

Environmental Assessment Checklist

Project Name: Northwest Montana Adventures Expansion

Proposed Implementation Date: 2026

Proponent: Northwest Montana Adventures, LLC

County: Flathead

Type and Purpose of Action

Description of Proposed Action:

Northwest Montana Adventures is requesting additional development and activities on commercial lease located on state trust land in the community of Olney, Montana in northwest Flathead County. The site is situated adjacent to U.S. Highway 93 North and the Upper Whitefish Road in Section 7 of Township 32 north, Range 23 west.

Beneficiary	Legal Description	Total Acres
Deaf and Blind Permanent Fund	Sections 7, T32N, R23W	7.28

Project History:

In 2019, MT DNRC, Stillwater Unit, released a Request for Proposals for the site and subsequently awarded a commercial lease to Northwest Montana Adventures. An Environmental Assessment Checklist (EAC) was also completed prior to the issuance of the lease (Proposed Upper Whitefish Road Commercial Lease, 2019) analyzed for the following structures and 1.25 acres (cleared) with 12,640 sq ft of building space:

- 72 x 120-foot main office/shop/apartment (8,640 sq ft)
- 40 x 40-ft cold storage building (1,600 sq ft)
- 60 x 40-ft FSA storage building (2,400 sq ft)
- ¾ acre gravel driveway and parking
- Above ground fuel tank

Through development of the lease, additional temporary and permanent structures have been placed on the site. Structure configuration has changed since and additional land has been cleared. An approved (by Flathead County and DEQ) Class 2 septic (elevated sand mound) and a well (water right #76LJ 23352-00) have been placed on the lease site, with Department approval. The septic permit allows for the Rental Shop (60 patrons/day and 2 employees) a 2-

bedroom cabin and a 1-bedroom cabin. The septic includes an elevated sand mound and is located behind the 60 x 64-cold storage.

Proposal Description:

This environmental analysis will consider the additional permanent and temporary structures that have been placed at the site since the last EAC (2019). Some existing structures are temporary and may change configuration in the future. The total disturbed acreage would remain 2.0 acres or less and the buildings, temporary and permanent, would not exceed 13,000 sq feet. In addition a gravel lift will be added to roughly ¾ of an acre for parking and driveways at the site. while the size of the leased area (7.28 acres) would not change. This analysis will consider the below listed buildings, and their footprints as **permanent**:

1. 70' x 50' (3,500 sq. ft.)- Main Building with lean-to (contains office/grocery/deli /customer locker room)
2. 60' x 64' (3,840 sq. ft.)- Main Out Building containing cold storage and repair shop
3. 20.5' x 14.5' (297.25 sq. ft.)- Fuel Shed with Above Ground Tank (AGT)
4. 6' x 5' (30 sq. ft.)-foot wood boiler (main heat source for Lease)
5. 16' x 42' (928 sq. ft.) two-bedroom cabin with 14' x 8' deck- (employee housing)

Total “permanent footprint” square feet: 8,595.25

This analysis will consider the following structures and their footprints as **temporary**:

1. A total of 5, 8 x 40-foot Conex containers (1600 sq ft)- Snowmobile/UTV storage
2. 7' x 7' (49 sq ft)- “garden shed” next to well
3. 18-foot diameter (254 sq ft) old grain silo- customer gathering place in front of Main Building
4. 20' x 8' (160 sq ft)- Conex container with window (additional office space)
5. 21' x 8' (168 sq ft)- trailered “icehouse” (employee housing)

Total “temporary footprint” square feet: 2,231

Total current footprint- 10,826.25 square feet.

The lands involved in this proposed project are held in trust by the State of Montana. (Enabling Act of February 22, 1889; 1972 Montana Constitution, Article X, Section 11). The Board of Land Commissioners and the 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).

The DNRC would manage lands involved in this project in accordance with:

- The State Forest Land Management Plan (DNRC 1996),
- The Real Estate Management Programmatic Plan (DNRC 2005)
- Administrative Rules for Forest Management (ARM 36.11.401 through 471),
- Administrative Rules for State Land Leasing (ARM 36.25.101 through 817),
- and all other applicable state and federal laws

Project Development

SCOPING:

- DATE:
 - November 6, 2025
- PUBLIC SCOPED:
 - The scoping notice was posted on the DNRC Website: <http://dnrc.mt.gov/public-interest/public-notices>
 - Adjacent landowners and interested parties
- AGENCIES SCOPED:
 - Flathead County
 - Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks
 - USFS – Tally Lake Ranger District
 - Montana Department of Transportation (MDT)
 - City of Whitefish
- COMMENTS RECEIVED:
 - How many: 1
 - Concern: potential for the proposed development would affect MDT facilities.
 - Results (how were concerns addressed): After further discussion with MDT staff, it was determined that that “since access will be perpetuated via Upper Whitefish Road/Olney Crossover Road with no direct access to US 93 and no substantial impact to the transportation system, the Department does not have any further comments on this request.”

DNRC specialists were consulted, including:

- Vicki Forristal, Wildlife Biologist, DNRC NWLO
- Josh Harris, Hydrologist, DNRC NWLO
- Patrick Rennie, Archeologist, DNRC Helena

ISSUES ELIMINATED FROM FURTHER ANALYSIS

This analysis does not analyze for an additional bathroom as it is already permitted under their Northwest Montana Adventure’s septic permit with Flathead County. The Lessee would need to approach Flathead County about adding another bathroom to their permit before submitting an “improvement request.” to the Stillwater Unit

Internal and external issues and concerns were incorporated into project planning and design and will be implemented in associated contracts.

OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED: *(Conservation Easements, Army Corps of Engineers, road use permits, etc.)*

- Flathead County Planning and Zoning oversees zoning and subdivision regulations for development on property in Flathead County as identified in the Flathead County Zoning Regulations.
- Environmental Health Services Sanitation Division - governing agency that oversees permitting for the design, installation and operation of sewage treatment systems.
- MT DEQ Petroleum Tank Release Compensation Board – permits and governs the operation and management of petroleum storage tanks.
- MDT – responsible for the regulation and control of outdoor advertising along the National Highway System or the Primary Highway System.

No-Action: The Project Area would be returned to the condition analyzed for in the 2019 MEPA and approved in the Upper Whitefish Road Commercial Lease (DNRC 2019). Revegetation would occur on 0.75 acres of forest clearing that exceed the 1.25 acres previously analyzed.

Action Alternative:

The improvements and clearing of an additional 0.75 acres that were not included in the 2019 MEPA (DNRC 2019b) are considered in this analysis to bring the total acreage of development/clearing to 2.0 acres.

Impacts on the Physical Environment

Evaluation of the impacts on the No-Action and Action Alternatives including **direct, secondary, and cumulative** impacts on the Physical Environment.

VEGETATION:

1. **Vegetation Existing Conditions:** The site is a 7.28-acre timbered parcel of property that is situated adjacent to Highway 93 North, Upper Whitefish Road, Bonneville Powerline and a cabinsite lease. The site is currently classified as "other" with lodgepole pine being the dominate overstory and Western larch scattered throughout.

Vegetation	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
<i>No-Action</i>														
Noxious Weeds	X					X				X			Y	V-1
Rare Plants	X				X				X					
Vegetative community	X				X				X					
Old Growth	X				X				X					
<i>Action</i>														
Noxious Weeds		X				X				X			Y	V-2
Rare Plants	X				X				X					
Vegetative community		X			X				X					V-3
Old Growth	X				X				X					

Comments:

V-1: The DNRC would continue to treat weed infestations in the project area as part of its ongoing weed management program.

V-2: Northwest Montana Adventures would continue to be responsible for controlling any noxious weeds introduced on the premises.

V-3: Approximately 2.00 acres of timber and vegetation has been cleared for the construction of buildings and for driveways and parking.

Vegetation Mitigations:

- Abiding by the Montana County Noxious Weed Management Act, *Mont. Code Ann., 7-22-2101, et seq.* would be required per the lease agreement. DNRC would approve method of control with the minimum requirement being a spring treatment of weeds during the rosette stage by a certified applicator.

SOIL DISTURBANCE AND PRODUCTIVITY:

Soil Disturbance and Productivity Existing Conditions: The existing landtype in the 7.28-acre project area is identified as 28-7 in the *Soil Survey of Flathead National Forest Area, Montana* (Martinson and Basko 1998). This landtype is characterized by a mixed forest with overstory vegetation consisting of Douglas-fir, ponderosa pine, subalpine fir, and lodgepole pine, and a forest understory of low shrubs and grasses. Wet meadows may form in depressions and typical soils in the landtype consist of a silt loam surface layer approximately 6 inches deep over a gravelly loam subsoil derived from glacial outwash.

Past uses of the project area include timber management and livestock grazing. Since 2019, approximately 2 acres of forest land have been cleared, and various structures have been added to facilitate the operations of Northwest Montana Adventures under the Upper Whitefish Road Commercial Lease (DNRC 2019a). Existing improvements and approximately 0.75 acres of additional forest clearing exceeded what was analyzed for in the 2019 MEPA (DNRC 2019b). Despite this, the total disturbed acreage would remain 2.0 acres or less, and the buildings, temporary and permanent, would not exceed 13,000 sq feet. Impacts to soil disturbance and productivity are not expected to exceed those described in the 2019 MEPA.

No-Action: The Project Area would be returned to the condition analyzed for in the 2019 MEPA and approved in the Upper Whitefish Road Commercial Lease (DNRC 2019). Revegetation would occur on 0.75 acres of forest clearing that exceed the 1.25 acres previously analyzed.

Soil Disturbance and Productivity	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
<i>No-Action</i>														
Physical Disturbance (Compaction and Displacement)	X				X						X			S-1
Erosion	X				X					X				
Nutrient Cycling	X				X						X			S-1
Slope Stability	X				X				X					
Soil Productivity	X				X						X			S-1
<i>Action</i>														

Soil Disturbance and Productivity	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
Physical Disturbance (Compaction and Displacement)		X				X					X		N	S-2
Erosion		X				X				X			Y	
Nutrient Cycling		X				X					X		N	S-2
Slope Stability	X				X				X					
Soil Productivity		X				X					X		N	S-2

Comments:

S-1: Current conditions are a result of past development detailed in the 2019 MEPA. Moderate cumulative impacts to compaction and the removal of down woody debris have likely resulted in reductions of soil productivity, although the direct and secondary impacts are low.

S-2: The proposed action is intentionally disturbing soil for construction of buildings, driveways and parking areas. Approximately 0.75 acres of the 7.28-acre parcel has been cleared. High direct and indirect impacts would occur on an additional 10 percent of the project area; however, the impact would only be considered a moderate cumulative impact as it would cover less than three-tenths of the project area.

Soil Mitigations:

Grass seed disturbed areas to minimize the risk of noxious weed establishment.

WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY: The project is located in the Meadow Creek drainage. Terrain is nearly flat and is densely vegetated with grasses, especially in the wetland depression. The lower reach of Meadow Creek flows seasonally.

Water Quality and Quantity Existing Conditions: While no streams or other perennial surface flow has been identified on the 7.28-acre parcel, a wetland that likely contributes to Meadow Creek during high spring flows bisects the property. Meadow Creek flows seasonally during spring snowmelt. Because it is dry for the majority of the year, the lower reach is not considered as fish-bearing and no measurable impacts to fisheries are expected.

No-Action: The Project Area would be returned to the condition analyzed for in the 2019 MEPA and approved in the Upper Whitefish Road Commercial Lease (DNRC 2019). Revegetation would occur on 0.75 acres of forest clearing that exceed the 1.25 acres previously analyzed.

Water Quality & Quantity	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
<i>No-Action</i>														
Water Quality		X				X				X				WQ-1
Water Quantity	X				X					X				WQ-2
<i>Action</i>														
Water Quality		X				X				X			Y	WQ-1
Water Quantity	X				X					X			Y	WQ-2

Comments:

WQ-1: The wetland drains toward Meadow Creek and has been forded in multiple locations by the general public. Concentrating use along the wetland (although no use of the wetland is proposed) and the installation of a septic system may have a minor impact.

WQ-2: Existing annual water yield increases would not be expected to change as a result of the Action Alternative.

Water Quality & Quantity Mitigations

- Follow all construction practices for minimizing sediment delivery/movement off site.
- Follow all requirements imposed by state and county authorities for the permitting, installation and operation of all waste (septic) systems.
- Follow all Montana Administrative Rules for Streamside Management Zones.

WILDLIFE:

Wildlife Existing Conditions: The 7.28-acre Project Area consists of DNRC-managed lands adjacent to U.S. Highway 93 and the townsite of Olney, MT. The Project Area is not included in DNRC’s Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP, USFWS and DNRC 2010). To the west and south of the Project Area are residential developments and to the east is the largely undeveloped Stillwater State Forest. The Upper Whitefish Road to the north, U.S. Highway 93 to the west, and the powerline corridor to the east are sources of disturbance and habitat fragmentation. Small-diameter (pole-sized) lodgepole pine occupies most of the undeveloped portion of the Project Area. A small stand of mature trees (approximately 1.5 acres) with a closed overstory canopy is situated along the northeast border of the Project Area. The Project Area lacks substantial hiding cover and visual screening from adjacent open roads. Due to existing commercial development, current vegetation conditions, surrounding development and disturbance, habitat quality for most terrestrial wildlife species is low or absent within the Project Area. Since 2019, approximately 2 acres of forest land have been cleared and various structures added to facilitate operations of Northwest Montana Adventures under the Upper Whitefish Road Commercial Lease (DNRC 2019a). Existing improvements and approximately 0.75 acres of additional forest clearing exceeded what was analyzed for in the 2019 MEPA (DNRC 2019b).

No-Action: The Project Area would be returned to the condition analyzed for in the 2019 MEPA and approved in the Upper Whitefish Road Commercial Lease (DNRC 2019). Revegetation would occur on 0.75 acres of forest clearing that exceed the 1.25 acres previously analyzed.

Action Alternative (see Wildlife table below):

The improvements and clearing that were not included in the 2019 MEPA (DNRC 2019b) are considered in this analysis.

Wildlife	Impact												Can Impact be Mitigated?	Comment Number	
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative						
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High			
Threatened and Endangered Species															
Grizzly bear		X				X				X				Y	WI-1

Northwest Montana Adventures Expansion
 Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation EACv2.0

Wildlife	Impact												Can Impact be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
<i>(Ursus arctos)</i> Habitat: Recovery areas, security from human activity														
Lynx (<i>Felis lynx</i>) Habitat: SF hab.types, dense sapling, old forest, deep snow zone		X				X			X					WI-2
Yellow-billed cuckoo (<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>) Habitat: open cottonwood riparian forest with dense brush understories (Lake and Flathead counties)	X				X				X					WI-3
Wolverine (<i>Gulo gulo</i>) Habitat: high elevation areas that retain high snow levels in late spring	X				X				X					WI-3
Sensitive Species														
Bald eagle (<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>) Habitat: Late-successional forest within 1 mile of open water	X				X				X					WI-3
Black-backed woodpecker (<i>Picoides arcticus</i>) Habitat: Mature to old burned or beetle-infested forest	X				X				X					WI-3
Common loon (<i>Gavia immer</i>) Habitat: Cold mountain lakes, nest in emergent vegetation	X				X				X					WI-3
Fisher (<i>Martes pennanti</i>) Habitat: Dense mature to old forest less than 6,000 feet	X				X				X					WI-3

Northwest Montana Adventures Expansion
 Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation EACv2.0

Wildlife	Impact												Can Impact be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
in elevation and riparian														
Flammulated owl <i>(Otus flammeolus)</i> Habitat: Late-successional ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir forest	X				X				X					WI-3
Peregrine falcon <i>(Falco peregrinus)</i> Habitat: Cliff features near open foraging areas and/or wetlands	X				X				X					WI-3
Pileated woodpecker <i>(Dryocopus pileatus)</i> Habitat: Late-successional ponderosa pine and larch-fir forest		X				X			X					WI-4
Fringed myotis <i>(Myotis thysanodes)</i> Habitat: low elevation ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir and riparian forest with diverse roost sites including outcrops, caves, mines	X				X				X					WI-3
Hoary bat <i>(Lasiurus cinereus)</i> Habitat: coniferous and deciduous forests and roost on foliage in trees, under bark, in snags, bridges	X				X				X					WI-3
Townsend's big-eared bat <i>(Plecotus townsendii)</i> Habitat: Caves, caverns, old mines	X				X				X					WI-3
Big Game Species														
Elk	X				X				X					WI-5

Wildlife	Impact												Can Impact be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
Whitetail		X				X			X				Y	WI-5
Mule Deer	X				X				X					WI-5
Moose	X				X				X					WI-5

Comments:

WI-1. Grizzly Bear – The Project Area is within the NCDE Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone (USFWS 1993, Wittinger 2002). Existing habitat conditions and surrounding human development and disturbance reduce the likelihood of grizzly bears using the Project Area. While a grizzly bear could pass through the Project Area during its extensive movements, appreciable use of the area is not expected. The removal of approximately 0.75 additional acres of low-quality habitat is anticipated to have negligible impacts on grizzly bears. The greatest risks to bears in the area are the adjacent federal highway, and human habitations and associated attractants that bring bears into conflict with people. The proposed Action Alternative would increase the potential for unnatural attractants and human-bear conflicts. However, lease requirements would minimize the potential for these conflicts by strictly limiting attractant sources (see *Wildlife Mitigations* below). Thus, adverse impacts to grizzly bears would be expected to be low.

WI-2. Canada Lynx – Less than 5 acres of potentially suitable lynx habitat lie within the 7.28 acre Project Area. However, the existing commercial development, adjacent open roads, highways, and human developments, combined with the area’s small size, would indicate that appreciable use by lynx would not be expected. Because measurable use of the Project Area by lynx is not anticipated, removal of approximately 0.75 acres of habitat would be expected to have low impacts to lynx.

WI-3. This species was evaluated, and it was determined that the Project Area lies outside of the normal distribution for the species, and/or suitable habitat was not found to be present.

WI-4. Pileated Woodpecker – The Project Area contains approximately 1.5 acres of suitable pileated woodpecker habitat. Use of the Project Area by pileated woodpeckers is possible, however the limited availability of suitable habitat likely limits extended use of the area by woodpeckers. Therefore, removal of less than 0.75 acres of pileated woodpecker habitat within the Project Area is anticipated to have low impacts on pileated woodpeckers. Activities associated with the improvements (i.e. construction noise) could temporarily displace any pileated woodpeckers should they be present in the area. Because pileated woodpeckers are fairly tolerant of human disturbance and the development footprint within suitable habitat is relatively small, long-term displacement of pileated woodpeckers would not be anticipated. Thus, low adverse impacts would be anticipated.

WI-5. Big Game – The Project Area contains potential habitat for big game species. Due to the Project Area’s small size, proximity to human disturbance, and available vegetation, occasional use by white-tailed deer would be the only big game use expected. Visual screening and hiding cover is not adequate to support extended use by white-tailed deer. Winter range for deer and elk is not present (DFWP 2008). Removal of approximately 0.75 acres of habitat is expected to have negligible impacts to big game. Disturbance associated with long-term occupancy of the Project Area could displace any deer that might be present in the area. However, substantial changes in the overall use of the Project Area or larger surrounding area by big game would not be expected. Lease requirements would minimize attractants that could bring deer and humans

into conflict (see *Wildlife Mitigations* below). Thus, low adverse direct and indirect impacts to white-tailed deer would be expected. Mule deer, elk and moose would not be impacted by the proposed Action Alternative.

Wildlife Mitigations:

- If a threatened or endangered species is encountered, consult a DNRC biologist immediately. Similarly, if undocumented nesting raptors or wolf dens are encountered within ½ mile of the Project Area, contact a DNRC biologist.
- Require licensee to immediately report any bear or other wildlife conflicts to DNRC.
- Enforce strict food storage and disposal rules – require bear-resistant trash receptacles and/or trash storage inside buildings, daily cleanup and inspection of the site by the licensee, and proper disposal of other unnatural attractants (e.g. petroleum products) (ARM 36.25.1204). Solid waste (trash) shall not be accumulated for longer than seven days and must be removed every seven days. Solid waste must be covered when it is being transported. Burying or burning solid waste is prohibited. Food vendors/caterers servicing the site should also be informed of these rules and policed by the licensee.
- Permanent barbecue pits are prohibited. Barbecue grills must be stored inside an enclosed building at night or when not in immediate use.
- One group fire pit is allowed. No grills should be mounted to fire pit. Fire pit shall be kept free of debris and potential wildlife attractants.
- Prohibit bird feeders between April 1 and December 15.
- Intentional feeding of wildlife is prohibited (except for birds), as set forth above. Salt blocks, mineral blocks and feeding platforms for deer or other wildlife are prohibited. Pet food and horse or livestock feed, such as hay, pellets and grain, shall be stored indoors in a secured area or in commercially produced wildlife resistant containers.
- Gardens, compost piles or fruit trees should be surrounded by a functioning electric fence.
- Licensee shall provide signage and educational materials to customers about recreating in bear and wildlife habitat.

Literature:

DFWP. 2008. Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks maps of moose, elk, mule deer, and white-tailed deer distribution in Montana. In Individual GIS data layers. Available online at: <https://gis-mtfdwp.hub.arcgis.com/>

DNRC. 2019a. Northwest Montana Adventures LLC Upper Whitefish Road, Lease No. 3053575. Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation; Stillwater Unit, Olney, MT.

DNRC. 2019b. Proposed Upper Whitefish Road Commercial Lease. Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation; Stillwater Unit, Olney, MT.

USFWS. 1993. Grizzly bear recovery plan. Report on file at Missoula, MT. 181pp. Available online at: https://www.fws.gov/mountainprairie/es/species/mammals/grizzly/Grizzly_bear_recovery_plan.pdf

USFWS, and DNRC. 2010. Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Forested Trust Lands Habitat Conservation Plan, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Volumes I and II., U.S. Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 6,

Denver, Colorado and Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation,
Missoula, MT.

Wittinger, W. 2002. Grizzly bear distribution outside of recovery zones. Unpublished memorandum. Report on file at USDA Forest Service, Region 1, Missoula, MT.

AIR QUALITY:

Air Quality	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
No-Action														
Smoke	X				X				X					
Dust	X				X				X					
Action														
Smoke	X				X				X					
Dust	X				X				X					

Comments: None

Air Quality Mitigations: None

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES / AESTHETICS / DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Will Alternative result in potential impacts to:	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
No-Action														
Historical or Archaeological Sites	X				X				X					AR-1
Aesthetics	X				X				X					
Demands on Environmental Resources of Land, Water, or Energy	X				X				X					
Action														
Historical or Archaeological Sites	X				X				X				Y	AR-1
Aesthetics			X		X				X					AR-2
Demands on Environmental Resources of Land, Water, or Energy	X				X				X					

Comments:

AR-1: The DNRC archeologist was consulted on this project. No known historical archeological or cultural features exist in the proposed area.

AR-2: Buildings associated with the development of this parcel are visible from the Highway 93 corridor and the Upper Whitefish Road.

Mitigations:

- If previously unknown cultural or paleontological materials are identified during project related activities, all work will cease until a professional assessment of such resources can be made.
- There is a 50-foot building development setback from Highway 93 and Upper Whitefish Road right-of-way to provide for visual screening.

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

- Upper Whitefish Road Reclassification, November 2019
- Proposed Upper Whitefish Road Commercial Lease Environmental Assessment Checklist, November 2019

Impacts on the Human Population

Evaluation of the impacts on the proposed action including **direct, secondary, and cumulative** impacts on the Human Population.

Access to and Quality of Recreational and Wilderness Activities Existing Conditions:

The project area, located in the small community of Olney, MT is situated at the corner of Highway 93 and the Upper Whitefish Road which is one of the main access roads to the Stillwater State Forest. The primary dispersed recreational uses include snowmobile riding, ATV/UTV use, hunting, fishing, sightseeing, berry picking, hiking and camping. Upper Whitefish Lake Campground a developed campground on Stillwater State Forest and can be accessed from the Upper Whitefish Road system.

The Olney snowmobile trailhead is located directly adjacent to the proposed lease site. This trailhead and the system of groomed snowmobile trails it accesses is licensed and maintained by the Flathead Snowmobile Association (FSA). The snowmobile trailhead and trails are annually maintained and groomed from December 1st through April 1st. There are currently three licensed commercial snowmobile businesses that operate on the groomed trail system as well as a licensed annual dogsled race.

Northwest Montana Adventures currently offers seasonal snowmobile and equipment rentals and has an existing license with the DNRC, Stillwater Unit to annually operate guided and unguided snowmobile tours on Stillwater State Forest from December 1st to March 31st. The company also seasonally holds a license to rent and operate guided and unguided ATV/UTV tours during the summer season.

Northwest Montana Adventures Expansion
 Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation EACv2.0

Will Alternative result in potential impacts to:	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
No-Action														
Health and Human Safety	X				X				X					
Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural Activities and Production	X				X				X					
Quantity and Distribution of Employment	X				X				X					
Local Tax Base and Tax Revenues	X				X				X					
Demand for Government Services	X				X				X					
Access To and Quality of Recreational and Wilderness Activities	X				X				X					
Density and Distribution of population and housing	X				X				X					
Social Structures and Mores	X				X				X					
Cultural Uniqueness and Diversity	X				X				X					
Action														
Health and Human Safety	X				X				X					
Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural Activities and Production	X				X				X					
Quantity and Distribution of Employment	X				X				X					
Local Tax Base and Tax Revenues	X				X				X					
Demand for Government Services	X				X				X					
Access to and Quality of Recreational and Wilderness Activities	X				X				X					
Density and Distribution of population and housing	X				X				X					
Social Structures and Mores	X				X				X					
Cultural Uniqueness and Diversity	X				X				X					

Comments: The additional clearing of 0.75 acres is expected to have negligible impacts to the human population.

Mitigations: None

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.*

- Flathead County Growth Policy: The Flathead County Growth Policy is a non-regulatory document adopted by the Flathead County Commissioners (Resolution #2015A) on March 19, 2007, and most recently updated on May 21, 2024 (Resolution #2015AE).
- Flathead County Zoning Regulations: This parcel is zoned Scenic Corridor, which regulates signs and cellular communication towers within ¼ mile of US 93.

Other Appropriate Social and Economic Circumstances:

Costs, revenues and estimates of return are estimates intended for relative comparison of alternatives. They are not intended to be used as absolute estimates of return.

No Action: The No Action alternative would continue to generate the revenue outlined in the lease document through lease expiration in 2030. The estimated return to the trust would be the commercial lease rate as defined in MCA 77-1-905(2) multiplied by the land value. Every subsequent year has an associated 2% annual escalator. The Department valued the land at \$78,000 in 2018, resulting in the base rent schedule below.

Lease Year	Calendar Period	Adjustment Period Escalator	Adjusted Base Rent
1	Nov 1, 2019 – Oct 31, 2020	0	\$3,500.0
Supplemental Billing period	Nov 1, 2020 – Feb 28, 2021 (120 days)	0	\$1,150.68
2	March 1, 2021 – Feb 28, 2022	2%	\$3,570.00
3	March 1, 2022 – Feb 28, 2023	2%	\$3,641.40
4	March 1, 2023 – Feb 28, 2024	2%	\$3,714.23
5	March 1, 2024 – Feb 28, 2025	2%	\$3,788.51
6	March 1, 2025 – Feb 28, 2026	2%	\$3,864.28
7	March 1, 2026 – Feb 28, 2027	2%	\$3,941.57
8	March 1, 2027 – Feb 28, 2028	2%	\$4,020.40
9	March 1, 2028 – Feb 28, 2029	2%	\$4,100.81
10	March 1, 2029 – Feb 28, 2030	2%	\$4,182.82

Action: The lease would generate additional revenue for the Deaf & Blind Permanent Fund trust. The estimated return to the trust would be the commercial lease rate as defined in MCA 77-1-905(2) multiplied by the land value. Every subsequent year has an associated 2% annual escalator. The Department of Revenue values the land as the lessee is required to pay

beneficial use tax on the land, since it is used commercially (MCA 15-23-111). The current DOR value of the land is \$145,120. The current commercial lease rate is 5% (2/19/2026). This would result in a hypothetical lease fee of \$7,256 annually with a 2% escalator.

References

DNRC 1996. State forest land management plan: final environmental impact statement (and appendixes). Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Forest Management Bureau, Missoula, Montana.

DNRC. 2010. Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Forested State Trust Lands Habitat Conservation Plan: Final EIS, Volume II, Forest Management Bureau, Missoula, Montana.

Does the proposed action involve potential risks or adverse effects that 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?

No.

Environmental Assessment Checklist Prepared By:

Name: Kari Nielsen
Title: NWLO Area Land Use Planner
Date: January 5, 2026

Finding

Alternative Selected

Upon review of the Checklist EA, and attachments, I find the Action Alternative, as proposed, meets the intent of the project objectives as stated in the Type and Purpose of Action section of this document. This project received one public comment during the 30-day scoping period and was addressed with the commenter (see Project Development above). The lands involved in this project are held by the State of Montana in trust for the support of specific beneficiary institutions and DNRC is required by law to administer these trust lands to produce the largest measure of reasonable and legitimate return over the long run (Enabling Act of February 22, 1889; 1972 Montana Constitution, Article X Section 11; and 77-1-212 MCA).

The Action Alternative complies with all pertinent environmental laws, the DNRC SFLMP and HCP, and is based upon a consensus of professional opinion on limits of acceptable environmental impact. For these reasons and on behalf of DNRC I have selected the Action Alternative to be implemented on this project.

Significance of Potential Impacts

After a review of the scoping documents and comments, project file, relevant Administrative Rules of Montana, SFLMP and HCP checklists, and Department policies, standards, and guidelines, I find that all the identified resource management concerns have been fully addressed in this Checklist EA and its attachments. Specific project design features and various recommendations by the resource management specialists will be implemented to ensure that this project will fall within the limits of environmental change. Taken individually and cumulatively, the proposed activities are common practices, and no project activities are being conducted on important unique or fragile sites.

I find there will be no significant impacts to the human environments as a result of implementing the Action Alternative. In summary, I find that the identified impacts will be controlled, mitigated, or avoided by the design of the project to the extent that the impacts are not significant.

Need for Further Environmental Analysis

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

Environmental Assessment Checklist Approved By:

Name: Dave Ring
Title: Stillwater Unit Manager
Date: March 9, 2026
Signature: /s/ David A. Ring

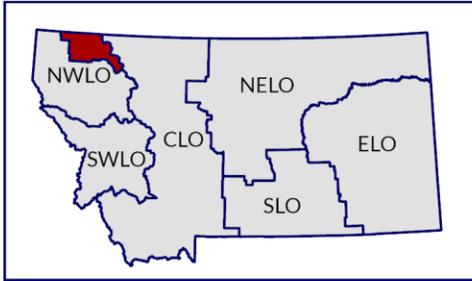
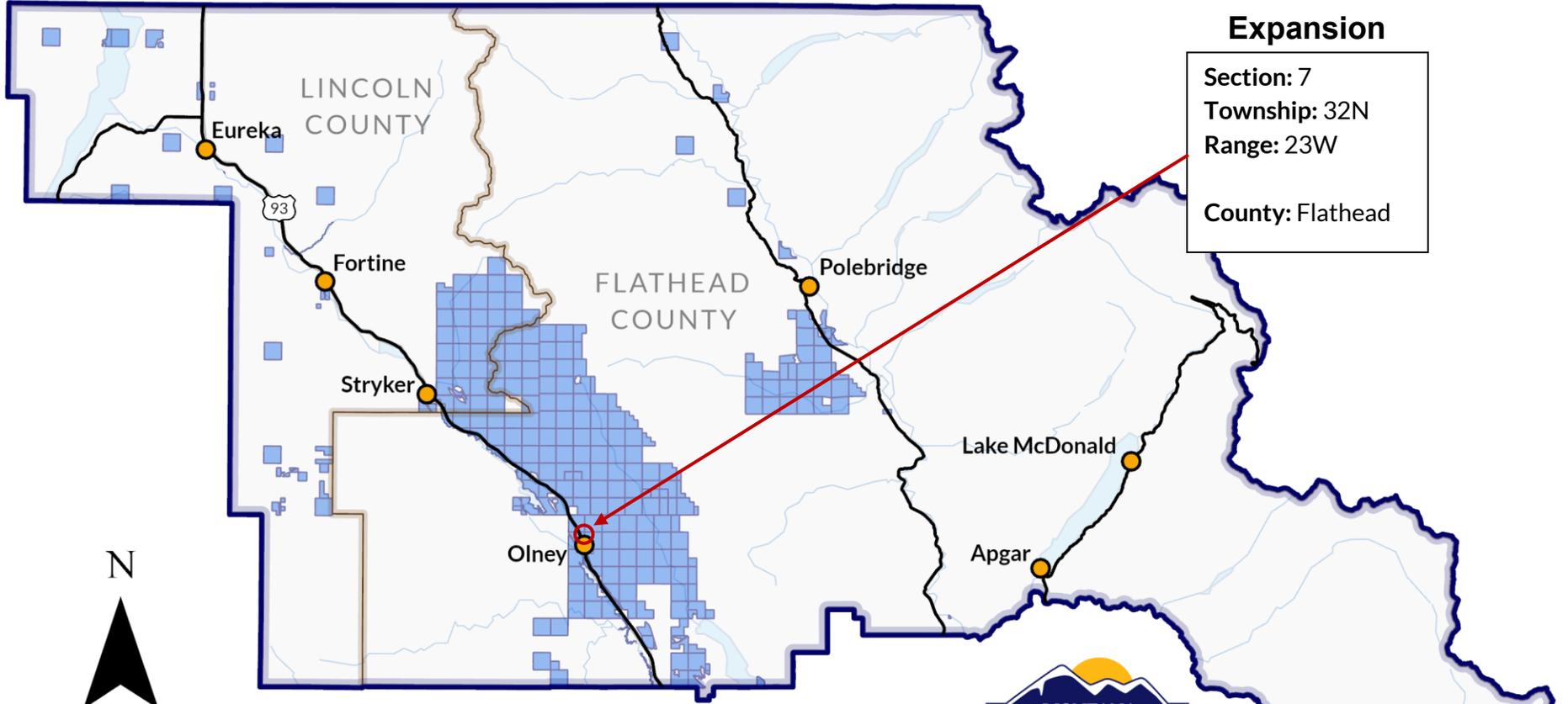
Attachment A - Maps

State Trust Land Vicinity Map

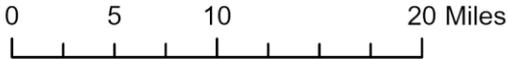
Stillwater Unit

Northwest Montana Adventures Expansion

Section: 7
Township: 32N
Range: 23W
County: Flathead



- Towns
- County Lines
- Major Roads
- Rivers & Lakes
- State Trust Land





 Commercial Lease Boundary

0 125 250 500 Feet

