maintenance X
- Land Acquisition _____
- Equipment Acquisition _____
- Other (Describe) _____

2. If appropriate, agency responsible for the proposed action.

State of Montana statutes that relate to Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), Chapter 2, Part 1 statutes relating to Recreation: MCA 23-2-101, and Part 6 statutes relating to snowmobiling: MCA 23-2-106 to 23-2-656.

State of Montana statutes that relate to Montana Environmental Policy Act: MCA 75-1-101 to 75-1-1112.

3. Name, address phone number and E-mail address of project sponsor.

Helena Snowdrifters, PO Box 5505, Helena, MT, 59604

4. Name of project.

Helena Snowdrifters Trail System.

5. If applicable:

Estimated construction/commencement date
Trail Grooming, December 1 through March 31

Estimated completion date: Ongoing Maintenance Project

Current status of project design (100% complete)

6. Location affected by proposed action (county, range and township).
Lewis & Clark County - T9S, R14E
Helena National Forest
Bureau of Land Management, Butte District Office

7. Project size: estimate the numbers of acres that would be directly affected that are currently: **Groomed trail located on approximately (279) miles of existing roads and trails.**

(a) Developed:
residential..... 0 acres
industrial 0 acres

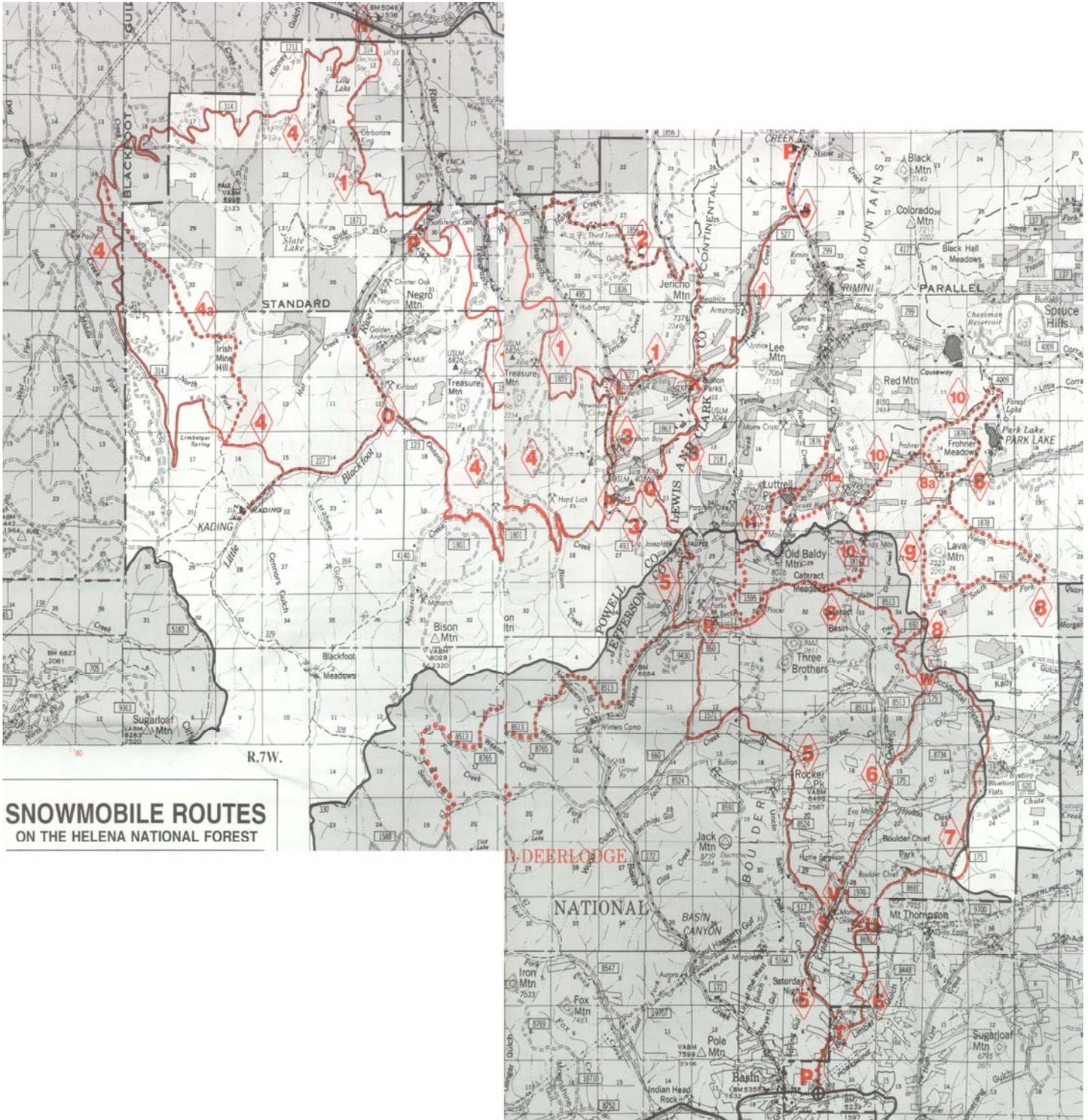
(b) Open Space/Woodlands/
Recreation..... 0 acres

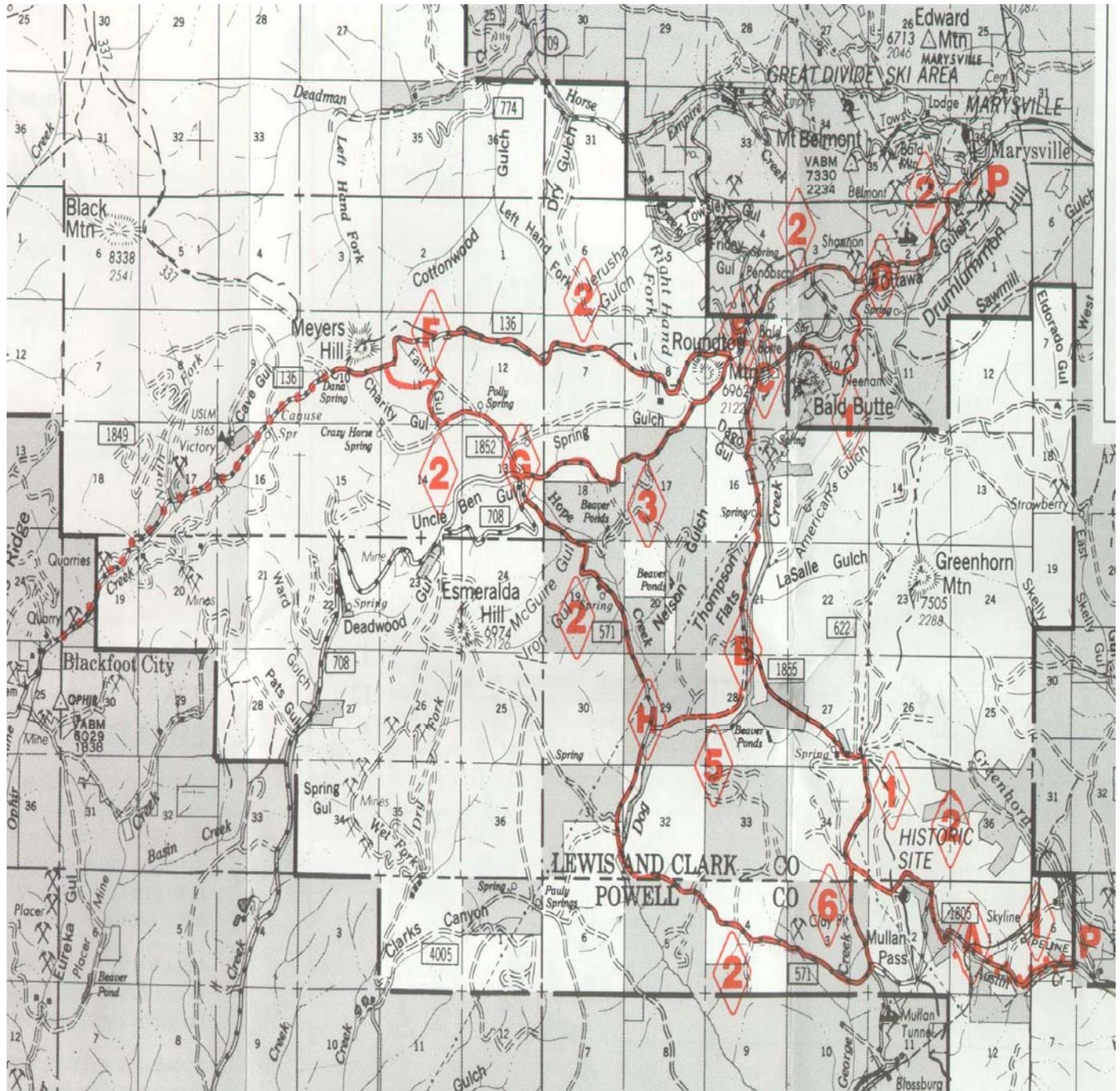
(c) Wetlands/Riparian
Areas 0 acres

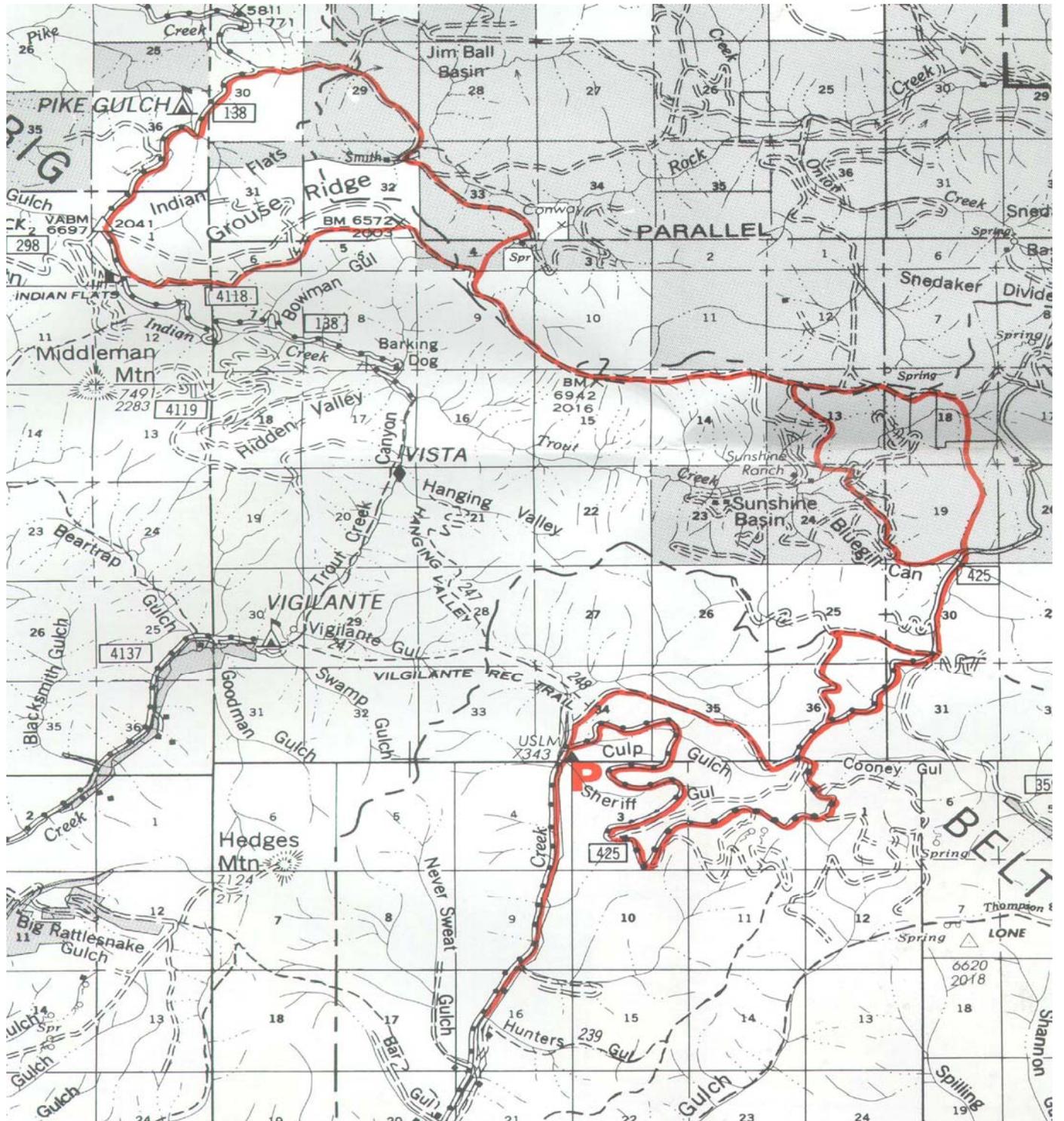
(d) Floodplain 0 acres

(e) Productive:
irrigated cropland..... 0 acres
dry cropland 0 acres
forestry 0 acres
rangeland..... 0 acres
other..... 0 acres

8. Map/site plan: attach an original 8 1/2" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map showing the location and boundaries of the area that would be affected by the proposed action. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.







9. Narrative summary of the proposed action or project including the benefits and purpose of the proposed action.

FWP proposes to award a Montana State Snowmobile Program Grant to the Helena Snowdrifters for the purpose of continuing grooming maintenance activities on the existing groomed trail system which is over authorized trails or roads located on lands of the Helena National Forest or Butte District.

This environmental review focuses on snowmobile trail grooming operations and maintenance within the Helena Snowdrifters Snowmobile Club groomed trail system which is funded from the state snowmobile gas tax. The broader scope of issues was adequately addressed in previous environmental review document(s) that include the Montana Snowmobile Grant Program PEIS and the 1996 environmental review of the Helena Snowdrifters' groomed trail system.

A Challenge Cost Share (CCS) Agreement was updated in 2008. The CCS agreement complies annually with MEPA and NEPA requirements under the Montana Snowmobile Grant Program (PEIS). Exhibit A of the CCS Agreement, the Operating Plan is updated annually and will be revised for those existing snowmobile trails established on existing roads and trails. The agreement will be in effect for a period of five (5) year or until one party calls for the termination of the agreement or there is a significant change from the current situation.

Site-specific analysis is the responsibility of the land management agency. The U.S. Forest Service has completed this analysis in the 2006 Helena Forest or BLM, Butte Distric Travel Plans and determined that maintenance of existing federal roads and trails are categorically excluded under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

In 1992, the Washington Office of the Forest Service issued amendment 1909.15-92-1 to FSH 1909.15, Environmental Policy and Procedures Handbook. This amendment clarified categorical exclusions. One item clarified was grooming. This amendment lists those categories which,

"At the discretion of the responsible official, a project or case file and a decision memo are not required but may be prepared for categories of actions set forth in sections 21.1a and 31.1b. (Section 31.1)

Section 31.1b lists those categories established by the Chief as,

Categorically excluded from documentation in an EIS or EA unless scoping indicates extraordinary circumstances exist.

Listed under Item 31.1b is item 4.d,

"Pruning vegetation and cleaning culverts along a trail and grooming the surface of the trail.

Each of the groomed trails occurs on Forest Service system roads that are located in areas allocated to winter motorized recreational use in the 2006 Helena National Forest or BLM Butte District Travel Plan.

10. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the MEPA-required no action alternative). At a minimum, the following three alternatives must be presented.
 - a). Preferred Alternative: continue grooming program with stipulated mitigative measures. Under this alternative, the grooming grant would be awarded. The grant would require those mitigative measures outlined in the 1996 Environmental Review's Enforcement/Education plan and Administrative strategies to continue.
 - b). No-action Alternative: Under this alternative, Fish, Wildlife and Parks would continue the program as currently administered. The environmental, social and economic conditions that currently exist as a result of the program would not change; current levels of administration and management efforts would be retained; and the application preparation and review processes would continue.
 - c). Additional Alternatives: discontinuation of grooming grant. Under this alternative the grooming grant would be withdrawn from the Helena Snowdrifters.

Environmental consequences of this alternative.

- The economies of Helena could be reduced during the winter months because of novice to intermediate riders not coming. This would likely result in significant negative impacts on the annual income of several individuals and families in the area.
- Snowmobiling would continue.
- Trail safety review could diminish to a point where public safety is compromised.
- Trail hazards would not be identified or resolved by the snowmobile club or FWP.
- Visitor education efforts by FWP in the Helena area would diminish.
- Reduced law enforcement presence. The enforcement presences by FWP would be only for state statutes (DUI, vehicle registration, and fish & wildlife regulations).
- Community may groom trails without direction or funding input from state.

11. Listing of each local, state or federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

(a) Permits		
Agency Name: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks; Helena National Forest,	Permit: Challenge Cost Share Agreement Exhibit A: Annual Financial and Operating Plan	Date Filed: 2007

(b) Funding	
Agency Name: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	Funding Amount: \$ 18,175

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities	
Agency Name: Park County Commissioners	Type of Responsibility: Land Management Agency

12. List of agencies consulted during preparation of this Environmental Checklist:

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Helena National Forest, or
Bureau of Land Management, Butte Distric

Name of Preparer(s) of this Environmental Checklist:

Ray Heagney
Region Three Snowmobile Grant Program Coordinator.
406-994-6934
rheagney@mt.gov

14. Date submitted. April 1, 2008

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Land Resources” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on land resources. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects of the action as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

1. LAND RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil which would reduce productivity or fertility?		X				
c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other		X				

- a., b., c.:** Snowmobile trail grooming has no direct influence or contact on the geologic substructure of the area.
d.: Snowmobile trail grooming takes place on established (engineered) roads away from streams, rivers, and lakes.
e.: The likelihood of a trail groomer causing earthquakes or other major changes in landmass is improbable.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Air” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on air resources. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects of the action as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

2. AIR Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (also see 13 (c))		X				
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. Any discharge that will conflict with federal or state air quality regs?		X				
f. Other		X				

a. & b., e.: The trail grooming employed to conduct trail maintenance are diesel vehicles which are required to be maintained under state guidelines and are anticipated to operate in an efficient manner.

c.: It is improbable that trail grooming in the Helena area plays major role climate changes on a local or regional basis.

d.: Trail grooming is conducted on established forest roads away from vegetation.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Water” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on water resources. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

3. WATER Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		X				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. Effects to a designated floodplain?		X				
m. Any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations?		X				
n. Other:		X				

a. Thru m.: Trail grooming is the manipulation of the crystalline form of water on engineered forest roads. Low ambient temperatures throughout the winter months disallow the excessive run-off of water along groomed trails. Conditions within the snow pack are subject to melt-freeze process. This condition leads to a higher stability of the snow pack. Therefore, it is improbable that this natural physical process of snow-dynamics will change watershed hydrology.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Vegetation” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on vegetative resources. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

4. VEGETATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?		X				
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?		X				
f. Effects to wetlands or prime and unique farmland?		X				
g. Other:		X				

a. Thru f.: Due to the depth of the snow pack on the established engineered forest roads vegetation of any kind is likely to establish itself along these corridors. These trails/ established engineered forest roads are not located near any wetlands or farmland.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Fish/Wildlife” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on fish and wildlife resources. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

5. FISH/WILDLIFE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
h. Adverse effects to threatened/endangered species or their habitat?		X				
i. Introduction or exportation of any species not presently or historically occurring in the affected location?		X				
j. Other:		X				

a. Thru i.: Groomed trails are proposed for over established engineered forest roads, that were constructed several decades ago prior to the state-grooming program. Though these corridors are adjacent to public lands there are no impact to any wildlife species either introduced or native.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Noise/Electrical Effects” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects of noise and electrical activities. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Increases in existing noise levels?		X				
b. Exposure of people to severe or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other:		X				

a. Thru d.: Grooming equipment used on authorized trail corridors is operated away from residences and the community. There is no detrimental increase to decimal levels.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Land Use” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on land use. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects.

7. LAND USE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. A conflict with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. A conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on, or relocation of, residences?		X				
e. Compliance with existing land policies for land use, transportation, and open space?		Yes				Yes
f. Increased traffic hazards, traffic volume, or speed limits or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				
g. Other:		X				

a. Thru f.: Grooming of the authorized trail corridors does not conflict with land management practices and complies with current “Travel Plan” strategies for public use.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Risk/Health Hazards” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects of risks and health hazards. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects of the action as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?		X				
b. Effects on existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				
d. Disturbance to any sites with known or potential deposits of hazardous materials?		X				
e. The use of any chemical toxicants?		X				
f. Other:		X				

a. Thru e.: Grooming equipment operates on diesel and oil. Requirements of the Montana Snowmobile Trail Grooming program requires that all state owned equipment must be maintained to run efficiently

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Community Impact” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on the community. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				
f. Other:		X				

- a. Thru d.: There are no alterations to the community profile from grooming activities.**
- e.: Groomed trails leading from town are design not to conflict with either pedestrian or other motor vehicle travel patterns.**

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Public Services/Taxes/Utilities” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on public services, taxes and utilities. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. An effect upon, or result in a need for new or altered, governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If so, specify:		X				
b. Effects on the local or state tax base and revenues?			X			
c. A need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Increased used of any energy source?		X				
e. Other.		X				
Additional information requested:						
f. Define projected revenue sources.	Increased revenue will be potentially derived from accommodations tax.					
g. Define projected maintenance costs.	No additional maintenance costs are projected for this grooming program.					

a., c., and d.: No additional costs or impacts are associated to any of the services listed.

e.: Increased revenue will be potentially derived from accommodations tax.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Aesthetics/Recreation” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on aesthetics & recreation. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report)		X				
d. Adverse effects to any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas?		X				
e. Other:		X				

a. Thru d.: No alterations to the listed items will occur, due to the fact that trail grooming limited under the Helena National Forest Travel Plan.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Cultural/historical Resources” checklist, provide a narrative

description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on cultural/historical resources. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				
b. Physical changes that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. Adverse effects to historic or cultural resources?		X				
e. Other:		X				

a. Thru d.: Grooming operations only effects the crystalline structure of the snow pack on those trails/road, which are authorized under the current Helena National Forest Travel Plan.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Summary Evaluation of Significance” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects. Even if you have checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:						
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources which create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?			X			
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. Have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy?		X				
Additional information requested:						
g. List any federal or state permits required.	Challenge Cost Share Agreement, Financial & Operations Agreement, Project Agreement. These are currently up to date and in affect.					

- a.: The grooming of authorized trails does not significantly or cumulatively impact the Natural or Human environment.**
- b.: One potential risk involves the existence of the exposure to avalanches. This risk applies to any winter use on slopes greater than 30°**
- c.: Grooming operations does not conflict with any local, state or federal laws, in effect is promotes cooperation between agencies.**
- d.: The routine grooming operations have not created any significant impacts over the course of the past 40 years.**

PART III. ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST CONCLUSION SECTION

1. Discuss the cumulative and secondary effects of this project as a whole. These are impacts to the human environment that, individually, may be minor for a specific project, but, when considered in combination to other actions, may result in significant impacts.

2. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this Environmental Checklist (Part II), is an EIS required?

YES _____

NO X

If an EIS is not required, explain why the current checklist level of review is appropriate.

3. **Public Comment.** At minimum, public input to the proposed project must be solicited through a legal ad in a daily newspaper with widest circulation in the immediate project area. This ad must run for a minimum of one day with at least 30 days allowed for public comment. The ad must include a brief description of the proposed project with the name, address, and contact information of the project sponsor. Comments should be provided in writing. The public comment period for this project must have occurred within 24 months (2 years) of the grant submission deadline.

a). Please include a photocopy of the legal advertisement, showing the date on which it ran in the newspaper.

b). Describe the total public involvement for this project beyond the legal ad. Projects may not be planned in isolation. The general public, adjacent landowners, and other interested parties should be involved from the onset. Promotion of public participation may be through newspaper articles and any other means available, such as public meetings, federal quarterly newsletters, TV programs, radio announcements, etc.

4. **Public Input Summary.** Please describe the nature of the public comments received during the official public comment period. Tally numbers of comments in support of the project and the numbers against. Summarize the most important comments received and your response to these comments. For example, if a reviewer made suggestions on how the project could be made better, how did you respond to that suggestion?

a). Provide copies of all comments received.

b). Changes to project design or scope of work based on public input.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Affected Environment – The aspects of the human environment that may change as a result of an agency action.

Alternative – A different approach to achieve the same objective or result as the proposed action.

Categorical Exclusion – A level of environmental review for agency action that do not individually, collectively, or cumulatively cause significant impacts to the human environment, as determined by rulemaking or programmatic review, and for which an EA or EIS is not required.

Cumulative Impacts – Impacts to the human environment that, individually, may be minor for a specific project, but, when considered in relation to other actions, may result in significant impacts.

Direct Impacts – Primary impacts that have a direct cause and effect relationship with a specific action, i.e. they occur at the same time and place as the action that causes the impact.

Environmental Assessment (EA) – The appropriate level of environmental review for actions that either does not significantly affect the human environment or for which the agency is uncertain whether an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required.

Environmental Assessment Checklist – An EA checklist is a standard form of an EA, developed by an agency for actions that generally produce minimal impacts.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) – A comprehensive evaluation of the impacts to the human environment that likely would result from an agency action or reasonable alternatives to that action. An EIS also serves a public disclosure of agency decision-making. Typically, an EIS is prepared in two steps. The Draft EIS is a preliminary detailed written statement that facilitates public review and comment. The Final EIS is a completed, written statement that includes a summary of major conclusions and supporting information from the Draft EIS, responses to substantive comments received on the Draft EIS, a list of all comments on the Draft EIS and any revisions made to the Draft EIS and an explanation of the agency's reasons for its decision.

Environmental Review – An evaluation, prepared in compliance with the provisions of MEPA and the MEPA Model Rules, of the impacts to the human environment that may result as a consequence of an agency action.

Human Environment – Those attributes, including but not limited to biological, physical, social, economic, cultural, and aesthetic factors that interrelate to form the environment.

Long-Term Impact – An impact, which lasts well beyond the period of the initial project.

Mitigated Environmental Assessment – The appropriate level of environmental review for actions that normally would require an EIS, except that the state agency can impose designs, enforceable controls, or stipulations to reduce the otherwise significant impacts to below the level of significance. A mitigated EA must demonstrate that: (1) all impacts have been identified; (2) all impacts can be mitigated below the level of significance; and (3) no significant impact is likely to occur.

Mitigation – An enforceable measure(s), designed to reduce or prevent undesirable effects or impacts of the proposed action.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) – The federal counterpart of MEPA that applies only to federal actions.

No Action Alternative – An alternative, required by the MEPA Model Rules for purposes of analysis, that describes the agency action that would result in the least change to the human environment.

Public Participation – The process by which an agency includes interested and affected individuals, organizations, and agencies in decision making.

Record of Decision – Concise public notice that announces the agency’s decision, explains the reason for that decision, and describes any special conditions related to implementation of the decision.

Scoping – The process, including public participation, that an agency uses to define the scope of the environmental review.

Secondary Impacts – Impacts to the human environment that are indirectly related to the agency action, i.e. they are induced by a direct impact and occur at a later time or distance from the triggering action.

Short-Term Impact – An impact directly associated with a project that is of relatively short duration.

Significance – The process of determining whether the impacts of a proposed action are serious enough to warrant the preparation of an EIS. An impact may be adverse, beneficial or both. If none of the adverse impacts are significant, an EIS is not required.

Supplemental Review – A modification of a previous environmental review document (EA or EIS) based on changes in the proposed action, the discovery of new information, or the need for additional evaluation.

Tiering – Preparing an environmental review by focusing specifically on narrow scope of issues because the broader scope of issues was adequately addressed in previous environmental review document(s) that may be incorporated by reference.



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Outdoor Recreation Grants Wildlife Review Form

Project Sponsor Helena Snowdrifters

Sponsor Contact Jeff Otto, Club President
Name

406-443-0108
Telephone No.

New Trails Construction: new trail, trail-head, trail-side facilities

Trail Renovation: renovation, expansion, relocation, and redesign of existing facilities

Trail Maintenance

Other

Required Materials

Map of project location (USGS 1:24,000 at a minimum)

Complete description of project

 Applicant fills out information above this line

Wildlife biologist fills out information below this line 

1. Are there any wildlife concerns? Explain.

Yes:

Ungulate winter range should be excluded from snowmobile play areas, and it is recommended that snowmobiles remain on designated routes while traversing through ungulate winter range.

2. Will there be any possible effects on:

a. Critical seasonal wildlife habitats.

There may be minimal disturbance to wintering ungulates, including elk, mule deer and moose:

The routes around Marysville extending into Dog Creek are adequately located, but some of the surrounding areas on BLM lands, including Edwards Mountain, Deer Creek, Piegan Gulch and Empire Creek, are all used by elk and mule deer for winter range. The Drummlummon Hill area is also used during less severe winters by elk and mule deer. The area including Tenmile and Minnehaha Creeks, Lave Mountain and Mullan Pass is utilized by moose.

b. Fawning or calving areas.

No.

c. Breeding, roosting, nesting, perching or hunting areas.

There are none known. However, it is likely that raptors do utilize areas near trails for all activities: breeding, roosting, nesting, perching and hunting. Breeding and nesting for some species may overlap with the grooming period indicated.

d. Riparian habitat.

No.

e. Federally listed threatened, endangered, sensitive species: are there any in the area? May this project affect any? How? Will this project, as proposed, require a biological assessment as part of consultation with the USFWS on TES species?

Some trails extend into higher elevations and may potentially impact wolverine and lynx (e.g., Rimini-Elliston-Basin Trail System).

Current wolf distribution overlaps with all of the Helena Snowdrifters Trail System.

In late March, grizzly bears may be emerging from dens, which overlaps with the grooming period indicated.

f. Other

3. Mitigating measures: Examples could include signing, alternate routes, use restrictions, timing, etc. If there are no mitigating measures and project is not acceptable as proposed, reject the proposal! Supply additional page if necessary.

Signing indicating that no off-trail travel is allowed in ungulate winter range is recommended.

Recommend that other mitigating measures in the 1996 PEIS be implemented.

4. Additional comments.

Wildlife Biologist Signature Page

Area Biologist: Jenny Sika

I don't recommend this project as proposed.

Signature: _____

Agency, title, phone number: _____

Date (month, day, year): _____

I recommend this project with the following stipulations:

Recommend additional review of the Marysville-Austin and Rimini-Elliston-Basin Trail Systems by a Region 2 biologist, given the overlap of these trails with both Regions 2 and 3.

That no grooming occurs on the Townsend Trails.

Signature: Jenny Sika (faxing w/signature)

Agency, title, phone number: MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Wildlife Biologist, 202-0884

Date (month, day, year): February 8, 2008

I did not have enough time to adequately review this proposal and subsequently do not want to give authorization.

Signature: _____

Agency, title, phone number: _____

Date (month, day, year): _____

Suggested reference for recreation effects on wildlife:

Joslin, G., and H. Youmans, coordinators. 1999. Effects of Recreation on Rocky Mountain Wildlife: A Review for Montana. Committee on Effects of Recreation on Wildlife, Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society. 307 pp.



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Outdoor Recreation Grants Fisheries Review Form

Project Sponsor **Helena Snowdrifters**

Sponsor Contact Jeff Otto, Club President
Name

406-443-0108
Telephone No.

New Trails Construction: new trail, trail-head, trail-side facilities

Trail Renovation: renovation, expansion, relocation, and redesign of existing facilities

Trail Maintenance

Other

Required Materials

Map of project location (USGS 1:24,000 at a minimum)

Complete description of project


Applicant fills out information above this line

Fisheries biologist fills out information below this line

1. Are there any fisheries or fisheries habitat concerns?

Modification of stream crossings, especially culverts.

2. Describe any potential effects on:

- a. Fish species: **Winter fish movement through culverts can sometimes be reduced due to snow compaction at small culverts.**

- b. Federally listed threatened, endangered, sensitive species: are there any in the area? Will this project affect any? How? Will this project, as proposed, require a biological assessment as part of consultation with the USFWS on TES species?

West slope Cutthroat trout may be present near some of the trail crossings

c. Riparian areas: **None**

d. Water quality: **None**

e. Potential sedimentation or any other issues

Ice formation at some small culverts due to snow compaction may cause flooding during thaw events on rare occasions.

f. Other: **None**

- 3. Mitigating measures: Examples could include alternate routes, signs, design changes to crossings, etc. If there are no mitigating measures and project is not acceptable, reject the proposal! Supply additional pages if necessary.

Monitor culvert function during late winter / early spring thaw to determine whether grooming practices result in reduced culvert function. Modify grooming practices when problems are identified.

- 4. Will this project require 124, 310 or 404 permits and, if so, have they been completed?

NO

- 5. Additional comments.

NO

Fisheries Biologist Signature Page

Area Fisheries Biologist: Ron Spoon

I don't recommend this project as proposed.

Signature: _____

Agency, title, phone number: _____

Date (month, day, year): _____

I recommend this project with the following stipulations:

Monitor culvert function to determine potential icing effects due to snow compaction and modify practices where needed.

Signature: *Ron Spoon*

Agency, title, phone number: MDFWP, Fisheries Biologist, 266-4237

Date (month, day, year): 1/8/08

I did not have enough time to adequately review this proposal and subsequently do not want to give authorization.

Signature: _____

Agency, title, phone number: _____

Date (month, day, year): _____

Suggested reference for recreation effects on wildlife:

Joslin, G., and H. Youmans, coordinators. 1999. Effects of Recreation on Rocky Mountain Wildlife: A Review for Montana. Committee on Effects of Recreation on Wildlife, Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society. 307 pp.

Modification #3

**EXHIBIT A
FINANCIAL AND OPERATING PLAN
2007-2008 Season**

This Financial and Operating Plan is hereby made and entered into by and between the Snowdrifters Snowmobile Club (Club), Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), and the USDA Forest Service, Helena National Forest, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (Forest Service) as specified under the provisions of Challenge Cost Share Agreement #04-11011200-001 executed on 01/20/2004.

Extension Duration: Change the expiration date of Challenge Cost Share Agreement #04-11011200-001 from 5/1/2008 to **10/31/2008**.

I. The Club shall:

- A. Be responsible for operational maintenance and grooming of the trail system as well as plowing out the trailhead parking facilities.
- B. Begin trail grooming when there is adequate snow cover, after December 1. Provide trail grooming once a week, more or less, depending upon the suitability of snow conditions and availability of funds to fund the snowmobile grooming budget.
- C. Remove any trees or obstacles leaning into or across the groomed trail. Additional limbing of trees encroaching the trail corridor may be necessary as the snow pack increases over the course of the season. Tree limbs will be cut flush with the trunk of the tree. The club will notify the Forest Service when trails need brushing, so the work may be included in the summer road brushing contract. Assist the Forest Service with off-season trail maintenance, as mutually agreed to, to keep snowmobile trails open. *See related Operating Plan provision III-C.*
- D. At the end of the season, prepare an inventory of gate maintenance, hazards, and signing needs for the Forest Service. The Club will inventory signs (reassurance blazers, turn arrows and warning signs) on hand and include a replacement order with the grant application to the FWP.

II. The FWP shall:

- A. Provide funds for grooming as specified in agreement provision IV-C.
- B. Provide technical assistance to the Club to help ensure compliance with the terms of the Snowmobile Grooming Program Grant.
- C. Monitor the snowmobile grooming for compliance with grooming guidelines, performance standards and safety in accordance with appropriate FWP standards and the USDA Forest Service Handbook 2309.18, Trails Management Handbook.

- D. Provide signs such as reassurance blazers, turn arrows, and warning signs, consistent with FWP Snowmobile Program Operations Manual. *See related Operating Plan provision III-A and B.*
- E. Coordinate with land management agencies on the implementation of snow grooming activities.

III. The Forest Service shall:

- A. Develop a sign plan for the snowmobile trails and trailheads for the groomed trails. The sign plan will comply with sign warrants and EM-7100-15, Standards for Forest Service Signs and Posters.
- B. Furnish required signs not provided by FWP.
- C. At their discretion, perform off-season maintenance activities on designated trails. Maintenance may include brushing, erosion control, etc. and will be in accordance with the guidelines in the Forest Service Handbook 2309.18, Trails Management Handbook.
- D. Monitor the snowmobile grooming for compliance with grooming guidelines, performance standards and safety in accordance with the USDA Forest Service Handbook 2309.18, Trails Management Handbook and appropriate FWP standards.

IV. It is mutually agreed that the parties shall:

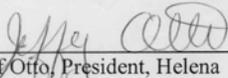
- A. Prior to grooming, coordinate gate closing with the Forest Service and other landowners. Properly sign all affected gates indicating seasonal change in travel management. Lock gates open within the interior of the trail system.
- B. Agree to responsibility for maintenance and repairs of the gates damaged during the course of the snowmobile season. Ensure gates are locked and include proper hazard signing.
- C. Coordinate the installation of snowmobile trail signs and bulletin boards at the trailheads. The snowmobile trail sign system will be put up when the grooming season begins and removed when it ends. All signs will be installed in accordance with the Forest Service sign plan for the area. Replace signs and posts as needed and raise signs on the posts as the snow depth increases through the course of the season. Minimum clearance from the bottom of the sign to the snow surface is 42".
- D. Coordinate removal and storage of the signs at the end of the season.

The authority and format of this Annual Financial and Operating Plan has been reviewed and approved for signature.

/s/ Teresa Asleson
TERESA ASLESON, Helena NF Agreements Specialist

3/2/2007
Date

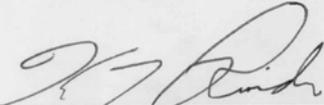
In witness whereof, the parties hereto have executed the Annual Financial and Operating Plan as of the last date written below.


Jeff Otto, President, Helena
Snowdrifters Snowmobile Club

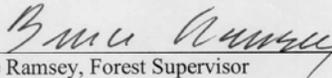
MARCH 11-07
Date

Patrick Flowers, Region Three Supervisor
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Date


Kevin Riordan, Forest Supervisor
USDA Forest Service, Helena National Forest

4/4/07
Date


Bruce Ramsey, Forest Supervisor
Beaverhead-Deerlodge

4-12-07
Date

The authority and format of this Annual Financial and Operating Plan has been reviewed and approved for signature.

/s/ Teresa Asleson
TERESA ASLESON, Helena NF Agreements Specialist

3/2/2007
Date

In witness whereof, the parties hereto have executed the Annual Financial and Operating Plan as of the last date written below.

Jeff Otto, President, Helena
Snowdrifters Snowmobile Club

Date



Patrick Flowers, Region Three Supervisor
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

3/19/07

Date

Kevin Riordan, Forest Supervisor
USDA Forest Service, Helena National Forest

Date

Bruce Ramsey, Forest Supervisor
Beaverhead-Deerlodge

Date

**FY 2007-2008
 FINANCIAL PLAN**

Cost Elements Direct Costs	FOREST SERVICE	SNOWDRIFTERS SNOWMOBILE CLUB		FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS Third-party		Subtotal
	(a) Non-Cash Contributions	(b) Non-Cash Contributions	(c) In-Kind Contributions	(d) Cash FWP Reimb Club Expenses	(e) Non-cash Contribution	
Salaries/Labor	\$2,000	\$ 1,500	\$2,000			\$ 5,500
Travel	\$ 500		\$ 500			\$ 1,000
Supplies	\$ 500	\$ 1,500				\$ 2,000
*Equipment Use (Groomer/Snowmobiles)	\$1,000				\$35,000	\$36,000
**Groomer Operations				\$22,000		\$22,000
Sub Total	\$4,000	\$ 3,000	\$2,500	\$22,000	\$35,000	\$66,500
Indirect Costs	\$ 712					\$ 712
Total	\$4,712	\$ 3,000	\$2,500	\$22,000	\$35,000	(f)\$67,212

* Equipment use = equals the value of renting the groomer if not provided by FWP.

**Groomer operations include groomer operator salary and groomer expenses such as fuel for groomer and truck, hyd fluid, maintenance and repairs.

Matching Costs Determination

Total Forest Service Share =	(g)
(a) + (f) = (g)	7%
Total Cooperator Share =	(h)
(b+c+d+e) ÷ (f) = (h)	93%
Total (g+h) =	100%

Instructions

(a) **Forest Service Contribution:** Forest Service employee salaries, travel, equipment, supplies, etc., provided toward completion of the project. Total Forest Service indirect cost (17.8% overhead) is also included in this column. All the costs listed here are an expense to the Forest Service.

(b) **Club Contribution:** Club salaries, travel, equipment, supplies, etc., provided toward completion of the project. Total Club indirect cost (overhead) is also included in this column. All of the costs listed here are an expense to the Club.

(c) **Value of Club In-Kind Contribution:** Club noncash contributions provided toward completion of the project for which the Club has incurred no expense. These contributions can be made from the Club or through the Club by other entities and include such items as volunteer labor, donated materials, equipment, supplies, etc. These values are not reimbursable and can only be used to satisfy the Club's matching requirement.

(d) **FWP Reimbursable Club Expenses:** The estimated figures listed here are both the maximum FWP funds to be obligated for reimbursement and Club expenses that are not included anywhere else on this form. All the costs listed here are an expense to FWP.

(e) **FWP Contribution:** FWP employee salaries, travel, equipment, supplies, etc., provided toward completion of the project. Total FWP indirect cost (overhead) is also included in this column. All the costs listed here are an expense to FWP.

(f) **Gross Total Project Value:** The sum of all the values provided toward the project. This figure reflects the true estimated cost of the project.

SNOWMOBILE MAP

The map displays the designated snowmobile trail system that includes trails approved for grooming, trails groomed intermittently, and non-groomed trails on the Helena and Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest.

Location	Length (in miles)
Marysville-Austin Trail System	
Route#1 Austin Road to Ottawa Gulch	10
Route#2 Marysville to Mullan Pass	25
Route#3 Uncle Ben Gulch to Roundtop	4
Route#5 Crossover between Rt#2 and Rt#1	2
Route#6 Crossover between Rt#2 and Rt#1	2.5
Rimini-Elliston-Basin Trail System	
Route#1 Moose Creek to Elliston	22
Route#2 Bullion Parks to Telegraph Creek	9
Route#3 Bullion Parks to Upper Onterio Creek	7
Route#4 Upper Onterio to Elliston	37
Route#4a Limburger Springs to Upper Trout Creek	7
Route#5 Upper Onterio Creek to Basin	20
Route#6 Upper Basin Creek to Cataract Creek	17
Route#7 Occidental Plateau to Morning Glory Mine	9
Route#8 Park Lake to Occidental Plateau	18
Route#9 Frohner Meadow to Lava Mtn.	4
Route#10 Park Lake to Perry Park	11
Magpie to Jim Ball Basin Loop	
	33
Townsend Trails	
North Fork/Cabin Gulch #582	13
Holloway #583	7
East Fork Cabin #584	3.5
Middle Fork Cabin #585	4
Grassy Mt #587	6
Sulphur Bar #586	8
Total Miles	279