

Draft Environmental Assessment

Stumptown Addition to the Garry Mountain Wildlife Management Area



November 2019



Region 2
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 Purpose of and Need for Action	1
1.1 Proposed Action and Need	1
1.2 Objectives of the Proposed Action	4
1.3 Location	4
1.4 Relevant Plans	4
1.5 Authority	8
2.0 Alternatives	8
2.1 Alternative A--Proposed Action	8
2.2 Alternative B--No Action	9
2.3 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Further Analysis: Conservation Easement	9
3.0 Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences	9
3.1 Land Use	9
3.2 Vegetation	11
3.3 Wildlife Species	13
3.4 Fisheries and Water Resources	16
3.5 Aesthetics and Recreation	16
3.6 Community and Taxes	18
3.7 Cultural and Historic Resources	18
3.8 Cumulative Effects	19
4.0 Resource Issues Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Analysis	19
4.1 Soils	19
4.2 Air Quality	19
4.3 Noise and Electrical Effects	19
4.4 Risk and Health Hazards	20
5.0 Need for an Environmental Impact Statement	20
6.0 Public Participation	20
6.1 Public Involvement	20
6.2 Duration of Comment Period	21
6.3 Timeline of Events	21
7.0 EA Preparation	21
8.0 References	21

Appendices

A. Draft Management Plan for Proposed Stumptown Addition to Garrity Mountain Wildlife Management Area (2019)	23
B. Garrity Mountain WMA Draft Management Plan (2001)	30
C. Integrated Pest Management Plan for [the proposed] Stumptown Addition to Garrity Mountain WMA (2019)	35

1.0 PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

1.1 Proposed Action and Need

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) proposes to purchase fee-title acquisition of 600 acres of privately-owned land as an addition to FWP's adjoining 9,907-acre Garry Mountain Wildlife Management Area (GMWMA). The acquisition parcel (hereafter, Stumptown Addition or addition), is located 1.5 miles west of Anaconda in Deer Lodge County, west-central Montana (Figure 1). The Stumptown Addition would provide critical winter range for elk and deer, summer range for bighorn sheep, and represent an important spring calving area for elk. The addition also encompasses 0.7 miles of Warm Springs Creek and its associated riparian area that is one of the most productive and diverse riparian habitats in the area. The addition would support a diversity of game species and many nongame species, including 29 nongame species that are classified as state Species of Concern or Potential Species of Concern (section 3.3).



Figure 1. Location of the Stumptown Addition to the Garry Mountain Wildlife Management Area.

The Upper Clark Fork River Basin (UCFRB) and Anaconda in particular, suffered significant damages to natural resources as a result of decades of mining and smelting of ore and associated activities in the watershed. The State of Montana sued Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO) for damages in 1983, which resulted in a series of settlements in 1999, 2005 and 2008. These settlements are administered by the Montana Department of Justice's Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP). NRDP uses settlement funds to prepare and implement restoration plans in the UCFRB to restore, replace, or acquire the equivalent of

injured natural resources. The funds are available to purchase properties that would replace the equivalent of the lost or damaged aquatic and terrestrial resources and replace lost recreation opportunities.

The Stumptown Addition would replace lost recreational resources and contains multiple types of high-value habitats in both the aquatic and terrestrial realms. Habitats on this property have been identified as high priority for conservation both by *Montana's State Wildlife Action Plan* (SWAP; FWP 2015) and the NRDP *Final Upper Clark Fork River Basin Aquatic and Terrestrial Resources Restoration Plans* (NRDP 2019).

The addition is approximately 600 acres of diverse habitats including aspen stands and riparian areas that are some of the most biologically rich and imminently threatened habitats in Montana (Figures 2, 3). Warm Springs Creek flows through the property and supports a robust riparian zone with quality habitat for federally threatened bull trout and many state Species of Concern, including westslope cutthroat trout, western toad, and great blue heron. The section of the Creek that flows through the addition is considered critical habitat for bull trout (a Threatened species under the federal Endangered Species Act) by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Upland habitats on the property consist of a mix of forest types and grasslands that provide cover and feeding opportunities for ungulates and other wildlife. Flat lowland areas are scarce for game animals on the GMWMA, so this addition would provide a critical linkage between high- and low-elevation habitats on the larger landscape. The addition and the surrounding landscape are important for fish and wildlife habitat and connectivity in FWP Region 2, and SWAP recognizes the area as a priority for conservation actions.



Figure 2. The area just outside of the riparian area along Warm Springs Creek consists of open grassland meadows interspersed with aspen stands and shrub thickets. The views of the surrounding landscape are outstanding.

The Stumptown Addition would add to the ~9,907-acre GMWMA that is in turn connected to a large landscape of U.S. Forest Service and FWP lands in the Beaverhead-Deer Lodge National Forest and the Mt. Haggin WMA. Acquisition of the property would protect the existing resource values by precluding development (e.g., subdivision) of the property or other management practices that might occur under private ownership that could be incompatible with fish and wildlife habitat values. The addition would offer a variety of recreational opportunities including hunting, fishing, hiking, trapping, picnicking, wildlife-watching, mountain biking, and horseback riding. Access to the GMWMA would be enhanced in an area that is generally steep and rugged and therefore difficult to access by the general public. The addition would also enhance fishing access along Warm Springs Creek, where trout are abundant. Wildlife watchers and hunters would enjoy the network of trails and old roads that course through a diversity of habitat types. While access opportunities are abundant on the addition, large portions remain wild and relatively unimpacted, providing security and other necessary resources for a variety of species throughout their life cycles.



Figure 3. The riparian area along Warm Springs Creek within the Stumptown Addition is wide and diverse, with multi-story vegetation that is critical for nesting songbirds and woodpeckers, as well as a variety of other game and nongame species.

FWP has been working with Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) to arrive at a conservation outcome for this property. RMEF provided funds for a purchase option to hold the property until FWP and NRDP can work through the public processes to provide the additional funding. RMEF has offered an addition \$75,000 to help with the purchase price. The appraised value of the Stumptown Addition and sale price from the private owner to FWP is \$1,740,600. As proposed, NRDP would pay \$1,465,600 from the UCFRB Restoration Fund, FWP would pay \$100,000 from the Habitat Montana Fund, RMEF would contribute \$100,000, and the Montana Fish & Wildlife Conservation Trust would pay \$75,000 to convey the property to FWP (Table 1). FWP is requesting an additional \$79,200 from the NRDP for initial start-up and maintenance costs of the addition, including addressing weed infestations, improving or removing fences, and road/parking improvements.

Table 1. Funding strategy for the Stumptown Addition to the Garry Mountain Wildlife Management Area.

Entity	Contribution	Status
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation	\$100,000	\$25,000 in purchase option, \$75,000 for purchase cost
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (Habitat Montana Fund)	\$100,000	Committed
Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust	\$75,000	Committed
Natural Resource Damage Program (UCFRB Restoration Fund)	\$1,465,600	Requested
Total price of acquisition	\$1,740,600	
Natural Resource Damage Program	\$79,200	Requested (initial maintenance)
Total price of project	\$1,819,800	

1.2 Objectives of the Proposed Action

FWP objectives for purchasing the Stumptown Addition are to:

1. Protect and enhance important elk calving grounds and winter range.
2. Protect critical fish and wildlife habitat for both game and nongame species.
3. Enhance outdoor recreation opportunities in Anaconda and surrounding communities.
4. Add significantly to a landscape-scale block of conservation lands with great public access.
5. Facilitate and complement management of the existing GMWMA.
6. Partially meet the goals of the Upper Clark Fork River Basin Aquatic and Terrestrial Resources Restoration Plans (NRDP 2019).

1.3 Location

The Stumptown Addition is 600 acres and is located in Anaconda-Deer Lodge County (ADLC), approximately 1.5 miles west of Anaconda in the foothills between Highway 1 to the north and FWP's Mt. Haggin WMA and the Continental Divide to the south (Figure 4). The parcel that would be acquired is in Section 31, Township 5 North, Range 11 West. The only portion of this (currently platted) parcel that would be excluded from the acquisition is in the northwest corner of the property (that portion that is west of Ravndal Road; Figure 6).

The proposed addition has GMWMA adjacent along its (the addition's) south boundary and half of its east boundary (Figure 5). Half of the west boundary of the proposed acquisition is adjacent to public property owned by the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC). Part of the north boundary of the addition is adjacent to land owned by Anaconda-Deer Lodge County. All other portions of the property boundary are adjacent to private lands.

1.4 Relevant Plans

Montana's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP; FWP 2015) identifies habitats and species prioritized for conservation statewide. As identified by the SWAP, the Stumptown Addition is comprised almost entirely of Tier 1 Community Types (highest priority; based on Level 2 Landcover), including:

- 251 acres (42%) of Montane Grassland
- 161 acres (27%) of Conifer-dominated Forest and Woodland (Xeric-mesic)
- 69 acres (11%) of Floodplain and Riparian
- 43 acres (7%) of Sagebrush-steppe
- 23 acres (4%) of Deciduous-dominated Forest and Woodland
- 10 acres (2%) are a mix of Shrublands, Open Water, and Wet Meadows

The only non-Tier 1 Community Types are 22 acres (4%) of Developed and 21 acres (3%) of Insect-killed Forest. However, on-the-ground observations indicate the Developed acreage is significantly less than shown by landcover data. The addition lies within Tier I and II Focal Areas for Aquatic and Terrestrial species, respectively. Approximately 0.7 miles of Warm Springs Creek, a large perennial stream, flows through the property. This creek has complex, multi-threaded stream channels and is surrounded by a lush riparian area consisting of willows, alders, aspens, junipers, and cottonwoods. An additional 0.4 miles of intermittent streams flow seasonally in the higher elevations on the addition. There would be no irrigated cropland included in this fee-title acquisition.

The **Upper Clark Fork River Basin Aquatic and Terrestrial Resources Restoration Plans** (Section 4; NRDP 2019) guide NRDP's implementation of restoration actions in the UCFRB on priority aquatic and terrestrial habitats. The Anaconda landscape is one of 9 priority landscapes identified in the UCFRB. Aspen, riparian, and native grassland habitats--all of which occur on the property--are of highest priority for restoration and replacement actions in these plans.

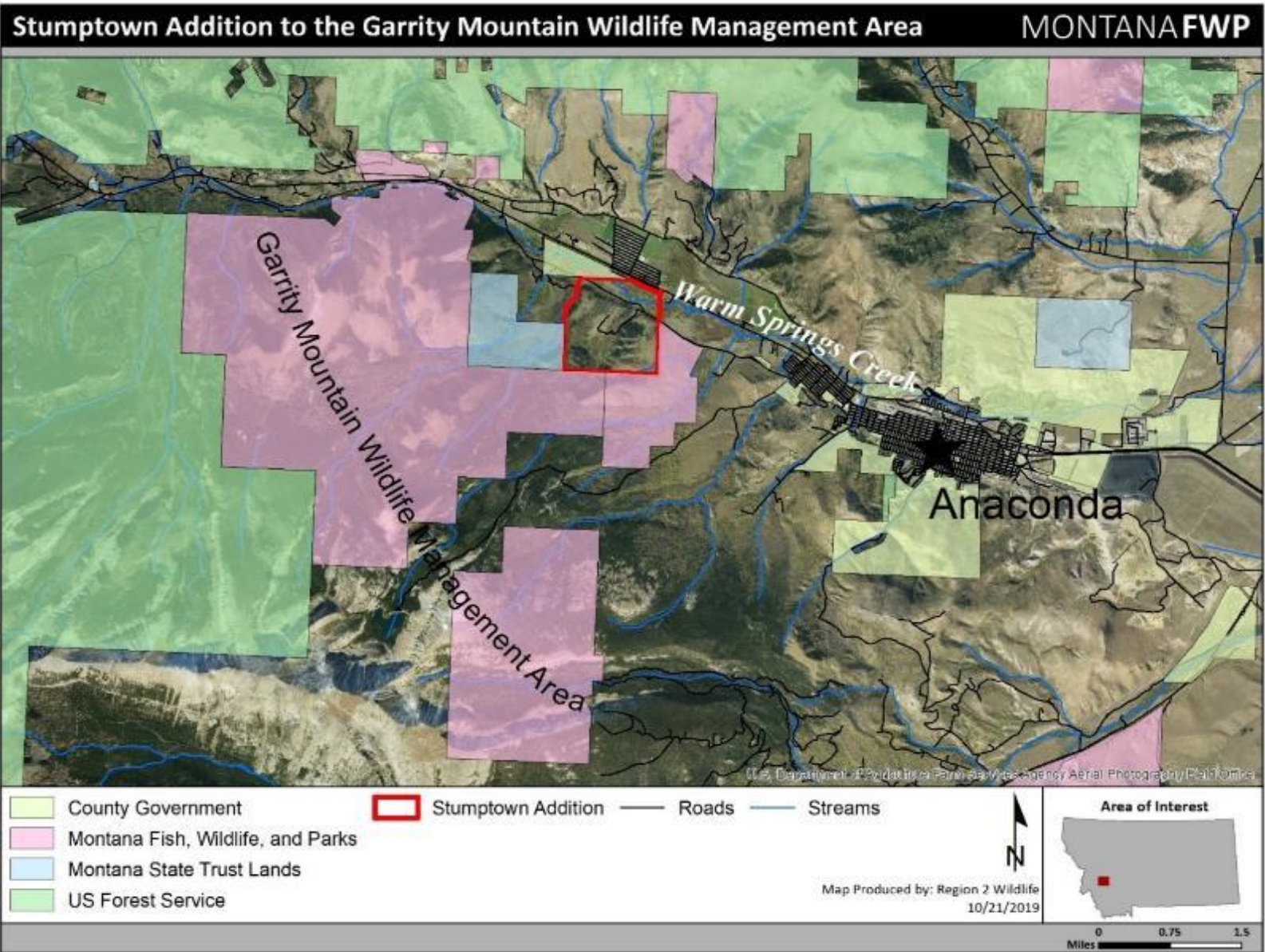


Figure 4. Landscape context map for the proposed Stumptown Addition to the Garry Mountain Wildlife Management Area.

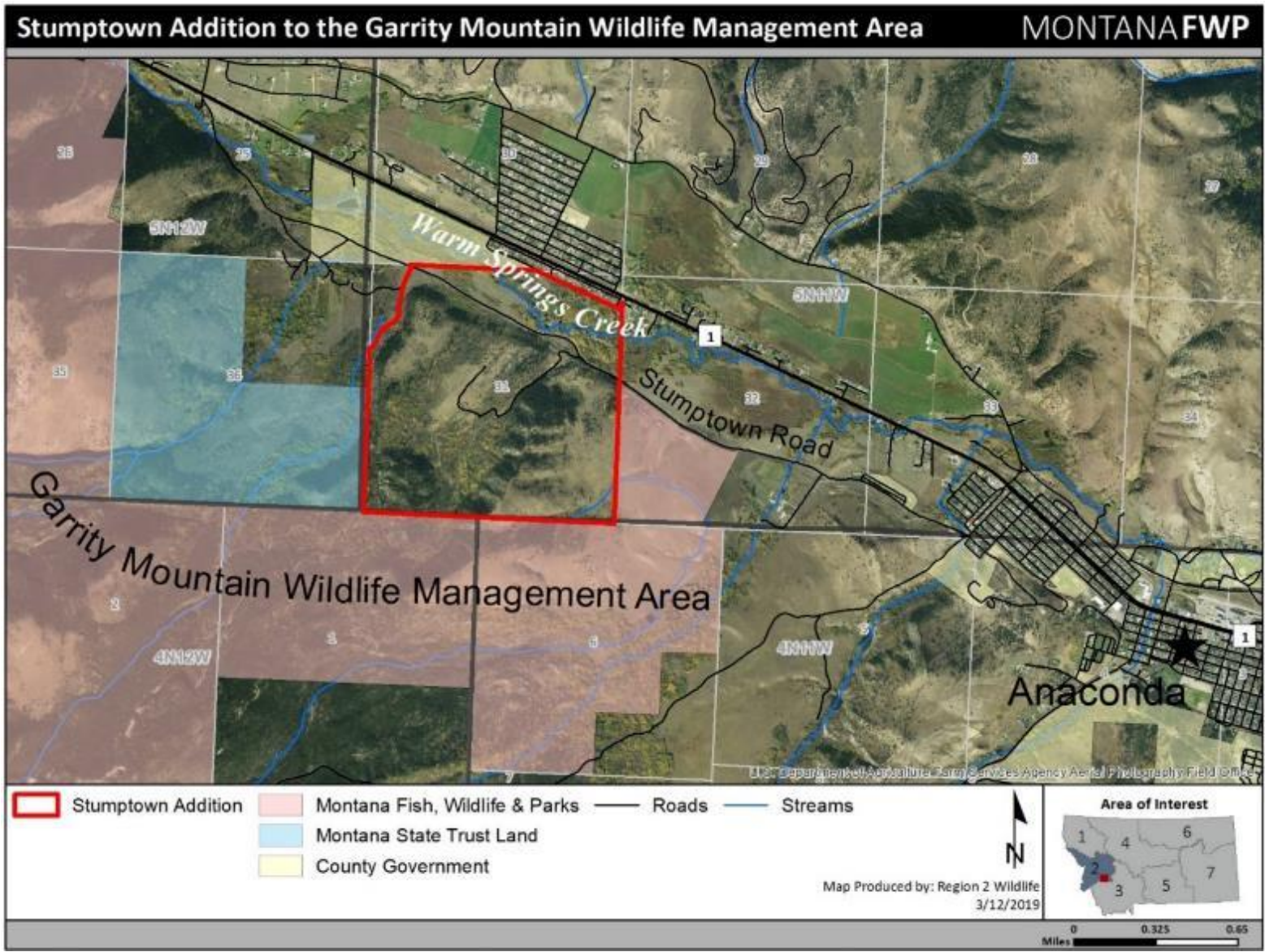


Figure 5. Land ownership map of the proposed Stumptown Addition to the Garry Mountain Wildlife Management Area. All properties not colored on the map are private.

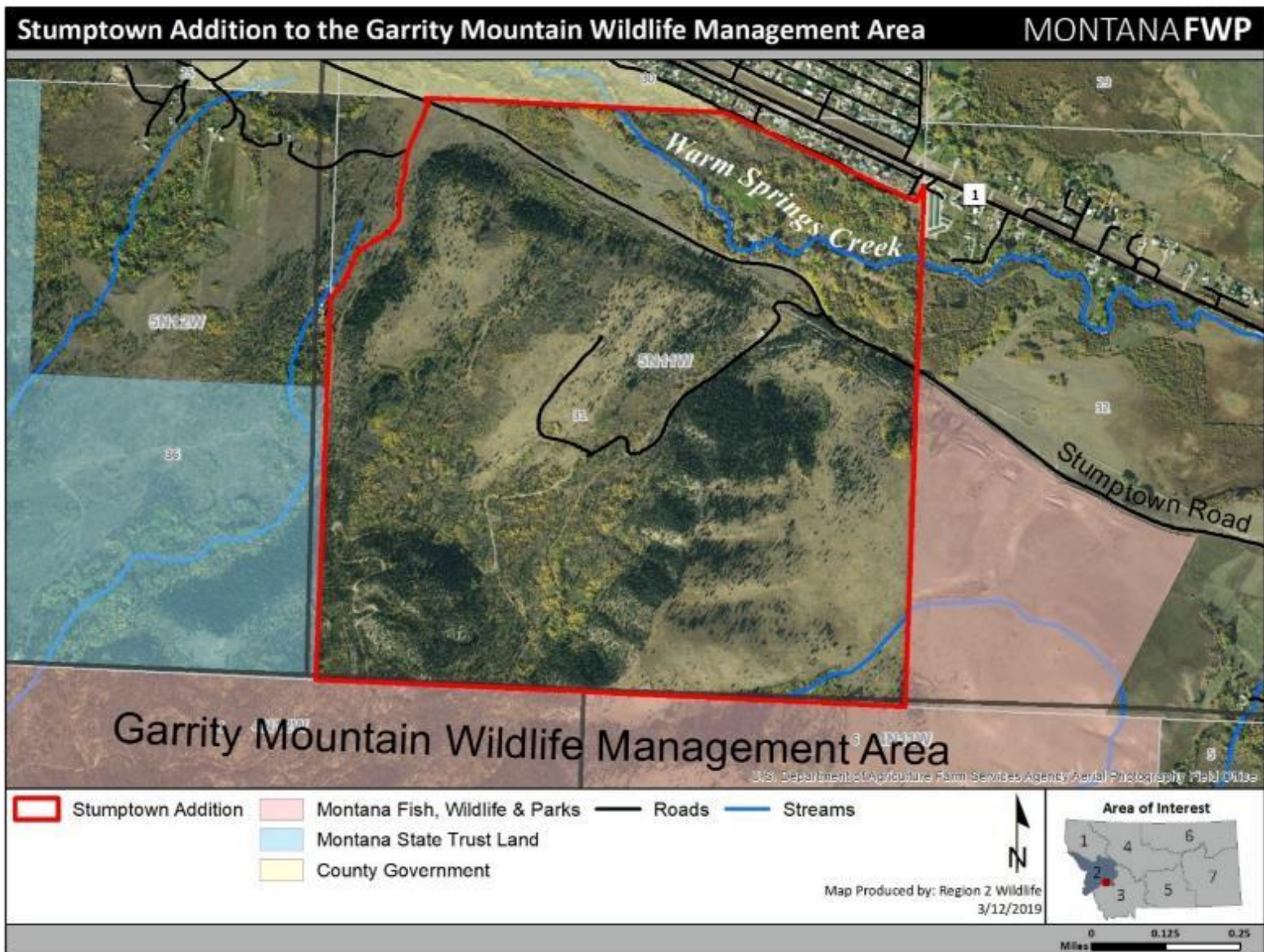


Figure 6. Detail map of the proposed Stumptown Addition to the Garry Mountain Wildlife Management Area.

The **Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Growth Policy** (ADLC 2019) serves as a planning guide for local officials and citizens. It summarizes the existing demographic, social, and economic status and trends in Anaconda-Deer Lodge County and provides goals, policies, and actions for public policy. ADLC goals identified in its Growth Policy that are applicable to the proposed Stumptown Addition acquisition are summarized in this EA in Section 3.6 (Community and Taxes).

1.5 Authority

FWP, with the consent of the Fish and Wildlife Commission and the Montana Land Board has authority to purchase lands that are suitable for game, bird, fish or fur-bearing animal restoration, propagation or protection; for public hunting, fishing, or trapping areas; and for state parks and outdoor recreation, per state statute 87-1-209, Montana Code Annotated (MCA) 2019.

FWP is required by state law to implement programs that address fire mitigation, pine beetle infestation, and wildlife habitat enhancement, giving priority to forested lands in excess of 50 contiguous acres in any State Park, Fishing Access Site, or Wildlife Management Area under the department's jurisdiction [87-1-201(9), MCA]. FWP has prepared a draft Management Plan (Appendix A) that outlines how FWP would manage the new Stumptown Addition to GMWMA, as well as address these state-law issues.

2.0 ALTERNATIVES

2.1 Alternative A--Proposed Action: FWP would purchase 600 acres from a private landowner as an addition to the Garrity Mountain Wildlife Management Area

FWP proposes fee title acquisition of 600 acres of privately owned land and the addition of this land to the existing GMWMA. The addition would provide winter range and calving habitat for elk in the eastern portion of Hunting District (HD) 214 (Mill Creek-Georgetown Lake). Aspen stands, grassland meadows, mixed-conifer forests, and a diverse and robust riparian area along Warm Springs Creek all provide additional important habitats for game species as well as a variety of nongame species including state SOC (section 3.3).

Partial funding for the purchase of the Stumptown Addition has been secured with a commitment of \$100,000 from the FWP Habitat Montana fund, \$75,000 from the Montana Fish & Wildlife Conservation Trust, and \$100,000 from the RMEF (Table 1). FWP and RMEF are working with the NRDP to secure an additional approximately \$1.5 million to complete the purchase. The NRDP funding would be contingent on consideration from the UCFRB Citizen's Advisory Council and Trustee's Restoration Council and approval by the Governor. This EA would provide opportunity for public comment to fulfill both the FWP Fish and Wildlife Commission and the UCFRB Terrestrial and Aquatic Restoration Plans' public comment requirements. Project costs for a Hazardous Materials Search, water rights research, geological remoteness determination, land appraisal, and other necessary due-diligence and administration activities have been supplied by FWP.

The Stumptown Addition would be managed as part of the GMWMA and as such, activities would be directed by the proposed Stumptown Addition GMWMA management plan (Appendix A) as well as the existing management plan for the GMWMA as a whole (Appendix B). FWP has prepared a weed ("integrated pest") management plan, which has been approved by Anaconda-Deer Lodge County (Appendix C). In addition to the approximately \$1.5-million funding for the majority of the property's purchase cost, NRDP has agreed to include \$79,200 to be used for start-up operations and maintenance funds in the first 5 years of FWP ownership. These funds would be used to repair, remove and/or construct fences, treat invasive weeds, place signage, construct a parking area, and complete other management needs that arise. Current FWP staff would be used for maintenance, enforcement, natural resource surveys and inventory, and administration.

FWP would act as a good neighbor to adjoining landowners by controlling weeds, maintaining fencing, and providing reciprocal management access. FWP is required by law to "pay a sum equal to the amount of taxes that would be payable on the county assessment of the property if it was taxable to a private citizen" (87-1-218(3)(c), MCA); taxes on the proposed addition are anticipated to be approximately \$616 in 2020.

2.2 Alternative B--No Action: FWP would not purchase 600 acres from a private landowner as an addition to the Garry Mountain Wildlife Management Area

Under the No Action Alternative, FWP would not purchase the 600 acres proposed as an addition to the GMWMA, and the property would remain under private ownership. The current owner has already begun subdividing the property, and it is expected that if this property is not purchased by FWP, much of the land would be subdivided and developed as home sites. This outcome would degrade fish and wildlife habitat values and likely result in no public access for outdoor recreation. Depending on the values and management approach of possible subsequent owner/s, the land could be managed in a manner that would complicate or conflict with FWP's objectives for the addition and the adjoining GMWMA.

2.3 Alternatives Considered but eliminated from further analysis: Conservation Easement

This option is not viable because the owner is not interested in donation or sale of a conservation easement.

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

3.1 Land Use

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) conducted a cultural resource file search for the proposed Stumptown Addition. According to its records: "there have been a few previously recorded sites within the designated search locale. None of the sites are located within the proposed project area. The absence of more cultural properties in the area does not mean that they do not exist but rather may reflect the absence of any previous cultural resource inventory in the area, as our records indicated only one. It is SHPO's position that any structure over fifty years of age is considered historic and is potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. If any structures are to be altered and are over fifty years old, we would recommend that they be recorded, and a determination of their eligibility be made prior to any disturbance taking place. As long as there will be no disturbance or alteration to structures over fifty years of age, we feel that there is a low likelihood cultural properties will be impacted. We, therefore feel that a recommendation for a cultural resource inventory is unwarranted at this time. However, should structures need to be altered or if cultural materials are inadvertently discovered during this project, we would ask that our office be contacted, and the site investigated."

In modern times, the property has been used primarily for hunting and fishing by the private landowners, with some irrigation used for horse pasturing. The lower portion of the property has gravel roads, two small hunting cabins that would be removed by the private owner prior to FWP's acquisition, and wooden horse corrals. The upper portion of the property has a historic cabin that would be left in place, additional wooden corrals that would be left in place for use by horseback riders, and a small shed that would be demolished and reclaimed in subsequent years after FWP's acquisition of the property. There has not been any recent road construction or timber harvest on the property.

The private landowner constructed wooden-rail and high-tensile fences on the property along Stumptown Road; these would be left in place to discourage illegal off-road travel. However, these fences would be modified to comply with FWP's wildlife-friendly fencing standards and to make future fence maintenance efficient and cost-effective. A three-strand barbed wire fence runs along the west and north boundaries of the property, but the maintenance status of these fences along the entire length is unknown. FWP staff would inspect the condition and need for these fences upon acquisition of the property. Other fencing along the property's boundaries may be in poor condition or nonexistent. A dilapidated split-rail fence runs along the eastern boundary adjacent to the current GMWMA. This fence would likely be removed after acquisition. The status of fencing along the southern boundary of the property is unknown. Road access to the property is available off the Stumptown Road (Figure 7). Walk-in access is available along a gravel road that runs from Stumptown Road up through the middle of the property to higher elevations. Motorized access to the lower portions of the property may be available in the future, dependent on future evaluation of desired public use of the property as well as the potential impacts of that public use to fish and wildlife habitat values.

Due to the relatively small size of the addition, its high value to wildlife, and the vulnerability of wintering and calving elk to disturbance, the portion of the property south of Stumptown Road would only be open to nonmotorized use. Additionally, a seasonal (yearly) closure would be in place from December 1 through May

15 at noon. These closure dates are consistent with the management of the rest of the WMA and with FWP's standard closure dates for WMAs having big-game winter range. FWP would construct 1-2 parking areas to facilitate and direct access from Stumptown Road.



Figure 7. The Stumptown Road bisects the property on the northern end and provides year-round access to the Stumptown Addition. Fences along the road would be maintained to discourage off-road motorized travel but would be re-built to wildlife-friendly standards.

The portion of the Stumptown Addition north of Stumptown Road would be open year-round to accommodate fishing, hiking, and other recreational uses. Trapping would not be permitted north of Stumptown Road to avoid conflicts with dog-walkers and other recreational users and to protect populations of beavers that are essential for maintaining the health of the stream and riparian area. Motorized access to this lower elevation portion of the property would not be allowed initially but may be considered in future years after an evaluation of the level, type, and extent of public use is completed. If any motorized access were allowed on the lower portion of the property it would likely be via a short access road to a parking area.

Any mineral rights tied to the land held by the present owner would be conveyed to FWP at closing. Mineral development is unlikely; a mineral remoteness report (21 Oct 2019) found that the potential for mineral development is negligible.

Proposed Action: FWP would gain ownership of the proposed Stumptown Addition along with associated mineral rights. Management priority would be for fish and wildlife resources. Public access would be provided to the extent that it is compatible with the stewardship of natural resources on the property. Management

actions would be implemented when they enhance fish and wildlife habitat. The Stumptown Addition Management Plan would guide public use and FWP management of the addition (Appendix A).

No Action: Under the No Action Alternative, there is a high likelihood that the private landowner would subdivide the property and sell parcels, likely to private buyers. The probability that the land would remain in its current undeveloped condition is low, and public access would be unlikely and would be beyond the control of FWP.

3.2 Vegetation

The Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) maintains a statewide landcover map that shows the distribution and extent of habitat types across the State of Montana. This map, in tandem with field observations, was used to determine the habitat types and associated acres on the proposed Stumptown Addition (Table 2). Elevation on the Stumptown Addition ranges from approximately 5,200 feet along Warm Springs Creek (flowing roughly west to east) along the northwest portion of the addition, to 6,240 feet along portions of the addition's south boundary.

Table 2. Montana Land Cover, Level 3 (Montana Natural Heritage Program cover mapping).

Land Cover	Acres
Rocky Mountain Lower Montane, Foothill, and Valley Grassland	143
Rocky Mountain Montane Douglas-fir Forest and Woodland	110
Rocky Mountain Subalpine-Upper Montane Grassland	100
Northern Rocky Mountain Lower Montane Riparian Woodland and Shrubland	69
Montane Sagebrush Steppe	43
Rocky Mountain Lodgepole Pine Forest	35
Developed	26
Aspen Forest and Woodland	23
Insect-Killed Forest	21
Rocky Mountain Ponderosa Pine Woodland and Savanna	15
Rocky Mountain Subalpine-Montane Mesic Meadow	7
Rocky Mountain Montane-Foothill Deciduous Shrubland	3
Rocky Mountain Subalpine Mesic Spruce-Fir Forest and Woodland	3
Open Water	2
Total area classified	600

On the upland portion of the proposed Stumptown Addition (south of Stumptown Road), aspen stands are interspersed with conifer forests covering approximately 190 acres. Conifer forests on the addition consist of lodgepole pine, Douglas-fir, juniper, and limber pine in the higher elevations. Aspen stands are abundant and are particularly important habitat types because they provide important resources for a variety of game and nongame species disproportionate to their overall footprint on the landscape.

Native grasslands are found on approximately 304 acres of the addition and occur as somewhat isolated meadows in the middle portions of the property, as well as more extensive grasslands that provide winter range for elk and deer on the eastern portion of the property (Figure 8). There are also grassland meadows along the riparian area near Warm Springs Creek. Grasslands on the addition are used by elk and deer year-round and are in fair condition. Spotted knapweed is a prominent invasive weed on the property and patches of cheatgrass are also present but are currently limited in extent. Elk winter range is limited between Anaconda and Georgetown Lake, and the proposed addition would protect and enhance an important portion of this critical habitat type.



Figure 8. The middle portions of the proposed addition consist of broad grassland meadows surrounded by mixed-conifer forests and aspen stands. These meadows are not visible from the Stumptown Road, providing security for game animals looking to forage near the cover of forested areas.

The Stumptown Addition contains some of the most diverse and robust riparian habitats anywhere along the Warm Springs Creek corridor (Figure 9). In the western United States, riparian areas make up less than 4% of the landscape yet are important habitats for more than 80% of the wildlife species. Approximately 0.7 miles of Warm Springs Creek flows through the property and it supports approximately 80 acres of riparian habitat consisting of aspen, alder, willow, cottonwood, and a variety of other shrub, grass, and forb species. Although Warm Springs Creek is somewhat contained within its channel, large woody debris falling into the stream facilitates an active floodplain that provides channel complexity to the benefit of the riparian plant assemblage as well as fish and wildlife species. The floodplain supports side channels, disconnected floodplain pools, and backwaters that are important foraging and breeding habitats for amphibians, reptiles, and riparian-dependent bird species. Allowing the area along Warm Springs Creek to remain an active floodplain would be one of the most important contributions this purchase would make to sustaining and enhancing habitat for both aquatic and terrestrial species in this area.

Invasive weeds are present on the addition and so far, spotted knapweed and Canada thistle appear to be the most common weed species. A thorough weed inventory would be conducted by FWP staff in cooperation with the Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Weed Coordinator in early summer 2020.

Proposed Action: With adoption of the proposed action FWP would conserve and enhance native habitats on a unique property with high value for wildlife. Development or subdivision would be precluded. Weed treatments would begin on the property within a year of purchase. Critical habitat for a locally significant elk herd would be protected.

Since a primary objective is to protect and enhance critical elk winter range, FWP does not anticipate grazing livestock. This approach is consistent with management of the existing WMA and nearby DNRC properties. There are relatively few private landowners that are adjacent landowners to this property, and none are focused on livestock production. This would allow FWP to minimize fencing and manage the range with less concern about trespass cattle.

Little merchantable timber is present on the addition. FWP does not anticipate commercial timber harvest in the next decade. Conifers that are crowding out aspen stands or are encroaching on grasslands may be thinned, as has been successfully done on the nearby Mt. Haggin WMA in recent years. Aspen clones regenerate with the application of fire, disturbance of soil, and/or removal of competing conifers and where

aspen stands are in decline these treatments may be used to revitalize them. Junipers may be removed from the riparian areas and aspen stands where appropriate to enhance wildlife habitat and water resources.



Figure 9. The riparian area along Warm Springs Creek is a mosaic of dense, shrubby and forested areas innervated by trails and meadows. This mix provides secure areas for nesting birds and small mammals while also providing great access for anglers, hunters, dog-walkers, photographers, and wildlife-watchers.

FWP would complete a weed inspection as required by 7-22-2154, MCA, and would coordinate weed management activities with ADLC (Appendix C). If the Stumptown Addition is acquired, FWP would spot-treat weeds as needed to prevent their spread and further degradation of the native range.

No Action: By not purchasing the Stumptown Addition, FWP would lose the opportunity to conserve and enhance native vegetation for wildlife. Current or subsequent owners could, through differing management or possible development or subdivision, compromise natural resource and public use values. It is unknown how the local elk herd would respond, but if winter range is compromised or elk displaced, adverse impacts are likely. This is especially true of the eastern part of the property that makes up a significant portion of the available winter range in this area. Were the eastern portion of this property to be developed, elk could be displaced from winter range both on the Stumptown Addition as well as on the adjacent GMWMA.

3.3 Wildlife Species

The Montana Natural Heritage Program database indicates 46 fish and wildlife species have been observed on or within 1 mile of the proposed Stumptown Addition, with an additional 200+ species that potentially could use the addition either for some portion of their life-cycle or as a stopover area on migration routes. Approximately 29 state Species of Concern¹ (SOC) occur or are likely to occur on the addition including western toad, pileated woodpecker, great blue heron, bald eagle, and federally threatened bull trout (Table 3). Beaver activity has been observed on Warm Springs Creek, and the presence of this keystone species and ecosystem engineer is highly valuable for enhancing and maintaining the riparian corridor around the creek.

¹ A native animal (or plant) breeding in Montana and considered to be “at risk” due to declining population trends, threats to its habitats, and/or restricted distribution. Montana’s SOC listing highlights species in decline and encourages conservation efforts to reverse population declines and prevent the need for future listing as Threatened or Endangered Species under the Federal Endangered Species Act. Further information available at <http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/species/speciesOfConcern/> (accessed 6 Nov 2019).

Aspen, riparian areas, and native grasslands provide important seasonal ranges for multiple species. The addition provides habitat for a suite of managed species, including elk, mule deer, white-tailed deer, bighorn sheep, moose, black bear, mountain lion, wolf, bobcat, beaver, muskrat, mink, dusky grouse, and ruffed grouse. The aforementioned big game species and grouse are known to occur on the property, and beavers are using the Warm Springs Creek corridor. Other furbearers may be present based on the availability of appropriate habitat.

Table 3. List of Species of Concern (SOC) and Potential Species of Concern (PSOC) that would be supported by habitats within the proposed Stumptown Addition to the Garry Mountain Wildlife Management Area.

Species	Type	MT Status	Confirmed	Suspected	Possible
Bull Trout	Fish	S2	X		
Westslope Cutthroat Trout	Fish	S2	X		
Lewis's Woodpecker	Bird	S2		X	
Black-crowned Rosy Finch	Bird	S2		X	
Gray-crowned Rosy Finch	Bird	S2		X	
Western Toad	Amphibian	S2		X	
Dwarf Shrew	Mammal	S2			X
Clark's Nutcracker	Bird	S3	X		
Evening Grosbeak	Bird	S3	X		
Cassin's Finch	Bird	S3	X		
Brown Creeper	Bird	S3	X		
Pileated Woodpecker	Bird	S3	X		
Pacific Wren	Bird	S3	X		
Veery	Bird	S3	X		
Great Blue Heron	Bird	S3	X		
Northern Goshawk	Bird	S3		X	
Golden Eagle	Bird	S3		X	
Bald Eagle	Bird	S3	X		
Loggerhead Shrike	Bird	S3		X	
Wolverine	Mammal	S3			X
Fisher	Mammal	S3			X
Little Brown Myotis	Mammal	S3		X	
Townsend's Big-eared Bat	Mammal	S3			X
Western Screech-owl	Bird	S3		X	
Northern Hawk Owl	Bird	S3		X	
Green-tailed Towhee	Bird	S3			X
Preble's Shrew	Mammal	S3			X
Yuma Myotis	Mammal	S3			X
Fringed Myotis	Mammal	S3			X

The proposed addition adjoins GMWMA and would protect critical elk winter range in the eastern portion of HD 214. In exceptionally harsh months like February and March, this eastern portion of the GMWMA supports most elk in the area. When the snow is too deep, hard packed, or crusty elsewhere, winter range between Georgetown Lake and Anaconda is constricted, and elk are found atop Garry Mountain and on the eastern portion of the WMA, including the land encompassed by the proposed addition (Figure 10). Incorporation of the

Stumptown Addition into the existing WMA would accommodate shifts in elk distribution, protect crucial winter range, and assure that the GMWMA continues to meet its goal of providing winter range for elk populations west of Anaconda. Extensive use of the addition also occurs during the spring and fall when elk utilize the property's aspen stands for calving and rutting. On the proposed addition, elk are frequently observed by residents, were observed during field visits by FWP and partners, and are consistently recorded during aerial surveys. Anaconda residents enjoy watching elk on and around the proposed addition.



Figure 10. The southeast portion of the proposed addition adjoins the existing Garrity Mountain WMA and protects the remainder of a large expanse of grasslands that are considered critical winter range for the local elk herd. Elk were observed on this portion of the property several times during project development.

Montana SOC and Potential SOC possibly present on the addition (either foraging or breeding) are listed in Table 3. The property has not been surveyed for small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, bats, or songbirds (although some bat and songbird surveys have been conducted in similar habitats nearby). Wildlife that are targeted for restoration in the NRDP's Restoration Plans (NRDP 2019) that are likely to use the addition include species of waterfowl, herons, raptors, amphibians, woodpeckers, insectivorous birds, bats, and burrowing mammals.

Wolves are occasionally found in the area (L. Bradley, FWP, pers. comm.), and in 2005 a male grizzly bear was poached near Cabbage Gulch, about 5 miles to the southeast (J. Jonkel, FWP, pers. comm.). The presence of these wide-ranging carnivores and herds of elk that converge on the property from the Anaconda-Pintler (mountain) Range and its foothills demonstrates that the addition would contribute to the connectivity of lands running east to west along the Continental Divide and north into the Flint Creek Range. Overall, a high

level of connectivity and protected lands characterize this area, but developed lands in the corridor west of Anaconda are a constriction for wildlife movement.

Proposed Action: Under the Proposed Action, FWP would protect additional, critical elk winter range and calving habitat between Anaconda and Garrity Mountain. The purchase would benefit migratory songbirds, raptors, woodpeckers, small mammals, amphibians, and reptiles while providing hunting and recreational opportunities such as wildlife-viewing. Existing native vegetation that supports multiple SOC and PSOC would be conserved and enhanced, and habitat connectivity would be retained. It would facilitate FWP meeting the wildlife objectives for GMWMA.

No Action: If no action were taken, FWP would be unable to protect and enhance crucial winter range for elk. Future land management would be at the discretion of the current or subsequent landowners, and the property could be further subdivided and sold to individual buyers. The conservation of aspen, riparian, and other native habitats utilized by big game, furbearers, fish, songbirds, and a host of other nongame species would not be assured.

3.4 Fisheries and Water Resources

Approximately 0.7 miles of Warm Springs Creek, a large perennial stream, flows through the Stumptown Addition. Warm Springs Creek has complex, multi-threaded stream channels and is surrounded by a lush riparian area consisting of willows, alders, aspen, junipers, and cottonwoods. Warm Springs Creek is identified as a Priority 1 stream for aquatic restoration in the NRDP Restoration Plans (NRDP 2019) and provides habitat for native westslope cutthroat trout (an SOC) and bull trout (federally threatened under the ESA). An additional 0.4 miles of intermittent streams flow seasonally in the higher elevations on the property, flowing downstream through the property towards the northeast.

The addition would provide easy walk-in access for wade fishing along Warm Springs Creek (Figures 11 & 12). Local sportsperson's organizations have reported the fishing in Warm Springs Creek is exceptional, and the section that flows through the proposed acquisition provides deep pools, undercut banks, and plenty of side channels for anglers to explore. Some sections of the creek are accessible enough that those with limited mobility may be able to access the creek.

Beavers appear to be active on the section of stream within the proposed addition, and their tree-felling activities are an important source of large woody debris in the creek. Accumulated debris in the channel forces lateral migration, creates deep pools, and facilitates side-channel formation. Channel complexity is critical for maintaining and enhancing both aquatic and terrestrial habitats.

Proposed Action: Under the Proposed Action, water resources on the property would be maintained or enhanced by protecting riparian areas and natural fluvial processes. There are no proposed changes that would occur under state ownership that would result in increased discharge, changes in drainage patterns, alteration the stream course, changes in the quality or quantity of groundwater, and/or changes in water rights for other water users.

No Action Alternative: If FWP does not purchase the property, it is unknown how water resources would be affected by the management of current or future owners.

3.5 Aesthetics and Recreation

The Stumptown Addition occupies a prominent viewshed west of Anaconda looking towards Mt. Haggin. There are no homes on the ridge of the addition which would block views of Mt. Haggin or the rest of GMWMA. Currently, there is no public recreational access to the property, but public use occurs on adjoining portions of GMWMA. It is expected that, were this purchase finalized, recreational use on the property would be high owing to the breadth of recreational opportunities the addition represents, the ease of access to the property, and the proximity to Anaconda and Interstate Highway 90 (~12 miles east). These same beneficial features of the addition also make it a highly desirable area for home construction, and the property is considered imminently threatened by development.



Figures 11 (top) and 12 (bottom). Warm Springs Creek is an exceptional fishery and walk-in access to the creek is easy through the proposed addition. The creek occupies an active floodplain, meaning the movement of the creek over time produces side channels, backwaters, and plenty of pools that fish and anglers enjoy. Concurrently, the active floodplain is also critical for maintaining the robust and diverse riparian habitat surrounding the creek.

Proposed Action: Under the proposed action no change would occur on the addition that would modify the viewshed in the West Valley (the area west of Anaconda). Nonmotorized public access would be allowed from noon on May 15 through December 1 on the upper (higher elevation) portion of the addition (south of Stumptown Road), and year-round, nonmotorized access would be allowed on the lower portion of the addition (north of Stumptown Road). To the extent that recreation does not conflict with the conservation of soil, water, vegetation, and wildlife resources, there would be opportunities for hunting, wildlife viewing, trapping, hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, picnicking and other compatible recreational activities on 600-acre addition. However, trapping would not be permitted on the portion of the addition north of Stumptown Road to avoid conflicts with other users and to protect populations of beavers.

The addition is easily accessed and is located 1.5 miles west of Anaconda, so increased recreation use is expected under FWP ownership. Heavy recreation use, particularly if motorized, would likely displace elk and potentially other wildlife. Therefore, public access would be walk-in only, and motorized use would be prohibited. The Stumptown Road bisects the property in the lower elevations, providing ample public access points.

No Action: If FWP does not obtain ownership of the proposed addition to GMWMA, the current private owners would likely continue to subdivide and sell off portions of the property. While future landowners might allow some level of public access, the probability of public access across the entire property being allowed under multiple private owners is low. Overall, there is a high likelihood that public access to hunting and other recreational opportunities would be minimal or nonexistent if this property were sold to private buyers. Impacts to aesthetics and the viewshed from Anaconda's West Valley to Garrity Mountain and Mt. Haggin would depend on future owners of the property.

3.6 Community and Taxes

The 2018 estimated population in Anaconda-Deer Lodge County was 9,131 (US Census Bureau 2019). State and local government are the largest employers, followed by health care and the accommodations/food service industry (ADLC 2010). One of the stated economic development goals of the ADLC Growth Policy is to "expand visitation and tourism as a component of the base economy." The Stumptown Addition would align well with this goal by providing greater outdoor recreation opportunities and protecting scenic views in the Anaconda Valley. Current taxes on the property proposed as the Stumptown Addition are approximately \$616 per year based on the current assessment.

Proposed Action: No change in the tax base would result if the property were conveyed to FWP. Under 87-1-218(3)(c), MCA, FWP shall pay "to the county in a sum equal to the amount of taxes that would be payable on county assessment of the property if it was taxable to a private citizen." Taxes on the proposed addition are anticipated to be approximately \$616 in 2020. FWP purchase of the Stumptown Addition would, however, preclude future development and/or subdivision of the property and the potential increased revenues to the county that might result.

No Action: Under the no action alternative the impact to county tax rolls is dependent on the actions of the current and/or subsequent owners. Were the property to be developed or subdivided and sold to individual buyers, the taxable value to ADLC would be expected to increase.

3.7 Cultural and Historic Resources

State agencies are required by law to consult with the State Historic Preservation Office to identify and locate any heritage properties on lands owned by the state and assess if they would be adversely impacted by a proposed action or development project (22-3-433, MCA). SHPO completed a cultural resource file search; this search revealed no known cultural resources on the Stumptown Addition and concluded there would be a low likelihood the proposed action would result in disturbance or destruction of cultural or historical resources (Section 3.1 Land Use of this EA; D. Murdo, SHPO, pers. comm.). There is a historical barn on the proposed addition that was moved to the property by the current landowner. This barn would be left in place upon purchase of the property but would not be maintained.

Proposed Action: FWP's proposed acquisition would have either a neutral or a positive effect on cultural and historical resources by securing and managing them in public ownership.

No Action: Selection of the no-action alternative would have no known impacts to cultural and historical resources, but would be dependent on the actions of future owners.

3.8 Cumulative Impacts

Proposed Action: If FWP purchases the proposed Stumptown Addition from the private landowner, there would be positive near- and long-term effects to fish and wildlife, native vegetation, and public recreational access. The addition of 600 acres east of Garrity Mountain to the existing WMA would facilitate management of the existing FWP lands, preclude development or subdivision, and provide a buffer from disturbance that might occur on nearby private lands. Adoption of the proposed alternative would protect critical winter ranges for elk residing between Georgetown Lake and Mill Creek and conserve wildlife connectivity in the long-term.

No Action: The pace and intensity of impacts to fish and wildlife and their habitats would depend on current or subsequent owners' actions, as well as the pace and intensity of potential development. If the property were subdivided and/or otherwise developed, the effect would be negative for wildlife and wildlife habitat. The private owner had already begun subdividing and selling portions of the property when RMEF and FWP were approached for this project, so under the no-action alternative the property would likely continue to be subdivided and sold in smaller parcels.

4.0 RESOURCE ISSUES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED ANALYSIS

The Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) provides for the identification and elimination from detailed study, issues which are not significant or which have been covered by a prior environmental review. This narrows the discussion of these issues to a brief presentation of why they would not have a significant effect on the physical or human environment or provides reference to their coverage elsewhere (Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) 12.2.434(d)). While these resources are important, FWP anticipates they would be unaffected by the proposed action or if there are any effects, those influences could be adequately mitigated below significance and thus were eliminated from further detailed analysis.

4.1 Soils

FWP used the NRCS Web Soil Survey (accessed 22 October 2019) to produce a soils report identifying soil types of local or statewide importance within the proposed Stumptown Addition. The report identified 117 acres of the addition as "farmland of local importance" and 24 acres as "farmland of statewide importance." The rest of the addition was classified as "not prime farmland." None of the actions FWP would undertake as part of its management of this property would be expected to cause degradation of these soils. Under the no-action alternative, areas of important soils may be disturbed or developed by current or future owners.

4.2 Air Quality

Under the proposed action, there is unlikely to be any changes in ambient air quality because the addition would be incorporated into the existing WMA and managed as such. There may be minor and temporary emissions from construction equipment for road and parking-area construction/maintenance, but these activities would be limited in their extent and temporary in nature. Under the no-action alternative, ambient air quality may also be temporarily negatively affected due to construction activity during development of subdivided parcels or as a result of other activities by owners of (portions of) the property (e.g., timber management, slash-pile burning, etc.)

4.3 Noise and Electrical Effects

Potential for changes in noise levels are expected to be minimal since the rural character of the property would be unchanged. Any changes in noise levels that do occur would depend on authorized recreational activities and the intensity of those activities in a specific location of the addition under FWP ownership. Existing electrical structures and pipelines would not be affected by either alternative.

4.4 Risk and Health Hazards

As part of due diligence, FWP contracted for a hazardous materials survey, which was completed on 21 October 2019. No hazardous materials or health hazards were detected other than a decrepit “valve box” that contains the remains of a presumably defunct water-diversion valve. The box is sunk into the ground approximately 2 feet and could pose a fall hazard for humans or large animals walking on the property. FWP would secure or bury the box after acquiring the property in order to mitigate this danger.

5.0 NEED FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

An EIS is not required. Based on an evaluation of the primary, secondary, and cumulative impacts to the physical and human environment, no significant impacts from the proposed acquisition were identified. In determining the significance of the impacts of the proposed project, FWP assessed the severity, duration, geographic extent, and frequency of the impact, the probability that the impact would occur, or reasonable assurance that the impact would not occur. FWP assessed the importance to the state and to society of the environmental resource or value affected; any precedent that would be set as a result of an impact of the proposed action that would commit FWP to future actions; and potential conflicts with local, federal, or state laws. As this EA revealed no significant impacts from the proposed actions, an EA is the appropriate level of review.

6.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

6.1 Public Involvement

The public would be notified in the following manners about the opportunity to comment on this current EA, the proposed action, and alternative:

- Legal notice would be published twice each in these newspapers: *Anaconda Leader*, *Independent Record* (Helena), *Missoulian*, *Montana Standard* (Butte), and *Silver State Post* (Deer Lodge).
- Public notice would be posted on FWP’s webpage: <http://fwp.mt.gov> (“Public Notices”); the Draft EA would also be available on this webpage, along with the opportunity to submit comments online.
- Public notice would also be posted on the NRDP’s webpage: <https://dojmt.gov/lands>
- A news release would be prepared and distributed by FWP to a standard list of media outlets interested in FWP Region 2 issues; this news release would also be posted on FWP’s website <http://fwp.mt.gov> (“Doing Business,” then “Contact Us,” then “Region 2”).
- Copies of this environmental assessment would be mailed (or notification of its availability emailed) by FWP to neighboring landowners and other interested parties (individuals, groups, agencies) to assure their knowledge of the Proposed Action.
- Notification would be emailed to NRDP’s email contact list of ~400 recipients.

Copies of this draft EA may be obtained by mail from Region 2 FWP, 3201 Spurgin Rd., Missoula 59804; by phoning 406-542-5500; by emailing shrose@mt.gov; or by viewing FWP’s Internet website <http://fwp.mt.gov> (“Public Notices,” beginning November 8, 2019).

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope with no significant physical or human impacts and only minor impacts that can be mitigated.

6.2 Duration of Comment Period

The public comment period will extend for thirty (30), beginning November 8, 2019. Comments must be received by FWP not later than December 11, 2019. (The legal notice indicates December 9, but this deadline has been extended to the December 11.)

Comments may be made online on the EA's webpage, mailed to the FWP address below, or emailed to Sharon Rose at shrose@mt.gov.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Region 2
Attn: Stumptown Addition EA
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804

For questions about the project, please contact Torrey Ritter by email at torrey.ritter@mt.gov or by phone at 406-542-5551.

6.3 Timeline of Events

EA Public Comment Period (FWP)	November 8 to December 11, 2019
EA Decision Notice (FWP)	mid-December 2019
Fish & Wildlife Commission Decision	February 2020 meeting
Montana Land Board Decision	March 2020

Public Hearing: FWP will hold a public hearing in Anaconda on November 19, 2019 (Tuesday) at 6:00 p.m. at the AOH Hall (321-323 East Commercial Street) to discuss the proposal, answer questions and take public comment.

7.0 EA PREPARATION

EA Preparer:

Torrey Ritter, FWP Wildlife Biologist, Missoula, MT

Parties Consulted:

Julie Golla, FWP R2 Wildlife Biologist, Anaconda, MT
Caleb Uerling, FWP R2 Fisheries Biologist, Missoula, MT
Brady Shortman, FWP WMA Maintenance Supervisor, Warm Springs, MT
Mike Thompson, FWP R2 Wildlife Manager, Missoula, MT
Sharon Rose, FWP R2 Comments Coordinator, Missoula, MT
Martin Balukas, FWP Lands Agent, Helena, MT
Mike Mueller, RMEF, Missoula, MT
Greg Mullen, NRDP, Helena, MT
Douglas Martin, NRDP, Helena, MT
Michael Marker, ADLC, Weed Coordinator, Anaconda, MT

8.0 REFERENCES

ADLC (Anaconda-Deer Lodge County). 2019. Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Growth Policy, 2019 Edition. Anaconda, MT. <<https://www.adlc.us/187/Planning>> Accessed 7 Nov 2019.

FWP (Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks). 2015. Montana's State Wildlife Action Plan. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 1420 East Sixth Avenue, Helena, MT. <<http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/conservationInAction/actionPlan.html>> Accessed 4 Nov 2019.

MCA (Montana Code Annotated). 2019. Montana Code Annotated. <<https://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/index.html>> Accessed 7 Nov 2019.

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US Census Bureau. 2019. U Census Quick Facts. <<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/anacondadeerlodgecountymontana,US>> Accessed 7 Nov 2019.

APPENDICES

- A. Draft Management Plan for Proposed Stumptown Addition to Garry Mountain Wildlife Management Area (2019)
- B. Garry Mountain WMA Management Plan (2001)
- C. Integrated Pest Management Plan for [Proposed] Stumptown Addition to Garry Mountain WMA (2019)

Appendix A

Draft Management Plan Proposed Stumptown Addition to Garry Mountain Wildlife Management Area

I. INTRODUCTION

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to purchase fee-title ownership of 600 acres (hereafter, the Stumptown Addition) adjoining the Garry Mountain Wildlife Management Area (GMWMA). This management plan is Appendix A of the Draft Environmental Assessment, Stumptown Addition to the Garry Mountain Wildlife Management Area (hereafter, draft EA); this management plan is specific to the Stumptown Addition to GMWMA and is generally consistent with and incorporates the original GMWMA Management Plan prepared in 2001 (Appendix B of this draft EA). It is a supplement designed to accommodate the Stumptown Addition. FWP provides this draft plan to make clear the agency's direction for the proposed addition and to capture our current knowledge of the land for public consideration in the Environmental Assessment process.

The objectives for purchase of the Stumptown Addition are:

- To protect and enhance critical elk calving grounds and winter range
- To protect and enhance other habitats for a diversity of fish and wildlife species
- To establish and maintain public access and outdoor recreation opportunities
- To facilitate and complement management of the existing GMWMA
- To partially meet the goals of the Upper Clark Fork River Basin Aquatic and Terrestrial Resources Restoration Plans (NRDP 2019)

A. Acquisition Date

Pending public review, Commission approval, approval of the State Land Board, and the Governor's approval of the UCFRB Restoration Fund funding of \$1.47 million, FWP plans to acquire the property in the spring or summer of 2020.

B. Chain of Ownership

The current owner is Raymond J. Dvorak, a private landowner. In 2019, RMEF secured a purchase option on the property to prevent it being sold while FWP and NRDP worked on funding and due diligence to acquire and manage the property. FWP would acquire fee-title to the Stumptown Addition and all mineral rights associated with it.

C. Property Description

The Stumptown Addition is located approximately 1.5 miles west of Anaconda in the foothills at the base of Mt. Haggin (Figure A-1). It is legally described as 599.62 acres in:

A tract of land located in Section 31, T5N, R11W, P.M.M., Anaconda-Deer Lodge County, Montana described as Government Lots 1, 2, 3, 4 and the E1/2NW1/4, E1/2SW1/4, SE1/4, and the remainder of the NE1/4 of Section 31 as shown and described on Certificate of Survey #367-B, less lots 1,3, and 5 of Certificate of Survey # 470-B both filed of record at the Clerk and Records office of Anaconda-Deer Lodge County, Montana.

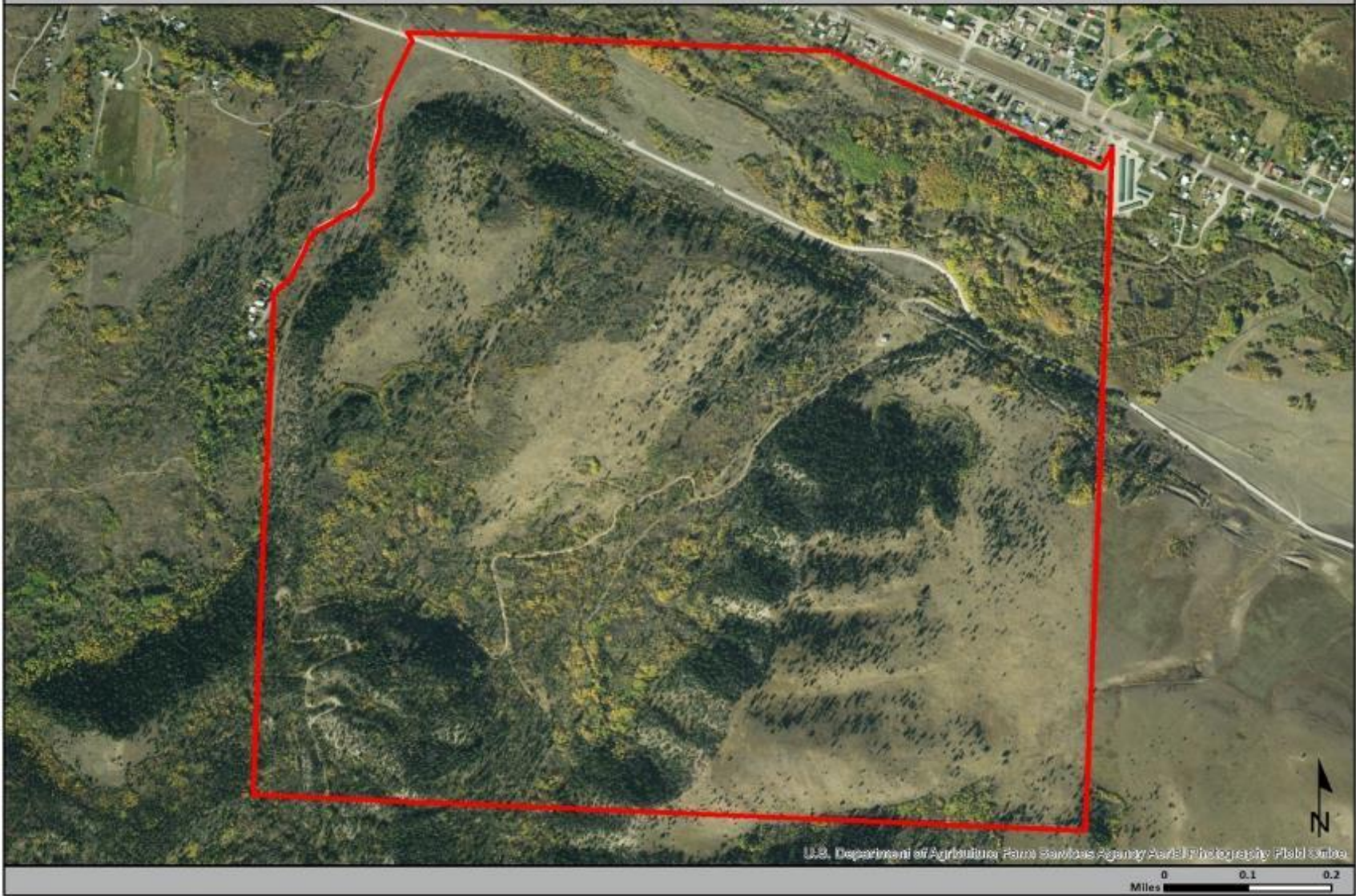


Figure A-1. Aerial photo of the proposed Stumptown Addition to the Garry Mountain Wildlife Management Area.

A. Landscape

The proposed addition is adjacent to GMWMA (~10,000 acres) on its (the addition's) southern boundary and partially along its eastern boundary. The addition adjoins 480 acres of Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) land to the west and shares a portion of its northern boundary with land owned by Anaconda-Deer Lodge County. The remaining borders of the property abut private lands. Thousands of acres of the Beaverhead-Deer Lodge National Forest in the Flint Creek Mountain Range to the north and the Anaconda-Pintler Range to the south dominate this landscape.

B. Wildlife and Fisheries

The proposed Stumptown addition would protect a diversity of habitat types while contributing to landscape-scale habitat conservation. The addition supports wintering elk, mule deer, and moose and connects low elevation habitats to steeper, forested habitats on the GMWMA and surrounding USFS lands. The addition is particularly valuable for nongame wildlife habitat as it provides ecological niches for a wide range of plant and animal species. The uplands are a mix of conifer forests, aspen stands, and grassland meadows where animals can find a range of resources in a relatively small area. Birds in particular can find good nesting and foraging resources among the habitats in the proposed addition. Warm Springs Creek flows through the addition and supports a robust riparian zone with quality habitat for threatened bull trout and many Species of Concern including Westslope cutthroat trout, western toads, and great blue herons. Warm Springs Creek and the associated riparian area support high biodiversity in both the aquatic and terrestrial realms. Protecting this property would allow the stream to move in its floodplain just downstream of a constricted stretch of the channel, potentially reducing flooding hazards downstream while protecting the critical ecological link between the stream channel and the floodplain. Almost the entire Stumptown Addition consists of Tier I Community Types as identified by the Montana State Wildlife Action Plan and the land lies within Tier I and II Focal Areas for Aquatic and Terrestrial species, respectively. A long list of Species of Concern and Potential Species of Concern benefit from the habitats on this property.

II. MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW

Introduction

FWP would manage the Stumptown Addition to maximize its value for fish and wildlife while providing for seasonal, non-motorized recreational access. Conservation and enhancement of native grasslands, riparian areas, and aspen stands for wintering and calving elk would take precedence over recreational opportunity. The Stumptown Addition would be managed consistent with rules and regulations on nearby WMAs. Vegetation management would occur when there is opportunity to enhance habitat. FWP would act as a good neighbor to adjoining land owners by cooperating with fence maintenance, treating noxious weeds, providing road access consistent with existing easements or to facilitate management, or otherwise lending a hand.

A. Public Access

The public would have access to the portion of the Stumptown Addition south of Stumptown Road for hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, wildlife-watching, horseback-riding, and other non-motorized recreational pursuits from May 15 to December 1. The property closure from December 2 through May 14 would be to protect wintering elk. The portion of the addition north of Stumptown Road would be open year-round but trapping would not be permitted on this portion of the addition. Rules and regulations would be consistent with those on the existing GMWMA.

- ✓ *The portion of the Stumptown Addition south of the Stumptown Road would be open to public use from noon on May 15 through December 1 for non-motorized travel and recreation.*
- ✓ *The portion of the Stumptown Addition north of Stumptown Road would be open to public use year-round.*
- ✓ *The WMA would be closed to mountain lion hunting during the winter and spring.*

- ✓ *Hunting would be allowed as per statewide regulations and regulations for Deer/Elk Hunting District 214, Moose Hunting District 214, and Black Bear Management Unit 216 (fall season and May 15 through June 15).*
- ✓ *Trapping would be allowed on the portion of the WMA south of Stumptown Road when the WMA is open to public recreation.*
- ✓ *Trapping would not be allowed on the portion of the WMA north of Stumptown Road.*
- ✓ *There would be no roads open to motorized travel. Access the property would be along the existing Stumptown Road.*
- ✓ *Camping would be allowed.*
- ✓ *No firewood cutting or open fires would be allowed.*
- ✓ *Permits would be required for groups of more than 15 people.*
- ✓ *Pack in, pack out garbage and litter would be mandated.*
- ✓ *Outfitting would be prohibited within the WMA.*
- ✓ *Commercial activities would be prohibited, except as authorized by permit, as specified by FWP's commercial use policy.*

Access Issues:

- *Proximity to Anaconda* - The addition is just outside of town with access off a county road; as a result, FWP anticipates greater public use and potential for violation of travel rules than would occur on other nearby WMAs.
- *Interest in yearlong recreation* - Residents may have an interest in using the southern portion of the Stumptown Addition when it is closed to pursue winter sports, trapping, lion hunting, or antler shed hunting. Public education regarding access rules and enforcement would be necessary.
- *Illegal off-road vehicle travel* - Illegal motorized use may occur on the proposed addition. FWP would leave in place or repair fencing provided by the current landowner and would repair/enhance existing gates to control motorized travel. Enforcement would be necessary, resulting in additional expenditures by FWP. FWP anticipates that the high visibility of the property would help to lessen the incidence of illegal motorized use or other travel violations.
- *Hunting season displacement of big game* - There is potential for elk and deer to be pushed off the property in hunting season due to high hunter use.
- *Signage boundary and rules* - It would be necessary to sign the property's boundaries and clearly post rules at primary access points off of the Stumptown Road.
- *Education and Outreach* - Information on the Stumptown Addition would be available to the public onsite and online. FWP would post a map of the property and management rules online. An interpretive sign with a map of the Stumptown Addition and rules would be located just inside of the fence along Stumptown Road. Signage along the road would identify the addition as FWP property.

B. Habitat Management

1. Forest Management

FWP does not anticipate any timber management for at least the next decade. Little merchantable timber exists at the present time. If aspen stands are found to not be regenerating FWP would consider thinning aspen stands and encroaching conifers to stimulate new growth. FWP may also pursue removal of junipers that are encroaching on riparian areas and grasslands.

2. Livestock Grazing

Lease of the uplands of the Stumptown Addition for livestock grazing is not anticipated. The Stumptown Addition is relatively small with critical value for wintering and calving elk. Provision of forage for elk and retaining them on the property are essential. Placement of domestic livestock on the parcel would have the potential to displace elk and reduce winter forage that is already heavily used by elk. There is not currently any grazing on GMWMA and FWP holds the lease on the nearby 480 acres of DNRC property in order to avoid placement of livestock there. No neighboring landowners have livestock operations so trespass cattle would not be an issue, allowing FWP to minimize fencing that can be injurious or fatal to wildlife.

3. Irrigation

There are no irrigation water rights associated with the Stumptown Addition.

Habitat Management Issues:

- Down and old fencing present a hazard to wildlife. FWP would work with neighbors and volunteers to remove unnecessary fencing.
- Exterior fences are nonexistent in places. Exterior fences are not necessary adjoining the GMWMA. FWP would evaluate where boundaries may be marked by other means, check the location corner pins, and construct fence where necessary.
- There is heavy grazing pressure by elk. Monitoring would be necessary to assure that elk grazing is not adversely impacting range conditions. If elk populations exceed objective FWP will liberalize hunting regulations to reduce populations and impacts to range.
- Aspen stands and conifer forests are vulnerable to insect infestation.
- Conifers are encroaching on grassland, aspen, and riparian habitats. FWP may undertake thinning operations to remove conifers and enhance these habitat types.
- Invasive weeds are present on the property including spotted knapweed and Canada thistle. FWP would conduct a weed inventory and use chemical, biological, and mechanical treatments to keep weeds from causing significant degradation of native vegetation.

C. Noxious Weed Management

In compliance with 7-22-2151, MCA, FWP is required by state statute to develop a noxious weed management plan, have the plan approved by the county weed board, and provide a biennial report on weed management activities. FWP has developed a noxious weed management plan (Appendix C) that has been approved by the county. FWP is committed to implementing an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan. The IPM plan that was used on the GMWMA has been very successful on other WMAs in the area. In early summer of 2020, FWP would complete a survey of the Stumptown Addition to estimate acres of infestations or interspersions of weeds within native plant communities.

FWP's approach to weed management on the Stumptown Addition would be to treat patches of noxious weeds using herbicides (Milestone, Tordon and Escort XP), evaluate the outcome, re-treat as necessary, and then use appropriate insects as biological controls to keep noxious weeds at low densities. The *Larinus* seed head weevil and *Cyphocleonus* root weevil would be released on spotted knapweed. Re-seeding of sprayed areas would be done to further prevent future infestations.

Weed Issues:

- Weed infestations are present with spotted knapweed being dominant. FWP would treat weed infestations with herbicides upon purchase of the property.
- Coordination with neighboring private landowners will be necessary to most effectively treat weeds across the area. As a good neighbor, FWP will work with neighbors to control weeds.

D. Fire Suppression

Fire suppression on the Stumptown Addition would be covered under existing cooperative agreements with the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation and Anaconda-Deer Lodge County.

E. Good Neighbor

Maintaining positive and productive relationships with neighboring landowners is a core concern for FWP. FWP would cooperate with neighbors by honoring existing easements, allowing vehicle passage as necessary to facilitate management, repairing and constructing fence as needed, and controlling weeds.

Neighbor Issues:

- Some fences are down or non-existent and boundaries are unclear between properties in some areas.
- There is potential for additional subdivision of neighboring lands which could complicate FWPs' management.

F. Maintenance and Budget

The Stumptown Addition currently has four structures: one historic barn that will be left in place, two small hunting cabins that will be removed by the current owner upon purchase by FWP, and one small shed that will need to be demolished and the site reclaimed by FWP if the property is acquired. Additionally, there are two sets of wooden horse corrals on the property that would be left in place for use by horseback-riders.

Two jeep trails run through the middle portions of the property and are in good condition. These roads would be closed to public use but may be used by FWP staff for maintenance and enforcement purposes. There is also a short gravel road running through the portion of the property north of Stumptown Road. This road would also be closed to public use and may be reclaimed in future years if it is deemed unnecessary for management and enforcement. Some boundary fences are in disrepair or nonexistent.

There are high-tensile fences along either side of Stumptown Road running through the property and these fences are in good condition. A three-strand barbed wire fence runs along the northern and western boundaries of the property. An old jack-leg fence runs along the eastern boundary where the addition adjoins the existing GMWMA. The remaining boundaries are either partially fenced with three-strand barbed wire or are not fenced at all.

The lack of fencing on some portions of the property are not currently a detriment since no livestock are found on the adjoining lands and FWP is interested in maintaining passage for ungulates. The jack-leg fence on the eastern boundary of the property would likely be removed by FWP staff or volunteers to enhance elk movement and clarify public ownership of the property. FWP's intent for the Stumptown Addition is to minimize fencing, road work, or other maintenance over the long term. To accomplish this, FWP has requested \$80,000 in start-up funding from NRDP for use during the first 5 years of FWP's ownership. These funds would be used to construct fencing, control weeds, check the location of corner pins, secure and mark boundaries, build a parking area, and place an interpretive sign showing a map of the property and access rules.

Estimated start-up costs are:

- Removal of existing fencing: \$500/mile for ~2.5 miles = \$1,500
- Construction or repair of fencing: \$10,000/mile for ~2.5 miles = \$25,000
- Construction of parking area for ~8 vehicles off Stumptown Road = \$5,000
- Ground spray: \$55/acre for ~200 acres and follow-up work for 2 years = \$22,000
- *Cyphocleonus* root weevils: \$100 per release for 10 releases for 2 years = \$2,000

- *Larinus* seed head weevil: \$100 per release for 5 releases for 2 years = \$1,000
- Seeding of sprayed acreage: \$100 per acre for ~200 acres = \$20,000
- Gates: \$250 each for 3 gates = \$750
- Survey to check location of boundary pins = \$1,950
 - Total Estimated Start Up Costs= \$79,200

These initial expenditures made during the first 5 years of FWP ownership would cover the most significant costs associated with purchase of the property and providing for public use. Future expenditures to spot-spray weeds, bring in additional insects for biological control, repair fences, and sign the property would be necessary to manage the property to the satisfaction of FWP, our neighbors, and the public whom we serve.

Appendix B Garry Mountain WMA Draft management Plan

APPENDIX

GARRITY MOUNTAIN WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN May 2, 2001

INTRODUCTION

Phase one (5789 acres) of the Garry Mountain/Clear Creek Wildlife Management Area was acquired in Feb. 2001. These lands were purchased through the National Natural Resource Damage Program for the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation-YT Timber Company. Phase Two of the acquisition (3181 acres) is scheduled to proceed through the Natural Resource Damage Program during 2001 and be completed in 2002. This management Plan is intended to apply to the entire property and is based on the assumption that Phase Two of the acquisition will be approved.

Garry Mtn/Clear Creek WMA

	Garry Mtn.	Clear Creek
Phase I	4343	1446
Phase II	2364	819
Total	6707	2265

The purpose of the WMA is to provide winter range for the Bighorn sheep herd, elk, mule deer and whitetail deer. Secondly, the WMA was purchased to improve habitat for other wildlife species and to enhance public recreational opportunities, watershed, and scenic vistas.

Phase One (5789 acres) of the WMA was purchased for \$3,763,207.50 from the Upper Clark Fork Basin Restoration Fund. This document is the first comprehensive Management Plan for the Garry Mountain/Clear Creek WMA and will set the basic management direction established under the present circumstances. It is intended that this plan be updated periodically to maintain its flexibility.

Area Description

The Garry Mountain/Clear Creek WMA involves two separate pieces of property. The Garry Mtn. parcel covers a total of 6707 acres located on Garry Mountain approximately three miles west of Anaconda, MT (Figure 1). Approximately 2400 acres of the area is open bunchgrass rangeland at elevation from 6,800 to 8,000 feet. The remaining 4300 acres are predominately second growth lodgepole pine. The Clear Creek parcel covers a total of 2265 acres at the head of the Clear Creek Drainage south of Anaconda. The Clear Creek property ranges from 6700 to 9000 feet in elevation. The two parcels are separated by a section of Butte Water Company lands.

GOAL

Manage for highly productive, diverse vegetative communities that will provide high quality forage and cover for native wildlife species, with an emphasis on bighorn sheep, elk and mule deer, white-tailed deer winter/spring forage supplies; and manage for hunting and other recreational opportunities for the public and access to National Forest lands.

Objective 1:

Prevent soil erosion and conserve and improve the vegetation communities, striving for maximum vegetation diversity dependent on soil types.

Problem 1: Incomplete vegetation analysis and documentation. At present there are no vegetation analysis transects to understand plant composition or forage production or utilization.

Strategy: Establish vegetation transects to determine plant community composition, monitor vegetation trends, forage production and utilization. Establish transects and/or enclosures and systematically collect data based on the recommendations of the Department's plant ecologist.

Problem 2: The purchase agreement negotiated by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and YT Timber allows for the harvest of 5.2 million board feet of timber from the property until Dec. 2008. YT Timber will adhere to harvesting guidelines as per Exhibit B "Timber Harvest Policy" of the Purchase Agreement with annual review by the Dept. FWP and the RMEF. The extent and location of harvest will be at YT's discretion as defined in the Purchase agreement. Site specific management decisions will have to wait until timber harvest has been completed for any specific section.

Strategy: Monitor timber harvest activities and verify completion on specific sections. Develop appropriate management responses as timber harvest progresses and try to anticipate needed actions.

Problem 3: Control noxious weeds on the property.

Strategy: Annually evaluate range conditions and implement management practices that will improve range conditions and reduce soil erosion. Implement biological control measures for leafy spurge and evaluate chemical control options. Monitor timber harvest areas and access roads for the spread of noxious weeds. Manage to contain and reduce existing weed infestations and eradicate new species and infestations.

Strategy: All road construction equipment and equipment used in off road logging activity must be washed by the contractor and inspected by YT Forest Officer prior to entering the area to prevent direct transfer of weed seed to the site.

Problem 4: Trespass livestock. Boundary fences are incomplete or nonexistent.

Strategy: Prioritize fence construction needs. The initial emphases will be on the eastern boundary adjacent to private lands. Select fence type that requires minimal maintenance and poses the least hazard to wildlife movement. Inspect fences annually and work closely with neighbors on cooperative fence management.

Problem 5: Effects of public access. Increased public access, particularly with respect to vehicles, can result in habitat damage.

Strategy: Prohibit off road vehicle use. Restrict vehicle access to established road right of way as defined in Exhibit C to Amended Reciprocal Easement Agreement. Implement seasonal closures and provide adequate parking facilities and signing to protect WMA soils and vegetation. Proposed restrictions attached.

Problem 6: Fire Protection and Management

Strategy: The area is within the Anaconda Forest fire Protection District and will be assessed by the DNRC.

Strategy: Adopt YT Fire Protection contract terms and DNRC Forest Fire Rules and Regulations for the WMA. (attached)

Objective 2:

Manage for a wintering population of 50+ bighorn sheep, 200 elk and 100 mule deer; provide for upland game bird production and maintain existing nongame species.

Problem 1: Elk use of the WMA has been and is expected to increase. The major portion of this herd's winter range lies on the WMA and private lands to the east. This population has increased from 40 to 175 head in the past 12 years.

Strategy 1: Continue efforts to work with private landowners on public hunting access in order to control herd size. Acquisition of the WMA will ensure public hunting access on a portion of the range and provide additional hunting management options. Harvest sheep, elk and deer populations annually to maintain animal numbers at or with range capacity during all but the most severe winters.

Problem 2: The harvest of 5.2 million board feet of timber will significantly alter the habitat conditions on the Garrity Mountain property for bull elk security during the general hunting season. This along with an increase in public access may result in an increased harvest rate for bull elk in District 214.

Strategy 2: Monitor the harvest rate of bulls and post season bull/cow ratios as per Elk Management Plan. Implement access restrictions and/or season changes as needed.

Objective 3:

Provide for public hunting and recreation.

Problem 1: Increased and/or unlimited public access may conflict with management objectives of providing high quality secure winter range.

Strategy 1: Establish seasonal travel and access restrictions to protect winter range values for big game species while providing reasonable access and recreational opportunities. Maintain information signs explaining the need for and actual travel restrictions. Close the WMA to public travel from: Dec. 1-May 15, exception for Lion hunting; Dec 1-15.

Problem 2: Off road vehicle travel damages soils and vegetation.

Strategy 2: Prohibit off road vehicle travel. Restrict vehicular travel to designated open roads. Erect and maintain signs to inform the public of travel restrictions.

Problem 3: Conflicts have occurred in the past regarding vehicular hunting access between general public and YT employees on the property.

Strategy 3: Prohibit YT employees or contractors from carrying firearms in their vehicles on state property during the general hunting seasons while they are engaged in timber harvest activity. No firearms or archery equipment will be allowed in vehicles on state property beyond areas closed to motorized vehicles.

Objective 4:

Manage habitat for a variety of upland game birds, predators and non game species.

Problem: Need to document species present.

Strategy 1: Develop a species list of resident and migratory species using the WMA by habitat type.

Strategy 2: Continue proper land management practices featuring high quality big game winter range which has and will provide for other species.

GARRITY MOUNTAIN

For the Garrity Mountain parcel two land management or habitat units are delineated for purposes of this Plan on the basis of topography, vegetation, wildlife use and other management considerations.

Winter Range Slopes and Basins- The WMA has approximately 2400 acres of bunchgrass rangelands. This type provide the important bighorn sheep, elk, mule deer and whitetail deer winter range. The primary grass species are rough fescue, Idaho fescue, and bluebunch wheatgrass. These south/east facing slopes, basins and benches are the key component of this easement. These grasslands have not received domestic livestock grazing in the reported history of the area. They represent the native bunchgrass rangelands historically found in the Upper Clark Fork Basin.

Forested- The predominate timber type (4300 acres) found on the property is lodgepole pine. These represent second growth timber following extensive harvesting at the turn of the last century. This component provides important thermal and hiding cover for wintering elk. It also provides a diversity of habitat for a diversity of other wildlife species. As part of the purchase agreement negotiated by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and YT Timber, YT Timber will remove 5.2 million board feet of timber from the property. YT Timber will have until Dec. 2008 to complete their harvesting activities on the property.

CLEAR CREEK

The Clear Creek parcel has been broken into two habitat types for the purpose of the plan.

Forest types- A baseline inventory would be necessary to accurately delineate the specific timber types on this property. They would be characterized by Douglas fir at lower elevations and white bark pine/spruce at higher elevations

Rock/Scree- Approximately 700 acres of this parcel will be characterized as a rock/scree type. This type is found on the higher elevation north slopes of Clear Creek and the west-side of Fifer Gulch.

MONITORING

Management Actions: management actions will be evaluated through the MEPA process.

Vegetation: Vegetation transects will be established with the guidance of the Department's plant ecologist. These will be directed toward determining species composition, plant succession and forage production. The transects will be run annually or as they are established to monitor long term trends. Photo plots will be established to monitor vegetation trends over time.

Timber Harvest: Timber harvest volumes will be monitored according to Exhibit B "Timber Harvest Policy" of the Purchase Agreement. Bi-monthly harvest reports from YT will be reviewed. Annual inspections with YT Timber and the RMEF will monitor and map the area and extent of timber harvest. Photo points will be established by GPS units to establish vegetative recovery and trends in harvest areas.

Populations: Numbers of bighorn sheep, elk, white-tailed deer, and mule deer will be monitored by fixed wing aircraft, helicopter, and ground observation during the winter and spring. Monthly observations will be used to determine total use and correlated to forage production to refine population objectives for the WMA.

Public use: Man days of use will be determined by public contact and traffic counters. This information will be used to determine travel and seasonal restrictions.

Appendix C

Integrated Pest Management Plan for the Stumptown Addition to Garry Mountain WMA

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) is proposing to purchase 600 acres of private property that adjoins the Garry Mountain Wildlife Management Area (GMWMA). The property lies approximately 1.5 miles west of the town of Anaconda off Stumptown Road. The property is located at T5N R31W Section 31. This addition will help protect valuable fish and wildlife habitat and provide public access for outdoor recreation.

In compliance with 7-22-2151, MCA, FWP is required by state statute to develop a noxious weed management plan, have the plan approved by the county weed coordinator, and provide a biennial report on weed management activities. FWP is committed to an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach in its weed management on this property. FWP has been pro-active in the use of an IPM plan on the GMWMA and other WMAs within close proximity to the proposed purchase with good success.

FWP will survey the 600-acre property for noxious weeds in early summer 2020. Observations by FWP staff so far indicate the presence of spotted knapweed as the most dominate noxious weed, with some infestations of Canada thistle as well. The following are the herbicides and application rates that will be used for the chemical application.

- Milestone @ 6 ounces/ per acre
- Tordon 22k @ 1 ½ pints/ per acre
- Escort XP @ 1 ½ ounces/ per acre

Both FWP and their contracted herbicide applicators will use the proper chemical products and the required rate of application in compliance with all label directions. FWP and their contractors will use newly introduced products as they become available. FWP will hand-pull, bag, and properly dispose of noxious weeds when applicable.

FWP may also use biological control insects to avoid risk of injury to native forbs and other plants. The following biological control insects may be released on spotted knapweed.

- *Larinus* seed head weevil
- *Cyphocleonus* root weevil

FWP and their contractors will annually map all treated sites within the boundary of the addition and record whether sites were chemically, biologically, or otherwise treated. This reporting will include the rate of chemical application and or number of biological control insects released.

As with all FWP lands located in Region 2 in Montana, this property will be managed in accordance with the FWP Statewide Weed Management Plan (June 2008) and County Weed Management Agreement.

/s/ Mike Marker Oct 29, 2019

Mike Marker
Anaconda/Deer Lodge County
Weed Supervisor

/s/ Brady Shortman Oct 29, 2019

Brady Shortman
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Region 2
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