

Draft Environmental Assessment

BANNACK INTERPRETIVE TRAILS

December 15, 2005



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

Please return comments to Tom Lowe by January 17, 2006, or call if you need more time to review the EA. We want your comments!

Contact Dale Carlson or Tom Lowe at 834-3413, bannack@smtel.com 4200 Bannack Road, Dillon, MT 59725

ROAD AGENT ROCK TRAIL

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS



**ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS
MEPA/NEPA CHECKLIST**

MISSION. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, through its employees and citizen commission, provides for the stewardship of the fish, wildlife, parks and recreational resources of Montana, while contributing to the quality of life for present and future generations

All Montanans have the right to live in a clean and healthful environment. This brief environmental analysis is intended to provide an evaluation of the likely impacts to the human environment from proposed actions of the project cited below. This analysis will allow Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks to fulfill its oversight obligations and satisfy rules and regulations of both the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The project sponsor has a responsibility to ensure that all impacts have been addressed. Some effects may be negative; others may be positive. Please provide a discussion for each section. If no impacts are likely, please discuss the reasoning that led to your determination.

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of proposed action.

- Development X
- Renovation
- Maintenance X
- Land Acquisition
- Equipment Acquisition
- Other (Describe)

The proposed project includes: promoting, interpreting and improving about 10.75 miles of existing roads and trails in Bannack State Park, State of Montana (DNRC) property, and on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) property; grade & gravel single vehicle turn around pads (2), Grade and gravel one parking area and construct about 800 feet of new trail with a 20' bridge on park land; stabilize trail; install two cattle guards, four equestrian gates, three trailhead kiosks; install signs showing direction, regulations, modes of travel allowed on trail, user

etiquette and interpretive points; manage weeds; and interpretive trail brochure and map design, layout and printing. **If appropriate, agency responsible for the proposed action.**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP)

2. Name, address, phone number and E-mail address of project sponsor.

Bannack State Park phone: 406-834-3413
4200 Bannack Road bannack@smtel.com
Dillon, MT 59725

4. Name of project: Road Agent Rock Trail

5. If applicable:

Estimated construction/commencement date: June 2007

Estimated completion date: Spring 2008

Current status of project design (% complete): 60%

6. Location affected by proposed action (county, range and township).

Bannack State Park, State of Montana (DNRC), and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Lands north and west of the park, Beaverhead County, Montana. Township 7 South, Range 12 West, Section 36; Township 8 South, Range 11 West, Sections 5 and 6; Township 7 South, Range 11 West, Sections 29-32; and Township 8 South, Range 12 West, Section 1; Township 7 South, Range 12 West, Sections 25 and 36.

7. Project size: estimate the numbers of acres that would be directly affected that are

currently: Note: approximately 10.75 miles (16 acres) of existing roads and trails would be used and improved on BLM, State of Montana, and State Park lands; approximately 800 feet of new trail would be developed on State Park land.

(a) Developed:

residential..... ___ acres

industrial ___ acres

(b) Open Space/Woodlands/

Recreation..... 3.5 acres (roads & trails on park land)

(c) Wetlands/Riparian

Areas ___ acres

(d) Floodplain ___ acres

- (e) Productive:
 - irrigated cropland..... __ acres
 - dry cropland __ acres
 - forestry __ acres
 - rangeland..... 12 acres (roads & trails on BLM land)
 - other..... __ acres

8. Map/site plan: attach an original 8 1/2" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map showing the location and boundaries of the area that would be affected by the proposed action. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.

Please see Appendix B: RoadAgentRock_trail
 (This file is a 1.1 MB jpg file – if you wish to receive a paper copy in the mail please call.)

9. Narrative summary of the proposed action or project including the benefits and purpose of the proposed action.

The proposed project would promote hiking, biking, horseback riding and motorized vehicle use on 11 miles of roads and trails in Bannack State Park, State of Montana, and on adjacent BLM lands. Much of the proposed trail route would follow existing two-track roads, minimizing the need for trail construction. About 2 miles of existing road and about 600 feet of existing trails would be improved and an additional 800 feet of new trail (four feet wide) developed for non-motorized use in Bannack State Park. Approximately 1.2 miles of existing two-track road on FWP land and another 8 miles of existing two-track road and 0.5 mile of existing trail would be improved and promoted for motorized and non-motorized use north of the park, on BLM land. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) or similar agreement must be approved by FWP, the BLM and the DNRC to formally complete the proposed project, address future maintenance and ensure adequate recognition of each agency’s land and visitor management goals now and in the future. Members of FWP, BLM and DNRC will develop the MOU after the EA has been published for public comment and an alternative selected.

The primary non-motorized trailhead would originate behind the Bannack Visitor’s Center. A new section of compacted gravel trail about 800 feet long and four feet wide would be constructed north of Bannack’s Main Street, include one or two switch backs to gain elevation into the defunct North Side Ditch for a short distance, then angle northeast, up the slope past the Griffith House. A new wooden, twenty-foot long bridge would span Hangman’s Gulch enabling continuation on the trail to meet Hangman’s Gulch Road. The Gulch is typically dry except during spring run-off periods. This seasonal water is diverted into the North Side Ditch, flows east of the Gulch and into Grasshopper Creek. Sagebrush species and various grasses would be removed in this trail route.

The purpose of developing this new section of trail is to easily direct mountain bikers and pedestrians to the trail system from the Visitor’s Center. This would help to promote the

trails program, assist in distribution of interpretive trails brochures, ease collection of park fees, and divert bicyclists away from Main Street, the presence of which distracts visitors from the historic experience of a frontier mining town.

A second trailhead is proposed that would primarily benefit equestrian trail users who would find it more convenient to use the parking and loading area provided at the east end of Bannack Main Street, rather than the often congested parking area adjacent to the Visitor's Center. A new kiosk at this trailhead would help orient trail users about the routes and provide interpretive brochures. An existing self-pay station would aid in the collection of fees from non-residents. The trail would begin at the east end of Main Street; signs would divert equestrian riders north of the street to about 600 feet of existing single-track trail to connect with Hangman's Gulch Road. This would reduce dust and potential equestrian conflicts with park users concentrated on Main Street.

In section 31 and 32 an existing overgrown road, approximately one mile long on BLM ground, will be cleared of brush four feet wide for use as a non-motorized trail. This trail segment will be signed at each end and identified in the brochures as non-motorized use only. This will enable those visitors that wish to take a hike but are not willing to hike the entire trail to Road Agent Rock and back to do a shorter loop. This trail segment will also allow equestrians and mountain bikers to do a loop to the Rock and back.

A third trailhead is proposed near the new Bannack Cemetery located approximately 1 ½ miles northwest of the townsite on State Park land. This trailhead would primarily be for motorized, equestrian, mountain bikers and perhaps a few hikers. A new kiosk at this trailhead would help orient trail users about the routes and provide interpretive brochures. The size of the parking area at the trailhead would be approximately 100 x 100 feet. The proposed area is level and would only require sagebrush to be removed and the surface graded.

Wooden water bars or wooden troughs would be installed across steeper road/trail sections inside park boundaries to control erosion. Troughs would be more consistent with the Bannack mining aesthetics. Erosion control measures would primarily be necessary on a steep section of the Old Stage Route near the East Cemetery.

A combination of equestrian/pedestrian gates, road gates, and/or cattle guards are proposed to maintain livestock containment (BLM grazing leases) where fence lines exist, rather than the current barbed-wire gates. The proposed combinations would contain livestock; yet allow equestrians, pedestrians, mountain bikes and vehicles to pass easily through fences along the trails. Equestrian gates allow users to open and close gates without dismounting. Typical gates with locks would also be used to bar vehicle traffic from entering Bannack State Park from the north. Vehicles would only be able to access the park from Bannack Road, thus eliminating vehicles from Bannack Main Street and easing fee collection.

Signs along the trails would be installed to provide directional, interpretive and regulatory information. Most signs would be unobtrusive, small or simple markers with short messages, symbols or numbers. Messages on signs or in the interpretive brochures

would encourage proper trail etiquette, designate trail use (non-motorized versus motorized), educate and encourage respect for other land uses (livestock grazing-closing gates) and identify points of interest.

Interpretation would be provided along the trails through markers and coordinating brochure(s). The proposed trail route follows the Old Stage Route and freight routes between Bannack and Virginia City. The trails proposed in this project would terminate at Road Agents Rock, where part of the Vigilante and Road Agents saga took place. Early routes and modes of travel would be appropriate interpretation themes along these trails. To expand visitor's knowledge about Bannack and the surrounding area, interpretation along the trail could also address: history, geology, mining, transportation, wildlife and vegetation.

No construction is proposed for DNRC lands and construction on BLM land will be limited to installing two cattle guards and equestrian gates, clearing brush along the existing overgrown road and some interpretive signs.

The purpose of the proposed improvements is to expand the number of recreational opportunities available to visitors at Bannack State Park. Issue #2 of the Bannack State Park Management Plan (2001) discusses Visitor Management and the impacts of crowding. Too many people in long lines and noise not only can diminish the visitor's ability to imagine an adventure through time, but too many people can also destroy the historic physical resources. Dispersing visitors throughout the park via the trail system will alleviate crowding in the townsite. Issue #3 of the Management Plan discusses interpretation; Action A3-6 states: "New interpretive programs will be developed that focus visitor use out of the town site."

Bannack visitors often request access to hiking trails. The proposed action will disperse visitor use throughout the park and adjoining public lands, thereby maintaining the rustic "Bannack Experience," and at the same time, allowing increased visitor use at the Park without significantly crowding existing attractions.

10. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the required no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a comparison of the alternatives with the proposed action/preferred alternative:

Note that Alternatives C and D are contingent upon proposal acceptance and negotiating an agreement between FWP, Montana DNRC, and BLM.

Alternative A: No Action

If no action is taken to develop a trail system for Bannack State Park, an opportunity for additional recreation and interpretation at this park will be disregarded. Most visitors are not aware that lands around the park are owned by the BLM and also open to the public. Non-motorized users are not inclined to use these trails and routes without previous knowledge of the area, maps, proper signage and/or interpretation. People who choose to venture on these trails

would be undirected with little or no interpretation as to the historical or natural significance of the area. Road and trail access points are not identified and roads are not marked, therefore the potential for cross-country travel increases. This might result in damaged vegetation and might encourage similar activity by other users. Without trail identification and markers to help users with proper trail etiquette toward various user-types, multi-use trails can be the source of conflict and visitor dissatisfaction.

Park visitors often request information about area trails. Without maps and/or interpretive information, many Bannack visitors will not pursue trail opportunities. Most visitors come to experience the historical aspects of the park and would expand their education with a related trail experience. In addition, Bannack tends to get crowded during summer special events and weekends. Crowding makes it difficult for visitors to remove themselves from modern life and imagine the past culture of Bannack though the solitary, historical features left behind. The Bannack State Park Management Plan specifies the importance of expanding visitor opportunities outside of town to help disperse people and allow higher quality visitor experiences. In time, too many people in the buildings will also speed the deterioration of the historical resources in Bannack; dispersed use would slow this process.

The physical environment would not be impacted by trail, gate, cattle guard or related construction, as is discussed in the three remaining alternatives listed. The human environment would not be improved with regard to educational and recreational opportunities.

Alternative B: Limited development of non-motorized trail system inside Bannack State Park

Implementation of this alternative would result in about 2.5 miles of (dead-end) trails for hikers, mountain bikers and equestrian riders inside the park with trailheads and kiosks at the Visitor's Center and the east end of the park.

Proposed Construction

- The new 800' trail section, 20' bridge and orientation kiosk would be built behind the Visitor's Center to provide access for mountain bikers and hikers.
- An orientation kiosk and equestrian trail at the east end of the park would be constructed and signed, directing riders north of Main Street.
- Non-motorized users could travel nearly one mile north on both the Hangman's Gulch Road and the Old Stage Route to the park boundary, where a locked gate would block the road. These users would return to the town area by the same route; Hangman's Gulch Road and the Old Stage Route would not be connected.
- A second smaller gate would be installed adjacent to each road at the park boundary to allow non-motorized users onto BLM land.
- No interpretation, signing or trail development would occur outside the park boundaries, though users could continue onto BLM land if they wished.
- Interpretive kiosks and pamphlets would be developed and installed at the Visitor's Center and the east end of Bannack (not the Bannack cemetery west of town).
- Signs and markers would be installed along all routes to provide direction, multi-use trail etiquette guidelines, and to coincide with the interpretive pamphlet.

Discussion

This Alternative would improve the non-motorized trail opportunities in the park and could be a logical first phase to the Preferred Alternative (D). The area routes and modes of transportation, historic sites, vegetation, and wildlife could all be interpreted to a lesser degree than under the Preferred Alternative, to coincide with the shorter length of trails. A kiosk would not be installed at the Bannack Cemetery.

Alternative B is not the Preferred Alternative for several reasons. Dead-end trails are much less desirable for users than a loop trail. The “park boundary” is an unsatisfactory attraction or destination. Dead-end trails require users to pass the same features twice; opportunities for viewing, learning, and interpreting the natural and historic features are less than what a loop trail offers.

It is possible that a route could be constructed in the future that would connect Hangman’s Gulch Road and the Old Stage Route on park land. This is not proposed because a single-track trail exists on BLM land a short distance north of the park boundary that would be more suitable terrain for a connecting trail requiring less construction and environmental impacts.

Estimated Cost

Alternative B would be less costly than the Preferred Alternative (D). Below is a rough estimate of construction costs. A Recreation Trails Grant and/or state parks funds, or other grants and donations could fund the improvements proposed in Alternative A.

Two equestrian gates installed at park boundary; no cattle guards	\$900	materials
New trail & bridge construction work completed by contracted services	\$10,600	
Volunteer labor to stabilize sections of trail (water troughs)	\$500	materials
Interpretive brochure designed by FWP staff	\$100	printing
Annual maintenance and weed control	\$400	
Trail markers and signs installed by FWP staff	\$500	
Two kiosks installed by FWP staff	\$1,800	
Total estimated costs of Alternative B	\$14,800	

Alternative C: Interpret and promote an 11-mile multi-use trail system on Park, State of Montana, and BLM lands with two trailheads at Bannack and one at the Bannack Cemetery; no construction on BLM land.

Alternative C expands the opportunities provided in Alternative B by more aggressively identifying and promoting access to the BLM trails from the Bannack Cemetery, in addition to trailheads proposed at the Visitor’s Center and the east end of the park. Alternative C identifies access and interprets about 11 miles of motorized and non-motorized trails. No construction would occur on BLM land, however, such as: cattle guards, equestrian gates, or trail improvements between the Hangman’s Gulch Road and the Old Stage Route.

Construction

The following items would be completed in addition to the construction listed in Alternative B.

- Directional and etiquette signs, and interpretive markers would be installed on BLM land.
- Directional, non-motorized trail use, user etiquette signs, and interpretive markers would be installed on ½ mile trail connecting Hangman’s Gulch Road and the Old Stage Route on BLM land.
- Kiosk and parking area would be installed near the Bannack Cemetery.
- A high quality interpretive brochure would be professionally designed and printed including features throughout the 11 miles of trails.
- Cattle guards or equestrian/pedestrian gates would not be installed on BLM land.

Discussion

Alternative C increases the amount of interpreted, self-guided trails by 8.5 miles over Alternative B. The proposed sign and marker installations on BLM land are minor tasks and easily maintained, but important to improve the quality of recreation for visitors new to the area. Directional signs would allow visitors to guide themselves easily through the trail system. If trails were marked, users would be less likely to travel off designated routes. Small trail markers allow more thorough interpretation of the area and would link BLM trails with trails in the state park.

Motorized users would have to turn around at the park boundary gates, where space may be limited, especially if more than one vehicle is present simultaneously. To avoid construction on BLM land, park boundary gates/fences would be set back to allow room on park land, but north of the fence, to grade and gravel a single vehicle turn-around pad along Hangman’s Gulch Road and the Old Stage Route.

Two barbed-wire gates that are needed to contain livestock hamper motorized travel on the BLM road from the Bannack Cemetery to Road Agents Rock; BLM leases this ground for grazing purposes. Alternative C does not include installation of cattle guards or a second equestrian gate for easy non-motorized pass-through. Barbed-wire gates intimidate some trail users into believing that the property beyond is private and inaccessible. Additional signs could help mitigate this and the importance of keeping gates closed, but it is anticipated that trail users would often leave gates open due to the inconvenience and difficulty of closing barbed-wire gates. Gates left open could result in cattle roaming into unauthorized/unwanted areas. Pedestrians or bicyclists may attempt to go through or over fences, which could break them down. These results are undesirable, as ranchers who lease the land and local residents might consider FWP and BLM irresponsible land and visitor managers.

Signing the non-motorized trail between Hangman’s Gulch and the Old Stage Route would provide a more desirable loop for non-motorized users who access trails at Bannack State Park trailheads. No other improvements for this about ½ mile-long trail are proposed. This would complete a loop approximately three miles long, which may be more attractive to people, equestrians and mountain bikers than a two-mile dead-end trail.

Estimated Cost

Below is a rough estimate of construction costs in addition to the costs listed in Alternative C.

Interpretive brochure professionally designed and printed	\$1,500
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Annual maintenance and weed control	\$500
Trail markers and signs installed by FWP staff throughout trails on BLM	\$1,000
One kiosk installed by FWP staff at Bannack Cemetery	\$900
Grade and gravel parking lot for trailhead near Cemetery	\$10,000
<u>Grade and gravel (2) turn around pads and realign park boundary gates</u>	<u>\$3,000</u>
Subtotal of additional costs in Alternative C	\$16,000

Total costs of Alternative B and additions in Alternative C \$30,800

Recreation Trails Grant funds could be used for trail construction and signs installed on park land, and for signage and cattle guard/gate construction on BLM (federal) land. An MOU agreed upon by both FWP and BLM would negotiate the costs of maintenance and construction on BLM land.

Preferred Alternative D: Proposed action to interpret and promote an 11-mile multi-use trail system on Park, State of Montana, and BLM lands with two trailheads at Bannack and one at the Bannack Cemetery; install combination of gates and cattle guards at Park boundaries and on BLM lands; improve and sign trail connecting Hangman’s Gulch and Old Stage Route on BLM land.

Alternative D includes the trailheads, 11 miles of trails and interpretation as described in Alternatives B and C. In addition, Alternative D improves an existing single-track trail that would connect non-motorized use between Hangman’s Gulch Road and the Old Stage Route.

Construction

The following items would be completed in addition to the construction listed in Alternatives B and C.

- Install cattle guards and adjacent equestrian/pedestrian gates on BLM land in two locations.

Discussion

This option utilizes the most relevant and easily available trails in the vicinity of Bannack. It allows for self-guided use by visitors and minimizes the potential for unwanted activities (i.e. off-road travel, open gates) by providing trails that are easy to use and follow, and are interpreted to impress upon the visitor the significance of the area.

As discussed under Alternative C above, BLM leases the project land for livestock grazing. The purpose of installing cattle guards and adjacent equestrian/pedestrian gates are to allow easy trail use by both motorized vehicles and a variety of non-motorized users, while greatly reducing the risk of releasing livestock into unwanted areas. Signing at these areas would alert users to the importance of keeping gates closed; and more convenient and easy-opening gates will reduce the likelihood of releasing livestock. Cattle guards would allow motorized vehicles and bicyclists to use trails without having to stop.

Estimated Costs

Below is a rough estimate of construction costs in addition to the costs listed in Alternative B and C.

Two cattle guards installed on BLM land	\$7,000
<u>Two equestrian/pedestrian gates installed on BLM land</u>	<u>\$900</u>
Subtotal of additional costs in Alternative C	\$7,900

Total costs of Alternative B & C and additions in Alternative D \$38,700

The construction work (installing cattle guards and gates) for this alternative may be reduced if completed by agency staff using agency equipment.

11. Listing of each local, state or federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

(a) Permits		
Agency Name: Montana DNRC BLM Beaverhead County	Permit: Memorandum of Understanding Memorandum of Understanding Weed permit	Date Filed: To be negotiated To be negotiated Dependent upon grant receipt

(b) Funding		
Agency Name:	ESTIMATED Funding Amount:	
FWP – Parks Operating & Maintenance Acct and Other sources*	36%	\$13,932
<u>Natl. Recreation Trails Grant</u>	<u>64%</u>	<u>\$24,768</u>
Total	100%	\$38,700
*Other sources of funding may include BLM funds, donations, grants, volunteer labor		

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities	
Agency Name:	Type of Responsibility:
State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)	Cultural preservation
Bureau of Land Management (BLM)	Approval of promoting trail/road use and installing gates, cattle guards & signing on adjacent federal land

12. List of agencies consulted during preparation of this Environmental Checklist:
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Parks Division

Design & Construction Bureau
State Trails Coordinator
Wildlife Division
Fisheries Division

Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
Bureau of Land Management- Recreation Division, Dillon, MT
Montana Natural Heritage Program (Natural Resources Information System – NRIS)
Bonnie Heidel, past botanist for the Natural Heritage Program
Montana DNRC

13. Name of Preparer(s) of this Environmental Checklist:

Tom Lowe	Sue Dalbey (2002 draft)	Dale Carlson
Bannack State Park	Private Contractor	Bannack State Park Manager
FWP	Dalbey Resources	FWP
4200 Bannack Road	926 N. Lamborn	4200 Bannack Road
Dillon, MT 59725	Helena, MT 59601	Dillon, MT 59725
406-834-3413	406-443-8058	406-834-3413

14. Date Draft EA submitted for public review. December 15, 2005

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Land Resources” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on land resources. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects of the action as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

1. LAND RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				1a.
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?			X		yes	1b. 1f.
c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?			X			1c.
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?			X		yes	1d.
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				1e.
f. Other		X				

1a. The proposed trail work is primarily surface disruption and is not anticipated to alter geologic substructure.

1b. Construction of the 800’ new trail behind the Visitor’s Center will disrupt, compact and cover soils, reducing productivity and fertility both in the trail pathway and immediate vicinity where cutting and filling of the trail will be necessary. The trail itself will result in an area of compacted soil that will reduce the fertility and productivity of that soil. Installation of cattle guards and gateposts will also alter surface soils in affected areas. Areas of disturbed soil along trails will be seeded with a grass mix immediately after construction, to reduce erosion and re-establish productivity.

1c. About 300' of the North Side Ditch will be cleared of brush and altered with cut and fill to create a trail from the Visitor's Center. This ditch was historically used during Bannack boom days for mining. This is not considered a significant alteration since this section of ditch is not useable and is only a short portion of the overall length of the ditch; a significant section of the ditch remains east of Hangman's Gulch and is in working condition for nearly the length of the town.

1d. Soils disrupted during new trail and bridge construction behind the Visitor's Center could cause minor siltation, deposition and erosion during an unusual heavy and prolonged precipitation event. Installation of the 20' bridge across Hangman's Gulch would create minor and temporary sedimentation in the gulch and ditch when water run-off events occur in spring. None of these erosion actions are considered large enough to modify the streambed or channel. When Sue Dalbey consulted with FWP Fisheries Biologist Dick Oswald May 28, 2002, he did not anticipate impacts to Grasshopper Creek caused by this project due to the distance of construction from the creek and interception of potentially turbid water by the ditch.

Disrupted areas surrounding the new trail and bridge would be reseeded with local grasses to reduce future erosion.

1e. Though holes and cutbanks are common in abandoned mining areas, the proposed trails are not in areas where ground failure or landslides are anticipated. Most mining activity occurred on the opposite side of Grasshopper Creek valley, south of Bannack; the trails are north of Bannack and the Creek.

1f. Construction of the 100' x 100' parking area at the new cemetery trailhead will disrupt, compact and cover soils, reduce productivity and fertility. Disrupted areas surrounding the new trail and bridge would be reseeded with local grasses to reduce future erosion.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this "Air" checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on air resources. Even if you checked "none" in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects of the action as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

2. AIR Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (also see 13 (c))			X			2a.
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. Any discharge that will conflict with federal or state air quality regs?		X				
f. Other		X				

2a. Minor and temporary dust will occur during construction of 800' of new trail behind the Visitor's Center and installation of the bridge, cattle guards and gates. Vehicles and horses may create minor and temporary dust when traveling motorized routes on State and BLM land during late summer, though much of the natural road surface is gravelly. Horses may create minor and temporary dust when using the trail from the east end of the park to Hangman's Gulch Road. Because equestrian use is concentrated here, this trail will be monitored and if necessary, surfaced with gravel or other material to reduce dust.

No impacts to remaining features

Dust is the primary air pollutant that will be created during this project and should have no effect on odors, temperature patterns, vegetation, nor will it be created in volumes significant enough to conflict with state or federal air quality regulations.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Water” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on water resources. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

3. WATER Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?			X		Yes	3a.
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. Effects to a designated floodplain?		X				
m. Any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations?		X				
n. Other:		X				

3a. Due to the movement of soils to construct the new trail and install bridge, surface water turbidity may temporarily increase during a runoff event during or soon after construction. The gates and cattle guards are in locations some far from active drainages or near drainages that are

only typically dry, therefore construction will have very minor effects on surface water quality.

Scheduling construction after spring runoff would help reduce these minor impacts. In addition, potentially turbid waters from construction of the new trail behind the Visitor's Center and bridge installation would be diverted into the North Side Ditch prior to entering Grasshopper Creek, thus much of the turbidity would be dispersed prior to reaching the creek. Areas surrounding the new trail, bridge and cattle guards will be seeded with local grasses to reduce future erosion.

No impacts to remaining features

The ditch above the Visitor's Center has been inoperative for many, many years. The proposed changes to build a trail along the ditch will retain the primary ditch qualities and allow continued use for floodwaters if needed. There are no additional changes anticipated to the quality or quantity of groundwater or surface water from the use of trails by vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists or horses. Water users or rights-holders will not be affected by the proposed trail improvements.

The proposed trails are not in a designated floodplain and will not impact the Grasshopper Creek floodplain. No federal or state water quality regulations will be altered due to the potential minor and temporary surface water alterations discussed above.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Vegetation” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on vegetative resources. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

4. VEGETATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X		Yes	4a.
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				4b.
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?			X		Yes	4c.
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				4d.
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X		Yes	4e.
f. Effects to wetlands or prime and unique farmland?		X				
g. Other:		X				

4a. Trail and parking area construction and cattle guard, gate and sign installations will be limited to the immediate area. The overall loss of vegetation in the proposed 11-mile trail system is less than a quarter of an acre for construction of new trail, 100’ x 100’ parking area, turn around pads, and cattle guard installation. The remaining 10.75 miles of trails will use existing trails and roads. New trail construction (800 linear feet and 4 feet wide) would require clearing of about 4,800 square feet of sage brush (*Artemisia tridentata* var. *vaseyana* and *Artemisia tridentata* var. *tridentata*) and grasses, such as blue bunch wheat grass (*Elymus spicatus*) and needle and thread grass (*Stipa comta*). Other plant species that would be removed during construction are prickly pear (*Opuntia fragilis*) and hedgehog cactus (*Pediocatus simpsonii*) and introduced grasses in town such as Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*) and crested wheatgrass (*Agropyron cristatum*). (Vanderhorst, J. 1995. *Survey of Bannack State Park and Vicinity for Montana Plant Species of Special Concern*. Unpublished report to Bannack State Park.) Other areas proposed for installation of kiosks, cattle guards, and some gates are already disturbed by existing roads, parking areas or lawn-type grasses. Installation of four equestrian gates and joining trails will cause the trampling or removal of the same species for distances of about 30 feet. Trail users would have to leave the existing road to pass through the adjacent user-friendly gate. Plant species in the construction zones are common to the area.

A local grass seed mixture will be planted after construction is complete to speed re-vegetation.

4b. A plant community is not expected to be altered as a whole.

4c. A data search by the Montana Natural Heritage Program (May 16, 2002) identified five plant species of special concern in the immediate vicinity of Bannack: hoary phacelia (*Phacelia incana*), taper-tip desert-parsley (*Lomatium attenuatum*), beautiful bladderpod (*Lesquerella pulchella*), Bitterroot milkvetch (*Astragalus scaphoides*) and chicken sage (*Sphaeromeria argentea*). These are considered imperiled because of rarity or other factors making it vulnerable to extinction in Montana (S2 ranking), though globally they may be abundant at some of their locations. BLM has classified the first species, hoary phacelia, as a species to “watch”; the last four species listed above are classified by the BLM as sensitive species. None of the species found in the NHP data search are listed under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Endangered Species Act.

Sue Dalbey consulted with Bonnie Heidel, former botanist for the Heritage Program who has conducted field studies in the area northeast of Bannack (personal communication June 20, 2002). Most of these species have a preference for sparsely vegetated areas and low tolerance for competition and may occur in the vicinity of the proposed trails.

In 1995, Jim Vanderhost completed a study entitled *Survey of Bannack State Park and Vicinity for Montana Plant Species of Special Concern*. Three species identified above favor limestone based soils, which can be found above the cemetery north and east of town (different cemetery than where the proposed trailhead would be located). These species are: *Lesquerella sp.*, *Lomatium attenuatum*, and *Sphaeromeria arentea*. The *Astragalus scaphoides* was found on a ridge ½ mile to the east of the proposed area. The BLM land has been surveyed to a small degree at the time of the Vanderhost survey, but the exact trail route has not been searched for species of concern.

The proposed trails will primarily utilize existing roads and trails, and though these rare plants are found in the area, the proposed project or increased traffic on existing routes is not expected to significantly impact these species. Visitors tend to stay on a trail when it provides easy travel, has directional signs and interpretation. Infrequent, minor amounts of off-trail, non-motorized travel is not expected to significantly impact the species identified. Brochures and trailhead kiosks will include educational information and stress the importance of staying on the trails. Interpretation would be carefully written so as to discourage visitors from leaving the trail or removing/damaging sensitive species.

4d. The land owned by BLM and the State will remain open for livestock grazing.

4e. Areas disturbed by construction are prone to the establishment of noxious weeds. In addition, promoting vehicle traffic on BLM land would increase the potential for new weeds establishing and existing weeds spreading. FWP Region 3 and Bannack State Park cooperate with the Beaverhead County Weed Supervisor, Montana DNRC, and BLM to combat weeds in accordance with the Region 3 Weed Management Plan. The surrounding disturbed areas will be seeded with a native grass mix immediately after construction and closely monitored for weed growth and subsequently treated. This area of the park and BLM land currently have sparse growth of dandelion and low numbers of knapweed. The MOU will outline each agency’s role and participation in weed management.

4f. No wetlands or prime or unique farmlands occur in the proposed project area. This is an arid climate well above Grasshopper Creek.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Fish/Wildlife” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on fish and wildlife resources. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

5. FISH/WILDLIFE	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?			X		Yes	5a.
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?			X		Yes	5b.
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?			X		Yes	5c.
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				See comment 5a. below
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?			X			See comment 5a. below
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?			X		Yes	See comment 5b. below
h. Adverse effects to threatened/endangered species or their habitat?		X				See comment 5b. below
i. Introduction or exportation of any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location?		X				
j. Other:		X				

A data search by the Natural Heritage Program (NHP) identified these Montana species of concern: westslope cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki lewisi*), Great Basin pocket mouse (*Perognathus parvus*), pygmy rabbit (*Brachylagus idahoensis*), black-tailed jack rabbit (*Lepus californicus*), greater sage grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) and the ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*).

FWP Fisheries Biologist Dick Oswald indicated that Grasshopper Creek near Bannack has an impoverished fish population due to several factors caused by the area mining: 1) an altered stream channel which reduces habitat, niche diversity and quality; 2) movement of sediment load; and 3) possibly due to heavy metals, though the main problem site was contained in the late

1970's under a special reclamation project. The fish population is dominated by brown trout and brook trout, and a few rainbow trout. Westslope cutthroat trout and mountain whitefish are not as prevalent. Other species in the stream include white suckers, longnose suckers, and mottled sculpins. Overall numbers are lower in this stretch of stream than farther upstream. Oswald anticipates very low risk of any impacts to fish populations or habitat from the proposed improvement project. (Personal communication with Sue Dalbey, May 28, 2002.)

5a. FWP Wildlife Biologist Gary Hammond advised that sagebrush connectivity is important to reduce impacts to small mammal habitat, particularly the Great Basin pocket mouse and pygmy rabbit. The sagebrush ecosystem is also important black-tailed jackrabbit habitat. The Bannack area provides habitat for many other species such as: mule deer, elk, moose, mountain lion, cottontail rabbits, chipmunks, skunks, blue birds, as well as a variety of other song birds and hawks. Wolf tracks have been noted in the area. Land north of Bannack is important habitat for rattlesnakes and winter range for elk and mule deer. Only the wolf is listed on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Endangered Species Act, and the trail project does not include critical wolf habitat, nor will it impact its survival. (Personal communication with Sue Dalbey, May 28, 2002.)

The 800-foot long new trail behind the Visitor's Center will create a small island of sagebrush habitat; however, the dividing trail will only be 4 feet wide, not 12' wide as needed for a road. This narrow width reduces the potential isolation and increases the likelihood that small animals mentioned above would cross the trail for increased habitat. The pygmy rabbit and jackrabbit are nocturnal, and trail use would be limited to day use, thus allowing undisturbed use by animals at night.

5b. There is a slight potential for elk and mule deer to be influenced by human activity during the late fall and winter, depending on weather, game animal use of this area for winter range, and human use during this time. The vast majority of the human trail use would occur between Labor Day and Memorial Day, though if weather continues warm into the fall, a small number of visitors will continue to enter the park. Impacts to wildlife could be mitigated by limiting trail use seasonally, especially during early winter conditions when this range may receive high wildlife use. The BLM would have management authority over their land and trails, unless this issue is negotiated in the MOU. Promoting and signing access to these trails increases public use of these remote areas during hunting season and other shoulder-season periods. Conflicts between humans and animals are likely to increase.

5c. Removal of a small area of sagebrush habitat may displace a few nongame species as discussed in 5a.

No impacts to remaining features

New species are not anticipated with increased trail use.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Noise/Electrical Effects” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects of noise and electrical activities. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			X			6a.
b. Exposure of people to severe or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other:		X				

6a. Minor and temporary noise will occur with the use of equipment to build the new 800’ trail behind the Visitor’s Center, parking area near new cemetery, installation of cattle guards, gates and kiosks. A minor increase in human noise will occur outside of the Bannack townsite as more people use the trails. This is the purpose of this project – to disperse visitors and improve or at least maintain a quality experience in Bannack. Noise levels in the “back country” are not expected to be significant given the number of miles of trails, diversity of trail length and use, all of which will help disperse trail users.

To mitigate the noise effects to visitors, the construction would occur during the week when visitation is less and not during times of special events at the park.

No impacts to remaining features listed

Due to the short time needed to construct 800’ of new trail and bridge (two weeks) and the location of the trail behind the primary Main Street attraction, construction noises are not anticipated to be a nuisance to visitors. This type of construction is not known to create electrical or wire-less communication interference.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Land Use” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on land use. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects.

7. LAND USE	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?			X positive			7a.
b. A conflict with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?			X positive			7b.
c. A conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?			X		Yes	7c.
d. Adverse effects on, or relocation of, residences?		X				7d.
e. Compliance with existing land policies for land use, transportation, and open space?			X positive			7e.
f. Increased traffic hazards, traffic volume, or speed limits or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?			X		Yes	7f.
g. Other:		X				

7a. Providing trails for visitors increases the productivity of Bannack State Park by expanding the recreational opportunities at the park. Trails provide another means for visitors to experience and understand their heritage and natural world. The number of trail users will increase on State and BLM lands in addition to existing livestock grazing use. Trails are expected to draw a small number of additional visitors, thus a small amount of state park non-resident day-use revenue may be realized.

7b. Bannack is recognized as an area of unique educational and historic importance, thus its designation as a State Park. Though the area outside of Bannack is not formally designated, it harbors educational value in its historical use and unique natural environment. The proposed trails would provide visitors with an opportunity to experience and study historic modes of travel and travel routes used by the early pioneers of Bannack. These trails will also give users an opportunity to study the flora and fauna inhabiting the area around Bannack.

Much of the land around Bannack is used by a very small percentage of visitors. One goal of the proposed project is to increase the use of surrounding lands, thereby reducing some of the impacts of high use to the Bannack townsite.

7c. The BLM and Montana DNRC manage the land north of Bannack on which 8.5 miles of trail are proposed. The success of the proposed Preferred Alternative is contingent upon negotiations between Bannack State Park, Montana DNRC, and the BLM.

There is potential for conflict if trail users leave gates open in areas with grazing livestock. Installing signs, user-friendly gates and cattle guards will reduce the risk of gates being left open.

7d. The nearest residence other than park staff quarters in the park, is about half a mile from the Cemetery trailhead and $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the Visitor's Center trailhead. This residence is located along Bannack Road, the main road accessing the park from Highway 278. Trails are primarily located north and east of the residence. Though trail users would not be encouraged to use Bannack Road, some trail users (primarily mountain bikers and equestrian riders) may use the main Bannack Road to complete a loop route and return to a vehicle in the park (creating a 6 mile looping trip instead of 10 miles if returning on the same route). The residents located along Bannack Road would see some of this traffic.

7e. The proposed trails comply with visitor management, interpretation and recreation issues identified in Bannack State Park Management Plan (2001).

The Montana DNRC and BLM manage lands for multi-use including livestock grazing and recreational use, both of which would be utilized under the proposed trails project.

7f. The project has been designed specifically to reduce traffic pattern affects on Main Street of Bannack. The new trail behind the Visitor's Center and identifying the equestrian trail from the east will provide trail access without bicyclers or equestrian riders traveling down Main Street.

Motor vehicles may have difficulty passing each other on narrow sections of road; however, most areas are open enough to allow passage of two vehicles. A gravel turn-around pad would be graded and surfaced on Hangman's Gulch Road and the Old Stage Route, where these roads meet the park boundary fence. A pad perpendicular to the road would allow motorized vehicles to back in and turn around for the return trip. A designated area such as this would reduce vegetative impacts of haphazard vehicle negotiations. The fence lines and gates could be moved or readjusted to provide space for this construction on park land if BLM opposes this construction on federal land.

As discussed in 7d. above, if trail users choose to travel the Bannack Road between trailheads, non-motorized traffic would have to share the road with motorized traffic; there is little shoulder space.

Bannack staff would monitor the occurrence of non-motorized use of this route, and if necessary, can discuss options of signing with Beaverhead County to alert motorists to pedestrians, slow moving traffic, or livestock use, etc. Perhaps another trail route would be necessary in the future. Significant increases in non-motorized traffic on the Bannack Road are not anticipated in the short term. It is expected that most non-motorized trail users would choose shorter trail routes based out of Bannack Main Street and would focus on Road Agent Rock as a destination point.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Risk/Health Hazards” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects of risks and health hazards. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects of the action as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?			X		Yes	8a.
b. Effects on existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create need for a new plan?			X		Yes	8b.
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?			X		Yes	8c.
d. Disturbance to any sites with known or potential deposits of hazardous materials?		X				8d.
e. The use of any chemical toxicants?			X		Yes	See comment 8a. below
f. Other:		X				

8a. The FWP Region 3 Weed Management Plan advocates and Bannack State Park utilizes chemical, mechanical and biological methods to combat weeds. Though the proposed area has few weeds, herbicides will be used to control any weeds that may become established after construction disturbs the ground or if transported by vehicle. All applications will be conducted by a licensed weed applicator according to established guidelines.

No other uses of hazardous substances are anticipated during construction, maintenance or use of the trails.

8b. The Bannack emergency response plan would require expansion to include response to disperse trail visitors who might require aid. Only about ½ mile of non-motorized trail on BLM land (connecting trail between Hangman’s Gulch and the Old Stage Route) is not fully accessible by vehicle or close to vehicle access. Emergency vehicles could be used to evacuate injured visitors, or to warn or evacuate them during a potential emergency such as a wildfire in the area.

8c. Rattlesnakes inhabit the area and there is potential for visitors to encounter them when using the trails. Information provided at the trailhead kiosks and interpretive brochure and perhaps signs along the trail can educate visitors about snake behavior and precautionary measures to avoid them.

8d. Hazardous materials are not known to occur along the proposed trails.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Community Impact” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on the community. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?			X positive			9a.
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?			X			9c.
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?			X		yes	9d.
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?			X		yes	9e.
f. Other:		X				

9a. One of the goals of the proposed project is to disperse visitors, enabling a sense of isolation and visions of the historic Bannack culture. With some visitors using the trails, this will decrease the number of users on Main Street to a small degree.

9b. Use of the trails would slightly increase visitation in the hills above town, primarily between Memorial Day and Labor Day, the peak visitation season. The number of trail miles proposed and the opportunity for loop trails will help disperse users, as well.

9c. If the new trail work is completed using contracted services, a small level of employment will be provided, likely to a local contractor. A Montana Conservation Corps youth employment crew could complete this type of project, as well.

9d. Industrial or commercial activity is not allowed in the park unless approved by the park manager. Bannack Days is the primary opportunity for commercial activity in the park and most of the commercial presence is by food vendors. It is possible that the trails would be used in the future to offer stagecoach rides, horse rides, safari-type excursions, or mountain bike adventures. These business ventures would be explored thoroughly by FWP, including consultation of the Bannack Management Plan and discussion with the Bannack Association, which has 500 members.

9e. Traffic in Bannack, along Main Street, will not be altered. The proposed trails behind the Visitor’s Center and the trail from the east end will divert bicyclists and equine north of main street where the most potential exists for conflicts with other visitors. Motorized traffic will increase on the rural BLM roads. Directional signs and multi-use/trail etiquette signs will encourage

appropriate travel patterns and user interactions. Trail etiquette signs and information at the trailhead kiosks and in brochures will help visitors to be courteous and respect other trail users.

No impacts to remaining features listed

Visitation from this project is not expected to increase to a degree that would alter the social structure of nearby Polaris or other small rural communities. The trails add to the Bannack experience, but are not necessarily the reason visitors are coming to Bannack (the history and main street buildings are the primary attraction).

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Public Services/Taxes/Utilities” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on public services, taxes and utilities. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. An effect upon, or result in a need for new or altered, governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If so, specify: <i>recreation trails, roads, litter</i>			X			10a.
b. Effects on the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. A need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Increased used of any energy source?		X				
e. Other.		X				
Additional information requested:						
f. Define projected revenue sources.						
g. Define projected maintenance costs.						

10a. Construction and implementation of the proposed interpretive trails would slightly increase demands on park staff for repair and cleaning of the water bars (or troughs), bridge, kiosks, gates and signs, weed control, and litter pick up. Roads will be monitored and repaired or possibly graded, when needed. Trails will be monitored to ensure erosion control measures are working. Signs may need replacing due to vandalism.

No impacts to remaining features listed

The proposed multi-use trails are not expected to affect taxes, since state and federal agencies pay

fees in lieu of taxes or are exempt. The project will not require use of fuel or power supplies beyond the average visitor consumption.

10f. Bannack State Park receives revenue from non-resident visitor entrance fees. Montana residents pay an additional fee when they license their motor vehicle, which allows them free entrance into all of Montana’s state parks. The number of visitors and revenue may increase slightly with the addition of the proposed trails.

Revenue for use in construction and implementing the interpretive trails system would come from the State Parks operations and maintenance fund. A National Recreation Trails Grant application will be submitted for matching funds, as well. Other grants or donations will be explored and requested if needed. **An estimated \$38,700 is needed to complete the proposed project.** Please refer to the discussion of the alternatives in Part I for a complete list of costs for construction. The State Park operations and maintenance funds, other funding accounts or private donations would provide the 20% match necessary for the Trails Grant program.

10g. Average maintenance costs are estimated at \$900-\$1,500 annually to accomplish tasks discussed in 10a.above. This would include staff time and replacement materials, and printing of the interpretive brochure. These funds would come from FWP operations and maintenance funds.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Aesthetics/Recreation” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on aesthetics & recreation. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?			X		Yes	11a.
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report)			X Positive			11c.
d. Adverse effects to any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas?		X				
e. Other:		X				

11a. The trails proposed use primarily existing roads or trails. The new 800-foot trail and 20 foot-bridge behind the Visitor’s Center will be low profile and will be highly screened from view in town due to the sagebrush vegetation on either side of the trail and area buildings. The trails will

be surfaced when necessary with materials native to the area to blend in with area aesthetics. Some signs or trail marker posts may be visible across the landscape from other trail locations, but these can be low to the ground or painted in natural landscape colors to reduce visibility. Signs will be consistent with the historical nature of Bannack State Park. Other trail users, including motorized vehicles, will be viewed in certain areas of the trails.

11c. The proposed project is expected to have a positive effect on both the quality and quantity of recreational opportunities in the Bannack area. Visitors will have the opportunity to do more than just walk down Main Street and look in the buildings. Visitors can experience Bannack from a distance rather than immersed in Main Street buildings. Interpreted trails will provide additional reasons for people to visit the park and stay longer. They can experience these trails in a variety of ways suitable to their ability and preferences: hike, bike, horse-back-ride; drive a motorcycle, four-wheeler, or passenger vehicle. Visitors who will utilize the trails opportunities may have an easier time envisioning what early pioneers encountered at Bannack, thus obtaining a more thorough interpretive and educational experience at the park. Please see the attached Tourism Report.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Cultural/historical Resources” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects on cultural/historical resources. Even if you checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				
b. Physical changes that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. Adverse effects to historic or cultural resources?			X positive			12d.
e. Other:		X				

The State Historic Preservation Office Review and Compliance Officer Josef J. Warhank toured the proposed trail project area and another project in the park on August 21, 2002 with former Bannack State Park Manager Angie Hurley.

12d. One purpose of this project is to disperse visitation at Bannack, thereby reducing the rate of deterioration of these historic buildings.

No impacts to remaining features listed

This area is not known to have religious or sacred uses.

All construction will take place in areas previously disturbed by man as roads, settlements or mining and related ditches. If artifacts are uncovered during construction, they will be classified and entered into the Bannack inventory of artifacts.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT. At the bottom of this “Summary Evaluation of Significance” checklist, provide a narrative description and evaluation of the cumulative and secondary effects. Even if you have checked “none” in the above table, explain how you came to that conclusion. Consider the immediate, short-term effects as well as the long-term effects. Attach additional pages of narrative if needed.

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:						
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources which create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)			X positive			13a.
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?			X		yes	13c.
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. Have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy?		X				
Additional information requested:						
g. List any federal or state permits required.	Please see Part I above, Item # 11a. Permits: Listing of each local, state or federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.					

13a. When this trail project is combined with other projects at the park, such as the proposed trail for tours into the mine adit on the south side of Grasshopper Creek, the range and quality of opportunities greatly expands for visitors. This coincides with the Bannack State Park Management Plan goals to disperse use for the purposes of enhancing visitors’ experiences and to reduce impacts to historic structures.

13c. An MOU between FWP, Montana DNRC, and BLM would be completed regarding the promotion and improvements of federal land by the state park for recreational use. Rights of the grazing leaseholders must be considered, as well as other management goals each agency wishes to achieve through the proposed action.

No impacts to remaining features listed

Other extremely hazardous risks are not anticipated. Future actions with significant environmental impacts or controversy are not anticipated as a result of this proposed action.

PART III. ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST CONCLUSION SECTION

1. Discuss the cumulative and secondary effects of this project as a whole.

FWP is attempting to maximize the recreational and interpretive opportunities available and surrounding Bannack State Park. The proposed action is an effective way of developing these opportunities by using 10.75 miles of existing public roads and trails, and constructing only about 800 feet of new trail. FWP contracts require construction to be restricted to areas immediately adjacent to the project area to limit impacts on the surrounding environment. All areas disturbed by the construction process would be seeded with a native grass mix to encourage vegetative growth, reduce erosion, and reduce weed infestation.

This analysis did not reveal any significant impacts to the human or physical environment. Many of the minor impacts can be mitigated. Less than a quarter of one acre of vegetation will be removed during construction of new trail, cattle guards, and turn-around pad. Montana species of concern may be minimally impacted, if at all. Increased visitation attracted to the area by this trail plan will be limited to established trails through the use of directional signs and designated routes.

Sensitive interpretation can help educate visitors to the importance of preserving species of concern and historic resources. Various means of interpretation and signing will provide direction, regulations, education and encourage respect for other trail users. The proposed project will enhance visitors' educational and recreational opportunities.

The existing Bannack State Park emergency plan will be expanded to encompass trail users.

Noxious weed growth will be closely monitored until vegetation is re-established, then regularly monitored and treated in accordance with the Region 3 Weed Management Plan. Only licensed applicators will use chemical weed treatment.

Trails are an opportunity often requested by Bannack visitors and a needed feature identified in the Bannack State Park Management Plan.

2. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this Environmental Checklist (Part II), is an EIS required?

YES _____

NO X

If an EIS is not required, explain why the current checklist level of review is appropriate.

Based on an evaluation of impacts to the physical and human environment under MEPA and NEPA, this environmental review revealed no significant negative impacts from the proposed action and most minor impacts can be mitigated. An EIS, therefore, is not necessary and an environmental assessment is the appropriate level of analysis.

3. Describe the public involvement for this project.

An article describing the proposed trails was published in summer of 2002 in the Bannack Association newsletter. The newsletter was mailed to the 500 Association members, all of whom have an interest in the park and its activities. No negative comments were received by park staff regarding this specific trails project.

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on the EA, the proposed action and alternatives:

- One public notice in each of these papers: *Dillon Tribune, Montana Standard, and the Helena Independent Record*;
- One statewide press release,
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife and Parks web page: <http://fwp.mt.gov>

Copies of this environmental assessment will be distributed to the various land management agencies involved, neighboring landowners, grazing leaseholders, and interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project.

This is an appropriate level of public notice and participation for a project of this scope having few minor impacts, many of which can be mitigated, and a project with little or no opposition anticipated.

3. What was the duration of the public comment period?

The public comment period will extend for thirty (30) days following the publication of the legal notice in area newspapers. Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m. January 17, 2006 and can be mailed to the address below:

Bannack State Park
Bannack Interpretive Trails Project
4200 Bannack Road
Dillon, MT 59725

Or e-mail to: bannack@smtel.com

APPENDICES

(Please note that the Appendices are not attached to the electronic version of the EA. If you would like to receive a paper copy of Appendix B. Conceptual Trail Alignment, please call Tom Lowe at 834-3413. Thank you.)

- A. 23-1-110 MCA Project Qualification Checklist
- B. Conceptual Trail Alignment
- C. Tourism Report-Department of Commerce (pending)
- D. Clearance Letter- State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)

APPENDIX A
23-1-110 MCA PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST
BANNACK INTERPRETIVE TRAILS

Date: _____ 2003

Person Reviewing: Sue Dalbey, consultant
Dalbey Resources

Project Location: Bannack State Park and BLM Lands north and west of the park, Beaverhead County, Montana. Township 8 South, Range 11 West, Sections 5 and 6; Township 7 South, Range 11 West, Sections 29-32; and Township 8 South, Range 12 West, Section 1; Township 7 South, Range 12 West, Sections 25 and 36.

Description of Proposed Work: The proposed project includes: promoting and interpreting about 10.75 miles of existing roads and trails on State Park and Bureau of Land Management Land; about 800' of new trail construction with 16' bridge on park land; trail stabilization; installation of two cattle guards, four equestrian gates, three trailhead kiosks; sign installation showing direction, regulations, modes of travel allowed on trail, user etiquette and interpretive points; weed management; interpretive trail brochure design, layout and printing.

The following checklist is intended to be a guide for determining whether a proposed development or improvement is of enough significance to fall under 23-1-110 rules. (Please check all that apply and comment as necessary.)

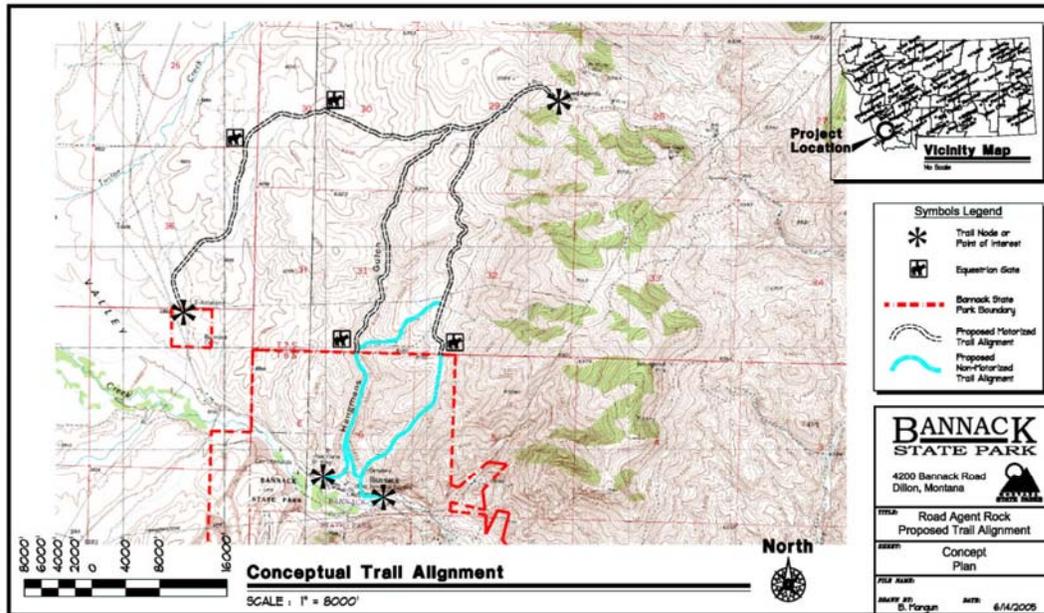
- A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?
Comments: *About 800' of new trail and 16' bridge will be built over lands disturbed at the turn of the century, but now recovered with common area vegetation.*
- B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?
Comments: *None*
- C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?
Comments: *Construction of the new trail, bridge and two cattle guards may require cut and fill of more than 20 c.y.*
- D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?
Comments: *None*
- E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a double-wide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?
Comments: *None*
- F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?
Comments: *None*

- [] G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?
Comments: *A SHPO Compliance Officer toured the site in August 2002 and did not identify cultural artifacts on the proposed trail project. SHPO will receive a copy of the EA for review.*
- [] H. Any new above ground utility lines?
Comments: *None*
- [] I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?
Comments: *None*
- [] J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern; including effects of a series of individual projects?
Comments: *The existing roads and trails proposed for the project have been and are currently open to public use, though not promoted or interpreted for Bannack visitors.*

If any of the above are checked, 23-1-110 MCA rules apply to this proposed work and should be documented on the checklist above. Refer to MEPA/HB495 Cross Reference Summary for further assistance; see Regional State Parks office.

APPENDIX B CONCEPTUAL TRAIL ALIGNMENT BANNACK INTERPRETIVE TRAILS

Beaverhead County, T8S, R11W, Sections 5 and 6; T7S, R11W, Sections 29-32; and T8S, R12W, Section 1; T7S, R12W, Sections 25 and 36.



**APPENDIX C
TOURISM REPORT
BANNACK INTERPRETIVE TRAILS**

- PENDING -
HARD COPY ONLY

APPENDIX D
CLEARANCE LETTER – STATE HISTORICAL PRESERVATION OFFICE
BANNACK INTERPRETIVE TRAILS

- PENDING -
HARD COPY ONLY

APPENDIX F GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Affected Environment – The aspects of the human environment that may change as a result of an agency action.

Alternative – A different approach to achieve the same objective or result as the proposed action.

Categorical Exclusion – A level of environmental review for agency action that do not individually, collectively, or cumulatively cause significant impacts to the human environment, as determined by rulemaking or programmatic review, and for which an EA or EIS is not required.

Cumulative Impacts – Impacts to the human environment that, individually, may be minor for a specific project, but, when considered in relation to other actions, may result in significant impacts.

Direct Impacts – Primary impacts that have a direct cause and effect relationship with a specific action, i.e. they occur at the same time and place as the action that causes the impact.

Environmental Assessment (EA) – The appropriate level of environmental review for actions that either does not significantly affect the human environment or for which the agency is uncertain whether an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required.

Environmental Assessment Checklist – An EA checklist is a standard form of an EA, developed by an agency for actions that generally produce minimal impacts.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) – A comprehensive evaluation of the impacts to the human environment that likely would result from an agency action or reasonable alternatives to that action. An EIS also serves a public disclosure of agency decision-making. Typically, an EIS is prepared in two steps. The Draft EIS is a preliminary detailed written statement that facilitates public review and comment. The Final EIS is a completed, written statement that includes a summary of major conclusions and supporting information from the Draft EIS, responses to substantive comments received on the Draft EIS, a list of all comments on the Draft EIS and any revisions made to the Draft EIS and an explanation of the agency's reasons for its decision.

Environmental Review – An evaluation, prepared in compliance with the provisions of MEPA and the MEPA Model Rules, of the impacts to the human environment that may result as a consequence of an agency action.

Human Environment – Those attributes, including but not limited to biological, physical, social, economic, cultural, and aesthetic factors that interrelate to form the environment.

Long-Term Impact – An impact, which lasts well beyond the period of the initial project.

Mitigated Environmental Assessment – The appropriate level of environmental review for actions that normally would require an EIS, except that the state agency can impose designs, enforceable controls, or stipulations to reduce the otherwise significant impacts to below the level of significance. A mitigated EA must demonstrate that: (1) all impacts have been identified; (2) all impacts can be mitigated below the level of significance; and (3) no significant impact is likely to occur.

Mitigation – An enforceable measure(s), designed to reduce or prevent undesirable effects or impacts of the proposed action.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) – The federal counterpart of MEPA that applies only to federal actions.

No Action Alternative – An alternative, required by the MEPA Model Rules for purposes of analysis, that describes the agency action that would result in the least change to the human environment.

Public Participation – The process by which an agency includes interested and affected individuals, organizations, and agencies in decision making.

Record of Decision – Concise public notice that announces the agency's decision, explains the reason for that decision, and describes any special conditions related to implementation of the decision.

Scoping – The process, including public participation, that an agency uses to define the scope of the environmental review.

Secondary Impacts – Impacts to the human environment that are indirectly related to the agency action, i.e. they are induced by a direct impact and occur at a later time or distance from the triggering action.

Short-Term Impact – An impact directly associated with a project that is of relatively short duration.

Significance – The process of determining whether the impacts of a proposed action are serious enough to warrant the preparation of an EIS. An impact may be adverse, beneficial or both. If none of the adverse impacts are significant, an EIS is not required.

Supplemental Review – A modification of a previous environmental review document (EA or EIS) based on changes in the proposed action, the discovery of new information, or the need for additional evaluation.

Tiering – Preparing an environmental review by focusing specifically on narrow scope of issues because the broader scope of issues was adequately addressed in previous environmental review document(s) that may be incorporated by reference.