



Draft
Environmental Assessment

**Spring Meadow Lake State Park and
Prickly Pear Land Trust
Centennial Trail Extension**



Spring/Summer 2018

Draft Environmental Assessment CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

Type of proposed state action: To allow a Non-Profit Trails organization to construct a multi-use non-motorized trail from the parking lot at Montana Wild, to the existing trail spur on Spring Meadow Resources property for approximately 900 ft. The trail will have a natural native soil substrate surface. This trail would parallel the existing fence as it heads west and then north where it would connect to the Tenmile Creek Park trails. This trail connection would serve as part of a bike and walk commuter route for the over 700 employees who work at the VA Hospital and Fort Harrison. In addition, it would provide access for recreationists between Spring Meadow Lake State Park and Prickly Pear Land Trust's Tenmile Creek Park.

Specifications:

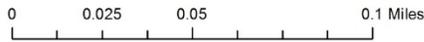
- 1. Name, address and phone number of project sponsor (if other than the agency):**
Prickly Pear Land Trust 40 W. Lawrence St. POB 892. Helena, Mt. 59624

- 2. Anticipated Schedule:**
Estimated Construction Commencement Date: May 2018
Estimated Completion Date: July 2018
Current Status of Project Design (100% complete):

5. Location affected by proposed action (county, range and township – included map):
 Lewis & Clark County, S23; T10N; R04W; NWNESW



Created by: Nate Kopp
 Prickly Pear Land Trust
 August, 2017



- Existing Trail to Tenmile Creek Park
- Proposed FWP Trail Connection
- Centennial Trail
- Spring Meadow Lake State Park
- Spring Meadow Resources

6. Project size -- estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

	<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	_<1	Dry cropland	_0
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas	_0	Forestry	_0
		Rangeland	_0
		Other	_0

8. Permits, Funding & Overlapping Jurisdiction.

(a) **Permits:** permits will be filed at least 2 weeks prior to project start.

Agency Name 0 Permits 0

(b) Funding:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount Volunteers, +</u>
Prickly Pear Land Trust,	\$500 for signage and tools

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Type of Responsibility</u>
FWP, Montana Wild	approval
Northwestern Energy	utility locating along route

9. **Narrative summary of the proposed action:** Prickly Pear Land Trust (PPLT) seeks to create a trail connection between PPLT’s newly constructed trail at Tenmile Creek Park and the termination of the Centennial trail at the Montana WILD parking lot. This trail would cross the southwestern corner of Spring Meadow Lake property and would allow recreationists seamless connectivity between the two parks. In addition, it would improve safety by keeping users off the road at Broadwater Avenue.

10. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action, if no action is taken, it is likely that trail users will create “social trails” from the MT-WILD lot to the trailhead at the corner of Spring Meadow Resources Property. Confusion could create hazard as people use Broadwater Avenue, SMLSP and other routes to get from one section of the trail to the other.

Alternative B: The preferred alternative; is for FWP and PPLT to construct a 900-foot connector trail along the southwestern border of MT WILD and Spring Meadow Lake State Park property from the MT WILD parking area to the west. This trail would mostly parallel the existing fence as it heads west and then north where it would connect to the Tenmile Creek Park trails. This trail connection would serve as part of a bike commuter route for the over 700 employees who work at the VA Hospital and Fort Harrison. In addition, it would provide access for recreationists between Spring Meadow Lake State Park and PPLT’s Tenmile Creek Park. The trail would be constructed using volunteer labor and hand tools, leaving a natural surface..

11. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency: **None**.

Trail Corridor Permissions:

Agency authority for the proposed action: HB495

- PPLT Project Manager will work with FWP to gain permission for construction of the trail and satisfy any permitting or design needs that are required. This includes approval of the trail corridor location, trail specifications, fencing needs, and construction standards.
- PPLT Project Manager will work with Lewis and Clark County and/or Northwestern Energy to get permission to build under the power line on the first segment of trail from the MT WILD parking lot. Getting permission for this segment would mean that the building of an expensive structure such as a bridge or culvert could be avoided.
- **Trail:** 3' wide x 900' long composed of native materials beginning at the Montana WILD parking area and terminating at Broadwater Avenue at the entrance to the Tenmile Creek Park Trails.
- **Signage:** The trail will be signed to notify pedestrian and bicyclists to be aware of vehicular traffic at both the approaches to the Montana WILD parking lot and Broadwater Avenue.

Upon completion of the trail PPLT will sign a memorandum of understanding with FWP that clearly defines roles and expectations of ongoing maintenance needs. Proposed responsibilities are as follows:

- PPLT will be responsible for any and all future trail repair and maintenance needs.
- PPLT will inventory the trail at least yearly and respond to trail issues in a quick, efficient manner.
- FWP will be responsible for any weed and litter treatments that is typical for a state park. This would include mowing grass, treating weeds off the trail, etc.
- FWP will notify PPLT if the trail is in disrepair and in need of maintenance.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Provided
1. Geology and soil quality, stability and moisture			X			A1.
2. Air quality or objectionable odors				X		
3. Water quality, quantity and distribution (surface or groundwater)				X		
4. Existing water right or reservation				X		
5. Vegetation cover, quantity and quality			X			A1.
6. Unique, endangered, or fragile vegetative species				X		
6. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats				X		
7. Unique, endangered, or fragile wildlife or fisheries species				X		
8. Introduction of new species into an area				X		
9. Changes to abundance or movement of species				X		

A1. The construction of the trail would result in very minor impacts to the soils and vegetation cover in the immediate area. Only hand tools would be used to construct the trail.

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Provided
1. Noise and/or electrical effects				X		
2. Land use			X			A2.
3. Risk and/or health hazards				X		
4. Community impact			X			A2.
5. Public services/taxes/utilities				X		
6. Potential revenue and/or project maintenance costs				X		
7. Aesthetics and recreation				X		
8. Cultural and historic resources				X		
9. Evaluation of significance				X		
10. Generate public controversy			X			A2.

A2. The construction of the trail connector would have an overall positive effect on the community and public enjoyment and use of Spring Meadow Lake State Park and adjoining trails and park systems.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

Prickly Pear Land Trust (PPLT) seeks to create a trail connection between PPLT's newly constructed trail at Tenmile Creek Park and the termination of the Centennial trail at the Montana WILD parking lot. This trail would cross the southwestern corner of Spring Meadow Lake property and would allow recreationists seamless connectivity between the two parks. In addition, it would improve safety by keeping users off the road at Broadwater Avenue.

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:

- Two public notices in this paper: Helena IR.
- One statewide press release;
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: <http://fwp.mt.gov>.

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 impacts, many of which can be mitigated.

2. Duration of comment period:

The public comment period will extend for (30) thirty days following the publication of the second legal notice in area newspapers. Written comments will be accepted until 5 pm on Tuesday, May 22, 2018 and can be mailed to the address below:

Montana State Parks;
C/O Craig Putschat
POB 200701
Helena, Mt. 59620

Or by email to cputchat@mt.gov

PART V. EA PREPARATION

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

If an EIS is not required explain why the ES is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action. Based on an evaluation of impacts to the physical and human environment under MEPA, this environmental review revealed no significant negative impacts from the proposed action; therefore,

an EIS is not necessary and an environmental assessment is the appropriate level of analysis in determining the significance of impacts.

2. **Person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:** Craig Putschat, Park Manager, POB 200701, Helena, Mt. 59620-0701, 406-495-3270, cputchat@mt.gov

3. **List of agencies or offices consulted during preparation of the EA:**
 - Prickly Pear Land Trust
 - Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks:
 - Parks Div.
 - Lands Div.
 - Design & Const. Div.