

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Fox Farm Public Recreation Park Easement
Proposed Implementation Date:	2024
Proponent:	Cascade County
Location:	Township 20 North, Range 3 East, Section 23, W2SW4 Lots 6-7
County:	Cascade County
Trust:	University of Montana

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Cascade County has applied to Department of Natural Resources & Conservation (DNRC) for a 79.27-acre public park recreation easement. This tract of State Trust Land is commonly referred to as the "Fox Farm" parcel as it is located directly adjacent to Fox Farm Road in the southwestern portion of the City of Great Falls.

This parcel is currently classified as grazing land. This a vacant tract, meaning there are no existing leases or licenses on the acres requested for easement (agriculture and grazing, mineral, or commercial uses). There is an existing commercial lease on 5.74 acres in the southeast corner of the tract for a communication tower. The proposed easement excludes these acres. There are multiple existing easements on this state tract for buried natural gas pipelines, buried power distribution lines, overhead power distribution lines, buried phone line, and a public roadway.

Multiple access sites are present along Fox Farm Road, 45th Ave. SW, and the Missouri River. Currently, the Fox Farm parcel is used extensively by the public for recreation. The local community seems to place a high value on the parcel as open space. The majority of authorized recreational use consists of walking and bicycle traffic.

DNRC historic documents allude to the following former uses and proposals for the Fox Farm parcels. It was considered for urban development in the 1980's to include a golf course, a club house and a residential complex. The tract was considered for a land exchange project in 1990. Other historic DNRC agreements include multiple sand and gravel permits (1954-2002). Also, the parcel was leased for grazing until 1985. Since this time, the majority of the parcel has earned little to no revenue for the trust beneficiary.

DNRC investigated potential commercial interest in 2018 to pursue revenue producing opportunities. This action prompted DNRC to follow the 1994 REMB Management Plan which requires the Department to consider "conservation interests". According to administrative rule, "Conservation" means a primary land use for open space, preservation of habitat, natural areas, parks, or related public purposes. Only the Montana Board of Land Commissioners (Land Board) has the authority to approve or deny easements. Under MCA 77-2-101, the Land Board can only grant an easement on the Fox Farm parcel for a public recreation park to a local government or state government entity with authority to hold the easement. As a result, Missouri River Open Lands Preservation (MROLP) approached Cascade County, who applied for a public recreation easement (hereafter referred to easement). Additionally, MROLP and Cascade County agreed that Cascade County would apply for the easement, while MROLP would shoulder financial and management responsibilities to be addressed in a separate agreement between Cascade County and MROLP.

See Attachment A map and Attachment B survey.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

DNRC staff consulted: Land Use Specialist Dylan Craft, Archeologist Patrick Rennie

DNRC performed the scoping and public involvement by the following actions:

- Public notice on the DNRC website with a link to submit electronic comments.
- Public notice on DNRC Facebook site.
- News releases were distributed to a standard list of real estate contacts.
- Scoping notice mailed to all neighboring landowners.
- Public comment period for 30 days (May 15-June 15, 2023).
- Comments received:
 - How many: 71 commentors
 - 68 commentors were in support of the easement
 - Zero commentors were direct opposition
 - Three commentors-neutral/neither for or against
 - Concerns: value of open space, development, education, appraisal, traffic, Sheriff's office staffing, private property and/or roads, easement language, MCA 77-2-303 Restrictions on Land Available for Sale, soils, water quality & quantity, air quality, vegetation, wildlife & wildlife habitat, archeology & historical, aesthetics, health & safety, access to recreation.
 - This document is analyzing no action and proposed action of the easement application only. Many comments were directed at development, which is outside the scope of this project and not analyzed in this document.
 - Concerns deemed non-substantive and/or outside of the scope of this proposal include: in support of, development, education, appraisal, private property and/or roads, easement language, and MCA 77-2-303 Restrictions on Land Available for Sale.
 - Results:
 - See Table 1 below on number of comments for each substantive concern and the location in this document where concerns are addressed.
- Additional but not all-inclusive outreach and interaction (with the public and the proponents):
 - December 19, 2017-DNRC staff (Balukas, Zipperian, Grimm, Atwood) met with city and county zoning officials and local economic development representatives to begin discussion about the future of the parcel
 - February 13, 2018-DNRC staff (Balukas) attending Neighborhood Council Meeting to begin the discussion with the community about the future of the parcel
 - March 10, 2018-DNRC staff (Balukas) attended another Neighborhood Council Meeting to further the discussion
 - May 4, 2018-DNRC staff attended a Great Falls Development Authority meeting to discuss the future of the parcel
 - August 30, 2018-DNRC staff (Balukas) attended a meeting in the home of Al Rollo to have a discussion with interested/concerned neighbors
 - October 9, 2018-DNRC staff (Balukas) attended Neighborhood Council Meeting
 - February 12, 2019-DNRC staff (Burgoyne) attended Neighborhood Council Meeting-informing attendees DNRC's plan to solicit conservation proposals
 - May 14, 2019- DNRC staff (Burgoyne/Grimm) attended Neighborhood Council Meeting to inform attendees of official timeline established for soliciting conservation proposals
 - June 3, 2019-The time-period to submit a conservation proposal begins and runs for 60 days
 - August 5, 2019-Conservation proposals are due by 5:00 pm. Proponents have 45 days to submit a formal application for a license, lease, easement, etc.
 - September 20, 2019-all official applications must be submitted by 5:00 pm.
 - September 10-a letter to the proponent explaining proponent's proposal did not meet the requirement for a formal application (Application for Easement by a public entity) -45 days were granted to the proponent to get a public entity to apply for an easement.
 - October 25, 2019-this 45-day period ended.

- Jan 7, 2020-DNRC (Burgoyne/Grimm) attended a City of Great Falls meeting to provide information regarding the proponent's proposal and DNRC process.
- February 21, 2020- DNRC (Burgoyne/Zipperian) attended a meeting with the Cascade County Commission to provide information regarding conservation interests and how the county could apply for an easement (park/open space). The county expressed interest in possibly pursuing an easement utilizing funds gathered by Missouri River Open Lands Preservation group.
- March 4, 2020-DNRC responded to several questions the Cascade County Commissioners posed during the meeting on February 21.
- April 7, 2020-The Cascade County Commission expressed continued interest in acting as the "public entity" to hold the easement. However, due to the current COVID-19 outbreak, the county asked for additional time before meeting officially to vote on the matter.
- March 19, 2021- Call with Cascade County (legal staff), Missouri River Preservation Group, and DNRC
- November 2, 2022-Call with Cascade County, Missouri River Preservation Group, and DNRC
- January 27, 2022- Meeting with Cascade County Commission and MROLP
- February 27, 2023- Meeting with Cascade County Commission and MROLP
- March 14, 2023-Cascade County Commission-Commission vote to apply for an easement

Table 1: Summary of Public Comments and Analysis of Concerns within this Document

Comment concern	Number of comments received	Location in EAC where concern is addressed
Process	3	I. Type and Purpose of Action
Alternatives	3	3. Alternatives Considered
Soils	7	4. Geology and Soil Quality, Stability and Moisture 13. Other Environmental Documents Pertinent to the Area
Water Quality & Quantity	4	5. Water Quality, Quantity and Distribution
Air Quality	1	6. Air Quality
Vegetation	9	7. Vegetation Cover, Quantity and Quality
Wildlife & Habitat	34	8. Terrestrial, Avian and Aquatic Life and Habitats 9. Unique, Endangers, Fragile or Limited Environmental Resources
Archeology & History	6	10. Historical and Archaeological Sites
Aesthetics	40	11. Aesthetics
Other Documents	1	13. Other Environmental Documents Pertinent to the Area
Health & Safety	4	14. Human Health and Safety
Tax Revenues	2	17. Local and State Tax Base and Tax Revenues
Government Services	3	18. Demand for Government Services
Local Plans & Zoning	1	19. Locally Adopted Environmental Plans and Goals
Public Access/Recreation	61	20. Access to and Quality of Recreational and Wilderness Activities.
Tradition	48	22. Social Structures and Mores
Unique	22	23. Cultural Uniqueness and Diversity

Return to Trust	10	24. Other Appropriate Social and Economic Circumstances
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*Individual Comments are available upon request.

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

DNRC is not aware of any additional permits required or of any conflicts with other jurisdictions as a result of either alternative.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action): The easement would be denied. Current and existing uses would continue. DNRC would seek alternative opportunities to earn revenue for the trust beneficiaries through other land management activities (grazing leases, real estate endeavors, mineral development).

Alternative B (Proposed Action): The proposed easement would be approved. The acres encumbered would be used as a public recreation park. Revenue to the trust beneficiaries would be realized from the purchase of the easement.

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 any cumulative impacts to soils.

The area of the proposed easement site is suburban and borders the Missouri River. According to Web Soil Survey the soil types on this tract include clay loams, silty clay, gravelly sandy loam and a complex. These soils have moderate to high potential ratings for soil restoration potential. These soils have somewhat limited and very limited rating for paths and trails.

Approximately 28 acres of this tract (northern portion in Lot 6) is classified as gravel pits by the Web Soil Survey. This acreage was not rated for any of the suitability and limitation options to query on this website. A cultural resource survey from 1984 stated this tract was disturbed by gravel mining in the 1940's or 1950's. Gravel was removed to an unknown depth and the topsoil replaced. However, the reclamation may not have included recontouring. During site inspections, DNRC staff noticed the old gravel sites that have pits and piles that appear unnatural but have been revegetated.

There are no anticipated potential impacts to geology and soil stability, quality, and moisture and would not affect existing soil patterns, structures, productivity, fertility, erosion, compaction, or instability. Soil and geologic substructure would remain stable during and after the proposed easement as there would be no physical changes to the location.

See Attachment C – TD & H Engineering Report of Geotechnical Site Assessment

Alternative A (No Action): The easement would be denied. Current and existing uses would continue. DNRC would seek alternative opportunities to earn revenue for the trust beneficiaries through other land management activities (grazing leases, real estate endeavors, mineral development).

Alternative B (Proposed Action): The proposed easement would be approved. The acres encumbered would be used as a public recreation park. Revenue to the trust beneficiaries would be realized from the purchase of the easement.

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 cumulative effects to water resources.

The easement application area of 79.27 acres with approximately 1400 linear feet on the Missouri River in the northeast portion of Lot 6. This easement would include no changes to current use with respect to water quality, quantity, and distribution.

Alternative A (No Action): The easement would be denied. Current and existing uses would continue. DNRC would seek alternative opportunities to earn revenue for the trust beneficiaries through other land management activities (grazing leases, real estate endeavors, mineral development).

Alternative B (Proposed Action): The proposed easement would be approved. The acres encumbered would be used as a public recreation park. Revenue to the trust beneficiaries would be realized from the purchase of the easement.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

This easement proposal would not have impacts to air quality.

Alternative A (No Action): The easement would be denied. Current and existing uses would continue. DNRC would seek alternative opportunities to earn revenue for the trust beneficiaries through other land management activities (grazing leases, real estate endeavors, mineral development).

Alternative B (Proposed Action): The proposed easement would be approved. The acres encumbered would be used as a public recreation park. Revenue to the trust beneficiaries would be realized from the purchase of the easement.

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 cumulative effects to vegetation.

This tract is considered to be Great Plains Mixed Grass Prairie according to Natural Heritage Map Viewer. This tract has not been part of a DNRC surface grazing lease since 2011.

This site has been and would continue to be walk-in access only for recreation. There would be minimal change in impacts to vegetation cover, quantity, and quality due to existing trails. DNRC Helena Unit Land Use Specialist Dylan Craft completed multiple site visits to this tract during the spring and summer of 2023 and found many native and invasive species present. These species include smooth brome, Sandberg bluegrass, Kentucky bluegrass, needle and thread grass, green needle grass, crested wheatgrass, snowberry, leafy spurge, spotted knapweed, various willow species, and cottonwood species.

Under current DNRC management, the noxious weed species have been sprayed or contracted to spray by DNRC. If the easement is approved, weed management would become the responsibility of Cascade County delegated to MROLP via agreement (MOU).

Alternative A (No Action): The easement would be denied. Current and existing uses would continue. DNRC would seek alternative opportunities to earn revenue for the trust beneficiaries through other land management activities (grazing leases, real estate endeavors, mineral development).

Alternative B (Proposed Action): The proposed easement would be approved. The acres encumbered would be used as a public recreation park. Revenue to the trust beneficiaries would be realized from the purchase of the easement.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

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

This site would continue to be walk in only access which would have no additional impacts to terrestrial, avian, and aquatic life and habitats. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks commented in scoping that the easement would “protect the high-quality wildlife habitat and continued recreational use of the State Trust Land located along Fox Farm Road and the Missouri River”.

Alternative A (No Action): The easement would be denied. Current and existing uses would continue. DNRC would seek alternative opportunities to earn revenue for the trust beneficiaries through other land management activities (grazing leases, real estate endeavors, mineral development).

Alternative B (Proposed Action): The proposed easement would be approved. The acres encumbered would be used as a public recreation park. Revenue to the trust beneficiaries would be realized from the purchase of the easement.

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 cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program database indicated that there were several species of concern with habitat polygons which overlap this tract including the following birds and reptiles: Golden Eagle, Great Blue Heron, and Spiny Softshell. Vascular plants and bryophytes which occur in this tract are: Many-headed Sedge, Chaffweed, Pale-yellow Jewel-weed, Foxtail Muhly, and Heim's Henediella Moss. However, there are no point observations noted for this tract. There is extensive existing recreational use, and an easement would not change the use. Anticipated impacts would remain unchanged to unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources.

Alternative A (No Action): The easement would be denied. Current and existing uses would continue. DNRC would seek alternative opportunities to earn revenue for the trust beneficiaries through other land management activities (grazing leases, real estate endeavors, mineral development).

Alternative B (Proposed Action): The proposed easement would be approved. The acres encumbered would be used as a public recreation park. Revenue to the trust beneficiaries would be realized from the purchase of the easement.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

A Class I (literature review) level review was conducted by the DNRC staff archaeologist for the area of potential effect (APE). This entailed inspection of project maps, DNRC's sites/site leads database, land use records, General Land Office Survey Plats, and control cards. The Class I search results revealed that the state ground was inventoried for cultural resources in 1984 and 1990 (Passmann 1984, 1990). An atlatl-size corner notched stone projectile point was identified on the ground surface of the parcel in 1990 but the precise location was not documented (Passmann 1990). Similarly, Passmann (1990) noted the presence of “6 flakes [chipped stone detritus] per 31 square meters were observed”. Precontact cultural material is present on the state parcel but this material has not been evaluated under the National Register of Historic Places significance and integrity criteria, nor has a formal site boundary been established.

In 1986 a construction crew working on a sewage lagoon directly across the Missouri River from the state parcel, unearthed a few bones of extinct bison species (24CA262), but no evidence of associated cultural material was identified. The faunal remains were discovered at a depth of 32 ft below the present ground surface (Melton and Schwab 1986).

A Class III cultural and paleontological resources inventory was conducted of the area of potential effect on state land in October of 2023. Although no palaeontologic resources were identified, three cultural resources were documented. These consist of a low-profile cairn of unknown age and purpose, a thin scattering of

chipped stone detritus, and an isolated projectile point fragment. Considering the non-ground disturbing nature of the Public Recreation Easement, the proposed project will have *No Effect* to *Antiquities* as defined under the Montana State Antiquities Act. A formal report of findings is on file with the DNRC and the Montana State Historic Preservation Officer.

References Cited:

Melton, Doug, and David Schwab

1986 Original site form for 24CA262. Document on file with the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, Montana.

Passmann, Dori

1984 Great Falls Lease Numbers 1209 and 2305. Unpublished cultural resources inventory report on file with the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, Montana.

1990 Fox Farm Land Exchange. Unpublished cultural resources inventory report on file with the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, Montana.

Additionally, all tribes within Montana Boundaries were scoped, no comments were received.

Alternative A (No Action): The easement would be denied. Current and existing uses would continue. DNRC would seek alternative opportunities to earn revenue for the trust beneficiaries through other land management activities (grazing leases, real estate endeavors, mineral development).

Alternative B (Proposed Action): The proposed easement would be approved. The acres encumbered would be used as a public recreation park. Revenue to the trust beneficiaries would be realized from the purchase of the easement.

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 cumulative effects to aesthetics.

The proposed easement would result in no changes of physical management of the site. The site is currently used for foot and bicycle traffic. No motorized vehicle use is allowed on this tract. No impacts or changes to aesthetics are anticipated.

Alternative A (No Action): The easement would be denied. Current and existing uses would continue. DNRC would seek alternative opportunities to earn revenue for the trust beneficiaries through other land management activities (grazing leases, real estate endeavors, mineral development).

Alternative B (Proposed Action): The proposed easement would be approved. The acres encumbered would be used as a public recreation park. Revenue to the trust beneficiaries would be realized from the purchase of the easement.

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 cumulative effects to environmental resources.

The area does not contain limited resources. There are other parks and fishing access sites upstream and downstream from this site. Nearby activities consist mostly of residential, agriculture, and recreational activities.

Alternative A (No Action): The easement would be denied. Current and existing uses would continue. DNRC would seek alternative opportunities to earn revenue for the trust beneficiaries through other land management activities (grazing leases, real estate endeavors, mineral development).

Alternative B (Proposed Action): The proposed easement would be approved. The acres encumbered would be used as a public recreation park. Revenue to the trust beneficiaries would be realized from the purchase of the easement.

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.

TD&H Engineering Report of Geotechnical Site Assessment. This document is available upon request.

Alternative A (No Action): The easement would be denied. Current and existing uses would continue. DNRC would seek alternative opportunities to earn revenue for the trust beneficiaries through other land management activities (grazing leases, real estate endeavors, mineral development).

Alternative B (Proposed Action): The proposed easement would be approved. The acres encumbered would be used as a public recreation park. Revenue to the trust beneficiaries would be realized from the purchase of the easement.

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.

The proposed easement is anticipated to have no change to human health and safety.

Alternative A (No Action): The easement would be denied. Current and existing uses would continue. DNRC would seek alternative opportunities to earn revenue for the trust beneficiaries through other land management activities (grazing leases, real estate endeavors, mineral development).

Alternative B (Proposed Action): The proposed easement would be approved. The acres encumbered would be used as a public recreation park. Revenue to the trust beneficiaries would be realized from the purchase of the easement.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

The proposed easement would have impacts to industrial, commercial and agriculture activities and production on this tract. The 79.27 acres in the proposed easement would limit the acres encumbered for any potential agricultural and grazing activities, commercial real estate, residential, or mineral development.

Alternative A (No Action): The easement would be denied. Current and existing uses would continue. DNRC would seek alternative opportunities to earn revenue for the trust beneficiaries through other land management activities (grazing leases, real estate endeavors, mineral development).

Alternative B (Proposed Action): The proposed easement would be approved. The acres encumbered would be used as a public recreation park. Revenue to the trust beneficiaries would be realized from the purchase of the easement.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

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

Impacts to quantity and distribution of employment are not anticipated.

Alternative A (No Action): The easement would be denied. Current and existing uses would continue. DNRC would seek alternative opportunities to earn revenue for the trust beneficiaries through other land management activities (grazing leases, real estate endeavors, mineral development).

Alternative B (Proposed Action): The proposed easement would be approved. The acres encumbered would be used as a public recreation park. Revenue to the trust beneficiaries would be realized from the purchase of the easement.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

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

Impacts to local and state tax base and tax revenues are not anticipated.

Alternative A (No Action): The easement would be denied. Current and existing uses would continue. DNRC would seek alternative opportunities to earn revenue for the trust beneficiaries through other land management activities (grazing leases, real estate endeavors, mineral development).

Alternative B (Proposed Action): The proposed easement would be approved. The acres encumbered would be used as a public recreation park. Revenue to the trust beneficiaries would be realized from the purchase of the easement.

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 cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

No impacts or changes are anticipated regarding demand for government services. FWP wardens would continue to enforce applicable rules and laws on State Trust Lands on this tract whether the easement is approved or not. If the easement is approved, members of the public could use this tract for recreation without further authorization. If the easement is not finalized, members of the public would need a conservation license to recreate on this tract.

Alternative A (No Action): The easement would be denied. Current and existing uses would continue. DNRC would seek alternative opportunities to earn revenue for the trust beneficiaries through other land management activities (grazing leases, real estate endeavors, mineral development).

Alternative B (Proposed Action): The proposed easement would be approved. The acres encumbered would be used as a public recreation park. Revenue to the trust beneficiaries would be realized from the purchase of the easement.

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.

Neither the No Action Alternative nor Action Alternative are anticipated to conflict with any locally adopted plans. Two applicable environmental plans and goals include:

- FWP Comprehensive Fish & Wildlife Management Strategy, Community Type of Greatest Conservation Need and Mixed System Aquatic Community Type of the Greatest Conservation Need (Missouri River).

- City of Great Falls: 2004 Missouri River Urban Corridor Plan, 2002 Missouri River Urban Corridor Inventory and Assessment.

Alternative A (No Action): The easement would be denied. Current and existing uses would continue. DNRC would seek alternative opportunities to earn revenue for the trust beneficiaries through other land management activities (grazing leases, real estate endeavors, mineral development).

Alternative B (Proposed Action): The proposed easement would be approved. The acres encumbered would be used as a public recreation park. Revenue to the trust beneficiaries would be realized from the purchase of the easement.

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 cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

The proposed easement is anticipated to have no impacts to access or the quality of recreational activities. No wilderness areas are nearby nor accessible through this tract.

Alternative A (No Action): The easement would be denied. Current and existing uses would continue. DNRC would seek alternative opportunities to earn revenue for the trust beneficiaries through other land management activities (grazing leases, real estate endeavors, mineral development).

Alternative B (Proposed Action): The proposed easement would be approved. The acres encumbered would be used as a public recreation park. Revenue to the trust beneficiaries would be realized from the purchase of the easement.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.

Implementation of the No Action Alternative or Action Alternative is not anticipated to have adverse impacts to density and distribution of population and housing.

Alternative A (No Action): The easement would be denied. Current and existing uses would continue. DNRC would seek alternative opportunities to earn revenue for the trust beneficiaries through other land management activities (grazing leases, real estate endeavors, mineral development).

Alternative B (Proposed Action): The proposed easement would be approved. The acres encumbered would be used as a public recreation park. Revenue to the trust beneficiaries would be realized from the purchase of the easement.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

During public scoping, 68 comments were "in support of" the easement application. There are no native, unique, or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity that would be impacted by implementation of the No Action Alternative or Action Alternative.

Alternative A (No Action): The easement would be denied. Current and existing uses would continue. DNRC would seek alternative opportunities to earn revenue for the trust beneficiaries through other land management activities (grazing leases, real estate endeavors, mineral development).

Alternative B (Proposed Action): The proposed easement would be approved. The acres encumbered would be used as a public recreation park. Revenue to the trust beneficiaries would be realized from the purchase of the easement.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

Implementation of the No Action Alternative or Action Alternative is not expected to have a significant adverse impact on cultural uniqueness or diversity.

Alternative A (No Action): The easement would be denied. Current and existing uses would continue. DNRC would seek alternative opportunities to earn revenue for the trust beneficiaries through other land management activities (grazing leases, real estate endeavors, mineral development).

Alternative B (Proposed Action): The proposed easement would be approved. The acres encumbered would be used as a public recreation park. Revenue to the trust beneficiaries would be realized from the purchase of the easement.

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

The State of Montana would benefit by receiving a one-time payment for this easement. The fee for the easement is based on the appraisal. The appraisal report found Lot 6 valued at \$640,000 and Lot 7 valued at \$360,000 for a total of \$1,000,000. The appraisal is effective for a one-year period, and should the easement proposal not be presented to the Land Board before the appraisal termination date, the referenced appraisal would be invalid. The University of Montana is the beneficiary of this payment.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Heidi Crum, Andy Burgoyne	Date: February 14, 2024
	Title: Helena Unit Manager, CLO Trust Land Program Manger	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative B (Proposed Action):

This MEPA document analyzes the proposed action of issuing permanent easement for a public recreation park use within the project area. The proposed action does not include any improvements or changes to the human environment but rather continues recreational use of the tract in perpetuity while meeting fiduciary responsibilities of administering Montana's State trust lands. The proposed action provides fair market compensation to the trust and a source of revenue significantly exceeding the current existing condition.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The review of the public comment received during project scoping, analysis contained in the Checklist Environmental Assessment and personal communications with the Interdisciplinary Team have provided the Decision Maker adequate information to make the informed decision that no significant potential impacts will occur from selecting the proposed action.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

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EIS

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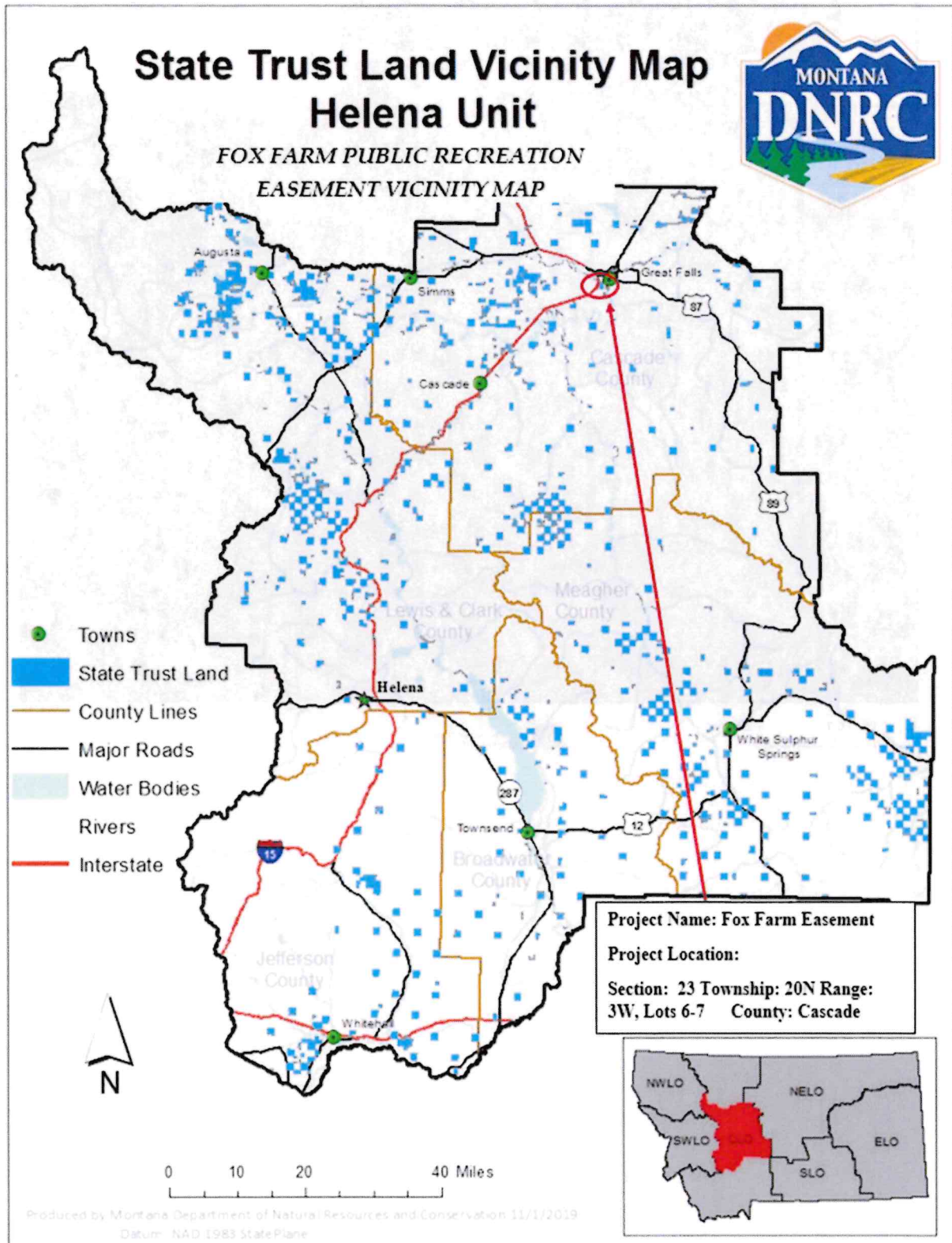
More Detailed EA

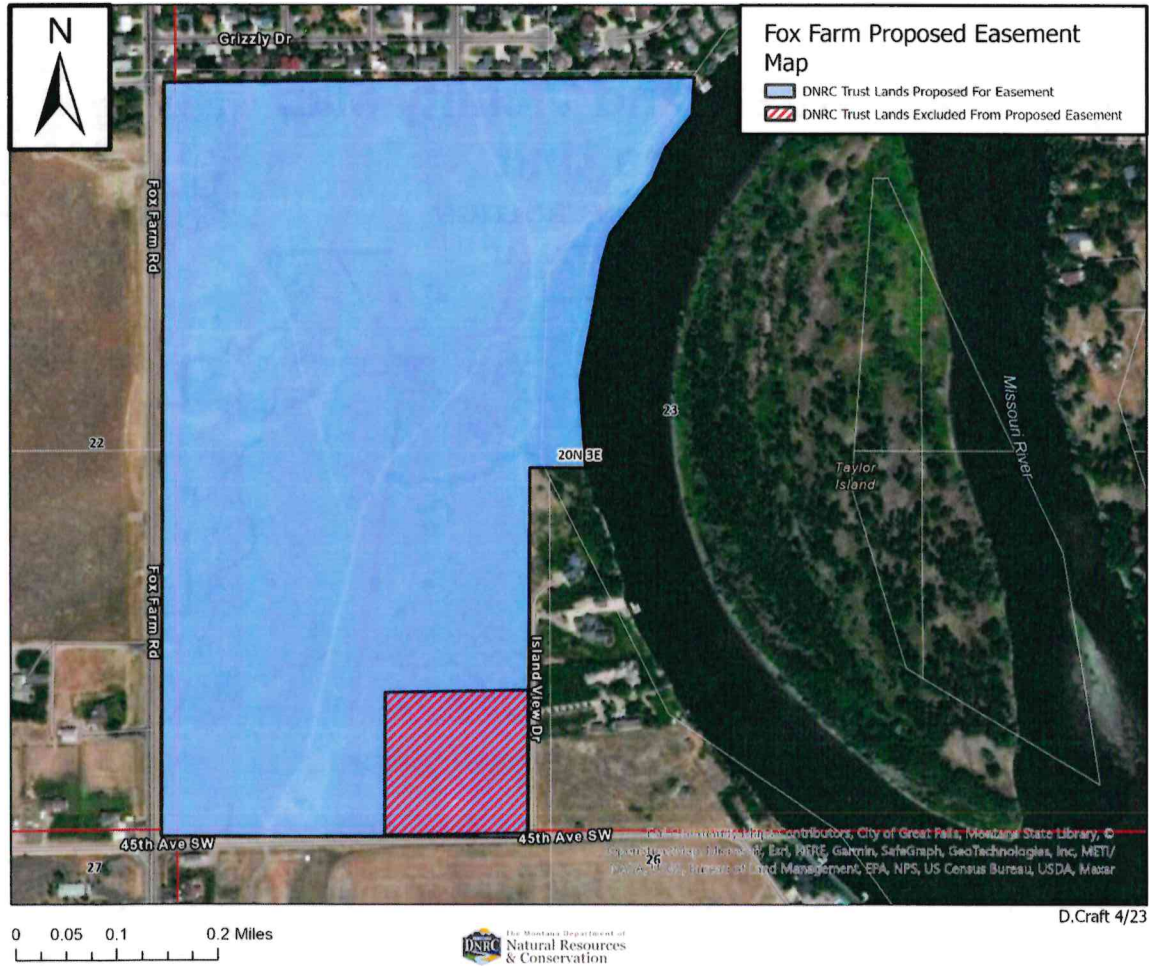
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No Further Analysis

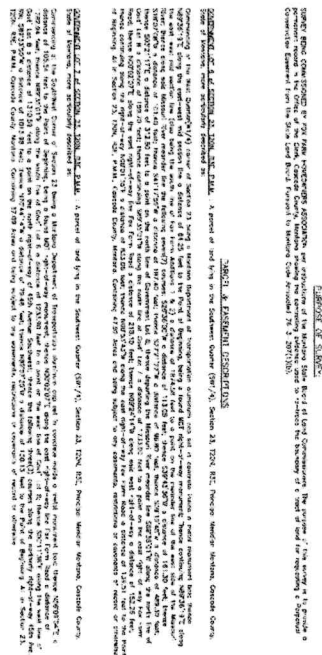
EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Hoyt Richards
	Title: Area Manager, Central Land Office
Signature:  Date: 3/4/2024	

Attachment A – Maps





CERTIFICATE OF SURVEY
BEING THE RETRACEMENT OF AN EXISTING TRACT OF LAND
Affecting Government Lots 6 & 7 of Section 23, T20N, R3E. P.M.M., Cascade County, Montana

[illegible]

EXAMINED FOR COMPLIANCE WITH
SLEDGEHORN & PLATING ACT
TREASURER'S SIGNATURE YES NO X
DATE
BY
CASCADIA COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

[illegible]

KENDALL LAND SURVEYING, INC.
 GREAT FALLS, MONTANA 59401
 409-217-1707

5294.11' = 150'
10496.00' = 500'
DATE: 2/28/2024

