Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

PART I. Purpose of and Need for Action

1. Project Title: Great Falls Shooting Sports Complex (GFSSC)

2. Type of Proposed Action: (1) Finish construction of 200 yard range.
(2) Development of 5 station skeet house
(3) Finish construction of perimeter fence and gates
(4) Development of a youth/family training range
(5) Development of a 500-meter Silhouette range

3. Location Affected by Proposed Action Three mile north of Great Falls, Montana. Range complex is approximately 942.37 acres off of Ryan Dam Road. Formerly the Beckman property with Black Horse Butte on north edge of the property, but known locally as Radio Tower Hill from the microwave relay towers on top. Of the 942.37 acres, 582.37 are owned by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) and the remaining 360 acres is owned by GFSSC.

FWP: Township 21 North, Range 4 East, M.P.M.
Section 15: NW¼ ; Section 16: NE¼, E½NW¼, N½S½, SW¼SW1/4

GFSSC: Township 21 North, Range 4 East, M.P.M.
Section 15: NE ¼; Section 16: SE¼SW¼, S½SE¼, W½NW¼

4. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action: MCA87-1-276 through 87-1-279 (Legislative established policies and procedures for the establishment and improvement of shooting ranges) MCA87-2-105 (Departmental authority to expend funds to provide training in the safe handling and use of firearms and safe hunting practices). The 2007 Montana Legislature has authorized funding for the establishment of a Shooting Range Development Program providing financial assistance for the development of shooting ranges for public purposes. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks has responsibility for the administration of the program, including the necessary guidelines and procedures governing applications for funding assistance under the program.

5. Need for the Action(s): Increased recreational opportunities, enhanced safety and security, and improved usability of the range complex. (See paragraph 10).

6. Objectives for the Action(s): See para. 5 above.

7. Maps:

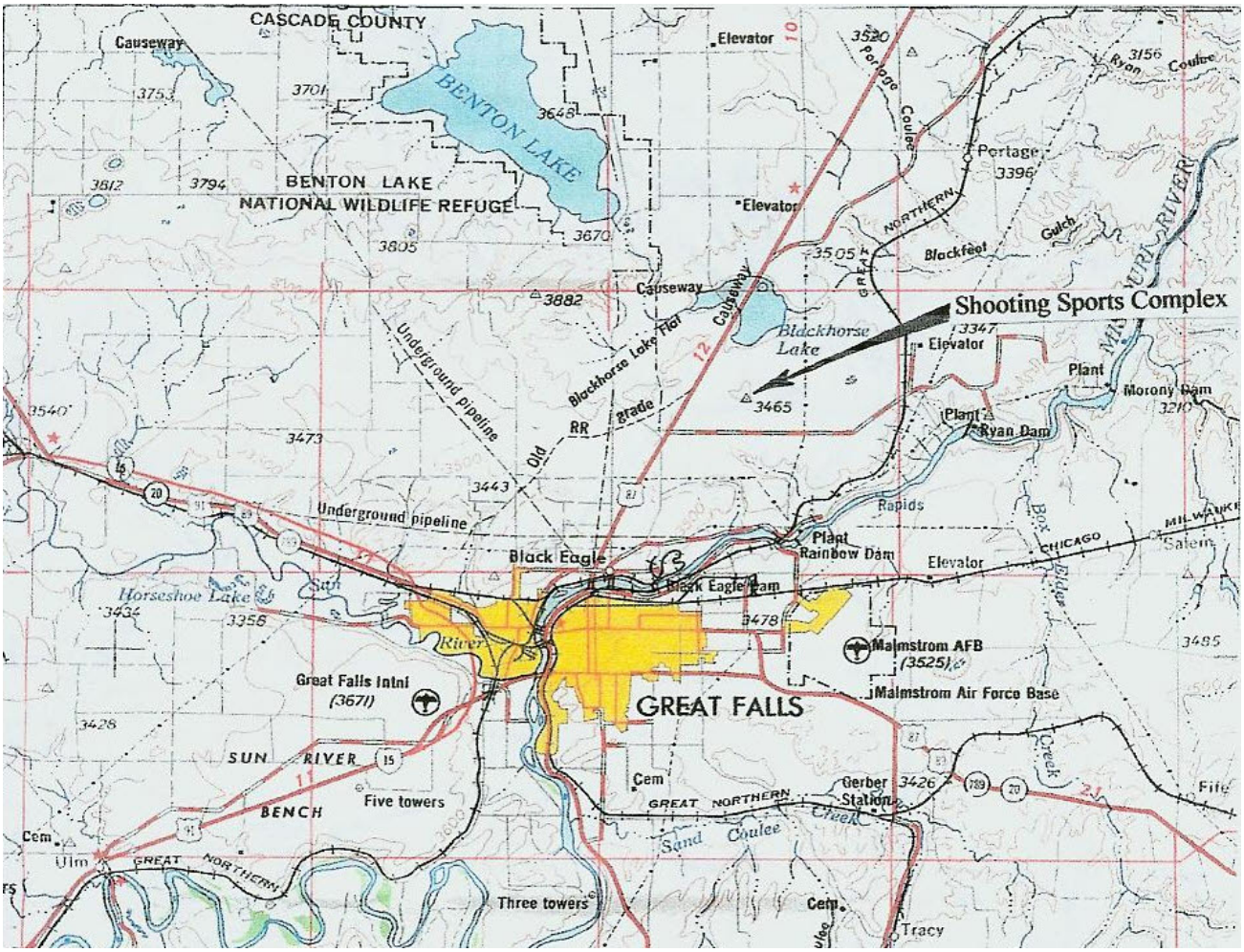

Figure 1 - Area Map showing GFSSC location.

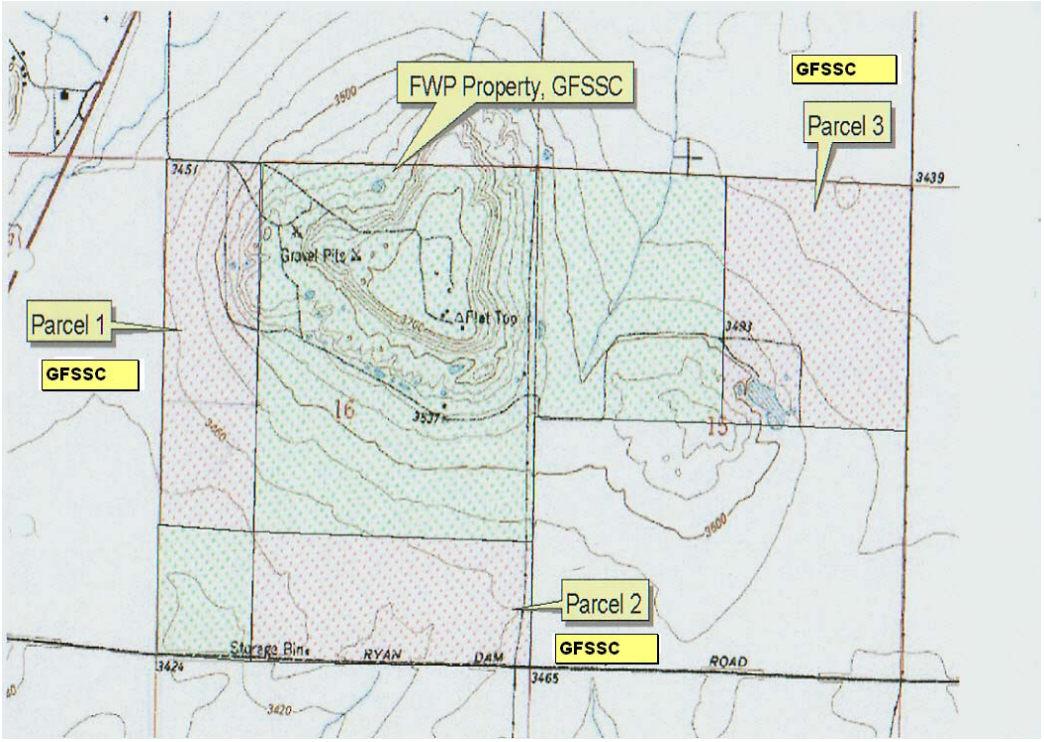

Figure 2 – Black Horse Butte showing land ownership between FWP & GFSSC. Green areas are FWP property and red are GFSSC properties.

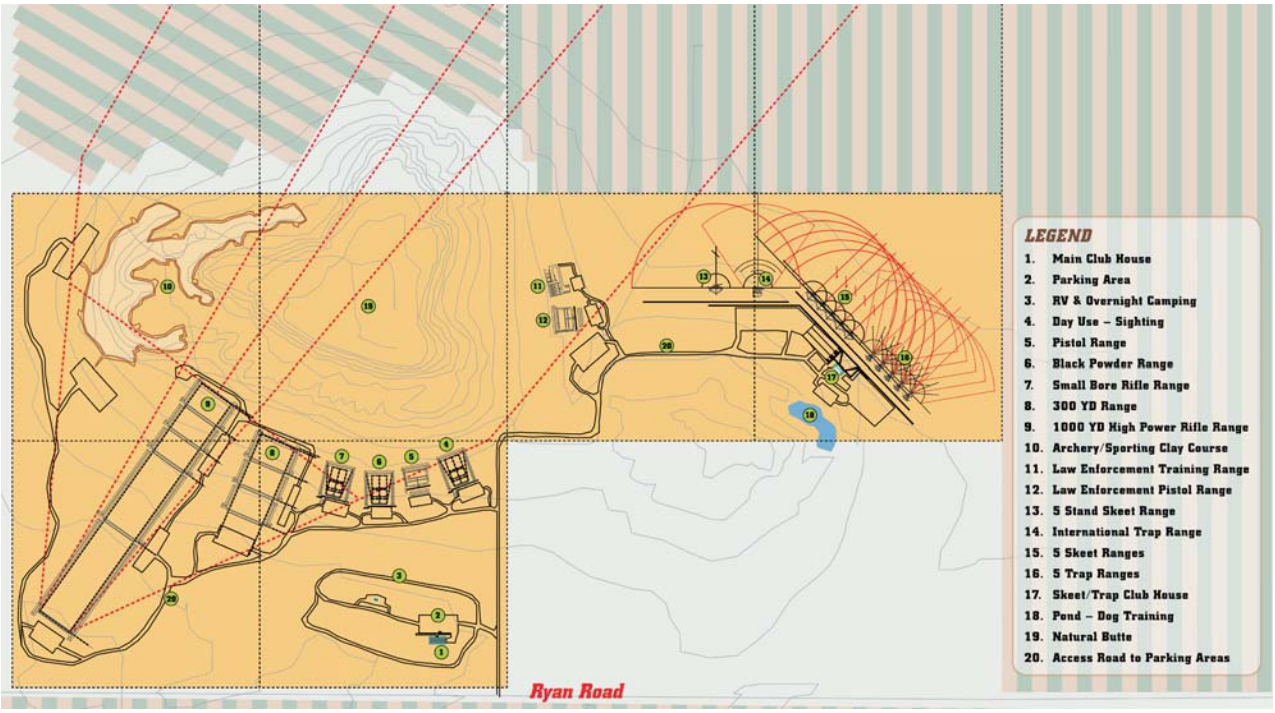

Figure 3 – Site Plan for GFSSC (CTA Architects Engineers)

Figure 4 – Architectural depiction of future range complex

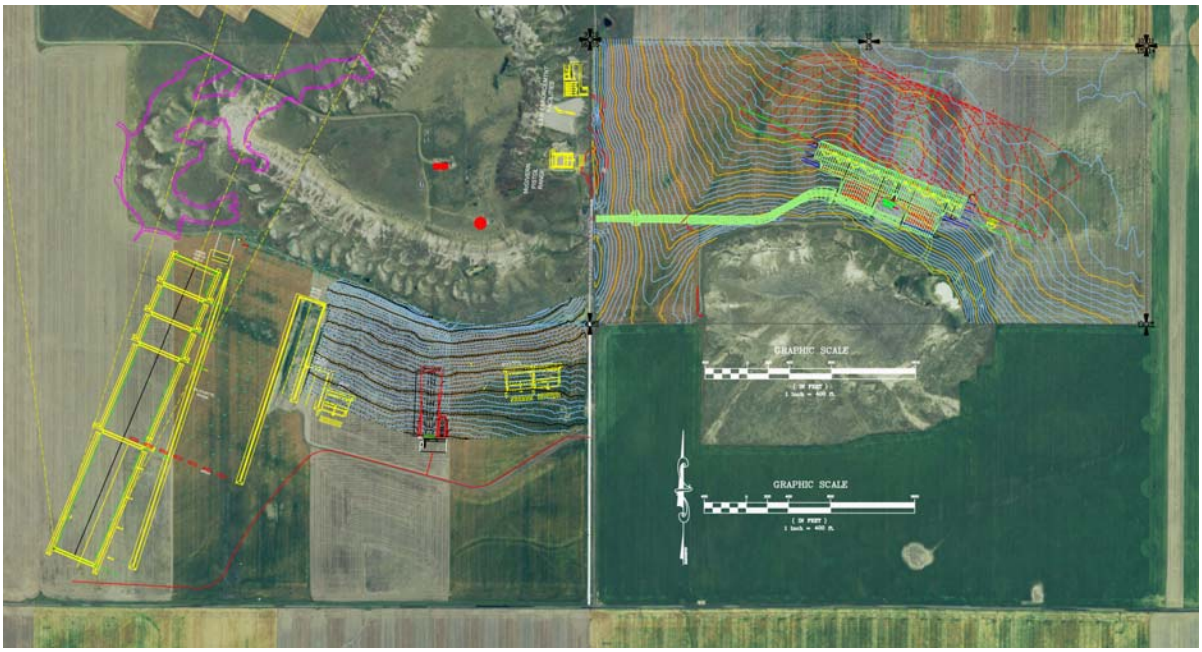

Figure 4 – GFSSC site plan overlay map.

8. Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected: Range is approximately 942.37 acres, but improvements are limited to a much smaller area within the broader area of the range.

9. Affected Environment (A brief description of the affected area of the proposed project): The area affected is the existing Great Falls Shooting Sports Complex on 942.37 acres approximately 5 miles north of Great Falls, MT (See Para. 3). A previous EA completed in 2005 considered the building of all of the ranges proposed here. Completion of all the initial construction on those ranges has been completed and the new proposed actions are the follow-on improvements or next phase of construction for these ranges. Consequently the 2005 environmental assessment for the Great Falls Shooting Sports Complex is applicable here, and appropriate portions should be tiered for this EA. Although the 2005 EA addressed the specific actions proposed then, a broader analysis of the entire range complex's environment was conducted, with these future improvements being addressed. That broad environmental assessment should be tiered for use in the continuation of this 2007 project. A cultural resources inventory on 582.37 acres of the complex was conducted in November 2005. That inventory discovered five cultural sites and three isolated finds. This information was then published in February 2007. Even though this EA may be tiered with the completed 2001 and 2005 EAs, on these ranges, to insure proper analysis and to incorporate the new cultural information, the current EA checklist is used for these next phases of the development.

10. Description of Project: The previous 2005 EA considered the building of all of the actions proposed in this latest grant request for the range improvements and fences proposed in this 2007 EA. Initial construction phases on those ranges has been completed. The following proposed actions are the follow-on improvements or the next phases of construction for these ranges, as documented in the 2005 EA. Most of these improvements are now more specific and described in slightly more detail than in the 2005 EA. Additional cultural resource information published in February 2007 has also been reviewed.

(1) Finish construction of 200 yard range. The facility is still under construction and the current proposal of continued improvements to this range are to: (a) add a range cover (b) add a target back holding system and (c) the seeding of grass.

(2) Development of 5 station skeet house. Again this was part of a previous EA completed in 2005, for the shooting complex, which considered this construction of a range for a 5 station skeet house, and to cut and fill approximately 40,000 cubic yards, construct road system to the range and to install electricity to the skeet range. All have been completed with the exception of construction of the skeet house which is proposed here. This action should be considered tiered from the previous 2005 EA.

(3) Finish construction of perimeter fence and gates to secure the area. GFSSC petitioned local businesses for materials and funds to construct approximately 1.5 miles of fence. An additional $6,500 is requested to complete the perimeter fencing.

(4) Development of a youth/family training range. A previous EA completed in 2005, for the shooting complex, considered this construction for a youth/family training range and approved the construction of the preliminary construction phases at that time. The rim fire only family/training range and the 100-meter small bore/black powder range or the 100/200 meter public range was built concurrently because the dirt work required to construct the berms is most economically excavated from 100 to 150 meters behind the proposed location of both ranges. The youth/family training fire range will be separated from other firing lines by a surrounding dirt berm. The rim fire only youth/family range will have 10 covered firing points located on a pea-gravel platform. To complete the improvements to this range the construction of a covered firing line, tables, benches and completion of adjacent training area are needed, in addition to 5 permanent target backers; one at the 15 meter, two at the 25 meter and two at the 50 meter lines.

(5) Development of a 500-meter Silhouette range. A previous EA completed in 2005, for the shooting complex, considered the development of 500 meter and 1000 meter ranges and approved the preliminary construction phases at that time. Excavation of 11,000 cubic yards of material are needed, to ensure the safety of shooters on the 500-meter silhouette range. Additionally a concrete restroom with fiberglass pit is proposed for this range. Excavation of this range area and the installation of a pre-fabricated restroom was proposed in 2005 and is tiered to the 2005 EA previously referenced.

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

(a) Permits, Licenses and/or Authorizations:

Agency Name	Permit
None (Exempted by County for FWP property, GFSSC pays property taxes on its portion)	

Funding:

Agency Name	Funding Amount
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	$37,500

12. Affiliations, Cooperating Agencies, User Groups and/or Supporting Groups: (See previously tiered EAs from 2001 and 2005)

Sportsmen Clubs: Safari Club, National Rifle Association, Montana Wildlife Federation, Mule Deer Foundation, Pheasants Forever, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, National Wild Turkey Federation, Ducks Unlimited, Walleye's Unlimited.

Shooting Sports: Missouri River Shooters, Sun River Skeet Club, Russell Country Sportsmen, Russell Country Sportsmen, Ed McGiveran Pistol Club, Montana Plainsman Black Powder Club.

Government/Corporate Sponsors: PPL Montana, Cascade County, City of Great Falls, Three Rivers Communication

Law Enforcement: Great Falls City Police, Montana Highway Patrol, US Border Patrol, Montana

CIB, Montana Probation & Parole, Malmstrom AFB Security Force, Montana Law Enforcement Academy, Cascade County Sheriff, FWP Law Enforcement, US Marshall Service, FBI, US Customs, US Fish & Wildlife Service, BIA Youth Education: 4H Shooting Program, Olympic Shooting Program, FWP Hunter Safety Program.
Fish Wildlife & Parks as owner of the majority of the property to be leased to a Board of Directors of the Great Falls Shooting Sports Complex, Inc.

13. History of the Planning and Scoping Process, and Any Public Involvement: No additional public involvement was deemed necessary due to the previous completed EAs, which should now be tiered for completion of this EA. Proposed range improvements and safety enhancements had been discussed within the membership of the club and with the associated project vendors and contractors.

14. List of Agencies Consulted/Contacted During Preparation of the EA:

- Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- State Historic Preservation Office consultation thru Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- Reference previous Environmental Assessment (EA) of Dec. 2001, for Acquisition of a Community Shooting Range. The 2005 EA for construction of the range complex and facilities can also be referenced and the current EA can be tiered from both of these previous EAs.
- Reference Cultural Resource Management Report for the Beckman Shooting Range Property on Black Horse Butte, dated 1 February 2007 by Garvey C. Wood of Gar C. Wood and Associates of Loma, MT.
- Reference letter from Dr. S. Wimoth, Deputy State Archaeologist, at the State Historic Preservation Office.

15. Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor:

Wayne Moyes
764 33rd A Ave. N.E.
Great Falls, MT 59404
453-8798
bpburner@aol.com

16. Other Pertinent Information:

This EA is tiered from two previous EAs, IAW The Montana Environmental Policy Act. This environmental assessment (EA) checklist references the previous broader scope environmental assessments of Dec. 2001, for Acquisition of a Community Shooting Range and the 2005 EA for construction of the range complex and facilities. Both of these EAs are referenced and the current EA checklist is tiered from these previous EAs.

A cultural resources inventory on 582.37 acres of the complex was conducted in November 2005. That inventory discovered five cultural sites and three isolated finds. They include four prehistoric

occupation sites and an historic farm. This information was then published in February 2007 and was completed by Gar C. Wood and Associates of Loma, MT. The summary of that inventory concludes that "Construction of the Shooting Sports Complex will have no adverse effect upon this site." However, mitigation measures have been stipulated to reduce or prevent undesirable effects or impacts on the identified cultural sites. The Cultural Resources Inventory contains sensitive cultural resource information and exact locations of these sites, is given in the inventory report. The exact location for these sites will not be included in this or any other public document concerning this project.

Shooting range applications require the participant's governing body to approve by resolution its submission of applications for shooting range funding assistance. Resolution Date: April 3, 2007.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Abbreviated Checklist – The degree and intensity determines extent of Environmental Review. An abbreviated checklist may be used for those projects that are not complex, controversial, or are not in environmental sensitive areas)

Table 1. Potential impact on physical environment.

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

Comments (A description of potentially significant, or unknown, impacts and potential alternatives for mitigation must be provided.)

2. & 5. There are no delineated wetlands and no natural water sources within the area proposed for development. There are 24 old reservoirs or waterholes in the area which were identified during the February 2007 Cultural Resources Inventory. During the surveys of August 2005 there was no water found in any of these sites and only wet mud and a small puddle in the largest "pond" east of the bentonite hill. The three "wetter" reservoirs are located in the area of the bentonite hill, and on the north side of Black Horse Butte and southeast side of Black Horse Butte along the access road. Two of these are on FWP property and the largest pond is on GFSSC property. These three man-made reservoirs have some

water for most of the wet years and all three had water during this July 2007 survey. The larger pond area, northeast of the bentonite hill, is designated as the future dog training area. There are no plans to eliminate, nor materially alter any of these ponds in the future. The other "so-called" water holes identified during the cultural inventory are ephemeral and only occasionally collect rain or snowmelt, and none of these are permanent surface water sources. There was no water found in any of these areas during the surveys of August 2005, nor again in July 2007. The majority of these "wetter" sites are on the GFSSC property and outside of the future proposals for development on the range. The primary aquifer is approximately 500 feet beneath the surface with minimal risk of pollution.

7 . Soil disruption for this site is very localized. Erosion control measures are in effect and disturbed areas are to be reseeded.

9. A cultural resources inventory on 582.37 acres was conducted in November 2005 and published in February 2007. That inventory discovered five cultural sites and three isolated finds. One site was uncovered during road right of way construction during the cultural resources inventory. This site (probably tipi ring) was identified as possibly eligible under Criteria D, having the potential to yield information of importance about pre-history, but that testing would be required at the site prior to a determination of eligibility under Criteria D. The report further states, "…that there may be some limited potential to yield information of importance about prehistory should sufficient intact subsurface cultural deposits be found." The uncovered portion of the "tipi" ring was recovered in place without further disturbance, at the direction of the archeological team conducting the cultural inventory. The summary of results for that inventory concludes that "Construction of the Shooting Sports Complex will have no adverse effect upon this site." However, A letter from Dr. S. Wilmoth, Deputy State Archaeologist, states that this summary statement does not appear consistent with the recommendations and findings within the report itself. Dr. Wilmoth recommends that FWP develop an agency plan or commitment for requiring avoidance or other consideration for these sites. An additional recommendation is for a second assessment or recordation of the "Auberon Site", which is located on GFSSC lands adjacent to the skeet range access road. This second assessment should include feature mapping and subsurface testing, to be completed prior to any further alteration of the area around this site. (See mitigation measures/stipulations in Part III). If any subsurface cultural materials are found during any construction activities Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks in Helena will be notified.

Table 2. Potential impacts on human environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Social structures and cultural diversity				**X**		
2. Changes in existing public benefits provided by wildlife populations and/or habitat				**X**		
3. Local and state tax base and tax revenue				**X**		
4. Agricultural production				**X**		**#4**
5. Human health				**X**		**#5**
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income				**X**		
7. Access to & quality of recreational activities				**X**		**#7**
8. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals (ordinances)				**X**		
9. Distribution & density of population and housing				**X**		**#9**
10. Demands for government services				**X**		
11. Industrial and/or commercial activity				**X**		

Comments (A description of potentially significant, or unknown, impacts and potential alternatives for mitigation must be provided.)

4. The site is adjacent to surrounding agricultural land. Agricultural leases are being pursued to continue dry land farming on portions of the property. Currently 278.07 acres of the property are characterized as too saline or too steep to farm.

5. Range site plans, construction and the ongoing operational and maintenance plans meet the standards of safety for the range participants and the public at large.

7. Range will provide year round controlled access and fulfils a need for a range to accommodate law enforcement training, hunter education, bow-hunter safety, and public shooting.

9. This is a rural area with a low population density. The GFSSC site is completely surrounded by one farm operation. Nearest neighbor is 1/3 mile on the NW corner on opposite side of the butte.

Part III. Environmental Consequences

Does the proposed action involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely harmful if they were to occur? No

Does the proposed action have impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant? No

Identification of the Preferred Alternatives:

- **Alternative A** is as described in paragraph 10 (Description of Project)
  (1) Finish construction of 200 yard range.
  (2) Development of 5 station skeet house
  (3) Finish construction of perimeter fence and gates
  (4) Development of a youth/family training range
  (5) Development of a 500-meter Silhouette range

- **Alternative B (No Action Alternative)** area will remain as an active shooting complex without improvements to the ranges, construction of 5 station skeet house and installation of perimeter fence and gates.

Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:
Two alternatives have been considered, **A** (Proposed Alternative) and B (No Action Alternative). There were no other alternatives that were deemed reasonably available, nor prudent.

Neither the proposed alternative (A) nor the no action alternative (B) would have any significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences.

- There are beneficial consequences for the acceptance of alternatives **A** to Improve shooting sports opportunities, and to provide improved safety and security, with the mitigations and stipulations listed below.

- The No Action Alternative would be not to improve the range and continue on with present shooting activities without increased shooting opportunities and improved safety. Land use would remain the same. Therefore the proposed alternative is the prudent alternative.

Describe any Alternatives considered and eliminated from Detailed Study:
None

List and explain proposed mitigative measures (stipulations):

One potential archeological site was uncovered during road right of way maintenance activities which was concurrent with the cultural resources inventory. The site was investigated by the cultural resource inventory team and was immediately reburied without further disturbance. This site is outside of any future development within the shooting complex and will remain untouched. All other identified sites are untouched and are also outside of future development areas. Additionally the uncovered site and all other potential sites have been identified to the directors of the GFSSC and to FWP personnel, these sites will remain outside of any future development or maintenance areas. The uncovered site is available for a second assessment and additional recordation and will be maintained in its present preserved state. Discussions on how and when to do a future assessment of this site are being carried out between Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

Proposed complex site plans with overlay maps showing roads, ranges, backstops, buildings, latrines, etc. have been forwarded to the SHPO for their further analysis of potential impacts to the sites identified during the cultural resources inventory dated 1 February 2007.

If any subsurface cultural materials are found during any construction or maintenance activities, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks in Helena will be notified, who will, in-turn, consult with the State Historic Preservation Office.

Individuals or groups contributing to, or commenting on, this EA:

Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks
Warren Moyes, 764 33rd A Ave. N.E., Great Falls, MT 59404

PART IV. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

All of the pertinent or potential impacts of the project have been reviewed, discussed, and analyzed. None of the projects reviewed were complex, controversial, or located in an environmentally sensitive area. One potential cultural site was identified as possibly occurring within the current project area. Mitigation measures have been proposed to protect this particular site an all others identified in the recent cultural inventory. The projects being proposed are on properties owned by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and to a lesser extent to those owned by the GFSSC. This environmental assessment (EA) references the previous environmental assessments of Dec. 2001, for Acquisition of a Community Shooting Range and the 2005 EA for construction of the range complex and facilities. Both of these EAs should be referenced and the current EA checklist should be tiered from those previous EAs. Because of the previously completed and approved EAs, the proposed low impact activities, the mitigation measures proposed, and the increased recreational opportunity indicates that this should be considered the final version of this environmental assessment. There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative (A). The previously successful EAs and the history of the Great Falls Shooting Sports Complex providing extensive recreational opportunities to its members and the public, indicates support for the proposed alternative. Therefore, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks should approve the proposed alternative (**A**) for improvements to the Great

Falls Shooting Sports Complex as outlined in para. 2 & 10.

EA prepared by: GENE R. HICKMAN
Ecological Assessments
Helena, MT 59602

Date Completed: July 19, 2007

PART V. EA CONCLUSION SECTION

Recommendation and justification concerning preparation of EIS:

None Required

Describe public involvement, if any:

None