INTRODUCTION

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) invites the public to comment on its proposal to acquire a conservation easement on approximately 4,940 acres of the Melany Mannix Ranch, in Powell County. FWP would provide the funding needed to purchase the proposed easement with a fixed grant of $1,379,000 from the federal Forest Legacy Program. The private landowner would donate the remainder of the appraised easement value, which by Forest Legacy stipulations would total no less than 25 percent of appraisal.

The proposed project area, to be known as the Dalton Mountain Conservation Easement, would adjoin the east boundary of the preexisting 740-acre Nevada Lake Wildlife Management Area, and would include approximately 2,220 acres currently owned by The Nature Conservancy (TNC). As a result of this project, these TNC lands would be added to the Melany Mannix Ranch, and would be included as part of the 4,940 acres in the Dalton Mountain Conservation Easement. This is an outcome prescribed by the Blackfoot Community Project (BCP) of the Blackfoot Challenge, as part of a local grassroots effort to secure the future of some 87,000 acres formerly owned by Plum Creek Real Estate Investment Trust. These 87,000 acres were recently purchased by TNC to enable the BCP.

The purposes of the conservation easement would be to conserve fish and wildlife habitat by preventing subdivision, development, and other forms of habitat loss, perpetuate the ranching and logging lifestyle of the private landowner on the land under easement, and guarantee reasonable access for public hunting. The land under easement would remain in private ownership, and would remain on the county tax rolls. Traditional uses of the land would continue and generally would be unaffected by the easement. Rights granted to the public for access, restrictions on potential changes in land use, and other terms of the conservation easement would endure in perpetuity, and be enforceable upon future owners of the property.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

Authorities/Direction

FWP is authorized by State law (87-1-209, MCA) to purchase conservation easements for protecting wildlife habitat. The Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission (the Commission) is the decision-making authority for matters of acquiring conservation easements or other interests in land proposed by FWP. Through its Habitat Montana Policy (ARM 12.9.508-512), the Commission has directed FWP to deliver the following services and benefits with its acquisitions of conservation easements and other interests in wildlife habitat: (a) conserve and enhance land, water and wildlife; (b) contribute to hunting and fishing opportunities; (c) provide incentives for habitat conservation on private land; (d) contribute to non-hunting recreation; (e) protect open space and scenic areas; (f) promote habitat-friendly agriculture; and (g) maintain the local tax base. Following Commission approval of a proposed project, the Montana Board of Land Commissioners (the Land Board) must approve land acquisitions, disposals or exchanges involving FWP proposals over 100 acres or $100,000 in value.

The proposed Dalton Mountain Conservation Easement is made possible by a grant from the federal Forest Legacy Program, pursuant to Section 1217 of Title XII of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990 (16 USC Section 2103C). The Forest Legacy Program was created to protect environmentally important private forest lands threatened with conversion to non-forest uses. FWP is the agency that administers the Forest Legacy Program in Montana, in close cooperation with Montana's Forest Stewardship Committee.

Area Description/Wildlife Resources

The proposed easement area is located about 10 miles southeast of Helmville, in Powell County. Public access is available from State Highway 141 by Dalton Mountain Road #329 and Clear Creek Road #1831. A map is provided in Appendix 1.

The easement area is located entirely in the upper Blackfoot River basin. Vegetation is a complex of native sagebrush-grassland, riparian, aspen, ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir and

lodgepole pine vegetation types that have never been plowed. Buffalo Gulch, Clear Creek, Sheldon Creek, California Gulch, Madison Gulch and Jefferson Creek are the principal drainage features of the property. There are no buildings or other structures besides cattle pasture fences on the land proposed for conservation easement (the ranch headquarters and irrigated haymeadows are excluded from the easement area). The primary land uses during the past 100 years have been cattle grazing, logging, and hunting.

The proposed Dalton Mountain Conservation Easement would underlie approximately 4,940 acres in the headwaters of a remote intermountain valley that covers some 300,000 acres between the Bob Marshall and Scapegoat Wilderness Areas, the Garnet Range, the Flints and Sapphires, and the Continental Divide. The Dalton Mountain Conservation Easement would span a wildlife linkage zone that connects the Continental Divide and the Garnet Range at the narrowest points of the Nevada and Avon Valleys. It is positioned on the southeastern fringe of a fall staging area for upwards of 400 sandhill cranes from scattered breeding grounds all across the upper Blackfoot Valley. It is part of the continental migration route for bald eagles between the Northwest Territories and southwest United States. Wolves have been documented across this area on a regular basis over the past 5 years, which is indicative of its natural linkage with distant regions of the Northern Rocky Mountains.

The project area supports year-round or significant seasonal range for subpopulations or population units of mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk, moose, black bear, mountain lion, bobcat, lynx, marten and others. Habitat suitable for wolverine, grizzly bear and gray wolf is present, and is connected by other suitable habitat to large occupied refugia only 10-30 miles distant. No inventory of reptiles, amphibians or invertebrates has been accomplished to date. FWP has found evidence in field notes obtained from the U. S. Bureau of Land Management of Pileated Woodpecker, Cassin's Finch, Pine Grosbeak, Varied Thrush, American Robin, Townsend's Solitaire, Yellow-rumped Warbler, MacGillivray's Warbler, Western Wood-peewee, Hairy Woodpecker, Common Raven, Gray Jay, Red-tailed Hawk, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Flicker, Williamson's Sapsucker, Franklin's Grouse, Great Gray Owl, Chipping Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Goshawk, Pine Siskin, Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch and Western Tanager.

These species have been observed in the vicinity of the project area, and are expected in the forests of the subject property.

Project Need

The Mannix Ranch owner is interested in preventing subdivision and development of the property, and in replacing economic incentives to subdivide with economic incentives to leave the land undivided. FWP has long recognized the importance of the Mannix Ranch as wildlife habitat, and as a desirable location to expand public access for hunting. FWP and the Mannix Ranch have a history of cooperating on issues and opportunities such as establishment of a Block Management Area (Nevada Lake BMA) with other neighbors in 1985. Since the early 2000s, the Mannix Ranch has been among the highest priorities of FWP Region 2 (Missoula) for acquisition of a conservation easement. Limited available funding and urgent needs to accomplish other important, time-sensitive projects all across Montana prevented FWP from committing to purchase a conservation easement on the Mannix Ranch prior to the present time. The involvement of TNC and the Blackfoot Challenge, along with the availability of Forest Legacy Program funding for which the proposed Mannix Ranch project qualified, makes this proposal a possibility today.

This opportunity to acquire a conservation easement on the Mannix Ranch represents a timely coincidence of interests, priorities and funding among the private landowner, FWP and other project partners to perpetuate a traditional agricultural lifestyle and important wildlife habitat in perpetuity. This project would enact most of the land conservation strategy of the *Blackfoot Challenge*—and FWP as a partner—for the Nevada Creek Area of the Blackfoot Community Project. The *Challenge* initiated the Blackfoot Community Project in Fall 2002—beginning with community meetings from Helmville to Seeley Lake—as a proactive response to the progressive parceling and development of Plum Creek timberlands across the watershed. As a result, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) agreed to assume the financial risk of obtaining loans and purchasing up to 89,000 acres of Plum Creek property for the *Challenge*. TNC and Plum Creek closed on the first 18,443 acres in January 2004, and the next 19,883 acres in May 2004. (The May closing included 3,834 acres of Plum Creek inholdings within the Blackfoot-

Clearwater Wildlife Management Area, which enabled the Blackfoot-Clearwater Forest Legacy Project, and the transfer of these acres to FWP ownership in Fall 2004.) TNC and Plum Creek closed on the next 4,601 acres in November 2004, including the approximately 2,220 acres of TNC parcels that are herein proposed for inclusion in the Dalton Mountain Conservation Easement.

TNC's pivotal role in the Blackfoot Community Project—and as a partner in this proposed Forest Legacy project—is as the buyer and interim property holder, on behalf of the local communities. TNC relies in turn on its partners in the *Blackfoot Challenge* to develop and help implement a property disposition strategy by which permanent landowners may be found who will maintain the community values that were identified in the meetings of 2002, and thereafter. Among the community values at the top of the list are continued forest management, timber harvest, livestock grazing, noxious weed control, conservation of fish and wildlife habitat, and public recreational access. These values were provided for decades by the corporate timber companies, and were generally taken for granted by the neighbors and publics who benefited. This proposal for the Dalton Mountain Conservation Easement reflects the currently emerging disposition strategy of the *Blackfoot Challenge* for Plum Creek lands in the Nevada Creek area, in an attempt to fulfill the desires and expectations of the local community, including FWP and the other participating public agencies.

Failure to act on this opportunity could make a conservation easement much more difficult to accomplish in the future as property values continue to rise and as the land passes to succeeding owners who may have different interests. The current Powell County Comprehensive Plan prohibits residential subdivisions of less than 160 acres, but hypothetically could allow up to 30 subdivided homes across the subject lands. The proposed Dalton Mountain Conservation Easement and Nevada Lake Wildlife Management Area are already bordered on the southwest by a 15-lot subdivision on about 600 acres. If the Mannix Ranch were to be sold, subdivided and developed, a unique, native wildlife habitat would be lost forever, along with the public's opportunities to access and appreciate that habitat. The potential replacement of native vegetation with houses, fences, driveways, garages, barns, and other structures constitutes a direct habitat

loss for native wildlife populations. Human activity associated with residential areas, including vehicle traffic, pets and outdoor recreation, would displace many species from otherwise suitable habitat within an expanded radius around the homes. Conversely, the potential introduction of garbage, bird feeders, fruit trees and other unnatural foods would likely attract deer, bears and mountain lions into nuisance situations that would not occur without rural residential development, and are difficult and expensive to mitigate or correct. If the Powell County Comprehensive Plan were to be amended in the future to allow a higher residential density, impacts to wildlife habitat would be greater still.

Additionally, potential residential development on the lands proposed for a conservation easement would seriously decrease future hunting opportunities on those lands. Shooting restrictions would become a practical necessity within an extended radius surrounding the home sites to protect residents. As hunting is removed as a practical possibility on more and more acres in a rural setting, there would be increasing potential for wildlife, particularly elk, to habituate and seek refuge in areas closed to hunting. Experience has shown that this can prevent FWP from effectively managing elk population size to keep elk numbers in balance with natural forage and to control levels of private property damage caused by elk.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to acquire a conservation easement on approximately 4,940 acres of the Melany Mannix Ranch, in Powell County. FWP would provide the funding needed to purchase the proposed easement with a fixed grant of $1,379,000 from the federal Forest Legacy Program. The private landowner would donate the remainder of the appraised easement value, which by Forest Legacy stipulations would total no less than 25 percent of appraisal.

The proposed project area, to be known as the Dalton Mountain Conservation Easement, would adjoin the east boundary of the preexisting 740-acre Nevada Lake Wildlife Management Area, and would include approximately 2,220 acres currently owned by The Nature Conservancy (TNC). As a result of this project, these TNC lands would be added to the Melany Mannix

Ranch, and would be included as part of the 4,940 acres in the Dalton Mountain Conservation Easement.

The purposes of the conservation easement would be to conserve fish and wildlife habitat by preventing subdivision, development, and other forms of habitat loss, perpetuate the ranching and logging lifestyle of the private landowner on the land under easement, and guarantee reasonable access for public hunting. The land under easement would remain in private ownership, and would remain on the county tax rolls. Traditional uses of the land would continue and generally would be unaffected by the easement. However, rights granted to the public for access, restrictions on potential changes in land use, and other terms of the conservation easement would endure in perpetuity, and be enforceable upon future owners of the property.

The terms of the proposed conservation easement would prohibit any subdivision of the subject land for any purpose. The easement would prohibit commercial uses (other than agriculture and forestry), surface mining, game farms, and other activities that might adversely impact the conservation values of the land. Ranching and forestry would be specifically allowed by the easement, in a manner generally consistent with traditional practices on the Melany Mannix Ranch, but with limitations to prevent abrupt changes in management practices that would seriously impact wildlife habitat (for example, sodbusting of native rangeland or unrestricted clearcutting).

Under the terms of the conservation easement, the landowner and FWP would agree to follow a plan for timber harvest. This Forest Stewardship Plan (dated October 24, 2006) has been prepared by Northwest Management, Inc. of Helena, MT in consultation with Melany Mannix and FWP, and in accordance with Forest Legacy stipulations. It reflects the goals and objectives of the Ranch, as well as the purposes for which FWP and the Forest Legacy Program propose to enter into the Dalton Mountain Conservation Easement. Both FWP and the landowner possess copies of the Forest Stewardship Plan. Excerpts from the Plan, which illustrate its scope and direction, are reprinted in the Draft Management Plan (Appendix 2) and

in Appendix 3 for reference.

The Forest Stewardship Plan and FWP Management Plan highlight grazing management issues and opportunities. As indicated in the draft Management Plan (Appendix 2), the landowner and FWP would agree to cooperate in the future on mutually agreeable opportunities to use and manage livestock distribution for the enhancement of wildlife habitat and the livestock operation.

Public access for hunting would be guaranteed in perpetuity across the approximately 4,940 acres proposed for conservation easement by a method agreed upon between FWP and the landowner. Opportunity for at least 400 hunter-days of access would be provided annually during the fall-winter-spring hunting seasons (September 1-May 15), including but not limited to upland bird, archery, general elk and deer, spring and fall bear, and lion. Outfitting or fee hunting on the conservation easement would be prohibited. Hunters would be restricted to access by foot or horseback.

For the 2008 hunting season, hunters would be required to ask permission to hunt directly from the landowner. Hunting access generally would be limited to one or two parties per day. FWP and the landowner would document this access by maintaining a list of names to whom permission is issued. Immediate family members and ranch employees would not count toward the minimum hunter days of opportunity guaranteed the public by the terms of the proposed conservation easement. The landowner would be free to reserve days for her exclusive use, as long as the public access requirement is met during the course of the hunting year. The landowner reserves the right to deny access to any person for cause.

As further described in the draft management plan, FWP would visit the easement area and the landowner each summer to monitor compliance with the easement terms and maintain communication. FWP would also increase its management and enforcement presence in the local area during hunting season to ensure that the agreed-upon access regulations are not violated by the public, and that the public's rights to access under the terms of the easement are

realized.

ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION

Alternative A—No Action

FWP considered the alternative of taking no action. This would leave a full range of future management options for the subject lands, including development options, in the hands of current and future owners of the property. FWP would retain the option to comment on proposed land subdivisions and developments on the subject lands under existing laws and policies in Powell County; however, the effects of FWP's input on any future proposed subdivision are uncertain. Public access for hunting on the Mannix Ranch would remain at the discretion of current and future landowners.

Alternatives Considered but Dropped from Further Consideration

Because the proposed conservation easement represents the full extent of agreement between FWP and the private landowner, "no-action" is the only reasonable alternative to the proposed action. The Mannix Ranch is not for sale, so fee-title purchase of the property by FWP is not an option. FWP's preferred method for securing wildlife habitat is by perpetual conservation easement whenever appropriate because it leaves the land in private ownership and allows FWP to stretch limited available dollars.

IMPACTS

Neither the proposed action nor alternative A would have any effect on the following concerns:

Solid/hazardous wastes	Water rights
Wild and scenic rivers	Floodplains

Wildlife Populations and Use Currently Associated with the Property

Threatened and Endangered Species: The gray wolf is classified by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service as an endangered species, and may be present occasionally on the subject lands. Future recovery of wolves in this area will largely depend on prey populations (deer and elk) and conflicts with human activities. The proposed action would better protect habitat for prey populations of elk and mule deer than no action, and would lead to the lowest future increase in human settlement, development and potential conflicts with wolves.

Grizzly bears, a threatened species, may occasionally cross the property, but grizzly bears have not established a consistent use pattern on the Mannix Ranch. Suitable habitat for lynx, an endangered species, exists in forested habitats on the subject lands, but the presence of lynx has not been confirmed. Bald eagles nest about 3 miles northwest, but the subject lands are probably not important to this recently delisted species due to a lack of adequate aquatic foraging habitat. In all cases, the proposed action would be expected to benefit threatened and endangered wildlife in the long run by maintaining native plant communities and preventing residential or other land developments. The proposed conservation easement would not introduce any land use or activity that would be detrimental to these species.

No other federally listed threatened or endangered species are known or expected to occur on or within the affected area of the proposed action.

Sensitive Species: No sensitive animal or plant species are known to occur on the subject lands. The proposed action offers protection from habitat loss for sensitive and other native plant and animal species collectively, while the no-action alternative does not.

Big Game Species: The proposed action would serve to maintain existing land uses and prevent changes in land use that would affect wildlife populations and current use patterns. Alternative A (no action) would leave an important portion of the habitat and local wildlife populations vulnerable to the management decisions of future private landowners who might not

consider objectives that feature wildlife or the general public interest in wildlife. Changes in management direction, such as subdivision and sale of residential lots for development, would negatively impact native wildlife through direct removal of natural habitat on homesites, along roadways, and elsewhere within the daily use area of people and pets. Indirect effects include disturbance of wildlife across a wider area around homes due to an increase in human recreational activity. Wildlife species diversity would be expected to decline as species associated with human residential areas increase and species sensitive to disturbance are displaced. Elk and deer would likely be displaced onto adjacent private lands, increasing the currently high amount of game damage on private property and costs to FWP of addressing these issues. The introduction of dog food, garbage, bird feeders, pets and other attractants in this presently remote habitat would probably attract black bears, mountain lions and potentially grizzly bears to residences, ultimately increasing mortality in these species as they become viewed as pests. The proposed action would prevent these and other forms of wildlife habitat loss on the subject lands.

The proposed action would ensure opportunity for at least 400 hunter-days access each year for public hunting. If opportunity for more than 400 hunter-days were required by the conservation easement, it might reduce the quality of the hunting experience and the probability of achieving an effective annual elk harvest necessary for meeting FWP elk population objectives. The no-action alternative would allow a future landowner(s) to close the land to public hunting, which would result in a loss of valued access to remote, natural habitat. It might also lead to a reduced opportunity for effective elk harvest, which would exacerbate current game damage problems on private lands in the Helmville area.

Potential Value of the Land for Protection, Preservation and Propagation of Wildlife

The proposed action would serve to maintain future management options for protecting, preserving and propagating wildlife by preserving in perpetuity the natural habitat required at the landscape scale to support wildlife populations and communities, and by prohibiting competing land uses and developments that would diminish habitat quality. Alternative A (No Action) would allow the possibility of future land subdivisions, developments and substantial changes in

land use and habitat quality that would severely limit and diminish options for protecting and managing wildlife populations for the public benefit.

Management Goals Proposed for the Land and Wildlife Populations, and Any Additional Uses of the Land Such as Livestock Grazing or Timber Harvest

Management goals and strategies for the proposed Dalton Mountain Conservation Easement, including wildlife populations, timber harvest, livestock grazing, and noxious weeds are detailed in the draft management plan (attached). In effect, the management plan describes direction for enhancing the already demonstrated compatibility of the existing commercial ranch operation with the management of wildlife habitat, wildlife populations and public hunting.

Potential Impacts to Adjacent Private Land Resulting from the Proposed Action

The proposed action could influence landowners bordering the conservation easement via long-term impacts on property values. Property values on lands bordering the conservation easement may increase because the easement lands will remain dominated by open space and effective as wildlife habitat. Otherwise, the general effects of this proposal, as felt by neighbors of the Mannix Ranch on a day-to-day basis, would be status quo. FWP would continue to attempt to control elk population size (by hunting) to match available natural habitat and minimize damage to private crops and fences. The no-action alternative would allow the possibility of dramatic changes in land use on the subject property in the future, which could change the character of the local community.

Potential Social and Economic Impacts to Affected Local Governments and the State

A draft socio-economic assessment is attached (Appendix 4). To summarize, the proposed action would leave the land in private ownership, and in continuing agricultural use, with no change in its status on the county tax rolls. Over the long run, Alternative A (no action) would allow greater potential residential and commercial growth in this rural area. This possible future growth would be accompanied by higher demand for utilities, roads, schools and other services that would have to be partially or wholly provided by state and local governments. As

developments achieved their potential growth limits under Alternative A, the recreational and economic benefits generated by the existence of abundant and diverse wildlife and natural landscapes in the local area would be diminished. Conversely, the proposed action would restrict future residential and commercial developments on the subject lands, in a location that would allow wildlife to continue to flourish, and in a rural setting where wildlife populations may be managed effectively.

Land Maintenance Program to Control Weeds and Maintain Roads and Fences

Under the proposed action, the land would remain in private ownership. The control of noxious weeds and the maintenance of roads and fences would remain as responsibilities of the landowner, and would not be shared by FWP (other than indirectly via FWP's partnership in the local weed management group). However, a draft management plan is attached that addresses land management issues that would be controlled by the proposed conservation easement, as well as other management issues of mutual interest between the landowner and FWP (including the management of noxious weeds).

Air and Water Quality

The proposed action would likely result in a net reduction in potential future risks to air and water quality on the subject lands, compared to no action. Possibilities for residential, commercial, and industrial developments would be reduced and restricted across the subject land.

Such developments, which would remain a possibility under the no-action alternative, would have the potential for affecting air and water quality in numerous ways. For example, increased roading and traffic on roads to service housing or commercial developments could increase runoff from road surfaces into Clear Creek or other tributaries. The proposed action would avoid the possibility of increased cattle use in and beside Clear Creek and other riparian zones under different land ownership in the future, which would not be controlled under the no-action alternative. Effects of timber harvests allowed in the proposed easement would not differ from the current situation, but would prevent increased sedimentation that might occur as a result of timber harvests under the direction of future landowners if no action is taken.

Wetlands and Riparian Habitats

Under the proposed action, riparian habitat would be included among the conservation values of the land to be protected from further damage. Thus, the current condition of the riparian zone would be documented in photographs and serve as a baseline for comparison in the future. Implementation of grazing management opportunities identified in the Management Plan would be expected to improve streambank and riparian vegetation conditions in the long run. The no-action alternative offers no protection for riparian areas across the entire 4,940 acres proposed for conservation easement.

Livestock grazing

The proposed conservation easement would allow and anticipate continued livestock grazing. Implementation of grazing management opportunities identified in the Management Plan would be expected to improve wildlife habitat and the livestock operation in the long run. Livestock grazing would be unrestricted under the no-action alternative.

Historic and Cultural Resources

The proposed action would not cause a change in land use, so would not affect cultural sites. Potential developments allowable under the no-action alternative would leave cultural resources at risk.

Cumulative Impacts

Alternative A (no action) could ultimately contribute to the cumulative regional and local loss of wildlife habitat and public access if the subject lands on the Mannix Ranch are eventually managed in a manner incompatible with these values. Further, no-action could ultimately contribute slightly to the cumulative regional and local loss of grazing land for the livestock industry, and an increasing cumulative demand for services provided by local county and state governments to new residences. The proposed action would not be expected to contribute to a cumulative impact in a measurable way.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Formal public review of the draft environmental assessment (EA) for the proposed Dalton Mountain Conservation Easement, including a draft socio-economic assessment and management plan, will begin with the availability of these documents on October 26, 2007 and will close on November 26, 2007. The availability of this EA for public review will be advertised in the local, Missoula-area, and statewide media, and a copy of the draft EA will be mailed to all parties who indicate an interest in this proposal. A public hearing will be held at the Helmville Community Center on November 5, 2007 at 7:00 P.M. After reviewing public input received on or before November 26, FWP will decide upon a preferred alternative. The Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission will be asked to render a final decision on this proposal at its regularly scheduled meeting on November 29. The State Board of Land Commissioners will be asked to approve the proposal at its first monthly meeting following an approval by the Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission.

Comments should be addressed to Mike Thompson; Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks; 3201 Spurgin Road; Missoula, MT 59804 (phone 406-542-5516; email *mthompson@mt.gov*). Comments must be postmarked no later than November 26 to ensure their consideration in the decision-making process.

AGENCIES, GROUPS OR OTHERS CONSULTED IN PREPARATION OF THE EA

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

- Darlene Edge, Land Agent, Helena
- Rebecca Jakes-Dockter, Legal Counsel, Helena
- Steve Knapp, Habitat Bureau Chief, Wildlife Division, Helena
- Mike Frisina, Range Coordinator, Butte
- Ken McDonald, Wildlife Division Administrator, Helena
- Ron Pierce, Fisheries Biologist, Missoula
- Mack Long, Regional Supervisor, Missoula

Mannix Ranch

- Melany Mannix, Owner/Operator, Helmville

The Nature Conservancy

Bee Hall, Helena

Caroline Byrd, Missoula

Blackfoot Challenge

Hank Goetz, Lands Director, Ovando

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Greg Neudecker, Wildlife Biologist, Ovando

Kevin Ertl, Wildlife Biologist, H2-O WPA, Helmville

Northwest Management, Inc.

Gary Ellingston, Forester, Helena

PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR PREPARING THE EA

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Region 2

Mike Thompson, Regional Wildlife Manager, Missoula

NEED FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Based on an evaluation of impacts to the physical and human environment, under MEPA, the proposed action is not a significant action affecting the human environment; therefore, an environmental impact statement is not a necessary level of review.