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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

PART I. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

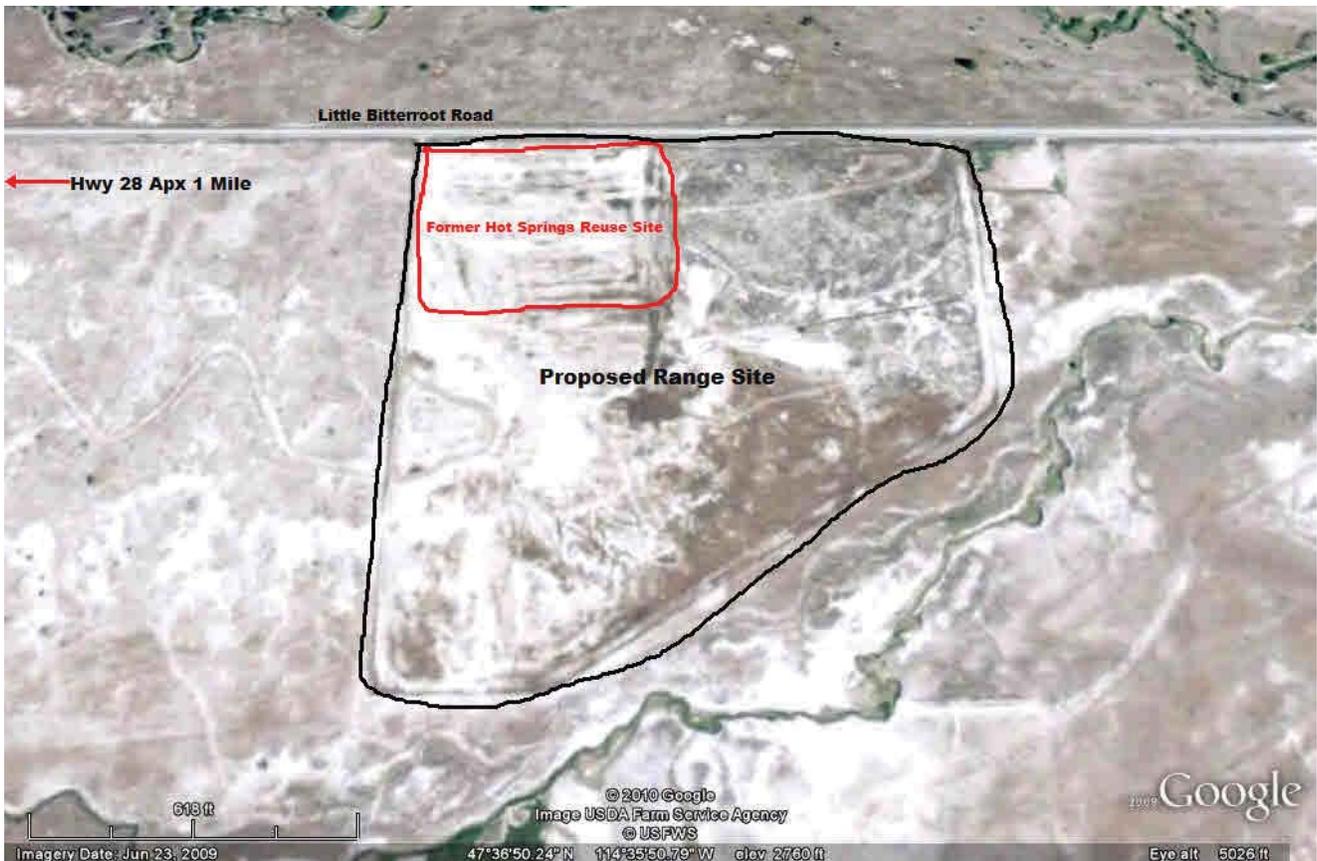
1. Project Title: Town of Hot Springs

2. Type of Proposed Action:

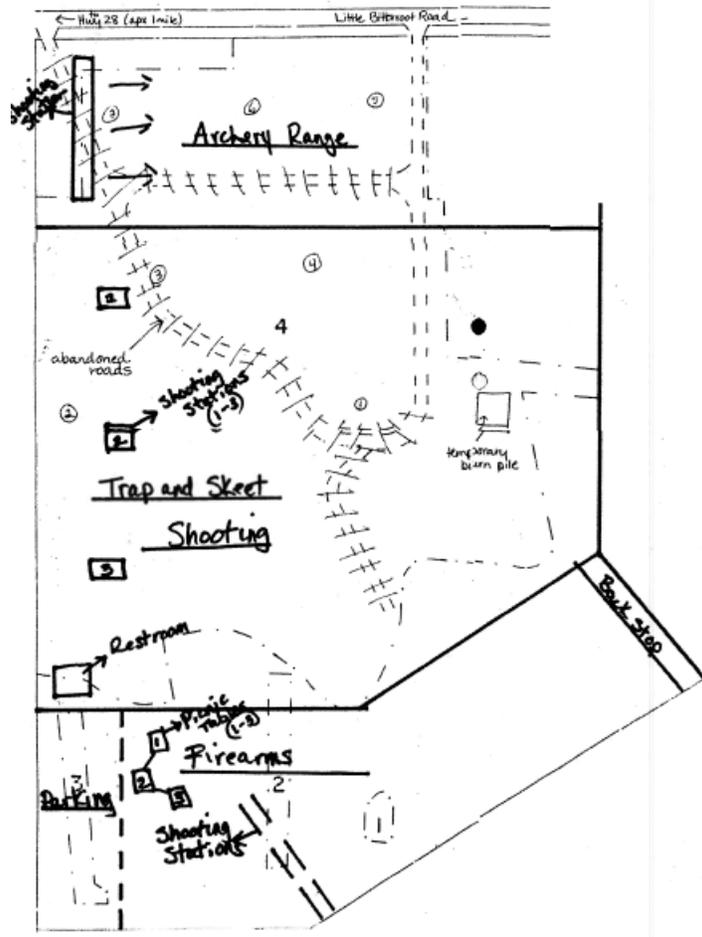
- Build a Clubhouse

3. Location Affected by Proposed Action:

The shooting range site is on 40 acres approximately 3 miles from the town of Hot Springs and about 1 mile from Highway 28 on Little Bitterroot Road. The site is located on property owned by the town of Hot Springs in the NE ¼, NW ¼, Sec. 6, T21N, R23W.



Map 1 – Area Map showing site of the Hot Springs Shooting Sports Complex.



MAP 2 – Shooting Complex Facilities Map

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

To be eligible for grant assistance, a private shooting club or a private organization:

- (a)(i) *Shall accept in its membership any person who holds or is eligible to hold a Montana hunting license and who pays club or organization membership fees;*
- (ii) *May not limit the number of members;*
- (iii) *may charge a membership fee not greater than the per-member share of the club's or organization's reasonable cost of provision of services, including establishment, improvement, and maintenance of shooting facilities and other membership services; and*
- (iv) *shall offer members occasional guest privileges at no cost to the member or invited guest and shall make a reasonable effort to hold a public sight-in day each September, when the general public may use the shooting range for a day-use fee or at no cost; or*
- (b) *Shall admit the general public for a reasonable day-use fee.*

5. Need for the Action(s):

Currently, there is not a training/classroom area, or a central support and administrative area for range activities, such as leagues, meets, tournaments, or other special events.

6. Objectives for the Action(s):

Provide a training/classroom area for Hunter Education, 4-H shooting sports, firearms and archery training, concealed weapons and other firearms safety courses in addition to creating a central support and administrative area for range activities.

7. Project Size: estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected:

The proposed new club house would be approximately 1,400 sq. ft. building within the existing shooting range property.

8. Affected Environment (A brief description of the affected area of the proposed project):

Twelve acres of the site was formerly used as a solid waste landfill, which has been closed and capped. The surrounding area and part of range is or was formerly agricultural. There are no delineated wetlands, or natural water sources within the area proposed for development. However, an irrigation ditch runs through the southwest corner of the range property. The irrigation water flowing through the ditch eventually drains into Hot Springs Creek.

The shooting range complex is administered by the City of Hot Springs, Parks and Recreation Board. Within the 40 acre site is a 12-acre site in the NW corner that was formerly a solid waste landfill (Hot Springs Reuse Site). That site has been closed and capped in accordance with state and federal guidelines.

The shooting complex currently includes an archery range, skeet and trap shooting area, paintball area, and pistol and rifle range, as well as a designated parking area and pit latrine.

9. Description of Project:

The foundation for the clubhouse will be a concrete slab on grade. The clubhouse building dimensions will likely be 30'x48' equaling approximately 1440 sq. ft. It will be of standard wood frame construction built to meet Montana codes for handicapped accessibility. Propane will be the main heat source. The clubhouse will be provided electrical power by means of a generator and a solar array. There will be no plumbing in the building at this time; however, there will be a handicapped accessible pit latrine.

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

None

(a) Permits, Licenses and/or Authorizations:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>	<u>Date Filed/#</u>
N/A		

Funding:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	\$42,500

11. Affiliations, Cooperating Agencies, User Groups and/or Supporting Groups: The range is located on Town property and is administered by the Town of Hot Springs, Recreation Department and is a public range with no

public use fees. The range is used for Hunter Education, Bowhunter Education, firearms training, and general shooting sports activities by two local 4-H clubs, the Hot Springs School District, the Hot Springs Police Department, Dryden Tactical Defense, and local shooting clubs.

12. History of the Planning and Scoping Process, and Any Public Involvement: The project has been discussed during town council meetings of the town of Hot Springs. Those meetings their minutes or transactions are open or available to the public. This range proposal had also been discussed with the associated project vendors and contractors.

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

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

14. Names, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor:

Randy Woods, P.O. Box 669, Hot Springs, MT 59845, (406) 741-2325

15. Other Pertinent Information:

The initiative to build a Shooting Range was discussed during Hot Springs Town Council meetings and was approved in 2010. Plans called for the building of a shooting sports complex that would offer shooting sports opportunities for rifle, pistol, shotgun, archery, muzzleloader, paintball, and airsoft with room for expansion into other venues. This process began in 2010, and an EA in conjunction with an FWP grant was completed in 2010. This EA tiers to the environmental analysis that was completed for the initial shooting range development grant in 2010 and builds on that foundation for the next phase of the range's development.

Shooting range applications require the participating governing body to approve by resolution its submission of applications for shooting range-funding assistance. Resolution Date: Feb. 7, 2012

PART II. IDENTIFICATION OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVES

The proposed alternative A, alternative B and the no action alternative were considered.

Alternative A (Proposed Alternative) is as described in Part I, paragraph 9 (Description of Project). Build a Clubhouse for range staff duties, meetings, and events. There are beneficial consequences to acceptance of the **Proposed Alternative (A)** to build a clubhouse.

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- **Alternative B (No Action Alternative)** Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Shooting Range Development Grant money would be denied and the area will remain as an active shooting range without the proposed improvements. The Hot Springs Town Council may investigate other funding opportunities to build the clubhouse or reapply for an FWP Shooting Range Grant in the future. Future events that require a shelter at the shooting range would need to investigate other options.

Describe any Alternatives considered and eliminated from Detailed Study:

Only the proposed alternative and the no action alternative were considered. There were no other alternatives that were deemed reasonably available, nor prudent. Neither the proposed alternative nor the no action alternative would have significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences.

List and explain proposed mitigating measures (stipulations): None

PART III. 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		#4
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		#8
9. Historical & archaeological sites				X		#9
10. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
11. Aesthetics				X		

2. & 5. There are no delineated wetlands and no natural water sources within the area proposed for development. However, there is irrigation runoff along the south that drains into Hot Springs Creek. A small footprint is all that is required for the construction of the proposed clubhouse. No critical wildlife habitat would be affected. Any resident or transient wildlife may leave the immediate area while the construction is taking place.

4. The elimination of vegetation for the implementation of the proposed action will not change the overall abundance and diversity of plant species within the area. The proposed projects occupy a very small portion of the individual properties. Because of prior land use, native vegetation is minimally present anywhere on the property. Therefore, this proposed project is determined to have an insignificant impact on native vegetation in the area.

7. The project will cause limited displacement of soils but these improvements and construction will not substantially effect geological features or establish new erosion patterns. Soil disruption for this site is localized. Erosion control measures will be in effect and disturbed areas are to be reseeded.

8. Minor and temporary dust and vehicle emissions would be created by construction equipment during the proposed improvements within the project area. However, the construction time is short and human effects will be limited due to the sparse population in the surrounding area.

9. This project uses no federal funds; therefore, the Federal 106 Regulations do not apply. However, when projects are on state owned properties the State Antiques Act does apply.

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		

4. The site is adjacent to surrounding agricultural land used primarily for grazing.

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 complex will provide year round controlled access and fulfils a need for a range to accommodate law enforcement training, hunter education, and public shooting.

9. This is a rural area with a low population density. There is only one farm operation adjacent to the site.

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. The projects being implemented are already on an existing range or altered areas that together with the insignificant environmental effects of the proposed action, indicates that this should be considered the final version of the environmental assessment. There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative. The city council and the public support the Town of Hot Springs, Shooting Range. Therefore, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks should approve the proposed alternative (A) for the improvements as outlined in Part I, Para. 9.

PART V. 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? Individually, the proposed actions have minor impacts. However, it was determined that there are no significant or potentially significant cumulatively impacts. Cumulative impacts have been assessed considering any incremental impact of the proposed action when they are combined with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, and no significant impacts or substantially controversial issues were found. There are no new hazards created with this project and there are no conflicts with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan.

Recommendation and justification concerning preparation of EIS:

There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative; therefore, an EIS is not required.

PART VI. EA CONCLUSION SECTION

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

Randy Woods, P.O. Box 669, Hot Springs, MT 59845, (406) 741-2325
MT Fish Wildlife and Parks

EA prepared by:

GENE R. HICKMAN
MS Wildlife Management
Ecological Assessments
Helena, MT 59602

Date Completed: June 27, 2012

Describe public involvement, if any:

This draft EA will be advertised on FWP's web site and through a legal ad in the *Sanders County Ledger* in Thompson Falls, MT announcing a public comment period. A press release will also announce the project and comment period.