Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

PART I. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

1. Project Title: Ruby Valley Gun Club

2. Type of Proposed Action:

a) Land Survey and Appraisal
b) Install Water System & Plumbing
c) Install Drain field (Septic)
d) Build and additional trap field (Trap Field #2)
e) Purchase Pat Trap
f) Install Lights Trap Field #1
g) Put in Sidewalks
h) Purchase Electrical Trap #2
i) Gravel Trap Fields
j) Bui ld Pistol Range
k) Install Club House Decks/awning
l) Acquire permanent ownership of the 23 acres

3. Location Affected by Proposed Action:
The Ruby Valley Gun Club is located 2.7 miles southeast of Twin Bridges and 5.9 miles northwest of Sheridan, Montana. It is on a tract of land being situated in NW1/4 NW 1/4 of Section 7, Township 4 South, Range 5 West, M.P.M., Madison County, Montana. The property is 23 acres of which 5 acres is dedicated to the facilities and 18 acres will be used for a shot fallout zone. Currently one trap, rifle /pistol range, club house and storage facility are on site.

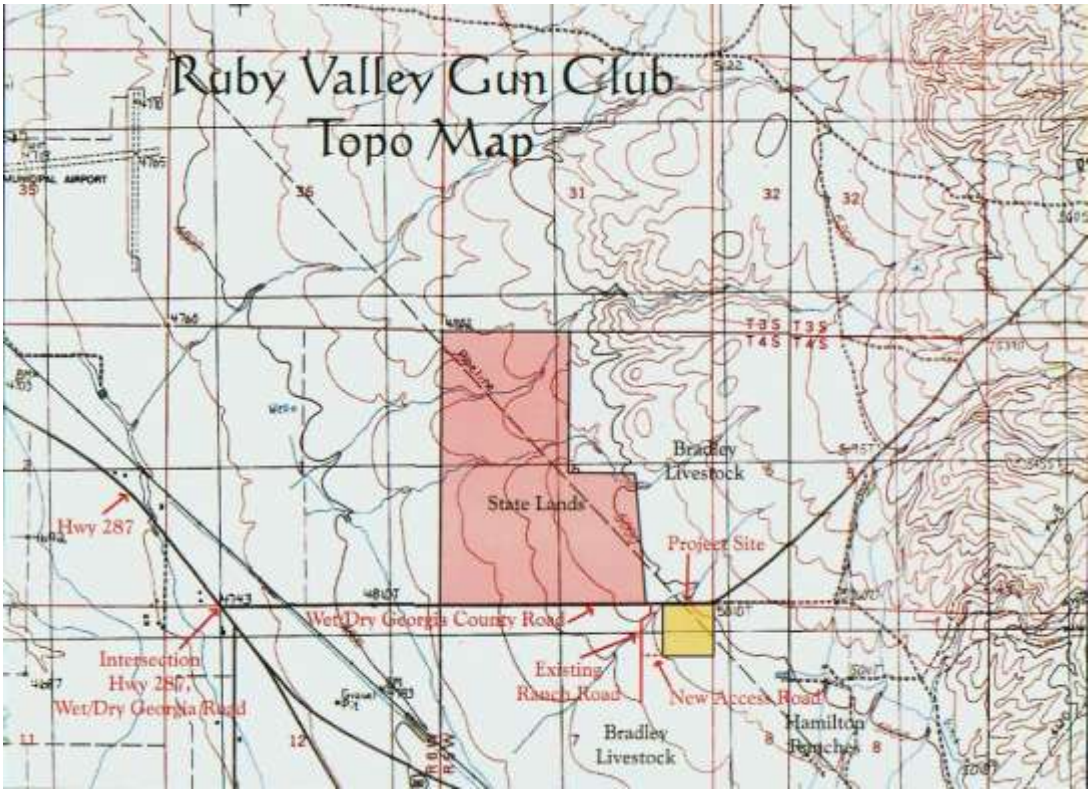

Figure 1 – Topographic map of project site for Ruby Valley Gun Club.

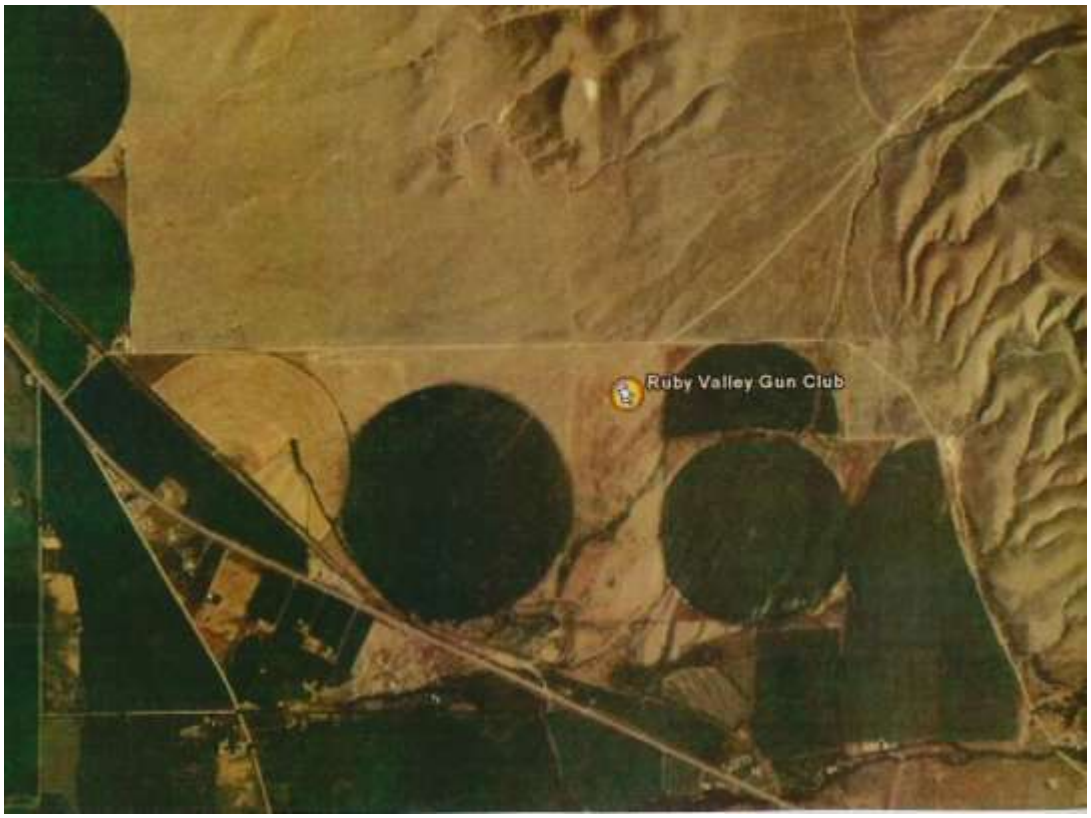

Figure 2 – Ruby Valley Gun Club in relation to surrounding agricultural areas.

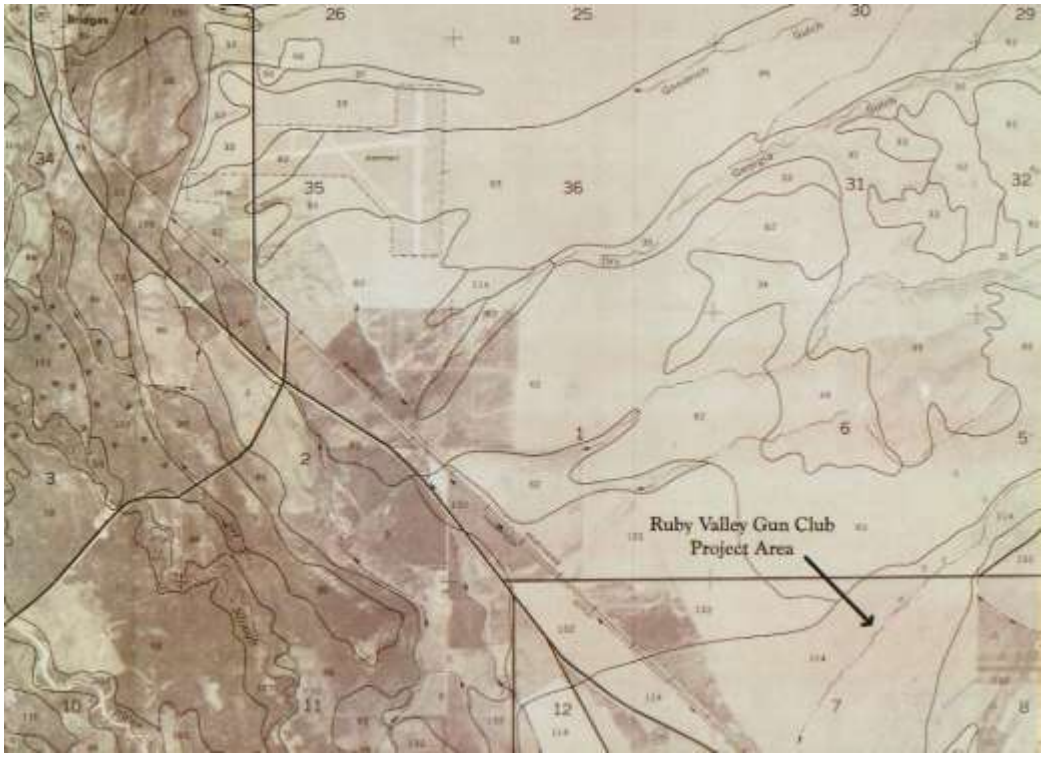

Figure 3 – Soils map around Ruby Valley Gun Club.

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): The 2011 Ruby Valley Gun Club grant application is a continuation of their phased Range Development Plan which was initially submitted in 2007. The club had relocated from Sheridan, MT, after 105 years of operation, to the present location and had implemented their development plan for the new range. The proposed range improvements will allow the club to continue to exist and increase recreational opportunities to area

residents. There is not another trap or rifle and pistol shooting facility in Madison County and there are also no safe reliable places for hunters to sight-in rifles. Secondary needs are to enhance and promote firearms safety.

6. Objectives for the Action(s): To provide a safe and reliable shooting facility providing both trap and recreational, rifle and pistol shooting. Additional objectives are to provide a facility for Hunter Education, Law Enforcement and youth shooting activities. See paragraph 5 above.

7. Project Size: estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected:
The proposed improvements are a much small area than the total acreage (5 acres versus 23 acres) and will be safely spread within the leased property.

8. Affected Environment (A brief description of the affected area of the proposed project):
The area affected for the Ruby Valley Gun Club is located 2.7 miles southeast of Twin Bridges and 5.9 miles northwest of Sheridan, Montana (See paragraph 3, Figure 1). The average annual precipitation is approximately 12 inches. The range is located in an area that has always been dry land agriculture. With the exception to land to the east (irrigated hay fields by center pivot) all other land is unimproved native pasture land. Lands north, south and to the west is owned by the same rancher who provided the site for the range (See Figure 2). The area is composed primarily of sandy loam soil designated as Scarvo (See Figure 3). The Scarvo is deep well drained soil, with moderately rapid permeability to a depth of about 16 inches and rapid below this depth. The Scarvo soils are located on fans and terraces in the Madison and Ruby valleys.

9. Description of Project:

a) Land Survey and Appraisal
b) Install Water System & Plumbing
c) Install Drain field (Septic)
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e) Purchase Pat Trap
f) Install Lights Trap Field #1
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10. List any Other Local, State, or Federal Agency that has Overlapping or Additional Jurisdiction: None

(a) Permits, Licenses and/or Authorizations:

Agency Name	Permit	Date Filed/#
Montana Building Standards Division	Restroom Foundation -	2007
Madison County Dept. of Health	Septic tank and drain field-	Pending

Funding:

Agency Name	Funding Amount
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	$38,541.00

11. Affiliations, Cooperating Agencies, User Groups and/or Supporting Groups: In the 105 year history of the Ruby Rod & Gun Club, formerly in Sheridan, MT, the organization has hosted and supported many groups in the community, i.e. Boy Scouts, 4-H, Hunter Education, local fishing lodges, etc. Additionally the club has hosted two turkey shoots around Thanksgiving and Christmas each year and four ATA registered trap shooting tournaments. The club is associated with the Amateur Trapshooting Association and the Montana State Trap Shooting Association. It is forecast that the addition of the rifle and pistol ranges will further increase membership and range usage.

12. History of the Planning and Scoping Process, and Any Public Involvement: Extensive public involvement was not deemed necessary due to the previous completed EA addressing future range plans. This previous EA should be tiered for completion of this EA. Proposed range improvements and safety enhancements had been discussed within the membership of the club and 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:
Jack J. Kaatz, PO Box 312, Sheridan, MT 59749 (406) 842-5960

15. Other Pertinent Information: Land is currently leased but is being donated by the lessor to the Ruby Valley Gun Club and the club is in the process transferring the land in accordance with the Montana Subdivision and Platting Act. The 2011 Ruby Valley Gun Club grant application is a continuation of their phased Range Development Plan which was initially submitted in 2007. A previous EA was completed in 2007 which constituted the initial Range Development Plan, that considered the building and improvements for all of the range complex. Completion of initial construction on most of the range is done and the new actions are the planned follow-on improvements or next phase. Consequently 2007 environmental assessment for the Ruby Valley Gun Club is applicable here, and appropriate portions should be tiered for this EA. Although the 2007EA addressed the specific actions proposed then, a broader analysis of the entire range complex's environment was conducted, with future improvements being addressed. Those broad environmental assessments should be tiered for use in the continuation of this project.

Shooting range applications require the participant's governing body to approve by resolution its submission of applications for shooting range-funding assistance. Resolution Date: April 29, 2011.

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). Land Survey and follow-on phase II improvements to the range.

- **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 improvements proposed.

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

There are beneficial consequences to acceptance of the **Proposed Alternative (A** Land Survey and follow-on phase II improvements to the range.

The **No Action Alternative** (B) would be to not fund the improvements and the range will continue on with present conditions. Land use would remain the same.

Describe any Alternatives considered and eliminated from Detailed Study:
NONE

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

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

2. & 5. There are neither surface waters nor delineated wetlands on the range.

7. Soil disruption for this site is very localized. Erosion control measures will be instituted and where appropriate disturbed areas will be reseeded.

9. This project uses no federal funds nor does it take place on state owned or controlled property; therefore, the Federal 106 Regulations and the State Antiques Act do not 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**		

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

4. This area has always been dry range land (see Figure 3). Land usage north, south, and west is dry range land (agriculture). The land to the east is irrigated hay fields by center pivot. All other land is unimproved native pasture land. Lands north, south and to the west is owned by the same rancher providing the site and easement for the range. Grazing will continue on the 18 acre shot drop zone. The 5 +/- acres where the facilities will be located will be fenced to keep livestock out.

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. The range will provide year round controlled access, meeting the standards for range security and it also meets the accepted safety design standards. These ranges will fulfils a need for a range to accommodate a variety of users, such as, law enforcement, hunter education, bow-hunter safety, and public shooting.

9. This is a rural area with a low population density and the nearest inhabited dwelling is approximately 2 miles northeast of 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 project reviewed were complex, controversial, or located in an environmentally sensitive area. The projects being implemented are already on an existing range/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 Ruby Valley Gun Club's proposed alternative, improve their range facilities and to provide a safe regulated shooting opportunity is supported by its members and the public. 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? This proposed action has no impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant. 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 extreme 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:
Jack J. Kaatz, PO Box 312, Sheridan, MT 59749
MT Fish Wildlife and Parks

EA prepared by: GENE R. HICKMAN
MS Wildlife Management
Ecological Assessments

Helena, MT 59602

Date Completed: July 23, 2011

Describe public involvement, if any:
This draft EA will be advertised on FWP's web site and through a legal ad in the Madisonian, in Ennis, MT announcing a public comment period. A press release will also announce the project and comment period.