



**Environmental Analysis Form
Montana State Parks Recreation Programs**

- 1. Proposed RTP Project Name:** Butler Creek Trail
- 2. Organization Applying for RTP Funds:** Butler Creek Trail Association
- 3. Application Year:** 2020

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

- 1. Type of proposed action (new trail construction, new snowmobile grooming route, relocation of existing trail, new trailhead structure, etc.):** New trail construction

- 2. Agency authority for the proposed action:**
Permissions from the private landowners has been obtained in the waiver of compensation forms agreeing to the easement, as well as from the County documenting their willingness to realign the portion of road in question (see letters from landowners and minutes of the Design Review Team meeting with County agencies in attachments to the RTP application).

Agencies that hold jurisdiction in the path are identified in 8a below.

- 3. Name, address and phone number of RTP applicant (if other than the agency):**
Butler Creek Trail Association
10851 La Famille Lane
Missoula, MT 59808

- 4. Anticipated Schedule:**
Estimated Construction Commencement Date: Spring of 2022
Estimated Completion Date: Fall of 2022
Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 50
Summarize precisely when (what time of year) project phases will be occurring:

- Assist Hanson Ranch and Otherworld Brewery in delineating and recording public access easements for the shared use path prior to **March of 2021**.
- Finalize the detailed design of a shared use path, and complete permitting requirements (e.g. Floodplain, 310 and possibly 404) prior to **May of 2021**.
- Request bids for construction of a paved, shared use path that follows AASHTO specifications along approximately 2 miles of Butler Creek Road in **July / August of 2021**.
- Select firm / award contract for construction services in **August / September of 2021**.
- Begin construction of the proposed shared use path on or before **May / June of 2022**.
- Finish construction of path prior to **September 2022**.

5. Location affected by proposed action. Include a map. If your project will take place on specific trails, ensure they are clearly identified here by name as well as on your map:

See Project Area Map: "191038_STKtrail strip map – low res.2021"

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	<u>2.05</u>
Residential	<u>0</u>		
Industrial	<u>0</u>	(e) Productive:1	
(existing shop area)		Irrigated cropland	<u>2.43</u>
(b) Open Space/	<u>0</u>	Dry cropland	<u>0</u>
Woodlands/Recreation		Forestry	<u>0</u>
(c) Wetlands/Riparian	<u>0</u>	Rangeland	<u>0</u>
Areas		Other2	<u>0.78</u>

8. Permits, Funding & Overlapping Jurisdiction.

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

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permits</u>
Missoula County Floodplain Administration	Floodplain permit
Missoula County Conservation District	310 Application
Montana Department of Environmental Quality	Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan
US Army Corps of Engineers	404 Permit
Missoula County Public Works	Right of Way Excavation Permit

(b) Funding:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
Private Donations	\$50,000
Missoula County	\$830,000
Recreation Trails Program	\$69,300*
Montana Trail Stewardship	\$47,690**

*would cover excavation above sub-grade on Hanson's property only (west side of Butler Creek road)

**would cover trail on Hockenbrough property only (east side of Butler Creek Road)

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Type of Responsibility</u>
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1 This is an initial estimate - may be larger depending on adoption of supplemental design guidelines

2 Includes the existing roadway corridor along with the end of the existing sidewalk up to the crossing near Angus Lane.

9. Narrative summary of the proposed action (include reasons why project is necessary and benefits of the project):

The proposed action would involve development of a 2 mile path on two parcels of private land, along with re-aligning a short (approximately 700 feet) section of Butler Creek Road (maintained by Missoula County). The project is needed for the following reasons:

- Increase safety for those who use the road currently for running, walking and biking (see pictures). This foot and bike traffic has been increasing recently as development moves toward this area.
- Related to the above, hazards for automobile and commercial truck traffic would also be lessened with the construction of a shared use path.
- The reconstructed section of Butler Creek Road would provide both improved vehicular safety and alignment that is less impactful to the environment (e.g. reduced sedimentation in the stream).
- Would provide numerous public benefits to future residents and workers in the area, described in the following answers.
- A path would provide connectivity between housing developments and the Missoula County Trails along Expressway. Similarly, it opens the potential for future phases of the path to connect with the Grant Creek Trail.

The Butler Creek trail would provide benefits in the form of expanded recreational opportunities to trail users through access to a convenient and safe public access trail on private land, and connectivity with other trails, specifically:

- Provide additional land for the public to recreate on, easements are being donated by two landowners covering approximately 2 miles.
- Aesthetic open space views for users of the trail, which would be adjacent to a perennial stream, and irrigated hay fields and pasture on the Hanson Ranch.
- Allow users of the trail connection between housing developments (Circle H, West Pointe and Butler Creek households to the north) and the Missoula County Park trail system along Expressway.
- Provide an initial step to possible future connections with other regional trails including the Grant Creek trail (just east of Butler Creek), which would form a trail loop.
- Easy access to outdoor exercise during the day for people who work at commercial enterprises along Expressway and Broadway, including the Smoke Jumpers Center and Forest Service Fire Lab among many others.
- Provide a safe alternative for school aged children to commute to Desmet school (at the southern end) from the existing and planned residential developments adjacent to the shared use path.
- Provide a venue for travelers and visitors of the nearby Butler Creek Lodge (2 miles north) Stone Creek Lodge and Westin Hotel (1 mile east) to stretch their legs and enjoy a small piece of Montana's outdoors.

10. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:

Alternative A: Extend the path from the existing sidewalk to past Angus Lane (approximately 450 feet), then the path will cross Butler Creek Road, and have several footbridges across Butler Creek for the first ¼ mile. The path would generally follow the road for nearly 2 miles on Hanson Ranch. This would require additional hydrologic analyses for the floodplain permit, as well as result in potential impairments to the perennial stream being crossed. Of the alternatives considered this would constitute the largest amount of agricultural lands being taken out of production.

Alternative B (PROPOSED ACTION): The Proposed Action is to extend the path from the existing sidewalk to past Angus Lane (approximately 450 feet), then the path will cross Butler Creek Road and generally follow the road for nearly 2 miles on Hanson Ranch, but east of Butler Creek. No crossing of the creek would occur in this alternative. This will involve moving approximately 700 feet of the Missoula County maintained Butler Creek road west, further from the creek, thus providing enough room to fit the shared use path in between the creek and the road. Moving the road could improve stream water quality through reducing sedimentation from the roadway.

Alternative C: The other alternative considered was to continue the path on the east side of Butler Creek road instead of on the west. The problems with this alternative are: 1) increased slopes on the east side make for more challenging slope stabilization and more expensive slope retention strategies in development; 2) the east side of the road would be in the shadow of the hill and freeze / snowpack difficulties with accessing the path are anticipated with this alternative; 3) the owner(s) of the land on the east side of the road are supportive of the project but not willing to donate a public access easement for a path with this alignment.

Alternative D (NO ACTION): The no action alternative would result in public safety hazards due to the narrow road with line of sight difficulties and increased foot traffic and vehicle traffic in the future on Butler Creek road.

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

No mitigation, stipulation or control measures are expected at this time. Missoula County has committed to long term maintenance of Butler Creek Trail (see letter from Missoula County attached to the grant application).

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			1
2. Air quality or objectionable odors				X		2
3. Water quality, quantity and distribution (surface or groundwater)				X		3
4. Existing water right or reservation				X		4
5. Vegetation cover, quantity and quality				X		5
6. Unique, endangered, or fragile vegetative species				X		6
6. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats				X		7
7. Unique, endangered, or fragile wildlife or fisheries species				X		6
8. The nesting or movement of migratory bird species				X		8
9. Introduction of new species into an area				X		8
10. Changes to abundance or movement of species				X		8

1. The project will add more impervious surface to the area, however the outer shoulder of the path will be vegetated. Any impact on soil or geology would be minor due to the narrow width of the path (ten feet) relative to the valley floor. The cross slope of the path will be 1 percent so as to expel moisture off the side of the path (see AASHTO standards). Impacts to moisture accumulation and drainage will be minor.
2. Should be improved with the project (less vehicle use likely due to people currently driving Butler Creek Road to park and run / walk on it or Lavalley Road).
3. The project will move the road away from a creek, thus likely improving water quality.
4. Water will not be diverted or consumed as part of this project.
5. Turf will be disturbed, but replaced and additional vegetation planted (e.g. bushes) The proposed action will occur in a floodplain. Thus, an engineering analysis will be done to ensure there is no rise in the floodplain with the proposed action.

6. The project will occur on private land in a current use of farmland (nearly extensively). No unique, endangered or fragile vegetative, wildlife or fish species are expected to be impacted.
7. The proposed path will be near a creek for a small section of the path, however the design goal is to be a minimum distance of 10 feet horizontal distance from the high water mark of the creek.
8. None is expected.

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		1
2. Land use				X		2
3. Risk and/or health hazards				X		3
4. Community impact				X		4
5. Public services/taxes/utilities			X			5
6. Potential revenue and/or project maintenance costs				X		6
7. Aesthetics and recreation				X		7
8. Cultural and historic resources				X		8
9. Evaluation of significance				X		9
10. Generate public controversy				X		10

1. Noise levels during times of construction of the path may increase in the short term due to utilization of heavy equipment, but these are not expected to have any impacts on human environment.
2. Land use will be altered from private land without public access to private land with a permanent public access easement (see letters from Hanson Ranch and OtherWorld Brewery in the attachments of the RTP application).
3. Pedestrian safety will be improved by moving foot traffic off the main road, which is currently very narrow with little to no shoulder.
4. Community impacts are expected to be positive in the proposed action with improved safety, expanded connectivity, and enhanced recreational opportunities for the community.
5. No future impact is expected to taxes or services with the proposed action. Minor utility relocations, including relocation of up to six power poles, may be required to accommodate the trail.
6. Butler Creek Trail Association is seeking a long term partner for future maintenance costs to cost-share this future expense. We are anticipating the majority of these costs will be borne by the Butler Creek Trail Association funded through fundraising within our community. See maintenance plan section of the RTP application for expected annual maintenance costs.
7. The proposed path would allow public expanded recreation opportunities and access to aesthetic open space in an area of rapidly expanding development.
8. The current land use is primarily farmland. Development of a path is not expected to impact cultural or historic resources.
9. The project is not expected to result in any significant impact on human health, except for the positive impacts identified above.
10. In Butler Creek Trail Association’s outreach with agencies and other stakeholders we have not encountered any controversy over the development of the trail. So far, all parties have been very supportive as evidenced by the support letters included as attachments to the RTP application.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

1. Summarize the impacts of the proposed action and address any cumulative impacts:

We expect the only environmental impact will be in the replacement of irrigated pasture / range with fill and asphalt in the alignment of the path of the proposed action. This is expected to be limited to the 10 foot wide section of the path plus two foot gravel shoulders (14 feet total), and impacts are minor. A portion of the project is in the floodplain and therefore an engineering analysis will be done as part of the floodplain permitting requirements to ensure there will be no rise in the floodplain as a result of the proposed project. There are no other environmental impacts expected from the proposed action alternative.

The only human environment impacts expected from the project are positive in nature; and are briefly listed in the form above.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Public involvement:

Butler Creek Trail Association has contacted homeowner associations, businesses, and the Desmet School directly adjacent to the proposed path. As a result, several of these entities have issued letters of support for the proposed action alternative. See attachments to the RTP application.

2. Comment Period:

This environmental analysis will be posted on the Butler Creek Trail Association website, www.butlercreektrail.com. Public comments will be collected through the website.

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

This statement is true for the Butler Creek Trail project.

PART V. EA PREPARATION

- 1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? (YES/NO)? If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.**

An EA is an appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action due to the finding of no significance.

- 2. Person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:**

Travis Greenwalt, Butler Creek Trail Association
Maps and acreages provided by WGM Group, Melissa Matassa-Stone

- 3. List of agencies or offices consulted during preparation of the EA:**

Missoula County Floodplain Administration (Todd Kliez)
Missoula County Public Works (Erik Dickson)
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (Ladd Knotek)