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January 30, 2013

To:
Governor's Office, Sheena Wilson, PO Box 200802, Helena, MT 59620*
Environmental Quality Council, Capitol Bldg, Room 106, PO Box 201704, Helena, MT 59620 *
Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality, Bonnie Lovelace , PO Box 200901, Helena, MT 59620*
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks*:
-Director's Office (Coleen Furthmyre)
-Legal Unit (Jessica Snyder)
-Lands Section (Heather Noel)
-Fisheries Division (Beth Giddings)
-Wildlife Division (Laura Geary)
-Design & Construction (Paul Valle)
-Regional Information Officer's/ Office Managers/Reg Supervisors
Shane Colton, MT FWP Commissioner, 335 Clark, Billings MT 59101*
MT Dept of Natural Resources & Conservation, Eastern Land Office, PO Box 1794, Miles City MT 59301*
Montana Historical Society, State Preservation Office, PO Box 201202, Helena, MT 59620-1202
Montana Environmental Information Center, PO Box 1184, Helena, MT 59624
Montana State Library, 1515 E. Sixth Ave, PO Box 201800, Helena, MT 59620*
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, PO Box 595, Helena, MT 59624*
Montana Wildlife Federation, PO Box 1175, Helena, MT 59624*
Richland County Commissioners, 201 W. Main, Sidney, MT 59270*
Richland Co. Pheasants Forever, Kyle Carter, president*
Dave Haverkamp, NRCS, 2745 W. Holly St, Sidney, MT 59270*
Emilie Boyles-Montana East Radio News*
Dave Harris, Richland Co. Pheasants Forever member*
Troy Conradsen, neighbor*
Wade Hagler, neighbor, 10924 County Rd. 344, Savage, MT 59262
David & Lanette Jorgensen, neighbor, 10986 County Rd. 342, Savage, MT 59262
(*sent electronically)

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) propose to lease approximately 272 acres of the 1,585 acre Elk Island Wildlife Management Area (WMA) for cattle grazing to better manage vegetation for wildlife cover and forage. The proposed grazing lease will be used to improve vegetative conditions for pheasant and white tailed deer that utilize the WMA particularly during the spring, nesting, and brood rearing periods.

The EA can also be viewed on the FWP web site at: fwp.mt.gov, then Recent Public Notices.
A public comment period will extend until **5:00 p.m., Friday, February 22, 2013**.
Written comments can be mailed or emailed to the address below:

Elk Island WMA Agricultural Lease
P.O. Box 342
Wibaux, MT 59353
Email: mfoster@mt.gov

Thank you for your interest,

Brad Schmitz
Region 7 Regional Supervisor

Enclosure

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Draft Environmental Assessment

GRAZING LEASE ON PORTION OF
ELK ISLAND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

January 2013

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of proposed state action:

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) propose to lease approximately 272 acres of the 1,585 acre Elk Island Wildlife Management Area (WMA) for cattle grazing to better manage vegetation for wildlife cover and forage.

2. Agency authority for the proposed action:

FWP has the authority under Section 87-1-210 MCA to protect, enhance, and regulate the use of Montana's fish and wildlife resources for public benefit now and in the future. In addition, in accordance with the Montana Environmental Policy Act, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP) is required to assess the impacts that any proposal or project might have on the natural and human environments. Further, MFWP's land lease-out policy, as it pertains to the disposition of interest in Department lands (89-1-209) requires an Environmental Assessment (EA) to be written for all new grazing leases, lease extensions or lease renewals.

3. Anticipated Schedule:

Public Comment Period:	February 1 – February 22, 2013
Decision Notice:	February 25, 2013
Lessee selected (pending MFWP commission approval):	March 2013
FWP Commission Final Consideration:	April 2013
Turn out:	May of each year
Cattle Removed From WMA:	October of each year
Term of Grazing:	3 years; 2013-2015

4. Location affected by proposed action:

Elk Island WMA in eastern Montana is located northeast of the town of Savage along the Yellowstone River in Richland County (Figure 1). Elk Island WMA comprises 1,585 acres in T20N R58E portions of sections 12-13, 21-24, 27 and T20N R59E portions of sections 7, 18, however this proposal is relevant only to approximately 272 acres in T20N R58 E Sect 21 (Appendix A)

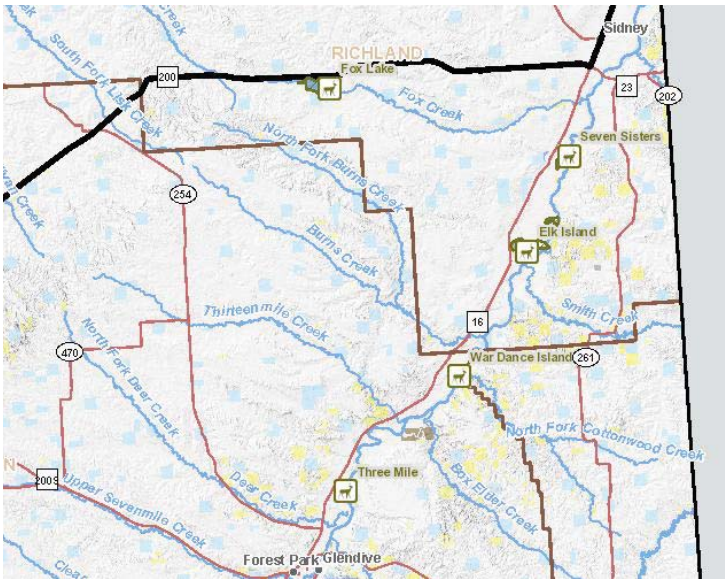


Figure 1. Elk Island WMA in eastern Montana is located northeast of the town of Savage along the Yellowstone River in Richland County.

5. Project size:

The proposed project area is approximately 272 acres of rangeland.

	Acres		Acres
(a) Developed		(d) Floodplain	0
Residential	0		
Industrial	0	(e) Productive	
		Irrigated Cropland	0
(b) Open Space/Woodlands/Recreation	0	Dry Cropland	0
		Forestry	0
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas	0	Rangeland	272
		Other	0

6. Permits, Funding & Overlapping Jurisdictions:

(a) Permits: None required
(b) Funding: N/A
(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities: None

7. Narrative summary of the proposed action:

Elk Island WMA was purchased by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP) to provide maximum hunting opportunities, primarily for white-tailed deer and pheasants, while also maintaining wildlife populations and the unique riparian ecosystem in a viable and healthy condition. The fields in the proposed project area (Appendix A) currently contain stands of rank, minimally productive vegetation that is too thick to provide ideal nesting and brood rearing habitat for pheasants and other bird species. The proposed action is to implement a 3-pasture

rest rotation grazing system (described in detail in Appendix B) that will allow for a range of habitat conditions to be maintained long-term while improving vegetation and soil health.

Rest-rotation grazing systems provide a myriad of benefits. Grazing of one-third of pastures during the growing season provides disturbance to "set back" rank vegetative growth and promote plant species diversity. Grazing one-third of pastures after seed ripe allows cattle to trample mature seeds into the soil, which promotes germination. The remaining one-third of pastures are completely rested, which allows plants to restore vigor and seedlings to establish. The result will be healthy plant communities that are diverse, provide excellent nesting and brood rearing cover for birds, and improved forage for a variety of wildlife species.

8. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action
• Decadent residual vegetation would remain.
• White-tailed deer and pheasant habitat would remain sub-optimal.
• Continued decline in vegetation quality and wildlife habitat functionality.

Alternative B: Haying or mowing under existing sharecropper agreements:
• Mowing and haying can result in direct mortality of birds and destruction of nests.
• Mowing is time-consuming, costly, and would result in significant litter deposition that may limit bird use and take several years to break down.
•Mowing would result in thick litter that might inhibit vegetation growth, reestablishment, and might promote establishment of undesirable plant species.
• Haying would remove litter but would require fertilizer inputs and reseeding in the long-term.
•The soil in the project area is generally poor and would not produce a desirable hay crop, especially given the current rank condition and poor forage quality of many fields.
•Haying occurs on approximately 55 acres of the WMA already—utilizing grazing as a management tool will allow the area biologist to compare the effectiveness of each method for reinvigorating grass stands.

Alternative C: Proposed Action: Provide grazing lease.
• Vegetation would be managed on a 3-year rotation, including two years of growing season rest.
• Soil and plant disturbance would reduce decadent residual vegetation and benefit plant seedling establishment.
• Management would promote maximum plant production, vigor and nutrient content.
• Provide better spring green-up vegetation conditions for white tailed deer.
• Provide better nesting and brood rearing cover for pheasants.
• Some segments of the general public may disapprove of cattle grazing on the WMA.
• Grazing the WMA as a management tool would facilitate positive relationships with local ranchers.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

1. Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

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			1b
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				

1b. Some impacts to soil conditions may occur due to trampling, trailing or grazing in localized, high use areas, especially around water sources. The grazing capacity estimate is believed to be a conservative estimate, so the risk of overgrazing-induced erosion should be minimal. Hoof action from livestock grazing should provide a positive benefit to soil quality by helping to break down old residual vegetative material, thereby returning nutrients to the soil.

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 or pollutants?		X				
e. For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a.)		N/A				
f. Other		X				

The proposed action would have no effect on the ambient air quality.

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				3a
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				3b
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				3h
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				3j
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				3k
l. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)		N/A				
m. For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)		N/A				
n. Other		X				

3a/b/h/j/k. Cattle grazing can result in fecal matter being discharged into waterways. This is anticipated have no impact on water quality for this project for the following reasons. (1) Cattle grazing is a dominant land use in the general area and the grazing that is proposed to occur on the WMA (95 AUMs/year or less) is very minor, thus any impacts to water quality would be negligible and of little significance given the prevalence of cattle grazing on the landscape. (2) The level of grazing recommended will leave adequate vegetative material to protect the soil and minimize potential runoff. (3) The Yellowstone River is >0.5 mi away (see map in Appendix A), thus it is unlikely fecal matter would be deposited into the river due to overland flow. (3) Lower Yellowstone Irrigation District ditches and roads surround the project area. These typically have raised sides which should prevent fecal matter from entering ditches. Even if small amounts of fecal matter did enter irrigation ditches, the material should be deposited onto farm fields and should not come into contact with drinking water, recreational water bodies, or natural ecosystems.

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 positive			4a
b. Alteration of a plant community?			X positive			4b
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?	X					4c
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				4d
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X		Yes	4e
f. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		N/A				
g. Other		X				

4a/b. While vegetation cover and quantity will be decreased as livestock are grazing a specific pasture, vegetation quality will increase following grazing as a part of the 3-year grazing cycle. Grazing will enhance the availability and palatability of spring forage in the area and improve overall plant condition. Grazing disturbance will promote vegetative species diversity. Plant and soil disturbance as the result of grazing may enhance seed placement, germination, and seedling establishment. Importantly, grazing will help to break down dense litter mats and rejuvenate vegetation that has become decadent due to years without any form of disturbance.

4c. No unique, rare, threatened, or endangered plant species are known to occur on the parcel, and the parcel has been tilled, burned, and planted historically. However MFWP does not have exhaustive data on the presence or distribution of rare, threatened or endangered plant species on the WMA and impacts to them are unknown.

4d. The proposed grazing will increase productivity of the ground and acreage of agricultural land.

4e. Grazing could introduce and spread noxious weeds. The project area will be monitored for new or spreading weed infestations by the MFWP area biologist, the grazing lessee, and Richland County Weed District personnel. Weed infestations will continue to be controlled according to MFWP's 2008 Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan. Weed control is conducted primarily by the Richland County Weed District.

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				5a
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?			X positive			5b
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?			X positive			5c
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				5f
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
h. For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in		N/A				
i. For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		N/A				
j. Other		X				

5a/b/c. While livestock grazing activities will reduce the amount of forage in a pasture during the grazing lease cycle and may temporarily displace game from the area being grazed, the project will have a positive long-term impact on whitetail deer and pheasant habitat. Cattle grazing will remove the existing buildup of decadent vegetation and residual litter, which should enhance spring green-up conditions and provide more palatable forage for grazing wildlife and pheasant brood rearing. Cattle grazing following the proposed 3-year rest rotation system will provide a diversity of vegetation structure in the area while annually retaining areas with high-quality residual cover for nesting and predator avoidance. Grazing is also expected to promote vegetative diversity, with increased forb and insect diversity and abundance, which are important components of upland game bird brood rearing habitat. Expected increases in species diversity and structural diversity of vegetation due to cattle grazing are expected to increase nongame species diversity and use of the area, especially songbirds.

5f. One federally-endangered fish species (pallid sturgeon), four Montana fish Species of Concern (blue sucker, paddlefish, sauger, and sturgeon chub), two Montana turtle Species of Concern (snapping turtle and spiny softshell), one Montana frog Species of Concern (northern leopard frog), and one bird species of concern (Interior Least Tern) are known to occur in or along the Yellowstone river. The proposed project should have no impact on any of these species because the proposed project is not anticipated to have any negative effects on water quality or riparian habitat (see comment 3a/b/h/j/k). One Montana Species of Concern, the meadow jumping mouse, may occur in the project area. Improved habitat structure and forage quality resulting from the proposed grazing are expected to benefit this species.

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

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 serve 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				

The proposed action would have no effect on existing noise level. Although cattle do vocalize, cattle grazing is a dominant land use in the general area and the proposed level of grazing (80 AUM annually) will not significantly increase the number of cattle in the general area.

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. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. 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. Other		X				

Grazing activity would occur outside the time frame of upland game bird and big game rifle seasons. No known or anticipated impacts would result as a result of adoption of this proposal.

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
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. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				
d. For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		X				
e. Other		X				

Chemical spraying is part of MFWP's weed management plan to limit the infestation of noxious weeds on its properties per guidance of the 2008 Integrated Weed Management Plan. Weed treatment and storage and mixing of the chemicals would be in accordance with standard operating procedures. No known or anticipated impacts would result as a result of adoption of this proposal.

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				

The proposed action would have no effect on local communities, increase traffic hazards, or alter the distribution of population in the area.

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Will the proposed action have 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 any, specify:		X				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				10b
c. Will the proposed action result in 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. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?		X				
e. **Define projected revenue sources		N/A				10e
f. **Define projected maintenance costs.		N/A				10f
g. Other		X				

10b. MFWP is required by law to pay property taxes in an amount equal to a private individual. This project will not affect the tax base in any way.

10e. This project will generate revenue rather than requiring revenue to complete. The exact amount of revenue from the grazing lease will depend upon the number of AUM's grazed (maximum 95 AUM/yr) multiplied by the annual grazing rate. The 2013 grazing rate is established as the annual average private land grazing rate as determined by the MT Agricultural Statistics Service.

10f. Additional costs to MFWP associated with periodic monitoring of the grazing system and weeds will be minimal, since the MFWP area biologist routinely monitors the WMA anyway. Initial startup costs associated with layout and location of electric fence and water sources will be the responsibility of the lessee.

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				11c
d. For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		N/A				
e. Other		X				

11c. Domestic livestock will not be present on the WMA during upland game bird or big game general rifle seasons.

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. **Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.)		N/A				
e. Other		X				

The proposed action will have no impact on cultural or historical resources.

C. SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that 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. For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)		N/A				
g. For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		N/A				
h. Other		X				

Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

The grazing lease agreement between MFWP and the lessee would include all lease stipulations and enforceable control measures. These are identified in the lease agreement and pertinent attachments to same.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The proposed grazing lease on Elk Island WMA will be used to improve vegetative conditions for pheasant and white tailed deer that utilize the WMA particularly during the spring, nesting, and brood rearing periods.

The proposed project is not expected to have significant impacts on the physical or human environment. Identified impacts are expected to be minor and of short duration. The project is expected to benefit wildlife habitat conditions in the long-term.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Public involvement:

The public will be notified in the following manner about the proposed action and alternatives considered, and how to comment on this current EA:

- One public notice in each of these papers: *Sidney Herald* and *The Glendive Ranger Review*;
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: *http://fwp.mt.gov*.

Copies of this environmental assessment will be distributed to neighboring landowners and interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project.
This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having limited and very minor impacts, which can be mitigated.

2. Duration of comment period:

The public comment period will extend for twenty-one (21) days. Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., February 22, 2013 and can be mailed to the address below:

Elk Island WMA Grazing Lease
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
P.O. Box 342
Wibaux, MT 59353

Or email comments to: mfoster@mt.gov

PART V. EA PREPARATION

1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? (YES/NO)?
If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.

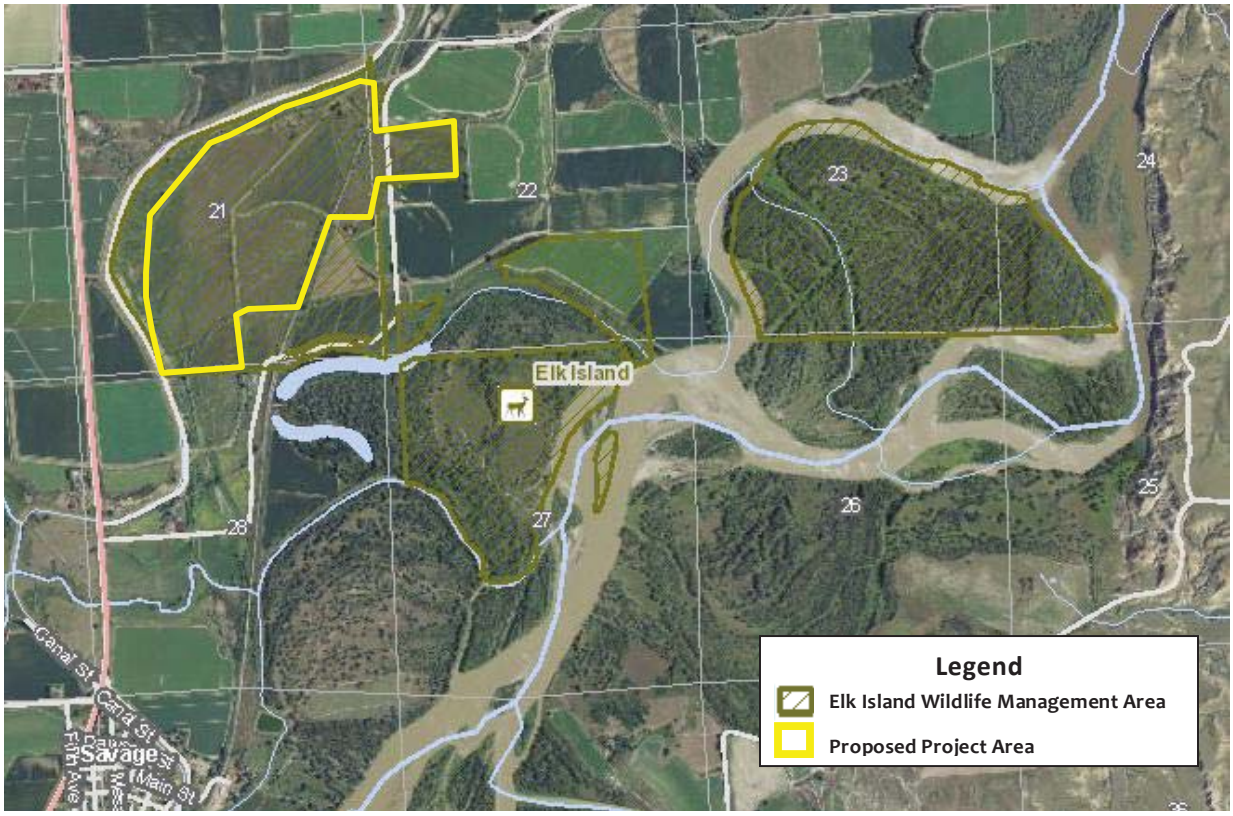
No, an ES is not required. It has been determined that no significant impacts to the physical and human environment will result due to the proposed action alternative, nor will there be significant public controversy over the proposed action; therefore, an EIS is not required.

2. Person responsible for preparing the EA:

Melissa Foster, MFWP Wildlife Biologist
P.O. Box 342
Wibaux, MT 59353
Office 406-796-5766
Cell 406-853-5682

APPENDIX A

Elk Island WMA Proposed Project Area Map



APPENDIX B

Grazing Plan – Elk Island WMA

A 3-pasture rest-rotation grazing system with a 3 year lease renewal is proposed for approximately 272 acres within Elk Island WMA. The area (see Appendix A) will be divided into 3 pastures. Pasture boundaries will be determined by the lessee and the area wildlife biologist in a way that is logistically feasible for the lessee to move animals, provide water, and erect temporary electric fences. A 3 pasture rest-rotation grazing system will be utilized following the general scheme below:

Year	Pasture 1	Pasture 2	Pasture 3
2013	Grazed Early[1]	Grazed Late[2]	Rested[3]
2014	Grazed Late[2]	Rested[3]	Grazed Early[1]
2015	Rested[3]	Grazed Early[1]	Grazed Late[2]

[1]Grazed early: grazed post green-up (approximately mid-may) to seed ripe (approximately late July)

[2]Grazed late: grazed after seed ripe with cattle removed prior to the youth pheasant hunting weekend.

[3]Rested: rested from grazing for the entire year.

Description of Pastures and Animal Unit Months (AUMs):

The project area consists of approximately 105 acres of dense nesting cover dominated by tall wheatgrass and pubescent wheatgrass with intermixed alfalfa, 125 acres of native vegetation (much of it dominated by inland salt grass), 40 acres of tame grass (dominated by smooth brome, with some areas of intermixed alfalfa). AUMs for the lease area were determined based upon NRCS recommendations for AUM for Richland County soil types (available from http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/ecs/range/ aum/mt083aum.html) and soil data for the project area from the NRCS Web Soil Survey (available from http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx). A maximum of 95 AUM will be provided for the project area annually. Stocking rates may be reduced in any year depending upon vegetation quality, numbers of cattle, growing conditions, and discretion of the area wildlife biologist and lessee.

Dates of Use:

Dates of grazing use will be dictated by 1) plant phenology, including timing of spring green-up and seed ripe, 2) forage consumption in the active pasture, and 3) hunting and recreational demands upon the area. Cattle will be removed from the area prior to the youth pheasant hunting weekend.

Special Conditions:

1. Stocking rates will be determined annually by the area wildlife biologist and will not exceed 95 AUM. Annual payments will vary depending upon AUMs grazed.
2. All livestock grazing (for purposes of this lease agreement) on the Elk Island Wildlife Management Area shall be restricted to pastures located in T20N R58E, Section 21 (portions thereof) as designated on the map in appendix A.
3. The lessee agrees to install and maintain temporary electric pasture fences in good functional condition. Electric fence must be removed within 7 days after cattle are removed from each pasture.
4. The lessee agrees to install and maintain livestock water facilities.
5. The lessee is responsible for moving cattle and adhering to lease terms.
5. Salt and mineral supplement is the responsibility of the lessee; salt grounds shall be moved periodically as designated by the area wildlife biologist.