



# Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

2300 Lake Elmo Drive  
Billings MT 59105  
February 18, 2014

TO: Environmental Quality Council  
Director's Office, Dept. of Environmental Quality  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks\*

Director's Office	Lands Section
Parks Division	Design & Construction
Fisheries Division	Legal Unit
Wildlife Division	Regional Supervisors

Tim Baker, Governor's Office \*  
Judy Beck, Press Agent, Governor's Office \*  
Montana Historical Society, State Preservation Office  
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council \*  
Montana Wildlife Federation \*  
Montana State Library \*  
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Montana Environmental Information Center \*  
Wayne Hirst, Montana State Parks Foundation \*  
FWP Commissioner Matt Tourtlotte\*  
Montana Parks Association/Our Montana (land acquisition projects)  
Glenn Hockett, Gallatin Wildlife Association\*  
Montana DNRC, Northeastern Land Office  
Wheatland County Commissioners \*  
Adjacent Landowners  
Other Local Interested People or Groups  
\* (Sent electronically)

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The enclosed draft Environmental Assessment (EA) proposal has been prepared for your review. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' land lease-out policy, as it pertains to the disposition of interest in Department lands (89-1-209), requires that an EA be written for all new leases, lease extensions or lease renewals. This draft EA assesses the potential impacts from grazing cattle on the Haymaker Wildlife Management Area relative to a proposed grazing lease renewal.

The public comment period will extend through 5:00 PM, March 14, 2014. Written comments can be mailed or emailed to the address below:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
Attn: Ray Mulé  
2300 Lake Elmo Drive  
Billings, MT 59105 or  
rmule'@mt.gov

Thank you for your interest,



Gary Hammond  
Region 5 Supervisor  
Enclosure

DRAFT



## Draft Environmental Assessment

February 18, 2014

### HAYMAKER WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA GRAZING LEASE

#### **PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION**

##### **1. Type of proposed state action:**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to lease approximately 1,360 acres of the Haymaker Wildlife Management Area (HWMA) for cattle grazing to encourage winter/spring elk use and provide high quality forage and cover on the WMA.

##### **2. Agency authority for the proposed action:**

FWP has the authority under Section 87-1-210 MCA to protect, enhance and regulate the use of Montana's fish and wildlife resources for public benefit now and in the future. In addition, in accordance with the Montana Environmental Policy Act, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) is required to assess the impacts that any proposal or project might have on the natural and human environments. Further, FWP's land lease-out policy, as it pertains to the disposition of interest in Department lands (89-1-209) requires an Environmental Assessment (EA) to be written for all new grazing leases, lease extensions or lease renewals.

##### **3. Anticipated Schedule:**

Grazing Schedule(s): April 1 to May 15

Term of Grazing: 4 year lease

##### **4. Location affected by proposed action:**

The 1,360 acre HWMA is located in central Montana along the Southeastern edge of the Little Belt Mountains, occupying land in Wheatland County (Fig. 1). The HWMA includes land on which the south facing slopes and large grassy benches provide winter range for elk numbering 30 to 800 (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3). Vegetation on the lease area comprises bluebunch wheatgrass, Idaho fescue, thickspike wheatgrass, timothy, Kentucky bluegrass, ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, limber pine, snowberry, wild rose, goldenweed, cottonwood, and aspen. The primary public access point is up Morris Coulee where people must traverse 2.5 miles of private land before entering the game range. The Lewis and Clark National Forest lies just to the north of the HWMA. Elevation on this foothill WMA ranges from approximately 4,900 to 5,800 feet. The Area was purchased in 1957 by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. See Appendix A for legal description of HWMA. See Appendix B for complete grazing system details.

Figure 1. Location of Haymaker WMA, Region 5

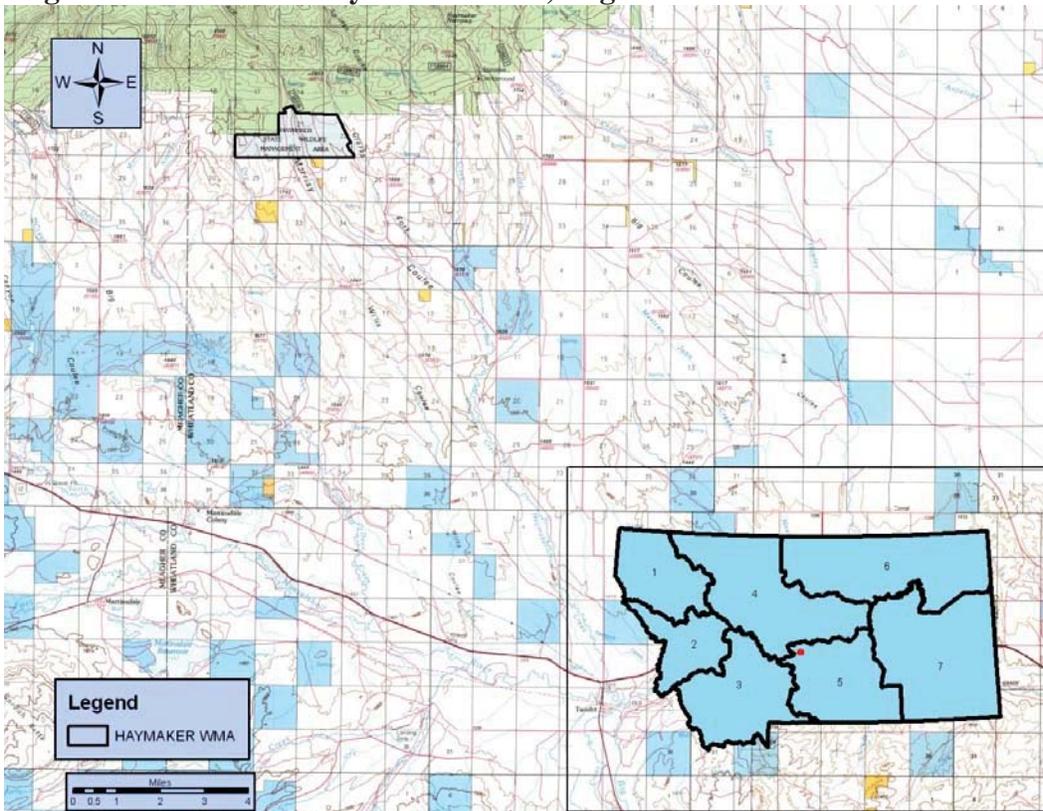
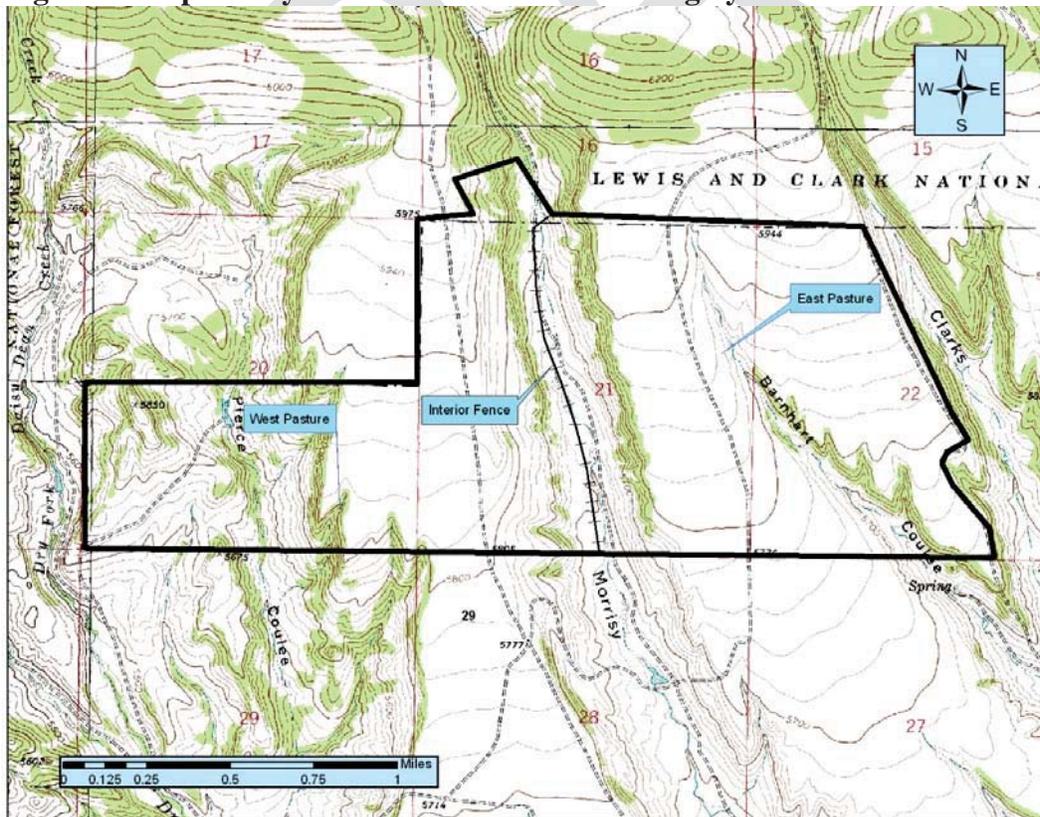
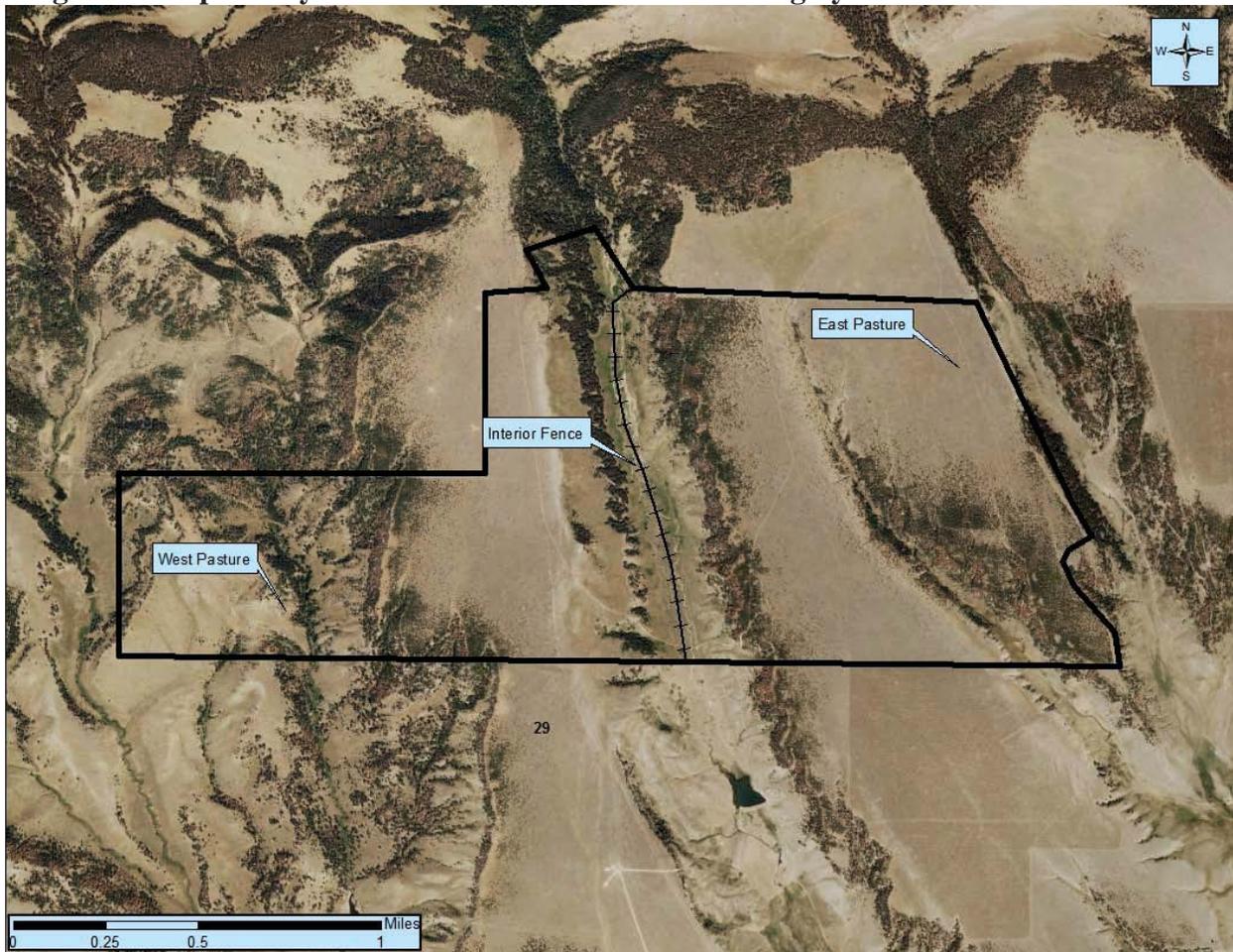


Figure 2. Map of Haymaker Rest Rotation Grazing System



**Figure 3. Map of Haymaker WMA Rest Rotation Grazing System**



**Project size:**

	<u>Acres</u>		<u>Acres</u>
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	_0
Residential	_0		
Industrial	_0	(e) Productive:	
(existing shop area)		Irrigated cropland	_0
(b) Open Space/ Woodlands/Recreation	_0	Dry cropland	_0
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas	~30	Forestry	~500
		Rangeland	~830
		Other	_

**6. Permits, Funding & Overlapping Jurisdictions:**

- (a) **Permits:** None required
- (b) **Funding:** NA
- (c) **Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:** None

**7. Narrative summary of the proposed action:**

See Appendix B. HAYMAKER WMA GRAZING SYSTEM PLAN

**8. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:**

**Alternative A: No Action**

This alternative would result in not renewing a grazing lease on Haymaker WMA. In the past, prior to a grazing lease, this area built up decadent residual grasses, which affected elk use on the WMA. FWP anticipates that Alternative A would result in the following:

- Decadent residual vegetation will accumulate, reducing attractiveness to elk.
- Elk will likely increase utilization of adjacent private land, especially during winter and spring months.
- Concern by some neighboring landowners regarding fire danger (build-up of vegetation) on the HWMA.
- FWP would continue to manage the WMA for the benefit of wildlife species and for public access.
- Current services and maintenance of the WMA would continue.

**Alternative B: Proposed Action**

The proposed alternative would be to renew a grazing lease on the Haymaker WMA for a 4-year term. The grazing system comprises two pastures. One pasture is rested each year and the alternate pasture is available for grazing April 1-May 15. Grazing alternates between the two pastures annually. FWP anticipates that Alternative B would result in the following:

- Promote attractive spring and summer green-up vegetation conditions for elk; thereby reducing elk big game usage of adjacent private property.
- Each pasture has full growing season rest for plant root development and maintenance every other year. Grazing only takes place during the dormant period until early in the growing season.
- Each year, one pasture in system receives complete rest from livestock grazing for plant health and big game winter forage. Total length of time each pasture receives livestock grazing rest equates to 22 consecutive months beginning on May 15 of the year it was grazed, and extending through the entire following year, and then extending through the next winter until April 1, nearly 2 years later.
- Some segments of the general public may disapprove of cattle grazing on the HWMA.
- Maintain strong relations with area Landowners.

## **PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST**

Below is the evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action.

### **PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

1. <b><u>LAND RESOURCES</u></b>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?			X			1b
c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				

1b. Some impacts to soil conditions may occur due to trampling, trailing or grazing in localized, high use areas. The grazing capacity estimate is believed to be a conservative estimate, so the risk of overgrazing-induced erosion should be minimal. Hoof action from livestock grazing is expected to provide a positive benefit to soil quality by helping to break down old residual vegetative material, thereby, returning nutrients to the soil.

2. <b><u>AIR</u></b>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)		X				
b. Creation of objectionable odors?			X			2b
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a.)		N/A				

2b. The proposed action would have no effect on the ambient air quality. Some individuals may find the smell of grazing livestock on the WMA objectionable. The area has been in a grazing rotation for the last 29 years under similar conditions and terms. In addition, livestock graze private property adjacent to the WMA, so the smell of grazing livestock is already present in the general area. Cattle on the landscape are a common practice in Montana and in the West.

3. <u>WATER</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		X				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?			X			3b
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)		N/A				
m. For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)		N/A				

3b. Live water sources are limited on the WMA. One man-made pond is located in the west pasture while all other water developments are stock tanks. In most years the major drainage on the WMA (Morrissy Coulee) does not have water flowing in it. While there is the potential for any snowmelt or rainstorm run-off from the area to eventually reach Morrissy Coulee, impacts on water quality, quantity and distribution will be minimal. The level of grazing recommended will leave adequate vegetative material to protect the soil and minimize potential run-off. Grazing will also occur in the spring, after primary snowmelt has occurred.

4. <u>VEGETATION</u> Will the proposed action result in?	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X			4a
b. Alteration of a plant community?			X			4b
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				

e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X			4e
f. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		N/A				

4a/b. While residual vegetation cover will be decreased as livestock are grazing a specific pasture, vegetation will increase following grazing as a part of the 2-year grazing cycle. More specifically, the “rest periods” occur each year in the rotation, giving plants full growing season rest in the rested pasture. Second, the livestock grazing period in the grazed pasture will close early enough to allow vegetation to continue growing after cattle are removed from the grazed pasture. Grazing will continue to enhance the palatability of spring forage in the area and maintain overall plant productivity. Hoof action is expected to continue to support germination and seedling establishment. Well dispersed water resources will allow widespread livestock distribution. The proposed grazing is expected to reduce the potential fire danger in the grazed pasture. The reduction in fine fuels would be appreciated by adjacent landowners.

4e. FWP currently manages noxious weeds on the HWMA through chemical and mechanical control per the guidelines set forth in FWP’s 2008 Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan. The acres grazed by the cattle would be monitored for new weed infestations. Very few noxious weeds have been observed in the proposed grazing area.

5. <u>FISH/WILDLIFE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?			X			5b
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?	X					5c
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?			X			5f
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?			X			5g
h. For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)		N/A	X			5f
i. For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		N/A				

5 b/c/f/g. Livestock grazing activities will reduce the amount of forage in a pasture during the grazing lease cycle and temporarily displace big game from the area to be grazed. The expected positive impact is that decadent residual vegetation will be removed, which should enhance spring green-up conditions and provide more palatable forage for grazing wildlife. Sufficient forage is available to elk, mule deer and other big game on the remainder of the HWMA to offset any short-term loss of forage due to livestock.

## HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

<b>6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u></b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>					
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Increases in existing noise levels?		X				
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				

The proposed action would have no effect on existing noise level since there would be no change in the level of activity on FWP-owned property.

<b>7. <u>LAND USE</u></b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>					
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				

With the exception of a possible spring black bear hunter on a rare occasion, grazing activity would occur outside the time frame of any big game archery or rifle seasons.

<b>8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u></b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>					
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?		X				
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				
d. For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		N/A				

<b>9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u></b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>					
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				

The proposed action would have no effect on local communities, increase traffic hazards, or alter the distribution of population in the area.

<b>10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u></b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>					
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?		X				
e. **Define projected revenue sources						10e
f. **Define projected maintenance costs.						10f

10e. The exact amount of revenue from the grazing lease will depend upon the number of AUM's grazed X the DNRC grazing rate. The 2014 grazing rate is established using the state DRNC rate. Revenue from this grazing system is detailed in Appendix B, Table 2.

10f. Additional costs to FWP will include periodic monitoring of the grazing system; no other costs are anticipated. Lessee will be responsible for maintenance of the pasture fences and water sources during the grazing lease period.

<b>11. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u></b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>					
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?			X			11a
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.)			X			11c
d. For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		X				

11a. Domestic livestock and signs of livestock use on the HWMA may be objectionable to some segments of the public. A well established history of livestock grazing on the WMA exists, with no recorded conflicts.

11c. Livestock and livestock sign on a FWP wildlife management area may seem out of place for some segments of the public.

<b>12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u></b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>					
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. **Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.)		N/A				

## SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. <u>SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE</u>  Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)		N/A				
g. For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		N/A				

### Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

The grazing lease agreement between FWP and the lessee would include all lease stipulations and enforceable control measures. These are identified in the lease agreement and pertinent attachments to same.

### PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The proposed grazing lease on the Haymaker WMA will be used to maintain vegetation conditions conducive for elk and deer particularly during the winter and spring time periods. The two pasture grazing system allows for one of the two pastures to be completely rested each year to allow for plant health and big game winter forage.

The proposed project is not expected to have significant impacts on the physical or human environment. Identified impacts are expected to be minor and of short duration. These are borne out by the 29-year history of grazing under similar conditions in the same area of the WMA.

## **PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

### **1. Public involvement:**

The public will be notified in the following manner to comment on this current EA, the proposed action and alternatives:

- Public notices in each of these papers: Billings: *Billings Gazette*; Harlowton: the *Harlowton Clarion Times*; Roundup: the *Roundup Record and Tribune*.
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: <http://fwp.mt.gov> under “Recent Public Notices”

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having limited and minor impacts, which can be mitigated.

### **2. Duration of comment period:**

Written comments will be accepted through 5:00 p.m., March 14, 2014, and can be sent to the following address:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
Attn: Ray Mulé  
2300 Lake Elmo Dr.  
Billings, MT 59105 or  
rmule'@mt.gov

## **PART V. EA PREPARATION**

### **1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? (YES/NO)? No**

- **If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.** It has been determined that no significant impacts to the physical and human environment will result due to the proposed action alternative, nor will there be significant public controversy over the proposed action; therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

### **2. Person responsible for preparing the EA:**

Ashley Beyer  
FWP Area Wildlife Biologist  
1163 Horsethief Road  
Roundup, MT 59072  
(406) 323-1446  
[abeyer@mt.gov](mailto:abeyer@mt.gov)

**APPENDIX A: LEGAL DESCRIPTION FOR HAYMAKER WMA GRAZING AREA**

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T 10N R12E

sec16 Portion

sec20, S 1/2

sec21

sec22 Portion of West 1/2

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DRAFT

## **APPENDIX B. HAYMAKER WMA GRAZING SYSTEM PLAN**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The 1,360 acre Haymaker Wildlife Management Area (HWMA) is located in central Montana along the southeastern edge of the Little Belt Mountains, occupying land in Wheatland County. The HWMA includes land on which the south facing slopes and large grassy benches provide winter range for elk numbering 200 to 800. Plant community is dominated by bluebunch wheatgrass, Idaho fescue, thickspike wheatgrass, timothy, bluegrass, ponderosa pine, douglas fir, limber pine, snowberry, wild rose, goldenweed, cottonwood, and aspen. The primary public access point is up Morrissey Coulee where people must traverse 2.5 miles of private land before entering the game range. The Lewis and Clark National Forest lies just to the north of the HWMA. Elevation on this foothill WMA ranges from approximately 4,900 to 5,800 feet. The watershed included in the area is Morrissey Coulee. Legal descriptions of the HWMA land included in this proposal are listed in Appendix A.

### **WMA GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

Overall management goals for the HWMA are (Haymaker Wildlife Management Area management plan, 1997):

"To encourage winter/spring elk use by managing for highly productive, diverse vegetative communities that will provide high quality forage and cover."

Consistent with that goal, certain management objectives have been identified. They include (but are not limited to) the following:

"To manage vegetation to provide high quality winter/spring habitat and forage production while following proper land management practices."

"To provide habitat for resident wildlife, including elk, mule deer, antelope, ruffed grouse, black bear, and nongame wildlife."

Other management objectives address elk depredations, hunting and recreational opportunities and deed restrictions addressing management, subdivision and commercial limitations on the HWMA. In 1984, a two pasture grazing system was implemented on the HWMA to meet goals listed above. The grazing system has been in place for 29 years.

### **GRAZING SYSTEM HISTORY**

The Area was purchased in 1957 by the then Montana Department of Fish and Game. The HWMA received little elk use in its early years of existence. Domestic livestock were not allowed to graze the area from 1957-1982 and little to no use by elk was observed during that time-period. In 1982 Mr. A.L. Hormay was contracted by FWP to develop a grazing plan for the HWMA with the primary objective to make the range more attractive to wintering elk. His letter suggested that the residual growth from years of non-use had made the range unattractive to wintering elk and he recommended a rest-rotation system for cattle designed to remove old residual growth prior to the main growing season.

The plan recommended constructing a fence down Morris Coulee which would divide the game range in half and then instituting a grazing system with half of the game range grazed each year (Fig. 1). Cattle would be removed from the HWMA when bluebunch wheatgrass (Agropyron spicatum) was in the low boot stage. The early grazing period, April through May, would help to remove the previous year's residual grass and stimulate new growth. Cattle have been grazing the HWMA in each year since 1984 except in 1989 and 2011.

### **GRAZING SYSTEM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

Any proposal for grazing domestic livestock under any circumstances must meet HWMA management goals and objectives as listed above, and meet or exceed FWP grazing standards. Further, goals and objectives specific to the implementation of a grazing system must be developed and followed. The following are offered to meet those needs.

#### **GOAL:**

- Maintain the attractiveness of winter and spring forage to elk, thereby influencing distribution and minimizing depredation to adjacent private lands.

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Implement a long term, beneficial grazing system on the HWMA.
- Maintain good ecological condition of desired native plant species.
- Stimulate root structure and maintain drought resistance using scheduled rest periods

The grazing system encompasses the entire HWMA (Fig. 1). Total size of the grazing system equals approximately 1,360 acres, including the following:

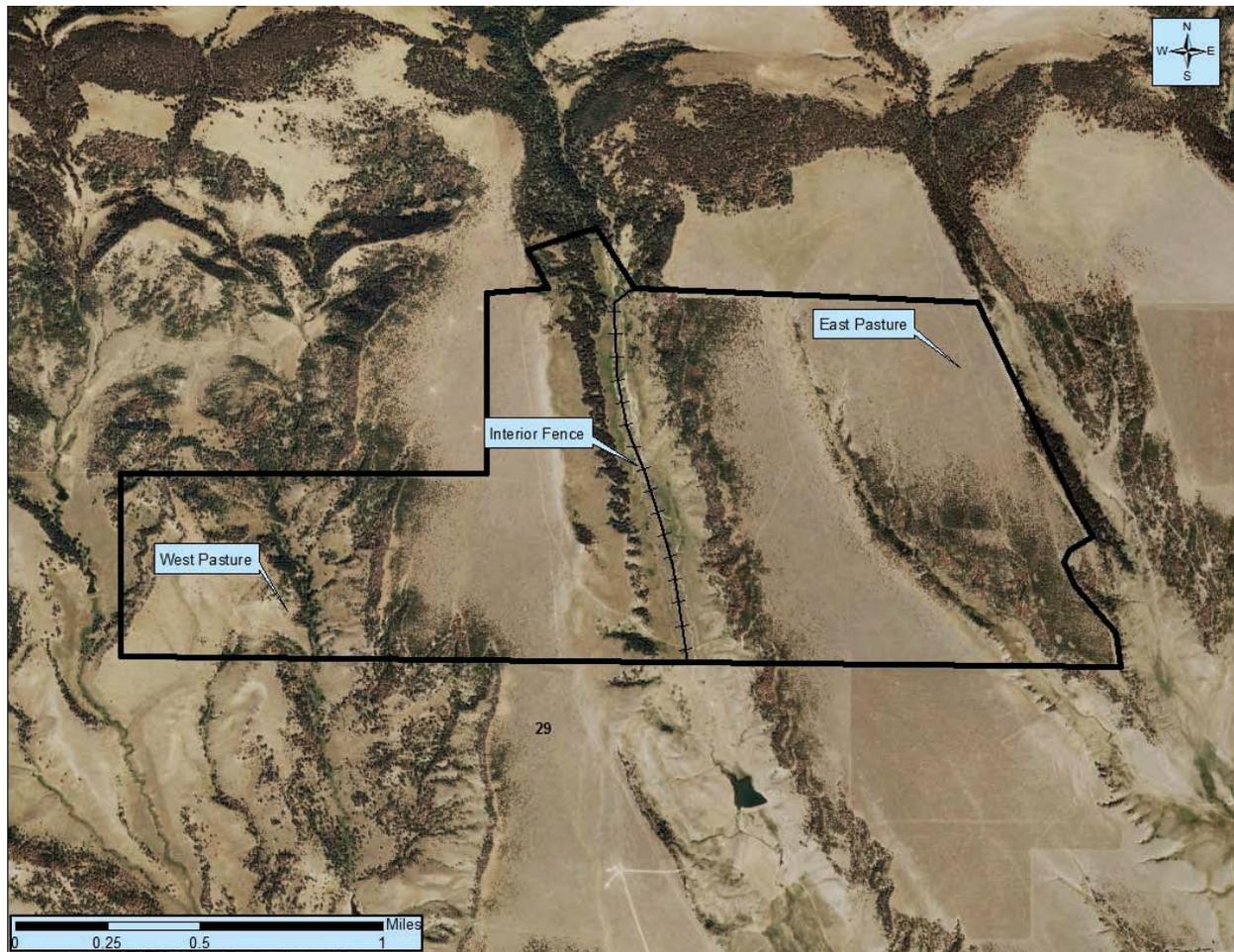
Approximate acreage of each pasture includes:

West Pasture--650 acres

East Pasture--710 acres

SUM = 1,360 acres

**Figure 1. Map of the HWMA rest-rotation grazing system pastures.**



### **GRAZING SYSTEM DETAILS**

Dates of grazing use are dictated by 1) plant phenology to include spring green-up, plant availability and 2) forage consumption in the active pasture(s). Bluebunch wheatgrass (*Agsp.*) will be used as the principal indicator, and livestock will be removed from the system when bluebunch wheatgrass begins the period of rapid growth.

General grazing season dates for these events approximate the following:

Early season graze April 1 – May 15

Complete Rest

Table 1 details the grazing scheme to be used from 2014 through 2017 in the HWMA grazing program. This is a continuation of the scheme employed from 1984 through 2013, with the exception that livestock grazing will end on May 15. This matrix will be used in conjunction with the attached map of the project area to determine grazing schedules and location.

**Table 1. Sequence of grazing treatments and pasture, 2014 - 2017.**

P A S T U R E	YEAR				
		2014	2015	2016	2017
East	Graze	Rest	Graze	Rest	
West	Rest	Graze	Rest	Graze	

Treatments*Graze = April 1 – May 15**Rest = Complete rest from livestock grazing May 16<sup>th</sup> of year one through March 31<sup>st</sup> of year 3 (22 months).*Pasture number and name:*East = 710 acres**West = 650 acres**SUM = 1,360 acres*

Table 2 details maximum AUMs allowed from 2014 through 2017 in the HWMA grazing program. This is a change of the scheme employed from 1984 through 2013. An average monthly stocking rate is indicated based on available forage and water supply, pasture size and layout, desired grazing effectiveness and previously observed effectiveness of livestock grazing abilities in the immediate area. The West Pasture is permitted a maximum of 210 AUMs and the East Pasture is permitted a maximum of 220 AUMs for livestock grazing during each yearly grazing season:

Table 2: AUMs available during grazing treatments by pasture, 2014-2017

P A S T U R E	YEAR				
		2014	2015	2016	2017
East	220	0	220	0	
West	0	210	0	210	

**MONITORING AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

Trends in vegetation composition will be monitored through the use of existing transects to determine changes in species composition, cover and frequency. FWP's Range Specialist and Area Wildlife Biologist will annually monitor photo points.

Stocking rates, period of use and grazing fees collected on the HWMA grazing lease are presented in Table 3. Historically, stocking rates ranged from 0 to 315 AUM's during the last 13 years of the grazing lease. Stocking rates were generally well below maximum (average 161 AUMs) estimated stocking rates, and never reached the maximum of 400 AUMs allowed. Days of use ranged from 0 to 61 days during the last 13 years of the grazing lease. The number of

days that grazing actually occurred were generally well below the maximum days allowed (61 days) with an average of 36 days grazed.

During the history of the grazing leases on Haymaker WMA, a total of 400 AUMs were allowed each grazing season per pasture, with one of the two pastures being grazed each year. Due to an AUM analysis utilizing data from NRCS, the East Pasture will be permitted to have a maximum of 220 AUMs during the year it is grazed, and the West Pasture will be permitted to have a maximum of 210 AUMs during the year it is grazed.

During the history of the grazing leases on Haymaker WMA, livestock were permitted to graze on the WMA until blue bunch wheatgrass reached low boot stage, or until June 1. However, grazing leases contracts allowed grazing to occur until June 20. When conducting early spring grazing programs, the FWP grazing standards allow for grazing to occur until the period of rapid growth begins. As a result, livestock will be permitted to occur until the period of rapid growth begins, which typically begins no later than the middle of May. Therefore, livestock will be removed from the WMA by May 15 in accordance to FWP grazing standards.

**Table 3. HWMA Cattle Stocking Rates, 2000-2013.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Pasture Grazed</b>	<b>AUM's</b>	<b>Days of Use</b>	<b>% AUM's Allowed<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Grazing Fee</b>
2000	East	315	32	79%	\$3,465.00
2001	West	176	44	44%	\$1,936.00
2002	East	163	61	41%	\$1,787.50
2003	West	216	54	54%	\$2,376.00
2004	East	179	42	45%	\$1,971.20
2005	West	61	25	15%	\$667.70
2006	East	95	32	24%	\$1,040.97
2007	West	253	58	63%	\$2,779.70
2008	East	63	21	16%	\$756.00
2009	West	240	30	60%	\$2,880.00
2010	East	160	40	40%	\$1,920.00
2011*	West	0	0	0%	0
2012	East	162	32	41%	\$1,944.00
2013	West	177	32	44%	\$2,124.00

<sup>1</sup> Based on 400 AUM's permitted on HWMA

\*Deep snow prevented grazing on HWMA in 2011

One result of livestock grazing is the reduction of standing dead grass litter and promotion of succulent new re-growth. Elk regularly utilize HWMA (Figure 2). Elk utilize the WMA year-round, but especially during winter and spring months due to the south facing slopes and large grassy benches which provide winter forage. December through March are the months of greatest elk use with transitional use of the WMA occurring in April. Elk are moving to higher elevations and neighboring landowners in April. Cattle don't usually go on the WMA until mid to late April due to the leasee's grazing schedule.

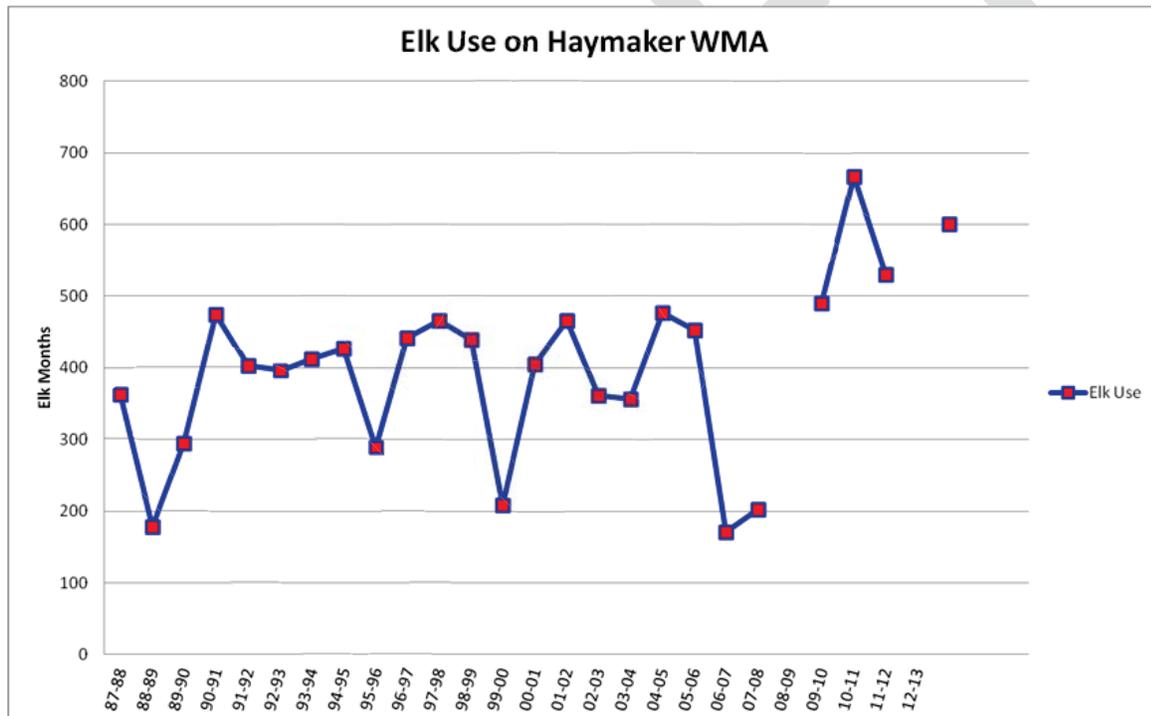
During initial setup of the grazing system water tanks were installed on the HWMA pastures to provide better cattle distribution in the uplands and to reduce cattle use of the riparian areas. This has worked very well to better distribute cattle throughout the system. Elk, deer and other game and non-game species continue to benefit from the increased water availability.

Livestock grazing on publicly owned FWP Wildlife Management Areas can sometimes draw attention from special interest groups. Owing to the public interest on this WMA, public education and information has been, and continues to be, necessary. These efforts include contact with the public via media outlets and informal contacts with the public that use the HWMA during summer months and hunting seasons.

**PUBLIC ACCESS**

This grazing lease does not inhibit public access to the WMA.

**Figure 2. Graph of elk use on Haymaker WMA (1987-2013).**



## **SPECIAL CONDITIONS**

Annual cash rental fee will be the state DNRC rate / AUM or rate mutually agreed upon by both parties in exchange for mutually negotiated services described. The DNRC rate is lower than FWP's standard grazing lease rate (which is based on a statewide average). The DNRC rate assumes the lessee will be responsible for repair and maintenance of all fences around both pastures during each year of the lease contract. Payment will be based upon the records provided by the lessee regarding actual animal stocking rates (AUM's) during grazing season of use.

Salting, and/or mineral grounds will be the responsibility of the lessee. Salt/mineral grounds shall be placed at locations mutually agreed upon by the lessee and FWP. Sites are to be moved periodically and according to mutual agreement.

The HWMA Grazing System plan and lease document will be employed during the term of this lease.

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