

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Big Hole Tourism Association
Proposed Implementation Date:	August, 2013
Proponent:	Big Hole Tourism Association
Location:	Section 26 & 34, Township 2 South – Range 15 West
County:	Beaverhead County

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The Big Hole Tourism Association has submitted a proposal to use state land in Sections 26 & 34, Township 2 South – Range 15 West to hold an annual Fun Run on existing roads in the Steele Creek drainage just east of Wisdom Montana. The run would be a non-profit event to raise money for community and regional charities. The event would host approximately 50-75 runners and would be finished in about two hours.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

Patrick Renee, MT DNRC Archeologist
Beaverhead County Commissioners
Crane Ranch
Jim Olson, FWP Fisheries Biologist
Craig Fager, FWP Wildlife Biologist
NRIS Search

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

None

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

A. Action Alternative: Grant a LUL to the Big Hole Tourism Association to hold an annual fun run on state land east of Wisdom on existing roads in the Steele Creek Drainage.

B. No Action Alternative: Deny a LUL to the Big Hole Tourism Association to hold an annual fun run on state land east of Wisdom on existing roads in the Steele Creek Drainage.

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III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

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

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

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

There are two main soil types that are present at the proposal location. The first being Hooligan-Inabnit Complex and the second is Phillipsburg –Mussigbrod complex. There is a third minor soil present which is Doolittle-Phillipsburg-Hooligan complex. All three soils are well drained with the top layer being a mix of silt clay loam which is slippery when wet. Because the race would take place on an existing surfaced road and two track ranch roads portions of the road could be slippery if it was raining during the race or if there is appreciable moisture the day of the race. Because the event is held in August the roads should be dry. Soil erosion and rutting of soils should not occur from having the race on these soil types.

This proposal should not cause long term or cumulative effects to soils.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

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

There aren't any perennial streams present on the race course and there aren't any know springs that are present. Holding a race at the proposed location will not affect water quality or cause degradation or cumulative affects to the surrounding watershed.

6. AIR QUALITY:

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

This proposal would not affect long term air quality in Southwest Montana because of the limited size and scope of the proposal.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

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

A Montana Heritage NRIS search of the proposed race site didn't identify any rare plants or cover types. There currently isn't any vegetation on the ground where the race would occur. The race will be run on existing roads.

No long term or cumulative impacts are anticipated to vegetation in or around the race area.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

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

The area is used by a large array of bird and wildlife species including small and large mammals. The proposal however should not have any direct, indirect or cumulative effects to these species due to the projects small footprint, and short duration.

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

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

The Montana Natural Heritage program identified three species of concern; Greater Sage Grouse, Arctic Grayling and Pygmy rabbit.

Greater Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) Greater Sage Grouse use has been recorded within the proposed project area. The DNRC is not aware of any important breeding leks within the proposal area. If sage-grouse are using the tract, they could be directly disturbed by activities associated with this project; however, the disturbance would be short term and would not be expected to have a measureable impact on the overall sage grouse population. Leks are used in the spring of the year and the race is being held in August. Measurable direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would not be anticipated as a result of the proposed project due to the short duration of the race and the lack of any change in habitat values.

Pygmy Rabbit (*Brachylagus idahoensis*) Pygmy Rabbits have used portions of Section 34, T 2 South – Range 15 West which is a part of this proposal. The area identified as being used by the rabbits is near the race location. The rabbit is a BLM and US Forest Service sensitive species. This project would probably not cause direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on this species because disturbance to sage brush and the surrounding habitat would be minimal and of a short duration.

Arctic Grayling (*Thymallus arcticus*) are found in the Steele Creek drainage which is near the location of the fun run. The race however is not close enough to the creek to cause any impacts to stream habitat due to the races short duration and small foot print. No direct, indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated to arctic grayling from this proposal.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

Patrick Renee Montana DNRC archeologist was contacted concerning this proposal. His search didn't identify any cultural resource concerns associated with this project.

11. AESTHETICS:

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

The proposal would not affect the aesthetics of the area due to the races short duration, approximately 2 hours.

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

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

The proposal would not present any demands on environmental resources of land, water, air or energy.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

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

The Dillon Unit is unaware of any other MEPA review or scoping being done in the project area.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

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

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

The risks to human health and safety associated with this proposal are low, but do exist. Racers could become hurt by trips or falls, get heat stroke or have a heart attack. The state would assume no liability for injury or death associated with this event.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

The proposed use, fun run, should not cause any loss of production or alter agriculture activities. The lessee has signed a settlement of damages form stating that there will be no impacts.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

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

This proposal will not increase or decrease employment in the Wisdom area.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

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

The license would not generate an increase or decrease of tax revenue locally or on a state wide basis.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

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

No additional government services would be required if this license is granted.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

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

None

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

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

The main Steel Creek Road is an access route to USDA Forest Service lands in the Steele Creek drainage. The race should not have any impact on the use of the road and if it does it will be of a short duration.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:
Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.

None

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:
Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

None

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:
How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

This proposal would be of short duration and no change in cultural uniqueness and diversity would be anticipated if this license is granted.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:
Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

The license would generate a onetime fee of \$150.00 for the Western/Eastern trust if the license is granted.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Tim Egan	Date: 8/5/13
	Title: Dillon Unit Manager	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Select the Action Alternative.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS More Detailed EA No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Hoyt Richards
	Title: CLO Area Manager
Signature: /s/	
Date: 8/15/2013	