

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
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Environmental Assessment Checklist

Part 1. Proposed Action Description

Project Title: Nuclear missile communications cable protection

Application Date: 7/23/2015

Name, Address and Phone Number:

United States Air force
Malmstrom Air force Base
Mike Best
6932 Goddard Dr
Malmstrom AFB, Mt 59402

Project Location: Deep Creek W, SW of Choteau

Description of Project:

Stabilize eroding bank to protect nuclear missile communications cable. Bank is comprised of glacial silt and gravel and is highly erodible. FWP made recommendations to stave erosion and protect the communications cable. Recommendations included minimizing use of rock, bank sloping to reduce the angle of repose, importing rooted willows, applying grass seed and maintaining channel width by removing streambed material from point bar opposite the site.

Other groups or agencies contacted or which may have overlapping jurisdiction:

The applicant indicates [verbally] that the landowner [representative] was consulted about the severity of the issues. The site is within an easement owned by the USAF. The applicant indicated the landowner is supportive of the project. The applicant consulted with a representative of the Sun River Watershed Group who gave some recommendations about project design. Many of those recommendations are reflected in the application and supported by FWP through the 125 permit (USAF-05-15).

Part 2 Environmental Review

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 provided
1. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources			x			1.
2. Terrestrial or aquatic life and /or habitats			x			2.
3. Introduction of new species into an area				x		
4. Vegetation cover, quantity and quality.				x		
5. Water quality, quantity and distribution (surface or groundwater)			x			5.
6. Existing water right or reservation.				x		
7. Geology and soil quality, stability and moisture				x		7.
8. Air quality or objectionable odors			x			8.
9. Historic and archaeological sites	x					
10. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air and energy				x		
11. Aesthetics			x			11.

Comments

(A description of potentially significant, or unknown, impacts and potential alternatives for mitigation must be provided.)

1. The site is within the range of the grizzly bear. Bears may frequent the area as a travel corridor while foraging for food. The project may displace grizzly bears upstream or downstream of the project site, but likely within the same stream corridor. These impacts would be short term and minor.

2. There may be a short term and minor impact to resident and migratory trout and whitefish. Conducting the project quickly will lessen any impacts. These impacts would be likely limited to causing fish to travel to an adjacent area, upstream or downstream, during the project. Fish would disperse after the project was completed. The permit stipulates a construction window during low water which coincidentally would protect spawning rainbow trout. These impacts would be short term and minor. See comment 1. Relating to impacts to grizzly bear. No impacts are expected to other terrestrial organisms beyond disturbance and disbursement from the site.

5. There may be a limited amount of turbid water generated from the project. The 124 permit (USAF-05-15) provides recommendations to reduce these impacts. The limited scope and duration of this project will also lessen the impacts.

7. This parent material at the site is highly erodible glacial silt and gravel. The permit recognizes this fact. The permit offers recommendations that give the project a high probability of success understanding the highly erosive nature of the parent material. The project is sensitive in nature given it deals with safeguarding a nuclear missile communications cable that is vital to the defense of the United States.

8. The project involves using diesel powered equipment which emit exhaust and can be loud. Odors would dissipate rapidly in the open air environment. The site is remote so it is unlikely that neighbors would be disturbed in any significant level from the noise generated from this project. Any disturbance would be short term and minor.

Impacts from exhaust would be short term and minor as exhaust fumes would dissipate rapidly.

11. There will be some impact to the aesthetics at this site. The project will result in a 'manicured' appearance during revegetation. It is possible that other trees/shrubs/grass will be added to the bank during natural processes.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially significant	Minor	None	Can Be mitigated	Comments provided
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			x		4.
5. Human health				x		
6. Quantity and distribution of community and personal income				x		
7. Access to and quality of recreational activities				x		
8. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals (ordinances)	x					8.
9. Distribution and density of population and housing				x		
10. Demands for government services	x					
11. Industrial and/or commercial activity				x.		

Comments

(A description of potentially significant, or unknown, impacts and potential alternatives for mitigation must be provided as comments.)

4. The neighboring lands are used for livestock and farming. It is not know if this project would have a significant impact on those activities.

7. The project is specifically proposed to increase recreational opportunities by reducing water hazards in this popular section of river. The project is expected to result in a positive impact to recreationists.

8. Purportedly the site is surrounded by lands held in a conservation easement. This action may be viewed as conflicting, but it is within the easement held by the United States Air force. Maintenance of infrastructure within that easement is common and does not conflict with environmental goals of adjacent lands.

Does the proposed action involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely harmful if they were to occur?

The site is presently highly erosive. The permit and this EA recognizes it may be difficult to stabilize this bank. See item 2 (7) regarding the sensitivity and necessity of protecting a nuclear missile communications cable.

Does the proposed action have impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant?

No. The proposed action is localized.

Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action when alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider. Include a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:

No other alternatives were identified that are reasonably practicable at achieving the goals. FWP and others have made recommendations to minimize impacts while fulfilling the objectives.

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

See above regarding recommendations to reduce impacts. These are technically mitigation, but were accepted by the applicant and reflected in the application.

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

EA prepared by: Grant Grisak

Date Completed: _____7/30/2015_____

Given the localized nature of this action no public comment was sought. The applicant indicates the only likely affected party is the neighboring landowner who has granted and maintained an easement for this cable. The landowner is supportive of the project.