

**Montana Department
of
Fish, Wildlife & Parks**



1400 So. 19th
Bozeman, MT 59715

February 22, 1996

TO: Governor's Office, Glenn Marx, Room 204, State Capitol, P.O. Box 200801, Helena, MT 59620-0801
Environmental Quality Council, Capitol Building, Helena, MT 59620
Dept. of Environmental Quality, Mecalff Building, POB 200901, Helena, MT 59620-1704
Dept. of Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Director's Office
Parks Division
Fisheries Division
Wildlife Division
Regional Supervisor
Lands Section
Design and Construction
Legal Unit
Montana Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, POB 201202, Helena, MT 59620-1202
Montana State Library, 1515 E. Sixth Ave., POB 201800, Helena, MT 59620-1800
Jim Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, POB 1184, Helena, MT 59624
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, POB 924, Helena, MT 59624
George Ochenski, POB 689, Helena, MT 59624
Gallatin County Commissioners, Gallatin County Courthouse, 311 W. Main, Room 301, Bozeman, MT 59715
Jerry DiMarco, P.O. Box 1571, Bozeman, MT 59771
Montana State Park Foundation, C/O Wayne Hirst, P.O. Box 728, Libby, MT 59923
Glenn Hockett, 745 Doane Rd, Bozeman, MT 59715
Ira Holt, 548 Cielo Vista, Hamilton, MT 59840
Jim Richards, POB 508, White Sulphur Springs, MT 59645
Tony Jewett, Montana Wildlife Federation, Box 1175, Helena, MT 59624

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is proposing to surplus Section 17 (Ophir School Section) and use the value to trade for either Big Sky Lumber or other private holdings in the Taylor Fork drainage as an integral part of the Gallatin Lands Consolidation and Protection Act. Section 17 is located in Gallatin County and lies west of and adjacent to U.S. Highway 191, about 2 miles south of the Big Sky Ski Resort turnoff. The section encompasses about 463 acres and the Ophir School is situated in the lower east portion of the property.

The two primary purposes of the proposed action are to: 1.) acquire and conserve crucial wildlife habitat and the rich diversity of wildlife and recreational resources found in the Taylor Fork drainage; and 2.) make available additional lands to the Ophir School District for future school expansion.

id. vol. 96-22900

We have enclosed a draft **Environmental Assessment (EA)** for your review. The comment period for this EA will extend through 5:00 p.m. **March 31, 1996**. Please send any written comments to the following address:

Section 17
% Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
1400 South 19th
Bozeman, MT 59715

A public hearing on this proposal will be held beginning at 7:00 p.m. **March 6, 1996**, in the Ophir School gymnasium at Big Sky, Montana.

Sincerely,



Stephen L. Lewis
Regional Supervisor

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

SECTION 17 SURPLUS PROPOSAL

(FEBRUARY 22, 1996)

PART ONE. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

I. LOCATION.

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) is proposing to surplus the portion of the Gallatin Wildlife Management Area located west of U.S. Highway 191 in the upper Gallatin Canyon. The parcel is approximately 463 acres located in Section 17, T7S, R4E, in Gallatin County just south of Big Sky, Montana (Attachment 1). Rural subdivision borders the property to the north, west and south. U.S. Hwy. 191 and Ophir School bound the property to the east. The property is not adjacent to other public lands and does not provide public access to public lands. If the property is surplussed, the purpose will be to exchange ownership for lands in the Taylor Fork drainage (Attachment 2) which possess critical wildlife values.

II. AUTHORITIES/DIRECTION.

FWP has the authority under law (87-1-201) to protect, enhance and regulate the use of Montana's fish and wildlife resources for public benefit now and in the future.

This portion of the Gallatin Wildlife Management Area was purchased in 1958 utilizing a combination of State license fees and Federal Pittman-Robertson funds (Grant # W-12-L). Over the last 15-20 years, residential subdivision has encroached along all three borders of the property. An opportunity now exists to conserve in perpetuity much of the private lands in the Taylor Fork drainage as described by the "Gallatin Range Consolidation and Protection Act of 1993 ("Act)". Because of this combination of events, a proposal to surplus Section 17 is now being considered as a prudent course of action.

The proposed action is an integral part of a larger scale project known as the federal "Gallatin Range Consolidation and Protection Act of 1993" ("Act"). The "Act" directs the USDA Forest Service (USFS), through cooperation and coordination with Big Sky Lumber (BSL), to consolidate its checkerboard land holdings with BSL utilizing a combination of land purchases and exchanges. The first acquisition, the 37,752 acre Gallatin Land Exchange, was completed in December, 1993. The Porcupine area was the next priority within this overall protection effort. The "Act" has further implications beyond the Porcupine drainage by requiring subsequent consolidation of national forest lands in the Taylor Fork drainage of the Madison

Range, Gallatin roaded area of the Gallatin Range, and the North Bridgers.

The USFS and BSL have entered into an option agreement authorized under the "Act" whereby Big Sky Lumber has agreed to sell/exchange its lands at appraised value. FWP, as a cooperator with the USFS, proposes to participate in the consolidation of lands authorized under the "Act". FWP would cooperate under the exclusive right and option granted the United States of America, acting by and through the Secretary of Agriculture on behalf of the USFS. Amendments to the "Act" allow the acquisition of Porcupine and Taylor Fork lands by FWP.

In late winter 1995, the USFS acquired, with Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF) appropriated from Congress, the upper two thirds of the BSL lands in the Porcupine drainage. In the spring of 1995, FWP purchased additional lands through the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) in the Porcupine drainage. In September, 1995, RMEF exercised its option with BSL and acquired the remainder of BSL's Porcupine drainage lands. In the 1996 federal budget, the acquisition of the Porcupine lands is nationally the highest priority for LWCF funds administered by the USFS. Funding from LWCF was used by the USFS to acquire the RMEF holdings in Porcupine this past January. Additional LWCF funding is expected this spring to acquire the remainder of the BSL holdings under the Porcupine Acquisition, i.e. 2 and 1/2 sections in South Cottonwood and 1/2 section in Taylor Fork.

Surplussing and trading Section 17 to secure important wildlife habitat in Taylor Fork would allow continued involvement by FWP in the consolidation effort under the "Act". In a comparative weighing of wildlife values, conserving land in Taylor Fork is crucial to maintaining the health of wildlife populations in the upper Gallatin relative to keeping Section 17.

There have been four key elements identified through the Gallatin Canyon/Big Sky planning process that should be addressed in the proposed action. They are as follows:

1. Because of the high land values that currently exist in the upper Gallatin Canyon and because of the opportunity which exists today to secure key wildlife habitat under the "Act", any value derived from surplussing Section 17 should be used in an exchange to secure key wildlife habitat in either the Taylor Fork or Porcupine drainages.

2. A portion of Section 17 still retains winter range value for elk. As stated in the draft Gallatin Canyon/Big Sky Plan, "In order to maintain winter range values for those elk wintering west of the Gallatin River above Ophir School, open space, in addition to that provided by Montana Department of

FWP land, needs to be identified". There has been no additional winter range proposed to be zoned as open space. The draft Gallatin Canyon/Big Sky Zoning Ordinance shows adjacent private lands as relatively small residential acreage which has either been developed or will be developed in the near future (Attachment 3). As illustrated in Attachment 3, all the private lands adjacent to Section 17 have been designated for residential cluster-single family dwellings in parcel sizes as follows:

- southeast border - 2.5, 5 and 10 acre parcels
- south border - 20 acre parcels
- west border - 20 acre parcels
- west 1/2 of north border - 20 acre parcels
- east 1/2 of north border - 5 acre parcels

Therefore, if a conservation easement or similar title restriction could be placed on a portion of the Section to maintain values for wintering elk, it would likely be of only short term value.

In addition, because the property is public, it has neither a draft zoning recommendation nor subdivided into small tracts. Therefore, if this property transfers to private ownership, a new owner would be required to request a zoning change if development were contemplated. A process of planning district, zoning commission and public review would then take place on any request and evaluated on the basis of compatibility with existing winter range values and the residential/school neighborhood.

3. In 1963 and 1973, FWP sold a total of 5 acres in the lower southeast corner of the property to the Ophir School District. The only restriction placed on the sale was that the land be used for school purposes. Within the last two years, the District has made repeated requests for additional land for future school expansion. There have been no other school sites designated in the draft Gallatin Canyon/Big Sky Plan and Zoning Ordinance. If the school desires to obtain additional lands for school expansion, FWP would need to surplus additional property to meet that need. Therefore, the new owner should be required to make available to the school district, through sale or donation, lands needed to accommodate future school expansion. If the department intends to fulfill that request, it would be a condition of the sale/trade agreement.

4. The first three quarters of a mile of the Beaver Creek road as it leaves U.S. Hwy. 191 and travels westerly through Section 17 is owned by FWP. The road leads directly into a large (roughly 13 sections) block of private ownership (primarily BSL). BSL currently holds a reservation from FWP for use and maintenance of the road for agricultural and

timber harvest purposes. Some of the owners of developed residential tracts currently use the FWP portion of the Beaver Creek road as the only access to their properties. In addition, in 1977, a law suit to access a residential property through the heart of the existing winter range owned by FWP, along what is known as the Ridge road, was taken to District Court and eventually to the Montana Supreme Court. The Courts ruled in favor of the residential property owner, ruling the owner had the right to access the property on a year round basis. Therefore, because of the various interests described above, any potential new owner would be required to dedicate, as a public right-of-way, that portion of the Beaver Creek Road which travels through Section 17.

III. DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES.

A. No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, FWP would continue to hold fee title to Section 17. Surplussing would not proceed at this time. The Section is bordered on three sides (N,S,W) by subdivision and the fourth side by U.S. Highway 191 (Attachment 4). As the Big Sky community grows the value of the property will become more city park like and hold less and less value for wintering wildlife. Because of the small acreage involved and because of the permanent year round residential development; maintenance and enforcement costs associated with weeds, dog control, winter time closures, etc., will increase substantially over time. The option to surplus and sell at some future date would be left open. However, because of the current sequence of events, the opportunity exists now to acquire significant acreage in the upper Gallatin. These same, significant opportunities will not exist in one year because the option will expire and BSL may no longer be willing to sell.

Under this alternative the road travelling through Section 17 would remain a non-public right-of-way unless an EA (at a minimum) were written under MEPA/NEPA and the appropriate Federal Aid review processes allowed the road to become a public right-of-way. This would be a lengthy process. Access to lands behind the Section would continue to be questionable at least until the process was complete. In addition, use of the road by other residential property owners, excluding the landowner in the court case, would need to be clarified in a legal context.

The school would lose any hope of obtaining additional land for immediate school use. In order to release a

portion of the lands a MEPA/NEPA document would need to be prepared. Federal Aid has already indicated that any further parcelling out of rights on this property is unlikely to be approved by their offices and instead has recommended that the entire Section should be surplussed at one time and dealt with as a whole.

B. Proposed Alternative

Under this alternative the value of Section 17 would be used to trade directly for lands in Taylor Fork. The lands to be acquired will be either remaining BSL holdings in Taylor Fork or other private lands in Taylor Fork possessing important wildlife values (Attachment 2).

Under the terms of the option agreement between the USFS and BSL, the USFS is the only entity which can acquire title to BSL lands. The USFS can assign all or a portion of the option to a qualified 501-C3 (private non-profit conservation organization), including the State. The USFS has, under the amendment to the option agreement assigned their option of Porcupine lands to the RMEF. Also under the amendment, the State of Montana can hold title to lands in Taylor Fork. This alternative would provide the most direct and expedient approach to obtaining high value wildlife habitat in the Taylor Fork drainage.

Under this alternative, the following terms regarding Section 17 would be followed:

- a. a deed restriction would be placed on existing wetlands (24 acres) identified via a wetland survey of the section required by Federal Aid (Attachment 4).
- b. that portion of the Beaver Creek road travelling through Section 17 must be dedicated as a public right-of-way (Attachment 4).
- c. the new owner must make available to the school district, through sale or donation, lands needed to accommodate future school expansion (Attachment 4).

In addition, any development of Section 17 contemplated by a future owner would go through extensive county and public review regarding compatibility with existing winter range values and the residential/school neighborhood.

C. OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT EVALUATED

DIRECT SALE: The property could be sold outright. However, FWP would be required to reimburse Federal Aid 75 percent of

the value of the property. Further, there would be no assurances of recovering those dollars to be specifically used in the acquisition of Taylor Fork lands.

TRADE WITH CONSERVATION EASEMENT: Under this alternative FWP would trade the property but in some manner assure that the winter range portion (about 70 percent) of the property would not be subdivided. Under this alternative three options could be considered.

1. FWP would retain a deed restriction on the winter range portion for no residential development. Under this option, FWP would lose a significant amount of the trade value.

2. FWP could require a future owner to donate an easement on the property either to the Department or to a private non-profit conservation organization. However, if a donated easement were made a requirement, the donated value could not be claimed by the new owner as a tax deduction. Therefore, FWP would in all likelihood again lose a significant amount of the trade value.

3. FWP could do either of the above and include in the easement, a stipulation for development with building sites designated so as to minimize impacts to the winter range. However, the Gallatin County Attorney has told the County they cannot zone public land. If FWP did this, it could be viewed as the State circumventing both the intent and public review process of the County planning and zoning effort in the Gallatin Canyon/Big Sky Planning District.

Under any of the three options listed above, Federal Aid may eventually require FWP to reimburse the value of the easement/deed restriction at a future date.

In summary, FWP would avoid any of the above pitfalls by finding replacement properties in Taylor Fork to be used in exchange for the values of Section 17.

For an overview of the major consequences of implementing the reasonable alternatives and a comparison of selection standards for the reasonable alternatives presented in matrix form, refer to Attachments 5 and 6.

IV. BENEFITS AND PURPOSE OF PROPOSED ACTION.

The benefit and purpose of the proposed action is to help preserve the unique resources found in the Taylor Fork drainage in their existing condition. FWP would assist in the conversion of BSL lands to public ownership. Not only has FWP provided some of the additional funding necessary to help complete as much of the larger

project as possible, but through this proposed action will continue to lend its influence and support to promote a positive outcome for wildlife management and habitat protection. FWP's recent acquisition in Porcupine and continued involvement through the proposed action will assist the USFS in obtaining support and additional resources for consolidating lands in the Gallatin II proposal, i.e. Taylor Fork, Gallatin Roaded and North Bridgers. The importance of completing the overall "Act" cannot be overstated.

A. BACKGROUND

The land covered by the "Act" encompasses some of the most geographically significant wildlife areas in Montana. The Upper Gallatin Canyon lies along the north boundary of Yellowstone National Park (YNP) and encompasses the Madison and Gallatin Mountain Ranges. The upper Gallatin is key to maintaining healthy wildlife populations in the Greater Yellowstone Area, providing habitat needs for a rich diversity of wildlife.

Land use issues in the Gallatin can be summarized chronologically as:

- * late 1800s, conflicts evolved around establishment of game laws.
- * early 1900s, livestock grazing became the predominant issue.
- * 1970s and 1980s, timber harvest, due to accelerated cutting activities by Plum Creek and development at Big Sky Resort, was the primary resource issue.
- * 1990s, subdivision and county land use planning, due to accelerated growth and subdivision of key areas important to wildlife in the Upper Gallatin.

When land values rise dramatically due to potential subdivision development, checkerboard ownership patterns make management of natural resources nearly impossible. A considerable amount of land involved in the "Act" has an extremely high development value. Most of the BSL lands in the upper Gallatin and all of the Porcupine lands were apparently legally subdivided into 20 acre parcels and recorded in Madison and Gallatin Counties prior to the passage of the Montana Subdivision Reform Act in 1993.

B. PAST WILDLIFE HABITAT INVESTMENTS

The following is a summary of the State of Montana's investment in wildlife habitat in the Upper Gallatin area:

- * On May 17, 1945, FWP purchased 6,188 acres from the Northern Pacific Railway Company. This was the first Wildlife Management Area (WMA) acquired in southwestern Montana and the

second acquisition of critical wildlife habitat in the State's history. Subsequently, FWP made three additional purchases (1951, 1957, and 1963) which brought the total area of the Gallatin WMA to 7,258 acres (PR Project W-12-L). The WMA encompasses lands in checkerboard ownership with the Gallatin National Forest from the Porcupine drainage south to Yellowstone National Park.

* In 1954, FWP acquired the Bear Creek Wildlife Management Area (PR Project W-44-L) lying just west of the Taylor Fork drainage. In 1994, FWP acquired a conservation easement on the Bear Creek Angus Ranch lying adjacent to the Bear Creek WMA. The area provides winter range for a portion of the Gallatin elk herd which migrates out of YNP through Taylor Fork to winter on the foothills of the Madison Valley.

* For the past 24+ years, FWP has leased about 2500 acres of Big Sky Lumber lands (formerly Northern Pacific, Burlington Northern, Plum Creek) in the Porcupine drainage to provide forage for wintering elk (PR Project W-101-R). FWP at one time also held leases on Plum Creek acreage in Taylor Fork which has since been sold.

GNF - The Gallatin National Forest has been involved with wildlife issues in the Upper Gallatin and has taken substantial action to preserve wildlife resources in the area. The following is from Allan Lovaas (1968) in "People and the Gallatin Elk Herd":

* In 1909, Chief Forester Pinchot was petitioned to establish a game preserve adjacent to Yellowstone National Park to minimize a boundary line situation. Pinchot agreed as long as it would be established by the State's Legislature or Congress. The Montana Legislature established a preserve in 1911. The preserve status has since been abandoned, but the area is now known as the Gallatin Closed Area.

* In 1909, the USFS closed all national forest land south of the Tepee/Buffalo Horn Divide and the Taylor Fork/Sage Creeks Divide and Shedhorn Mountain to livestock grazing. This was the first known reservation of land for wildlife in Montana.

* From 1920 on, all national forest land from the Porcupine drainage south on the east side of the Gallatin River was closed to livestock grazing.

* In 1933, the Northern Pacific Railway Company dedicated 37 sections (about 23,600 acres) east of the Gallatin River to elk grazing.

* In 1935, the USFS reported, "none of the important elk range within the USFS boundary is presently being grazed by domestic

livestock, private lands excepted."

* In 1977, the USFS purchased 3,777 acres in the heart of the Taylor Fork drainage from the Nature Conservancy via the Goodrich family.

* In 1983, Burlington Northern applied for and was granted access for timber harvest in the Porcupine drainage. However, because of public interest and concern, the USFS and Burlington Northern agreed upon an exchange package that would have put Porcupine lands in public ownership. Every year since 1983, and up until the time BSL acquired the Porcupine lands, this proposed exchange had been attached to other bills in Congress which were never passed. Therefore, the exchange was never consummated.

YNP - Yellowstone National Park is a key component of the Upper Gallatin. YNP provides key year-round range for all the species listed below. The health of wildlife populations in the northern portion of YNP is directly dependent upon the quality and availability of habitat in the Upper Gallatin.

It is significant to note that the first permanently stationed FWP biologist in the Upper Gallatin was funded equally throughout the 1970s by YNP, USFS and FWP. This underscores the importance these agencies attach to wildlife in the Upper Gallatin.

B. WILDLIFE POPULATIONS AND HABITAT CAPABILITIES IN THE TAYLOR FORK DRAINAGE

The Taylor Fork drainage currently provides wildlife habitat for a diverse array of wildlife species as follows:

>Elk

- *Spring, summer, fall range for elk which winter in the Madison and Yellowstone drainages.
- *Winter range for about 40 percent of the "Gallatin Elk Herd" which migrates out of Yellowstone National Park to winter in the Gallatin Canyon in Montana.
- *Taylor Fork provides the primary migration route for two segments of the Gallatin Elk Herd which winter along the west face of the Madison Range, i.e. Bear Creek WMA and Indian-Wolf Creek areas.
- *Taylor Fork provides the major calving concentration area for elk in the upper Gallatin.

>Moose

- *Year round range for moose.
- *The area in general is one of Montana's top three geographical areas in terms of moose population.
- *Taylor Fork has the highest concentration of wintering moose in the Gallatin and Madison areas.

- >**Black Bear**
 - *Year round range for black bears.
- >**Mule Deer**
 - *Year round range for mule deer.
- >**Mountain Lion**
 - *Year round range for mountain lions.
- >**Grizzly Bear**
 - *Entirely within the grizzly bear recovery zone and all of the area is classified either situation 1 or 2 grizzly bear habitat.
 - *The overall acquisition is critical to recovery of the grizzly bear population north of Yellowstone National Park as well as the Greater Yellowstone Area.
 - *In Taylor Fork, concentrations occur in spring during elk calving, underscoring not only the importance of these elk for hunting and other recreational enjoyment but also for grizzly bear recovery.
- >**Bighorn Sheep**
 - *The upper reaches of the Taylor Fork drainage have historically provided spring, summer and fall range for bighorn sheep.
- >**Mountain Goat**
 - *The upper reaches of the Taylor Fork drainage provide year round range for mountain goats.
- >**Wolverine**
 - *Year round range.
- >**Pine Marten**
 - *Year round range.
- >**River Otter**
 - *Year round range, Gallatin River and Taylor Fork.
- >**Other Fur-bearers**
 - *Beaver, mink, weasels, bobcats, Canada lynx.
- >**Mountain Grouse (Blue and Ruffed)**
 - *Found throughout the area.
- >**Trumpeter swan**
 - *In Taylor Fork, Albino Lake represents a potential reintroduction site for the trumpeter swan.
- >**Peregrine Falcon**
 - *There have been two hack sites used in the area for the reintroduction of peregrine falcons.
- >**Bald eagles**
 - *Winter along the Gallatin River and during January and February utilize animal remains left by late season elk hunters.
- >**Raptors**
 - *Including golden eagles, goshawk, sharpshinned, coopers, redtail, great grey owls, boreal owls.
- >**A myriad of song birds (neotropical migrants) and small mammals**
- >**Fisheries**
 - *Good potential for grayling establishment from 1992 reintroduction into the upper Gallatin River.
 - *Taylor Fork may be the most important drainage in terms of

recruitment and water quality to fisheries in the blue ribbon trout fishery in the upper Gallatin River.

*Most of the streams in Taylor Fork have excellent fisheries, i.e. hybrid west slope cutthroat/rainbow.

C. HUNTING SEASONS AND RECREATIONAL VALUES IN THE TAYLOR FORK DRAINAGE

The Taylor Fork drainage is entirely within deer/elk Hunting District 310. The area is popular with resident and nonresident hunters alike. Elk hunting opportunity is diverse and starts with the archery season and extends through the general season. The Gallatin late hunt runs the month of January and is the only regularly scheduled late hunt having both gun and archery only portions.

The purpose of the Gallatin late elk hunt is to manage the Gallatin elk herd, which migrates north out of YNP to winter in Montana, at a level compatible with winter range availability and vegetation/soil condition. The Gallatin late hunt is very intensively managed by the state. Approximately 75 percent of the winter range for the Gallatin elk herd lies north of YNP in Montana. This results in the ability to effectively manage the overall population level of the Gallatin elk herd.

The gun portion of the late hunt begins in the south portion of the Porcupine drainage and extends south to YNP and includes the entire Taylor Fork drainage. The archery only portion lies along the north side of the Porcupine drainage. A total of 510 permits were issued in 1995 for the gun portion of the Gallatin late hunt. A total of 379 archery hunters received permits to hunt in the late archery hunt in 1995. Archery hunters travel from the four corners of Montana to participate in the hunt and hunters from 14 other states received permits for the archery hunt in 1995.

In recent years an average of 200 elk (range of 150-270) annually, have been harvested in the late hunt. In the past as many as 3000 permits have been issued for the hunt. Most of the late season harvest has historically come from Taylor Fork and Porcupine.

Depending on the weather, anywhere from 150 to 400 elk are harvested during the general season in hunting district 310 with a combined general and late season average of 7223 (range of 6207-8379) hunter days during the last five years. Taylor Fork, in many years, accounts for a disproportionate amount of this harvest.

On average, 20 moose permits are issued for Hunting District 310 (Taylor Fork). Over the last five years, moose harvest has ranged from 14-19 per year in Taylor Fork, providing an average of 121 moose hunter days in Taylor Fork.

On average, 46 deer (mule deer and whitetailed combined) are harvested in Hunting District 310 providing an average of 2230 hunter days over the last five years.

The upper end of Porcupine is part of one of Montana's few unlimited bighorn sheep hunting districts, Hunting District 300. Harvest during recent years ranges between 3-5 sheep.

The Taylor Fork drainage is part of mountain goat Hunting District 326. Harvest over the last five years ranges between 8-12 goats providing an average of 62 hunter days. The Taylor Fork drainage is also important in providing access to these hunting opportunities.

The Taylor Fork drainage provides many motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities. The drainage provides a segment of the Big Sky Snowmobile Trail. The trail is part of the longest continuous snowmobile trail system in the country and connects Bozeman to West Yellowstone, YNP, and the states of Idaho and Wyoming.

The following summarizes the array of recreational opportunities in the Taylor Fork drainage:

During the winter the drainages provide both archery and gun hunting opportunities, snowmobiling, cross country skiing and wildlife viewing.

During the spring, summer and fall the drainages provide: hunting opportunities for elk, moose, deer, black bear, mountain goat, mountain grouse, mountain lions; hiking and camping; horseback riding, trail bike riding and mountain bike riding; fishing; and wildlife viewing.

Throughout the year the drainages provide educational opportunities for: professional resource managers; range, and fish and wildlife management undergraduate and graduate classes from Montana State University as well as other universities; and educational opportunities for the local school district.

PART TWO. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

A. EVALUATION OF THE IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT.

1. Land Resources

Impact of Proposed Action: No known impacts to soil

instability, changes in geologic substructure nor destruction of unique geologic or physical features. Because of possible school construction activities and potential residential development area there could be some disruption, displacement, compaction of soil which could reduce the productivity of a portion of the section. However, these impacts are expected to be minor relative to other developments in the area. In addition, for any proposed development to occur on the site following a change to private ownership, the owner would have to petition the Gallatin County Zoning Commission for a zoning change. This change would require public review via Gallatin County processes since no zoning exists on the property.

If the value of the property were used to acquire lands in Taylor Fork, land resources of a much larger area not impacted by human development would be conserved.

No Action Alternative: Negative impacts would likely occur if the GNF and FWP are not able to consolidate all of the BSL lands. It is likely that the entire private holdings in the Taylor Fork drainage would be developed relatively quickly as recreational and residential properties including the construction of houses, roads, etc. These developments would likely result in some soil instability, reduced productivity, increased siltation and erosion, and modification of physical features. Because there are unstable soils in the drainages, developments could be exposed to ground failure and sloughing. Under the "no action alternative" activities such as livestock grazing, mineral exploration, and timber harvest would not be managed and/or restricted in the same manner as they would be if the property is put in public ownership. Also, under this alternative, coordination of private and public natural resource management would cease in the near future as private lands become smaller residential parcels.

2. Air Resources

Impact of Proposed Action: With both school and residential development likely to occur on the Section, short term increases in particulate matter associated with construction activities could be expected. In the long term smoke from wood burning stoves and fireplaces could decrease air quality in the immediate area. However, these discharges would not be expected to conflict with federal or state air quality regulations.

Lands that would be acquired in Taylor Fork would be limited to the existing uses and would not impact air quality.

No Action Alternative: Air quality in the area would continue to be affected by the existing developments and potential new developments on adjacent private lands as well as from school operations. However, like the proposed action, these discharges would not be expected to conflict with federal or state air quality regulations.

If GNF and FWP are not able to consolidate the BSL lands, Taylor Fork lands would likely be developed. Short term increases in particulate matter associated with construction activities could be expected and smoke from wood burning stoves and fireplaces could decrease air quality in the drainage during cold winter months.

3. Water Resources

Impact of Proposed Action: No impact to any designated floodplain. Because deed restrictions would be placed on the wetlands referred to on page 5, any development likely to occur would not impact the wetlands area. Effects on surface water would be minimal and short lived during the construction phase.

Lands acquired in Taylor Fork would not be developed, thereby at least maintaining existing surface or ground water quality and quantity.

No Action Alternative: Negative impacts could result if GNF and FWP are unable to consolidate the lands in Taylor Fork. Residential development in Taylor Fork would increase surface water discharge and could impact groundwater in relatively pristine, undeveloped drainages. Natural resource development could also have detrimental impacts on water resources.

Because Beaver Creek will continue to develop, surface water and groundwater will likely be impacted in the future regardless of FWP surplussing Section 17.

4. Vegetation Resources

Impact of Proposed Action: Vegetation communities on

portions of the property will likely be affected by future school and residential development. The proposed action would not affect existing wetlands because of deed restrictions placed on identified wetlands. The proposed action would not affect prime or unique farmlands (Attachment 7).

Existing plant communities would be conserved on lands acquired in Taylor Fork. Acquisition of lands in this drainage would not adversely effect wetlands or prime and unique farmlands.

No Action Alternative: Existing plant communities on the Section would not be impacted. However, as the neighborhood fills in, human use of the property will increase leading to an increase in noxious weeds, etc. Habitat fragmentation will continue regardless of our actions.

Negative impacts could result if GNF and FWP are unable to consolidate Taylor Fork lands. Development in this drainage would lead to permanent habitat fragmentation and could change plant diversity, productivity, and abundance, could increase the establishment and spread of noxious weeds and adversely affect wetlands in the drainages.

5. Fish/Wildlife Resources

Impact of Proposed Action: Over time some of the winter range values of this section could be diminished depending on what a future owner may develop as allowed in the Gallatin Canyon/Big Sky Planning District. However, as the neighborhood fills in on adjacent properties, these wildlife values will diminish over time. Section 17 is north of the grizzly bear recovery zone. The only known recent grizzly use of the area was associated with improperly stored garbage associated with lower Beaver Creek residences.

The proposed action would conserve the fish and wildlife habitat and resources present in the Taylor Fork drainage in perpetuity. These resources include elk and moose winter range, a major elk calving area and migration route, grizzly and black bear habitat and a diverse community of small mammals and song birds. All of the lands in Taylor Fork are within the Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone and are either Situation 1 or 2 habitat and by definition critical for the recovery of the population.

No Action Alternative: Because of the amount of human residential development surrounding Section 17, grizzly bear use of the section will in most cases involve human attractants, i.e. improperly handled garbage will attract bears, such bears are likely to become "nuisance bears" which in turn require trapping and transplanting and in most cases result in the permanent removal of the bear by death or zoo placement.

If the GNF and FWP are unable to acquire the Taylor Fork lands, development of this drainage will accelerate and will significantly impact wildlife habitat. Various kinds of development could displace wintering elk and moose and impact availability of forage and habitat needed for other wildlife species. Human/bear conflicts would increase if homesites are developed in the drainage. Habitat loss combined with the attractants associated with human activities would have negative impacts on black and grizzly bear. Recovery of grizzly bears not only in the Montana portion but the entire Greater Yellowstone area would be jeopardized. Currently, the little development that has occurred over the years in Taylor Fork has led during the last two years to the death of 3 grizzly bears, which is approximately X percent of the allowable mortality to sustain recovery of the population. Development of the drainage could eventually lead to late season hunting activities either ceasing or being severely curtailed because of safety concerns. The loss of the management hunt would in the short run lead to an over population of elk, but would likely be short lived once a significant portion of the winter range was developed.

B. EVALUATION OF THE IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT.

1. Noise/Electrical Effects

Impact of Proposed Action: Under the proposed action, noise levels may increase as Ophir School expansion occurs. However, the Gallatin Canyon/Big Sky plan and zoning ordinance does designate this area as the only school site. If portions of the property were developed, electrical service lines would likely increase.

Lands acquired in Taylor Fork would be managed to conserve habitat for wildlife thereby maintaining the existing conditions.

No Action Alternative: If the School were not provided

additional land on which to expand, the district would need to find some other parcel in the Big Sky area. Noise levels and electrical services will still continue to expand in the area as the surrounding residential properties become more developed.

Negative impacts in Taylor Fork would likely increase from failure to complete the overall project. With possible timber harvest and construction activities, noise levels would temporarily increase. In addition, overall noise levels would increase with human occupancy. Electrical service lines would increase with population density.

2. Land Use

Impact of Proposed Action: The proposed action will modify the existing land use of the area in that it would potentially allow for future school expansion to accommodate a middle school and allow for playing fields adjacent to the existing school facilities. A future owner would be required to go through the County subdivision and zoning public review process and should assure that any development on the property would be compatible with the surrounding residential and school neighborhood. The wetlands portion of the section to be left as is, would continue to add value to the neighborhood as well as any potential development proposed by a new owner.

Lands acquired by FWP in Taylor Fork will be managed to conserve wildlife habitat. There could be some limitation on public use during specified critical times of the year; however, the property under its present ownership could possibly be closed to all public use if the owner should decide to do so. Resource and other development (livestock use, timber harvest, mining, roads, residential/commercial activities) will be limited under FWP ownership to those uses which are in the best interests of the habitat. The major existing human uses of the property will remain as they do today.

No Action Alternative: Significant impacts could result from failure to complete the overall project. The school would likely lose the opportunity to expand its existing facilities on site. The road issue could become protracted in court. With or without the proposed action wildlife values will continue to be diminished on the Section.

Significant impacts could result from failure to secure lands in Taylor Fork. With resource and residential development, the natural resource productivity of the area could be diminished. The area could become fragmented resulting in the loss of plant and wildlife diversity.

3. Risk/Health Hazards

Impact of Proposed Action: The Ophir School complex would remain in one concentrated location thus potentially lessening the burden on emergency services regarding school functions and activities. Residential development could lead to some potential for hazardous materials being unknowingly imported to the area in the form of building materials or fuel sources. However, private land development plans in the Beaver Creek area indicate a large potential growth in residential population regardless of our action. As this growth occurs, a need will be created for an emergency response or evacuation plan in the event of a wildfire or earthquake.

No impacts would occur in Taylor Fork from the proposed action. Current conditions will remain the same with completion of the project.

No Action Alternative: Potentially negative impacts could occur on the human environment in the Beaver Creek area regardless of the proposed action (see above discussion).

If the consolidation of Taylor Fork lands is not successful, potential negative impacts could occur. With residential and resource development, chemical toxicants may be used in the developed areas for landscaping and weed control. Some potential for hazardous materials being unknowingly imported to the area in the form of building materials or fuel sources could occur. Mineral development is another possible source for hazardous materials introduction. Development would create the need for an emergency response or evacuation plan in the event of a wildfire or earthquake.

4. Community Impacts

Impact of Proposed Action: The area surrounding Section 17 has experienced continual residential growth for the last 15 to 20 years. The Beaver Creek area is expected

to experience accelerated growth in the near future. Ophir School District is one of the fastest growing districts in Montana. Expansion of the school at its present location has strong support in the local community. Impacts from the proposed action will not alter, significantly, community impacts in and around Section 17.

With the successful completion of the Taylor Fork consolidation, no change in impact is expected from the existing condition. While the private development potential will be foregone on property to be acquired by FWP, public use of the land will still be available to all members of the public.

No Action Alternative: Negative impacts to the community could result if the overall project is not completed. The community will need to find another site for school expansion thus spreading school resources thin in a "rural" community. Although the area around Section 17 is continually developing, new areas of residential development could occur in Taylor Fork. Because the Big Sky Resort is a year-round recreational/residential community, the Taylor Fork and Porcupine drainages in an undeveloped condition play an important part in providing recreational opportunity to the recreational business part of the community. Residential and resource development of Taylor Fork could provide short term increases in employment opportunities in real estate, construction, timber products, or mining. However, there could be additional burdens on public services including schools, emergency services, traffic, police and fire protection, sewer and water, etc. in as yet undeveloped areas resulting from potential development.

5. Public Services/Taxes/Utilities

Impact of Proposed Action: A positive impact from the proposed action would be the consolidation of school facilities on one site, thus conserving school resources. FWP management costs would be decreased under the proposed action. If FWP ownership remains, management costs would likely increase over time in managing problems associated with increasing pressures from the residential neighborhood. Having the winter range portion of the Section in private ownership could be more cost efficient because of the increase in residential use of the small acreage of FWP ownership and private property trespass laws in Montana. Public services will

remain focused in an area already experiencing high growth. Additional utilities would need to be constructed to accommodate school and residential growth on a portion of Section 17. However, the areas bordering Section 17 are already experiencing rapidly expanding residential growth on existing private lands.

FWP currently administers significant lands in the Porcupine drainage. In addition, because of the high wildlife values found in Taylor Fork, FWP, by necessity expends considerable time administering the wildlife resources found throughout the entire Gallatin drainage. Therefore new or altered governmental services would not change significantly over what is already occurring in both drainages. FWP makes payments equal to taxes on the WMA it currently owns and the USFS pays in lieu of taxes for its ownership.

No Action Alternative: A negative impact from this alternative is the likelihood that the School District would need to find another place for school expansion. In addition, it will become exceedingly difficult to manage the problems associated with the growing permanent human residential community surrounding the property.

Overall impacts that could result if the project is not successful include increased demand and costs to taxpayers for: fire and police protection; schools; parks/recreation facilities; roads and road maintenance; water supply; sewer/septic systems; solid waste disposal; health; etc. If the area in Taylor Fork were developed, Gallatin County would receive an increase in tax revenues. New and additional power lines and/or natural gas lines would need to be constructed for the new homes in the as yet undeveloped drainages.

Governmental services could increase for FWP, primarily due to wildlife/human conflicts and include: black and grizzly bear nuisance problems; ungulates eating ornamental shrubbery; woodpeckers pecking at houses; moose/human interactions; lion/human confrontations; pets harassing wildlife; and winter elk feeding by homeowners.

6. Aesthetics/Recreation

Impact of Proposed Action: Because Section 17 does not provide access either directly or indirectly via roads, trails etc. to any other public land there will be no impact on access to other public lands. Because of the small size of the parcel and the surrounding residential

development, Section 17 currently provides very limited public hunting opportunity. The property is closed to all unauthorized public use in the winter months (December 1 - May 15) each year. However, problems with enforcing this winter closure are increasing each year due to its location and the surrounding developments. Under the proposed alternative, the winter range portion would become private land and could possibly receive less activity due to Montana's private property trespass laws than it does now under public ownership.

On lands acquired in Taylor Fork there would be no appreciable change expected over existing conditions. The land will be managed to conserve the habitat and wildlife. There could be some changes in recreational use on wildlife management areas during critical periods of the year in order to protect wildlife, but the property now could potentially be closed to all public use if the landowner should decide to do so. All motorized use is currently restricted to established trails. The Big Sky snowmobile trail was initially designed so as to minimize conflicts with wintering wildlife. It would continue to be managed in much the same fashion. Control and management practices by FWP will allow for public use in a manner consistent with department policy and goals for the area.

No Action Alternative: There could be significant impacts to both aesthetic and recreational values which currently exist in the Taylor Fork drainage and the Big Sky Community if the overall project is not completed. If the drainage was developed, the scenic vista of undeveloped drainages bound by high mountain peaks would likely be impacted. Existing recreational opportunity would be impacted. Hunting opportunity will also be reduced. It is likely that trail bike riding, hiking, mountain bike riding, cross-country skiing, camping, hunting access and horseback riding would be negatively impacted.

Although the overall recreational opportunity for the general public in Section 17 will be reduced, it is minimal opportunity relative to that which could be lost as a result of unsuccessful completion of the overall project. The back-door recreation opportunities enjoyed by the neighboring residential developments will be maintained.

7. Cultural/Historic Resources

Impact of Proposed Action: There will be no known negative impacts to known cultural or historic resources on Section 17 (Attachment 8). Since no development is contemplated, there should be no negative impacts to cultural or historic resources on lands acquired in Taylor Fork. The management activities will be centered around preserving the area's natural qualities. FWP could possibly offer more protection to any possible historic sites on Taylor Fork lands than private property owners. If any future development such as fencing is proposed, the department would first survey the area to identify possible cultural or historic resources.

No Action Alternative: Potential damage to as yet unidentified cultural sites in Taylor Fork could occur if the drainage were developed. Construction activities would be the major area of concern. Because of the as yet undeveloped nature of the drainage, development could impact its cultural value

8. Summary Evaluation of Significance

Collectively, there would be many impacts to the human and physical environment which currently exists in the Taylor Fork drainage if the proposed action is not completed. The risks are relatively much high. Collectively these impacts include: loss of key winter range for about 40 percent of the "Gallatin Elk Herd" which migrate north out of Yellowstone National Park to winter in Montana; significant impacts in Taylor Fork to the highest concentration of elk calving grounds in the upper Gallatin; significant impacts to a primary migration route for two segments of elk which migrate through Taylor Fork to winter along the west face of the Madison Range; loss of moose winter range in Taylor Fork which supports the highest concentration of wintering moose in the Gallatin and Madison Ranges; loss of habitat important for grizzly bear recovery in the Greater Yellowstone Area; impacts to year round habitat for many of Montana's big game, fur bearers, small mammals, and a wide array of song birds and raptors; potential impacts to water quality and fisheries including grayling, cutthroat and rainbow trout in the upper Gallatin River; loss of recreational opportunity including hunting, non-motorized and motorized uses; and impacts to soil, water and viewshed.

Failure to complete the proposed action would lead to great difficulties in Ophir School obtaining additional adjacent acreage for expansion needs. In addition, the issue of uses allowed on the Beaver Creek Road which passes through Section 17 would remain unresolved.

Failure to complete this project would reduce the prospect of acquiring all the BSL lands that are under the "Act".

Cumulatively, opportunities could be lost to consolidate the checkerboard ownership that would ensure one of Montana's most wildlife/recreation rich geographical areas would be preserved. Because many of these lands share wildlife and recreation resources with Yellowstone National Park, their significance is even greater.

PART THREE. E.A. CONCLUSION SECTION

1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this E.A., is an EIS required? NO.

Based on the above assessment, which has not identified any significant negative impacts from the proposed action, an EIS is not required and an E.A. is the appropriate level of review. The overall impact from the successful completion of the proposed action would provide substantial long term benefits to both the physical and human environment.

2. Describe the level of public involvement for this project, if any, and given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?

The FWP Commission will hold one public hearing on **March 6, 1996** at 7:00 pm at the Ophir School in Big Sky, Montana.

There have been several formal and informal meetings over the last two years during which the congressional legislation called the "Gallatin Lands Consolidation and Protection Act of 1993" has been presented and discussed. Included in these meetings has been potential FWP involvement in the Taylor Fork and Porcupine Acquisition. Nearly all of the user groups in the area, both motorized and non-motorized, are familiar with the intent of the Legislation. Strong support for this acquisition exists from a broad spectrum of public and private organizations, including sportsman and conservation groups, Gallatin County Commissioners and County Zoning Commission, neighboring landowners, and residents of Bozeman, Big Sky, and other local communities.

In addition, the proposal to surplus and trade Section 17 has been discussed extensively during many Gallatin Canyon/Big Sky planning group meetings as well as several Gallatin County Zoning Commission meetings. These meetings and discussions in the Big Sky community led to the presentation of the four key elements presented on page 2 of the E.A. Most of these elements have been incorporated into the proposed action and are generally supported in the Big Sky Community.

3. Duration of comment period for the Environmental Assessment.

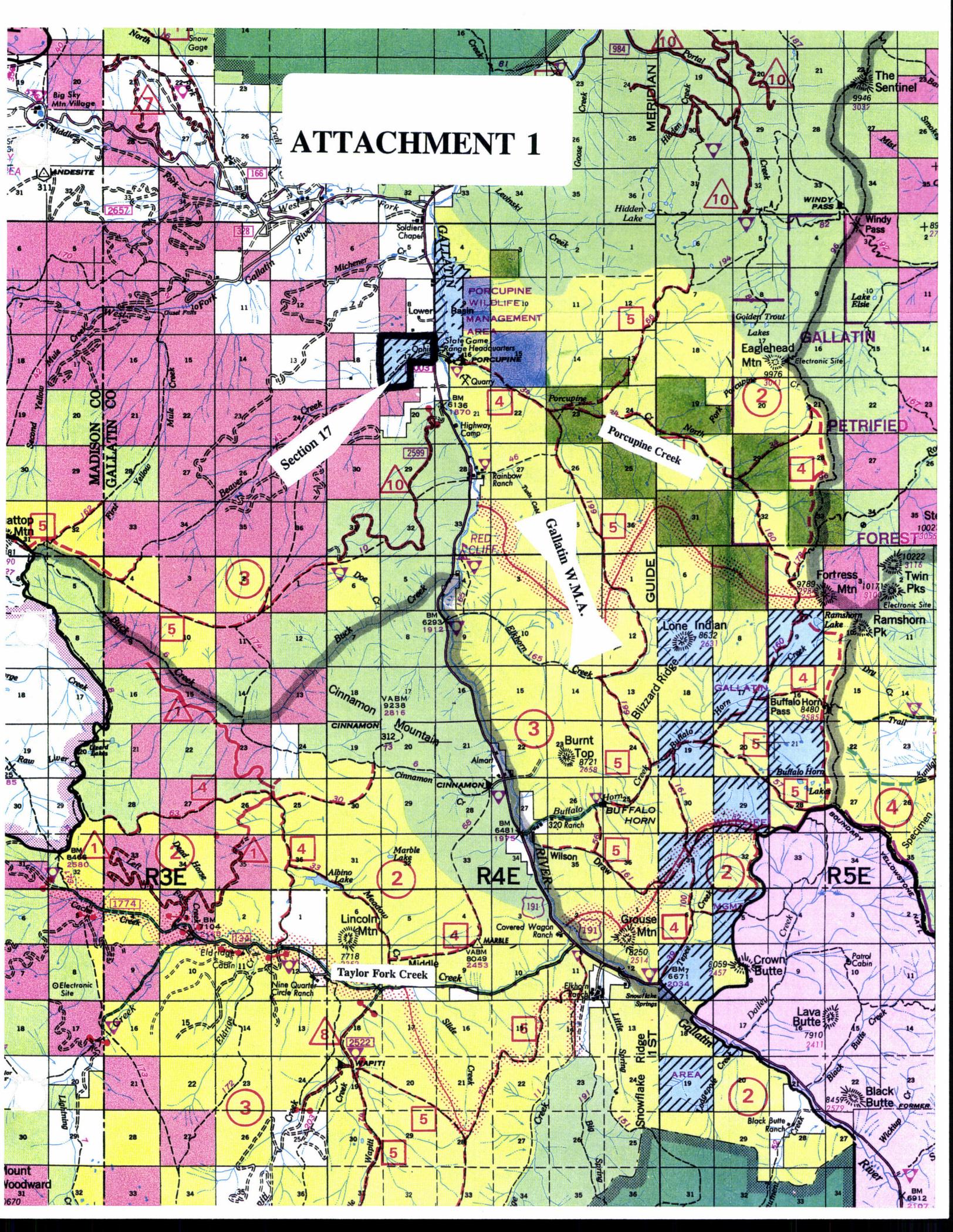
The public comment period will begin on February 22, 1996 and run through March 31, 1996.

4. Name, title, address and phone number of the person(s) responsible for preparation of the E.A.

Kurt Alt, Wildlife Biologist, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, 1400 South 19th, Bozeman, MT 59715; phone -(406) 994-4042.

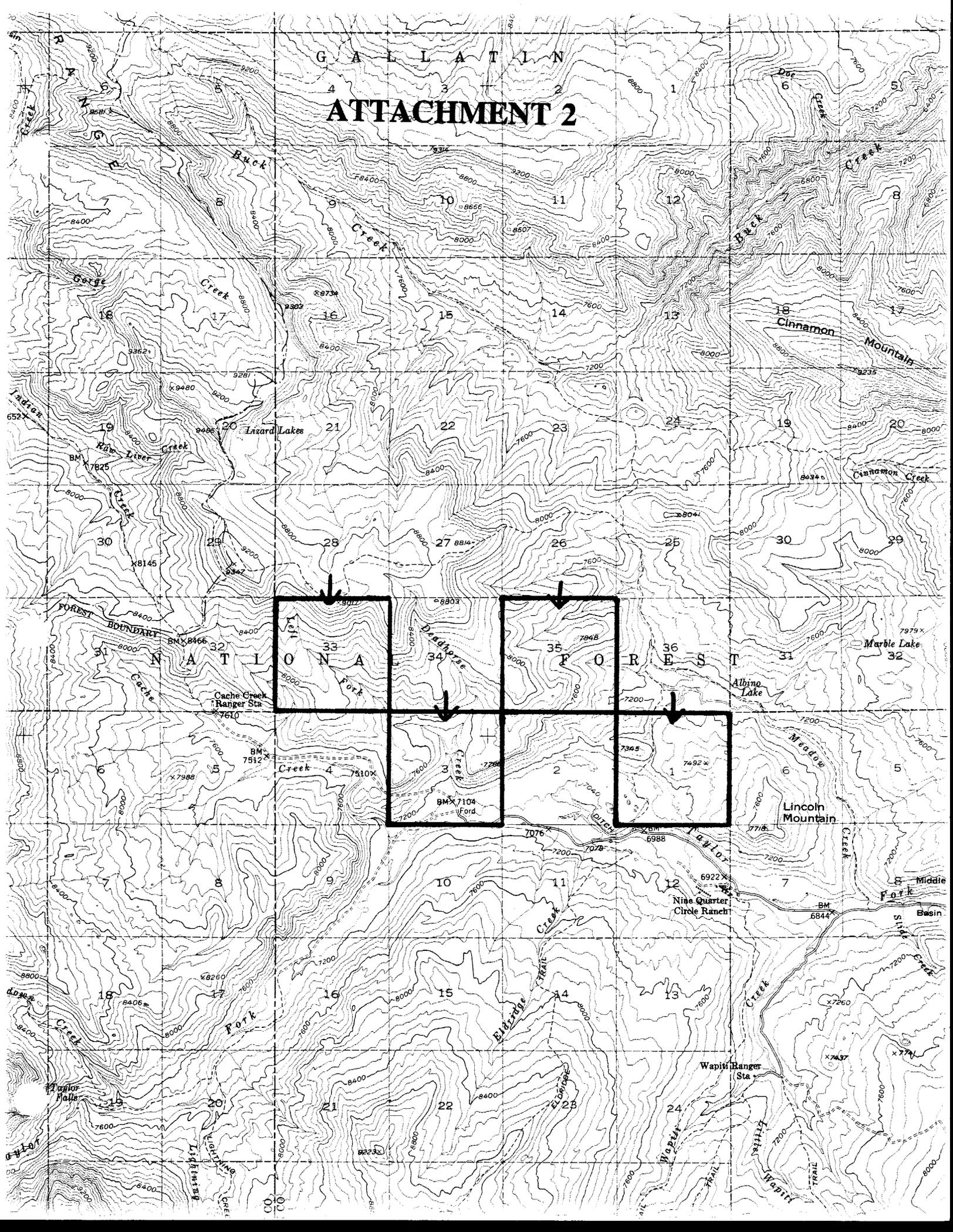
Craig Fager, Wildlife Technician, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, 1400 South 19th, Bozeman, MT 59715; phone -(406) 994-4042.

ATTACHMENT 1



GALLATIN

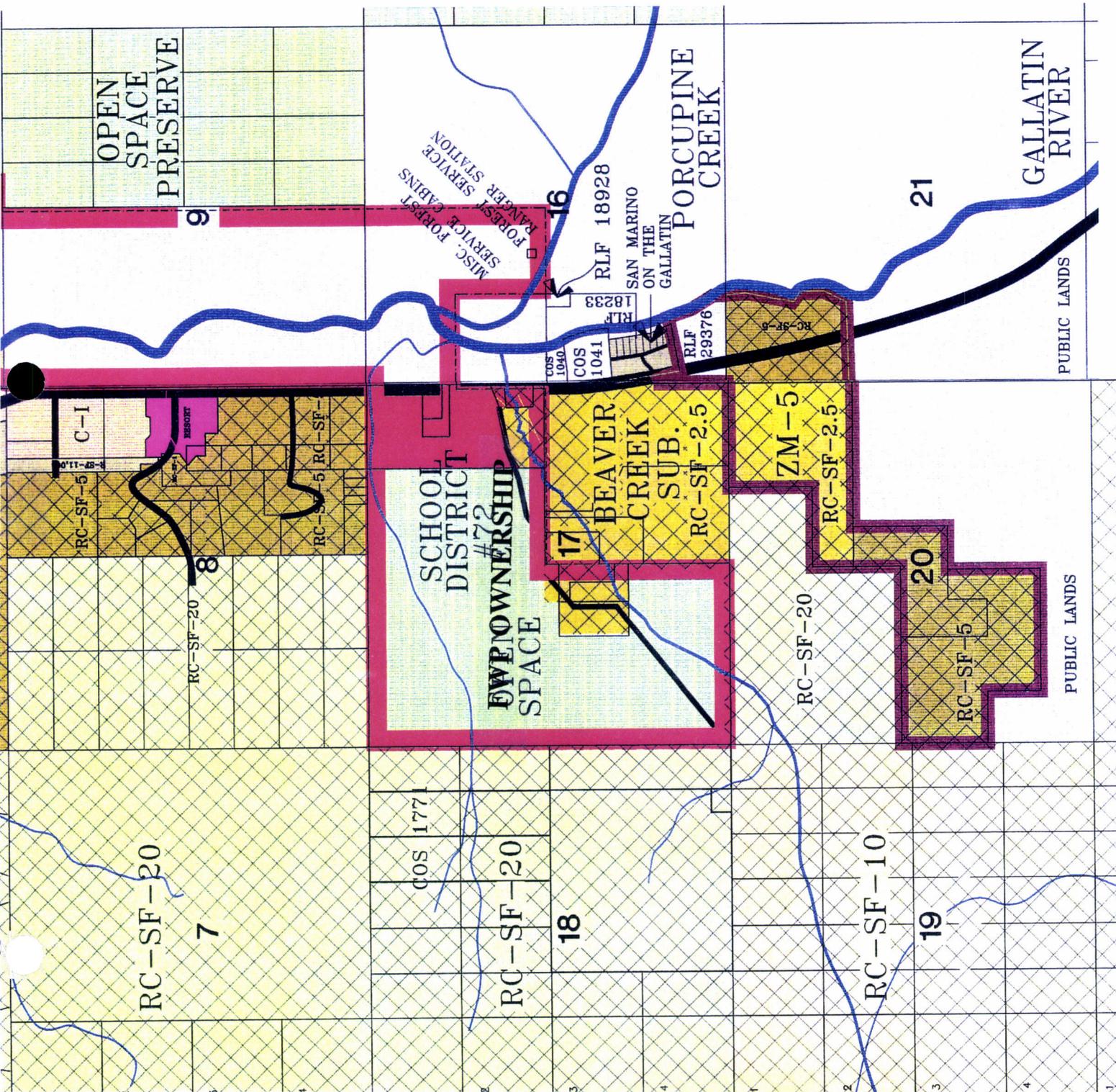
ATTACHMENT 2



ATTACHMENT 3

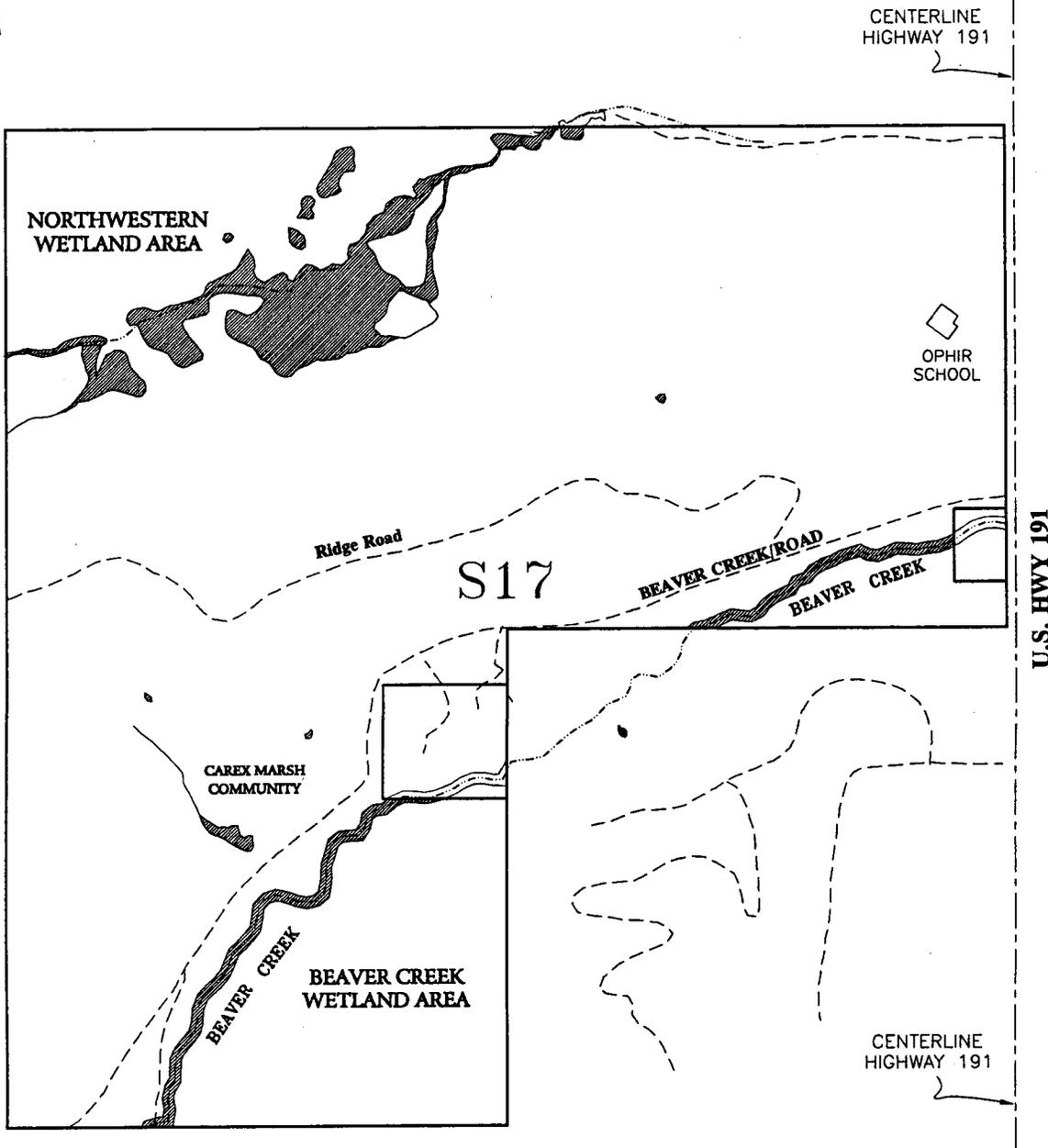
DRAFT

GALLATIN CANYON/ BIG SKY ZONING MAP



ATTACHMENT 4

GALLATIN STATE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA
TOWNSHIP 7 SOUTH, RANGE 4 EAST, SECTION 17, MPP



LEGEND

-  PROPERTY BOUNDARY
TOTAL AREA = 484 ACRES
-  GRAVEL/DIRT ROAD
-  STREAM &/OR
INTERMITTANT STREAM
-  WETLAND AREA
TOTAL AREA = 24 ACRES

Scale: 1" = 600'
0 600
Scale in Feet

<p>TITLE: WETLAND RESOURCE DETERMINATION FOR MT. DEPT. OF FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS GALLATIN STATE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA</p>			 EXHIBIT
<p>ORIGINAL DATE: DECEMBER 21, 1995</p>	<p>SCALE: 1" = 600'</p>	<p>SOURCE/DATE: AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH/7.21.94</p>	
<p>SHEET: 1 OF 1</p>	<p>PROJECT NO. 192</p>	<p>FILENAME: 192WET.DWG</p>	
<p> ENVIRONMENTAL SOLUTIONS FOR WATER, WASTE AND LAND SCHAFER & ASSOCIATES, INC. 865 TECHNOLOGY BLVD. BOZEMAN, MONTANA 59715</p>			

NOTE: THIS MAP WAS GENERATED FROM A DIGITIZED AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH (APPROX. SCALE: 1" = 200') AND FROM THE OUSEL FALLS USGS 7.5 MINUTE QUADRANGLE, ALSO PARTIALLY DIGITIZED. A FIELD SURVEY WAS NOT CONDUCTED.

ATTACHMENT 5

Attachment 5. A comparison of the major consequences (consequence matrix) of implementing (or not implementing) any of the alternatives considered by FWP in this environmental assessment.

Resource Affected	No Action Alternative A		Proposed Action Alternative B	
	Section 17	Taylor Fork	Section 17	Taylor Fork
Land & Water	status quo	< water quality	> impact to surface thru school constr. & other develop.	status quo, poss. > in land and water quality
Vegetation	status quo	< diversity > weeds	< diversity > more weeds	status quo
Fish & Wildlife	< winter range > grizzly & black bear problems < year round range for wildlife *Due to incr. develop. on all three sides of property	< winter range < grizzly recovery < year round range for wildlife < calving grounds	< winter range > grizzly & black bear problems < year round range for wildlife	*maint. winter range *maint. recov. potential for grizzly bear *maint. calving ground *maintain elk migr. corridor
Land Use	< in ability to manage natural resources	< in ability to manage natural resources	< in ability to manage natural resources	status quo, maint. oppor. to manage natural resources with possible >
Community	< in Ophir School expansion oppor. < development < business oppor. in construction < business in rec. sector	> development > business oppor. in construct. < business in rec. sector	> in oppor. for Ophir School expansion > development > business oppor. in construction < business in rec. sector	*maint. business economy in recreation sector < development oppor.
Recreation	< recreation oppor.	< recreation oppor.	< recreation oppor.	status quo, with possible >

Attachment 5. Continued.

Resource Affected	Direct Sale Alternative		Trade With Conserv. Easement Alt.	
	Section 17	Taylor Fork	Section 17	Taylor Fork
Land & Water	likely to be same as Alt. B	likely to be same as Alt. A	likely to be same as Alt. B	likely to be same as Alt. A, due to significant loss in value
Vegetation	likely to be same as Alt. B	likely to be same as Alt. A	likely to be same as Alt. B	likely to be same as Alt. A
Fish & Wildlife	likely to be same as Alt. B	likely to be same as Alt. A	likely to be similar to both Alt. A & B - The adj. area will continue to be developed. School and other develop. would still occur on a portion of the section	likely to be same as Alt. A
Land Use	likely to be same as Alt. B	likely to be same as Alt. A	likely to be same as Alt. B	likely to be same as Alt. A
Community	likely to be same as Alt. B	likely to be same as Alt. A	likely to be same as Alt. B	likely to be same as Alt. A
Recreation	likely to be same as Alt. B	likely to be same as Alt. A	likely to be same as Alt. B	likely to be same as Alt. A

ATTACHMENT 6

Attachment 6. A comparison of selection standards (alternatives matrix) for the alternatives considered by FWP in this environmental assessment.

Standard	No Action Alt. A		Proposed Action Alt. B		Direct Sale Alt.		Trade With Consev. Easement Alt.	
	Section 17	Taylor Fork	Section 17	Taylor Fork	Section 17	Taylor Fork	Section 17	Taylor Fork
Land & Water	0	--	-	0 to +	same as Alt. B	likely same as Alt. A	likely same as Alt. B	likely same as Alt. A
Vegetation	0	--	-	+	same as Alt. B	likely same as Alt. A	likely same as Alt. B	likely same as Alt. A
Fish & Wildlife	-	--	- to --	++	same as Alt. B	likely same as Alt. A and B	likely same as Alt. A and B	likely same as Alt. A and B
Land Use	--	--	--	++	same as Alt. B	likely same as Alt. A	likely same as Alt. A and B	likely same as Alt. A
Community	--	--	++	++	same as Alt. B	likely same as Alt. A	likely same as Alt. B	likely same as Alt. A
Recreation	-	--	--	++	same as Alt. B	likely same as Alt. A	likely same as Alt. B	likely same as Alt. A

KEY: ++ exceeds standards

+ meets standards

0 neutral

- does not meet standards

-- serious deficit

ATTACHMENT 7

U.S. Department of Agriculture

FARMLAND CONVERSION IMPACT RATING

PART I (To be completed by Federal Agency)		Date Of Land Evaluation Request			
Name Of Project PORCUPINE SECTION 17 LAND EXCHANGE		JAN. 30, 1995			
Proposed Land Use PASTURE/RANGELAND		Federal Agency Involved (F.S.) NRCS			
PART II (To be completed by SCS)		County And State (FWEP) GALLATIN, MONTANA			
Does the site contain prime, unique, statewide or local important farmland? <i>(If no, the FPPA does not apply - do not complete additional parts of this form).</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Major Crop(s) PASTURE/RANGE		Acres Irrigated 0	Average Farm Size —		
Farmable Land In Govt. Jurisdiction Acres: _____ %		Amount Of Farmland As Defined in FPPA Acres: 0 %			
Name Of Land Evaluation System Used SOIL SURVEY		Name Of Local Site Assessment System —			
		Date Land Evaluation Returned By SCS 2/2/95			
PART III (To be completed by Federal Agency)		Alternative Site Rating			
		Site A	Site B	Site C	Site D
A. Total Acres To Be Converted Directly		4			
B. Total Acres To Be Converted Indirectly					
C. Total Acres In Site					
PART IV (To be completed by SCS) Land Evaluation Information					
A. Total Acres Prime And Unique Farmland		0			
B. Total Acres Statewide And Local Important Farmland		0			
C. Percentage Of Farmland In County Or Local Govt. Unit To Be Converted		0			
D. Percentage Of Farmland In Govt. Jurisdiction With Same Or Higher Relative Value		N/A			
PART V (To be completed by SCS) Land Evaluation Criterion					
Relative Value Of Farmland To Be Converted (Scale of 0 to 100 Points)		ONLY PARTIALLY MAPPED.			
PART VI (To be completed by Federal Agency)					
Site Assessment Criteria (These criteria are explained in 7 CFR 658.5(b))	Maximum Points				
1. Area In Nonurban Use					
2. Perimeter In Nonurban Use					
3. Percent Of Site Being Farmed					
4. Protection Provided By State And Local Government					
5. Distance From Urban Builtup Area					
6. Distance To Urban Support Services					
7. Size Of Present Farm Unit Compared To Average					
8. Creation Of Nonfarmable Farmland					
9. Availability Of Farm Support Services					
10. On-Farm Investments					
11. Effects Of Conversion On Farm Support Services					
12. Compatibility With Existing Agricultural Use					
TOTAL SITE ASSESSMENT POINTS	160				
PART VII (To be completed by Federal Agency)					
Relative Value Of Farmland (From Part V)	100				
Total Site Assessment (From Part VI above or a local site assessment)	160				
TOTAL POINTS (Total of above 2 lines)	260				
Site Selected:	Date Of Selection	Was A Local Site Assessment Used?			
		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			

Reason For Selection:

ATTACHMENT 8

NOV 15 1994

Montana Department
of
Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Stan



1420 East Sixth Avenue
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, Montana 59620-0701

RECEIVED

NOV 13 1994

DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION
DEPT. OF FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

November 14, 1994

Marcella Sherfy
State Historical Preservation Officer
State Historical Preservation Office
1410 8th Avenue
Helena, Montana 59620

Dear Marcella:

Attached is the cultural resource report on the testing at Site 24GA1072. After review of the test results and discussions with the archaeologist, the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks is recommending the site is ineligible for listing on the National Register of Historic places. Please review this report and provide us with your comments.

Sincerely,

PAUL VALLE
Cultural Resources Coordinator
Design & Construction Bureau
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Attachment

CONCUR
NO PROPERTIES ON OR ELIGIBLE
FOR NRHP APPEAR LIKELY TO
EXIST WITHIN PROJECT IMPACT AREA
MONTANA DEPT. OF FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS
DATE 11-16-94 SIGNED

