

Environmental
Assessment (EA)
Resources

Environmental information should be attached to the EA specific forms or to the Other Attachments form. All potential impacts should have a statement explaining how these impacts will be **MITIGATED**. Mitigation statements must be included on the Environmental Assessment (EA) Worksheets. Mitigation is defined by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) as:

- avoiding an impact by not taking a certain action or parts of an action;
- minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of an action and its implementation;
- rectifying an impact by repairing, rehabilitating, restoring the affected environment; or
- reducing or eliminating an impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of an action or the time period thereafter that an impact continues.

The EA process is required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act and it also makes the project participants aware of environmental factors that require additional caution or a different treatment method to reduce the risk to the environment. Share the EA information with your project participants; it is for their benefit in caring for the environment.

Assistance in developing this information can be requested through the Montana Department of Agriculture with the specialists that review specific sections of the EA. Please contact Jasmine Reimer 406-444-7882 or jreimer@mt.gov will direct you to the person responsible for reviewing and approval of their specific EA section. You may also contact your local county weed district, local county extension agent, local conservation district, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and MSU for additional help. **START EARLY!!**

Requirements for Environmental Information from the Noxious Weed Trust Fund Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement [May, 2010] include:

Chemical Weed Control Programs

1. *Vegetation Type*
2. *Soil Type*
3. *Water Resources*
4. *Air Quality*
5. *Fish and Wildlife Habitat*
6. *Threatened, Endangered, Species of Concern*
7. *Historical and Archeological Sites*

Non-Chemical Weed Control Programs (grazing, mechanical, and cultural projects)

1. *Vegetation Types*
2. *Threatened, Endangered, Species of Concern*
3. *Fish and Wildlife Habitat*
4. *Historical and Archeological Sites*

- **Required:** Obtain an Environmental Summary Report from the Department of Agriculture (MDA), or the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MTNHP). Please include a project map, latitude/longitude, and general size of the project when making a report request. This report can be used to answer questions on the General Vegetation, Fish & Wildlife Habitat, and TES Species forms. Upload the report to “Other Attachments”.

To obtain a report, contact either of the following:

- MDA- Jasmine Reimer (jreimer@mt.gov)
- MTNHP- [Request a Report here](#)

- 1) **GENERAL VEGETATION TYPE:** This section should address impacts on non-target vegetation of terrestrial plant communities. Plant community type and plant species information can be found using the MTNHP Map Viewer, or in the Environmental Summary Report.
- Complete the table. Answer each question regarding the severity of impact from the proposed project activities. For each question, answer if mitigation is possible (if no impact is anticipated, answer “no” under the mitigation column).
 - Answer the mitigation questions below the table. Each question corresponds to the same lettered question in the table. For example, for question “1a”, describe mitigation strategies for question “a” in the table.
 - Use the Environmental Summary Report to answer question 1c. These should be species in the area that are susceptible to herbicide damage. Some mitigation strategies may include creating a buffer, spot spraying instead of broadcasting, using biocontrol in riparian areas, ect.

Resources:

MT Natural Heritage Program
Local Conservation District
Bureau of Land Management (local office) Rangeland
Natural Resource & Conservation Service (local office) Rangeland Specialist
Local County Extension Office
U.S. Forest Service (local office) Range Resource person

- 2) **SOILS:** This section should address the types of soils and geology in the area and their susceptibility to herbicide leaching. Do not send your entire County’s soil survey, only the project area.
- Create a soil data map using Web Soil Survey, or through your local NRCS office. All maps should include soil types, soil descriptions, soil drainage class, soil erosion factors (K and wind), and soil pH if necessary. Detailed instructions on how to obtain soil maps through Web Soil Survey are found under “Attachments” in the funding opportunity or on the MDA website [Here](#).
 - Complete the table. Answer each question regarding the severity of impact from the proposed project activities. For each question, answer if mitigation is possible (if no impact is anticipated, answer “no” under the mitigation column).
 - Answer the mitigation questions below the table. Each question corresponds to the same lettered question in the table. For example, for question “2a”, describe mitigation strategies for question “a” in the table. **List advisory and mandatory statements from each herbicide label regarding soils.** Be specific in your mitigation strategies.
 - Attach the WINPEST report with the highlighted soils map or the Web Soil Survey maps of your project area in the Other Attachments form in your WebGrants application.

Resources:

Natural Resources Conservation Service (local office)
County Extension Office (local office)
www.nris.mt.gov
<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>
<http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/soils/mtsoils/index.html>

- 3) **SURFACE AND GROUND WATER:** This section should address protecting surface water in the project area and identifying areas with shallow groundwater.

- a. Identify surface waters by **name** and describe the types of surface water found in the project area, i.e., ponds, wetlands, lakes, intermittent streams, and/or perennial streams on a map. Use the NRIS map viewer tool available at: www.mtnhp.org/mapviewer or any other mapping tool.
- b. Create a well location map and obtain a well log through the Montana Geographic Information Clearinghouse. Specifically identify any/all wells 50 feet deep or less. Detailed instructions on how to obtain well maps and logs are found under “Attachments” in the funding opportunity or on the MDA website [Here](#).
- c. Complete the table. Answer each question regarding the severity of impact from the proposed project activities. For each question, answer if mitigation is possible (if no impact is anticipated, answer “no” under the mitigation column).
- d. Answer the mitigation questions below the table. Each question corresponds to the same lettered question in the table. For example, for question “3a”, describe mitigation strategies for question “a” in the table. **List advisory and mandatory statements from each herbicide label regarding surface and groundwater.** Be specific in your mitigation strategies.
- e. Attach the map(s) and surface water list to the application in WebGrants using the Other Attachments form.
- f. Attach the groundwater map(s) and well summary report(s) to the application in WebGrants using the Other Attachments form.

Resources:

MT Bureau of Mines and Geology
 Ground Water Information Center
<http://maps2.nris.mt.gov/mapper>
www.mtnhp.org/mapviewer
www.nris.mt.gov

4) FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT: This section should address the potential for effects from weed control actions on the habitat of fish and wildlife species in your project. A list of fish and wildlife species and their habitats can be found using the MTNHP Map Viewer, or the Environmental Summary Report. You could also contact a local Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) Biologist to help identify the common wildlife species in your project area.

- a. Complete the table. Answer each question regarding the severity of impact from the proposed project activities. For each question, answer if mitigation is possible (if no impact is anticipated, answer “no” under the mitigation column).
- b. Answer the mitigation questions below the table. Each question corresponds to the same lettered question in the table. For example, for question “4a”, describe mitigation strategies for question “a” in the table.
- c. If the project includes grazing, consult with a local FWP specialist and describe mitigation strategies in question 4d.

Resources:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks- FWP local biologist

US Forest Service (local office)
Montana Field Guide- MTNHP
Bureau of Land Management (local office)

5) THREATENED, ENDANGERED, and SPECIES of CONCERN (TES): This section should address the effects on species listed under the Federal Endangered Species Act or species listed as sensitive by the Montana Natural Heritage Program. A list of TES species can be found in the Environmental Summary Report. You could also contact Martin Miller at the MTNHP and request a Species of Concern report for your project area.

- a. Complete the table. Answer each question regarding the severity of impact from the proposed project activities. For each question, answer if mitigation is possible (if no impact is anticipated, answer “no” under the mitigation column).
- b. Answer the mitigation questions below the table. Each question corresponds to the same lettered question in the table. For example, for question “5a”, describe mitigation strategies for question “a” in the table.

Resources:

MT Natural Heritage Program
Environmental Summary Report Request: <http://nris.mt.gov/reqapp/userMain.asp>
E-mail: mtnhp@mt.gov

U.S. Forest Service (local office)
Bureau of Land Management (local office)
<http://fieldguide.mt.gov>
<http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/tande/>
www.nris.mt.gov
<http://plants.usda.gov/threat.html>
<http://mtnhp.org>

6) AIR QUALITY: Please describe how the air quality in the project area may be impacted and how these impacts will be mitigated. For example: If burning, soil tillage, or herbicide operations will be used, describe how you would prevent or lessen the impact of the smoke, dust, or drift to the adjoining property owners. **Note: herbicide application will temporarily reduce air quality.**

- a. Complete the table. Answer each question regarding the severity of impact from the proposed project activities. For each question, answer if mitigation is possible (if no impact is anticipated, answer “no” under the mitigation column).
- b. Answer the mitigation questions below the table. Each question corresponds to the same lettered question in the table. For example, for question “6a”, describe mitigation strategies for question “a” in the table. **List advisory and mandatory statements from each herbicide label regarding air quality and drift.**

Resources:

<http://www.pesticides.montana.edu/Reference/Drift.htm>

- 7) **HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES:** A local historical society or the Montana Historical Society should be able to provide information on local features of historical or archeological importance to the area. Contact Damon Murdo at the MT Historical Society or your local county museum and request a letter from them pertaining to any historical or archeological importance within your project area. You will need to give them your project location and boundary of your proposed Trust Fund project. **NOTE: You will not be charged any fees for this service.**
- a. Complete the File Search Request Form and e-mail it to Damon Murdo. Attach the letter to the application.
 - b. Describe mitigation strategies if any impacts to historical and archeological sites is anticipated or indicated by the MT Historical Society.



Cultural Records

The Montana Antiquities Database contains cultural resource information on known historic and archaeological sites, previously conducted cultural resource inventories, National Register site status, and cultural resource management project information.



File Search Requests:

To request a file search please fill out the File Search Request form and email it in to dmurdo@mt.gov. The results of the file search will be sent within a few days of receiving the request.

[File Search Request Form](#)

Resources:

Montana Historical Society

Damon Murdo

E-mail: dmurdo@mt.gov

<http://mhs.mt.gov/shpo/CulturalRecords.asp>

Using the Montana Natural Heritage Program Website

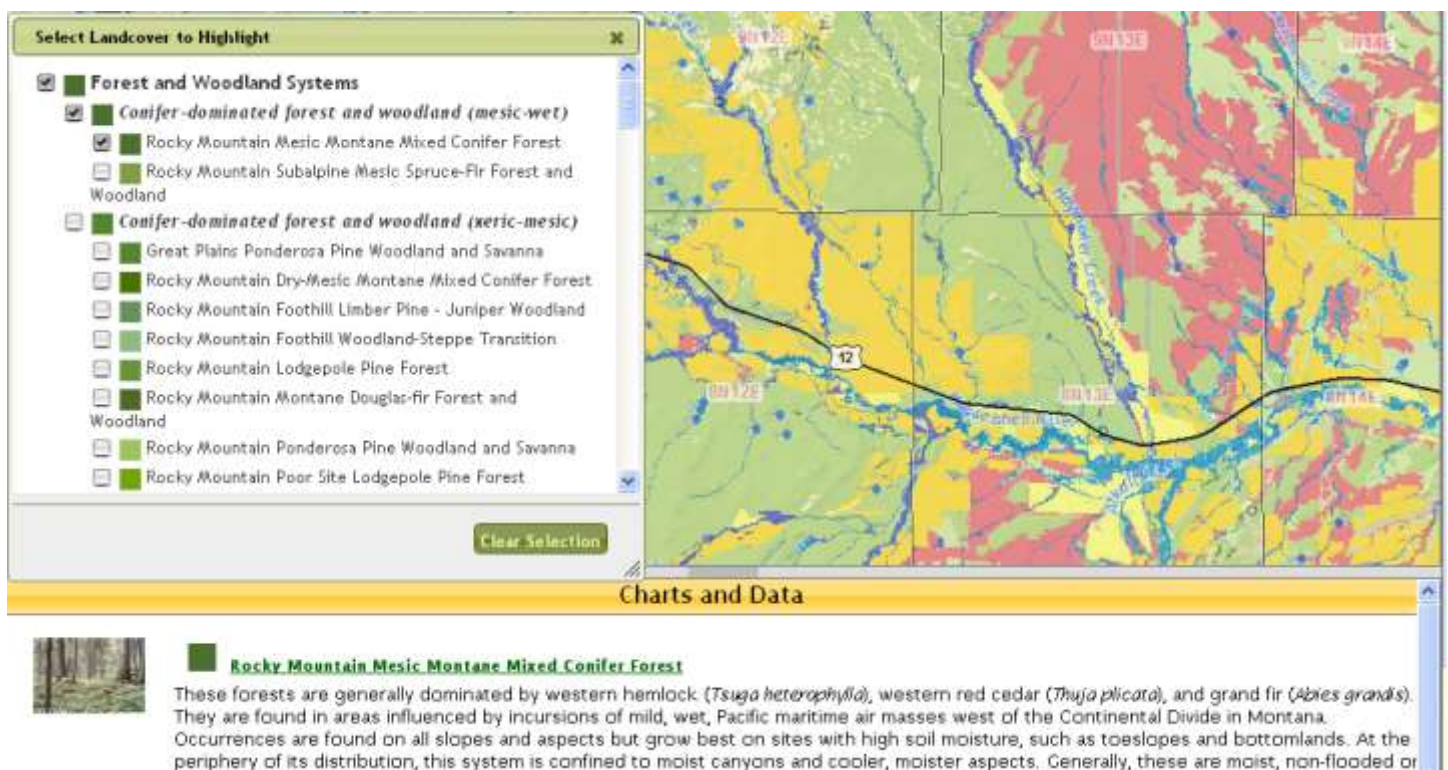
The MTNHP identifies and categorizes ecological communities into 97 vegetation communities by types. This information will be very helpful determining what type of plant communities are present in your project area. The MTNHP web site is <http://mtnhp.org/ecology/ecosections.asp> then click on the Ecological Section on the Montana map that your project would be located in on the map. A list of plant species is produced, which will help you describe the type of vegetation in your project area.

OR go to www.mtnhp.org/mapviewer and click on “Landcover” and at the top of the map click on the zoom button or use the many ways to “Search for Location” located on the left of the Montana map.



Now click on Summarize Landcover By and select Township to turn on the township and range lines to help with locating the right area for your project area. Once you have located your project on the map click on Landcover Type Distribution, which will open a pop-up legend of the colors on the map and the type of plant system. Click on a specific plant system name and a description will open.

This will be useful information to use when completing the description part of the General Vegetation Type form.




Select Landcover to Highlight

- Forest and Woodland Systems
 - Conifer-dominated forest and woodland (mesic-wet)
 - Rocky Mountain Mesic Montane Mixed Conifer Forest
 - Rocky Mountain Subalpine Mesic Spruce-Fir Forest and Woodland
 - Conifer-dominated forest and woodland (xeric-mesic)
 - Great Plains Ponderosa Pine Woodland and Savanna
 - Rocky Mountain Dry-Mesic Montane Mixed Conifer Forest
 - Rocky Mountain Foothill Limber Pine - Juniper Woodland
 - Rocky Mountain Foothill Woodland-Steppe Transition
 - Rocky Mountain Lodgepole Pine Forest
 - Rocky Mountain Montane Douglas-fir Forest and Woodland
 - Rocky Mountain Ponderosa Pine Woodland and Savanna
 - Rocky Mountain Poor Site Lodgepole Pine Forest

Clear Selection

Charts and Data

 **Rocky Mountain Mesic Montane Mixed Conifer Forest**

These forests are generally dominated by western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*), western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*), and grand fir (*Abies grandis*). They are found in areas influenced by incursions of mild, wet, Pacific maritime air masses west of the Continental Divide in Montana. Occurrences are found on all slopes and aspects but grow best on sites with high soil moisture, such as toeslopes and bottomlands. At the periphery of its distribution, this system is confined to moist canyons and cooler, moister aspects. Generally, these are moist, non-flooded or

How to get the information: internet, Extension guides and bulletins, local specialists.

Useful websites: www.mtnhp.org/mapviewer, http://fieldguide.mt.gov/displayES_LCLU.aspx or <http://fieldguide.mt.gov>.