MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

MONTANA STATE PARKS

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS
MEPA / NEPA CHECKLIST

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

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

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of proposed action:

Development	___X____
Renovation	_____
Maintenance	_____
Land Acquisition	_____
Equipment Acquisition	_____
Other (Describe)	_____

2. If appropriate, agency responsible for the proposed action:

MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks

3. Name, address, phone number, and e-mail address of project sponsor:

MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 490 N. Meridian Road, Kalispell, MT 59901

4. Name of project: Big Arm Major Maintenance Improvements

5. If applicable:

Estimated construction/commencement date: February 2005

Estimated completion date: May 2005

Current status of project design (% complete): 100%

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

Lake County, R21W, T24N

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

(a) Developed:
residential..... ___ acres
industrial ..... ___ acres

(b) Open Space/Woodlands/
Recreation..... 5 acres

(c) Wetlands/Riparian
Areas ..... ___ acres

(d) Floodplain ..... ___ acres

(e) Productive:
irrigated cropland..... ___ acres
dry cropland ..... ___ acres
forestry ..... ___ acres
rangeland..... ___ acres
other..... ___ acres

8. Map/site plan: attach an original 8½" 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.

See Appendices A through F.

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

The project proposes site improvements at Big Arm State Park (Appendix A, p. 29). These include: the addition of two rental yurts, relocation of the existing park host trailer pads, construction of a new storage shed, relocation of the campground boat trailer parking area, construction of a handicapped-accessible campsite in Loop B with accessible vault toilet, the relocation of the day-use picnic and swim area from the middle of the campground to the day-use area at the south end of the park, and the addition of three tent sites to the area previously used for picnicking. Additionally, the Loop A campground road will be bladed and graveled to improve the surface and allow for access by vehicles with limited clearance (this particular item is a road maintenance issue and will not be further addressed in this document). The purpose of this project is to better utilize available open space, provide increased camping opportunities, improve the visual quality of the campground area, and reduce traffic conflicts and crowding between day- users and campers.

Currently, the host pads are located on an open, grassy area in the middle of the campground just to the north of the main restroom facility. Relocation of the host pads uphill to sites adjacent to an old county road (henceforth referred to as the upper road) will eliminate the clutter created by three host trailers and accompanying vehicles and personal equipment. This will improve the visual quality of the area and permit its utilization by the public. A small storage shed also exists in the area of the current host pads. It will be eliminated and a new shed constructed on the upper road in proximity to the new host sites.

The addition of two yurts near the existing yurt is an attempt to meet the demand for this type of camping opportunity. The current yurt has been reserved for nearly every weekend during the high-use period for the past two seasons. Some potential users are denied the opportunity to rent because it has already been reserved. It is believed that demand is sufficient to support two more yurts.

Boat trailer parking in proximity to the campground is needed because most campers who bring boats refuse to leave them at the south end of the park in the large day-use boat trailer parking lot due to security issues. Currently, there is an overflow area consisting of a mowed field approximately 150’ by 100’ adjacent to and upslope from campground Loop B. This area is not very level and reduces the visual quality of the open prairie upslope from the lakeshore. At present, campers can either park their boats at their campsite or in the mowed field. However, campers are limited to the number of vehicles, including boat trailers, that may occupy their campsite. Vehicles over the allowed maximum must be moved to an appropriate, designated parking area.

At present, a dedicated handicapped-accessible campsite is nonexistent at the Big Arm campground. Over the years there have been complaints regarding the lack of such a site. The addition of the handicapped-accessible site will provide a camping pad that meets ADA standards. Included in this site development will be the addition of a new handicapped-accessible vault toilet near the pad. An older style nonhandicapped-accessible vault toilet will be replaced with a new vault located about 70 feet directly east of the old toilet’s location. The old vault is already scheduled to be removed as part of the Region’s

programmatic effort to upgrade toilet facilities. By moving it 70 feet east of its present location, closer to the handicapped-accessible site, the toilet can be utilized by all visitors.

The designated swim beach and picnic area is currently located in the middle of the campground. This situation results in increased vehicle traffic flow through at least part of the campground and competition for limited parking spaces. Additionally, campsites adjacent to the picnic and swim beach often are encroached upon by picnickers. The day-use area at the south end of the park is consistently under-utilized. There is a shelter available for groups, but the shoreline and a few acres directly to the south of the shelter receive very little use. The project calls for relocating the picnic/swim area from its present site to this location. The swim dock will be moved from its current location to this area as well. Shifting the aforementioned activities to the south end will eliminate the conflicts between campers and day-users.

The relocation of the picnic and swim area will also allow for additional tent campsites at the site currently used for picnicking. During the high-use season, demand for campsites exceeds supply. Many potential campers are turned away. Adding three tent sites to the area previously used for day use will increase the camping opportunities at the park.

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

Alternative 1: No Action (Appendix B site plan, p. 30)

This alternative will maintain the status quo. No changes will occur. The advantages are that there will be no new improvements and consequently no costs. Additionally, visitors will have the convenience of easier access to park hosts, as the host sites will remain situated in the middle of the campground. The disadvantages are that there will be continued traffic and encroachment conflicts between picnic/swim area visitors and campers, and the visual quality of the park will be diminished due to the clutter of staff trailers, vehicles, and equipment. Although still providing a service, the continuing use of the existing boat trailer parking area diminishes the view of the prairie area upslope from Loop B.

Alternative 2 (Appendices C, D, & E site plans, pp. 31-34):

Alternative 2 will include construction of the new handicapped-accessible campsite in Loop B and the replacement of the current vault toilet at the south end of the loop with a handicapped-accessible toilet. Campground Loop B is situated in an area that slopes upward from the shoreline at an approximate gradient of 4-5 degrees. Material will need to be removed to level the site. The new vault toilet will require a 10’ x 10’ area to be excavated to a depth of about 8 feet. Most of the vehicle parking areas for the campsites in Loop B have sloped off over time. The excavated material from the new site and toilet will be used to help level the vehicle and RV parking area for campsites located along the road. Construction of the campsite would fulfill requests for a site that meets ADA standards.

This alternative will also relocate the existing campground host pads and storage shed. The pads will be moved to sites located along the upper road approximately 100-150' upslope from their present location. Water and power lines already run near the proposed locations, and the park's main restroom lift station is directly downhill. The sewer system will be a gravity line running from the host pads to the lift station. Effluents can then be pumped to the existing drain field. The plan proposes connecting to the nearest utilities. It is estimated this will require no more than 150'of additional trenching from all existing utility lines to service the new host pads. A new storage shed approximately 16' x 20' will be constructed near the host pads. This will replace the old wooden storage shed, which has become inadequate for storage of the equipment needed to operate the park. Currently, some equipment and supplies must be placed in the well pump house or stored outside under tarps. The new shed will double the capacity of the existing facility. A third host pad will be located on the downhill side of the main campground road at its junction with the upper road. This will require extending power lines approximately 600 feet. Additionally, it will require either extending a sewer line originating from the main restroom facility or construction of a separate drain field. The sewer line will require a small lift station at some point along the length of the line to pump the effluents uphill to the main restroom lift station from where it would be pumped to the park's primary drain field. Ultimately, the action that is most cost effective will be pursued. To provide water to the site, a line will be extended from the campground Loop A water hydrant approximately 150' to the proposed host pad site. All the old host sites will be revegetated and the existing host site access road reseeded.

Relocation of the host pads will improve the visual quality of the campground by eliminating the host trailers and personal vehicles and equipment that are currently open to public view. The new locations provide vegetative screening from the immediate camp area, yet still provide reasonable access for visitors to acquire assistance and information. Signs and foot trails from the campground will direct visitors to the new host sites along the upper road. However, access will still be available for the public by vehicle via the upper road. Locating the third host pad along the main campground road would provide visitors with more convenient access to park staff.

Two new yurts will be constructed about 75 feet to either side and uphill of the existing yurt. Parking and access will occur along the upper road upslope from their locations. The additional yurts will be smaller than the existing yurt (16' vs. 20' diameter) and will not have the insulation package. Unlike the existing yurt, they are intended for summer use only. Site preparation for each yurt will require some cut and fill on the hillside to create a level placement area. An estimated 6-8 cubic yards of material will be moved to prepare each site. The addition of the yurts will help meet visitor demand and add to the park's diversity of camping opportunities.

Alternative 2 proposes relocation of the campground boat parking to a new area located along the upper road and directly north of the proposed host sites. A total of twenty 12' x 45' parking spaces will be constructed to accommodate campers with boats. A turnaround area will be created just past the parking area. All new parking spaces and the turnaround area will be graveled. Access to the parking area will be via the upper road and require a radius cut at the junction with the campground main road to allow for

vehicles and trailers to make the turn into the campground. In order to level the parking spaces and create a turnaround, cut and fill will occur. Most cut material will be utilized to fill and level the boat trailer spaces and turnaround area. Any additional material will be used for campsite leveling. The old boat parking area and any nongraveled, disturbed areas will be reseeded and monitored for noxious weeds. The proposed location of the boat parking area will enhance the visual quality of the campground by removing much of the vehicle clutter and reestablishing the natural prairie. It will improve and provide some measure of security as its location is near the host sites.

Another action of Alternative 2 proposes the relocation of the day-use swim and picnic area from its current location in the middle of the campground to the day-use area at the south end of the park. The south area encompasses approximately 200 feet of shoreline and two acres of ground. This section of shoreline presently is partially covered with brush and small cottonwood trees. This part of the project will require removal of approximately 25' of shoreline vegetation from the center. Openings already exist on either end of this shoreline section. The result will be three openings for access along the shoreline from the day-use shelter to the south park boundary fence. Other than the clearing of a 25' opening in the center of this section, all existing vegetation will remain to protect the shoreline from erosion. This allows for adequate swimmer access, but still maintains overall bank stability. To minimize erosion of the cleared section, bank stabilization measures consisting of placement of 6-inch round rock underlain by barrier cloth will be utilized. To further enhance the area, the existing swim dock will be moved to the new swim beach. The relocation of the swim and picnic area will more fully utilize the south end of the park and eliminate the parking and campsite encroachment problems that currently occur as a result of the present park layout.

The final action of this alternative will place three tent sites in the area previously utilized for picnicking. Camping demand is high in the summer, and the addition of three sites will not significantly affect park operations. Each site will be furnished with a table and fire ring.

Alternative 3 (Appendices E & F site plans, pp. 34-35):

This alternative is similar in most respects to that of Alternative 2 with a few exceptions. First, the relocation of the campground boat trailer parking area will occur at the present location of the picnic and swim area parking lot. Currently, there exist about 8-9 spaces for parking. This area would be extended an additional 75 feet to the south to allow for an additional 7-8 boat and extra vehicle parking spaces. The proposed added area is presently utilized by park staff for administrative and personal vehicle parking. The ground is relatively level and has already been impacted. Extending the existing picnic/swim area parking will only require relocation of the barrier posts that currently separate this parking from the staff parking. This will not result in any cut and fill, but would necessitate addition of gravel to the extended area as the staff parking surface area is mostly dirt and becomes muddy when wet. Costs will be significantly less than Alternative 2 as little new construction will be necessary to accommodate boat trailers and extra vehicles. This alternative will provide the necessary boat and extra vehicle parking for campers. It will provide more convenience to campers as they will not need to drive around to the upper road to pick up or drop off their boats. Additionally, boats

and extra vehicles will be closer to most campsites and can be checked or accessed by campers en route to the main campground restroom. The drawback to the proposal is that there may be some diminished security as this area will not be as visible from the re-located host pads. This alternative differs from Alternative 2 as it does not require the construction of additional boat trailer parking spaces on the upper road. However, it still proposes construction of the turnaround area on the upper road. Visitors who access the yurts or who drive to the host sites seeking information or assistance will still need an area to turn around. As in the previous alternative, the existing overflow boat trailer parking area will be revegetated with native grasses.

The second difference is that this alternative proposes locating all host pads in the same general area along the upper road. This would significantly reduce the distance required to run utilities to the third host site thus reducing costs and visual impacts. Another consideration is that if the third host site is located as proposed in Alternative 2, along the main campground road, the staff who occupy this site would bear the brunt of most visitor contacts even on their days off. The disadvantage is that campers will incur some inconvenience as they will need to take the upper road to the host sites rather than have a host site located directly on their route when entering or leaving the campground.

Selected Alternative (Appendix C – modified, p. 32; Appendix D no longer relevant, p. 33):

Alternative 2, with modification, is the preferred alternative. The modification entails relocating all three host pads to the upper road versus having one host pad along the campground entrance road. This alternative will meet the objectives of reduced campground traffic and improved utilization of park areas and resources. The alternative will also relocate camper boat trailer parking to the upper road and relocate the swimming and day-use area to the south end of the park to improve safety and reduce crowding. Additionally, it will restore some areas to a more natural condition and enhance the visual characteristics of the campground.

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

(a) Permits		
Agency Name:	Permit:	Date Filed:

(b) Funding	
Agency Name:	Funding Amount:

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities

Agency Name:	Type of Responsibility:

12. List of agencies consulted during preparation of this environmental checklist:

MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes Lakeshore Protection Unit

13. Name of preparer(s) of this environmental checklist:

Jerry Sawyer, Park Manager
Flathead Lake State Park
Fish, Wildlife & Parks
490 N Meridian Road
Kalispell, MT 59901
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PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST

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

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

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION:

1b. Soil will be disrupted and compacted during site preparation work for the new host pads, handicapped-accessible toilet, yurt sites, turnaround and parking area on the upper road, and trenching for the extension of utility lines. The host pads, yurt, handicapped-accessible campsite, and parking turnaround areas will be graveled. Graveled areas will be lost to future productivity of current vegetative species. Other locations not graveled, but disturbed during construction, will be reseeded and monitored for weed development. Overall these areas constitute a very small percentage of the park's open space (< 5 acres). The current boat trailer parking, host pad sites, and B-Loop vault toilet areas will be reclaimed. Consequently, there is expected to be no net loss of park open space. Overall effects are judged to be minor.

Some minor initial erosion may occur on slopes where cut-and-fill techniques are required. These locations will be sloped back to minimize erosion and reseeded, resulting in a decrease in erosion over time as vegetation reestablishes itself in the disturbed areas.

Minor erosion may occur where vegetation is removed along the shoreline for the new swim area at the south end of the park. Only one area will be cleared and kept to a length of no more than 25' to allow water access for visitors. It is expected some soil will be lost as the bank reaches a stabilization point in the cleared section. To prevent significant erosion, control measures consisting of the placement of 6-inch round rock underlain by barrier cloth sloped back 2-3 feet, will be utilized in this opening (Appendix G, p. 36).

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

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

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION:

2a. Some emissions of air pollutants will occur during the construction process. This will be the result of cut-and-fill site preparation for the new host pads, handicapped-accessible campsite, yurt sites, and turnaround area on the upper road. Other activities that will have minor effects include the installation of a new vault toilet near the handicapped-accessible site, and any trenching and filling necessary for extending utility lines. These will all be temporary in nature, and the site will be closed to the public during construction. Consequently, the effects are judged to be minor.

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

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

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION:

3a. Minor erosion may occur where vegetation is removed along the shoreline for the new swim area at the south end of the park. It is expected some soil will be lost as the bank reaches a stabilization point in the cleared area. As mentioned in Section 1b, last paragraph, bank erosion control methods will be utilized to minimize silting.

3b. Where cut and fill occurs during construction and where areas are graveled, some minor changes in drainage are anticipated. Theses areas will be engineered to allow for proper drainage through sloping or use of small culverts.

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

4. VEGETATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity, or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X		Y	4a.
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
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		Y	4e.
f. Effects to wetlands or prime and unique farmland?		X				
g. Other:						

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION:

4a. In areas of site development including the host pads, yurt sites, handicapped-accessible campsite, and the upper road parking and turn around areas, vegetation will be lost. This will occur where gravel is used for surfacing. Other disturbed areas will be leveled and reseeded with native plant species. Previous locations of the host sites and boat trailer parking will be reclaimed. The overall impact to the plant communities is considered minor.

4e. Disturbed areas resulting from the project will be continuously monitored for weed development. Where applicable, these areas will be reseeded. If weeds develop they will be eradicated following the Region 1 Weed Plan.

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

5. FISH/WILDLIFE 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				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
h. Adverse effects to threatened/endangered species or their habitat?		X				
i. Introduction or exportation of any species not presently or historically occurring in the affected location?		X				
j. Other:						

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION:

The overall construction and relocations of the aforementioned sites are considered minor in scope. No effects on wildlife are anticipated.

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

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

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION:

6a. Some minor and temporary increase in noise level will occur during construction from the use of heavy equipment for site preparation and hauling of materials. Most of the sections of the park undergoing the proposed renovation are currently closed to the public due to the normal off-season closure. Distance between the construction areas and nearest neighbors is such that it is not anticipated that noise will be significant. The work proposed for the south end picnic/swim area, which is open for public use year-round, will require only 2-3 days. This will occur mid week in the off-season and will not affect use of the boat ramp or parking area.

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

7. LAND USE 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?						
b. A conflict with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. A 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				
e. Compliance with existing land policies for land use, transportation, and open space?		X				
f. Increased traffic hazards, traffic volume, or speed limits, or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				7f.
g. Other:						

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION:

7f. The proposed project will actually reduce traffic hazards by shifting picnic and swimming activities from the middle of the campground to the day-use area at the south end of the park. Additional traffic reduction will occur by diverting traffic generated by the campground host sites and yurt to the upper road above the campground. The south end of the park has a large parking lot that is considered adequate to accommodate increased traffic due to the shifting of activity locations.

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

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS 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				
b. Effects on existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				8c.
d. Disturbance to any sites with known or potential deposits of hazardous materials?		X				
e. The use of any chemical toxicants?		X				
f. Other:						

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION:

8c. No risk to human health or creation of a public hazard are anticipated. Renovations will mostly occur in areas closed to the public for the season. Work on the south end of the park is not judged to have any effect on use of the boat ramp and boat parking area. This work will last only 2-3 days and will occur midweek during the off season. Signing will be utilized to inform the public of construction work.

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

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

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION:

Due to the limited scope of the project, no community impacts are anticipated.

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

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

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION:

10a. The proposed action will result in the following changes to the level of recreational facilities at the park (these are those beyond the current facility level). Two new rental yurts will be constructed in addition to the existing yurt and three tent sites added to the tents-only area. Additionally, a handicapped-accessible campsite will be constructed in campground Loop B. Other proposed project changes are relocations of existing facilities. Overall, these are considered minor changes to the overall level of park facilities.

10d. Addition of two yurts will increase the use of electricity at the park. The two yurts will have minimal electrical lighting installed and be equipped with small heaters.

10f. The following revenue sources have been identified.

MFWP Major Maintenance	-	$ 25,000
R1 Parks Operations Budget	-	5,000
Total		$ 30,000

10g. The two new yurts will increase electrical costs by approximately $100/mo. or a total of $350 for a season (3.5 months). Water for the relocated host pads will come from the existing well. Additional sewer costs will be minimal and take advantage of existing drain field infrastructure. Maintenance of the yurts will add 1-2 hours of staff time per week at $10/hr. for cleaning during the summer months of June, July, and August. This amounts to an approximate total of: 2 hrs. x 15 wks. x $10/hr. = $400.00 Additional cost for cleaning supplies for the new yurts are estimated to be $10/month for both.

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

11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION 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			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			11c.
d. Adverse effects to any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails, or wilderness areas?		X				
e. Other:						

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION:

11a. The proposed project will alter the scenic qualities of the area in a positive manner. Relocation of the host pads from their present site will remove the park staff trailers, vehicles, and personal equipment from public view and improve the aesthetic quality of the middle of the campground. Relocation of the existing campground boat trailer parking will allow reclamation of the current area and improve the quality of the open prairie vista.

11c. The project will improve camping opportunities with construction of two new yurts to meet growing demand. Addition of three tent sites to the area once utilized for day-use picnicking will add traditional camping opportunities for the public. Relocation of the swim area to the park's south end day-use area will eliminate user conflicts between campers and day-users and improve campground safety by reducing traffic flow.

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

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

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION:

No impacts to cultural or historical resources are anticipated. All locations affected by the project's actions have either had previous disturbance or have not been found to occur on any cultural or historic site (cultural inventory is pending). The State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) will be consulted prior to any actual work.

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

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE 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, which create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)			X		Y	13a.
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard, or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. Have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy?		X				13f.
Additional information requested:						
g. List any federal or state permits required.	Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes Lakeshore Protection permit					

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION:

13a. Cumulative impacts are judged to be minor and can be mitigated. Further discussion follows in Part III of this document.

13f. Any change brings some level of controversy. It is anticipated that the shifting of the swim/picnic area to the south end of the park may generate initial complaints from routine local users. However, once the new swim area is established, it is believed that opposition to this action will fade.

13g. To prevent bank erosion at the new swim area due to removal of vegetation from the shoreline, minor erosion control measures will be taken for the 25′ cleared area. Approval of the design for bank stabilization efforts will be needed and a permit required from the CSKT Lakeshore Protection unit.

PART III. ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST CONCLUSION SECTION

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

The cumulative effects of this project are considered minor and can be mitigated. Minor resource impacts will result from cut-and-fill methods and graveling for new host pads and yurt sites. Disturbances to vegetation and soils will be mitigated through leveling and reseeding. Nongraveled disturbed areas are expected to return to natural conditions within two years. Increased runoff potential and threats to surface waters will be lessened through proper sloping of cut banks, and revegetation and engineered drainage to prevent erosion and silting. Disturbed areas will be monitored for noxious weed development, and actions will be taken if weeds develop. The effects of noise and dust will be temporary and occur primarily when the campground is closed to the public. Recreational use patterns will undergo minor changes as day-use activity is shifted from the campground to the south end of the park. However, this will not have a significant effect on the overall use and activity level as the recreational opportunities of swimming and picnicking will still be available in the park and occur in an area more suitable for these types of activities.

Secondary effects include an increase in the number of campers during the high-use season as a result of the addition of the two yurts and three tent sites. This will increase the maintenance time and supplies needed for cleaning of sites. However, this is considered minor as the number of added sites (5) is low compared to the existing number (40), and additional costs and labor can be absorbed by the current operations budget and staffing level.

Implementing the actions of this project will enhance the recreational opportunities at the Big Arm unit of Flathead Lake State Park and improve the overall aesthetic quality of the campground. The addition of the yurts and the tent sites will help to meet the demand for camping around Flathead Lake. Restoration of a part of the prairie from a parking area to more natural conditions will improve the view of the grasslands area. Relocation of the host pads will enhance the characteristics of the open space in the center of the campground and allow for its use by the public. Relocation of the picnic/swim area will reduce user conflicts and crowding and improve visitor safety by reducing traffic flow. This project also complies with the long-range goals of MFWP to raise state park standards and meets the Parks Program outcome of protection and enhancement of resources.

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

YES _____

NO __X__

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

An environmental assessment is the appropriate level of analysis as the cumulative impacts are judged minor and no negative impacts are classified as significant.

3. Describe the public involvement for this project:

Public involvement consists of:

- Six legal notices: two notices published one week apart in each of these three newspapers: Daily Inter Lake, Lake County Leader, Missoulian
- One legal notice on FWP's web site
- One statewide press release
- Thirty-day public comment period following publication of second legal notice.

4. What is the duration of the public comment period?

Thirty days – from December 17, 2004, through January 16, 2005. A public meeting will be held if there is sufficient interest in the project.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) – A comprehensive evaluation of the impacts to the human environment that likely would result from an agency action or reasonable alternatives to that action. An EIS also serves as a public disclosure of agency decision-making. Typically, an EIS is prepared in two steps. The Draft EIS is a preliminary, detailed, written statement that facilitates public review and comment. The Final EIS is a completed, written statement that includes a summary of major conclusions and supporting information from the Draft EIS,

responses to substantive comments received on the Draft EIS, a list of all comments on the Draft EIS and any revisions made to the Draft EIS, and an explanation of the agency's reasons for its decision.

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

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

Long-term Impact – An impact that lasts well beyond the period of the initial project.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST
23-1-110 MCA

Date: October 22, 2004 Person Reviewing: Jerry Sawyer

Project Location: ____Flathead Lake State Park – Big Arm Unit _____

The following checklist is intended to be a guide for determining whether a proposed development or improvement is of enough significance to fall under 23-1-110 rules. (Please check all that apply and comment as necessary.) Capital Construction Projects – Prepared by D & C; Force Account Projects – Prepared by Region.

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

Comments:_____
_____

[**X**] B. New building construction (buildings, 100sf and vault toilets exempt)?

Comments: A new 300 sq ft storage shed will be built to replace the aging existing shed. The new shed will double current storage capacity.

[**X**] C. Any excavation of 20 cubic yards or greater?

Comments: Cut and fill will be required to level the new host pads as well as the handicapped-accessible campsite. Additional excavation will be required for the new vault toilet and upper road turnaround. Alternative 2 will require cut and fill for a new boat parking area on the upper road. It is estimated a total of 150-200 cubic yards of material will be excavated and redistributed depending on the alternative chosen.

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

Comments: In Alternative 2 the new parking area on the upper road will be partially built over undisturbed land. Capacity will remain similar to the existing boat trailer parking area. Alternative 3 proposes utilizing the existing picnic area parking lot in the campground for boat trailer parking. This requires expanding capacity to approximately double the current level (8-9).

[ ] E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a double-wide boat ramp or handicapped-accessible fishing station?

Comments:_____
_____

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

Comments: _____
_____

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

Comments:_____
_____

[ ] H. Any new, above-ground utility lines?

Comments:_____
_____

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

Comments:_____
_____

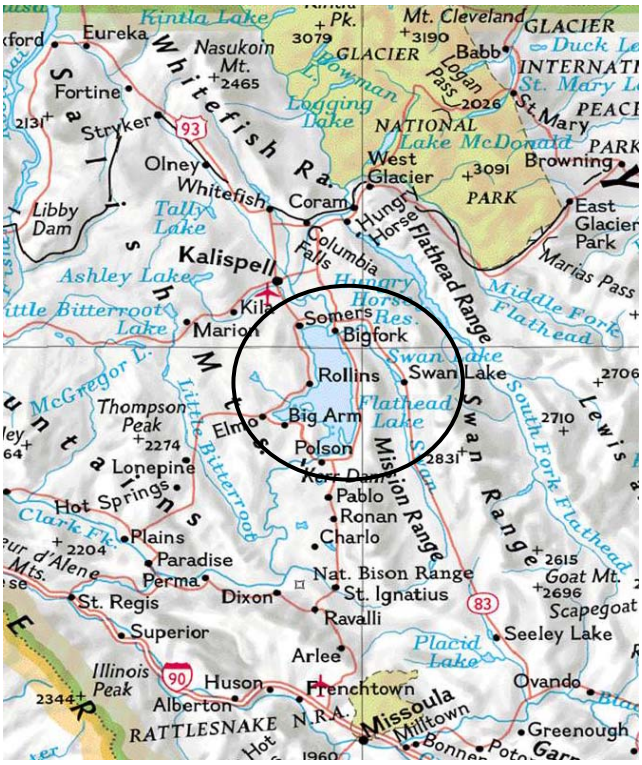
[ ] J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use patterns, including the effects of a series of individual projects.

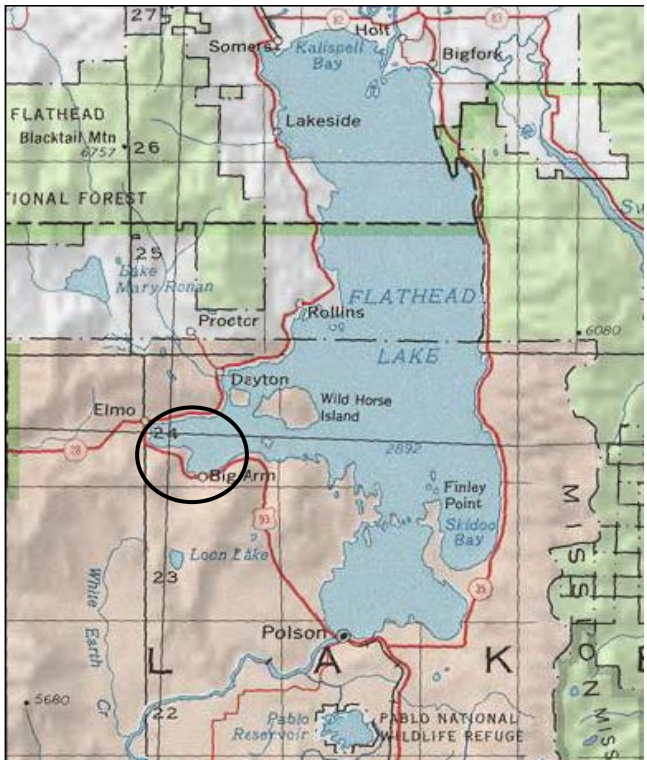
Comments:_____
_____

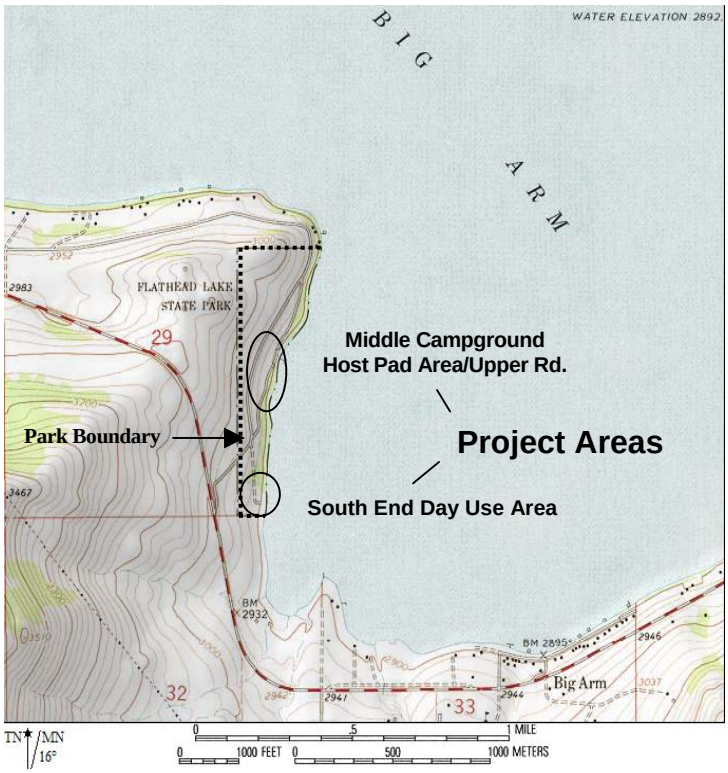
IF ANY OF THE ABOVE ARE CHECKED, 23-1-110 MCA RULES APPLY TO THIS PROPOSED WORK.

Appendix A

Flathead Lake State Park - Big Arm Improvement Project Site Location

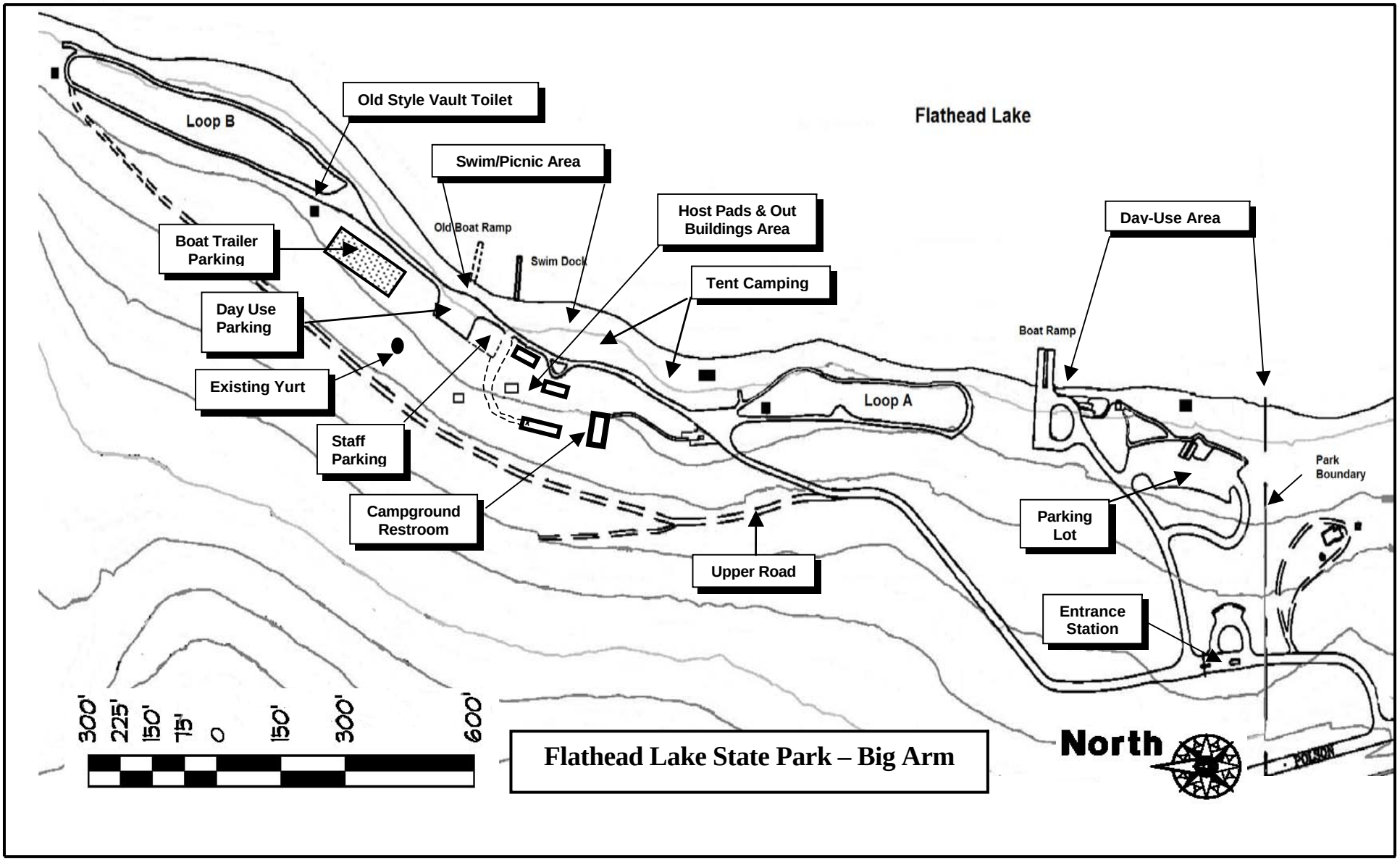






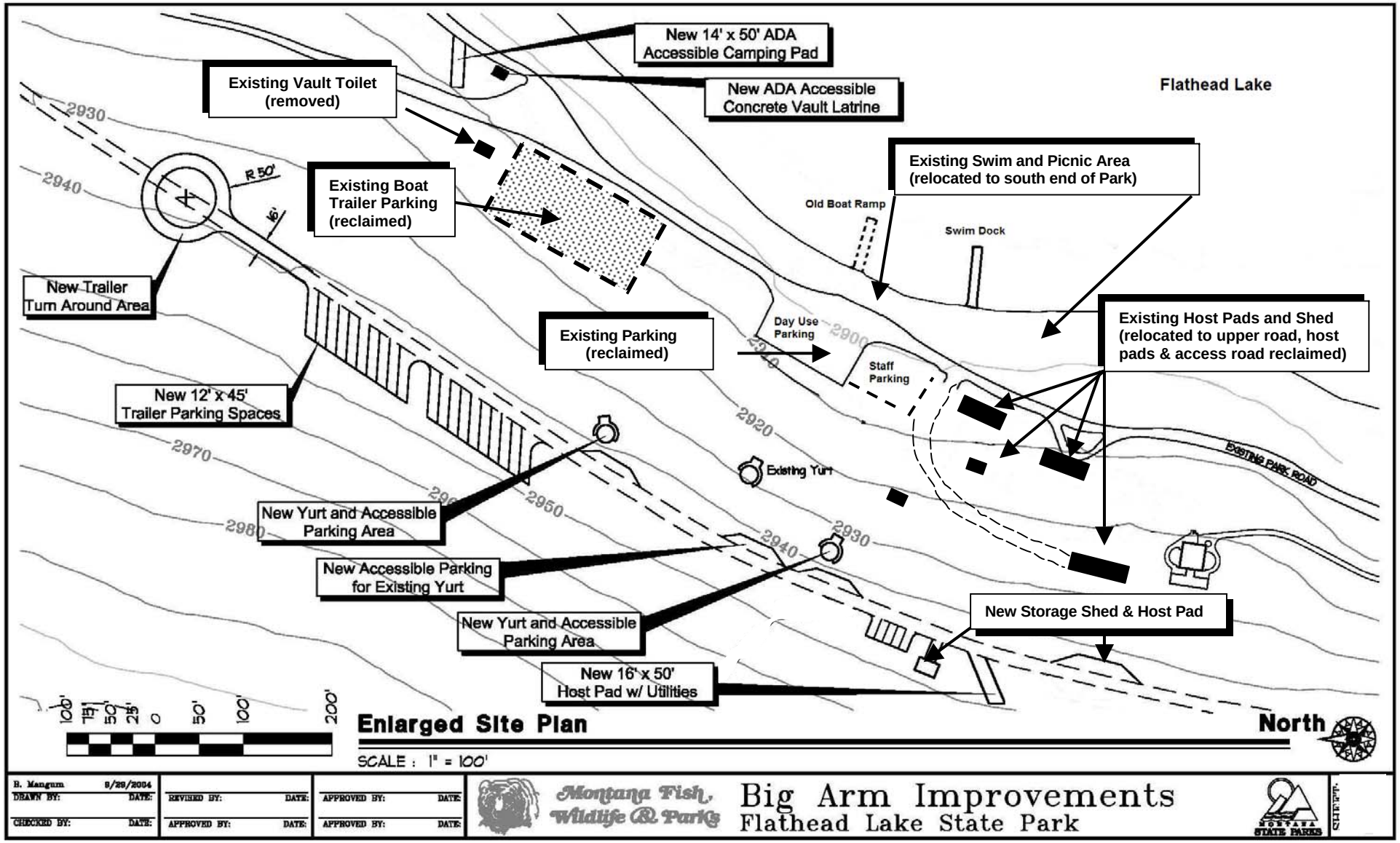
Appendix B

Alternative 1 – No Action (current Park layout)



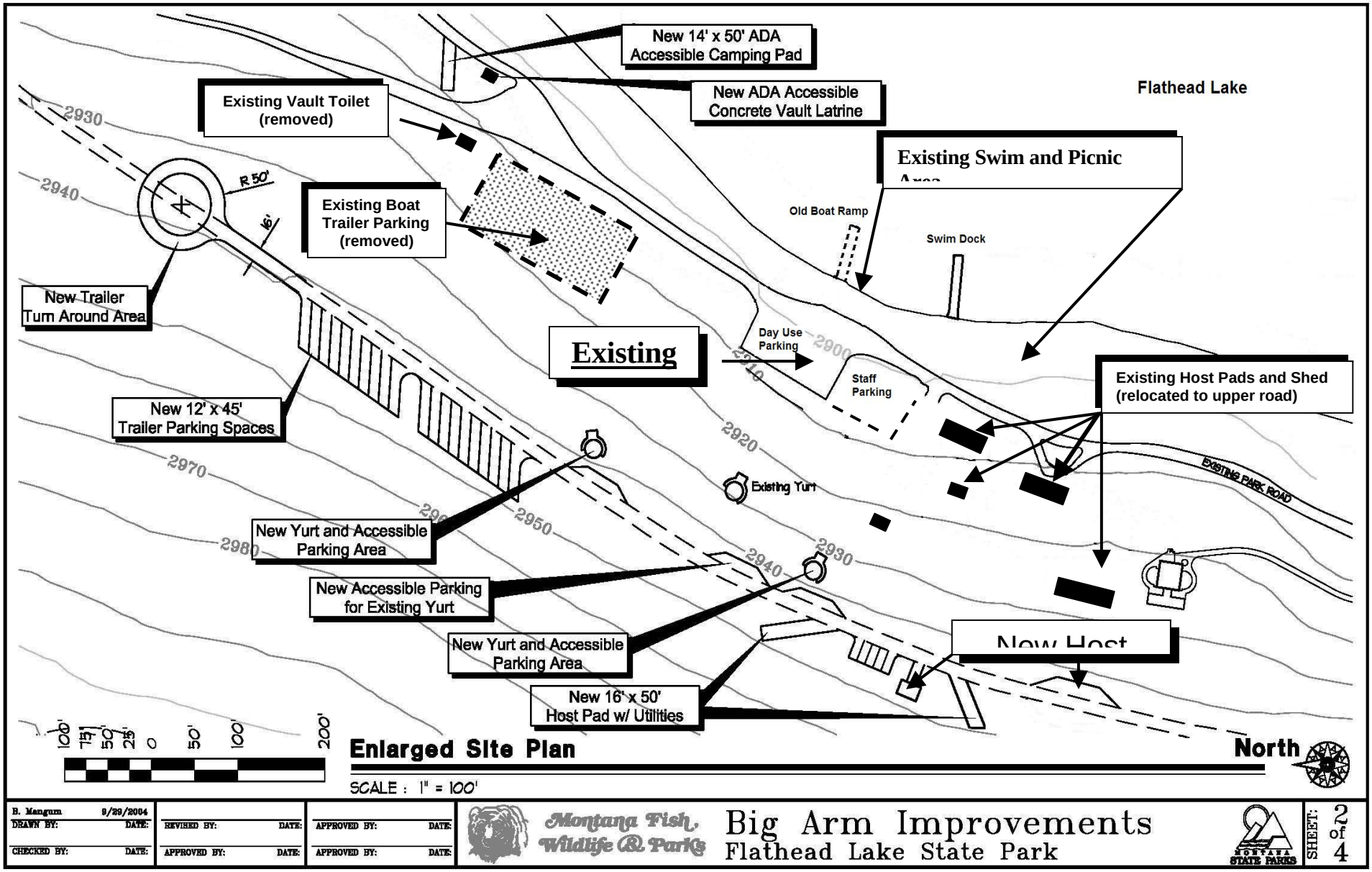
Appendix C

Alternative 2 (1 of 2)



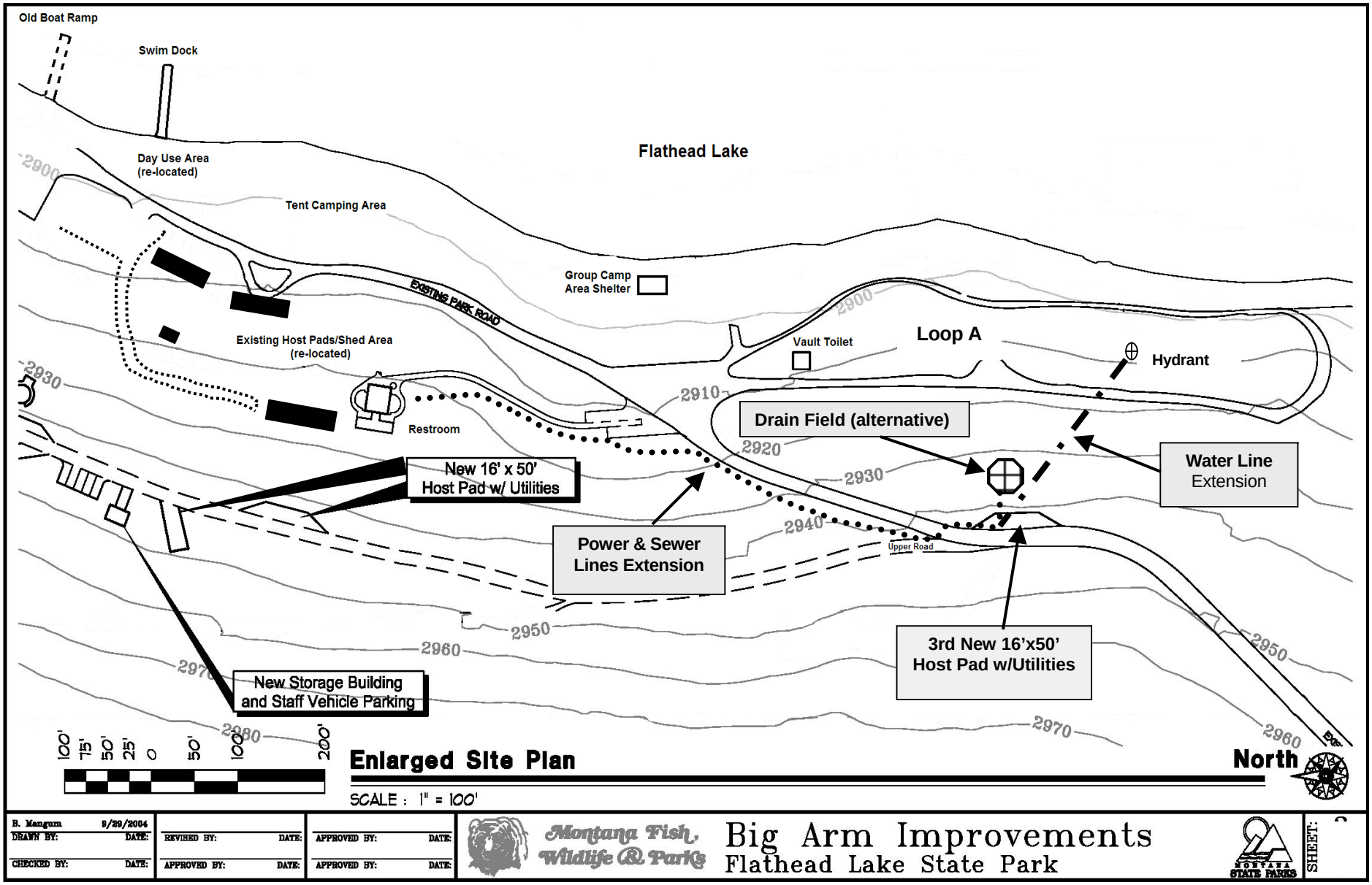
APPENDIX C

Alternative 2 (modified)



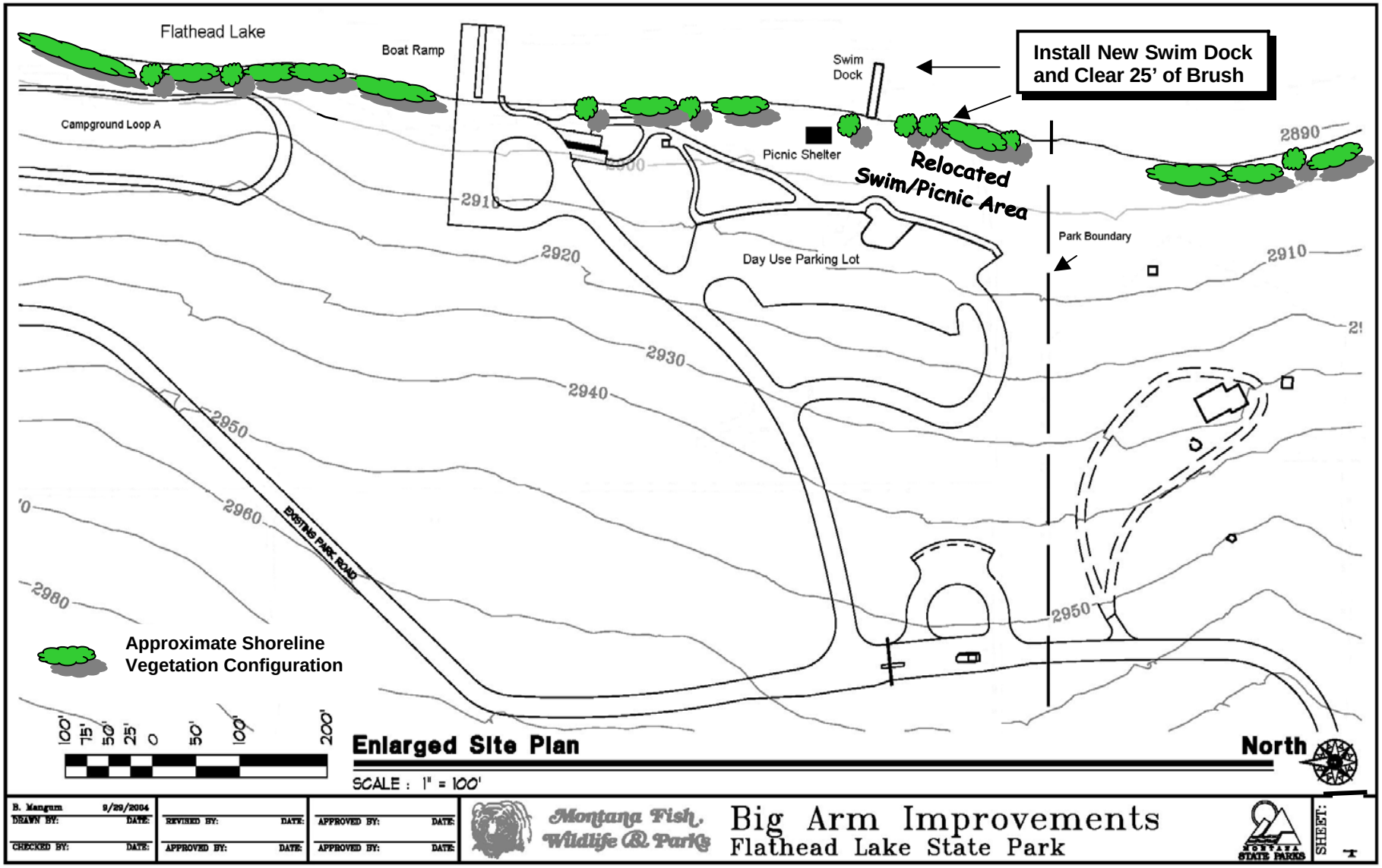
Appendix D

Alternative 2 (2 of 2)



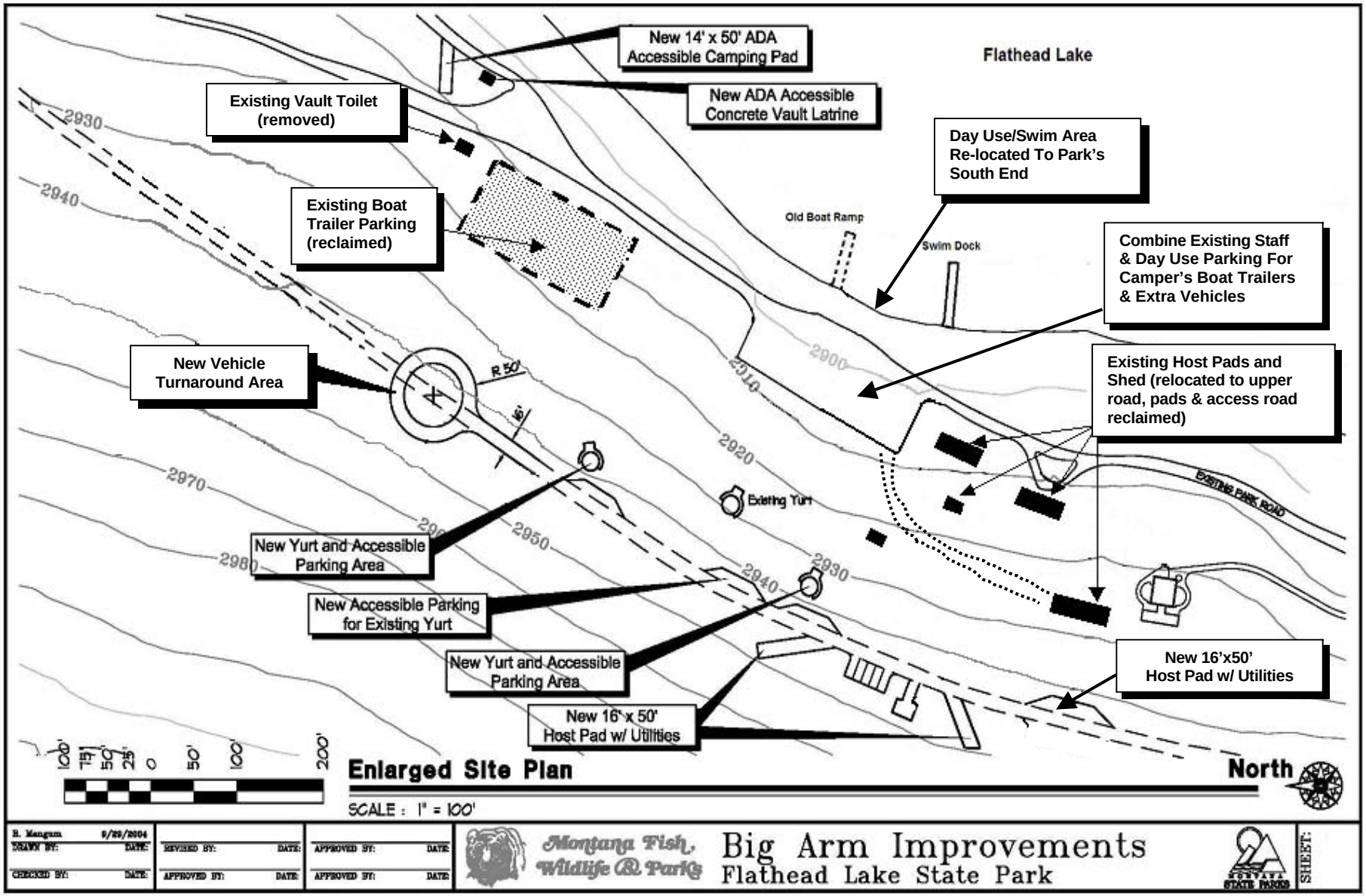
Appendix E

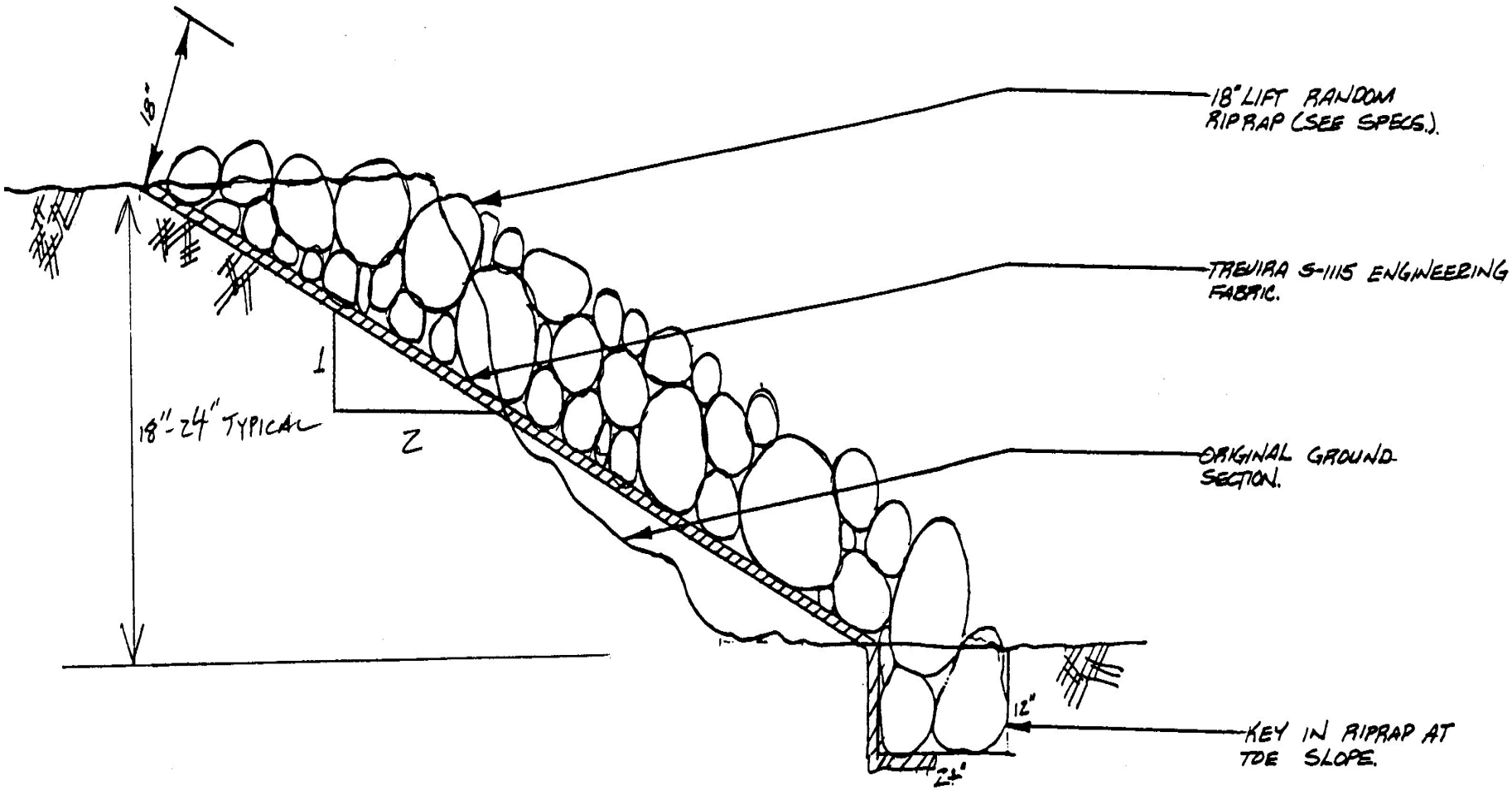
Alternatives 2 & 3 – South End Improvements



Appendix F

Alternative 3



Appendix G

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