

Draft
Environmental Assessment
Trident-Peregrine Birding Trail
Missouri Headwaters State Park



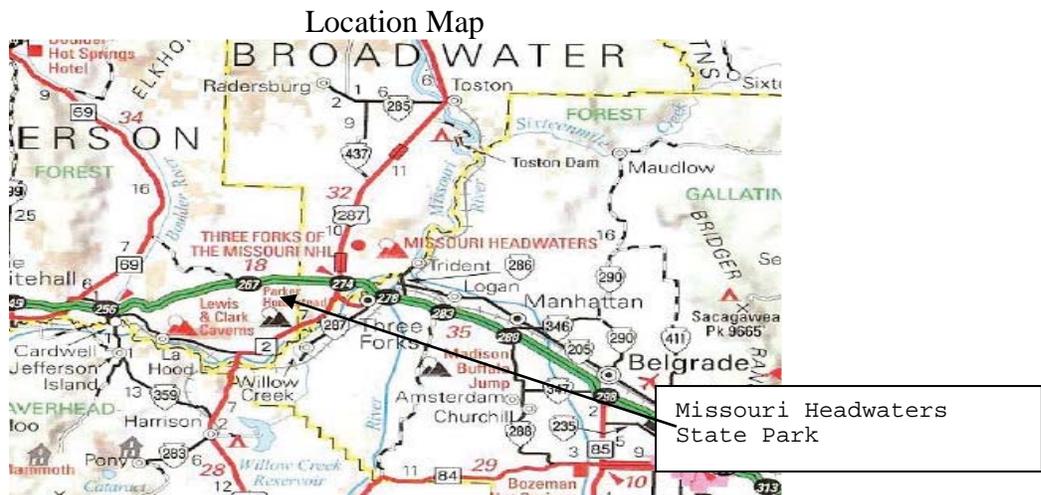
June 2016



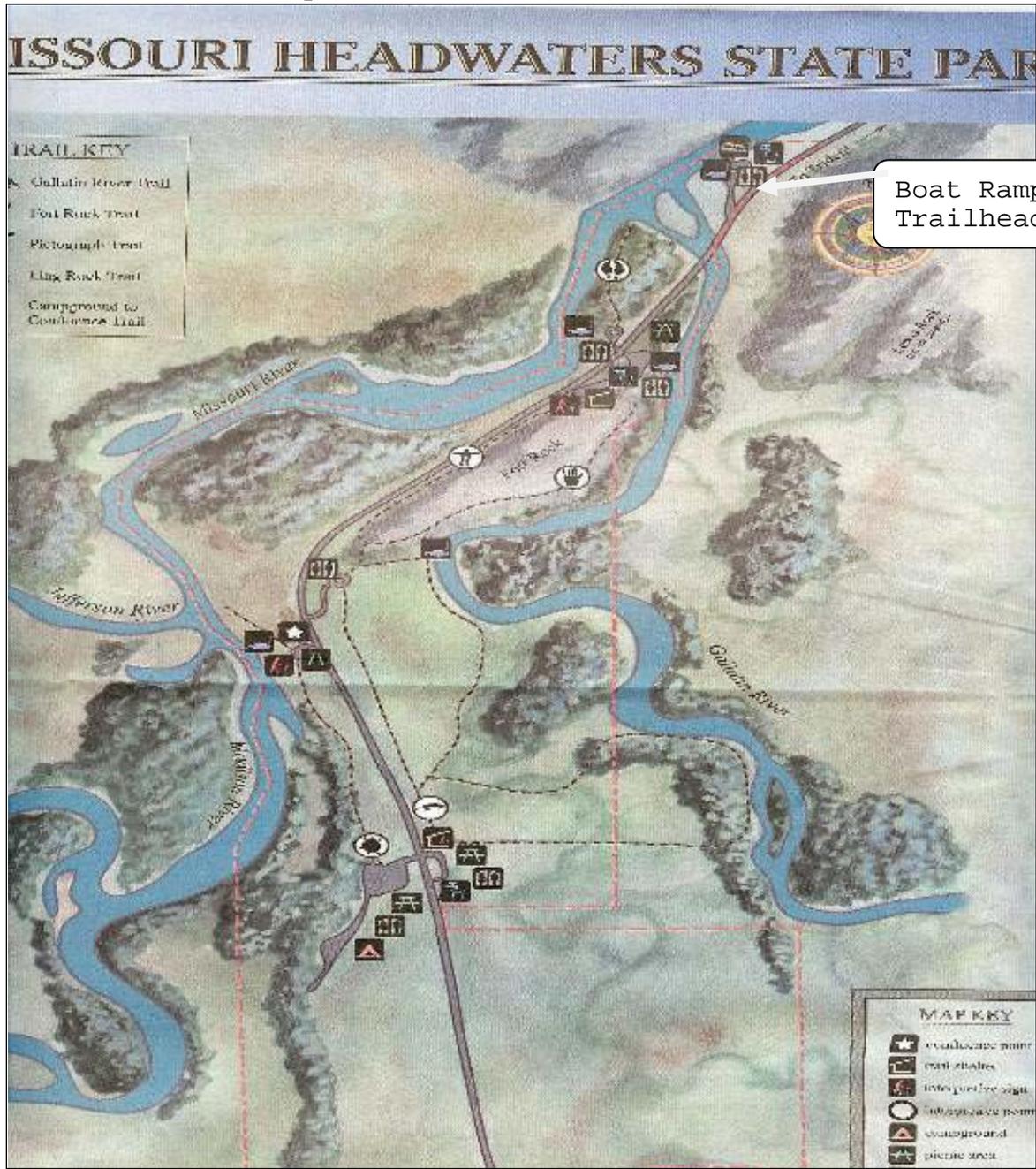
Draft Environmental Assessment MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

- 1. Type of proposed state action:** Develop and construct a walking pedestrian trail at the Northern area of Missouri Headwaters State Park. This is a cooperative project between Montana State Parks, CRH - Trident Cement Plant, Sacajawea Audubon Society and Montana State University. Additionally, \$25,000 was awarded for the project by Northwestern Energy through its Missouri-Madison River Fund program. The land on which the trail is proposed was donated by CRH-Trident Cement Plant's predecessor Ideal Cement Company in 1966 and is now an important area of the park; this trail project demonstrates the importance of the donation and illustrates the high quality natural resources contained there. Montana State Parks greatly appreciates the cooperation and contributions made by all of the partners to design and construct this birding trail.
- 2. Agency authority for the proposed action:** Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks, Montana State Parks Division. MSP has the authority to develop outdoor recreational resources in the state per Section 23-2-101, Montana Code Annotated (MCA). The public involvement for this EA follows Section 23-1-110 MCA and Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) 12.2.433.
- 3. Anticipated Schedule:**
Estimated Commencement Date: July 2016
Estimated Completion Date: August 2016
Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 20%
- 4. Location affected by proposed action (county, range and township – included map):** Gallatin County; T2N R2E, Section 9



Map of Missouri Headwaters State Park



Boat Ramp and Trailhead



Site plan for Proposed Project

5. **Project size -- estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:**

	<u>Acres</u>		<u>Acres</u>
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	<u>0.03</u>
Residential	<u>0</u>		
Industrial	<u>0</u>	(e) Productive:	
(existing shop area)		Irrigated cropland	<u>0</u>
(b) Open Space/ Woodlands/Recreation	<u>.03</u>	Dry cropland	<u>0</u>
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas	<u>0</u>	Forestry	<u>0</u>
		Rangeland	<u>0</u>
		Other	<u>0</u>

6. Permits, Funding & Overlapping Jurisdiction.

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

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permits</u>
Floodplain Permit from Gallatin County Planning Division.	

(b) **Funding:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
Northwestern Energy River Fund	\$25,000
CRH-Trident Plant (Materials, In-Kind Labor)	\$ 5,500

7. Narrative summary of the proposed action:

Missouri Headwaters State Park is a 506 acre cultural park located at the confluence of the Jefferson, Madison and Gallatin rivers which forms the Missouri River in south central Montana. The Park includes several day-use areas, a boat-launch, latrines, and a campground with 17 camping sites, restroom facilities, and several hiking trails (see map above).

The Park is a popular destination for local people from Three Forks, Manhattan, Logan, Bozeman and other parts of Gallatin County who use the park for a nearby get away, to camp, fish, float the rivers or go for a hike. The park also attracts visitors passing through this area on their way to and from Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks as well as other scenic attractions located in Montana. Visitation to this park is over 30,000 visitors per year. Given the significance of this area for Lewis & Clark expedition of 1804-06, Missouri Headwaters State Park is a National Historic Landmark and was Montana's 1976 National Bicentennial site.

Missouri Headwaters State Park is also an established Important Birding Area (IBA) by the Audubon Society and attracts birders from all over the country as well as internationally. Just downstream of the confluence of Gallatin River with the Missouri are limestone cliffs which have one of Montana's most successful nesting sites for peregrine falcons. On those same cliffs is one of the rare places in Montana where a group of canyon wrens live all year around. Our proposed action with this birding trail would provide access for the public to view these cliffs and birds from a safe distance and not disturb them. This overall trail project was designed by Montana State University's Landscape Design students as part of their Capstone Service Learning course.

Only the portion of the trail contained within Missouri Headwaters State Park is being evaluated in this Environmental Assessment. Other portions of the trail are proposed to be constructed on CRH property adjacent to the park but are outside of the scope of this EA.

The proposed project will fulfill the following needs:

- Allow people of all abilities to have a safe, healthy and enjoyable outdoor recreational experience while observing the birds and other wildlife.
- Allow children to connect to nature in a safe and easily accessible location.
- Interpret Montana's natural, historical and cultural resources.

This EA addresses the proposed action to construct a new pedestrian trail on and install accompanying trail side facilities on lands within Missouri Headwaters State Park (MHSP). The trail head will be accessible from the existing gravel parking lot at the MHSP's boat launch site. From there, the trail will traverse flat ground paralleling the Missouri River for 1/8 mile. The

proposed trail will end in a small designated viewing area that provides superior views of the Missouri River and the limestone cliffs on the opposite side of the river. The trail and viewing area will be hardened with crushed limestone material supplied and installed by CRH – Trident Cement Plant. The trail will be moderately accessible to those with mobility issues. FWP engineers will work with the existing topography and site conditions to make the completed trail as accessible as possible.

In addition to the trail this proposed project includes installation of trailside facilities to enhance the visitor's experience. Specifically these trailside amenities include;

- Trail head signage to provide safety information and convey what wildlife and birds can be seen in the area. The location of resting spots and viewing areas will be indicated on the signs for the benefit of visitors. Signage will also recognize the partners involved in this cooperative project and their valuable contributions.
- An interpretative sign and bench at the viewing area at the end of the trail.
- A shade structure sheltering a picnic table in proximity to the trail head.

Need for the Action: Action is needed to accommodate the increased interest and number of visitors to Missouri Headwaters State Park that want to use the proposed project area to experience views of the Missouri River and birds using the limestone cliffs across its waters. MT State Parks wants to provide safe and sustainable access to the area while maintaining a safe distance for the public away from the birds and other wildlife.

Objectives for the Action(s); To increase user safety, enjoyment and appreciation of Montana's natural resources through this cooperative project. To provide an outdoor wildlife experience to those who are physically challenged and/or have impaired mobility, and because of these conditions, are excluded from much of Montana's picturesque beauty and fantastic wildlife. To harden and protect an area which is already seeing visitor use.

8. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action

The No Action alternative would be to not construct the trail. Park visitors would continue to use the existing unimproved mowed route and would not be afforded the proposed trail amenities. The opportunity to cultivate visitor appreciation of Montana's wildlife heritage, and communicate to them the geological, cultural and historical significance of the area would not be enhanced.

Alternative B: Proposed Action

The proposed action is to grade a 5 foot wide and approximately 660 feet long trail corridor and place crushed and compacted limestone to harden the trail. The trail would end in a 100 square foot viewing area. Interpretative signage, benches, and a picnic table will be installed along the trail as envisioned by Montana State University's Landscape Design Department. A shade structure will be constructed to shield the picnic table from direct sunlight. The picnic table will meet ADA standards allowing use by people with disabilities and those using wheel chairs. At the trail head, an informational kiosk would be installed to communicate to trail users the geological, cultural and natural significance of the area; alert them to potential safety hazards, and inform them of trail length. Recognition of partners in the project will also be included. At

the viewing area, an interpretative sign highlighting the birds commonly seen in the area will be installed as well as a resting bench. This alternative provides trail users with the safest and most educational experience.

All signage will be cooperatively designed by Sacajawea Audubon Society, CRH – Trident Cement Plant, Montana State Parks, and Northwestern Energy.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

V. EVALUATION OF IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The proposed actions at Missouri Headwaters State Park would result in a footprint of disturbance or affected area of approximately 3,300 square feet. For purposes of this Environmental Assessment only the Proposed Action on Montana State Parks property will be discussed.

1. Land Resources

Impacts of Proposed Action: The proposed project will have limited impacts on the soils in the area due to material being added on top of existing soils. Construction will be limited to removing topsoil and grading to ensure proper drainage and improve accessibility. Proper erosion control measures will be used during construction to prevent runoff. FWP project managers will ensure best practices and regulations are followed. Any excess soil will be removed from the project area and relocated to other areas of the park where fill is needed.

2. Air

Impacts of Proposed Action: Air quality would be minimally impacted temporarily during construction of the proposed improvements and would return to normal levels after construction.

3. Water

Impacts of Proposed Action: The location of the proposed trail is near the banks of the Missouri River. FWP would ensure that Best Management Practices are employed during construction to minimize erosion. The project area is located within a designated floodplain; FWP will obtain proper flood permits with Gallatin County prior to construction.

4. Vegetation

Impacts of the Proposed Action: The proposed project would require clearing some vegetation, mostly native grasses. The area of disturbance would be minor and located near previously disturbed areas. To mitigate these impacts, FWP will plant native vegetation in disturbed areas and continue to manage the area for noxious weeds. The proposed project will likely have a positive impact on the area by providing a clearly identified route for visitors to follow thereby reducing establishment of social trails. No wetlands or riparian vegetation would be disturbed.

5. Fish/Wildlife

Impacts of the Proposed Action: Parks staff has consulted with FWP Fisheries Biologist Ron Spoon and he provided: “I see no potential for fishery or streambank issues that would result from the project. The river is relatively stable at this location and has low potential to impact the new trail. No 124 permit would be needed for this work.”

Parks staff consulted with FWP area Wildlife Biologist Julie Cunningham and she did not see any concerns regarding wildlife due to this proposed project.

VI. EVALUATION OF IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

1. Noise Effects

Impacts of the Proposed Action: There would be temporary noise related to construction of the trail and trail side amenities. Noise levels will return to normal after completion of the project.

2. Land Use

Impacts of the Proposed Action: The proposed action will not impact land use as this area is currently used as a trail and for birding. .

3. Risk/Health Hazards

Impacts of the Proposed Action: The proposed trail will not create risk or safety hazards. Parks staff will ensure public access is restricted during construction to prevent the public from being injured by construction activities.

4. Community Impact

Impacts of the Proposed Action: The proposed action is minor in scope and would not impact the community. Any impacts will be positive in improving public access and improving outdoor recreation opportunities and education. This project is a positive cooperative project involving conservation groups, local industry, state-wide industry, and state agencies.

5. Public Services/Taxes/Utilities

Impacts of the Proposed Action: There would be no substantial alteration in the need for public services or utilities as a result of the proposed action. There would be no change in taxes. Maintenance costs associated with the proposed action would be minor and well within normal operations capacity for the park.

6. Aesthetics/Recreation

Impacts of the Proposed Action: The proposed project will improve recreational activities and is designed to blend in with the environment. Care will be taken to select trail amenities in natural earth tone colors to maintain a natural and pleasing look.

7. Cultural/Historical Resources

Impacts of the Proposed Action: In accordance with the Montana Antiquities Act (22-3-421 to 22-3-442) and with FWPs ARM rules (12.8.501 to 12.8.10), a heritage resource review was conducted by MT State Parks. State Parks' Heritage Resources Program Manager Sara Scott determined that the project area was professionally surveyed for cultural resources in 2000 by Renewable Technologies Incorporated and again in 2012 by Ethnoscience. No cultural features were identified during these two surveys. Sara Scott personally surveyed the project area in May 2016 and found no indication of historic or archeological sites. She has determined that the project should have no effect on significant heritage sites.

Sara Scott submitted her determinations to the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in a letter detailing her findings and requesting concurrence on May 10, 2016. SHPO has concurred that the proposed project will have no effect to historic properties (see Exhibit C for SHPO concurrence letter).

VII. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE AND NEED FOR EIS

As a result of the proposed project being small in size and located in previously disturbed areas within Missouri Headwaters State Park, the impacts to the physical and human environments would be minimal. FWP will mitigate these minimal, adverse impacts by replacing soil and planting native vegetation on any disturbed areas. This project would positively impact local and statewide recreation and tourism related to hiking and wildlife viewing. Based on this analysis, an Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of analysis and an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The public notice and participation outlined below is appropriate for a project of this scope having limited impacts, which can be mitigated. The public will be notified about this EA and the opportunity to comment through the following actions:

- Two public notices will be published in the *Bozeman Chronicle* and *Helena Independent Record*
- One statewide press release
- Public notice on the Montana State Parks web page: <http://stateparks.mt.gov/>

The public comment period will extend for (30) thirty days and written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., Friday, July 15th, 2016. The public can submit written comments to Trident-Peregrine Trail Project, FWP Region 3 Headquarters, 1400 19th Ave SO, Bozeman, MT 59718, or email to mmarcinek@mt.gov.

PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR PREPARING THIS EA

Dave Andrus, Park Manager Missouri Headwaters State Park
Montana State Parks
1585 Trident Road
Three Forks, MT 59752
daveandrus@mt.gov

Matt Marcinek, Region Three Regional Parks Manager
Montana State Parks
1400 S. 19th Ave So
Bozeman, MT, 59718
mmarcinek@mt.gov

List of agencies or offices consulted during preparation of the EA:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
 Parks Division
 Wildlife Division
 Fisheries Division
 Design & Construction Bureau
 Responsive Management Bureau
Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
Montana Department of Commerce – Tourism

APPENDIX A
23-1-110 MCA
PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

Date: 4/15/16

Person Reviewing: Dave Andrus

Project Location: Missouri Headwaters State Park

Description of Proposed Work: The proposed action is to grade a 5 foot wide and approximately 660 feet long trail with compacted limestone to harden the trail. The trail will end in a 100 ft² viewing area. Interpretative signage, benches, and a picnic table will be installed along the trail. A shade structure will be constructed to shield the picnic table from direct sunlight.

The following checklist is intended to be a guide for determining whether a proposed development or improvement is of enough significance to fall under 23-1-110 rules.

- A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?
Comments: An existing mowed pathway already exists; the proposed project would harden the existing route with gravel to improve all weather access.
- B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?
Comments: No buildings will be built. Proposed trailside amenities are less than 100 sf.
- C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?
Comments: In the proposed project approximately 40 c.y. of existing topsoil will be removed to prepare the grade for the trail. Any soil not needed for leveling will be removed from the area and used elsewhere in the park for fill.
- D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?
Comments: Project will utilize an existing parking area. No changes will be made to the existing parking area as there is adequate capacity to accommodate trails users.
- E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a doublewide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?
Comments: No alternations will be made to the shoreline.
- F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?
Comments: No construction will be made into the river.
- G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?
Comments: Three separate surveys were completed in the project area and no cultural artifacts were found. A concurrence letter from SHPO is included as Exhibit C.
- H. Any new above ground utility lines?
Comments:
- I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?
Comments:
- J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern; including effects of a series of individual projects?
Comments:

If any of the above are checked, 23-1-110 MCA 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 B

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:

Jeri Duran, Director of Sales & Constituent Services
Montana Office of Tourism-Department of Commerce
301 S. Park Ave.
Helena, MT 59601

Project Name: Missouri Headwaters State Park Trident Peregrine Birding Trail

Project Description: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), State Parks Division proposes to construct a walking pedestrian trail with accompanying trail side facilities on park property at the northern end of Missouri Headwaters State Park. This trail will provide river access to the Missouri River and provide wildlife enthusiasts a unique opportunity to view a limestone cliff face on the opposite bank which is home to various bird species, including Peregrine Falcons who nest on the cliff face.

Total estimated cost to complete trail construction is. \$52,000.00

1. Would this site development project have an impact on the tourism economy?
NO YES
If YES, briefly describe: This project would have a positive impact on tourism by enhancing the popular activity of bird watching currently occurring at Missouri Headwaters State Park.
2. Does this impending improvement alter the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings?
NO YES
If YES, briefly describe: This project will improve the quality of the experience of bird watching by providing a harden trail surface and trail side amenities allowing for a more enjoyable experience.

Signature

Jeri Bucy Date *4/22/16*

APPENDIX C

State Historic Preservation Office Concurrence Letter

Big Sky. Big Land. Big History.
Montana
Historical Society

*Historic Preservation
Museum
Outreach & Interpretation
Publications
Research Center*

May 20, 2016

Sara Scott
Travelers' Rest State Park
P.O. Box 995
Lolo, MT 59847

Re: Missouri River Headwaters State Park Birding Trail
Gallatin County, Montana

Dear Ms. Scott:

Thank you for the letter, received May 13, 2016, regarding the proposed Missouri River Headwaters State Park Birding Trail project in Gallatin County, Montana. Based on the information provided, we concur that 24GA1505 is Not Eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and that this undertaking will have No Effect to Historic Properties.

If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me at (406)444-0388 or JBush2@mt.gov. Thank you for consulting with us.

Sincerely,



Jessica Bush, M.A.
Review and Compliance Officer
Montana State Historic Preservation Office