

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Tarkio Fire Station Easement
Proposed Implementation Date:	Start as early as 2022
Proponent:	Superior Fire Department
Location:	Section 22 T15N R25W
County:	Mineral

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The Superior Fire Department is proposing to purchase an easement on 2.001 acres of Trust Lands in order to construct a Fire Station. The new station would house a new structure engine, a new wildland fire engine and a water tender. The proposed design would be a two bay station with enough space to allow emergency vehicles to park two deep. The access would be on Tarkio Loop Road with a drive thru exit to Nemote Creek Road. An above ground 48,000 gallon water tank would be placed near the rear of the property designed to meet the needs of the newly annexed 5,136 acre rural area.

The proposed easement is perpetual, but if the easement ceased to be used as a fire station the easement would terminate. The easement holder must begin construction of the proposed fire station within 5 years of the day the easement is signed. If this doesn't happen the easement terminates. Construction does not have to be complete, but it must be started within the 5 years.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:
Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project. List number of individuals contacted, number of responses received, and newspapers in which notices were placed and for how long. Briefly summarize issues received from the public.

Scoping Notices were mailed or emailed to 32 interested parties.

Three responses were received:

Two letters-The letters were identical and signed by the same person (one was signed as a landowner and the other as a member of a family partnership). The letters outlined concerns about light pollution, wildlife, traffic and the value and location of the easement.

An email that indicated concerns about the easement cost being undervalued and safety concerns about the ingress and egress.

Issues and concerns were considered during project planning and design.

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:
Examples: cost-share agreement with U.S. Forest Service, 124 Permit, 3A Authorization, Air Quality Major Open Burning Permit.

None

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

Alternative A – Action Alternative would recommend Land Board approval of this easement application.

Alternative B – No action alternative would deny this easement application.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES* potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.
- Explain **POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS** following each resource heading.
- Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to soils.

The site was historically used as a location for a school (beginning around 1911). The buildings are no longer there and the area is grown over with vegetation. Given the fact that the area was historically used for an administrative site with no obvious signs of soil instability problems and it is relatively flat, no measurable impacts would be expected to occur as a result of the proposed action. Disturbed areas that are not used for the building location or ingress and egress would be re-seeded with a state approved grass seed mixture.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to water resources.

There are no streams within the proposed project area.

6. AIR QUALITY:

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

No change would be anticipated with either alternative.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to vegetation.

The area is currently overgrown with grass and weeds. 3-5 scattered trees exist towards the middle of the 2.001 lot with a clump of ponderosa pine existing in the northwest corner. It appears that a row of trees has been planted along the fence line to the south. Given the small size of the ownership (2.001 acres) removal of the overstory would not have an effect on the Missoula Unit Trust Lands timber program.

Natural Heritage Tracker indicated that the proposed easement area is within the general range of the small-flowered Pennycress. The plant most often inhabits sagebrush steppe but can also be found in mid-elevation (6,500'-10,000 elevation) grasslands to alpine turf. The proposed project area doesn't contain any of the areas described in the previous sentence and it is not within the elevation range outlined in the Natural Heritage Tracker. No small-flowered Pennycress were observed on the site during field visits.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

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

WILDLIFE:

Evaluation of the impacts of the No-Action and Action Alternatives including **direct, indirect, and cumulative** effects on Wildlife.

Wildlife Existing Conditions: The project area is a small parcel containing grass and a few trees and is bordered on 2 sides by open roads. Considerable disturbance to wildlife is likely given the proximity to open roads, Highway 90, the railroad, human residences, agricultural operations, timber management, and various forms of summer and winter recreation. The project area is within several bald eagle home ranges along the Clark Fork River, but extensive use of the project area is unlikely. Potential habitat exists for fringed myotis in the project area. Some big game winter range exists in the project area, but habitat conditions in the project area do not likely support wintering big game. Summer range for big game also exists in the project area, but extensive use is unlikely given the proximity to open roads, size of the project area, and limited habitat structure in the project area. No big game security habitat exists in the project area.

No-Action: Continued use at existing levels by wildlife species presently found in the project area would be anticipated. No further disturbance to wildlife would be anticipated. Generally, negligible direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would occur.

Action Alternative (see Wildlife table below):

Disturbance to wildlife in the project area would be anticipated. In general, habitats for those species using the project area would be reduced with the anticipated construction associated with the easement.

Wildlife	Effects								Can Impact be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct and Indirect				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
Threatened and Endangered Species										
Grizzly bear (<i>Ursus arctos</i>) Habitat: Recovery areas, security from human activity	X				X					1
Canada lynx (<i>Felix lynx</i>) Habitat: Subalpine fir habitat types, dense sapling, old forest, deep snow zone	X				X					2
Yellow-Billed Cuckoo (<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>) Habitat: Deciduous forest stands of 25 acres or more with dense understories and in Montana these areas are generally found in large river bottoms	X				X					2
Sensitive Species										

Wildlife	Effects								Can Impact be Mitigated?	Comment Number	
	Direct and Indirect				Cumulative						
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High			
Bald eagle <i>(Haliaeetus leucocephalus)</i> Habitat: Late-successional forest less than 1 mile from open water		X				X				Y	3
Black-backed woodpecker <i>(Picoides arcticus)</i> Habitat: Mature to old burned or beetle-infested forest	X				X						2
Common loon <i>(Gavia immer)</i> Habitat: Cold mountain lakes, nest in emergent vegetation	X				X						2
Fisher <i>(Martes pennanti)</i> Habitat: Dense mature to old forest less than 6,000 feet in elevation and riparian	X				X						2
Flammulated owl <i>(Otus flammeolus)</i> Habitat: Late-successional ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir forest	X				X						2
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						4
Hoary bat <i>(Lasiurus cinereus)</i> Habitat: coniferous and deciduous forests and roost on foliage in trees,	X				X						2

Wildlife	Effects								Can Impact be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct and Indirect				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
under bark, in snags, bridges										
Peregrine falcon (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>) Habitat: Cliff features near open foraging areas and/or wetlands	X				X					2
Pileated woodpecker (<i>Dryocopus pileatus</i>) Habitat: Late-successional ponderosa pine and larch-fir forest	X				X					2
Townsend's big-eared bat (<i>Plecotus townsendii</i>) Habitat: Caves, caverns, old mines	X				X					2
Wolverine (<i>Gulo gulo</i>) Habitat: Alpine tundra and high-elevation boreal forests that maintain deep persistent snow into late spring	X				X					2
Other Species Considered										
Mountain Lion (<i>Puma concolor</i>) Habitat: Mountains and foothills with sufficient food, cover and areas away from humans.	X				X					5
Black Bear (<i>Ursa americanus</i>) Habitat: Dense forests, riparian areas, open slopes	X				X					6
Big Game Species										
Elk		X				X			Y	7
Whitetail		X				X			Y	7
Mule Deer		X				X			Y	7
Moose		X				X			Y	7

Wildlife	Effects								Can Impact be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct and Indirect				Cumulative					
	N o	Low	Mod	High	N o	Low	Mod	High		
Other	X				X					

Comments:

1. The project area is 35 miles southwest of the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem grizzly bear recovery area and is 16 miles southwest of 'occupied' grizzly bear habitat as mapped by grizzly bear researchers and managers to address increased sightings and encounters of grizzly bears in habitats outside of recovery zones (Wittinger et al. 2002). Use by grizzly bears is unlikely given the openness of the habitats, proximity to open roads, human residences, agricultural operations, and other forms of human disturbance. Given their large home range sizes, habitats present, the small size of the project area, and manner in which they use a broad range of forested and non-forested habitats, the proposed activities would have no effects on grizzly bears.
2. The project area is either out of the range of the normal distribution for this species or suitable habitat is not present. Thus, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would be anticipated.
3. Portions of the project area are within the home ranges associated with the Tarkio/Rivulet, Fish Creek-Clark Fork, and Quartz Flats bald eagle territories. These territories experience considerable levels of human disturbance associated with Highway 90, the railroad, human residences, agricultural operations, timber management, and various forms of summer and winter recreation. Negligible levels of disturbance to bald eagles would be anticipated given the distance from those nests and the existing levels of disturbance. No changes to existing bald eagle habitats would occur.
4. Fringed myotis are year-round residents of Montana that use a variety of habitats, including deserts, shrublands, sagebrush-grasslands, and forested habitats. They overwinter in caves, mines, crevices, or human structures. Fringed myotis forage near the ground or near vegetation. No known caves, mines, crevices, or other structures used for roosting occur in the project area or immediate vicinity. Fringed myotis have been documented in the vicinity of the Clark Fork River near the project area. Proposed activities would not likely disturb fringed myotis along the Clark Fork River, but if any were using the project area, disturbance of those individuals could occur. Changes in vegetation structural attributes could change overall prey availability in this small area, but considerable foraging habitats would persist in the cumulative effects analysis area. Overall, no appreciable changes to fringed myotis use of the cumulative effects analysis areas would be anticipated.
5. The project area is largely too small, too open, and too close to various forms of human disturbance to be used by mountain lions. Considerable use by their prey is also unlikely.
6. The project area is largely too small, too open, and too close to various forms of human disturbance to be used by black bears. Food resources for black bears are not abundant in the project area.
7. White-tailed deer and elk winter range exists in the project area, but habitat attributes do not generally exist in the project area that would support wintering big game. Summer range for white-tailed deer, mule deer, elk, and moose exists in the project area. No big game security habitat exists in the project area. Extensive use of the project area is unlikely given the small size of the project area, habitats present, and the proximity to open roads, human residences, and other forms of human disturbance.

Proposed activities could disturb big game in the area and remove a small amount of potential habitat, but extensive habitats exist in the area.

Wildlife Mitigations:

A DNRC biologist will be consulted if a threatened or endangered species is encountered to determine if additional mitigations that are consistent with the administrative rules for managing threatened and endangered species (ARM 36.11.428 through 36.11.435) are needed.

Wildlife References:

Wittinger, W.T. 2002. Grizzly bear distribution outside of recovery zones. Unpublished memorandum on file at USDA Forest Service, Region 1. Missoula, Montana.2pp.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

No measurable impacts would be anticipated as a result of the proposed action.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine direct, indirect, and cumulative 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 no cultural or paleontological resources have been identified in the APE, and that the APE has been variously disturbed in the past.

Because the topographic setting and geology suggest a low to moderate likelihood of the presence of cultural or paleontologic resources, issuance of a proposed easement will have *No Effect to Antiquities*. No additional archaeological investigative work will be conducted in response to this proposed development. However, 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.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to aesthetics.

A scoping comment indicated a concern about light pollution if the proposed easement were granted and the Tarkio Fire Station was constructed. The Superior Fire Chief has proposed to install motion sensor lights to mitigate potential light pollution. The Chief anticipates an annual call volume of 10 calls per year. This fire station would be a secondary volunteer fire station to serve rural homes, not the primary fire station. Given the low amount of expected use and the utilization of motion sensor lights the proposed easement should have minimal effects on the overall quality of the night sky in the Tarkio area.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to environmental resources.

None

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.

None

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.</i>• <i>Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.</i>• <i>Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.</i>

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

A scoping comment was received that indicated a concern about traffic safety if an easement was granted for the proposed fire station. Specific comments indicated dips and blind spots along the road, ingress and egress on a blind corner, open range cattle and recreationist traffic.

The driveway plan under the proposed easement is to exit on the Tarkio Loop Road. This would provide a clear line of sight for traffic. Based on the existing call volume for the area, the projected annual calls served out of this fire station would be approximately 10. Given the expected low call volume and the proposed egress location, impacts to traffic and safety as a result of the proposed easement would be minimal.

Currently if an emergency were to happen in this rural area responders would have to come from Superior. This increase in response time can have negative impacts on the emergency. If a fire station were constructed response times in the immediate area would be reduced. This quicker response would have a positive impact on people impacted by an emergency in the Tarkio area.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

None

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

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

No measurable impacts would be anticipated as a result of the proposed action.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

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

No change from existing conditions would be expected.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

None

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

None

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

No measurable impacts would be anticipated as a result of the proposed action.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

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

None

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

None

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

No measurable impacts would be anticipated as a result of the proposed action.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

Granting the easement would generate approximately \$36,110 for the State Normal School Trust. Concerns were received during scoping that indicated the estimated value was too low. Valuation was calculated by analyzing both MLS listing and market land values utilized by DOR at the time (January 2022). The analysis actually concluded that the DOR value was higher than the average of the 3 active listings in the immediate area of Tarkio. (\$18,055/acre by DOR and \$12,675/acre by MLS). Thus, it was most beneficial to the Trust to use the DOR value and set the cost of the easement for the 2 acres at \$36,110.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Amy Helena	Date: June 7, 2022
	Title: Missoula Unit Manager	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:


I select the action alternative (Alternative A) - recommending Land Board approval of this easement application.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

No significant, unacceptable or measurable impacts are anticipated as a result of the proposed action.

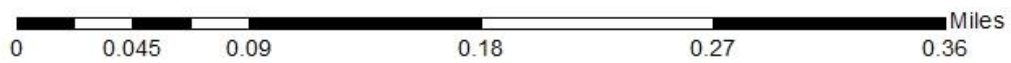
27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS More Detailed EA No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Sierra Farmer Title: Trust Lands Program Manager, Southwestern Land Office.
Signature: 	Date: 6/23/2022



Proposed Tarkio Fire Station Easement
Section 22 T15N R25W
DNRC-MISSOULA UNIT



 Proposed Easement

A. Helena
5/9/2022