Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

June 7, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) invites the public to comment on a proposal to create a 56-acre wetland and 25 acres of fringe wetlands, along with 125 acres of adjoining upland habitat enhancements to provide habitat for breeding waterfowl, migratory birds, upland game birds, and other game and nongame wildlife species in the Crow Coulee watershed east of Loma, Montana. The project is located on the ABN Ranch (Anderson Ranch).

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

- A public notice in the Great Falls Tribune and associated newspaper outlets in Region 4
- Public notice on the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: *www.fwp.mt.gov*

Copies of this environmental assessment will be distributed to interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project.

Public comment period will run for 21 days (June 9 – June 30, 2011). Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., June 30, 2011 which can be mailed or emailed to the following:

ABN Ranch Wetland Project Proposal
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
4600 Giant Springs Rd.
Great Falls, MT 59405
Or emailed to: cloecker@mt.gov

If you have questions, need additional copies of the draft EA or choose to provide written comments, please contact us at the following address:

Thank you for your interest,

Gary Bertellotti

FWP Region 4 Supervisor
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, MT 59405
(406) 454-5840

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Environmental Assessment

WETLAND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT- ABN RANCH, CHOUTEAU COUNTY
MONTANA MIGRATORY BIRD STAMP PROGRAM

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of proposed state action:
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to create a 56-acre wetland and 25 acres of fringe wetlands, along with 125 acres of adjoining upland habitat enhancements to provide habitat for breeding waterfowl, migratory birds, upland game birds, and other game and nongame wildlife species in the Crow Coulee watershed east of Loma, Montana. The project is located on the ABN Ranch (Anderson Ranch) (Figure 1).

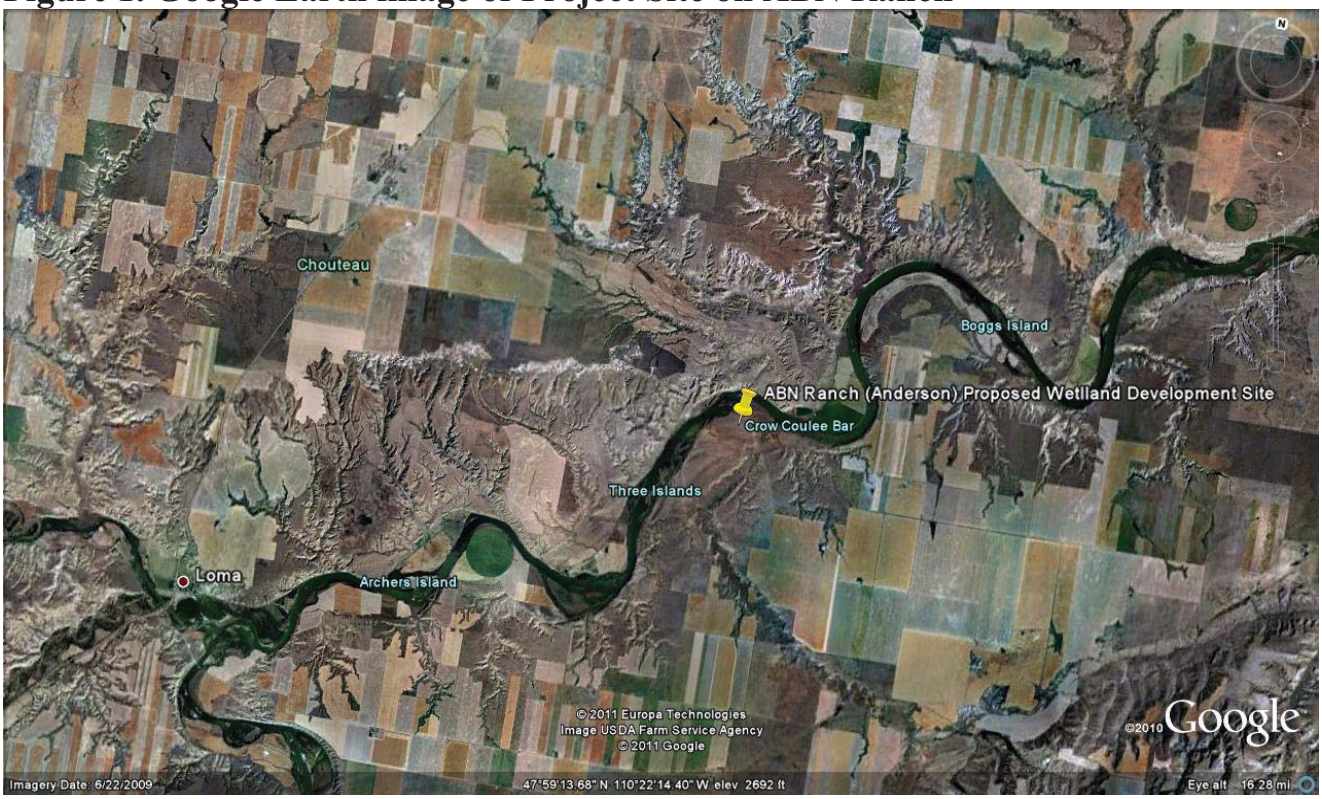
2. Agency authority for the proposed action:
FWP has the authority under Section 87-1-210 MCA to protect, enhance and regulate the use of Montana's fish and wildlife resources for public benefit now and in the future. In addition, Section 87-2-411 directs FWP to expend funds gathered from the sale of migratory game hunting licenses to protect, conserve and develop wetlands in Montana.

3. Location affected by the proposed action:
The ABN Ranch is located in Chouteau County along and south shore of the Missouri River. Project Legal Description is: T26N, R11E, Sections: 28 & 29. As shown in Figure 1, the site is approximately 8 miles east and 3.5 miles north of the Loma Bridge on the Missouri River.

4. Project size:

	Acres			Acres
(a) Developed:		(d)	Floodplain	0
Residential	0			
Industrial	0	(e)	Productive:	
			Irrigated cropland	0
(b) Open Space/ Woodlands/Recreation	0		Dry cropland	0
			Forestry	0
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas	81		Rangeland	125
			Other	0

Figure 1. Google Earth image of Project Site on ABN Ranch



5. Permits, Funding & Overlapping Jurisdictions:

(a) **Permits:** SHPO/Cultural Resources: Will be conducted by PPL Montana

(b) **Funding:** FWP Migratory Bird Stamp Program; PPL Montana Wildlife Mitigation and Enhancement Funding Project 2188; Ducks Unlimited Great Plains Regional Office Project Funding

(c) **Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:** None

6. Narrative summary of the proposed action: See Appendix A

7. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:

<u>Alternative A:</u> No Action

- Site would continue to have essentially no open water and fringe wetlands to provide suitable habitat for waterfowl and other water dependent migratory game birds.
- Productivity of the area from a broad wildlife habitat value perspective would remain unchanged from the current reduced level of wetland/riparian function

Alternative B: Proposed Action

- Enhancement of wetland and open water areas attractive to waterfowl, migratory birds, and other game and nongame species of wildlife.

If the No Action alternative is chosen, ABN Ranch would continue to manage the site as currently use with benefits to livestock production but more limited wildlife habitat value, particularly for wetland-dependent species, than would occur with development of the proposed wetlands.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

Below is the evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?			X			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			1d
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				

1b. Some temporary impacts to soil conditions would occur in relation to construction of the water delivery system and embankment for the wetland. This disturbance would occur only in localized areas. Once ground-disturbing activities were completed, barren areas would naturally revegetate or be reseeded by the project partners to reestablish the native-dominated plant community on the site.
1d. Construction of the proposed development could trap some eroded sediment from the watershed upstream of the project that would otherwise enter the Missouri River during high runoff events. However, this effect would be minor as the design will continue to pass flows directly into the river to maintain sediment sources during most normal runoff periods that are important to the natural hydrologic processes of the Missouri River in this reach.

2. AIR Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)		X				
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 regulations? (Also see 2a.)		N/A				

3. WATER **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT ***					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		X	X			3a
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?			X			3b
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?			X			3c
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?			X			3d
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			3i
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.)		N/A				
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.)		N/A				

3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 3i. As mentioned in Section 1 above, construction of the proposed development could trap some eroded sediment from the watershed upstream of the project that would otherwise enter the Missouri River during high runoff events. However, this effect would be minor as the design will continue to pass flows directly into the river and largely maintain sediment transport during most normal runoff periods that are important to the natural hydrologic processes of the Missouri River in this reach. ABN Ranch maintains livestock water right in this Section and specifically for waters discharging down Crow Coulee into a derelict pit reservoir on the site. These same waters via this right would fill the proposed development and provide livestock water as provided in that right. There are no downstream water users on Crow Coulee, either senior or junior to the ABN Ranch water right.

4. VEGETATION Will the proposed action result in?	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?		X				
b. Alteration of a plant community?			X			4b
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
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?		N/A				

4b. Equipment ground disturbance during the construction phase of the project may alter plant communities in the short term. Further, some areas within the proposed project area will convert from upland to wetland vegetation. Impacts to sagebrush and plant species of concern will be minor (if any), however given that the site has very little silver or big sagebrush and no known plant species of concern. In addition, because wetland types support many of the state's rarest plant species, benefits to the overall plant communities on the project area are expected to be more positive than negative in terms of plant biodiversity.

4e. The ABN Ranch manages noxious weeds ranch-wide. Any noxious weed infestations that result from construction and maintenance of the proposed wetland project site will be incorporated into their already-existing weed management activities for this portion of the ranch.

5. FISH/WILDLIFE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?			X			5b
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?			X			5c
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				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
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.)		N/A				
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.)		N/A				

5 b/c. Presence of the proposed wetland and fringe wetlands resulting from the proposed action is expected to increase the number of species, number of individual animals, and period of use of this site by waterfowl, other migratory birds, and other wildlife above the current condition. These anticipated increases are believed to be a primary benefit that may result from this project and serve as one of the primary justifications for the Proposed Action. However, the concentration of birds on the wetland area is not expected to negatively or significantly impact the Physical Environment.

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT ***					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
a. Increases in existing noise levels?		X				
b. Exposure of people to serve 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				

The proposed action would have no effect on existing noise level since there would be no change in the level of activity on the ranch.

7. LAND USE **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT ***					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
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				

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT ***					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
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				
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				
d. For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		N/A				

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
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				

The proposed action would have no effect on local communities, increase traffic hazards, or alter the distribution of population in the area.

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
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				
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				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?		X				
e. **Define projected revenue sources		X				
f. **Define projected maintenance costs.		X				

11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?			X			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				
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.)		X				

11a. Domestic livestock and signs of livestock use on the project site may be objectionable to some segments of the public, however the project site has been grazed in the past because it is private land that is part of an active cattle ranch. However, grazing is very limited on the project area and has resulted in establishment of extensive areas of dense nesting cover that would surround the proposed wetland development.

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT ***					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
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.)		N/A				

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE **Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:**	**IMPACT ***					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
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				
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.)		N/A				
g. For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		N/A				

Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency: The wetland management agreement between FWP and the ABN Ranch would include stipulations regarding grazing management on the site as well as mutually agreeable levels of public recreation on the site, including hunting, fishing, river access and wildlife viewing.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The proposed wetland development on the ABN Ranch will be used to improve wetland habitat conditions for waterfowl, migratory birds, and other game and nongame wildlife particularly during the spring, summer, and fall time periods. The proposed project is not expected to have significant impacts on the physical or human environment. Identified impacts are expected to be very minor and of short duration. The project is expected to benefit wildlife and habitat conditions for the long-term.

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:

- A public notice in the Great Falls Tribune and associated newspaper outlets in Region 4
- Public notice on the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: *www.fwp.mt.gov*

Copies of this environmental assessment will be distributed to interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project. This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having limited and very minor impacts, which can be mitigated.

2. Duration of comment period:

Public comment period will run for 21 days (June 9 – June 30, 2011). Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., June 30, 2011 and can be mailed or emailed to the following:

ABN Ranch Wetland Project Proposal
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
4600 Giant Springs Rd.
Great Falls, MT 59405
or email to: cloecker@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.** It has been determined that no significant impacts to the physical and human environment will result due to the proposed action alternative, nor will there be significant public controversy over the proposed action; therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

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

Tom Hinz, Coordinator
Montana Wetlands Legacy Partnership
1400 South Nineteenth Ave.
Bozeman, MT 59718
Phone: (406) 994-7889
Email: thinz@mt.gov

Cory Loecker
Wildlife Biologist
4600 Giant Springs Rd.
Great Falls, MT 59405
Phone: (406) 454-5840
Email: cloecker@mt.gov

APPENDIX A

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Migratory Bird Stamp Program - Project Proposal

1. **Proposed Project Title:** ABN Ranch (Anderson Ranch) Wetland Development Project

2. **Location:** Project site is at T26N, R11E, Section 28 & 29 located 8 miles east and 3.5 miles north of the Missouri River bridge at Loma, Chouteau County, Montana

3. **Landowner/manager's name, address, and phone number:** Rick Anderson; ABN Ranch, P.O. Box 1116; Fort Benton, Montana 59442; Phone: (406) 739-4226

4. **Description of project purpose (include map; describe water source and water rights as appropriate)**

   Purpose of the project is to restore, enhance, and develop new wetlands on the Missouri River floodplain using water rights previously dedicated to that purpose under the auspices of a Northern Great Plains Project. The original Great Plains project was designed to deliver water to both the east and west cells of what is now the new proposed project area to irrigate during spring runoff and high runoff events. PPL Montana has previously funded a project to irrigate wildlife food plots and dense nesting cover plots and to develop wetlands on the site. .

5. **Will the project area be protected by cooperative agreement, easement, or fee title acquisition?**

   Project will be protected by a cooperative agreement for the duration of the project between the landowner and FWP and USFWS, PPL Montana, and other project partners

6. **What is the proposed length of the agreement?** 10 years

7. **Estimated cost to FWP Migratory bird stamp program** $50,000

8. **Partner agencies and organizations providing funding - dollar value of their commitments**

PPL Montana	$120,000
USFWS	$0
DU	$1,000
FWP	$50,000

9. **What is the projected total project cost inclusive of all funding sources?**

   Approximately $175,000 for the first phase of the project

10. **Will the stamp dollars proposed for the project be used as match for grants either existing or future? If so, please indicate when and how the match will be used**

    MBSP funds for this project will be used to match contributions from PPL Montana, DU, and possibly other project partners.

11. **Would you categorize this as primarily a protection, enhancement, or restoration project?**

    This is a hybrid enhancement and development project. While the site does not contain historical depressional wetlands, it is Missouri River floodplain and still has small amounts of riparian wetlands.

12. **Current land use and condition of site; if grazing will be allowed, what is planned and how will weeds, including noxious weeds, be managed?**

    The project site is managed primarily as wildlife habitat including planted nesting cover, food plots, and water retained in pit reservoir. Grazing, although allowed on the site, is limited so as to maintain dense cover for upland game birds, nesting waterfowl and other wildlife habitat benefits. Weed management is accomplished through a combination of biological control, chemical control, and grazing management.

13. **What are the total project acres? Please provide legal description including county; township, range, section; and ownership/acreage for each landowner or land mgmt. agency with lands to be covered by the agreement**

    Sponsors of the project intend to construct approximately 56 acres of open water habitat, an additional 25 acres of wetland fringe habitat, and enhance 125 acres of uplands with potential additional new wetlands developing as the water saturates the area. Project site is at T26N, R11E, Section 28 & 29 which is 8 miles east and 3.5 miles north of the Missouri River Bridge at Loma, Chouteau County, Montana.

14. **List total wetland acres to be protected, restored, restored, or enhanced**

    At least 56 acres of open water habitat is planned. More may be result once primary wetlands are flooded and soils become saturated.

15. **List total upland acres to be included in the project area with a breakdown of acreage by the following types: grassland, shrubland, forested, crop/hayland, or native vegetation**

    125 acres of planted nesting cover (grassland) will surround the wetland areas.

16. **If the project is a riparian area, list miles of stream to be affected by this agreement**

    Riparian area along the south side of the Missouri River adjoining this project is approximately 2.4 miles in length.

17. **List species of fish and amphibians present or that utilize the site on a seasonal basis**

    PPL Montana studies have documented Western toad, Northern leopard frog, Blue racer, Spiny softshells, and other native herptiles in this reach of the Missouri River. All fish native to this reach of the Missouri are found adjacent to this property. Crow Coulee does not have a resident or spawning population of fish.

18. List species of special concern that are present or utilize the site on a seasonal basis

Townsend's Big-eared bat; Great Blue Heron, Bald Eagle, Brewer's Sparrow, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Spiny softshell turtle, Blue Sucker, Peregrine falcon, Sturgeon Chub, Paddlefish, Sauger, and Pallid Sturgeon.

19. Does the project site include streams and if so, do these streams provide spawning habitat for resident or migratory fish? Do the streams on the site have a history of being chronically or occasionally de-watered?

There is no known fishery or presence of resident, spawning, or migratory fish in Crow Coulee which is an intermittent stream.

20. Proposed agreement start date; proposed agreement expiration date; what are your plans to extend agreement into longer term or perpetual wetland protection?

Agreement is planned to begin sometime in 2011 and would expire in 2021. Longer term or perpetual protection of the site by the ranch will be an ongoing discussion that the current owners are receptive to. Additional restoration work through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and others may add to the wetland base needed long-term protection on this site.

21. Will FWP be lead agency/organization on this project? If not, who will be?

FWP will maintain an agreement with the ranch for the duration of the project which allows access to the site to assess its condition, needs for repair or enhancement, and to conduct bird or other wildlife surveys as needed. All access will be by prior permission of the landowner(s) only. PPL and DU will be the lead organizations for the project.

22. Water history and availability – please provide a brief description of your understanding of the quantity, source, etc. of surface and/or ground water necessary to maintain this wetland project once it's constructed

Crow Coulee is a watershed of approximately 15 square miles. As a result, it experiences intermittent high water events during runoff periods which have damaged the old Northern Great Plains project infrastructure. Water quality is adequate for livestock and wildlife based on observations at the existing pit reservoir on the site.

23. Proximity to other wildlife and fisheries habitat conservation areas; e.g. WMA's, refuges, fishing access sites

The site is approximately eight miles east and 3.5 miles north of the Loma Bridge BLM development which has dedicated wildlife habitat areas and public access for recreation. It is within the Department of Interior's designated Missouri Breaks National Monument.

24. What public benefits will the project provide? What will be the public access and allowable recreational activities on the site at various times of year?

The ranch allows access for hunting and fishing on a limited basis and will continue to do so as part of their commitment to this project and public enjoyment of it.

25. Please provide information that you have on hand regarding the migratory birds and other wildlife that occur on the area now or will likely use the area as habitat once the project is constructed. Are there any species that you expect may be negatively impacted?

Migratory birds using the site include breeding passerine birds common to the area, Canada geese, mallards, and other waterfowl adapted to nesting in floodplain areas. Creation of the enhanced wetland areas is expected to attract larger numbers and a greater diversity of riparian and wetland species that breed in the general vicinity and that migrate along the Missouri during spring and fall.

26. What are the current human uses of the area?

The Missouri River adjacent to the property is used for hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, floating, and other-water based recreation. Ranch property is primarily used for agriculture and limited hunting and fishing. Limited grazing occurs on the area.

27. Include digital pictures of the proposed project site(s)

See images in APPENDIX

28. Environmental and cultural resource impacts – level of review proposed; time frame expected for completion

Region 4 will complete a MEPA EA checklist for the project; PPL and USFWS will provide cultural resource assessment, NEPA, and other compliance required by the 2188 and PFFW programs.

29. Wetland permitting requirements (e.g. 310, 404)– time frame for obtaining

PPL and DU as primary project sponsors will assess permits needed for construction and assist landowner in obtaining them.

30. Other considerations of which you'd like to make this proposal's reviewers aware

This project is part of PPL Montana's habitat wildlife protection and enhancement program along the Madison-Missouri required by FERC through its issuance of a 40-year license for operations of PPL's 9 mainstem dams on these rivers. Due to the changes in the Missouri River floodplain and riparian wetlands since these dams were installed, restoration and enhancement of floodplain wetlands is challenging. This site is one of a very few in this reach of the river that lends itself to this type of restoration and enhancement. As such, PPL and its partners in this project are very supportive of completing this 2-phase project as designed by Ducks Unlimited.

This project is endorsed by the FWP Region 4 Management Team and signed by:

_____, **Regional Supervisor**
Gary Bertellotti

Name of Project Sponsor:
Cory Loecker
Wildlife Biologist
MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks
4600 Giant Springs Rd.
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Date submitted: 3/25/2011