

# U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management

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## Environmental Assessment

DOI-BLM-MT-B010-2014-0016-EA

November 2014

## Sauerkraut Land Acquisition

**Location:** Tract A located in the S½ of Section 29, T. 14 N., R. 9 W., P.M.M.,  
Lewis and Clark County, Montana (274.50 acres)

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION: PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

### INTRODUCTION

The Sauerkraut Creek acquisition parcel contains approximately 274.50 acres and is located along the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, adjacent to the Blackfoot River, about 3 miles west of Lincoln, Montana (Map 1).

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) in the President's fiscal year 2013 budget request includes the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail as one of the top priorities. This priority is the result of a merged submission process of each agency's FY2013 "core" and "collaborative" acquisition lists.

### PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

The Sauerkraut Creek area possesses a wide range of natural resource values that all contribute to the biological, cultural and economic health of the Blackfoot River Valley. Subdivision and development of the land holds the potential for significant adverse impacts to these wide ranging resource values.

The proposed action is to purchase the private land parcel along Sauerkraut Creek using funds provided by the LWCF. The objectives to be met by the proposed action are to:

- Maintain and improve recreational opportunities in the area.
- Protect and improve important wetland and riparian areas.
- Prevent disruptions to wildlife linkage zones.
- Protect critical big game winter range.
- Protect threatened and endangered species habitat.
- Assist in maintaining the rural character of the Blackfoot Valley.

### CONFORMANCE WITH BLM LAND USE PLAN(S)

The proposed action is subject to the following land use plan: Record Of Decision and Approved Butte Resource Management Plan (RMP) (April 2009). The RMP has been reviewed to determine if the proposed action conforms to the land use plan terms and conditions as required by 43 CFR 1610.5. The proposed acquisition is in conformance with the Butte RMP.

The Butte RMP establishes goals for evaluating land acquisition opportunities. The RMP identifies lands within the Field Office to be retained or those suitable for non-retention (disposal). The parcel proposed for acquisition is adjacent to existing BLM lands which the RMP categorizes for retention. The criteria for evaluating acquisition opportunities for this parcel are (from Butte RMP, page185):

#### ***Contain Moderate to high resource values and/or characteristics.***

- *Land along rivers, streams, lakes, dams, pools, springs and trails.*
- *Riparian areas, community watershed and/or flood plains*
- *Important general wildlife habitat*
- *Recreation sites and areas*

- *National Scenic and Historic Trails*

## **RELATIONSHIPS TO STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PLANS**

**Relationship to Statutes, Laws and Regulations:** The proposed land acquisitions would be conducted under authority of Section 205 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976. The proposed acquisitions would help realize the Secretary's goals to enhance resource values and to make the management of public lands more efficient.

**Relationship to Other Plans:** State-wide land ownership adjustment guidance is provided by the Land Pattern Review and Land Adjustment, Supplement to State Director Guidance for Resource Management Planning in Montana and the Dakotas, dated June 1984. The Supplement was published to provide guidance for all types of land adjustment projects. Through the application of criteria given in the Supplement, land retention zones were identified for Montana. Retention zones predominantly contain public lands that meet the retention criteria, define areas where BLM intends to retain existing public lands, and to acquire additional lands. The lands proposed for acquisition in this action are located within this retention/acquisition zone.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES**

#### **NO ACTION**

The proposed action would not be implemented and the BLM would not acquire the subject property. The properties would remain in private ownership, subject to State and county laws and regulations related to land use, zoning and development.

#### **PROPOSED ACTION**

The proposed action is to acquire the surface and mineral estate of approximately 274.50 acres within the Sauerkraut Creek area, as shown on Map 1, by direct purchase from willing landowners at no more than the approved appraised value. Purchase would be funded through the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which have been appropriated by Congress on a project basis.

Acquisition would include all of the property owner's title interests in the property, including any appurtenant access or water rights. In situations of split surface and mineral estate, acquisition of the mineral estate would only be pursued if the surface estate has been or can be acquired.

Future management emphasis for the acquired lands would be implemented through the Goals and Management Objectives of the Butte RMP. Management of the lands may be directed toward managing big game habitats, protecting T&E/Sensitive species and their habitats, managing recreational opportunities, maintaining and/or improving healthy forests, protecting wetlands and riparian areas.

Future BLM actions may include weed control measures, installation of interpretation and recreation facilities, forest management treatments such as planting, thinning, and harvest, prescribed fire, and erosion control measures on roads.

The acquired land would not be available for domestic livestock grazing.

Roads on the acquired land would continue to be used for local access as provided for by existing easements and would be used for administrative access purposes by BLM. The roads would be closed to use by the general public. If public use of the roads were to be considered in the future, a travel plan would be prepared to determine the appropriate route use and type of restrictions.

Development and implementation of specific projects on the acquired lands would be subject to the provisions of federal land management regulations for BLM-administered lands. This includes review of project proposals under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Endangered Species Act, and applicable public involvement requirements.

## CHAPTER 3

### AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

#### INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL SETTING

Certain resources are protected by specific laws, regulations, or policies (e.g., Executive Orders). BLM refers to these resources as “Critical Elements of the Human Environment” and addresses them in this EA. Those Critical Elements, as listed in Table below, are subsequently further addressed in the following sections.

| CRITICAL ELEMENTS |   |  |
|-------------------|---|--|
| Determination*    | Resource  | Rationale for Determination  |
| NI                | Air Quality   | No impacts anticipated, no ground disturbing activities are part of the proposed action.   |
| NP                | Areas of Critical Environmental Concern                     | None present   |
| NI                | Cultural Resources  | See below  |
| NP                | Environmental Justice                                       | No anticipated effects to low-income or minority communities.  |
| NP                | Farmlands (Prime or Unique)                                 | None present   |
| NI                | Floodplains   | None affected as per E.O. 11988 Sec. 6(c).   |
| NI                | Invasive, Non-native Species                                | Invasive species, particularly spotted knapweed, are found on the parcel but at no greater density than on adjacent BLM lands.   |
| NP                | Native American Religious Concerns                          | Consultation was conducted on May 1, 2014 with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and no religious issues or concerns were expressed.   |
| NI                | Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Plant or Animal Species | Occupied grizzly bear habitat occurs. Occupied Canada lynx and Canada lynx critical habitat do not occur. The wolverine may be present No Effect to the threatened bull trout and no impacts to westslope cutthroat trout. |
| NP                | Wastes (hazardous or solid)                                 | None identified or known present. Environmental site assessment completed.   |
| NP                | Water Quality (drinking/ground)                             | None present   |
| NI                | Wetlands/Riparian Zones                                     | None affected per E.O. 11988.  |
| NP                | Wild and Scenic Rivers                                      | None present   |
| NP                | Wilderness  | None present   |

\*Possible determinations:

NP = not present in the area impacted by the proposed or alternative actions

NI = present, but not affected to a degree that detailed analysis is required

PI = present and may be impacted to some degree. Will be analyzed in affected environment and environmental impacts.

(NOTE: PI does not mean impacts are likely to be significant in any way).

In addition to the affected Critical Elements, the following issues are analyzed for potential impacts:

- Fisheries
- Wildlife
- Recreation
- Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail
- Minerals
- County Revenues
- Livestock Grazing

## **Cultural Resources**

### **Affected Environment**

A literature search of the lands proposed for acquisition was conducted on the Montana State Historic Preservation Office database. Results indicate a portion of the Cokahlarishkit/Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail and the McClellan/Sauerkraut Historic Mining District are recorded inside the boundary of the acquisition piece. Both of these sites are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

### **Environmental Impacts to Cultural Resources**

#### **Proposed Action**

There would be no direct adverse effects on cultural resources. The indirect effect is that acquisition of the subject lands would provide protection to cultural resources under the Antiquities Act and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act. Future BLM management actions following acquisition would require a cultural resources inventory and Section 106 compliance, significantly increasing protection of undiscovered sites. No cumulative impacts were identified.

#### **No Action**

Potential cultural resources located on the lands proposed for acquisition, would not receive federal protection from potentially adverse actions. The level of protection given sites would continue to be at the landowner's discretion. Private landowners are under no legal obligation to conduct surveys or provide protection to cultural resources. Therefore, future actions can impact sites that are simply unknown to the private owner.

## **Fisheries**

### **Affected Environment**

The Sauerkraut acquisition is located in the Sauerkraut Creek and Willow Creek watersheds as well as along the Blackfoot River.

The Blackfoot River is one of the premier rivers in western Montana, supporting important populations of native bull trout (federally threatened) and westslope cutthroat trout (BLM sensitive species and State of Montana species of concern) as well as numerous other sport fishes. The Black Foot River provides habitat for numerous fish species within the acquisition area including native westslope cutthroat trout (BLM sensitive species), bull trout (federally

threatened species), sucker, sculpin, and mountain whitefish and non-native species brown trout and brook trout. The upper Blackfoot River has been designated as bull trout critical habitat and also acts as a migratory corridor for fluvial bull trout.

Historically, bull trout populations were well distributed throughout the Blackfoot River and were likely in much higher densities than they are today. Up to 1,000 bull trout redds may have been historically present in the Blackfoot River, although overall numbers were likely variable from year to year based on natural climatic and disturbance patterns (USDA-Forest Service 2013).

Bull trout distribution and numbers in the Blackfoot River declined due to mining, timber harvest, roading, livestock grazing, dams and other anthropogenic activities in the watershed. Currently, the main factor limiting recovery of bull trout in the Blackfoot is probably the lack of high quality tributaries throughout the Blackfoot watershed. However, it is unlikely that this impact is entirely responsible for the overall decline. Numerous other significant factors, such as inadvertent fishing mortality, non-native fish competition and hybridization, and water temperature likely contribute significantly to the current population trend. Future concerns would most likely be associated with the protection of instream flows in a time of increasing human consumption of surface and groundwater. Approximately 0.8 mile of the Blackfoot River is within the proposed acquisition.

Sauerkraut Creek is a fish-bearing stream that provides habitat for genetically pure native resident and fluvial westslope cutthroat trout, bull trout and sculpin and non-native species such as brook trout and brown trout (MFISH 2014). Although young bull trout have been documented in Sauerkraut Creek, this stream has not been designated as bull trout critical habitat. Approximately 0.4 mile of Sauerkraut Creek is located in the proposed acquisition area. Sauerkraut Creek provides exceptional spawning, rearing and year-round habitat for fish and other aquatic species throughout the acquisition area.

Radio-telemetry studies by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks identified spawning migrations of Blackfoot River westslope cutthroat trout in Sauerkraut Creek. These findings of migratory use indicate Sauerkraut Creek still provides for the life-history needs of migratory Blackfoot River native fish.

Willow Creek is a fish-bearing stream that provides habitat for genetically pure westslope cutthroat trout, sucker, dace, and redbreast shiner as well as brook trout and brown trout. Approximately 0.4 mile of Willow Creek is located in the proposed acquisition area. Throughout the acquisition area, Willow Creek is a low gradient stream dominated by willows and sedges. Although bull trout are not documented in Willow Creek, juvenile bull trout may be found in this low gradient reach of Willow Creek. Juvenile bull trout use areas of streams with relatively shallow depths that have adequate cover (Baxter and McPhail 1996).

Amphibians documented in on near the proposed acquisition parcel include Columbia spotted frog (MFISH 2014), western toad and long-toed salamander (Montana Natural Heritage Program 2014). Within the acquisition parcel, suitable breeding habitat likely exists for western toads, long-tailed salamander and Columbia spotted frogs. Since western toads travel long distances

from their breeding sites, this species is likely to be found disbursing through the proposed project area.

The low gradient willow and sedge dominated reaches of Willow Creek and lower Sauerkraut Creek provide exceptional habitat for amphibians.

### **Environmental Impacts to Fisheries**

#### **No Action**

##### ***Direct and Indirect Effects***

The proposed action would not be implemented and the BLM would not acquire the Sauerkraut lands. The property would remain in private ownership subject to state and county laws and regulations related to land use, zoning, and development. Effects would not occur to fish, aquatic habitats, amphibians or other aquatic species. The impacts of no action would not increase beyond what already exists. There would be no direct or indirect impacts from the no action alternative.

##### ***Cumulative Effects***

Various land-use and management activities can affect fish and aquatic habitats. Although the activities themselves may differ, the environmental changes they produce generally affect fish and aquatic habitats in similar ways. The effects of increased sedimentation on spawning gravels, for example, would be the same whether the sediment resulted from road construction, timber harvest, livestock grazing, and forest clearing, or mining. The same is true for other habitat variables such as water quality, temperature, quantity and distribution of instream cover, channel morphology, and dissolved oxygen concentrations (Meehan et al. 1991).

Past land use in the acquisition area consisted of forest management and associated roading and recreation.

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks have identified Sauerkraut Creek as an important stream for westslope cutthroat trout (especially for fluvial fish) and listed bull trout and have completed several restoration projects for these species. Sauerkraut Creek is the site of two recent restoration projects involving: 1) the restoration of over one mile of channel impacted by historic placer mining; and 2) the replacement of three undersized culverts with full-span bridges to improve fish passage. The No Action Alternative could degrade conditions in this stream.

Cumulative effects from the No Action Alternative would not increase beyond what already exists. Past logging, road building, livestock grazing, and mining has occurred. Presently these activities are not occurring. Reasonably foreseeable future actions are not anticipated. The proposed action would not occur. Direct and indirect impacts would not occur. Cumulative impacts would not occur related to past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions and the no action alternative.

## **Proposed Action**

### ***Direct and Indirect Effects***

There would be no direct effects to fish, aquatic habitats, amphibians or other aquatic species from the Proposed Action because no instream disturbing activities are likely to occur under this alternative.

Indirect effects of the proposed action would be expected to be beneficial to fish, amphibians and other aquatic species and their habitats due to stream and riparian management requirements protecting riparian habitats that would be implemented under Federal ownership. Riparian vegetation on lands proposed for acquisition would receive primary management emphasis and all activities carried out in riparian areas would be subject to protective standards and guidelines.

### ***Cumulative Effects***

In land ownership adjustment, cumulative effects from past actions are accounted for in assessing the current condition of fisheries habitat and species population. The acquisition would result in no immediate effects to aquatic or riparian habitats, so only foreseeable actions are addressed. No specific projects are proposed for the acquisition parcels; however, any future projects would require that riparian vegetation receive primary management emphasis. These protective standards would reduce the likelihood of adverse cumulative effects from future activities. There would be fewer cumulative effects under the Proposed Action than the No Action Alternative.

## **Wildlife**

### **Affected Environment**

The Sauerkraut land acquisition contains biologically diverse and productive wildlife habitat. Dry to moist forests consisting of Douglas-fir, ponderosa pine, lodgepole pine, Engelmann spruce, and western larch forests, found in the uplands, are in early and late succession stages. Timber harvesting has not occurred since the late 1940s. Bunchgrass meadows intersperse forest communities providing excellent big game summer and winter range conditions. The Blackfoot River flows through nearly 3/4ths of a mile through the Sauerkraut parcel. Sauerkraut Creek and other streams, seeps, and wetlands occur. Wildfire is a frequent to infrequent disturbance, depending on forest cover types, creating non-lethal, mixed, and lethal fire regimes. Invasive weeds, such as spotted knapweed and oxeye daisy are common.

### **Threatened and Endangered Species**

The Sauerkraut parcel is considered occupied grizzly bear (threatened) habitat and the land parcel is within two miles north of the Northern Continental Divide Grizzly Bear Ecosystem. Sauerkraut is not considered occupied Canada lynx (threatened) habitat and the area is not part of a Lynx Analysis Unit and is not part of Canada lynx Critical Habitat. The Sauerkraut land is potential habitat for wolverine (candidate). The land may function more as a linkage area between high elevation forest habitat to the north and south of the Blackfoot River.

## **Sensitive Species**

Bureau of Land Management sensitive species, such as the northern goshawk, bald eagle, golden eagle, peregrine falcon, flammulated owl, great gray owl, tree-toed woodpecker, black-backed woodpecker, gray wolf, Townsend's big-eared bat, and fisher may inhabit the area. Bald and golden eagle nests are not known to occur along the Sauerkraut section of the Blackfoot River or on the land parcel. However, this stretch of the river is part of important winter habitat for both bald and golden eagles.

## **Other Wildlife**

A biologically diverse wildlife community inhabits Morrison Mountain. Migratory birds such as Hammond's flycatcher, western tanager, and Swainson's thrush nest during the summer. Montana bird species of concern, such as the brown creeper, Cassin's finch, Clark's nutcracker, evening grosbeak, and pileated woodpecker may inhabit the Sauerkraut area. Resident birds such as the spruce grouse, gray jay, and mountain chickadee may be on the land parcel during all season. Small mammals like the red squirrel, and American marten are permanent residents. Large mammals such as the mountain lion, black bear, elk, moose, mule deer, and white-tailed deer inhabit the area. Important big game summer and winter range is located on these lands.

## **Linkage Zones**

The Sauerkraut parcel is part of an important linkage zone for wildlife moving in and out of the Bob Marshall/Scapegoat Wilderness Complex to the north and Ogden Mountain and the Anaconda/Pintler Wilderness the south. Grizzly bears, Canada lynx, and wolverines may travel through Sauerkraut and adjacent lands along the Blackfoot River to access habitat to the north and south.

## **Environmental Impacts to Wildlife**

### **No Action**

#### ***Direct and Indirect Effects***

The proposed action would not be implemented and the BLM would not acquire Sauerkraut lands. The property would remain in private ownership subject to state and county laws and regulations related to land use, zoning, and development. Impacts would not occur to threatened, endangered, sensitive, and other wildlife species. The impacts of no action would not increase beyond what already exists. Direct and indirect impacts related to no action would not occur. Threatened species, candidate species, sensitive species, big game, and Montana species of conservation concern would not be impacted.

#### ***Cumulative Effects***

The impacts of no action would not increase beyond what already exists. Past logging, road building, livestock grazing, and mining has occurred. Presently these activities are not occurring. No reasonably foreseeable future actions are anticipated. Direct and indirect impacts would not occur. Cumulative impacts would not occur related to past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. Threatened species, candidate species, sensitive species, big game, and Montana species of conservation concern would not be impacted.

## **Proposed Action**

### ***Direct and Indirect Effects***

The proposed action would have no effect on the grizzly bear, no effect on the Canada lynx and Canada lynx critical habitat, and would not jeopardize the continued existence of the wolverine. There would be no direct effects to threatened, endangered, and sensitive species, or other wildlife. The proposed action involves land acquisition and potential impacts to wildlife and/or their habitat would not directly occur.

Indirect effects would benefit threatened, endangered, sensitive, and other wildlife species. Acquisition of the subject lands may have a positive effect on threatened and endangered species and their habitats. Habitat would be managed for threatened, endangered, and candidate species and in compliance with the Endangered Species Act. BLM policy is to protect, manage and conserve sensitive species and their habitats such that Bureau actions would not contribute to listing under the Endangered Species Act. These species would benefit from increased management emphasizing conservation and recovery.

Land acquisition would consolidate ownership and increase the amount of public lands along the Blackfoot River. The proposed action would provide opportunities to manage the acquired lands consistent with RMP goals and guidelines to meet the biological needs of wildlife. Existing big game winter range and wildlife linkage zone would be maintained, enhanced, and protected.

### ***Cumulative effects***

Cumulative effects are expected to be beneficial. Indirect effects would be beneficial. Adverse effects would not occur. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, in relation to the proposed action, would not have adverse effects. In the context of ESA Section 7 consultation, the proposed action, with consideration of cumulative effects, has been determined to have no effect on the grizzly bear, Canada lynx, and Canada lynx Critical Habitat. The proposed action would not likely jeopardize the continued existence of the wolverine.

## **Recreation**

### **Affected Environment**

The Blackfoot River flows through the lands to be acquired. Little public recreational use is currently made of these lands aside from fishing and of that, primarily wade angling.

Currently, there is no public access via roads to these lands. Fishermen can access the river and these lands by parking on a road on BLM administered lands to the north of the area and then walking to the river. The Blackfoot River Recreation Management Plan (MT FWP 2010) identifies this area as being in Reach 1 of the Blackfoot River. Reach 1 receives the least amount of use on the entire Blackfoot River system. Organized group use and commercial float use is not permitted in this reach. The maximum group size for commercial wade angling is 3.

### **Environmental Impacts to Recreation**

#### **No Action**

If not acquired by BLM, the lands would more than likely not be available for public recreation. Private owners, at their discretion, could limit access to the property.

## **Proposed Action**

Acquisition of the subject property would add more land for the public to recreate on. However, access is limited as there is no public access to the parcel except from a pullout on Highway 200 and adjacent BLM lands. The pullout is small, so it is likely that recreationists will continue to access the area via the road to the north. Organized group use and commercial float use would continue to not be permitted in this area. And the maximum group size for commercial wade angling would continue to be 3. Because the Montana stream access law allows recreationists to use rivers up to the ordinary high-water mark, it is likely that fishermen have already been using this area. An increase in recreational use of the area would be small, but the opportunity to spend more time on BLM administered lands could increase.

## **The Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail**

### **Affected Environment**

On July 3, 1806, Lewis and Clark divided into two parties and left Travelers Rest, located near present day Lolo, Montana, to continue on their return trip home. Lewis, his party of nine men and several guides, travelling on horseback, began their journey through Hellgate Canyon (near present day Missoula, Montana), up the Blackfoot River and across the Continental Divide. Lewis and his men followed the "Cokahlaharishkit Trail". The "Cokahlaharishkit Trail" was a trail used for centuries prior to 1806 by Native Americans to access buffalo hunting lands east of the Continental Divide. The trail generally follows the Blackfoot River although segments veer away from the river.

The Lewis and Clark Trail was designated a National Historic Trail after the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978, Public Law 95-625, amended the National Trails System Act to include the new category of National Historic Trails. According to the Foundation Document (2012), the purpose of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail is to commemorate the 1804 to 1806 Lewis and Clark Expedition through the identification; protection; interpretation; public use and enjoyment; and preservation of historic, cultural, and natural resources associated with the expedition and its place in U.S. and tribal history.

The Secretary of the Interior was given the trail administrator responsibility and long-term administration of the trail was delegated to the National Park Service (NPS). In the 1982 Comprehensive Management Plan, the NPS recommended 2 types of development for Lewis's return trip between Traveler's Rest and Great Falls - a motor trail and a land trail. They proposed that the land trail would be located on the south side of the Blackfoot River between McNamara and Roundup Bridge and that Johnsrud Park and Ninemile Prairie Access were to be trailheads for the land trail. The motor trail would be along Highway 200.

### **Environmental Impacts to LCNHT**

**No Action:** If not acquired by BLM, the area would remain under private ownership.

**Proposed Action:** Acquisition of the property would increase public lands surrounding the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail and would benefit the LCNHT.

## **Mineral Resources**

### **Affected Environment**

The surface and mineral estates of the subject property are currently under one private landowner and available for development at the discretion of the owner.

The geology of the subject lands is dominated by Precambrian Snowslip Formation and Quaternary sediments. There is no current mineral exploration or development on the property. There is a low potential for minerals, oil, and gas development on the property, but historic placer mining has been known to have occurred on Sauerkraut Creek to the south.

### **Environmental Impacts to Mineral Resources**

#### **No Action**

The property would remain under private ownership and be made available for exploration or development at the discretion of the landowner.

#### **Proposed Action**

Lands and minerals acquired by purchase are categorized as “acquired lands” and are not subject to location under the General Mining Law of 1872. On acquired lands any uncommon variety minerals would be available for development through leasing under the Mineral Leasing Act for Acquired Lands of 1947. Common variety minerals could be disposed of through sale.

Acquiring the lands would not change the mineral development potential. Opening the lands to the public could increase interest in mineral exploration at the casual use or hobby level.

## **County Tax Revenues**

### **Affected Environment**

The 274.50 acres of lands proposed for acquisition has a 2013 assessed market value of approximately \$143,946.00. These lands generated \$886.94 of tax revenue for local taxing districts in 2013.

### **Environmental Impacts to County Revenues**

#### **No Action**

Revenues to local taxing districts would not change.

#### **Proposed Action**

Tax revenues to local taxing districts would normally be reduced by approximately \$886.94 per year since lands acquired by the United States are exempt from paying property taxes

There would be no effect on Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILT) payments received by Lewis and Clark County. Lewis and Clark County payments under the PILT formula are limited by the county population and are not affected by land ownership acreage changes.

## **Livestock Grazing**

### **Affected Environment**

The proposed land for acquisition is not currently part of base property (private land attached to a federal grazing lease/permit) tied to any known federal grazing lease or permit. Historically, the proposed land has been grazed periodically by stray livestock but not used as an essential part of a long term grazing system. The west boundary of the proposed land does border a BLM parcel (T14N, R9W, section 30) that is an active grazing lease identified as the Lone Point allotment. The Lone Point allotment is authorized for grazing for BLM administered lands south of the Blackfoot river.

There is a boundary fence (approximately ¼ mile in length) between the Lone Point allotment and the proposed land for acquisition. This boundary fence would go with the proposed land acquisition. Additional fencing is located on the southern border of the southwest quarter of section 29. These southern fences are owned and maintained by private land holders south of the proposed land acquisition.

Field observations on June 25, 2014 indicate some stray, domestic livestock are gaining access probably by existing logging roads and/or open gates. Livestock grazing is estimated as slight due to the presence of few cow droppings on roads. The area is mainly forested and preferred vegetation for livestock grazing is limited. The proposed land acquisition is mainly dominated by Douglas-fir with an understory dominated by elk sedge (*Carex geyeri*) and pinegrass (*Calamagrostis rubescens*). Rough fescue (*Festuca scabrella*), Idaho fescue (*Festuca idahoensis*) and green-needle grass (*Stipa viridula*) are present but limited to sparse forest open story canopies.

### **Environmental Impacts by Livestock Grazing**

#### **No Action**

The private lands would not be acquired by BLM and future land use would remain at the discretion of the land owner.

#### **Proposed Action**

There is no information indicating livestock grazing was purposely implemented on the proposed land acquisition. The area is not suited for livestock grazing due to forest canopy and lack of preferred vegetation for livestock. In accordance with the Butte RMP (page 25, #17) it has been determined that the acquired land would not be made available for domestic livestock grazing. Therefore, there would be no direct, indirect or cumulative impacts from grazing.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **PERSONS, GROUPS, AND AGENCIES CONSULTED**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
U.S. Forest Service  
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation  
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes  
Blackfoot Challenge

This project proposal was published in the U.S. Department of Interior, BLM, Western Montana Zone, FY 2014 NEPA Log, located on the Montana BLM State Office website at:  
<http://www.mt.blm.gov/nepalogs/mifo/nepalog06.pdf>.

#### **List of Preparers**

The following personnel participated in the interdisciplinary team process and/or contributed to the preparation of the EA.

|                 |                               |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|
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| Maria Craig     | Outdoor Recreation Specialist |
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| Sarah LaMarr    | Fisheries Biologist           |
| Jody Miller     | Archaeologist                 |
| Lonna Sandau    | Realty Specialist             |
| Jim Sparks      | Wildlife Biologist            |

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