

## CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**Project Name:** Clearwater River (Riverview Drive Bridge) Navigable Water Easement Grant  
**Proposed Implementation Date:** December 21, 2015  
**Proponent:** Missoula County and Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation  
**Location:** SW ¼ Section 3 Township 16 North Range 15 West  
**County:** Missoula

### I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The proposed project is a navigable water easement grant from Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) to Missoula County associated with the Clearwater River crossing at the existing Riverview Drive Bridge. In the summer of 2015 Missoula County Commissioners accepted a petition to make Riverview Drive a County Road from its junction with Hwy 83 to the eastern boundary of Section 10, T16N-R15W. The navigable river crossing of the Clearwater River was not included in this petition and is a missing link in legally connecting the petitioned road segment west of the river to Hwy 83. Missoula County has now requested this easement to perfect the County road status of this entire roadway.

The lands involved in this proposed project are held by the State of Montana in trust for the Public Land Trust – Navigable Waters Fund (Enabling Act of February 22, 1889; 1972 Montana Constitution, Article X, Section 11). The Board of Land Commissioners and DNRC are required by law to administer these trust lands to produce the largest measure of reasonable and legitimate return over the long run for the beneficiary institutions (Section 77-1-202; MCA).

### II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

*Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project. List number of individuals contacted, number of responses received, and newspapers in which notices were placed and for how long. Briefly summarize issues received from the public.*

The proposed project would involve an easement grant to Missoula County. DNRC specialists were consulted including Shawn Thomas, Trust Lands Division Administrator; Lisa Axline, Right-of-Way Section Supervisor; and Christie Hollenbeck, Right-of-Way Specialist. Private landowners affected by the easement grant, the US Forest Service, and Missoula County officials were also contacted.

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

*Examples: cost-share agreement with U.S. Forest Service, 124 Permit, 3A Authorization, Air Quality Major Open Burning Permit.*

None. There is an old bridge in poor condition located on the site of the proposed easement. The Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks and the Missoula Conservation District have jurisdiction regarding issuance of 124 and 310 permits associated with the installation of new structures, but not with the easement grant itself.

#### 3. ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT:

*Describe alternatives considered and, if applicable, provide brief description of how the alternatives were developed. List alternatives that were considered but eliminated from further analysis and why.*

#### **No Action**

The easement grant would not occur. The Trust would not be compensated. Private and public landowners beyond the bridge would not gain access for clear title at the bridge site.

### **Action Alternative**

Under the Action Alternative, DNRC would grant a Navigable Waters easement to Missoula County on the Clearwater River at the Riverview Drive Bridge. The Trust would be compensated. Private and public landowners beyond the bridge would gain access for clear title at the bridge site. A replacement bridge may or may not be installed at a future date.

## **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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to soils.*

#### **Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects**

None. Effects associated with any proposed bridge replacement would be expected to be addressed within a separate environmental analysis, and would need to comply with stream permitting regulations.

### **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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to water resources.*

No Action:

#### **Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects**

None.

Action:

#### **Direct and Indirect Effects**

None. Effects associated with any proposed bridge replacement would be expected to be addressed within a separate environmental analysis, and would need to comply with stream permitting regulations.

#### **Cumulative Effects**

Granting the easement would provide authorized legal access to land beyond the bridge which may result in more development which may impact water quality, quantity and distribution.

### **6. AIR QUALITY:**

*What pollutants or particulate would be produced (i.e. particulate matter from road use or harvesting, slash pile burning, prescribed burning, etc)? Identify the Airshed and Impact Zone (if any) according to the Montana/Idaho Airshed Group. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to air quality.*

No Action:

#### **Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects**

None.

Action:

#### **Direct and Indirect Effects**

None. Effects associated with any proposed bridge replacement would be expected to be addressed within a separate environmental analysis, and would need to comply with stream permitting regulations.

**Cumulative Effects**

Granting the easement would provide authorized legal access to land beyond the bridge which may result in more development which may impact air quality.

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**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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to vegetation.*

No Action:

**Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects**

None.

Action:

**Direct and Indirect Effects**

None. Effects associated with any proposed bridge replacement would be expected to be addressed within a separate environmental analysis, and would need to comply with stream permitting regulations.

**Cumulative Effects**

Granting the easement would provide authorized legal access to land beyond the bridge which may result in more development which may impact vegetation cover, quantity and quality.

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**8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:**

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

No Action:

**Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects**

None.

Action:

**Direct and Indirect Effects**

None. Effects associated with any proposed bridge replacement would be expected to be addressed within a separate environmental analysis, and would need to comply with stream permitting regulations.

**Cumulative Effects**

Granting the easement would provide authorized legal access to land beyond the bridge which may result in more development which may impact terrestrial, avian and aquatic life and habitats.

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**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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.*

No Action:

**Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects**

None.

Action:

**Direct and Indirect Effects**

None. Effects associated with any proposed bridge replacement would be expected to be addressed within a separate environmental analysis, and would need to comply with stream permitting regulations.

**Cumulative Effects**

Granting the easement would provide authorized legal access to land beyond the bridge which may result in more development which may impact unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources.

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**10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:**

*Identify and determine direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.*

**Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects**

None. Effects associated with any proposed bridge replacement are expected to be addressed within a separate environmental analysis, and would need to comply with stream permitting regulations.

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**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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to aesthetics.*

No Action:

**Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects**

None.

Action:

**Direct and Indirect Effects**

None. Effects associated with any proposed bridge replacement would be expected to be addressed within a separate environmental analysis, and would need to comply with stream permitting regulations.

**Cumulative Effects**

Granting the easement would provide authorized legal access to land beyond the bridge which may result in more development which may impact aesthetics.

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**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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to environmental resources.*

**Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects**

None. Effects associated with any proposed bridge replacement would be expected to be addressed within a separate environmental analysis, and would need to comply with stream permitting regulations.

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**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 Missoula County Growth Policy, Seeley Lake Regional Plan, US Forest Service and DNRC Placid Cost Share, and the Clearview Checklist Environmental Analysis.

#### 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.*

##### **Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects**

None. Effects associated with any proposed bridge replacement would be expected to be addressed within a separate environmental analysis, and would need to comply with stream permitting regulations.

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#### 15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

No Action:

##### **Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects**

None.

Action:

##### **Direct and Indirect Effects**

None. Effects associated with any proposed bridge replacement would be expected to be addressed within a separate environmental analysis, and would need to comply with stream permitting regulations.

##### **Cumulative Effects**

Granting the easement would provide authorized legal access to land beyond the bridge which may result in more development which may impact industrial and commercial activities and production.

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#### 16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

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

No Action:

##### **Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects**

None.

Action:

##### **Direct and Indirect Effects**

None. Effects associated with any proposed bridge replacement would be expected to be addressed within a separate environmental analysis, and would need to comply with stream permitting regulations.

##### **Cumulative Effects**

Granting the easement would provide authorized legal access to land beyond the bridge which may result in more development which may impact quantity and distribution of employment.

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#### 17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

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

No Action:

##### **Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects**

None.

Action:

**Direct and Indirect Effects**

None.

**Cumulative Effects**

Granting the easement would provide authorized legal access to land beyond the bridge which may result in more development, greater land values or both which may impact local and state tax base and tax revenues.

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**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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services*

No Action:

**Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects**

None.

Action:

**Direct and Indirect Effects**

None. Effects associated with any proposed bridge replacement would be expected to be addressed within a separate environmental analysis, and would need to comply with stream permitting regulations.

**Cumulative Effects**

Granting the easement would provide authorized legal access to land beyond the bridge which may result in more development which may impact demand for government services.

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**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.

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**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 direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.*

No Action:

**Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects**

None.

Action:

**Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects**

Riverview Drive, including the bridge crossing of the Clearwater River, is heavily used by the public for recreational access to State and Federal lands. Granting the easement across the Clearwater River to Missoula County (a public road agency) is expected to maintain or enhance long term motorized public access to this area.

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**21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:**

*Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to population and housing.*

No Action:

**Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects**

None.

Action:

**Direct and Indirect Effects**

None. Effects associated with any proposed bridge replacement would be expected to be addressed within a separate environmental analysis, and would need to comply with stream permitting regulations.

**Cumulative Effects**

Granting the easement would provide authorized legal access to land beyond the bridge which may result in more development which may impact density and distribution of population and housing.

**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?*

None.

**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 direct, indirect, and cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.*

No Action:

**Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects**

None.

Action:

**Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects**

The easement grant is expected to produce an estimated \$210 return to the trust for the easement encumbrance on .12 acres of land below the low water mark of the Clearwater River. Effects associated with any proposed bridge replacement would be expected to be addressed within a separate environmental analysis.

<b>EA Checklist Prepared By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Kristen Baker-Dickinson	<b>Date:</b> November 6, 2015
	<b>Title:</b> Clearwater Unit Manager	

**V. FINDING**

**25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:**

I select the proposed action alternative which is to grant an easement to Missoula County for a bridge crossing of the Clearwater River on Riverview Drive.

**26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:**

I find there are no significant impacts associated with the action of granting this easement. There is an old bridge in poor condition located on the site of the proposed easement.

Effects associated with any proposed bridge replacement would be expected to be addressed within a separate environmental analysis and would be subject to stream permitting regulations.

**27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:**

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

<b>EA Checklist Approved By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Robert H. Storer
	<b>Title:</b> Trust Lands Program Manager – Southwestern Land Office
<b>Signature:</b> <i>Robert H. Storer</i>	<b>Date:</b> <i>November 12, 2015</i>