Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

4600 Giant Springs Rd.
Great Falls, MT 59405

February 27, 2014

Dear Interested Party:

The enclosed draft Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared regarding a proposed grazing lease renewal on a portion of the Beartooth Wildlife Management Area (BTWMA). The 32,318 acre WMA is located in west-central Montana along the western and northern edge of the Big Belt Mountains, occupying land in both Lewis and Clark and Cascade Counties. Questions and comments on the EA will be accepted through 5:00 p.m. March 20, 2014. The proposed 160-acre grazing lease would allow cattle to be utilized as a management tool to remove residual vegetation, thus enhancing the availability and palatability of elk and mule deer forage on that portion of the WMA to be grazed. This portion of the WMA has been successfully grazed in a similar fashion with adjacent and cooperating lessee Voegele's Inc. for 21 years.

If you need additional copies of the draft EA, please contact Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks in Great Falls at (406) 454-5840. A copy of the draft EA is also available on Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' website at http//fwp.mt.gov – "Recent Public Notices".

Please send any written comments to the following address:

Beartooth WMA Grazing EA Comments
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
4600 Giant Springs Rd.
Great Falls, MT 59405

Or email comments to: cloecker@mt.gov

Sincerely,

Gary Bertellotti

Gary Bertellotti
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Region 4 Supervisor
Great Falls, MT 59404

Enclosed: Draft Beartooth WMA - Voegele's Inc. Grazing Environmental Assessment

Draft Environmental Assessment

GRAZING LEASE RENEWAL FOR PORTION OF
BEARTOOTH WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA (160 Acres)

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of proposed state action:
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP) proposes to renew a 160-acre cattle grazing lease on a portion of the Beartooth Wildlife Management Area (BTWMA) to adjoining landowner Voegele's Inc., for cattle grazing to better manage vegetation for wildlife cover and forage. This portion of the WMA has been successfully grazed in a similar fashion with adjacent and cooperating lessee Voegele's Inc. for 21 years.

2. Agency authority for the proposed action:
MFWP 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, MFWP is required to assess the impacts that any proposal or project might have on the natural and human environments. Further, MFWP's land lease-out policy, as it pertains to the disposition of interest in Department lands (89-1-209) requires and Environmental Assessment (EA) to be written for all new grazing leases, lease extensions or lease renewals.

3. Anticipated Schedule:

Grazing Schedule:	Available June 1 – September 1 (actual dates of use may vary depending upon environmental conditions and number of livestock to be grazed)
Term of Grazing:	6-year lease renewal
Legal Description:	Lewis & Clark County. 160 acres. T14N R02W Section 12: E1/2 NE1/4; NW1/4 NE1/4; E1/4 NW1/4 (Figure 2 and Appendix A)
Lease #	4062.7(B)03

4. Location affected by proposed action:
The 32,318 acre BTWMA is located in west-central Montana along the western and northern edge of the Big Belt Mountains, occupying land in both Lewis and Clark and Cascade Counties. Major drainages, including Cottonwood, Elkhorn and Willow Creeks, flow into Holter Lake, an impoundment on the Missouri River. Elevation on this rugged, mostly mountainous WMA ranges from 3,578 to 6,917 feet. The WMA was purchased in 1970 by the MFWP from the M. Pierce Milton estate.

Figure 1. Beartooth Wildlife Management Area Location.

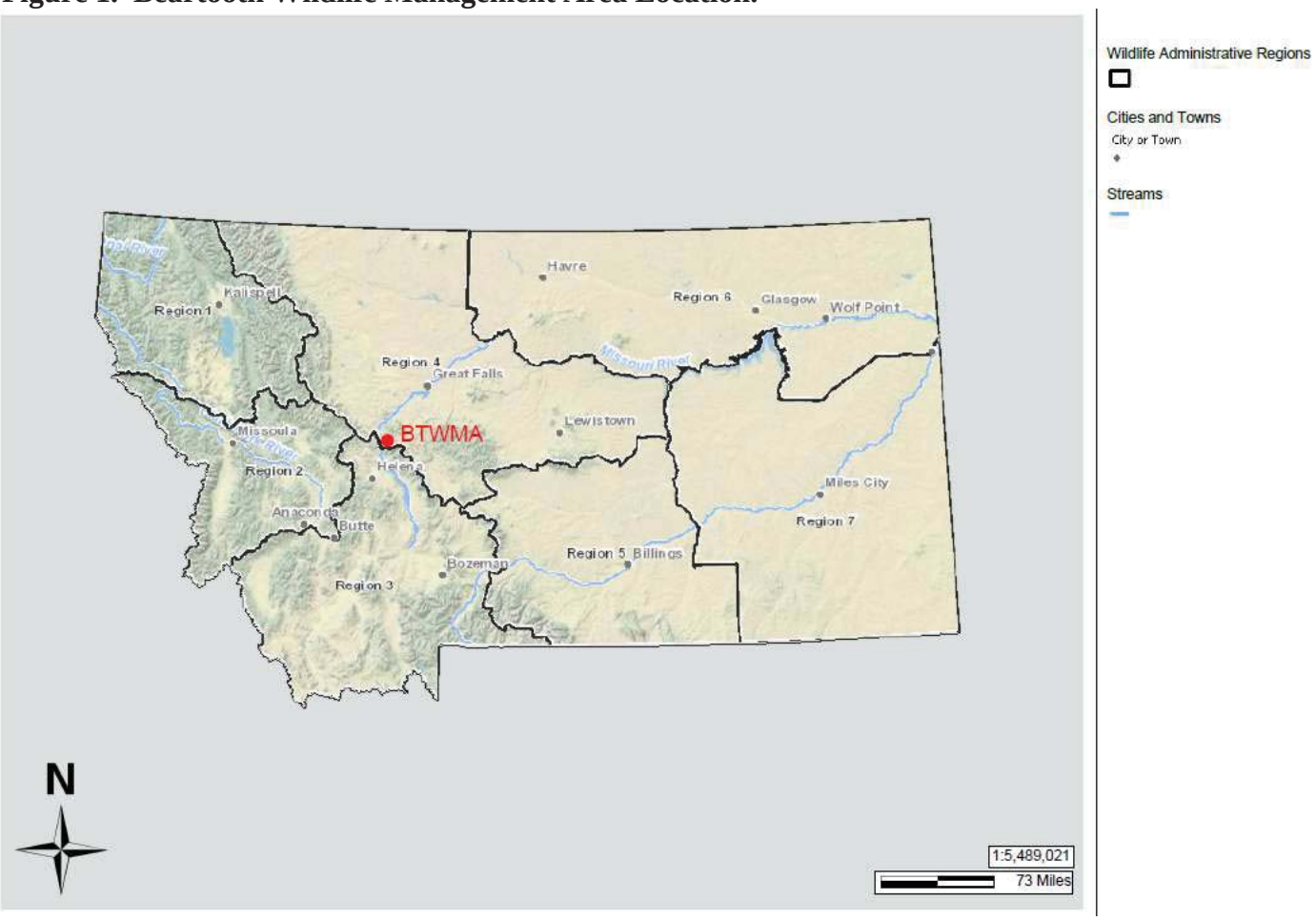
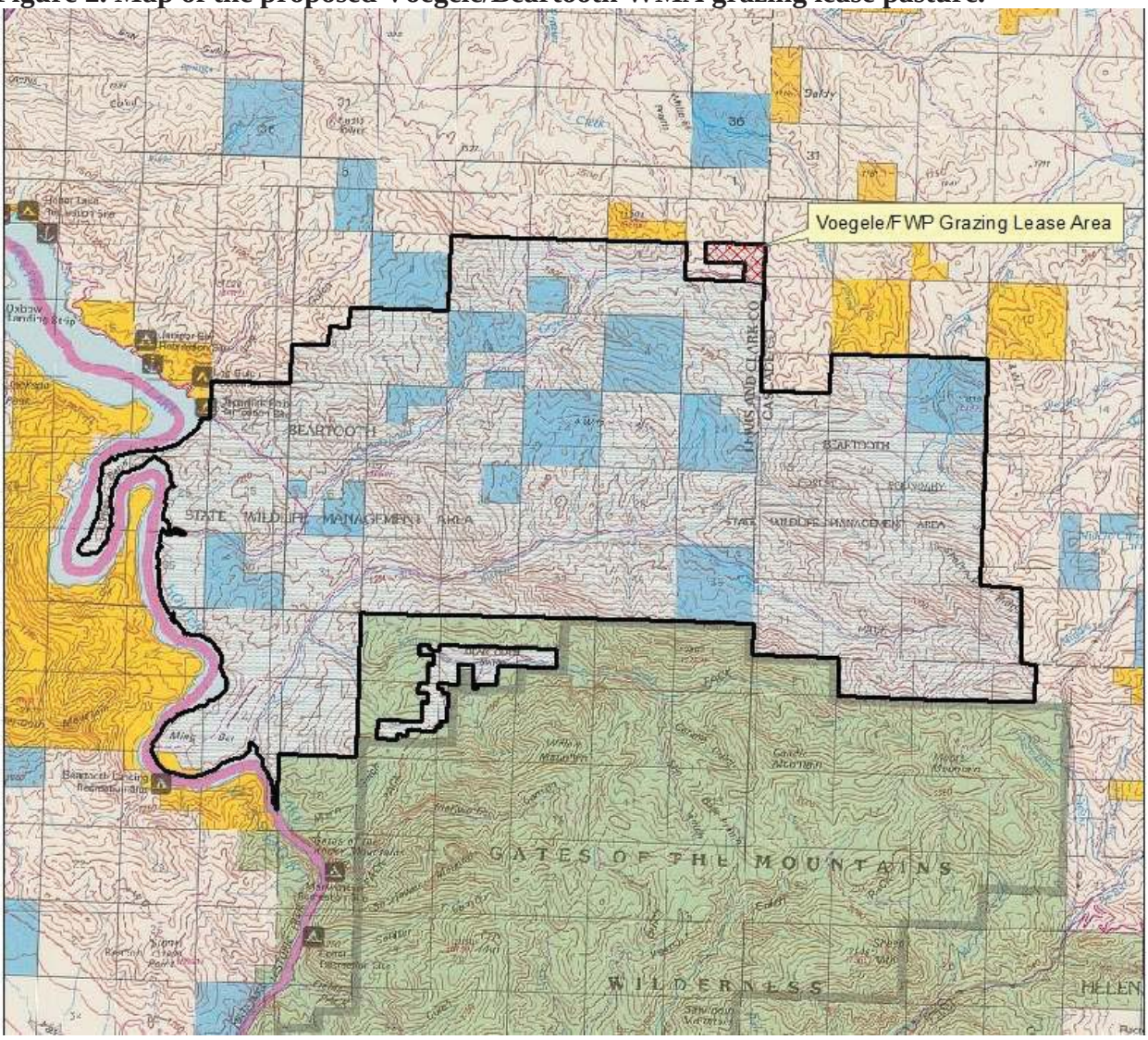


Figure 2. Map of the proposed Voegele/Beartooth WMA grazing lease pasture.



5. Project size: 160 acres

	Acres		Acres
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	0
Residential	0		
Industrial	0	(e) Productive:	
		Irrigated cropland	0
(b) Open Space/ Woodlands/Recreation	0	Dry cropland	0
		Forestry	65
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas	5	Rangeland	90
		Other	0

6. Permits, Funding & Overlapping Jurisdictions:

(a) Permits: None required

(b) Funding: N/A

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities: None

7. Narrative summary of the proposed action:
The BTWMA encompasses 32,318 acres, of which 27,000 acres are deeded MFWP lands with the remaining 5,318 acres leased from the State of Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) "school trust lands". The 160 acre area being considered in this proposal is near Cottonwood Creek and consists primarily native intermountain foothill grassland interspersed with Ponderosa Pine and scattered Douglas fir overstory.

The proposed grazing lease on these acres was part of the 160 acre land exchange for property received from the BLM in the Holter Lake land exchange, and has never been fenced into the BTWMA. The 160-acres are part of a larger 700 acre pasture (540 acres Voegele's, 160 acres MFWP). The 700 acre pasture is one of nine (9) pastures in a yearling cattle grazing scheme implemented by Sieben Live Stock. The 9 pasture system totals approximately 9,500 acres. Each pasture is rested 7 of 9 growing seasons, during the plants' most vulnerable stage. No pasture is ever grazed two growing seasons in a row. Each pasture is rested for 1 full year every 5th year to build organic matter and to improve plant root health and growth. Following year would be managed with the intent to remove decadent plant material and utilize trampling to help build soil and organic matter content in the soil. The grazing capacity of the 160 acres is estimated to be approximately 23 Animal Unit Months (AUMs). The area could be utilized approximately June 1 – September 1, although actual dates may vary depending upon environmental conditions and number of cattle to be grazed. This area was last grazed summer 2012 and rested in 2013.
MFWP is proposing to continue to utilize livestock grazing to remove decadent residual vegetation to enhance the availability and palatability forage on this portion of the WMA. The goal is to manipulate the current vegetation in the area through livestock grazing to encourage more elk and deer use of the area. It is also believed that periodic livestock grazing of the area will continue to enhance the forage and habitat for elk, mule deer, mountain grouse and nongame wildlife, which is one of the primary objectives of the BTWMA management plan.

If MFWP moves forward with this proposal, the grazing lease would require the lessee will to maintain pasture fences during the grazing season. The grazing fees would continue to be the Federal grazing rate, which is adjusted annually.

If MFWP does not move forward with this proposal, MFWP would need to build approximately 3 miles of fence due to this 160 acre parcel not being fenced within the BTWMA boundary and is within Voegele's Whitetail Prairie parcel. Fencing the 160 acre parcel would cost MFWP over $50,000 due to the terrain, shape of parcel, etc. Managed grazing within the Whitetail Prairie system is a much more feasible and preferred option.

Management goals for the BTWMA are:

"To manage for highly productive, diverse vegetative communities that will provide quality forage and cover for native wildlife species, emphasizing elk, while providing opportunity for public hunting and other outdoor recreation."

"To provide the year-long habitat requirements of resident wildlife, including 500 elk, 50 bighorn sheep, 200 mule deer, 100 white-tailed deer, 50 antelope, black bear, upland game birds and non-game wildlife."

"To provide winter range for 5 months for an additional 1,000 elk, 300 mule deer and 50 bighorn sheep from surrounding public and private lands."

"To manage grassland vegetation, with emphasis on rough fescue (Fesc.), and other native bunchgrass species, so that wildlife species, particularly big game, are provided abundant and nutritious forage."

Other management objectives address elk depredations on neighboring private lands, fisheries, hunting and recreational opportunities and deed restrictions addressing management, subdivision and commercial limitations on the BTWMA. In addition to this 160-acre lease, two other grazing systems occur on the WMA totaling about 5,750 acres.

GRAZING OBJECTIVES

Any proposal for grazing of domestic livestock under any circumstances must meet BTWMA management goals and objectives as listed above. 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:

-To provide abundant vegetative cover (abundance) and quality plant composition (nutrition/palatability) as related to wildlife needs and soil/watershed protection on elk seasonal ranges associated with the BTWMA.

OBJECTIVES:

- Promote succession of desired native plant species into areas previously abused by domestic livestock grazing which occurred prior to FWP acquisition in 1970.

- Promote maximum plant production, vigor and nutrient content.

- Maintain the attractiveness of late fall and spring forage to elk, thereby influencing distribution and minimizing depredation to other private lands.

- Implement a long term, beneficial grazing system on lands describing all or a significant portion of elk winter range in the upper Tyrell, Cottonwood and Elkhorn drainages.

- Expand the effective influence of the BTWMA for wintering elk by bringing adjacent private land into similar management, simultaneously meeting landowner needs and tolerance.

All projects conducted on the BTWMA (including grazing systems) are discussed with the local Devil's Kitchen Working Group, which includes area landowners, sportspeople, MFWP, outfitters, BLM, DNRC, USFS staff. The group has been in full support of grazing systems and habitat management on the BTWMA.

8. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action

- Decadent residual vegetation would accumulate, and the area would be unattractive to elk and other big game species.
- Elk and other big game would likely utilize adjacent private land pastures.
- Increased risk of wildfire
- Installation of 3 miles of fence required to separate this 160 acre parcel from the rest of the larger pasture at a cost of about $50,000.

Alternative B: Proposed Action

- Managed vegetation cycles across a larger rest rotation grazing system.
- Soil and plant disturbance that could benefit seedling establishment of desirable plant species.
- Seven of nine years during grazing treatment each pasture would have growing season rest for plant root development and maintenance.
- One of every five years the pasture in system would have complete rest from grazing for plant root development
- Provide for better spring and summer green-up vegetation conditions for elk, mule deer and other wildlife species; thereby reducing elk, mule deer and other big game usage of adjacent private property.
- Continued strong relations with area Landowners and continued public hunting access to lessee private lands as required by the grazing lease.

If the No Action alternative is chosen, MFWP 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. No impacts to environmental or human resources would be expected to occur as a result of livestock grazing given that the area wouldn't be grazed by livestock.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

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

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
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			1d
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				

1b/d. Some impacts to soil conditions may occur due to trampling, trailing or grazing in localized 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 can be a positive benefit to soil quality by breaking down old residual vegetative material, thereby, returning nutrients to the soil.

2. AIR **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT ***					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
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 regulations? (Also see 2a.)		N/A				

2b. Proposed action would have no effect on the ambient air quality. Some individuals may find the smell of grazing livestock on the WMA objectionable. However, the area has been grazed in the past. In addition, livestock graze the adjacent private property all around the WMA, so the smell of grazing livestock is already present in the general area.

3. WATER **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. Impacts on Cottonwood Creek water quality, quantity and distribution would be minimal. The level of grazing proposed should leave adequate vegetative material to protect the soil and minimize potential erosion. Grazing would also not occur until summer, after primary snowmelt has occurred.

4. VEGETATION **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		No	4a
b. Alteration of a plant community?			X		No	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		Yes	4e
f. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		N/A				

4a/b. While vegetation cover and quantity would be decreased while livestock are grazing the area, vegetation quality should increase follow grazing, as a result of removing the residual decadent plant material. Grazing should enhance the availability and palatability of spring forage in the area. Plant and soil disturbance as the result of grazing may enhance seed placement, germination, and seedling establishment for both native and nonnative plant species. The proposed grazing would be expected to reduce the potential fire danger from decadent standing vegetation. The reduction in fire fuels would be appreciated by adjacent landowners.

4e. The Department currently manages noxious weeds on the BTWMA through chemical and biological control per the guidelines set forth in MMFWP's 2008 Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan. The acres grazing by the cattle would be monitored for new weed infestations.

5. FISH/WILDLIFE **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
						5c

c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?	X					
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				
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				
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/. While livestock grazing activities would reduce the amount of forage in the area during the grazing lease period and could temporarily displace big game from the area to be grazed, it is expected that the proposed project would have a positive long-term impact on elk and mule deer habitats. The expected short-term positive impact is that decadent residual vegetation would 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 BTWMA and adjacent properties to offset any short-term loss of forage due to livestock. In regards to non-game impacts, the reduction in residual cover could have a short term impact on any ground nesting birds that may utilize the area, but long term rest rotation grazing would allow adjacent pastures to be rested and utilized by ground nesting birds. Westslope cutthroat trout were transplanted to Cottonwood Creek in 2009. Impacts on Cottonwood Creek water quality, quantity and distribution would be minimal. The level of grazing recommended should leave adequate vegetative material to protect the soil and minimize potential erosion.

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT ***					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
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 MFWP-owned property.

7. LAND USE **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT ***					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
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				
		X				

c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?						
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT ***					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
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				

Chemical and biological treatment is part of MFWP's weed management plan to limit the infestation of noxious weeds on its properties per the guidance of the 2008 Integrated Weed Management Plan. Weed treatment and storage and mixing of the chemicals would be in accordance with standard operating procedures.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT ***					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
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.

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT ***					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
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		X				

facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?						
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. Amount of revenue from the grazing lease is very minimal, typically about $50 annually. The grazing rate would be the Federal grazing rate of $1.35/AUM, adjusted annually as per the Holter Lake land exchange.
10f. No additional costs to MMFWP are expected with the implementation of the proposed grazing lease, as the lessee would be responsible for maintenance of the pasture fences during the grazing period.

11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT ***					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
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 BTWMA may be objectionable to some segments of the public, however this and 2 other pastures on the BTWMA have been grazed in the past, having successful results.
11c. Livestock and livestock sign on the WMA may seem out of place for some segments of the public, however this and 2 other pastures on the WMA have been grazed in the past.

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT ***					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
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				

C. SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE 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 MFWP and the lessee would include all lease stipulations and enforceable control measures.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The proposed grazing lease renewal on the BTWMA would be used to improve vegetative conditions for big game species that may utilize the WMA particularly during the spring and fall time periods. The proposed project is not expected to have significant impacts on the physical or human environment. Identified impacts are expected to be very minor and of short duration. The project is expected to benefit wildlife habitat conditions in the long-term.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Public involvement:

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

- A public notice in the Helena Independent Record and the Great Falls Tribune.
- Public notice on the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: www.fwp.mt.gov – public notices.
- Copies of this environmental assessment will be distributed to the neighboring landowners and interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project.

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

2. Duration of comment period:

Public comment period will run for 21 days (February 28 – March 20). Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., March 20, 2014 and can be mailed or emailed to the following:

Beartooth WMA Grazing Lease
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
4600 Giant Springs Rd.
Great Falls, MT 59405
or email to: cloecker@mt.gov

After the public comment period, MFWP will review comments and a decision notice will be completed by the Region 4 Supervisor. That decision notice will be provided to the public who provided comments. If the Region 4 Supervisor's decision is to proceed with the proposed project based on public comment, the decision notice will be provided to the MFWP Commission. The MFWP Commission, at their scheduled April 10th, 2014 meeting, would then endorse or disapprove the proposed action.

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:

Cory Loecker
MTFWP
Wildlife Biologist
4600 Giant Springs Rd.
Great Falls, MT 59405
(406) 454-5840
cloecker@mt.gov

APPENDIX A

Legal description of the BTWMA lands included in the Voegele's Inc grazing lease:

T14N R02W
Section 12: E1/2 NE 1/4; NW ¼ NE ¼; NE ¼ NW ¼

Approximate size: 160 acres

Lewis and Clark County

(See Figures 1 and 2)