



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

2300 Lake Elmo Drive
Billings, MT 59105

December 29, 2009

TO: Environmental Quality Council
Director's Office, Dept. of Environmental Quality
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks*

Director's Office
Parks Division
Fisheries Division
Wildlife Division

Lands Section
Design & Construction
Legal Unit
Regional Supervisors

Mike Volesky, Governor's Office *
Sarah Elliott, Press Agent, Governor's Office*
Montana Historical Society, State Preservation Office
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council
Montana Wildlife Federation
Montana State Library
George Ochenski
Montana Environmental Information Center
Wayne Hirst, Montana State Parks Foundation
FWP Commissioner Shane Colton*
Montana Parks Association/Our Montana (land acquisition projects)
David Moore, DNRC Area Manager, Southern Land Office
County Commissioners
Other Local Interested People or Groups
* (Sent electronically)

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The enclosed draft Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared for the development of the Holmgren Ranch Fishing Access Site on the Yellowstone River. Improvements to this 71 acre site on the Yellowstone River will be phased. The initial phase will include signage, construction of a public crossing of the railroad tracks, latrine, gravel parking area and access road. The final phase will include a gravel boat ramp and graveled designated parking area for 10-20 vehicles. Questions and comments will be accepted until Friday, February 5, 2010 at 5:00 p.m.

If you have questions or need additional copies of the draft EA, please contact Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) at 247-2940. Please send any written comments by mail to: Terri Walters at FWP, 2300 Lake Elmo Drive, Billings MT 59105; or by e-mail to twalters@mt.gov. The draft EA may be viewed on the FWP home page at fwp.mt.gov under recent public notices.

Thank you for your interest,

Doug Habermann
Regional Parks Manager

Enclosure

**Draft
Environmental Assessment**

**HOLMGREN RANCH FISHING ACCESS
SITE (FAS) DEVELOPMENT**



December 2009



***Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks***

**Holmgren Ranch Fishing Access Site (FAS) Development
Draft Environmental Assessment
MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST**

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. **Proposed state action:** Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks proposes development of the Holmgren Ranch Fishing Access Site (FAS) along the Yellowstone River, west of Columbus, Montana to improve public access to the Yellowstone River. This 71-acre parcel is located between Highway 10 and the Yellowstone River. Development is proposed in two phases with the initial development to include site signage, construction of a public crossing of the railroad tracks and new access road, latrine as well as a temporary fenced parking area for vehicles and the final phase to include a gravel boat ramp and graveled designated parking area for 10-20 vehicles.

2. **Agency authority for the proposed action:**
The 1977 Montana Legislature enacted statute 87-1-605, Montana Code Annotated (MCA), which directs FWP to acquire, develop and operate a system of fishing accesses. FWP has the authority to develop outdoor recreational resources in the state per 23-2-101, MCA: *“for the purpose of conserving the scenic, historic, archaeological, scientific, and recreational resources of the state and providing their use and enjoyment, thereby contributing to the cultural, recreational, and economic life of the people and their health.”*

Furthermore, state statute 23-1-110 MCA and ARM 12.2.433 guides public involvement and comment for the improvements at state parks and fishing access sites, which this document provides. ARM 21.8.602 requires the Department to consider the wishes of users and the public, the capacity of the site for development, environmental impacts, long-range maintenance, protection of natural features and impacts on tourism as these elements relate to development or improvement to fishing access sites or state parks. This document will illuminate the facets of the proposed project in relation to this rule. See Appendix 1 for HB 495 qualification.

3. **Name of project:** Holmgren Ranch FAS Development

4. **Project sponsor:**
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
2300 Lake Elmo Drive
Billings, MT 59105
406-247-2940

5. **Estimated Schedule of Events:**
- | | |
|---|--|
| Public Comment Period: | January 2010 |
| Decision Notice Published: | February 2010 |
| FWP Commission Final Approval: | March 2010 |
| Estimated Construction/Commencement Date: | Spring/Summer 2010 |
| Estimated Completion Date: | Fall 2010 (Phase 1)
Fall 2011 (Phase 2) |
- Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 30%

6. **Location:**
Stillwater County, Township 2, South Range 19 East, Section 14

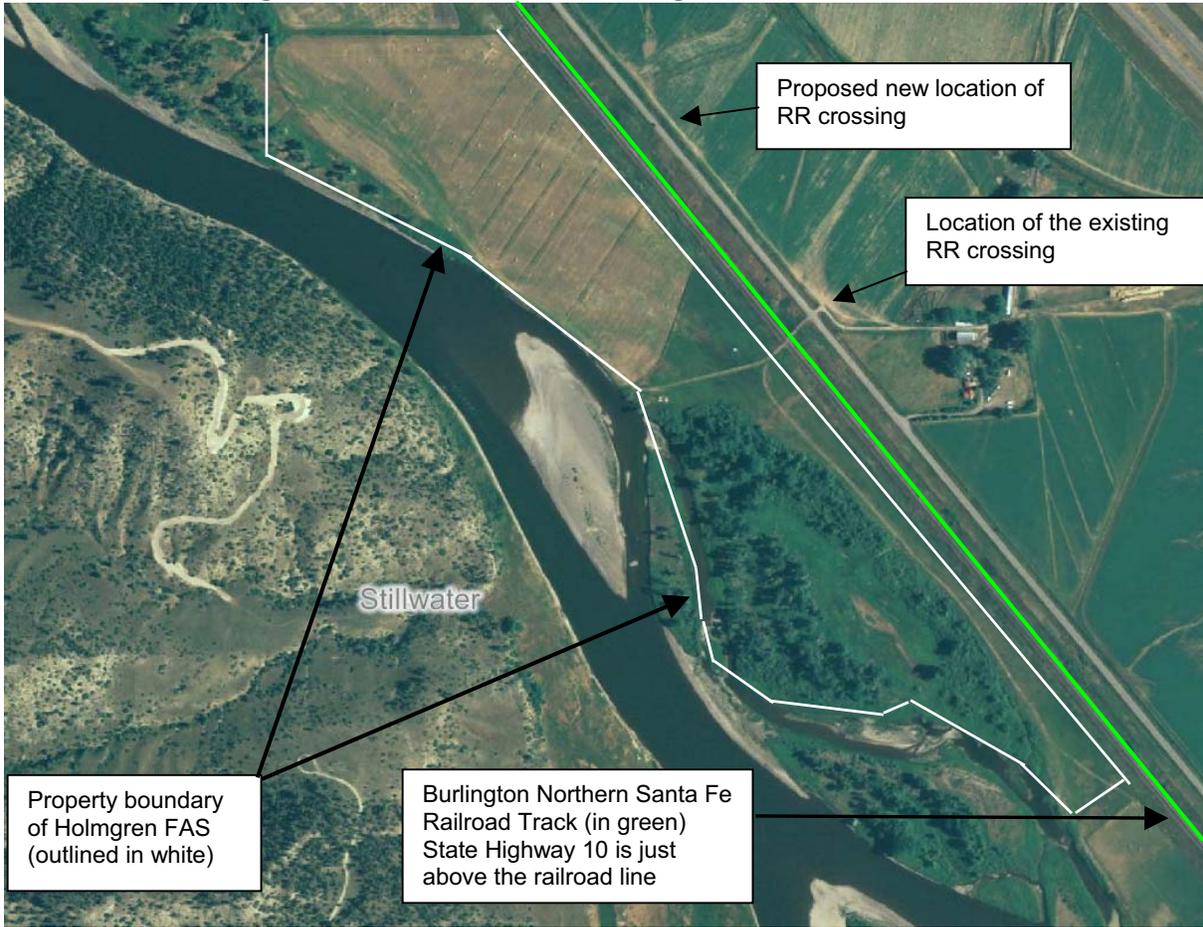
Figure 1: Approximate Location of Holmgren Ranch FAS



Figure 2: Highway Map of Area around Holmgren Ranch FAS



Figure 3: Aerial View of Holmgren Ranch FAS Parcel



7. Area Affected:

	<u>Acres</u>		<u>Acres</u>
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain/Riparian	<u>3</u>
Residential	<u>0</u>		
Industrial	<u>0</u>	(e) Productive:	
		Irrigated cropland	<u>0</u>
(b) Open Space/ Woodlands/Recreation	<u>0</u>	Dry cropland	<u>0</u>
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas	<u>0</u>	Forestry	<u>0</u>
		Rangeland	<u>3</u>
		Other	<u>0</u>

8. Other Local, State or Federal overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

a) Permits: Permits will be filed 60 days prior to work

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>
Burlington Northern Santa Fe	Permit to Crossing Location
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP)	124 MT Stream Protection Act
Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality	318 Short Term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity
Montana Department of Transportation	Approach permit
Stillwater County	Floodplain Permit and Sanitation Permit
US Corps of Engineers	404 Federal Clean Water Act

b) **Funding:** MT Fish Wildlife & Parks FAS Development \$50,000

c) **Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:**
Agency Name **Type of Responsibility**

Natural Heritage Program	Species of Concern (See Appendix 2)
State Historic Preservation Office	Cultural Clearance
US Fish & Wildlife Service	Bald & Golden Eagle Protection Act
US Fish & Wildlife Service	Migratory Bird Treaty Act
Montana Bald Eagle Working Group	Montana Bald Eagle Management Plan
Stillwater County Weed District	Weed Management Coordination and Approval of Weed Management Plan

9. Summary of the Proposed Action:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks proposes to develop the Holmgren Ranch Fishing Access Site (FAS). The property is approximately five miles west of Columbus along State Highway 10. The eastern boundary of the property is edged with mature cottonwood trees, mature willows, and some woody debris from old cottonwoods. At the southwestern edge of the property along the river, there is a healthy grove of cottonwood trees surrounded by a thicket of willows. There are two islands in close proximity to the Holmgren Ranch FAS that are owned by Montana Department of Natural Resources.

There is an active Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad line along the property's northern edge, currently leased by Montana Rail Link. There is a single lane road from Highway 10 across the BNSF right-of-way to gain access into the property. However a new approach and access road will be developed approximately ¼ mile to the west. The new location provides improved line-of-sight distances in both easterly and westerly directions. FWP has met on site with officials from Montana Rail Link and Montana Department of Transportation and received approval for the new approach location. Additionally, since the railroad's right-of-way extends 200 feet each side from the center of the track, FWP will install a fence along the right-of-way and property's border.

Need and Benefits:

This property is situated 31 miles east of Greycliff Prairie Dog Town State Park and 18 miles southeast of Cooney State Park. Annual visitation statistics for those two state parks average 15,000 to 150,000 annual visitors, respectively. This property is between the Indian Fort FAS 12 miles upstream and Itch-Ke-Pee Park in Columbus, 7 miles downstream, making this an ideal split between these two sites for a day float on the Yellowstone River. Those sites have moderate use of approximately 1,000 visitors during peak months. It is anticipated the Holmgren Ranch FAS, once fully developed, would be used heavily by anglers both for bank and float fishing as well as launching and taking out both non-motorized and motorized watercraft.

Recent surveys conducted by FWP show that the Yellowstone River in the stretch where Holmgren Ranch FAS is located supports an average of over 10,000 angler days per year. Game fish opportunities in the river include brown trout, rainbow trout, and burbot (ling). Mountain whitefish are abundant here and are also considered a game fish by some. The special fishing regulation in this portion of the Yellowstone allows for a total daily bag limit of

four trout, only one of which may exceed 18" in length. Yellowstone cutthroat trout are very rare in this section and are protected by a catch-and-release regulation in the Yellowstone River.

The proposed development would potentially provide travelers a new recreation area in south-central Montana. The acquisition of this site was supported by the Stillwater County Commission. The location of this property on the Yellowstone River, along the Interstate 90 corridor between Bozeman and Billings, with approximately one mile of river frontage, makes this site a great location for recreating on the Yellowstone River. It is within one hour's drive of the major population center of Billings as well as close to the growing community of Columbus.

Improvements, Maintenance and Public Use:

Development would include an improved railroad crossing, new access road, a temporary parking area and latrine. In the future when funding becomes available, river access facilities for boat launching and a larger parking lot would be developed.

This property already has a private access point across the BNSF railroad line. FWP has consulted with the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) regarding a new access road to the property, approximately 300-yards west of the existing one along Highway 10. FWP has applied for an easement from Montana Rail Link to construct a new at-grade crossing at the proposed location. FWP has also met with MDT as well as Montana Rail Link officials to evaluate and coordinate the installation of appropriate crossing signals to ensure the public's and rail traffic's safety. In addition, property signs, and necessary boundary or right-of-way fences would be built and maintained.

FWP would construct and maintain the new fenceline along the proposed access road that transects the railroad right-of-way. FWP Parks Maintenance would also implement the FWP Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan to mitigate the spread of knapweed and Russian thistle on the property.

The property would be regulated under existing FWP public use regulations. Management of the proposed development includes routine maintenance, control of vehicles, firearms and other accepted FWP recreation area management policies. Protection of the natural resources, the health and safety of visitors and consideration of neighboring properties would all be considered and incorporated into future development plans for this site. Development of the parking area and latrine will enhance visitor use of this site as well as provide long-term protection for the resources not impacted by the development footprint. While there are no current plans to develop campsites at this time, primitive camping would be allowed.

The site would be open during established hunting seasons with no restrictions since it is a large, undeveloped area that has been used as a traditional hunting area. Firearms use would be limited to hunting only and restrictions to that use would be posted on regulation signs for the protection of both recreationists and neighboring land use.

10. Alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action

If FWP were not to develop the Holmgren Ranch FAS and add the improved railroad crossing and new access road into the property, the property would only be accessible to the public from the river and would be restricted to float in access only. Boat launching would not be possible without development of the access road and boat ramp. Without a latrine, health and safety issues would likely develop overtime as people would utilize the shrubbery in place of a vault latrine.

Preferred Alternative B: Proposed Action

FWP proposes to develop the Holmgren Ranch FAS including necessary boundary fencing, site signage, and construction of a public crossing of the railroad tracks and new access road as well as a latrine and a temporary designated parking area. The proposed railroad crossing is necessary for a legal and safe crossing for public use as the existing crossing has had limited private use only. The proposed highway approach would be safer with a better line-of-sight for vehicles entering and leaving the property. The next phase of development includes a gravel boat launch and a formal designated parking area for 10-20 vehicles. An additional funding request will be submitted to the 2011 legislature. Upon receiving approval Phase II, development will take place during the summer of 2011.

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

There is mitigation associated with the proposed actions for protection of the bald eagle nest in the area. A bald eagle nest is located approximately over 1/2 mile south from the FAS boundary. To avoid disturbance of the eagles, proposed development is closer to the northern edge of the property, approximately a mile from the active nest. While Bald eagles were officially delisted in 2007, the US Fish and Wildlife Service has jurisdiction protecting this species under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). At the state level, the Montana Bald Eagle Working Group was formed in 1982 and is composed of representatives from federal and state agencies, tribes, universities, conservation groups, and private industry. In 1994 the group developed a "Montana Bald Eagle Management Plan" to provide information and guide landowners and resource managers in conserving eagle habitat. State pesticide use laws and regulations will be followed. Application records will be submitted to the Montana Department of Agriculture as required, and these records will be available upon request.

Control measures are associated with the proposed actions for decreasing the impacts of the construction work during the ramp construction. Control measures include timing the earthwork to coincide with the period of lowest flow to minimize bed-load transport of redistributed bank materials and of channel materials during the construction the boat ramp so that any materials mobilized into the stream channel would have minimum energy for transport. Thus, while sediment will be mobilized, only the silt, clay, and fine sand sized particles will move any distance downstream and, it is unlikely these particles will travel more than 200-300 yards before dropping out.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

The analysis of the physical and human environments discussed on the following pages is limited to Alternative B as the proposed action and preferred alternative.

Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u> 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 Positive	1b.
c. **Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
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				

1a. Soil and geologic substructure would remain stable during and after the proposed work. Developing a boat ramp will help ensure soil stability along the bank.

1b. There currently is not a boat ramp at this location and to prevent pioneered use of the site, the proposed boat ramp is intended to prevent the bank from eroding and from pioneered boat launches from becoming established.

Furthermore, providing a designated parking area would prevent uncontrolled/pioneered parking and prevent degrading the vegetation, which would result in compaction of the soil and increase the spread of noxious weeds.

1d. In the future, when a gravel boat ramp is added, the ramp may slightly change the current deposition pattern in a short reach of the river, but will have no long term effects on the river channel. The proposed gravel boat ramp does not produce a hard point in the river channel to disrupt flows in the same manner as a concrete boat ramp would.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

2. <u>AIR</u> 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		YES	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. ***For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a.)		NA				

2a. During the construction work, temporary amounts of dust may be generated during the soil excavation and placement in the flood plain. If additional materials are needed off-site, loading at the source site will generate minor amounts of dust. See Appendix 5 for the preliminary concept site plan. FWP follows the Best Management Practices (BMP's) during all phases of construction to minimize risks and reduce dust. See Appendix 4 for the BMP's.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

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		YES	3h.
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. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)		NA				
m. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)		NA				

3a. The ramp work would cause temporary and minor amounts of turbidity during construction. Construction is planned during low flow to ensure minimal impact. FWP will follow the permit requirements for the Montana Department of Environmental Quality for Permit 318 for Short Term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity.

3h. FWP follows the Best Management Practices during all phases of construction to minimize sediment delivery to the river. See Appendix 4 for the BMP's.

The application of herbicides to manage the existing noxious weeds would be done per the guidelines presented in the FWP Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan. FWP contracts with Stillwater County Weed District to manage weeds at FWP sites in the county. Last spring 2009, Stillwater County Weed District grazed sheep at the Holmgren Ranch FAS to successfully manage weeds and would continue to do so when feasible.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

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				4c.
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X		YES	4e.
f. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		NA				

- 4a. Construction of the boat ramp, parking lot, latrine and new access road would have a minor impact on the vegetation, removing existing vegetation in the area of construction and altering the diversity of the plant community on the site. Species known to exist on site primarily includes willows and cottonwoods and grasses. Initially, a temporary parking area would be a mowed fenced area, until funding is available to establish a graveled parking lot, which would eliminate vegetation in that area. Without designated parking the vegetation would be degraded from haphazard indiscriminate parking which would likely increase the spread of noxious weeds. Some grassland vegetation may be removed to develop a designated parking area and access road, but overall will positively impact vegetation, by restricting parking to designated areas.
- 4b. This area is characterized by open stands of cottonwoods, willows and mixed grasses, but also includes spotted knapweed and Russian thistle.
- 4c. A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program's (MNHP) species of concern database found no vascular or non-vascular plants of significance within the boundaries of the FAS.
- 4e. This property currently has a limited infestation of spotted knapweed and Russian thistle. The Stillwater County Weed District estimates less than 10% of the site infested with noxious weeds. FWP utilizes the Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan to control the noxious weeds on the property by using chemical, biological and mechanical methods in conjunction with the Stillwater County Weed District, whom FWP has worked with for many years. Holmgren Ranch FAS is included in the county weed contract. In the summer of 2009, 200 head of sheep were used to graze down the noxious weeds on the property successfully and anticipate to be used again in 2010. There are no costs accrued as the herder works both ranches on either side of the FAS. Furthermore, adding designated parking spaces will help deter motorized vehicles from indiscriminate parking, which disturbs the natural vegetation and results in the spread of weeds. Informative signage should also help prevent the spread of weeds.
- 4f. No wetlands designated by Montana Department of Environmental Quality will be affected by this acquisition (11/30/09, via Digital Atlas of Montana database). There are no prime farmlands included within the property's boundaries, but 47% of property is considered Farmland of Local Importance (1/16/08, Natural Resources Conservation Soil Survey database).

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

** 5. FISH/WILDLIFE	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Will the proposed action result in:	Unknown *	None	Minor *		
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				5f.
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				5g.
h. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)		NA				
i. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		NA				

The development the FAS will not affect the abundance of game and nongame species that move through the property. Game species that are known to use the property are white-tailed deer and wild turkey. The river bottom area is also habitat for numerous small mammals and a variety of bird species. (Assessments by Justin Paugh, FWP Wildlife Biologist, and Allison Begley, FWP Native Species Biologist). This stretch of the Yellowstone River is not considered critical fish habitat.

5f. A search of the Natural Resources Information System provided by the Montana Natural Heritage Program revealed four species of concern known to be generally distributed in the vicinity of the targeted acreage. Three of the species identified are ranked as sensitive including the Bald Eagle, Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout, and Greater Short-horned Lizard. The Common Sagebrush Lizard is the fourth species does not have any federal ranking, but is listed in Tier 2 of the Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Strategy. There are no threatened or endangered species found to be in the area of the parcel.

An active bald eagle nest is located approximately over 1/2 mile south from the FAS boundary. To avoid disturbance to these eagles, proposed development is closer to

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

the northern edge of the property, approximately a mile from the active nest.

There are two recorded bald eagle nests near the Holmgren property, but both nests are noted to be inactive since the late 1990s. There are no other nests reported within a 1-mile radius of the property. However, eagles are known to use the river corridor year-round for forage and as a travel route. The design for the proposed FAS will minimize impacts to the eagles that use the river area (assessment of Allison Begley, FWP Non-Game Wildlife Biologist).

An additional species of concern not identified in the Montana Natural Heritage Program Species of Concern report is the Great Blue Heron. There is an active Great Blue Heron Rookery across the river from the southern boundary of the FAS. The location of the proposed boat ramp would have at least ½-mile buffer from the rookery.

Minimal impacts are expected to occur to either of the lizards since the property does not include much of the habitat required for the lizards and would avoid their preferred rocky outcrop habitat to the extent possible. Nor would the boat ramp impact Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout. Yellowstone cutthroat trout are very rare in this section. Cutthroat trout are protected by a catch-and-release regulation in the Yellowstone River.

The three game fish species present in this stretch of the Yellowstone River are rainbow trout, brown trout (both non-native), and native burbot (ling). Native mountain whitefish are abundant here and are also considered a game fish by some. The special fishing regulation in this portion of the Yellowstone allows for a total daily bag limit of four trout, only one of which may exceed 18" in length.

Other common native species of the Yellowstone watershed along this area include longnose sucker, white sucker, and less common mottled sculpin and shorthead redhorse. The FWP fisheries biologist identified there may be minor short-term impact to the fish during the construction of the boat ramp, but would be minor and temporary, and once completed should not impact the fishery.

Please see Appendix 2 Montana Natural History Program (MNHP) Native Species Report for more information on these species.

- 5g. The land is has previously been privately owned and was used for grazing and hay production. The proposed development should not increase negative conditions that stress wildlife populations and should have a neutral impact on the fishery.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

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			6b.
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				6c.
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				

- 6a. Construction equipment would cause a temporary increase in noise levels at this site. Proximity to the highway and the railroad with much higher sustained noise levels, will likely mask any increase in noise level at the construction site. BNSF will continue to mark the location of the crossing with the blowing of the train's engine horn.
- 6b. If construction noise levels exceed a level deemed unsafe over a workday time frame, all workers will be required to wear proper ear protection. FWP will follow the Best Management Practices during all phases of construction to minimize risks. See Appendix 4 for BMP's.
- 6c. The new railroad crossing would have an automatic electronic railroad gate but is not expected to have any negative effects, rather a positive impact to assure the safety of visitors to the site.

7. LAND USE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?			X			7a.
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				

- 7a. The proposed development would alter the historic use of the property from a hay production and grazing to a public recreation area. Vegetation will be left in a natural state with the exception of noxious weeds, which will be managed per the FWP Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan. There may be a temporary inconvenience during the proposed improvements adding an access road, designated parking, and boat ramp. The land is in a floodplain and riparian area that serves as important habitat for a variety of mammal,

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

bird and fish species.

- * Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.
- ** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).
- *** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- **** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Will the proposed action result in:	Unknown *	None	Minor *		
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. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X			Positive	8c.
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		NA				

8a. FWP already manages for noxious weeds on the property following the Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan utilizing a combined method of managing weeds, in conjunction with the Stillwater County Weed District, whom FWP has worked successfully with for many years. In the summer of 2009, sheep were used to graze down the noxious weeds on the property successfully and anticipate to be used again in 2010. The use of herbicides would be in compliance with application guidelines and applied by people trained in safe handling techniques in accordance with product labels and as provided for under state law. Weeds would also be controlled using mechanical or biological means in certain areas to reduce the risk of chemical spills or water contamination. The proposed project includes revegetation to reduce the spreading of noxious weeds. Weed management will continue, but if no action is taken, the potential for indiscriminate parking increases the spread of the noxious weeds, requiring more weed management.

Operation of heavy equipment proximal to a surface water body presents a temporary potential risk of fuel or lubricating oil release into the surface water. Contractors would have on site absorbent materials to minimize any hydrocarbon releases, as well as conduct startup inspection of all hydraulic lines and cylinder seals daily to reduce the potential for a release. FWP will follow the Best Management Practices during all phases of construction to minimize risks. See Appendix 4 for BMP's.

8c. The relocation of the access point to the property will reduce the potential for accidents to occur due to poor visibility from the access road onto the highway. Additionally, the new access road and railroad crossing will be equipped with an automatic railroad-crossing gate, whereas the existing access road does not have such equipment.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
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				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?			X		Positive	9e.

- 9e. The new boat ramp will give boaters and floaters another opportunity in this area to access the Yellowstone River. The proposed development would have no effect on the community of Columbus to increase traffic hazards, or alter the distribution of population in the area. The change of location of the existing railroad crossing to one that is further due west will improve the line-of-sight for those visiting the property and merging onto Highway 10. The new automatic railroad-crossing gate will also help ensure the safety of visitors in and out of the site. Development of the site would likely have a positive economic benefit to retail and service businesses in the Columbus and Reed Point area since visitors might be purchasing supplies and gasoline from local vendors.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Will the proposed action have 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 any, specify:		X				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				10b.
c. Will the proposed action result in 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			10c.
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?			X			10d.
e. **Define projected revenue sources		X				
f. **Define projected maintenance costs.						10f.

10b. No change in tax base as FWP pays property taxes in an amount equal to that of a private individual.

10c/d. The new railroad crossing equipment would require a connection to a nearby electrical power source to function properly. This connection will be a new service to the property's location because no automatic crossing device exists at the current access road and railroad crossing. There is an existing electric transmission line (69 Kv or less) that crosses the southern boundary of the property. FWP will pay for half for the new crossing equipment and installation with other half of the funding from an MDT federal grant.

10f. Expenditures associated with the maintenance of the site are anticipated to be \$1500 annually from the FWP Region 5 maintenance budget. This expense will be for noxious weed management, latrine maintenance, caretaker work including litter removal, and maintenance of fencing, and boundary and regulatory signs.

Initial costs to add FWP signage for the highway approach, regulation and information signs are estimated to cost approximately \$2000 including staff time and mileage.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

** 11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Will the proposed action result in:	Unknown *	None	Minor *		
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. ***For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		NA				

11a. The new boat ramp and parking lot would be visible from the river and the new access road, railroad crossing and parking lot will be visible from the highway. The current railroad crossing and access road are visible from the highway.

11c. The public access to this stretch of the Yellowstone River would be improved by creating intermediate access between Indian Fort FAS (near Reed Point) and Itch-Ke-Pee access in Columbus, a river distance of 20 miles. As a result of the proposed action, it is likely that there would be an increase in opportunity for recreationists for fishing and floating activities in this section of the Yellowstone. While there are no plans to develop campsites at this location at this time, primitive camping would be allowed. Furthermore, the property will be open to hunting during established hunting seasons. Firearms use would be limited to hunting only and restrictions to that use would be posted on regulation signs for the protection of both recreationists and neighboring land use.

During construction, there will be a temporary inconvenience to the general public using the site. See Appendix 3 for the Department of Commerce Tourism Report.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. **Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric, historic, or paleontological importance?		X				
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.)		NA				

A cultural survey has been conducted at the Holmgren Ranch FAS. Once the written report is received, it will be submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for their concurrence. The proposed work would not begin until obtaining SHPO clearance. If cultural materials are discovered during the project, work would cease and SHPO will be contacted for a more in depth investigation.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. <u>SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE</u> Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)	X					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				
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. ***For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)		X				
g. ****For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		X				

13a. The proposed improvements would improve accessibility with an improved railroad crossing and access road, designated parking, and addition of a latrine. In the future, when funding is available a new boat ramp and expanded parking areas will improve accessibility further. FWP evaluated taking no action to leave the site undeveloped, but believes the proposed improvements will enhance visitor experience at this site and will prevent unnecessary degradation and prevent sanitation issues at the site.

During the construction of the proposed improvements, there may be minor and temporary impact to the physical environment, but the impact will be short-term and the improvements benefit the community and recreational opportunities over the long term.

The proposed action is expected to generate very little public controversy, set a precedent, or have considerable impacts to the physical and human environment.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The proposed development of the Holmgren Ranch FAS along the Yellowstone River will provide FWP with the opportunity to establish a formal recreation area for anglers, vacationers and other recreationists traveling along Interstate 90 corridor between Bozeman and Billings.

The development will not have significant impacts on the physical environment (i.e. geological features, fish and wildlife, and water resources) and would be minor and temporary during construction. The proposed project will affect the human environment (i.e. land use, recreation, and utilities) in a limited fashion. Most of these effects will be positive in quality, in that additional public access along the Yellowstone River will become available for the enjoyment of the natural surroundings and water-based activities. The minor impacts to the current environment are needed noxious weed management on the property and to ensure the public's safety when accessing the area via a new road and railroad crossing.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Public Involvement:

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

- Two public notices in the Columbus *Stillwater County News*;
- One public notice in the Helena *Independent Record* and *Billings Gazette*;
- One statewide press release;
- Direct mailing to adjacent landowners and interested parties;
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: <http://fwp.mt.gov>.
- Copies will be available for public review at FWP Region 5 Headquarters.

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having few limited physical and human impacts.

If requested within the comment period, the department may arrange a public meeting.

2. Duration of comment period.

The public comment period will extend for (30) thirty days. Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., January 29, 2010 and can be mailed to the address below:

Holmgren Ranch Fishing Access Site (FAS) Development
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Region 5 Headquarters
2300 Lake Elmo Drive
Billings, MT 59105

Or email comments to: twalters@mt.gov

PART V. EA PREPARATION

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

Based upon the above assessment, which has identified a very limited number of minor impacts from the proposed action, an EIS is not required and an environmental assessment is the appropriate level of review.

2. **Persons responsible for preparing the EA:**

Terri Walters
Parks Manager
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
2300 Lake Elmo Drive
Billings, MT 59105
406-247-2955

Pam Boggs
EA Coordinator
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
PO Box 200701
Helena MT 59620-0701

3. **Agencies/organizations consulted during preparation of the EA:**

Montana Department of Commerce – Tourism
Montana Department of Transportation
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
 Director's Office Lands Unit
 Director's Office Legal Unit
 Fisheries & Wildlife Division
 Parks Division
Montana Natural Heritage Program – Natural Resources Information System (NRIS)
Montana Rail Link
Montana State Historical Preservation Office
Stillwater County Weed District

Appendices

- 1 HB 495 Project Qualification Checklist
- 2 Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) Native Species Report
- 3 Tourism Report Department of Commerce
- 4 Best Management Practices Final FAS BMP's Department of Fish Wildlife & Parks
- 5 Draft Preliminary Concept Plan of Holmgren Ranch FAS Proposed Development

APPENDIX 1

HB495

PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

Date: November 12, 2009

Person Reviewing Pam Boggs

Project Location: Holmgren Ranch FAS is along the Yellowstone River 6 miles west of Columbus next to Highway 10. It is located within T2S, R19E, Section 14 in Stillwater County.

Description of Proposed Work: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks proposes to add a new railroad crossing, access road, parking lot, boat ramp, and latrine on the Yellowstone River at Holmgren FAS.

The following checklist is intended to be a guide for determining whether a proposed development or improvement is of enough significance to fall under HB 495 rules. (Please check all that apply and comment as necessary.)

[Y] A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?

Comments: A new access road will be put in from the new railroad crossing.

[] B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?

Comments: No new buildings other than vault latrine.

[Y] C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?

Comments: Some excavation for the parking lot, boat ramp, latrine, and access road.

[Y] D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?

Comments: There is no parking lot currently so a designated parking lot will be developed to accommodate up 10-20 parking spaces.

[] E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a doublewide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?

Comments: A new single wide gravel boat ramp will be added at this site in the future.

[Y] F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?

Comments: A new single wide gravel boat ramp will be added at this site in the future.

[] G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?

Comments: A cultural survey has been conducted and will be sent to SHPO for clearance, once the written report is received. If artifacts are discovered in areas excavated, work will cease and SHPO will be contacted.

[] H. Any new above ground utility lines?

Comments: The new railroad crossing will need power for the electric automatic gate.

[Y] I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?

Comments: Primitive camping would be allowed. In the future, camping may be developed if funding allows.

[Y] J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern; including effects of a series of individual projects?

Comments: The proposed work will provide a new railroad crossing and access road, new parking area, and latrine, where none currently exist. The crossing and access road were previously private.

If any of the above are checked, HB 495 rules apply to this proposed work and should be documented on the MEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST. Refer to MEPA/HB495 Cross Reference Summary for further assistance.

Appendix 2

SENSITIVE PLANTS AND ANIMALS IN THE HOLMGREN RANCH FAS AREA

Species of Concern Terms and Definitions

A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) element occurrence database (<http://nris.mt.gov>) indicates no known occurrences of federally listed threatened, endangered, or proposed threatened or endangered plant species in the proposed project. The search did indicate the project area is within habitat for Bald Eagle, Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout, Greater Short-horned Lizard and Common Sagebrush Lizard. Please see the next page for more information on these species.

Montana Species of Concern. The term "**Species of Concern**" includes taxa that are at-risk or potentially at-risk due to rarity, restricted distribution, habitat loss, and/or other factors. The term also encompasses species that have a special designation by organizations or land management agencies in Montana, including: Bureau of Land Management Special Status and Watch species; U.S. Forest Service Sensitive and Watch species; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Threatened, Endangered and Candidate species.

▼ **Status Ranks (Global and State)**

The international network of Natural Heritage Programs employs a standardized ranking system to denote global (**G** -- range-wide) and state status (**S**) (Nature Serve 2003). Species are assigned numeric ranks ranging from 1 (critically imperiled) to 5 (demonstrably secure), reflecting the relative degree to which they are "at-risk". Rank definitions are given below. A number of factors are considered in assigning ranks -- the number, size and distribution of known "occurrences" or populations, population trends (if known), habitat sensitivity, and threat. Factors in a species' life history that make it especially vulnerable are also considered (e.g., dependence on a specific pollinator).

Status Ranks

Code	Definition
G1 S1	At high risk because of extremely limited and/or rapidly declining numbers, range, and/or habitat, making it highly vulnerable to global extinction or extirpation in the state.
G2 S2	At risk because of very limited and/or declining numbers, range, and/or habitat, making it vulnerable to global extinction or extirpation in the state.
G3 S3	Potentially at risk because of limited and/or declining numbers, range, and/or habitat, even though it may be abundant in some areas.
G4 S4	Uncommon but not rare (although it may be rare in parts of its range), and usually widespread. Apparently not vulnerable in most of its range, but possibly cause for long-term concern.
G5 S5	Common, widespread, and abundant (although it may be rare in parts of its range). Not vulnerable in most of its range.

SENSITIVE PLANTS AND ANIMALS IN THE VICINITY OF HOLMGREN RANCH FAS ALONG THE YELLOWSTONE RIVER

1. *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* (Bald Eagle)

Natural Heritage Ranks:

State: **S3**

Global: **G5**

Federal Agency Status:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: **DM**

U.S. Forest Service: **Threatened**

U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier: 1

Five Element Occurrence data reported of bald eagle in the proximate area of this parcel. Last observation date was 2005.

2. *Oncorhynchus clarkii bouvieri* (Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout)

Natural Heritage Ranks:

State: **S2**

Global: **G4T2**

Federal Agency Status:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:

U.S. Forest Service: **Sensitive**

U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier: 1

No Element Occurrence data reported of Yellowstone cutthroat trout in the proximate area of this parcel.

3. *Phrynosoma hernandesi* (Greater Short-horned Lizard)

Natural Heritage Ranks:

State: **S3**

Global: **G5**

Federal Agency Status:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:

U.S. Forest Service: **Sensitive**

U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier: 2

The Element Occurrence shows one observation for 1952 of a Greater Short-horned Lizard in the proximate area of this parcel.

4. *Sceloporus graciosus* (Common Sagebrush Lizard)

Natural Heritage Ranks:

State: **S3**

Global: **G5**

Federal Agency Status:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:

U.S. Forest Service:

U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

FWP CFWCS Tier: 2

The Element Occurrence shows one observation for 1929 of a Common Sagebrush Lizard in the proximate area of this parcel.

Information courtesy of Montana Natural Heritage Program.

NOTE: This appendix is information provided by the Montana Natural Heritage Program from their database of the Natural Resources Information System. FWP Biologists have addressed the species identified in this appendix in this EA in PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST in section 5. Fish/Wildlife. FWP R5 Biologists have no concerns with the project impacting wildlife in the area. This stretch of the Yellowstone River is not considered critical fish habitat and Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout

are rare in this reach of river.

Appendix 3
TOURISM REPORT

MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA) & MCA 23-1-110

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has initiated the review process as mandated by MCA 23-1-110 and the Montana Environmental Policy Act in its consideration of the project described below. As part of the review process, input and comments are being solicited. Please complete the project name and project description portions and submit this form to:

Carol Crockett, Visitor Services Manager
Montana Office of Tourism-Department of Commerce
301 S. Park Ave.
Helena, MT 59601

Project Name: Holmgren Ranch Fishing Access Site (FAS) Initial Development

Project Description: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks proposes to develop the property at the Holmgren Ranch FAS along the Yellowstone River in Stillwater County approximately six miles upstream of Columbus, MT. The proposed project includes adding a new railroad crossing and access road to the property, and developing a new boat ramp, latrine and parking for approximately 10 - 20 vehicles. This development project will provide increased opportunity for boating and other recreational activities along this popular stretch of the Yellowstone River.

1. Would this site development project have an impact on the tourism economy?
NO YES If YES, briefly describe:

Yes, as described, the project has the potential to positively impact the tourism and recreation industry economy.

2. Does this impending improvement alter the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings?
NO YES If YES, briefly describe:

Yes, as described, the project has the potential to improve the quality and quantity of tourism and recreational opportunities.

Signature Carol Crockett, Visitor Services Manager Date 11/4/2009

Appendix 4
MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS
BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR FISHING ACCESS SITES
10-02-02
Updated May 1, 2008

I. **ROADS**

A. **Road Planning and location**

1. Minimize the number of roads constructed at the FAS through comprehensive road planning, recognizing foreseeable future uses.
 - a. Use existing roads, unless use of such roads would cause or aggravate an erosion problem.
2. Fit the road to the topography by locating roads on natural benches and following natural contours. Avoid long, steep road grades and narrow canyons.
3. Locate roads on stable geology, including well-drained soils and rock formations that tend to dip into the slope. Avoid slumps and slide-prone areas characterized by steep slopes, highly weathered bedrock, clay beds, concave slopes, hummocky topography, and rock layers that dip parallel to the slope. Avoid wet areas, including seeps, wetlands, wet meadows, and natural drainage channels.
4. Minimize the number of stream crossings.
 - a. Choose stable stream crossing sites. “Stable” refers to streambanks with erosion-resistant materials and in hydrologically safe spots.

B. **Road Design**

1. Design roads to the minimum standard necessary to accommodate anticipated use and equipment. The need for higher engineering standards can be alleviated through proper road-use management. “Standard” refers to road width.
2. Design roads to minimize disruption of natural drainage patterns. Vary road grades to reduce concentrated flow in road drainage ditches, culverts, and on fill slopes and road surfaces.

C. **Drainage from Road Surface**

1. Provide adequate drainage from the surface of all permanent and temporary roads. Use outsloped, insloped or crowned roads, installing proper drainage features. Space road drainage features so peak flow on road surface or in ditches will not exceed their capacity.
 - a. Outsloped roads provide means of dispersing water in a low-energy flow from the road surface. Outsloped roads are appropriate when fill slopes are stable, drainage will not flow directly into stream channels, and transportation safety can be met.
 - b. For insloped roads, plan ditch gradients steep enough, generally greater than 2%, but less than 8%, to prevent sediment deposition and ditch erosion. The steeper gradients may be suitable for more stable soils; use the lower gradients for less stable soils.
 - c. Design and install road surface drainage features at adequate spacing to control erosion; steeper gradients require more frequent drainage features.

Properly constructed drain dips can be an economical method of road surface drainage. Construct drain dips deep enough into the sub-grade so that traffic will not obliterate them.

2. For ditch relief/culverts, construct stable catch basins at stable angles. Protect the inflow end of cross-drain culverts from plugging and armor if in erodible soil. Skewing ditch relief culverts 20 to 30 degrees toward the inflow from the ditch will improve inlet efficiency.
3. Provide energy dissipators (rock piles, slash, log chunks, etc.) where necessary to reduce erosion at outlet of drainage features. Cross-drains, culverts, water bars, dips, and other drainage structures should not discharge onto erodible soils or fill slopes without outfall protection.
4. Route road drainage through adequate filtration zones, or other sediment-settling structures. Install road drainage features above stream crossings to route discharge into filtration zones before entering a stream.

D. Construction/Reconstruction

1. Stabilize erodible, exposed soils by seeding, compacting, riprapping, benching, mulching, or other suitable means.
2. At the toe of potentially erodible fill slopes, particularly near stream channels, pile slash in a row parallel to the road to trap sediment. When done concurrently with road construction, this is one method to effectively control sediment movement and it also provides an economical way of disposing of roadway slash. Limit the height, width and length of these “slash filter windrows” so not to impede wildlife movement. Sediment fabric fences or other methods may be used if effective.
3. Construct cut and fill slopes at stable angles to prevent sloughing and subsequent erosion.
4. Avoid incorporating potentially unstable woody debris in the fill portion of the road prism. Where possible, leave existing rooted trees or shrubs at the toe of the fill slope to stabilize the fill.
5. Place debris, overburden, and other waste materials associated with construction and maintenance activities in a location to avoid entry into streams. Include these waste areas in soil stabilization planning for the road.
6. When using existing roads, reconstruct only to the extent necessary to provide adequate drainage and safety; avoid disturbing stable road surfaces. Consider abandoning existing roads when their use would aggravate erosion.

E. Road Maintenance

1. Grade road surfaces only as often as necessary to maintain a stable running surface and to retain the original surface drainage.
2. Maintain erosion control features through periodic inspection and maintenance, including cleaning dips and cross-drains, repairing ditches, marking culvert inlets to aid in location, and clearing debris from culverts.
3. Avoid cutting the toe of cut slopes when grading roads, pulling ditches, or plowing snow.
4. Avoid using roads during wet periods if such use would likely damage the road drainage features. Consider gates, barricades or signs to limit use of roads

during wet periods.

II. RECREATIONAL FACILITIES (parking areas, campsites, trails, ramps, restrooms)

A. Site Design

1. Design a site that best fits the topography, soil type, and stream character, while minimizing soil disturbance and economically accomplishing recreational objectives. Keep roads and parking lots at least 50 feet from water; if closer, mitigate with vegetative buffers as necessary.
2. Locate foot trails to avoid concentrating runoff and provide breaks in grade as needed. Locate trails and parking areas away from natural drainage systems and divert runoff to stable areas. Limit the grade of trails on unstable, saturated, highly erosive, or easily compacted soils
3. Scale the number of boat ramps, campsites, parking areas, bathroom facilities, etc. to be commensurate with existing and anticipated needs. Facilities should not invite such use that natural features will be degraded.
4. Provide adequate barriers to minimize off-road vehicle use

B. Maintenance: Soil Disturbance and Drainage

1. Maintenance operations minimize soil disturbance around parking lots, swimming areas and campsites, through proper placement and dispersal of such facilities or by reseeding disturbed ground. Drainage from such facilities should be promoted through proper grading.
2. Maintain adequate drainage for ramps by keeping side drains functional or by maintaining drainage of road surface above ramps or by crowning (on natural surfaces).
3. Maintain adequate drainage for trails. Use mitigating measures, such as water bars, wood chips, and grass seeding, to reduce erosion on trails.
4. When roads are abandoned during reconstruction or to implement site-control, they must be reseeded and provided with adequate drainage so that periodic maintenance is not required.

III. RAMPS AND STREAM CROSSINGS

A. Legal Requirements

1. Relevant permits must be obtained prior to building bridges across streams or boat ramps. Such permits include the SPA 124 permit, the COE 404 permit, and the DNRC Floodplain Development Permit.

B. Design Considerations

1. Placement of boat ramp should be such that boats can load and unload with out difficulty and the notch in the bank where the ramp was placed does not encourage bank erosion. Extensions of boat ramps beyond the natural bank can also encourage erosion.
2. Adjust the road grade or provide drainage features (e.g. rubber flaps) to reduce the concentration of road drainage to stream crossings and boat ramps. Direct drainage flow through an adequate filtration zone and away from the ramp or crossing through the use of gravel side-drains, crowning (on natural surfaces) or

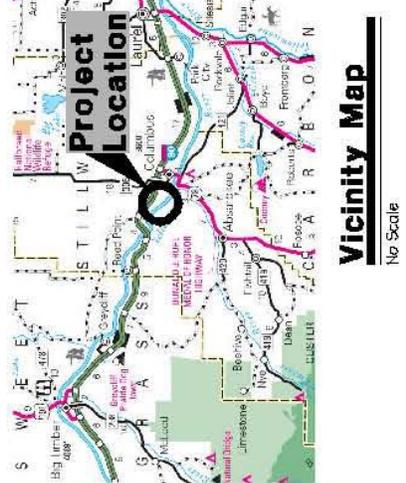
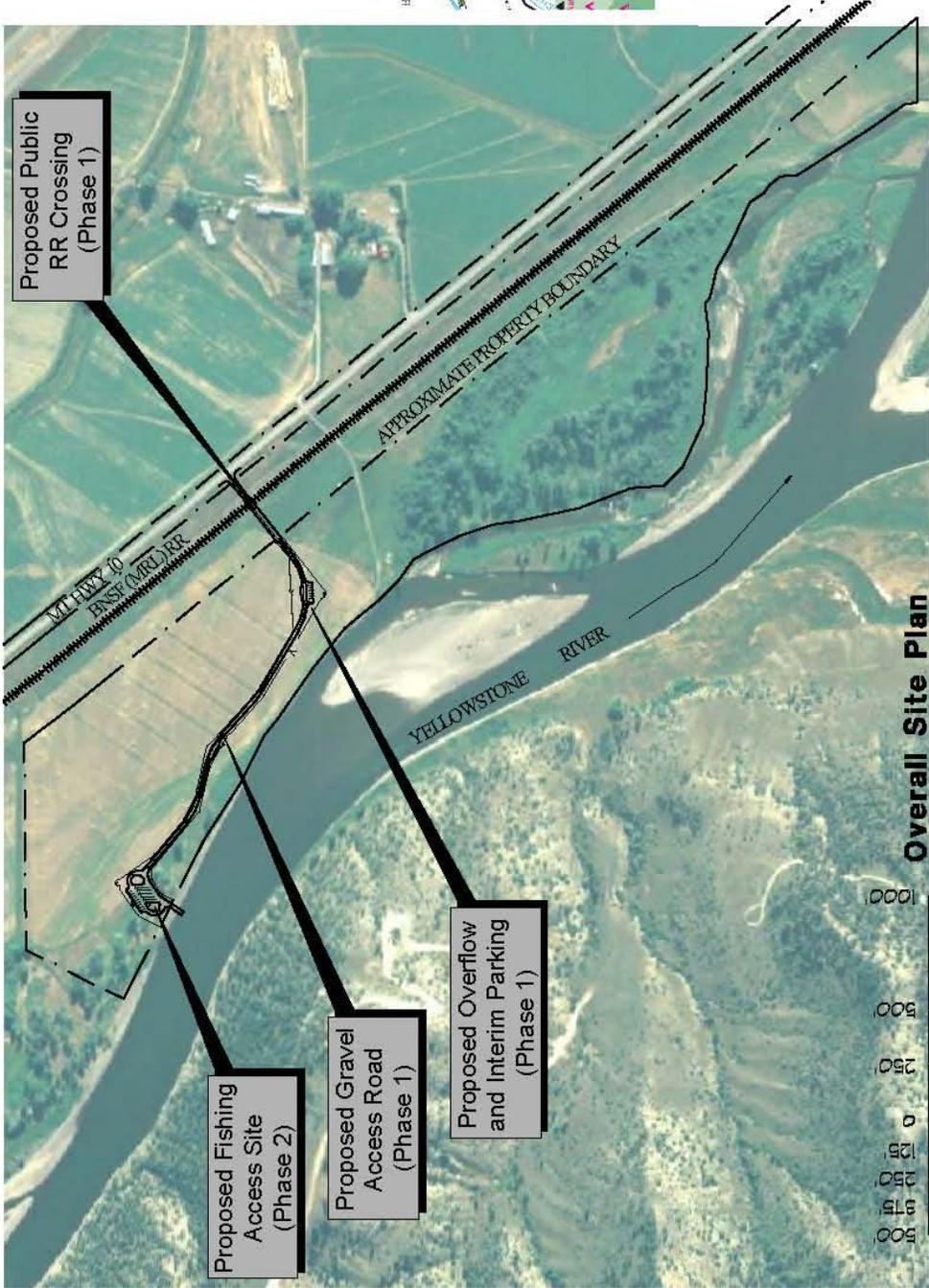
- 30-degree angled grooves on concrete ramps.
3. Avoid unimproved stream crossings on permanent streams. On ephemeral streams, when a culvert or bridge is not feasible, locate drive-throughs on a stable, rocky portion of the stream channel.
 4. Unimproved (non-concrete) ramps should only be used when the native soils are sufficiently gravelly or rocky to withstand the use at the site and to resist erosion.

C. Installation of Stream Crossings and Ramps

1. Minimize stream channel disturbances and related sediment problems during construction of road and installation of stream crossing structures. Do not place erodible material into stream channels. Remove stockpiled material from high water zones. Locate temporary construction bypass roads in locations where the stream course will have a minimal disturbance. Time the construction activities to protect fisheries and water quality.
2. Where ramps enter the stream channel, they should follow the natural streambed in order to avoid changing stream hydraulics and to optimize use of boat trailers.
3. Use culverts with a minimum diameter of 15 inches for permanent stream crossings and cross drains. Proper sizing of culverts may dictate a larger pipe and should be based on a 50-year flow recurrence interval. Install culverts to conform to the natural streambed and slope on all perennial streams and on intermittent streams that support fish or that provide seasonal fish passage. Place culverts slightly below normal stream grade to avoid culvert outfall barriers. Do not alter stream channels upstream from culverts, unless necessary to protect fill or to prevent culvert blockage. Armor the inlet and/or outlet with rock or other suitable material where needed.
4. Prevent erosion of boat ramps and the affected streambank through proper placement (so as to not catch the stream current) and hardening (riprap or erosion resistant woody vegetation).
5. Maintain a 1-foot minimum cover for culverts 18-36 inches in diameter, and a cover of one-third diameter for larger culverts to prevent crushing by traffic.

Appendix 5

Draft FWP Preliminary Concept Plan for Holmgren Ranch FAS



1 of 3 SHEETS

Holmgren FAS
Proposed Site Development



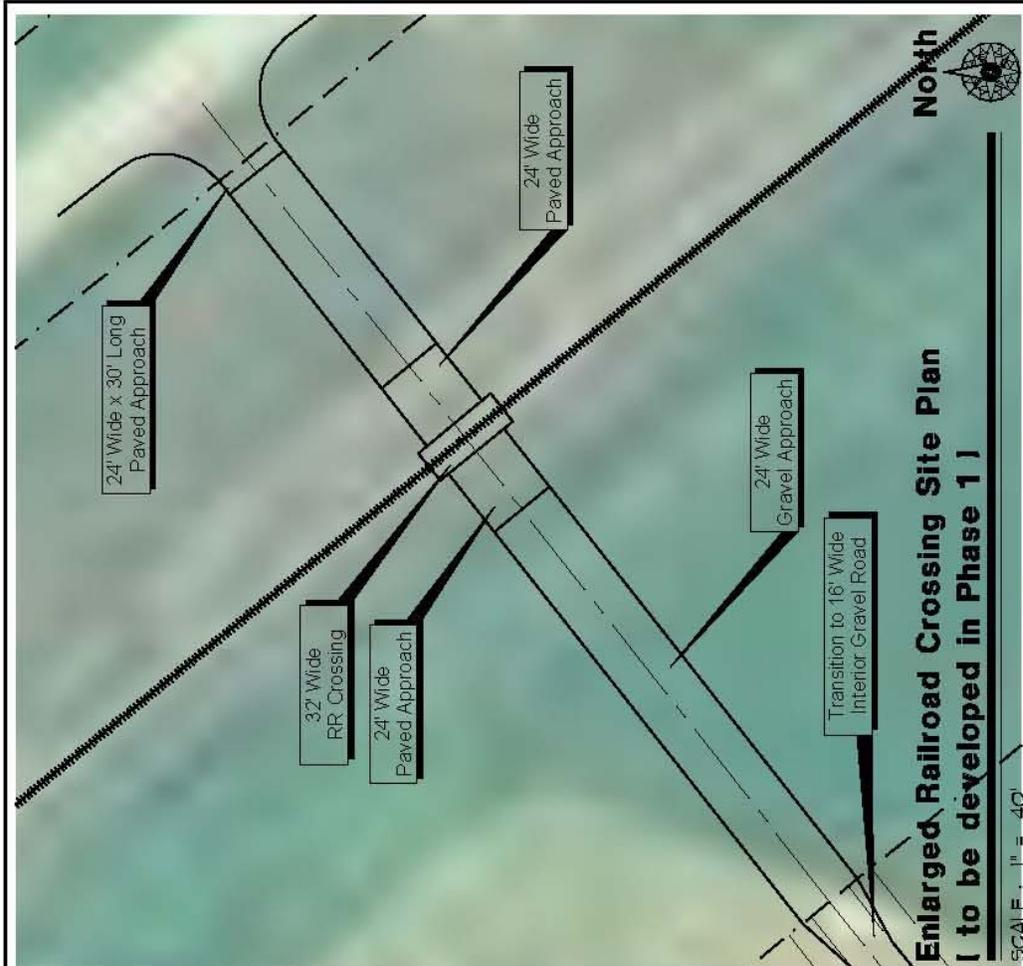
8. Macken DRAWN BY: _____ CHECKED BY: _____ DATE: _____	December 23, 2009 REVISION: _____ DATE: _____	APPROVED BY: _____ DATE: _____
--	---	-----------------------------------



**Enlarged Day Use Area Site Plan
(to be developed in Phase 2)**

SCALE: 1" = 40'

DESIGNED BY	DATE	APPROVED BY	DATE
CHECKED BY	DATE	APPROVED BY	DATE



**Enlarged Railroad Crossing Site Plan
(to be developed in Phase 1)**

SCALE: 1" = 40'

**Monguzzi Fish
Wildlife & Parks**

Holmgren FAS
Proposed Site Development

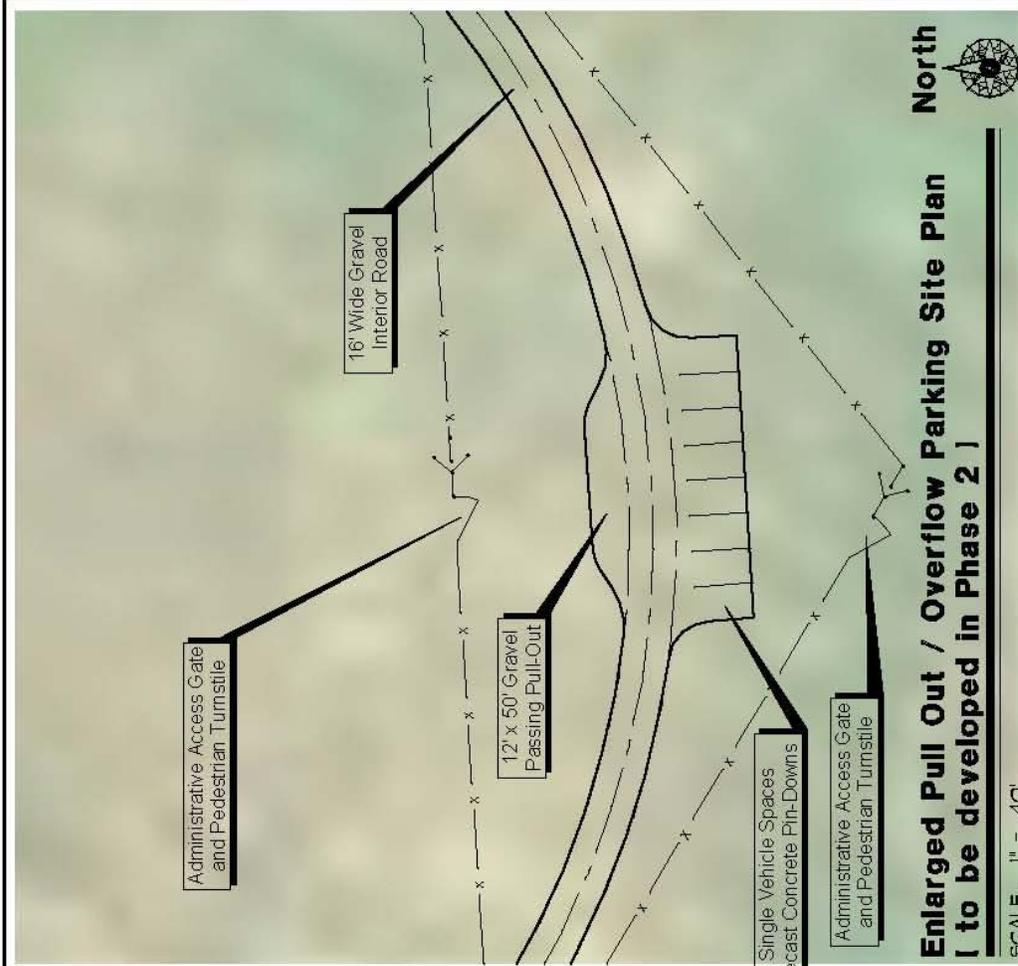
SHEET
2
of
3



**Enlarged Pull Out Site Plan
(to be developed in Phase 1)**

SCALE : 1" = 40'

DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE
DESIGNED BY	APPROVED BY	DESIGNED BY	APPROVED BY
CHECKED BY	DATE	CHECKED BY	DATE



**Enlarged Pull Out / Overflow Parking Site Plan
(to be developed in Phase 2)**

SCALE : 1" = 40'

3
of
3
SHEET

Holmgren FAS
Proposed Site Development