Draft
Environmental Assessment

REED & BOWLES
FISHING ACCESS SITE
IMPROVEMENTS

January 2003

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Reed & Bowles Fishing Access Site Improvements
Draft Environmental Assessment
MEPA/NEPA/MCA 23-1-110 Checklist

Draft

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. **Type of proposed state action:** Construct entry road, cul-de-sac with a six-stall parking area; install road barriers, latrine, perimeter fencing, screening and signs; install foot bridge across irrigation ditch and clear about 200' of trail.

2. **Agency authority for the proposed action:** The 1977 Montana Legislature enacted statute 87-1-605, which directs Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) to acquire, develop and operate a system of fishing accesses. The legislature established an earmarked funding account to ensure that this function would be accomplished.

3. **Name of project:** Reed and Bowles Fishing Access Site Improvements

4. **Name, address and phone number of project sponsor (if other than the agency):** Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks is the project sponsor**.**

5. **If applicable:**
   Estimated Construction/Commencement Date: Fall 2003 or Spring 2004
   Estimated Completion Date: Summer 2004
   Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 75%

6. **Location affected by proposed action (county, range and township):**
   The Reed & Bowles Fishing Access Site (FAS) can be reached by traveling north of Lewistown on Joyland Road (county road #237) two miles from U.S. Highway 191 North. The site is located in the northeast ¼ of Section 5, Township 15 North, Range 18 East, Fergus County, Montana. The site was purchased in February 2001 and totals 50.1 acres in size, including about ¾ mile of Big Spring Creek.

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

	Acres		Acres
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	<0.25
Residential	0		
Industrial	0	(e) Productive:	
		Irrigated cropland	0
(b) Open Space/Woodlands/Recreation	0	Dry cropland	1
		Forestry	0
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas	0	Rangeland	0
		Other	0

The footbridge and trail clearing would be the only construction in the floodplain.

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

Please refer to the attached Site Location Map in Appendix B and the Site Plan in APPENDIX C & D.

9. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

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

Agency Name	Permit
County Weed Board	weed permit
County Sanitarian	sealed vault septic system permit
County Road Department	site approach and road signs

(b) Funding:

Agency Name	Funding Amount
Fish, Wildlife & Parks (fishing access site protection license account)	$60,000

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

Agency Name	Type of Responsibility
State Historic Preservation Office	historic/cultural site protection
On-site irrigation ditch owners	footbridge approval

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

Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) proposes to provide moderate level of facilities at Reed and Bowles Fishing Access Site to allow fishing, shotgun and archery hunting, and other recreation access. The site plan identifies a gravel entry and off-road parking cul-de-sac for six vehicles. Rock barriers would limit vehicle traffic to the designated route. In addition, a vault latrine would be installed to maintain a healthy and sanitary site. Barbed wire fencing is proposed around the property perimeter to reduce trespass by fishing access site visitors and from neighboring livestock. A footbridge would cross the irrigation ditch (approximately 12 feet wide) and an existing game trail cleared to allow direct access to Big Spring Creek from the new parking area. Two pedestrian passes would be installed through the fence on either side of the county road bridge to provide walk-in access to the creek. The plan does allow for future site upgrades to meet higher accessibility levels, if needed. A double-sided entry sign would identify the site from the county road; a regulations

sign would be erected in the parking area. Screening, perhaps consisting of a vegetative shelterbelt or fencing, is proposed along the north edge of the parking area to reduce the visibility and noise of the new facilities, vehicles and visitors from the neighbors. Please refer to the Site Plan, APPENDIX C & D, and photos on the next page.

Big Spring Creek is very difficult to fish using a boat, because of its small size, sharp meanders and high current velocity; therefore, several walk-in access points are desirable to allow anglers to legally walk above the normal high water mark. The Reed and Bowles FAS is located approximately 2 miles downstream from the Carroll Trail FAS and about 2 miles upstream of the Hruska FAS. During the last two decades, the estimated fishing pressure on Big Spring Creek has varied from 8,601 – 17,329 angler days. In 1999, it is estimated that there were 9,467 angler days on Big Spring Creek. Population surveys conducted during the past several years indicate Big Spring Creek has very high trout numbers near the Butcher (Reed and Bowles FAS) property. Record high numbers of trout were found in 2000. From 1995 – 2000, total trout >= 10 inches varied from 1,250 – 3,230 per mile 2 miles upstream of the Butcher property. This compares with estimates of 380 – 1,040 per mile at sites 7 – 10 miles upstream. (Butcher Land Purchase EA, December 2000, FWP.)

As evidenced from the number of trout and angler days, fishing access on Big Spring Creek is in high demand. This site has received substantial recreational use due to the generosity of the owner prior to FWP possession. Anglers can legally access the creek by foot via the road right-of-way and provisions under the Stream Access Law; however, angler parking along the right-of-way is illegal and unsafe. The proposed level of development provides off-road parking for anticipated increased use at this newly acquired access. The acre identified for the parking area was used as dry-land hay and pasture. A footbridge will provide more direct access to the creek and help to disperse angling and shotgun bird hunting on this 51 acres and ¾ mile of creek. Due to the wetland and riparian habitat on this tract, many other recreational opportunities are available as well, such as: wildlife viewing, water play/wading, hiking, and picnicking.

The name Reed and Bowles originates from the old trading post at the nearby county farm.

11. List of agencies consulted during preparation of the EA:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- Parks Division
- Wildlife Division
- Fisheries Division
- Design & Construction Bureau

Montana Department of Commerce – Tourism
Montana Natural Heritage Program – Natural Resources Information System (NRIS)

Site proposed for entry, parking area and latrine; footbridge to be located at far left. Photo taken from county road (Joyland Road) looking northwest.

Vehicle using county road right-of-way for parking next to bridge; irrigation ditch in foreground. Photo taken from proposed entry road area looking southeast.

Proposed location for footbridge over irrigation ditch; existing game trail leads from center of photo into Russian olive trees to left. Photo taken at edge of parking area looking northwest.

The cover photo is looking west at Big Spring Creek from the county road bridge.

All photos by Sue Dalbey, July 2002

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

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

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

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

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

1a. The proposed project will not alter soil stability or geologic substructure. The parking area and latrine are proposed on a level area outside of the 100-year floodplain, requiring little grading and gravel added for surface treatment.

1b. The parking area, latrine and footbridge concrete piling construction will require some disruption, displacement, compaction and over-covering of soils, which will result in the loss of about 1 acre of productive hay/pasture land. These impacts can somewhat be mitigated by planting a grass mix in areas surrounding the facilities disrupted during construction. The reestablished vegetation will reduce future erosion and moisture loss. The site plan purposefully utilizes land that has been disturbed in the past by agricultural use, rather than impact productive wildlife riparian or wetlands habitat.

1c. There are no unique geologic or physical features in the area proposed for construction.

1d. Construction of the footbridge pilings will create some temporary siltation in the irrigation ditch. Construction can occur during a period when the ditch is empty; therefore, deposition will be negligible.

* 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. AIR Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. **Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)			X			2a.
b. Creation of objectionable odors?			X		yes	2b.
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.)		X				
f. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

2a. Minor and temporary dust will be created during construction of the entrance road and parking area. The anticipated increase in visitation will cause a slight increase in dust on the adjacent county road.

2b. Vault latrines often cause a very localized, minimal odor. Latrine design, seasonal pumping, and odor controls will reduce offensive odors.

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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		yes	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				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)		X				
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.)		X				
n. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

3a. Construction of the footbridge can occur when the ditch is empty; therefore, turbidity will be minimal when water does enter the ditch. Big Spring Creek should not experience any changes in water quality from this project.

3b. A slight increase in surface runoff may occur due to the change from pasture land to gravel road/parking surface. The site design closely matches the existing topography and will allow drainage to suitable retention areas.

3c. The proposed low profile construction will not alter water flows in this area. The one acre proposed for construction is considered a "Zone B" area on the Fergus County, Montana, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM Panel 1327 of 2650). This zone is classified as areas "between limits of the 100-year flood and 500-year flood; or certain areas subject to 100-year flooding with average depths less than one (1) foot or where the contributing drainage area is less than one square mile; or areas protected by levees from the base flood."

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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				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				4c.
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?			X			See comment 4a.
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?		X				4f.
g. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Vegetation (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

4a. Approximately one acre of grass hay/pasture land will be transferred into road/parking area for recreation. Grazing within the riparian area was eliminated when FWP acquired the tract, though it will be considered with all suppression measures for fire or weed control. With reduction in grazing, additional willow growth and development of deep-rooted native grasses will likely occur. It is proposed that an existing game trail be cleared to improve passage from the footbridge through the undergrowth to Big Spring Creek rather than creating a new trail. Installation of the footbridge and clearing about 200 total linear feet of dirt trail leading to and from this bridge will remove a small amount of native grasses, agricultural hay grasses, serviceberry, willow.

4c. The Montana Natural Heritage Program (Natural Resources Information System) found no species of concern in their database for this area (written communication May 16, 2002). A complete baseline field survey has not been completed. The primary construction area was planted in grasses and used for livestock pasture until 2001.

4e. The site does contain small populations of leafy spurge, thistle, and knapweed. Construction and additional traffic tend to increase the possibility of noxious weeds becoming established. Seeding of disrupted soils after construction limits the potential for additional weed growth by providing competition from a mix of hearty grasses. FWP staff will closely monitor the site after construction and weeds will be eradicated under direction from the FWP Region 4 Weed Management Plan.

4f. According to Ted Hawn, District Conservationist, USDA Natural Resource and Conservation Service, there are no prime or unique farmlands on the property proposed for purchase. A letter confirming this analysis is on file with FWP. (Butcher Land Purchase EA, December 2000, FWP.) Many wetlands exist on the property, however no development is planned in wetland areas.

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** 5. FISH/WILDLIFE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
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				5f.
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?			X		yes	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.)		X				
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.)		X				
j. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Fish and Wildlife (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

Only about one acre will be subject to disruption for the proposed construction. The proposed gravel entry road, parking area, and footbridge will have minimal impacts to wildlife, as the property was used for hay production and cattle pasture by the previous owner until 2001. The creek provides outstanding numbers of trout and is in high recreational demand due to the preponderance of private land up- and down-stream. The added angling pressure is not expected to significantly impact the fishery or habitat. The area habitat provides good waterfowl and pheasant hunting opportunities that the department wishes to conserve. The generosity of the previous landowner has allowed the public to fish and hunt on this property in the past. Future use is expected to somewhat increase, but not to levels that are detrimental to wildlife populations. FWP Fisheries Biologist Anne Tews and Wildlife Biologist Thomas Stivers support completion of a small parking area at this FAS.

5b. The improvements and signing of the site will likely increase angling, including catch and release fishing and fish harvest in this stretch of Big Spring Creek. Harvest of waterfowl and upland birds may also increase due to the anticipated increased hunting pressure when this becomes a signed public access. Hunting would be limited to shotgun use for waterfowl and upland birds, and archery-only for deer hunting due to anticipated visitation and proximity to homes.

5c. The proposed entry road and parking area will displace a small number of non-game mammals and reptiles that inhabit dryland grass habitat.

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** 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.

5f. According to Tom Stivers, Wildlife Biologist with FWP, bald eagles pass through this site, but resident populations have not been observed. Other federally listed species are not known to use this site. Activities covered by this project should not affect any federally listed endangered or threatened species, or their designated critical habitats. (Butcher Land Purchase EA, December 2000, FWP.) The Montana Natural Heritage Program (Natural Resources Information System) found no species of concern in their database for this project area (written communication May 16, 2002).

5g. Signing the property and providing parking will attract more anglers and hunters. This is the purpose for the site improvements to this public access. Visitation will slightly increase stress to wildlife, though the previous owners allowed some use of the site in the past. Day use regulations will allow continued night use by wildlife when many species are most active. Most human use will be focused along the creek, allowing wildlife to use thick surrounding riparian zones for shelter and protection.

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		yes	6a.
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				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Noise/Electrical Effects (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

6a. Increased visitation will slightly increase the noise created by vehicles and people. Proposed screening at the north side of the parking area will help diffuse vehicle and human noise from the neighbors.

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** 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.

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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 positive			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		yes	7d.
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Use (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

7a. One acre was taken out of agricultural production when FWP purchased the tract in February 2001. FWP purchased this property with the intent to provide access for the public. This indirectly contributes to the profitability of FWP by supplying access to anglers who buy fishing licenses; fishing licenses fund the purchase and improvement of fishing access sites.

7d. Two residences are within a quarter mile of the site. Public comment during the acquisition process indicated concern about trespass and noise due to the public access. In an effort to reduce impacts of added noise and vehicular and human traffic at the parking area, FWP proposes to plant a shelterbelt along the north side of the parking area. In several years, this vegetative wall will block some of the noise and visibility of increased use here. Much of the additional use along the creek will be sheltered by existing tall vegetation. Trespass on adjacent private lands can be somewhat prevented by fencing the perimeter of the property and signing the fence with FWP property boundary signs. FWP wardens will patrol the area periodically and FWP staff will work with neighbors to resolve specific problems as they arise.

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

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Risk/Health Hazards (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

8a. Chemical spray is part of the FWP weed management program, as well as biological and mechanical methods. Weed treatment is conducted by trained personnel and follows the guidelines in the FWP Region 4 Weed Management Plan. Chemicals are typically applied to sealed vault latrines to control odors.

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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		yes	9a.
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
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		yes	9e.
f. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Community Impact (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

9a. Site visitation is expected to increase after signs and basic facilities are installed. The site will be open for day use only, as are other FAS's in the area. Screening on the north end of the parking area will limit some impacts of higher visitation in the future, such as visibility and noise. Installing pedestrian passes through the fence on each side of the county road bridge and the new footbridge with trail to the west will help disperse the public within the 51-acre FAS.

9e. The anticipated increase in visitation to this site may result in a minor increase in county road traffic and minimal added road wear. Traffic using Joyland County Road will need to be more aware of traffic entering the road from this FAS and turning into the FAS. A double-sided entry sign will alert drivers to this FAS entrance. The posted speed limit on this road is 25 miles per hour.

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**** 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: **warden patrol, recreational facilities, septic**			X			10a.
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						10e.
f. **Define projected maintenance costs.						10f.
g. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Public Services/Taxes/Utilities (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

10a. Game wardens will patrol this site more often as visitation increases. The sealed vault latrine will require regular maintenance from the local fishing access site maintenance staff. The vault latrine will be pumped seasonally or "as needed" to maintain a sanitary facility. No garbage service will be available; visitors will be asked to uphold the "pack-in/pack-out" policy. The entry road and parking area may need grading about every five years. Visual screening will be installed with a minimal maintenance design standard, which will require some attention from maintenance staff.

10e. The proposed project is estimated to cost $60,000 and would be funded from the fishing access site protection license account.

10f. Maintenance costs will be funded from the Region 4 fishing access site maintenance account.

Additional FTE (about .01+)	$600 - $1,800 (depending on screening material)
Weed control	$500
Supplies, latrine pumping, etc	$400
Approximate total maintenance costs	$1,500 - $2,700

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** 11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
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.)		X				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Aesthetics/Recreation (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

The area proposed for construction is an open field adjacent to the county road and neighboring residence to the north. The proposed entry road, cul-de-sac parking area and latrine will alter the vista somewhat due to the designated gravel road and a small structure in an open area. The remainder of the tract has intermittent thick riparian vegetation, which will largely shield pedestrian use from the road and neighbors.

11a. The construction of a formal gravel parking area and latrine will alter the view to drivers on Joyland Road and the neighbors. The pre-cast latrine has an exposed aggregate finish to aid in blending with the natural landscape. Screening along the north border will help hide the new facilities.

11c. Recreational opportunities along Big Spring Creek are limited and many people expressed concerns during the acquisition of this tract that lands are continually being purchased and closed to trespass. The quantity and quality of recreation is intended to elevate with the improved access to this ¾-mile stretch of Big Spring Creek and 51 acres of public land. Not only does the site provide excellent fishing and hunting opportunities, but also wildlife watching, picnicking, walking, and wading. Signing the site allows the public to easily locate the site. The proposed formal parking area provides legal access off of the county road right-of-way. New pedestrian passes through the fence and the footbridge provide relatively easy and designated access for angling or hunting. A vault latrine maintains a healthy site and helps to protect the resources, as well as adding to the comfort of FAS visitors. Please refer to the Tourism Report from the Department of Commerce, Appendix D.

* 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. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES 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				12a.
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.)		X				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Cultural/Historical Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

12a. FWP hired a consultant to conduct a historical and cultural survey at the site. The consultant did not find any sites of cultural significance in the proposed construction area. FWP will consult with SHPO after the final cultural report is received and prior to the project start.

* 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. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE 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				
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				See #9a, page 2

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Significance Criteria (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

* 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 II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (CONTINUED)

2. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:

Construction of Alternatives B – D would be placed out for competitive bid by FWP. Standard State of Montana design and engineering practices would apply. The FWP Design and Construction Bureau would oversee the construction.

Alternative A: No Action

Although the private owners allowed some access to this property for hunting and fishing, it was not identified for public use. People often parked along the county road right-of-way and walked within the stream high water line, as is allowed under the Stream Access Law. Since FWP has purchased the property in 2001, fishing access site funds are available to provide better access to this site and protect the resources as visitation increases. This is a high priority within FWP Region 4 (Great Falls area) due to the high trout production in this reach and demand for access. Parking is not safe along the county road. This public site is open to many recreational opportunities, including: fishing, hunting (bow and shotgun only), wildlife watching, picnicking, walking, wading. As more people visit the site, more parking will occur along the road presenting dangerous circumstances. Problems will expound and the resources will suffer from unmanaged use.

Alternative B: Minimum Level of Development

Alternative B would sign the site as a FAS, but provide a small, rectangular-shaped gravel parking area adjacent to Joyland Road with no other amenities. The parking area would accommodate 5 standard vehicles with no additional consideration for those needing more accessible attributes. Vehicles may have to back out onto the county road to exit the area, causing concern for visitor safety and traffic hazards. Cost for gravel parking and rock barriers would be much less than the preferred alternative. Fencing and pedestrian passes through the fence would be the same as in the preferred alternative. A foot bridge would not be constructed, requiring pedestrians to wade across the irrigation ditch, or walk to the county road bridge and cross a fence, to access the lower reaches of the stream. Without a latrine, the site may develop sanitation concerns. A latrine is common at FAS's across the state, to maintain a healthy site and protect the resources. Screening of any type may not be constructed. Overall cost and impacts to the physical and human environment would be less from the construction of this alternative, but this level of development is not expected to meet the needs of anticipated visitation. Over-use may damage the natural resources. The project would be opened for competitive contractor bids; FWP Design and Construction Bureau would oversee the project.

Preferred Alternative C: Proposed Development

The proposed development identifies this area as a public fishing access site and provides easy access for vehicles and pedestrians. The cul-de-sac parking area has proven to be the best design at many fishing access sites. A smaller parking area often causes standard vehicles to be trapped by random parking and forces larger vehicles to back onto the county road to turn-around. Alternative C helps disperse use of the 51-acre parcel by

providing varying starting points, i.e. the footbridge to more directly access the western property area, and pedestrian passes through the fence to access the eastern end of Big Spring Creek. The latrine helps maintain a clean and healthy site, which becomes a concern when visitation increases. This level of development is proposed based on the use of fishing access sites in the area. The project construction would be opened for competitive contractor bids; FWP Design and Construction Bureau would oversee the project.

Alternative D: High Level of Development

Alternative D proposes that the site would be developed at a higher level than the proposed design. The parking area would provide slots for 6 to 8 vehicles and a hard surface, accessible route would connect the footbridge to parking and the latrine. The trail west of the footbridge would also be widened and improved to an Accessibility Level 3 (hard packed, mixed aggregate surface) to provide access to Big Spring Creek and provide some similarly surfaced fishing pads along the creek. A trail along the Creek would be improved the length of the creek and some natural history interpretation would be provided. The site could be used as an outdoor classroom for local schools. Impacts to the physical and human environment would be greater than the preferred Alternative C. Due to the rural nature of this FAS and other similar educational opportunities in the Lewistown area, Alternative D is considered too much development. In addition, public comment during the site acquisition indicated that the public does not want a high level of development at this site. Costs would be much higher to construct and maintain the facilities proposed in Alternative D. The project would be opened for competitive contractor bids; FWP Design and Construction Bureau would oversee the project.

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

The site design utilizes land outside of the 100-year floodplain that has been previously disturbed for agricultural production. Adjacent areas disturbed by construction will be seeded with a grass mix after project completion. This will reduce erosion, moisture loss and weed establishment. Installation of the footbridge will occur when the irrigation ditch is empty to reduce turbidity, siltation, and deposition.

Latrine odors will be controlled with periodic pumping and standard vault treatments.

An existing game trail will provide the base for a trail west of the footbridge. The trail will be cleared, but not surfaced to reduce impacts to the vegetation.

Noxious weeds will be closely monitored by FWP. An aggressive weed control program will be implemented in accordance with the Region 4 Weed Management Plan and the County Weed Supervisor using only trained applicators.

Day use only of the site will allow continued use of the site by deer and other wildlife at night, when many species are most active.

FWP incorporated public comment into their proposal in an attempt to alleviate public concerns, such as screening in the form of a vegetative shelterbelt or fencing to maintain visual aesthetics and dissipate noise, and continuing to allow shotgun and archery hunting.

Perimeter fencing and boundary signs will help reduce trespass onto adjacent private lands. Wardens will increase the number of patrols in the area. FWP staff will work with neighbors to solve specific problems as they arise.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

Visitation is sure to increase over what the private landowner allowed. FWP has several FAS's in the area to use as guides for the level of facilities needed to provide adequate access, accommodate visitor's needs, and to protect the resources. If the site is under-developed, the natural resources will be impacted from indiscriminate use. If over-developed, the negative aesthetic impacts to the area are extreme and costs for construction and maintenance are not warranted by high visitation.

The Preferred (proposed) Alternative C considers public needs for access, recreation and resource protection. The basic needs of the visitor are met, access to the creek and entire tract is improved and dispersed. The site and facilities should require little maintenance. Public comment received by FWP during the acquisition of the site was considered when designing the site, as well as comparing anticipated use to area FAS's and facilities.

This analysis did not reveal any significant impacts to the human or physical environment. The proposed design utilizes areas previously disturbed; therefore, only minor impacts will occur to the vegetation during construction. Most of the minor impacts can be mitigated. No threatened or endangered species have been identified in the area. No unique geological or physical features will be affected. The proposed improvements will enhance visitors' angling and recreational opportunities.

PART IV. EA CONCLUSION SECTION

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

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

2. **Describe the level of public involvement for this project if any, and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with**

the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?

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

- Two public notices in each of these papers: *Lewistown News - Argus, Great Falls Tribune,* and the *Helena Independent Record;*
- One statewide press release;
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: *http://fwp.state.mt.us*.

Copies of this environmental assessment will be distributed to the neighboring landowners and interested parties for review and to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project.

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having few minor impacts, many of which can be mitigated.

3. Duration of comment period, if any.

The public comment period will extend for thirty (30) days following the publication of the second legal notice in area newspapers. Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m. Friday, February 21, 2003 and can be mailed to the address below:

Reed & Bowles FAS Improvement
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, MT 59405

Or e-mailed to: dtodd@state.mt.us

4. Name, title, address and phone number of the person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:

Sue Dalbey	Dave Todd	Allan Kuser
Independent Contractor	Regional State Park Manager	Fishing Access Site Coord.
Dalbey Resources	FWP	FWP
926 N. Lamborn St.	4600 Giant Springs Road	PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59601	Great Falls, MT 59405	Helena, MT 59620-0701
406-443-8058	406-454-5859	406-444-7885

APPENDICES

A. 23-1-110 MCA Project Qualification Checklist
B. Site Location Map
C. Site Plan
D. Tourism Report – Department of Commerce

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APPENDIX A
23-1-110 MCA PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST
REED & BOWLES FISHING ACCESS SITE

Date: October 1, 2002 **Person Reviewing:** Sue Dalbey, contractor
Dalbey Resources

Project Location: The Reed & Bowles Fishing Access Site (FAS) can be reached by traveling north of Lewistown on Joyland Road (county road #237) two miles from U.S. Highway 191 North. The site is located in the northeast ¼ of Section 5, Township 15 North, Range 18 East, Fergus County, Montana. The site was purchased in February 2001 and totals 50.1 acres in size, including about ¾ mile of Big Spring Creek.

Description of Proposed Work: Construct entry road, cul-de-sac with a six-stall parking area; install road barriers, latrine, perimeter fencing, and signs; install foot bridge across irrigation ditch and clear about 200' of trail.

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.)

[✓] A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?
Comments*: The entry road will be constructed on agricultural land previously disturbed; about 200 feet of an existing game trail will be cleared to allow easier access from the parking area to the creek.*

[ ] B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?
Comments*: none*

[✓] C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?
Comments*: Road and parking area construction will require some grading, leveling, and installation of gravel.*

[✓] D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?
Comments*: Off-road parking is not currently provided; 6 spaces will be provided by the proposed project.*

[ ] E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a double-wide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?
Comments*: The shoreline of Big Spring Creek will not be altered. Concrete pilings will be installed on either side of the irrigation ditch to support a footbridge.*

[ ] F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?
Comments*: See E, above.*

[ ] G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?
Comments*: Consultant did not find sites of cultural significance. FWP will consult with SHPO prior to project start.*

[ ] H. Any new above ground utility lines?
Comments*: none*

[ ] I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?
Comments*: none*

[ ] J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern; including effects of a series of individual projects?
Comments*: Use will remain the same as historical use.*

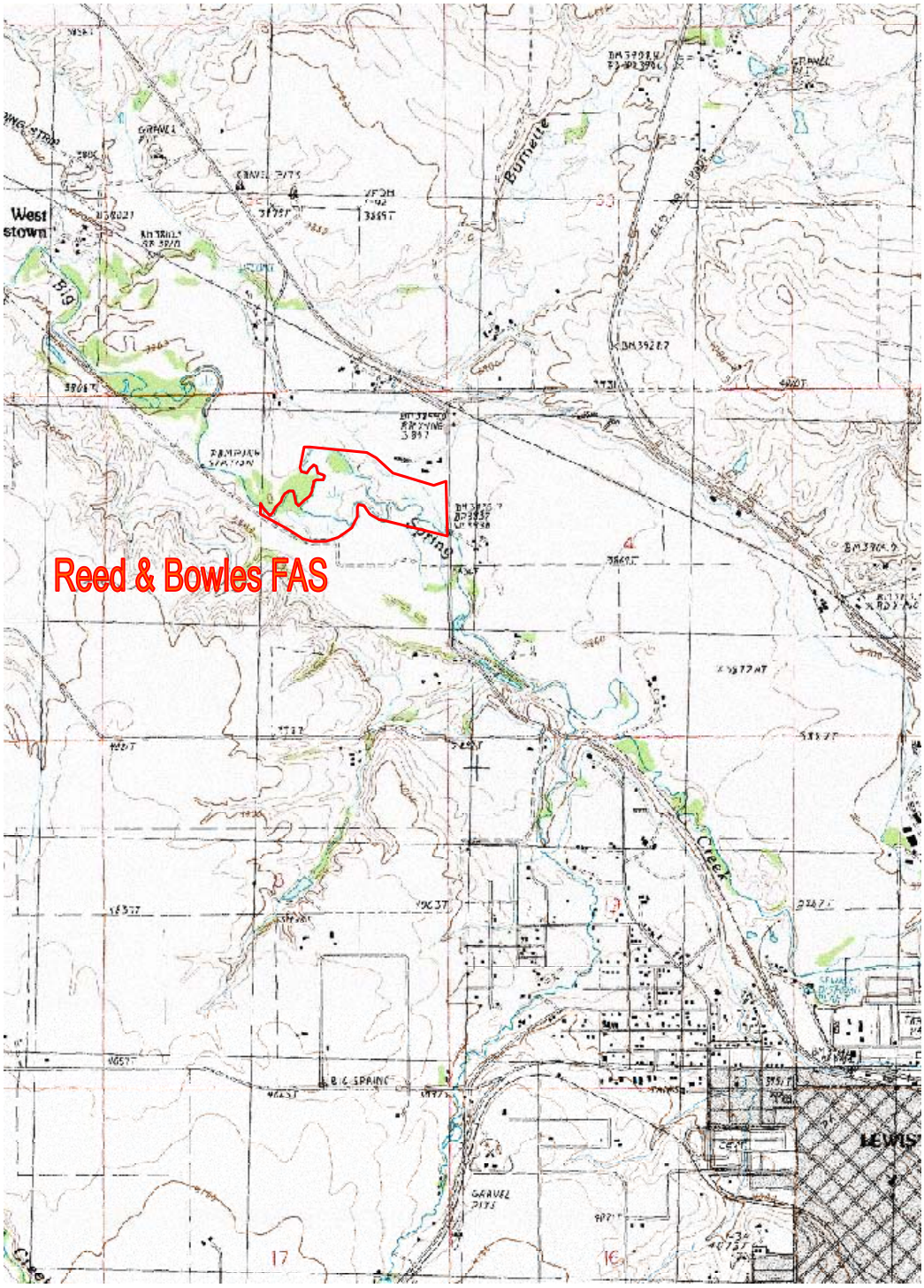
If any of the above are checked, HB 495 rules apply to this proposed work and should be documented on the MEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST. Refer to MEPA/HB495 Cross Reference Summary for further assistance.

APPENDIX B

SITE LOCATION MAP

REED AND BOWLES FISHING ACCESS SITE

Range 18 East, Township 15 North, Section 5 NE¼ ; 51.1 acres total



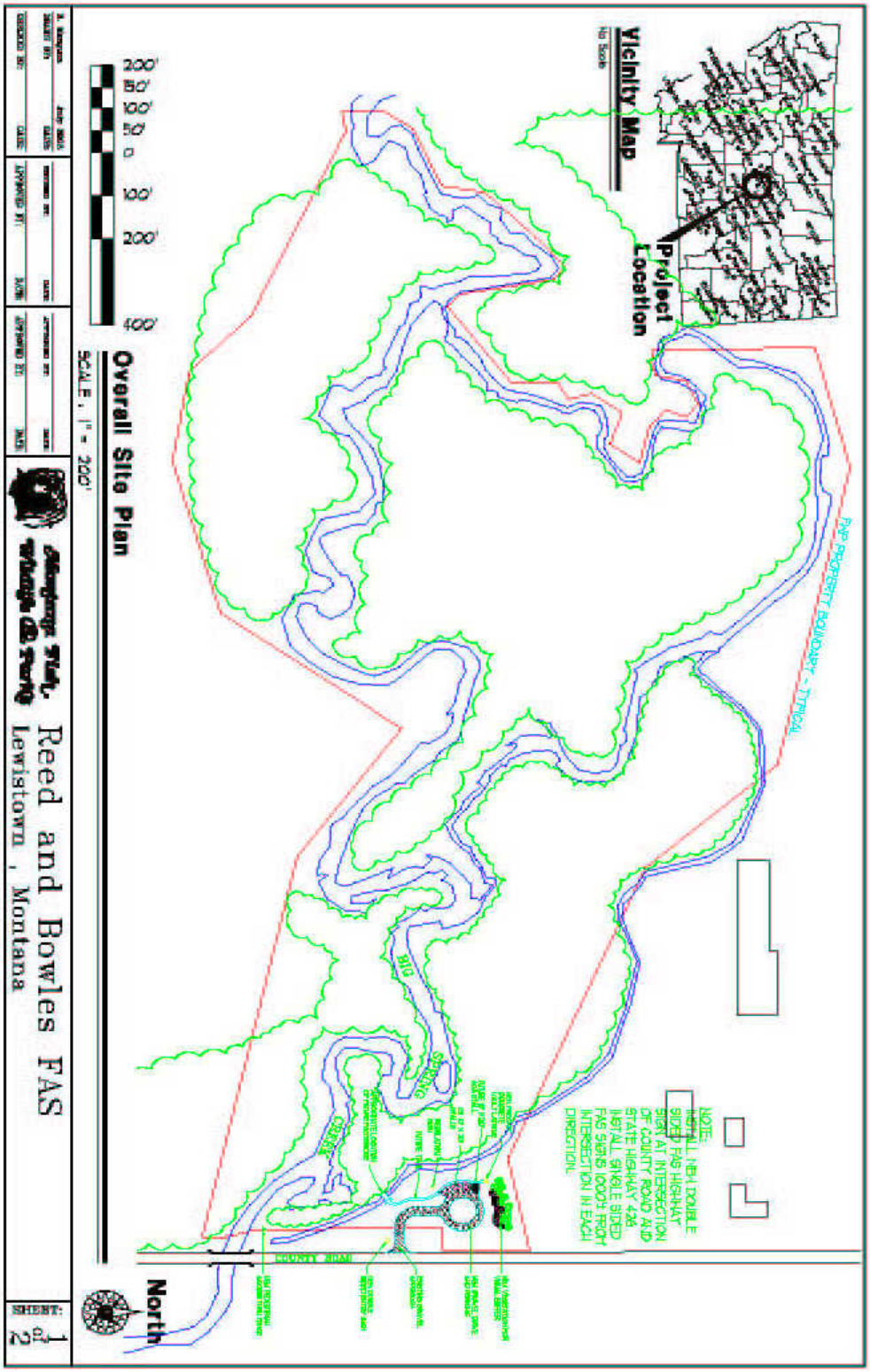
Map by Anne Tews, FWP

APPENDIX C

OVERALL SITE PLAN

REED AND BOWLES FISHING ACCESS

(WEB VIEWERS: HARD COPIES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST)

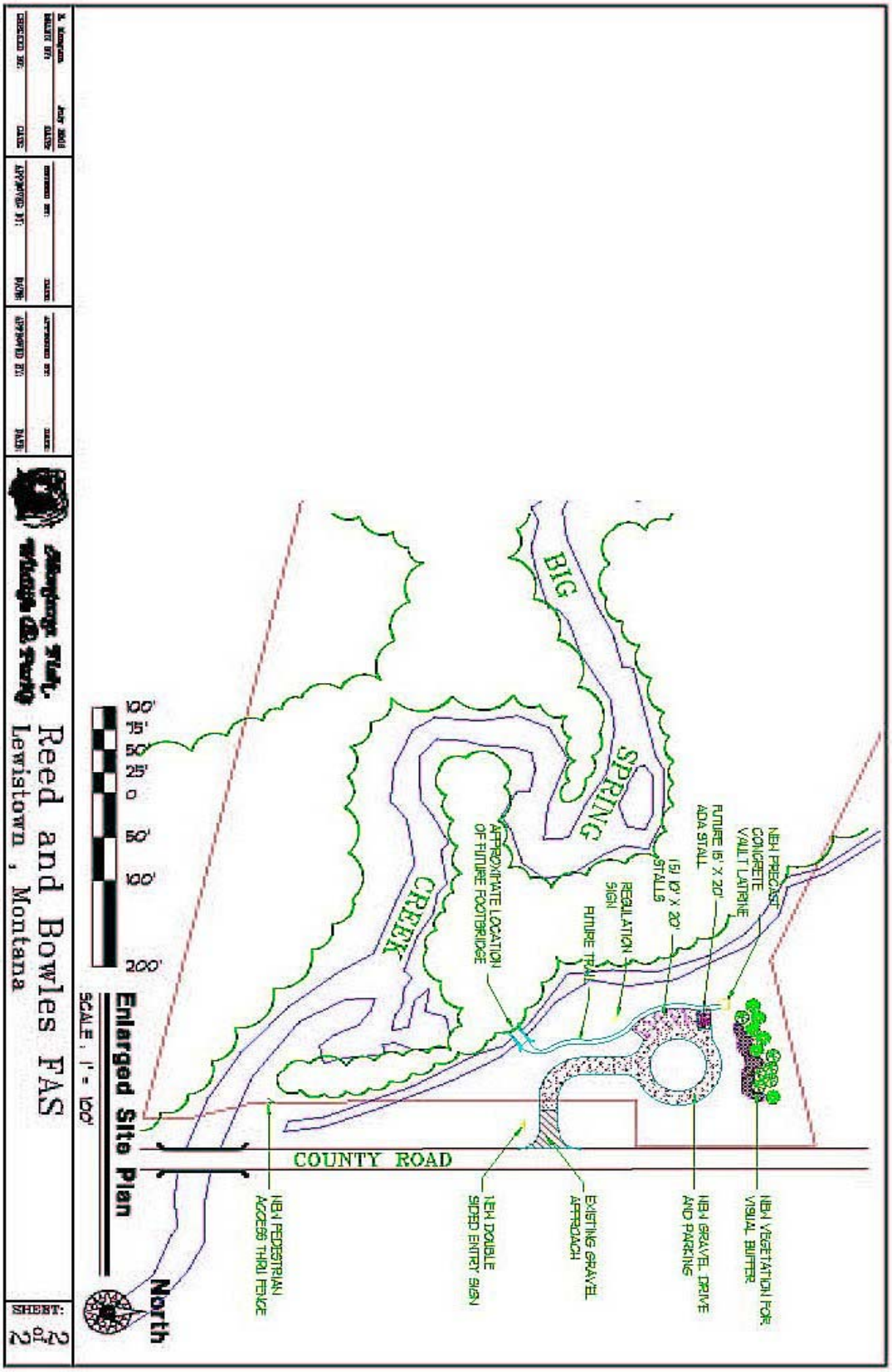


APPENDIX D

PARKING SITE ENLARGED PLAN

REED & BOWLES FISHING ACCESS SITE

(WEB VIEWERS: HARD COPIES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST)



APPENDIX D

TOURISM REPORT

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

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has initiated the review process as mandated by 23-1-110 MCA 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:

Victor Bjomberg, Tourism Development Coordinator
Travel Montana-Department of Commerce
PO Box 200533
301 South Park
Helena, MT 59620-0533

Project Name: Reed and Bowles Fishing Access Site Improvements

Project Description: Construct entry road, culdesac with a six-stall parking area; install road barriers, latrine, perimeter fencing, and signs; install foot bridge across irrigation ditch and clear about 200' of trail.

1. Would this site development project have an impact on the tourism economy?

   (circle one) NO (YES) If YES, briefly describe:

   The project looks like it should improve visitor/user facilities at the Reed and Bowles FAS. Safety issues are being addressed by the project as well as access to Big Spring Creeks recreational resources.

2. Does this impending improvement alter the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings?

   (circle one) NO (YES) If YES, briefly describe:

   It appears that both quality and quantity of Rec/tourism opportunities will be increased.

Signature Victor A Bjornberg Date Nov 8, 2002

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