

Part VI: Comments and Coordination

A. Early Coordination

Recognizing that this project interests many people in the Columbia Falls and Hungry Horse areas, several opportunities for comment were provide at early stages of the project and throughout the development of the EIS. The major public notices, meetings, and opportunities for comments are listed below.

- Notice of Intent to Conduct an EIS was published in the *Federal Register* on July 20, 1989. (Included on page VI-16)
- A Letter of Intent was issued to interested public agencies, organizations, and individuals on August 21, 1989. (Included on page VI-17)
- A scoping meeting to identify major issues and discuss generalized design alternatives was held on October 3, 1989.
- An informational meeting to discuss design alternatives and preliminary findings of EIS analyses was held on June 26, 1990.
- An "open forum" workshop and Highway Location and Design Public Hearing were held in Columbia Falls, Montana at the North Valley Community Center on December 10, 1992.
- An "open house" informational meeting to discuss design modifications to the preferred alternative made as a result of comments received on the Draft EIS and provide new information about the project was held on November 9, 1994.

B. Meetings With Community Groups

There were no special meetings held with community groups affected by the proposed action. **The EIS consultant and an MDT representative** met with a member of the Kootenai Culture Committee on June 26, 1990 in Badrock Canyon to determine if the proposed action would affect culturally sensitive sites. Members of the Blackfeet and Flathead Tribes were invited to the meeting but did not attend. **Follow-up contacts and requests for comments on the proposed action were made with the other two Tribes.** A memo describing coordination efforts with Indian Cultural Committees on file in Helena.

C. Scoping Meetings

Scoping meetings were held on October 3, 1989 at the High School Auditorium in Columbia Falls, Montana. The primary purpose of the meetings was to identify issues and concerns that are important to the proposed action.

The meetings were advertised in three local newspapers including the *Kalispell Weekly News*, the *Daily Interlake*, and the *Hungry Horse News*. The newspaper advertisements consisted of bordered notices placed in the classified sections of each paper two weeks prior to the meeting. **Notices of the meeting were sent** to more than 100 agencies and individuals with interests in the project.

A workshop session, held from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m., gave the public an opportunity to meet those responsible for preparing the EIS and to informally discuss project concerns with them. Approximately 20 people

attended the one and one-half hour long session. Questions and comments at the workshop focused on:

- the time schedule for the project
- pedestrian and traffic safety in Columbia Heights
- impacts to Berne Memorial Park
- impacts of right-of-way acquisition in Columbia Heights
- the redesign of the US 2/FAS 206 intersection.

Forms were provided for workshop participants wishing to submit written comments on the proposal.

The evening scoping meeting began at 7:30 p.m. and was attended by about 55 people. The meeting included opening remarks followed by a brief presentation **by the EIS consultant** describing the purpose of the proposed action and the EIS process. The presentation also provided a tentative schedule for the EIS and summarized issues potentially important to the proposed project. An information packet with a preliminary list of issues generated **through contacts with** other agencies was made available to the public. After the presentation, comments were received from the audience. Forms for submitting written comments on issues and design alternatives were provided at the meeting.

A total of 142 written comments were received as a result of the scoping meetings. The majority of the written comments (101 of 142 comments) on the proposed action were generated through efforts of the Coalition for Canyon Preservation (CCP), a local environmental group. The group provided preprinted comment forms and urged its members and other affiliates to comment on specific issues and support two-lane design alternatives. The CCP forms were developed to closely resemble the forms provided **at the scoping meeting**. **A total of 81** of the group's preprinted scoping comment forms **were received** through June, 1990. Additional letters and/or postcards, often containing remarks similar to those on the preprinted forms, were received from 20 of the individuals who also submitted scoping forms supplied by the CCP. Twenty comments were received on the preprinted forms provided **at the scoping meeting**.

Copies of the comments received following the October meeting and before an informational meeting held in June, 1990 are on file in Helena.

1. DEVELOPMENT OF PROJECT ISSUES

The 142 initial comments received **after the scoping meeting** were reviewed and used to identify the issues important to the proposed action. The comments submitted by the public were analyzed and categorized into broad issues for consideration in the EIS or supplementary studies. Specific concerns relating to each broad issue were then grouped for further analysis.

The issues and concerns generated through the initial scoping activities were reviewed for their importance to the proposed action. This evaluation was necessary to determine the issues that should be examined in detail by the EIS. Less important issues were addressed briefly in appropriate sections of the document.

The ranking of project issues was based on the following considerations:

- requirements to address specific impact categories,
- the number of public comments received on the issue, and

- the strength of convictions raised in each comment.

Equal consideration was given to the previously mentioned factors during the ranking of issues. Since many issues are subjective by nature, it is difficult if not impossible to rank them without incorporating some degree of subjectivity into the process.

2. MAJOR PROJECT ISSUES

The following table identifies the major issues for the proposed reconstruction of US 2 between Columbia Heights and Hungry Horse. **TABLE VI-1** summarizes the origin of the issues, the number of comments received, and how the EIS addresses each item. Please note that this summary is based on the 142 comments received after the initial scoping meetings. Major comments received after the June 26, 1990 meeting are summarized in Section D. of this Part. The scope of the EIS was subsequently revised to address these comments.

D. Comments on Alternatives

1. MEETINGS ON ALTERNATIVES

A secondary purpose of the October 3, 1989 scoping meeting was to present possible design alternatives and receive comments about the type of highway that should be constructed in the project corridor. This meeting provided an opportunity to present a range of possible designs for the highway and solicit comments from the audience about them. A handout describing the major features of each general highway design and comment forms were offered to the public. The handout contained a drawing of the types of highway designs being considered and requested comments on the features needed for this section of US 2.

As indicated previously, 142 comments **were received** following the scoping meetings on the proposed action. Most comments specified a preference for a design alternative in addition to important issues. Many of the public comments also suggested considerations that should be included in the project's design. The considerations mentioned most often were:

- reconstructing the highway through Badrock Canyon to provide a lower level of service in the design year,
- reducing travel speeds in Columbia Heights and Badrock Canyon,
- ensuring that the preferred design is the most cost-effective of the alternatives,
- improving winter driving conditions in the corridor,
- providing a facility that will safely accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians, and
- providing a design that is sensitive to the **features** of Badrock Canyon.

Alternatives for the proposed action were also presented to the public at an informational meeting held on June 26, 1990 at the High School Auditorium in Columbia Falls. Some 40 people attended the meeting and 16 persons presented oral comments. MDT recorded the proceedings of this meeting for its files.

A total of 86 written comments were submitted after the June meeting. Twenty-five of the comments were received on preprinted forms distributed by the CCP which supported for two-lane designs (Alternative 3 in Columbia Heights and Alternative 4 in rural areas). The CCP form only allowed respondents to select

**TABLE VI-1
SUMMARY OF MAJOR PROJECT ISSUES**

GENERAL TOPIC OF ISSUE	COMMENTS RELATING TO ISSUE	★	SOURCE OF COMMENT		IMPORTANCE VERY(1)= ⇒NOT(5)	HOW WILL ISSUES/COMMENTS BE ADDRESSED IN EIS?
			PUBLIC	AGENCY		
1. IMPACTS TO BERNE MEMORIAL PARK	Implement Section 4(f) at Berne Memorial Park	18	Written Comment		1	Section 4(f) Evaluation will Supplement EIS
	Preserve Berne Memorial Park	67	Scoping Comment Written Comment	MDT 8/21/89	1	Preliminary Designs Section 4(f) - Impacts Section 4(f) - Avoidance Alternatives
	Perpetuate Water Source at Berne Park	25	Scoping & Written	MDT 8/21/89	2	Section 4(f) - Proposed Action
	Relocate Park and Water Source?	0		MDT/FRWA 8/21/89	2	Section 4(f) - Avoidance Alternatives Section 4(f) - Mitigation
	Consider Cultural Significance of Park	7	Written Comment		2	Section 4(f) - Proposed Action
	Improve Maintenance of Park	2	Scoping Comment	MDT 8/21/89	4	Section 4(f) - Proposed Action
	Continue Access to "Fisherman's Rock"	1	Scoping Comment		4	Section 4(f) - Impacts
	Park Not Important	1	Written Comment		5	Section 4(f) - Properties
	Are Residential Relocations Necessary?	0		MDT 8/21/89	1	Preliminary Designs & Cross-Sections
	R/W Effects on Commercial Properties in Columbia Heights	0	Scoping Workshop		1	MDT R/W Cost Estimates Preliminary Designs/Alignments Preferred Alternative Discussions
2. RELOCATIONS, RIGHT-OF- WAY & UTILITY IMPACTS	Effects on BPA Power Lines	0	Scoping Meeting	MDT 8/21/89 BPA 9/26/89	3	Preliminary Designs Will Determine Impacts MDT Utility Relocation Cost Estimates Coordination with BPA
	Costs of Utility Relocations	0	Scoping Meeting		3	MDT Utility Relocation Cost Estimates Coordination with Utility Companies
	Use "Cost-Effective Design Methodology" (As a Reasonable Alternative)	42	Scoping Meeting Written Comment		1	Evaluation of Alternatives Alternatives - Proposed Action
3. DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS	Prepare Cost-Benefit Analysis	21	Scoping & Written		1	Evaluation of Alternatives
	Traffic Control Plan for Construction	2	Written Comment Scoping Workshop	MDT 8/21/89	2	Construction Impacts Preliminary Designs
	Improve Winter Driving Conditions Through Design	7	Scoping Workshop Written Comment		2	Preliminary Designs Accident History/Traffic Safety Discussions

★ Indicates number of times specific comment was mentioned in scoping forms or letters. Several issues were identified in most scoping correspondence.

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GENERAL TOPIC OF ISSUE	COMMENTS RELATING TO ISSUE	★	SOURCE OF COMMENT		IMPORTANCE VERY (1) ← ⇒ NOT (5)	HOW WILL ISSUES/COMMENTS BE ADDRESSED IN EIS?
			PUBLIC	AGENCY		
3. DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS (CONTINUED)	Design for Lower Level of Service	6	Written Comment		3	Capacity/Level of Service Discussions
	No Need for/Oppose Four-Lane Road	46	Written Comment		3	Capacity/Level of Service Discussions
	Traffic Counts Not Representative	21	Written Comment		3	Traffic Discussions
	Concerned About Cost	2	Written Comment		3	Evaluation of Alternatives
	Use Left Turn Lanes Where Needed	7	Scoping Meeting Written Discussion		3	Capacity/Level of Service Discussions Preliminary Designs
	Design & Location of New Bridge Over the South Fork of the Flathead	1	Scoping Comment Written Comment		3	Preferred Alternative Discussions MDT Bridge Bureau Guidance
	Reconstruct US 2/FAS 208 Junction	1	Scoping Meeting	MDT 8/21/89	3	Preliminary Designs of Intersection
	Reconstruct Weight Station in Columbia Heights?	2	Scoping Meeting Written Comment	MDT 8/21/89	4	MDT Agency Decision Preferred Alternative Discussions
	Develop Alternate Route Entirely	3	Written Comment		5	Identification of Reasonable Alternatives
	Construct Tiered Road Through Canyon	0	Scoping Meeting		5	Identification of Reasonable Alternatives
	Want Safest Road Possible	9	Written Comment		2	Traffic Safety Comparisons of Alternatives
	Reduce Speeds in Canyon or Columbia Heights	22	Scoping and Written		2	MDT Traffic Unit Determination
	Bus Stop and Crosswalk Provisions for School Children in Columbia Heights	3	Scoping and Written		3	MDT Traffic Unit Determination
4. TRAFFIC SAFETY	Consider Needs of Pedestrians and Bicyclists	10	Written Comment		3	Pedestrian/Bicyclist Provisions Discussion Preferred Alternative Discussions
	Provide Separate Facilities for Pedestrians and Bicyclists	6	Scoping and Written		4	Pedestrian/Bicyclist Provisions Discussion Criteria for Preliminary Designs
	Develop Limited Access Control	2	Written Comment	MDT 8/21/89	4	MDT Access Control Plan Preliminary Designs
	Left Turns onto Highway Difficult	1	Scoping Comment		5	Preliminary Designs Will Consider
	Disruption to Wildlife Travel Corridors	53	Written Comment		1	OEA Report Environmental Consequences Discussions
5. EFFECTS ON FISH & WILDLIFE						

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GENERAL TOPIC OF ISSUE	COMMENTS RELATING TO ISSUE	★	SOURCE OF COMMENT		IMPORTANCE VERY(1) <=> NOT(5)	HOW WILL ISSUES/COMMENTS BE ADDRESSED IN EIS?
			PUBLIC	AGENCY		
5. EFFECTS ON WILDLIFE & FISH (CONTINUED)	Effects on the Northern Continental Divide Grizzly Bear Ecosystem (NCDE)	47	Written Comment		1	Biological Assessment OEA Report Coordination with the USFWS
	Project's Effects on Threatened or Endangered Species	14	Written Comment	USFWS 8/22/89	2	Biological Assessment OEA Report Coordination with the USFWS
	Impacts to Common Wildlife Species	19	Written Comment	FVP 9/18/89	2	OEA Report Environmental Consequences Discussions
	Preserve Riparian Habitat (River and Bald Eagle Habitat)	29	Written Comment		2	OEA Report Environmental Consequences Discussions
	Wetlands Impacts	1	Written Comment	EPA 7/28/89 USFWS 8/22/89	2	OEA Report Agency Reviews/Consultations
	Impacts of River Encroachments	28	Written Comment	COE 8/9/89	2	Preliminary Designs COE, FWP Consultations Environmental Consequences Discussions
6. IMPACTS TO THE FLATHEAD RIVER	Floodplain Impacts	1	Scoping Meeting Written Comment	COE 8/9/89	3	Preliminary Designs COE Consultations Affected Environment Discussion Environmental Consequences Discussions
	Impacts to Recreational Use	0		FVP 9/18/89	3	Environmental Consequences Discussions Preferred Alternative Discussions
	Maintain Corridor's Scenic Qualities	41	Written Comment		1	Visual Resources Discussion Environmental Consequences Discussions
	Protect Trees Along River	51	Written Comment		1	Preferred Alternative Discussion Mitigating Measures Discussion
7. VISUAL IMPACTS & AESTHETICS	Apply "Scenic Enhancement Program"	31	Written Comment		3	Mitigating Measures Discussion
	Incorporate Scenic Turnouts	7	Written Comment		3	Mitigating Measures Discussion
	Don't Blast Rock in Canyon	8	Scoping Meeting Written Comment		4	Preliminary Designs & Cross-Sections Will Identify Excavation Required for Alternatives
	Presence of Historic and Prehistoric Properties in Corridor	5		MDT 8/27/89 USFS 8/21/89	3	HRA Cultural Resources Survey Section 4(f)- Properties, Impacts

★ Indicates number of times specific comment was mentioned in scoping forms or letters. Several issues were identified in most scoping correspondence.

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			PUBLIC	AGENCY		
8. IMPACTS TO CULTURAL RESOURCES (CONTINUED)	Native American Significance of Badrock Canyon	0	Written Comment	MDT 9/27/89	3	HRA Cultural Resources Report Section 4(f) - Properties Coordination with the Tribal Culture Committees
	Follow CFR Requirements for EIS/4(f)	2	Written Comment		1	Legal Sufficiency Reviews by MDT/FRWA
9. OTHER TOPICS	MDT and Consultant Orchestrating Biased EIS	1	Written Comment		1	Legal Sufficiency Reviews by MDT/FRWA
	Is EIS Necessary for Columbia Heights-Badrock Canyon Section of Project?	1	Written Comment		5	Purpose and Need for Action Description of Proposed Action
	Project Will Affect Tourist Expectations	1	Written Comment		3	Socio-Economic Impacts

★ Indicates number of times specific comment was mentioned in scoping forms or letters. Several issues were identified in most scoping correspondence.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS RECEIVED		ORIGIN OF SCOPING COMMENTS	
Total Number of Scoping Comments Received by MDT	142	Flathead County	78
MDT Distributed Comments Forms Received (Issues and Alternatives)	20	Elsewhere in State of Montana	30
Privately Distributed Comment Forms Received (Issues and Alternatives)	81	Other States	33
Letters With Comments	41	Canada	1

two-lane alternatives and did not list the other alternatives as options for the proposed action. Nine individuals who submitted CCP forms, also submitted postcards supporting the two-lane alternatives. Eight comments on alternatives were received on preprinted forms provided at the **June, 1990** meeting. Of the comments that specified an alternative, 38 supported two-lane designs, 3 supported 4-lane designs, and one supported no-action.

The remainder of the comments related to issues or specific design features for the new traffic facility. Of concern to most individuals was the need for reduced travel speeds through Columbia Heights and Hungry Horse, pedestrian and bicyclist safety and facilities in the corridor, the need for reconstructing the US 2/FAS 206 intersection, and the potential impacts of the project on Badrock Canyon and Berne Memorial Park.

Thirty-three of the 86 comments called for the agencies involved in the preparation of the EIS to undertake a study of the Flathead River downstream of Hungry Horse for possible inclusion in the Flathead Wild and Scenic River system. Other materials submitted included three completed surveys forms from users of the spring at Berne Memorial Park and three completed survey forms about recreational use in the corridor and the potential visual impacts of features related to the highway. **These surveys were privately initiated and distributed.**

Copies of these comments are on file in Helena. Note that a listing of **written public comments received up to the publication date of the Draft EIS** and the type of comment received is included in APPENDIX 9.

2. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ALTERNATIVES

TABLE VI-2 contains a summary of all written comments from the public about the alternatives considered for the proposed action. The table summarizes all comments pertinent to the alternatives received to date, including those received prior to the June, 1990 meeting. It should be noted that not all comments specified a particular design alternative, therefore, a more general assessment was made to show support for two-lane alternatives and four-lane designs.

TABLE VI-2 SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ALTERNATIVES	
Support 4-lane alternatives	14
Support 2-lane alternatives	135
No-Action	9
Alternative Not Specified or Issues Only	66
Other: 30' wide 2-lane	1
Tunnel	1
Close US 2	1
Use Alternate Route	1
Tiered Road	1

As indicated previously, a substantial amount of support for two-lane design options was generated through efforts of the CCP. A total of 106 comments about alternatives **were received** on preprinted forms provided by the group and many letters or postcards from its affiliates. The CCP's success in generating comments supporting two-lane alternatives skewed the results shown in **TABLE VI-2**.

E. Public Agency Coordination

1. COOPERATING AGENCIES

Several federal agencies were invited to be cooperating agencies for this project because of their jurisdiction over elements of the EIS or special interests in the project area. The agencies that were contacted included:

- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Flathead National Forest (7/28/89)
- U.S. Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers (8/9/89)
- U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service (7/20/89)
- U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Glacier National Park (7/31/90)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (7/26/89)

Letters from each of these agencies are included on pages **VI-18 through VI-20**.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Environmental Protection Agency declined the opportunity to participate as cooperating agencies for the EIS. However, the agencies did express their desire to provide review comments on the document.

2. FEDERAL AND STATE AGENCIES

Comments from agencies with interests in the proposed action were obtained as a result of early coordination and through direct requests for comments. The agencies that responded with comments are listed below. Pertinent comments are included in the letters that follow on pages **VI-21 through VI-50**. These letters, listed on the following pages by agency, have been placed in chronological order for convenience. Each cooperating agency was given the opportunity to review preliminary versions of this Draft EIS. Comments from the agencies are included on pages **VI-45 through VI-48**.

FEDERAL AGENCIES

- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Flathead National Forest, U.R. Morgan for Allen L. Christophersen, District Ranger, Hungry Horse Ranger District (5/4/90)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Region 1, James A. Lawrence for John M. Hughes, Acting Regional Forester, Missoula (1/8/92)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Flathead National Forest, Allen L. Christophersen, District Ranger, Hungry Horse District (3/12/91)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, Bozeman, Richard J. Gooby, State Conservationist (9/5/89)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, Kalispell, Rich Pettersen, District Conservationist, (1/19/90) and Form AD-1006, (5/24/90)
- Department of Energy, Bonneville Power Administration, Upper Columbia Area, Spokane, WA, William A. Freeland, Area Environmental Coordinator (9/26/89 and 6/26/90)

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Department of Energy, Bonneville Power Administration, Portland, Oregon, Leslie Kelleher, Environmental Specialist, letter to Kevin Hart, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Energy Division (11/19/92)

U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Helena, Montana State Office, Kemper M. McMaster, Acting State Supervisor (8/22/89)

U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Helena, Fish and Wildlife Enhancement, Kemper M. McMaster, Field Supervisor, Montana/Wyoming Office (1/4/91)

U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Helena, Montana State Office, Dale Harms, State Supervisor (11/4/91 and 3/24/92)

U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Montana Division, Duane C. Lewis, Assistant Division Administrator (12/20/91)

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Montana Office, John F. Wardell, Director (5/21/92)

STATE AGENCIES

Montana Department of Commerce, Aeronautics Division, Helena, Barbra Proulx for Gerald C. Burrows, Chief, Airport/Airways Bureau (9/7/89)

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Fisheries Division, Helena, Stream Protection Coordinator (9/18/89)

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Parks Division, Helena, Mary Ellen Poole, Administration Officer I, Operations Bureau (11/24/89)

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Parks Division, Helena, Arnie Olson, Administrator (7/26/90)

Montana Department of Highways, Environmental Section, correspondence to Marcella Sherfy, State Historic Preservation Officer from Edrie L. Vinson (7/25/90)

Montana Department of Highways, Environmental Section, correspondence to Marcella Sherfy, State Historic Preservation Officer from Edrie L. Vinson (8/15/90)

Montana Department of Highways, Environmental Section, Correspondence to Marcella Sherfy, State Historic Preservation Officer from Edrie L. Vinson (8/10/90)

Montana Department of Highways, Environmental Section, Correspondence to Marcella Sherfy, State Historic Preservation Officer from Edrie L. Vinson (8/10/90) with SHPO concurrence (8/20/90)

Montana Department of Highways, Environmental Section, Correspondence to Marcella Sherfy, State Historic Preservation Officer from Edrie L. Vinson (8/1/91)

Montana Department of Highways, Environmental Section, Correspondence to Marcella Sherfy, State Historic Preservation Officer from Edrie L. Vinson (10/7/91)

Montana Department of Health and Environmental Sciences, Air Quality Bureau, Helena, Warren Norton, Environmental Specialist (8/24/89)

Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Energy Division, Kevin Hart, Environmental Program Manager, (12/2/92)

Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Engineering Bureau, Floodplain Management Section, Helena, John R. Hamill, Supervisor (3/21/90)

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Helena, Jim Bond, Information Officer (10/31/89)

State Historic Preservation Office, Montana Historical Society, Helena, Mary McCarthy, SHPO Intern, (9/11/89)

State Historic Preservation Office, Montana Historical Society, Helena, Katherine M. Huppe, Historical Survey Reviewer, (6/13/90)

State Historic Preservation Office, Montana Historical Society, Helena, Katherine M. Huppe, Historical Survey Reviewer (7/2/91)

State Historic Preservation Office, Montana Historical Society, Helena, Mark F. Baumler, Ph.D., Deputy SHPO/Archaeologist (10/25/91)

State Historic Preservation Office, Montana Historical Society, Helena, Marcella Sherfy, State Historic Preservation Officer (12/17/91)

COOPERATING AGENCY COMMENTS ON PRELIMINARY DEIS

U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Glacier National Park, West Glacier, MT, for H. Gilbert Lusk, Superintendent (12/19/90).

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Flathead National Forest, Hungry Horse Ranger District, Hungry Horse, Allen L. Christophersen, District Ranger (3/12/91).

Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers, Omaha District, Planning Division, Omaha, Nebraska, Gerard E. Mick, Chief, Environmental Analysis Branch (3/28/91).

F. Agency Comments on the Draft EIS/Section 4(f) Evaluation

The following section includes comments on the Draft EIS/Section 4(f) Evaluation submitted by federal, state, and local agencies. Agency comments were subsequently reviewed and responses were drafted when appropriate. Comments generally suggested corrections to text, or technical data and sometimes requested that materials be added to the document. Practical and reasonable criticism was incorporated into the Final EIS in an effort to improve the overall quality of the document. Modifications to the Final EIS are identified in the responses that accompany agency letters.

After the comment letters from agencies were reviewed, preliminary responses to substantive comments on the Draft EIS were prepared. Correspondence containing the preliminary responses were sent to each agency for review. Follow-up letters from the agencies were requested to determine if the responses adequately address project concerns expressed by each agencies. Copies of these follow-up letters have been included in this Part of the EIS. Note that not all agencies submitted responses to the follow-up letters.

1. COOPERATING AGENCY COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

All cooperating agencies for this EIS submitted written comments on the Draft EIS. These letters along with appropriate responses are included on pages VI-51 through VI-59 of the Final EIS. The following letters were received from cooperating agencies after publication of the Draft EIS/Section 4(f) Evaluation:

U.S. Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers, Omaha District, Richard D. Gorton, Chief, Environmental Analysis Branch, Planning Division (9/2/92) and (Follow-up 8/4/93)

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Flathead National Forest, Joel D. Holtrop, Forest Supervisor, (12/15/92) and (Follow-up 8/13/93)

U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of the Secretary, Jonathan P. Deason, Director, Office of Environmental Affairs, Washington, D.C. (9/21/92)

2. OTHER AGENCY COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

The following agencies offered comments on the proposed improvements to US 2 between Columbia Heights and Hungry Horse:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Montana Office, Eric W. Finke for John F. Wardell (9/10/92) and (Followup 8/17/93)

Montana Department of Health and Environmental Sciences, Air Quality Bureau, Helena, Robert Raisch for Gretchen Bennitt, PM-10 SIP Coordinator (9/15/92) and (Follow-up 7/29/93)

Montana Department of Health and Environmental Sciences, Water Quality Bureau, Environmental Sciences Division, Helena, Abe Horpestad, Supervisor, Technical Studies and Support (7/8/93) and (3/23/94)

Flathead Regional Development Office, Stephen F. Herbaly, Planning Director, (11/13/92)

These comments can be found on pages VI-60 through VI-79 of this Part.

G. Public Comments on the Draft EIS/Section 4(f) Evaluation

1. WRITTEN PUBLIC COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

The Draft EIS/Section 4(f) Evaluation was made available for public review in late July, 1992. The initial review period for the Draft EIS/Section 4(f) Evaluation was extended until December 21, 1992 at the request of some members of the public. Written comments were generally accepted on the document through December 21, 1992 although some substantive comments were received well after this date. Written comments on the Draft EIS/Section 4(f) Evaluation along with appropriate responses are included on pages VI-80 through VI-184 of the Final EIS. Necessary modifications to the Final EIS are identified in the responses that accompany written comments.

2. PUBLIC DESIGN AND LOCATION HEARING

An "open forum" Highway Location and Design Public Hearing was held in Columbia Falls, Montana at the North Valley Community Center on December 10, 1992. The hearing began at 7:00 p.m. and lasted until about 9:30 p.m. An "open forum" workshop was also held between 1:30 and 4:30 p.m.

on December 10 at the center. The purpose of both sessions was to receive oral and written comments from the public on the Draft EIS/Section 4(f) Evaluation and issues relating to the proposed improvements to US 2 between Columbia Heights and Hungry Horse.

The afternoon workshop session provided the public with an opportunity to meet one-on-one with agency representatives familiar with the project and offer comments on the proposed highway improvements. The informal afternoon workshop was attended by eight people. Comments made by those attending the session were transcribed by the representatives contacted by members of the public.

The evening hearing began with a brief public presentation by the EIS consultant explaining the purpose of the hearing, important issues, the alternatives considered, the major environmental impacts of proposed improvements to US 2, and measures to mitigate identified impacts. Following the presentation, opportunities were provided for members of the public to make statements to the audience or to comment individually to representatives of agencies involved in the project. Public statements were recorded on tape and one-on-one comments were transcribed onto written comment forms by the agency representatives contacted by the public. The evening hearing was attended by about 75 people. Approximately 15 representatives of MDT, FHWA or other agencies involved in the project were present at the hearing.

A brochure outlining the procedures for making comments at the "open forum" hearing and summarizing the content of the Draft EIS was made available at the afternoon and evening sessions. The brochure also contained a form for submitting written comments on the proposed action or related issues. Information about the right-of-way acquisition process and Relocation Assistance program for affected landowners was made available at the meetings.

3. PUBLIC HEARING COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

As indicated above, those attending the Design/Location hearing were given the opportunity to submit written comments on forms provided at the hearing, to make public statements in front of an audience, or to discuss issues one-on-one with agency representatives familiar with the project. Most members of the public chose to make public statements rather than discuss the project individually with agency representatives. Public statements made at the hearing were tape-recorded and ultimately transcribed along with the engineering presentation made at the meeting.

In accordance with 23 CFR 771.111(h)(2)(vi), a transcript of the hearing and documents showing that a public hearing was held have been submitted to the FHWA. The transcript of the hearing is presented on pages VI-186 through VI-223. Responses to comments made in public statements are also included on these pages. Comments made to agency representatives during one-on-one discussions at the public hearing were transcribed. These comments are included with other written public comments that follow the transcript on pages VI-224 through VI-279.

H. "Open House" Informational Meeting

An "Open House" informational meeting was held on Wednesday, November 9, 1994 at the North Valley Community Center in Columbia Falls. The purpose of the "Open House" was to discuss modifications made to the preferred alternative and make other new information about the project available to the public. No formal presentations were made at the meeting; however, the public was given the opportunity to review displays and meet individually with agency representatives and the EIS consultant to discuss or answer questions about the project. A newsletter outlining design modifications to the preferred alternative, presenting responses to major comments on the Draft EIS, and providing new and relevant information was provided at the meeting.

The afternoon session of the "Open House", attended by about 26 people, began shortly after 1:00 p.m. and concluded about 4:15 p.m. The evening session began about 6:15 p.m. and ended by 9:15 p.m. Attendance during the evening session was estimated to be at least 38 people. Comments heard by agency representatives during the meeting sessions were similar to many comments already made on the project. Comments often focused on the impacts of reconstructing US 2 in Badrock Canyon and requested that the project be designed to avoid impacts on Berne Memorial Park and to avoid the excavation of the west outcrop in the Canyon. Other comments called for more vehicle parking in the proposed turnout for the spring at Berne Memorial Park. Members of the public also wanted to know what the intersection of US 2 and Highway 206 in Columbia Heights would be like and if traffic signals would be provided. Some residents of the project corridor suggested that the alignment of US 2 be shifted northward to reduce right-of-way impacts in the vicinity of Monte Vista Drive. A number of comments supporting the modifications made to the preferred alternative were also heard.

A summary of the November 9, 1994 "Open House" and comments received as a result of the meeting are on file in Helena.

I. Permit Requirements

Based on coordination with regulatory agencies, the following permits must be obtained prior to the construction of the proposed action.

1. WATER-RELATED PERMITS

Section 404 Permit - Under the provisions of Section 404 of the Federal Clean Water Act, any person, agency, or entity, either public or private, proposing a project that will result in the discharge or placement of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States, including wetlands. A permit application must be submitted to the **COE** district regulatory office for review. The EPA also has regulatory review and enforcement functions under the law.

A permit application and supplemental information **must be submitted** to the **COE** for review of: (1) the proposed placement of fill along the banks of the Flathead River opposite Berne Memorial Park; (2) the construction of piers for a new bridge over the South Fork of the Flathead River; and (3) the project's effects on wetlands in the corridor. The type of permit authorization (Nationwide, Regional, or Individual) required from the **COE** depends on the size and scope of the intended project.

Correspondence from the COE (included in APPENDIX 15) indicates that the information presented in the EIS appears sufficient at this time to issue a 404 permit. However, the COE stated that a decision to issue a permit for the proposed action would not be made until after the Final EIS is released and comments on the document have been received.

Section 401 Water Quality Certification - MDHES must certify that any discharges into state waters will comply with certain water quality standards before federal permits or licenses can be granted. The authority for this action comes from Section 401 of the Clean Water Act. This certification must be provided to the **COE** by MDHES prior to the issuance of a Section 404 permit.

NPDES/MPDES Permit - Both the federal and state governments have enacted legislation for the control of pollutants into navigable waters from point sources. The National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) authorizes states to administer this program, thus the Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (MPDES). Involvement with the MPDES on this project would likely be for dewatering of coffer dams. Storm drainage outfalls are considered as point source discharges, but MDHES, has not instituted a permitting process for such discharges at this time.

124 Permit - The Montana Stream Protection Act contains measures to ensure that the fish and wildlife resources of Montana's waters are protected and preserved. The Act requires any agency or subdivision of federal, state, county, or city government proposing a project which may affect the bed or banks of a stream in Montana to submit an application to the FWP. Activities requiring a permit include the construction of new facilities, or the modification, operation, and maintenance of existing facilities that may affect the natural existing shape and form of any stream or its banks or tributaries. MDT is responsible for obtaining this permit.

3A Authorization - The MDHES Water Quality Bureau may authorize temporary exemptions from surface water quality standards for turbidity, total dissolved solids, or temperature. Any person, agency, or entity, both public and private, initiating a short-term activity that may cause unavoidable short-term violations of water quality standards must obtain this authorization prior to beginning construction. The Authorization may be waived by FWP during its review process under the Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act (310 Permit) or the Stream Protection Act (124 Permit). The Contractor is generally responsible for obtaining this Authorization.

Memorandum of Agreement and Authorization (MAA) - This agreement between MDT and FWP stipulates the provisions that will be used to maintain the quality of streams and fisheries affected by highway-related construction. The MAA is intended to document compliance with the Montana Stream Preservation Act.

Temporary Water Use Permit - Under the Montana Water Use Act, a temporary water use permit will be required if water is needed for dust control or other construction-related purposes. This permit may be obtained by the Contractor from the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) Water Rights Field Office in Kalispell.

Floodplain Development Permit - A floodplain development permit will be required for new construction within designated 100-year floodplains of the Flathead River system. Activities requiring such a permit include road and bridge construction and placement of fill in floodplains. This permit **must be obtained from Flathead County**.

2. OTHER PERMITS

DSL Land Use License - The Montana Department of State Lands (DSL) will require MDT to obtain a land use license and a permanent right-of-way for the new bridge over the South Fork of the Flathead River west of Hungry Horse. An application must be submitted to the DSL Area Land Office in Kalispell for any construction below the low water mark of navigable streams.

Air Quality Permit - The suppliers of asphalt materials and crushed rock needed for construction must have an air quality permit from the MDHES Air Quality Bureau.

Construction Blasting Permit - The Contractor performing any blasting required for the proposed action must be licensed by the Safety Bureau of the Montana Department of Labor and Industry, Workers's Compensation Division. Local fire departments should be notified by the Contractor prior to each blasting occurrence, since they may have a blasting permit system in place or have other safety requirements that must be fulfilled.

Permits for Open Burning - If open burning would occur with the right-of-way clearing activities for the proposed highway improvement project, several permits may be required before such an action can be undertaken. A fire control permit may be required from the Department of State Lands for burning during restricted seasons. Additionally, open burning permits may have to be obtained from both the MDHES Air Quality Bureau and from Flathead County.

City of High Point, possibly bypassing the Town of Jamestown to the south, continuing northeast to Hilltop Road within the City of Greensboro corporate limits for a distance of about 8 miles. The proposed facility can provide a bypass for the Town of Jamestown while also relieving congestion for the existing High Point-Jamestown-Greensboro corridor travel.

Alternatives under consideration include: (1) The "no-build", (2) improve existing facilities, (3) construction an at-grade, partial control of access, multi-lane highway on new location. Incorporated into and studied with the various build alternatives will be design variations of grade and alignment.

Letters describing the proposed action and soliciting comments will be sent to appropriate Federal, State and local agencies, and to private organizations and citizens who have previously expressed or are known to have interest in this proposal. Public meetings and meetings with local officials and neighborhood groups will be held in the study area. The first public meeting will be held in August, 1989. A public hearing will also be held. Public notice will be given on the time and place of the public meetings and hearings. The draft EIS will be available for public and agency review and comment prior to the public hearing. No formal scoping meeting is planned at this time.

To ensure that the full range of issues related to the proposed action are addressed and all significant issues identified, comments and suggestions are invited from all interested parties. Comments and questions concerning the proposed action and the EIS should be directed to the FHWA at the address provided above.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Program Number 20.205, Highway Planning and Construction. The regulations implementing Executive Order 12372 regarding intergovernmental consultation on Federal programs and activities apply to this program)

Robert L. Lee,
District Engineer, Raleigh, North Carolina.

[FR Doc. 89-17007 Filed 7-19-89; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-22-M

**Environmental Impact Statement:
Flathead County, Montana**

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: The FHWA is issuing this notice to advise the public that an environmental impact statement will be

prepared for a proposed highway in Flathead County, Montana.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dale Paulson, Environmental and Project Development Engineer, Federal Highway Administration, 301 South Park Street, Drawer 10056, Helena, Montana 59628. Telephone: (406) 449-5310; or Mr. Steve Kogel, Chief, Preconstruction Section, Montana Department of Highways, 2701 Prospect Street, Helena, Montana 59620. Telephone (406) 444-6242.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The FHWA, in cooperation with the Montana Department of Highways will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) on a proposal to improve U.S. Route 2 (U.S. 2) in Flathead County, Montana. The proposed improvement would involve the reconstruction of the existing U.S. 2 from the junction of Federal Aid Secondary Route 206 (FAS 206), east of Columbia Falls to the west edge of Hungry Horse, a distance of 4.4 miles.

Improvements to the corridor are considered necessary to provide for the existing and projected traffic demand. Also, included in this proposal is the widening or replacement of the existing bridge over the South Fork of the Flathead River, at the east end of the proposed project, and the reconstruction of the U.S. 2/FAS 206 intersection.

Alternatives under consideration include (1) taking no action; (2) widening the existing two-lane highway to four lanes; and (3) replacing the existing facility with a "special design" two-lane highway. Incorporated into and studied with the various build alternatives will be design variations of roadway width, grade, and alignment.

Letters describing the proposed action and soliciting comments will be sent to appropriate Federal, State and Local agencies, and to private organizations and citizens who have previously expressed or are known to have interest in this proposal. A series of formal scoping meetings will be held in the Columbia Falls area between August and October, 1989. In addition, a public hearing will be held. Public notice will be given of the time and place of the meetings and hearing. The draft EIS will be available for public and agency review and comments prior to the public hearing.

To ensure that the full range of issues related to this proposed action are addressed and all significant issues are identified, comments, and suggestions are invited from all interested parties. Comments or questions concerning this proposed action and the EIS should be

directed to the FHWA at the address provided above.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Program Number 20.205, Highway Planning and Construction. The regulations implementing Executive Order 12372 regarding intergovernmental consultation on Federal programs and activities apply to this program)

Issued on: July 14, 1989.

D.C. Lewis,
Assistant Division Administrator, Montana Division, Helena.

[FR Doc. 89-17048 Filed 7-19-89; 2:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-22-M

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Grant Availability to the States for Projects Implementing School Bus Safety

AGENCY: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), Department of Transportation.

ACTION: Notice of a grant program.

SUMMARY: NHTSA intends to make funds available during fiscal year 1990 to assist the States in implementing school bus safety measures. Funding will be set aside from the Section 402 program, and each State will be eligible for a proportionate share of that funding. To participate in this grant program, a State must submit an application to NHTSA which proposes to expend the funds on one or more of the measures designated by NHTSA to be "effective" or "most effective" in improving school bus safety. This notice solicits applications from the States that are interested in developing and implementing projects under this program.

DATES: Applications must be received by November 1, 1989.

ADDRESSES: A State must submit its application to the NHTSA Regional Administrator serving the Region in which the submitting State is located. All applications submitted should be labeled "School Bus Safety Implementation Project." Interested States are advised that no separate application package exists beyond the contents of this announcement.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: States should direct all questions concerning the grant program and applications to the NHTSA Regional Administrator having responsibilities for the applicant State. More general inquiries on school bus safety may be directed to Ron Engle, Traffic Safety Programs (NTS-23), National Highway

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS



STAN STEPHENS, GOVERNOR

2701 PROSPECT AVE.

STATE OF MONTANA

HELENA, MONTANA 59620

August 21, 1989

Subject: F 1-2 (39) 138
Columbia Heights - Hungry Horse
NOTICE OF INTENT

To Whom It May Concern:

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in cooperation with the Montana Department of Highways (MDOH) intends to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) on a proposal to improve 4.4 miles of highway located between Columbia Falls and Hungry Horse in Flathead County, Montana

This project is located on U.S. 2 which is a major east-west highway generally paralleling the Montana-Canadian border. The proposed improvement will involve the reconstruction of the existing two-lane highway beginning at the intersection of U.S. 2 and Federal Aid Secondary Route 206 (FAS 206) at Columbia Heights and ending at the west edge of Hungry Horse. The project will also include the reconstruction of the U.S. 2/FAS 206 intersection and the widening or replacement of the existing two-lane bridge over the South Fork of the Flathead River.

Improvements are considered necessary to connect existing four-lane sections at both ends of the project and to accommodate current and projected traffic demands. Alternatives under consideration include (1) taking no action; (2) widening the existing two-lane highway to four lanes; and (3) replacing the existing facility with a "special design" two-lane highway. Incorporated into and studied with the various build alternatives will be design variations of roadway width, grades, and alignment.

In addition to this letter soliciting comments, formal scoping meetings will be held to determine significant issues and concerns. There will be public notice of an upcoming scoping meeting inviting the participation of affected Federal, State and local agencies and other interested parties to help determine

significant issues. Other informational meetings will be held during the development of the EIS. Additionally, a public hearing will be held as required for this action. The draft EIS will be available for public and agency review prior to the public hearing. The time and place for all public meetings will be advertised locally.

To ensure that a full range of issues related to this proposed action are addressed and all significant issues identified, comments and suggestions are invited from all interested individuals. Comments or questions concerning this proposed action and the EIS should be directed to:

Mr. Dale Paulson
Project Development Engineer
Federal Highway Administration
301 South Park Street
Drawer 10056
Helena, MT 59626
Telephone: (406) 449-5310

or Mr. Stephen C. Kologgi, Chief
Preconstruction Bureau
Montana Dept. of Highways
2701 Prospect Avenue
Helena, MT 59620
Telephone: (406) 444-6242

The attached list indicates those to whom this letter is being sent. If you are aware of any other agencies, groups, or individuals that might be affected or concerned and are not on the list, please contact the above.

Sincerely,

Stephen C. Kologgi
Stephen C. Kologgi, P.E.
Chief, Preconstruction Bureau

SCK:DMN:kjm

Attachments

cc: T.J. Barnard w/Attach
S.C. Kologgi "
J.R. Ricker "
R.R. Newhouse "
R.C. Lajoie "
File "

M-17



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Flathead National Forest
1935 Third Avenue East
Kalispell, MT 59901

Reply to: 1950/7710

Date: JUL 28 1989

RECEIVED

AUG 14 1989

ROBERT PECCIA
& ASSOCIATES

Federal Highway Administration
D. C. Lewis, Assistant Division Administrator
301 S. Park, Drawer 10056
Helena, MT 59626

Dear Mr. Lewis:

The Forest Service supports the improvement of U.S. Highway 2 from Columbia Heights to Hungry Horse. Many of our employees use the facility daily both to get to and from work and during their daily work schedule. Naturally we are interested in the safest possible standard for the road that can be accommodated environmentally. The proposed EIS is the appropriate means to analyze and arrive at the best solution.

There is approximately 1/2 mile of National Forest System land impacted by the 4.4 mile proposal. While 40 CFR Part 1501.6 indicates that we must be a "Cooperating Agency", I am hopeful that our involvement can be minimized due to the press of other priorities. We are prepared to participate in the project as outlined in our Memorandum of Understanding with the Montana Highway Department. This should allow for orderly involvement by our Agency in the planning, location, design, and easement process.

District Ranger AJ Christophersen will be the Flathead National Forest contact for this project. He is located at the Hungry Horse District Office (phone 387-5243).

Sincerely,

Mary H. Peterson
for EDGAR B. BRANNON, JR
Forest Supervisor

cc: Van Natta
HH
Hensler
Peterson
III



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
CORPS OF ENGINEERS, OMAHA DISTRICT
215 NORTH 17TH STREET
OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68102-4978

August 9, 1989

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

Planning Division

Mr./Ms. D.C. Lewis
Montana Division
Federal Highway Administration
301 South Park Drawer 10056
Helena, Montana 59626

Dear D. C. Lewis:

We have received your letter of July 14, 1989, sent to Mr. Robert McInerney of our Helena office, regarding an EIS for U.S. 2 improvements in Flathead County.

We agree to serve as a cooperating agency for this EIS. Subjects we will need to see addressed include placement of fill in wetlands or other water bodies, subject to Corps Section 10 and Section 404 requirements, and placement of materials within floodways, subject to a review for impacts on floodplains.

Please send notice of meetings and of other developments to Mr. McInerney and to this office:

Mr. Steve Rothe
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Omaha District, Planning Division
215 North 17th Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68102

If you have any questions, you can call Mr. Rothe at (402) 221-4579. Thank you for this involvement opportunity.

Sincerely,

Keth Parks
for Richard D. Gorton
Chief, Environmental
Analysis Branch
Planning Division

Ad	Info	MAN. ROUTE	Attach
		38	
		30 Eng. Specialist	
		31 Contract Plans	
		32 Loc. Road Design	
		33 Environment	
		34 Hydraulics	
		35 Surfacing Design	
		36 Traffic	
		37 Pub. Hearing	
		38 Photogrammetry	
		39 Consultant Design	



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Fish and Wildlife Enhancement
Federal Bldg., U.S. Courthouse
301 South Park
P.O. Box 10023
Helena, Montana 59626

IN REPLY REFER TO:

FWE-61130-BILLINGS
M.17(1)

Mr. D.C. Lewis, Assistant Administrator
Federal Highway Administration
Montana Division
Federal Bldg., U.S. Courthouse
301 S. Park, P.O. Drawer 10056
Helena, Montana 59626

31-2(39)
Columbia Heights
Hungry Horse

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We appreciate your early letter regarding this proposed project. If you have any questions about this response, please feel free to contact Gary Wood at our Billings Suboffice (FTS: 585-6750).

Sincerely,

Kemper McMaster

Kemper McMaster
Acting State Supervisor
Montana State Office

cc: Steve Kologi, Montana Dept. of Highways (Helena, MT)
Jeff Ryan, Montana Dept. of Highways (Helena, MT)
Larry Lockard, USFWS (FWE-61130-Kaliispell)
Suboffice Coordinator, USFWS (FWE-61130-Billings)

JGW/dc/clh

Dear Mr. Lewis:

This responds to your July 14, 1989 letter concerning a proposal by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Montana Department of Highways (MDOH) to improve U.S. Route 2 in Flathead County, Montana. The proposed improvement project would involve reconstruction of 4.4 miles of U.S. 2 from the junction of Secondary Route 206, east of Columbia Falls, Montana, to the west edge of Hungry Horse, Montana. Replacement of the existing bridge over the South Fork Flathead River, at the east end of the project, would also be required. Your July 14 letter invited the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) to be a formal cooperating agency during preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed project.

Based on the information contained in your letter and a subsequent telephone conversation between Mr. Dale Paulson of FWHA and Mr. Gary Wood of my staff, we would prefer to decline the invitation to participate as a cooperating agency. However, in as much as the project will constitute a "major construction activity" within the meaning of 50 CFR, Part 402, Interagency Cooperation — Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act), it appears appropriate to work closely with you and any non-Federal representative you may designate to conduct informal consultation or to prepare a biological assessment concerning threatened or endangered species. In that regard, we will comment in more detail during the initial project review and EIS scoping period, as outlined in your July 14 letter. Based on the telephone conversation between Messrs. Paulson and Wood, it appears that this response would also likely be the appropriate time to provide you with the listed and proposed threatened and endangered species that may be present in the project area, as required under Section 7(c) of the Act and Section 402.12(c) of the Interagency Cooperation Final Rule.

"Take Pride in America"

VI-19



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
GLACIER NATIONAL PARK
WEST GLACIER, MONTANA 59936

(406) 888-5441
FAX: (406) 888-5581

IN REPLY REFER TO:

July 31, 1990

Mr. David C. Miller
Planning and Program Development Engineer
Federal Highway Administration
301 South Park
Helena, Montana 59626

Dear Mr. Miller:

Glacier National Park welcomes the opportunity to participate in the development of the Environmental Impact Statement that your agency and the Montana Department of Highways are preparing on the proposed improvements to US 2 between Columbia Heights and Hungry Horse.

The park contact for the Highway 2 project will be Brace Hayden. It is anticipated that both he and Bob Dunkley will provide input into the development of the EIS.

Sincerely,

H. Gilbert Lusk
Superintendent

cc: Edrie Vinson



*Miller
Paffler*



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION VIII, MONTANA OFFICE
FEDERAL BUILDING, 301 S. PARK, DRAWER 10096
HELENA, MONTANA 59626-0096

Ref: BMO

July 26, 1989

Mr. D.C. Lewis,
Assistant Division Administrator
Federal Highway Administration
Federal Building, Drawer 10056
301 South Park
Helena, Montana 59626

F 1-2 (39)
Re: U.S. Highway 2 EIS

Dear Mr. Lewis:

This is in response to your letter of July 14, 1989 inviting EPA to be a cooperating agency with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) during the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for a Federal Aid Highway Project to reconstruct U. S. Highway 2 east of Columbia Falls.

EPA is interested in providing meaningful and early input on environmental issues of concern. We are particularly interested in helping to ensure that proper wetland protection and water quality protection considerations are incorporated into the Highway 2 project. The Agency, however, has resource limitations, which will have to limit the degree and extent of EPA's participation. These resource constraints make it difficult for me to agree to full fledged participation as a cooperating agency during the preparation of the Highway 2 EIS.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss possibilities for EPA to have a limited but still meaningful role in this project. Please feel free to call me at FTS 585-5432 if you would like to discuss this.

Sincerely,

John F. Wardell
John F. Wardell, Director
Montana Office

VI-20



RECEIVED

AUG 28 1989

IN REPLY REFER TO
ROBERT PECCIA
FWE-61130-BILL LESTER
& ASSOCIATES
H.17(I) (ER 89-627)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Fish and Wildlife Enhancement
Federal Bldg., U.S. Courthouse
301 South Park
P.O. Box 10023
Helena, Montana 59626

J-1-2(39)

Mr. Dale Paulson
Environmental & Project Development Engineer
Federal Highway Administration
301 South Park, Drawer 10058
Helena, Montana 59626

Dear Mr. Paulson:

This letter is provided in response to a July 20, 1989 Federal Register Notice by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) concerning your intent to prepare an environmental impact statement for a proposed highway project (U.S. 2 from the junction of Federal Aid Secondary Route 206 [FAS206] east of Columbia Falls, Montana, to the west edge of Hungry Horse, Montana, a distance of 4.4 miles).

As a consequence of an understanding previously reached between yourself and Gary Wood of my staff, documented in a letter from this office to Mr. D.C. Lewis dated July 20, 1989, we are providing the following information on threatened and endangered species at this time.

In accordance with Section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act as amended (Act), we have determined that the following listed and proposed threatened or endangered species may be present in the project area:

Listed Species	Expected Occurrence
Grizzly bear (<u>Ursus arctos horribilis</u>)	Resident near project
Gray wolf (<u>Canis lupus</u>)	Potential resident near project
Bald eagle (<u>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</u>)	Breeds in general project vicinity; wintering concentration along Flathead and South Fork Flathead Rivers; seasonal migrant
Peregrine falcon (<u>Falco peregrinus</u>)	Seasonal migrant

Proposed Species

None

8-25-89 [Signature]

Date	Part.	Preconst	MAIL ROUTE	Attach	Initial
			30		
			31 Eng. Specialties		
			32 Contract Plans		
			33 Aug 28 1989		
			34 Environment		
			35 Hydraulic		
			36 Surfacing Design		
			37 Traffic		
			38 Pub. Hearing		
			39 Photogrammetry		
			40 Consultant Design		
			FILE		

Section 7(c) of the Act requires that Federal agencies proposing major Federal construction actions conduct a biological assessment to determine the effects of the proposed actions on listed and proposed species. If the biological assessment is not initiated within 90 days of receipt of the foregoing list, the list of threatened and endangered species should be verified with the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) prior to initiation of the assessment. The biological assessment should be completed within 180 days of initiation, but can be extended by mutual agreement between your agency and the Service. The biological assessment may be undertaken as part of your agency's compliance of Section 102 of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and incorporated into the draft or final NEPA document. A Federal agency may designate a non-Federal representative to conduct informal consultation or prepare a biological assessment by giving written notice to the Service of such designation. If a biological assessment is prepared by the designated non-Federal representative, the Federal agency shall furnish guidance and supervision and shall independently review and evaluate the scope and contents of the biological assessment. The ultimate responsibility for compliance with Section 7 remains with the Federal agency.

We recommend that the biological assessment include:

- 1) a complete description of the project;
- 2) the current status, habitat use, and behavior of listed species in the project area;
- 3) discussion of the methods used to determine the information in item 2;
- 4) detailed evaluation of the direct and indirect effects of the action on listed species;
- 5) cumulative impacts from federal, state or private projects in the area;
- 6) coordination measures that will reduce/eliminate adverse impacts to listed species;
- 7) the expected status of listed species in the future (short- and long-term) during and after project completion;
- 8) determination of "no effect/may affect" to listed species;
- 9) review and citation of literature used in the assessment; and
- 10) personal contacts and views of recognized experts on the species at issue, to include at a minimum, comments from the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

If it is determined that the project "may affect" any of the above-listed species, formal consultation should be initiated with us. If it is concluded that "no effect" is likely, we should be asked to review the assessment and concur with the determination of no effect.

Section 7(c) of the Act requires that the appropriate Federal agency shall not make any irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources which would preclude the formulation of reasonable and prudent alternatives until consultation on listed species is completed.

Based on the limited information we now have, it appears that the project may encroach on the Flathead River at some locations, in addition to requiring replacement of the existing bridge over the South Fork Flathead River just west of Hungry Horse. In that regard, we suggest that you or your agent work very closely with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks to minimize any essential stream encroachment and associated fishery impacts. We also recommend that a wetlands assessment be conducted in accordance with the recently-signed, "Interagency Memorandum of Understanding: Management and Mitigation of Highway Construction Impacts to Wetlands in the State of Montana".

Please contact Mr. Larry Lockard by telephone at (406) 775-7870 if we can be of further assistance or if you have questions regarding this letter.

Sincerely,



Kemper McMaster
Acting State Supervisor
Montana State Office

cc: ✓ Stephen Kologi, Montana Dept. of Highways (Helena, MT)
 Jeff Ryan, Montana Department of Highways (Helena, MT)
 Jeff Herbert, Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (Helena, MT)
 Ken Chrest, Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (Helena, MT)
 Jack Thomas, Montana Dept. of Health, Water Quality Bureau (Helena, MT)
 Steve Potts, Environmental Protection Agency (Helena, MT)
 John Peters, Environmental Protection Agency (Denver, CO)
 Larry Lockard, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWE-61130-Kalispell)
 BFA/ERT (Washington, DC)
 Suboffice Coordinator, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service-(FWE-61130-Billings)

JGW/dc/clh

"Take Pride in America"

DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES
AIR QUALITY BUREAU



STAN STEPHENS, GOVERNOR

COGSWELL BUILDING

STATE OF MONTANA

FAX # (406) 444-2806

HELENA, MONTANA 59620

(406) 444-3454

August 24, 1989

Mr. Stephen Kologi, Chief
Preconstruction Bureau
Montana Department of Highways
Capitol Station
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Mr. Kologi:

This is in response to your letter of notification regarding the highway improvement project designated as F1-2(39)138 Columbia Heights-Hungry Horse.

In general, any project which will smooth out the traffic flow, and reduce stopping and idling time will also reduce the amount of air pollution emissions from transportation sources. From this standpoint the Air Quality Bureau would like to support your efforts to upgrade the Montana highway system. Asphalt plants and gravel crushers are the primary emission sources for highway construction, and they must obtain an air quality permit from our office to operate in the state.

Sincerely,



Warren Norton
Environmental Specialist

Date Recd.	Precon	18-24-89	MAIL ROUTE	Attach	Initial
			30		
			30 Eng. Specifications		
			31 Contract Plans		
			32 Loc. Road Design		
			33 Environment		
			34 Hydraulics		
			35 Surfacing Design		
			36 Traffic		
			37 Pub. Hearing		
			38 Photogrammetry		
			39 Consultant Design		
			<i>J. L. Weaver</i>		
			File		

WN:kh

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Soil
Conservation
Service

Federal Building, Room 443
10 East Babcock Street
Bozeman, MT 59715

RECEIVED

September 5, 1989

OCT 3 1989

**ROBERT PECCIA
& ASSOCIATES**

Mr. Stephen C. Kologi
Preconstruction Bureau
Department of Highways
2701 Prospect Ave.
Helena, MT 59620

RE: F1-2(39)138 Columbia Heights-Hungry Horse NOTICE OF INTENT

Dear Mr. Kologi:

We have reviewed the above Notice of Intent and have no comments to offer.

Sincerely,

RICHARD J. GOOBY
State Conservationist

cc:
Ron Batchelor, State Biologist, SCS, Bozeman, MT

9/18/89

Date Recd.	Info	MAIL ROUTE	Attach	Initial
		30		
		30 Eng. Specifications		
		31 Contract Plans		
		32 Loc. Road Design		
		33 Environment		
		34 Hydraulic		
		35 Structural Design		
		36 Traffic		
		37 Pub. Hearing		
		38 Geotechnical		
		39 Consultant Design		
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file

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
AERONAUTICS DIVISION



STAN STEPHENS, GOVERNOR

STATE OF MONTANA

(406) 444-2508

P.O. BOX 5178
2630 AIRPORT ROAD

HELENA, MONTANA 59604

September 7, 1989

Mr. Stephen C. Kologi, P.E.
Chief, Preconstruction Bureau
Department of Highways
2701 Prospect Avenue
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Mr. Kologi:

FILE: F 1-2 (39) 138
Columbia Heights - Hungry Horse
NOTICE OF INTENT

The Montana Aeronautics Division has reviewed the above-mentioned project; and, in our opinion, this project will not have any adverse effects on aeronautical activities in this area.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project.

Sincerely,

Michael D. Ferguson, Administrator
Aeronautics Division

Barbara Crouley
Gerald C. Burrows, Chief
Airport/Airways Bureau

bp

9/18/89

Date Recd.	Info	MAIL ROUTE	Attach	Initial
		30		
		30 Eng. Specifications		
		31 Contract Plans		
		32 Loc. Road Design		
		33 Environment		
		34 Hydraulic		
		35 Structural Design		
		36 Traffic		
		37 Pub. Hearing		
		38 Geotechnical		
		39 Consultant Design		
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file

VI-23



Department of Energy
 Bonneville Power Administration
 Upper Columbia Area
 Room 561, U.S. Court House
 West 920 Riverside Avenue
 Spokane, Washington 99201-1083

September 26, 1989

In reply refer to: UD-5

Mr. Stephen C. Kologi
 Chief, Preconstruction Bureau
 Montana Department of Highways
 2701 Prospect Avenue
 Helena, Montana 59620

Dear Mr. Kologi:

Subject: F1-2(39)138
 Columbia Heights - Hungry Horse

Enclosed are two Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) plan and profile maps, which contain information on BPA powerlines in the area that you contemplate for improvement. A location map is also enclosed. If any of your proposed alternatives would affect such BPA facilities as tower locations, etc., please contact this office to coordinate impact analysis. We wish to review your environmental impact statement so that all impacts are adequately covered in your document.

The information provided herein was also requested by S. L. Willows, Coalition for Canyon Preservation. That group may have similar concerns that all significant issues are addressed. BPA looks forward to cooperating in your effort to address any significant concerns. Please feel free to contact Mr. Randy Moy of the BPA Montana State Coordination Office, Federal Building (Room 162) Drawer 10061, 301 S. Park Avenue, Helena, MT 59626 (406-449-5093), or myself at the above address, if your desire further information or have any questions.

Sincerely,

William A. Freeland
 Area Environmental Coordinator

Enclosure

*Given to Consultant
 10-3-89
 Bob [unclear]*

Date	Recd.	Preconst	9/27/89	
Act	Info	MAIL ROUTE	Attach	Initial
		30 Preconst Engr		
		30 Assistant		
		30 Office Mgr		
		32 Road Design		
		33 Environment		
		34 Hydraulics		
		35 Survey & Mapping		
		39 Consultant		
		File		

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
 AND CONSERVATION



STAN STEPHENS, GOVERNOR

LEE METCALF BUILDING
 1520 EAST SIXTH AVENUE

STATE OF MONTANA

DIRECTOR'S OFFICE (406) 444-8699
 TELEFAX NUMBER (406) 444-6721

HELENA, MONTANA 59620-2301

October 31, 1989

Stephen C. Kologi, P.E.
 Chief, Preconstruction Bureau
 Montana Department of Highways
 2701 Prospect
 Helena, MT 59620

RE: F 1-2(39)138 Columbia Heights - Hungry Horse

Dear Mr. Kologi:

This department has several concerns about the above-referenced project. First, this project will involve designated floodplains. Therefore, a floodplain development permit will have to be obtained from the Flathead Regional Development Office, 723 Fifth Ave. East, Kalispell, MT 59901 (phone 752-5300).

Second, water may be needed for dust control or some other construction-related purpose. If so, a temporary water use permit will have to be obtained. For information about application forms and procedures, contact the DNRC Water Rights Field Office, P.O. Box 860, Kalispell, MT 59903 (phone 752-2288).

Third, this project may affect irrigation facilities. Care should be taken during construction not to interfere with existing water rights, and any facilities that may be involved should be maintained or replaced. Our Kalispell Water Rights Field Office can provide information on any water rights that may be affected.

Sincerely,

Jim Bond
 Information Officer/
 Citizen Participation Advocate

cc: Ron Guse, Water Resources Division
 John Hamill, Water Resources Division
 Chuck Brasen, Kalispell Field Office
 Intergovernmental Review Clearinghouse

Date	Recd.	Preconst	11/2/89	
Act	Info	MAIL ROUTE	Attach	Initial
		30 Preconst Engr		
		30 Assistant		
		30 Office Mgr		
		32 Road Design		
		33 Environment		
		34 Hydraulics		
		35 Survey & Mapping		
		39 Consultant		
		File		

CENTRALIZED SERVICES
 DIVISION
 (406) 444-6700

CONSERVATION & RESOURCE
 DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
 (406) 444-6687

ENERGY
 DIVISION
 (406) 444-6687

OIL AND GAS
 DIVISION
 (406) 444-6671

WATER RESOURCES
 DIVISION
 (406) 444-6601

V1-25

Montana Department
of
Fish, Wildlife & Parks



Helena, Montana 59620
November 24, 1989

Mr. David Johnson
Chief, Preconstruction Bureau
Department of Highways
2701 Prospect
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Mr. Johnson:

RE: F 1-2(39)138
Columbia Heights - Hungry Horse

We have reviewed your above-mentioned proposed project for highway reconstruction improvements. The Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks knows of no 6(f) or 4(f) Conversion of Use which would occur as a result of the proposed highway reconstruction.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We appreciate your cooperation.

Sincerely,

MARY ELLEN POOLE
Administration Officer I
Operations Bureau
Parks Division

MEP/th

RECEIVED

DEC 21 1989

ROBERT PECCIA
& ASSOCIATES

Date Recd. Processed		11/29/89	
Act	Info	Match	Initial
	MAIL ROUTE		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	30 Preconst Engg		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	30 Assistant		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	30 Chief Insp		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	32 Permit Design		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	33 Enforcement		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	33 Field Inspr		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	33 Survey & Mapping		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	33 Traffic		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	33 Superintendent		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	33		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	File		

RECEIVED

JAN 22 1990

ROBERT PECCIA
& ASSOCIATES

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE

SOIL
CONSERVATION
SERVICE

35 W. Reserve Drive
KALISPELL MT 59901
PHONE 752-4242

1-19-90

Robert Peccia & Associates
BOX 5633
Helena, MT 59604-5633

Dear Sirs:

In response to your letter requesting information on soils and farmlands in the area of the proposed reconstruction of U.S. Highway 2 between Columbia Heights and Hungry Horse.

The SCS Soil Survey does not encompass the entire corridor of the proposed project, however enclosed you will find all of the information that we have on the area including general soils information and prime farmland information including a copy of the map. To further investigate the soils further you may want to contact the Supervisors Office of the Flathead National Forest to obtain a copy of the Forest Soil Survey.

I hope this information can assist you in the writing of the E.I.S. If we can be of further assistance to you don't hesitate to contact us.

Thank You.

Sincerely,

Rich Pettersen
District Conservationist

Enclosures

U.S. Department of Agriculture
FARMLAND CONVERSION IMPACT RATING

PART I (To be completed by Federal Agency)		Date Of Land Evaluation Request		
Name Of Project COLUMBIA HEIGHTS - HUNGRY HORSE F-12(34)133		Federal Agency Involved FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMIN / MT DEPT OF TRANS		
Proposed Land Use U.S. 2 HIGHWAY RECONSTRUCTION		County And State FLATHEAD COUNTY, MT		
PART II (To be completed by SCS)		Date Request Received By SCS		
Does the site contain prime, unique, statewide or local important farmland? (If no, the FPPA does not apply - do not complete additional parts of this form).				
Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Acre Irrigated		
Average Farm Size		Average Farm Size		
Major Crops		Amount Of Farmland As Defined in FPPA		
Fertile Land In Govt Jurisdiction		Acres		
Name Of Land Evaluation System Used		Name Of Local Site Assessment System		
Date Land Evaluation Returned By SCS		Date Land Evaluation Returned By SCS		
PART III (To be completed by Federal Agency)				
Alternative Site Rating				
A. Total Acres To Be Converted Directly				
B. Total Acres To Be Converted Indirectly				
C. Total Acres In Site				
PART IV (To be completed by SCS) Land Evaluation Information				
A. Total Acres Prime And Unique Farmland				
B. Total Acres Statewide And Local Important Farmland				
C. Percentage Of Farmland In County Or Local Govt Unit To Be Converted				
D. Percentage Of Farmland In Govt Jurisdiction With Same Or Higher Relative Value				
PART V (To be completed by SCS) Land Evaluation Criteria				
Relative Value Of Farmland To Be Converted (Scale Of 0 to 100 Points)				
PART VI (To be completed by Federal Agency)				
Site Assessment Criteria (Those criteria are explained in 7 CFR 882.5(b))				
Maximum Points	ALT 1	ALT 2	ALT 3	ALT 4
1. Area In Nonurban Use	15	10	10	10
2. Perimeter In Nonurban Use	10	4	4	4
3. Percent Of Site Being Farmed	20	2	2	2
4. Protection Provided By State And Local Government	20	0	0	0
5. Distance From Urban Builtup Area	N/A	--	--	--
6. Distance To Urban Support Services	N/A	--	--	--
7. Size Of Present Farm Unit Compared To Average	10	0	0	0
8. Creation Of Nonfarmable Farmland	25	25	25	25
9. Availability Of Farm Support Services	5	5	5	5
10. On-Farm Investments	20	1	1	1
11. Effects Of Conversion On Farm Support Services	25	0	0	0
12. Compatibility With Existing Agricultural Use	10	5	5	5
TOTAL SITE ASSESSMENT POINTS	180	52	52	52
PART VII (To be completed by Federal Agency)				
Relative Value Of Farmland (From Part V)				
100				
Total Site Assessment (From Part VI above or a local site assessment)				
180				
TOTAL POINTS (Total of above 2 lines)				
280				
Was A Local Site Assessment Used?				
Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>				

Site Selected: **SITE A (ALT. 1)** Date Of Selection **8/93**

Reason For Selection:
SITE A WAS SELECTED ON THE BASIS OF HIGHWAY CAPACITY, OPERATIONAL AND SAFETY BENEFITS THE ALTERNATIVE WILL PROVIDE FOR THE PROJECT CORRIDOR. FORM AD 1006 WAS NOT SUBMITTED TO THE SCS BECAUSE THE TOTAL SCORE FOR THE SITE ASSESSMENT CRITERIA IN PART VI WAS LESS THAN 60 POINTS. PREVIOUS COORDINATION WITH SCS OCCURRED IN 5/10.

**DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
AND CONSERVATION**



STAN STEPHENS, GOVERNOR

STATE OF MONTANA

DIRECTOR'S OFFICE (406) 444-6699
TELEFAX NUMBER (406) 444-6721

LEE METCALF BUILDING
1820 EAST SIXTH AVENUE

RECEIVED

MAR 23 1990

**ROBERT PECCIA
& ASSOCIATES**

March 21, 1990

Mr. Daniel Norderude
Transportation Planner
Robert Peccia & Associates Engineers
P.O. Box 5653
Helena, MT 59604

RE: Columbia Heights - Hungry Horse Highway Project EIS

Dear Dan:

The City of Columbia Falls and Flathead County are participating in the National Flood Insurance Program. Each has adopted a floodplain management ordinance that requires a permit for floodplain development activities. The community of Hungry Horse is unincorporated and falls under the jurisdiction of Flathead County.

You must request the cross-sectional information you mentioned through FEMA's regional office. Send your request to:

John Liou, Regional Hydrologist
FEMA, Region 8
Box 25267
Denver Federal Center
Denver, CO 80225-0267

I recommend that you call periodically after submitting the request to ensure a timely response. We generally have the information you requested, but data for that portion of the Flathead River is not in our files.

Sincerely,

John R Hamill

John R. Hamill, Supervisor
Floodplain Management Section
Engineering Bureau

JRH:cif



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service
(406) 387-5243

Hungry Horse Ranger District
PO Box 340
Hungry Horse, MT 59919-0340

RECEIVED

MAY 7 1990

ROBERT PECCIA
& ASSOCIATES

Reply to: 1560

Date: 5/4/90

Mr. Daniel Norderud
Robert Peccia & Associates
Box 5653
Helena, MT 59604

Dear Mr. Norderud

Your request for information necessary to complete the Section 4f Evaluation for the Columbia Heights to Hungry Horse Highway EIS was forwarded to me for reply. This project has little direct impact on Forest land. Most of the proposed development is on private land or on land that is in other non federal ownership. In this response I will limit my comments to Forest land only.

Forest lands directly effected by the project are in the N 1/2, NW 1/4, S 7, T 30 N, R 19 W, MPM on the Hungry Horse Ranger District, Flathead National Forest. This encompasses a gross area of approximately 80 acres. Within this area an estimated 15 acres or less have the potential to be directly impacted by the highway construction or placement of the new bridge. This land lies along approximately 2600 linear feet of existing highway beginning at the east end of the South Fork Bridge and running toward the mouth of Badrock Canyon.

Management direction for all Forest land in the vicinity of the project is specified in the Flathead National Forest Plan. Forest lands directly effected by this project are subject to the general provisions of the Forest Plan as well as the specific management direction found in Chapter III of the Plan. These lands are within Management Area (MA) 10. A copy of the specific management direction for this area is attached for your information.

MA-10 consists of lands designated as Administrative Sites. These lands are managed for continued use as administrative sites. They are not managed for recreation, park, wildlife or waterfowl purposes nor are they significant for these purposes as specified in Federal Regulations (23 CFR 771.135d).

The effected Forest lands on the west side of the South Fork of the Flathead River are in Situation 2 Grizzly bear Habitat. Those on the east side of the river are in Situation 3 Grizzly Bear Habitat. Situation 2 is defined as an area that lacks distinct grizzly bear population centers; highly suitable habitat does not generally occur, although some grizzly bear habitat components exist and grizzlies may be present occasionally. By definition Situation 2 areas are considered unnecessary for survival and recovery of the bear. Situation 3 is defined as areas where grizzly presence is possible but infrequent; where developments associated with high levels of human presence result in conditions which make grizzly presence untenable for humans and/or grizzlies.

These effected Forest lands are also within essential Bald Eagle habitat (USFS, Bald Eagle Essential Habitat, September 1978). Bald eagles are known to use this portion of the South Fork of the Flathead River as a migratory flyway during the fall and early winter. This constitutes the major use of effected Forest lands by this species. A few eagles have been observed during the winter, indicating that some of them winter in the Flathead Valley. There are no known nest sites in the area. The area already has significant human related disturbances in the form of heavy train and motor vehicle traffic. Additional

impacts are most likely to occur in the form of displacement during the construction period. We have no means of assessing possible long term effects of this displacement. Assuming that the volume of traffic will be independent of the eventual highway standard, the only potential impact on eagles would be if there is a significant reduction of screening between the highway and the South Fork. If this potential can be eliminated or mitigated there should be no additional adverse effects on eagles.

In summary, the project, as proposed, will cross Forest land designated as Management Area 10 that is not significant for park, recreation, wildlife or waterfowl purposes as specified in Federal Regulations (23 CFR 771.135d). Based on the land classifications and known uses it should have no long term effects on the use of Forest lands by threatened or endangered species, provided that the single concern related to bald eagles is addressed.

Forest lands adjacent to the proposed construction in Section 7, and those that lie south of the private land where the remainder of the construction will take place are not directly effected by this proposal. In the event that indirect effects become an issue, it is worthwhile to note the management scheme prescribed for these lands. They are located in Management Area 3 which consists of non forested lands and timberlands that are suited for amenity value resources. These lands are managed to maintain or enhance amenity values which include nongame wildlife species, visual quality, old growth and water quality. Generally the area will provide wildlife and fish habitat, including security from human disturbance. Recreation opportunities will be provided where they will not interfere with wildlife and fish values. Lands in MA-3 are generally available for recreation, but they are not specifically managed for that purpose. The Forest lands adjacent to the project do not serve significant recreation purposes as specified in Federal Regulations (23 CFR 771.135d). There are no significant waterfowl activities on this land. Existing development in Badrock Canyon (US Highway #2, the Burlington Northern Railroad, Berne Park) with its associated heavy use has already impacted wildlife use on these adjacent lands. Although some wildlife use continues to exist on the MA-3 lands adjacent to the project, its significance has been reduced by historic development in the canyon. Assuming that the volume of traffic will remain the same regardless of the highway standard, the project should have little additional impact to wildlife. Reconstruction of the highway adjacent to the MA-3 Forest lands should not significantly reduce existing or potential recreation, waterfowl or wildlife opportunities on these lands beyond what exists today. I am enclosing a copy of the MA-3 management direction for your information.

These Forest lands in MA-3 are within Situation 2 Grizzly Bear Habitat. Those areas that are within 1/2 mile of the South Fork or the main stem of the Flathead are within Essential Bald Eagle Habitat. The same statements made in addressing threatened and endangered species in MA-10 apply in this situation.

A very small portion of the project lies within the Middle Fork of the Flathead Recreational River Corridor (MA-18). It is located in Lot 14 in the extreme SW corner of section 6. This 0.64 acre parcel is Forest land which is crossed by the existing highway. It is well away from and out of site of the main channel of the Middle Fork. It is unlikely that any construction will have a significant impact on river values within the Wild & Scenic River corridor. A copy of management direction for MA-18 is included.

I am enclosing a map showing the various areas discussed above. It may be worthwhile to note that the Middle Fork Recreational River Corridor is slightly different than you depicted on the map you sent with your 3/12/90 letter. This is the correct location.

If we can be of further help, please feel free to contact us again.

Sincerely,

ALLEN L. CHRISTOPHERSEN
District Ranger

CC: D. Paulson

V-28





Department of Energy
 Bonneville Power Administration
 Upper Columbia Area
 Room 561, U.S. Court House
 West 920 Riverside Avenue
 Spokane, Washington 99201-1083

In reply refer to: UE

June 26, 1990

RECEIVED

JUN 29 1990

ROBERT PECCIA
& ASSOCIATES

Mr. Daniel Norderud
 Robert Peccia & Associates
 P.O. Box 5653
 Helena, MT 59604


Dear Mr. Norderud:

The towers and transmission lines indicated in your letter to Environmental Coordinator, William Freeland, dated April 20, 1990, are owned and operated by Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) rather than the Columbia Falls Aluminum Company. The lines and structures were purchased from ARCO Metals February 21, 1984.

The vertical clearance between the road and the 230-kV loop line may fall below acceptable standards with a vertical adjustment to the elevation of the road. An elevation adjustment of the towers on each side of the road could be required. A tower relocation would have a cost associated with it. Tower relocation may, however, be a better alternative than trying to control the fill slope in close proximity to the existing towers.

Enclosed is the plan and profile drawings you requested. If you require more engineering data, please call Don Hawkins, Montana District Engineer in Missoula at (406) 329-3060.

Sincerely,


 William A. Freeland
 Area Environmental Coordinator

Enclosure

V-30

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS



STAN STEPHENS, GOVERNOR

2701 PROSPECT AVE.

STATE OF MONTANA

HELENA, MONTANA 59620

July 25, 1990

RECEIVED

AUG 29 1990

ROBERT PECCIA
& ASSOCIATES

Marcella Sherfy
 State Historic Preservation Officer
 Montana Historical Society
 225 North Roberts
 Helena, MT 59620

Subject: F 1-2(39)138
 Columbia Heights - Hungry Horse

Thank you for your request for additional information on 24FH419, the Freida Wilkes Herrig property, later sold to Billy Berne. Highway construction, in 1934, took the original site of Mrs. Wilkes house. The remnants indicated on the site map, page 8, are primarily on the north slope downward where it meets the toe of the slope from the original highway construction. Figure 5, page 9, gives an indication of the slope to which I refer.

We have not conducted any archaeological excavations at this site because we are unaware of any significant information the site could possibly yield that is not more readily available in the written record. The dump could hold tin cans, which have no particular artifact value. Information on canned goods available to consumers during the period can be located in period catalogs and in records of mercantile stores. Other scrap metal parts or pieces could likewise be available in the same or similar historic records.

As for any possible local significance of Mrs. Wilkes or Billy Berne, other sites are probably more likely to portray ties to them than does this site. The report refers to the Berne family being associated with a brick yard in Columbia Falls and that their brick was used in the construction of many downtown buildings. Perhaps the yard itself, or buildings constructed with their brick still exist, and would better represent their possible local significance than would this site, built and occupied by Mrs. Wilkes.

Page 2
July 25, 1990

While I am not convinced that significant information could be obtained from a residential site that is not more readily available elsewhere, I would insist that if such be the case, that the site itself would have to have integrity. This property does not, as the 1934 road construction obliterated the main portion of the site containing the residence. This property is further devalued by the surface disturbance caused by construction of a gas pipeline a distribution line and two transmission lines, including the Bonneville Power Administration line. Following construction of these, its potential decreased even further and I do not recommend it as eligible now.

We have concluded our consultation with the Indian Cultural Committees and have no impacts to report. A copy of a memo describing that coordination is included for your information.

We request your concurrence that this project will have no effect on properties on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. If you have further questions, please call and discuss them with me as we need to conclude this review promptly. Thank you for your consideration.

Edrie Vinson

Edrie L. Vinson, Supervisor
Environmental Section

ELV:D:683.cm

Enclosure

cc: D. S. Johnson
G. A. Jackson
✓ R. R. Newhouse
J. T. Weaver
Environmental Section, w/enclosure
File

Montana Department
of
Fish, Wildlife & Parks



RECEIVED

AUG 6 1990

ROBERT PECCIA
& ASSOCIATES

Helena, MT 59620
July 26, 1990

Edrie L. Vinson, Supervisor
Environmental Section
Department of Highways
2701 Prospect Ave.
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Edrie:

I have enclosed a copy of the Smith River Management Plan as requested in your letter of June 14.

Currently, a management plan is being developed for Rock Creek (interagency) and the Missouri (department effort). There are no plans for the Flathead or Yellowstone Recreational waterways.

The mere designation of these rivers as recreational waterways does not necessarily trigger 4-F requirements; however, individual sites along the river may do so.

Sincerely,

Arnie Olsen

ARNIE OLSEN
Administrator
Parks Division

lj

cc: Larry Peterman

*Sent to Consultant
8-3-90
Bob Newhouse*

Date Recd. Preconst. 8-3-90			
Act	Info	MAIL ROUTE	Initial
		30 Preconst Engr	
		30 Assistant	
		30 Office Mgr	
		32 Road Design	
		33 Environment	
		34 Hydraulics	
		35 Survey & Mapping	
		36 Traffic	
		39 Consultant	
		<i>Handwritten initials</i>	
		<i>Handwritten initials</i>	

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS



STAN STEPHENS, GOVERNOR

2701 PROSPECT AVE.

STATE OF MONTANA

HELENA, MONTANA 59620

August 10, 1990

Marcella Sherfy
State Historic Preservation Officer
Montana Historical Society
225 North Roberts
Helena, MT 59620

Subject: F 1-2(39)138
Columbia Heights - Hungry Horse

Enclosed please find supplemental information on the Berne property. The highway plans you have in your file date to 1928. It shows that the right-of-way purchased from the Berne family did not include their buildings. In 1949, however, there was an additional purchase, and the land on which the buildings sat was required for improvements. The purchased portion is highlighted for your convenience in reading the plans. Also enclosed is a copy of a memo regarding the removal of the buildings.

In read through the rough draft of the comments at the public scoping meeting June 26, 1990. Unfortunately Mr. Simpson's comments about the house being exactly where the road is now are not on it. Apparently he made that statement following the formal meeting, at a time when the people were gathered around the aerial displays at the front of the room. These documents, however, show conclusively that the buildings were taken by the department in 1949.

I believe this is sufficient to demonstrate that this property no longer possesses integrity, a requirement for being considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. I would appreciate your

Marcella Sherfy
Page 2
August 10, 1990

concurrency that this project will have no effect on properties on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Thank you for your consideration.

Edrie L. Vinson, Supervisor
Environmental Section

ELV:D:ENV:3.mb

Enclosures

cc: D. S. Johnson, w/attach
G. A. Jackson, "
R. R. Newhouse, "
J. T. Weaver, "
Environmental Section, w/attach
File, w/attach

CONCUR
NO PROPERTIES OR ELIGIBLE
FOR NRHP APPEAR LIKELY TO
EXIST WITHIN PROJECT IMPACT AREA
MONTANA SHPO
DATE 8/10/90 SIGNED [Signature]

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS



STAN STEPHENS, GOVERNOR

2701 PROSPECT AVE.

STATE OF MONTANA

HELENA, MONTANA 59620

RECEIVED

August 15, 1990

AUG 17 1990

ROBERT PECCIA
& ASSOCIATES

Marcella Sherfy
State Historic Preservation Officer
Montana Historical Society
225 North Roberts
Helena, MT 59620

Subject: F 1-2(39)138
Columbia Heights - Hungry Horse

I sent Jon Axline to the Columbia Heights area to determine if there were any sites better associated with the Berne Brothers than the Bad Rock Homestead site (24FH419). Both the brickyard and brick home associated with the brothers have been destroyed within the last decade. The old St. Richards Catholic Church in Columbia Falls, however, is still standing. The church, built with brick acquired from the brickyard, is already listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Montana Department of Highways is offering to erect an historical marker commemorating the Berne family and directing the readers to the church -- if you recommend that it should be done. We are firm in our recommendation that the Berne Site (24FH419) has lost integrity and is not eligible for the National Register.

Edrie Vinson

Edrie L. Vinson, Supervisor
Environmental Section

ELV:JA:D:ENV:11.mb
cc: D. S. Johnson
G. A. Jackson
R. R. Newhouse

J. T. Weaver
Environmental Section
File



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Fish and Wildlife Enhancement
Federal Bldg., U.S. Courthouse
301 South Park
P.O. Box 10023
Helena, Montana 59626

JAN 6 1991

ROBERT PECCIA
& ASSOCIATES

IN REPLY REFER TO:

M.17 Fed Highway Admin. (I)

January 4, 1991

Mr. Daniel M. Norderud
Robert Peccia and Associates
P.O. Box 5653
Helena, Montana 59604

Dear Mr. Norderud:

This responds to your November 20, 1990 letter addressed to Gary Wood of our Billings Suboffice concerning Federal Highway Administration Project F1-2(39)138, Columbia Heights - Hungry Horse. Your letter transmitted a draft Biological Assessment for review and requested our comments. The draft Assessment addresses four endangered/threatened species: grizzly bear (Ursus arctos horribilis), gray wolf (Canis lupus), peregrine falcon (Falco peregrinus), and bald eagle (Haliaeetus leucocephalus).

Based on the information presented, we believe we could concur in the tentative conclusion in the draft Assessment that the proposed project is not likely to adversely affect the grizzly bear, gray wolf, or peregrine falcon.

As noted in the draft Biological Assessment, the bald eagle reportedly uses mature cottonwoods and conifers along the Flathead River within the project corridor, including along a 1/4 mile reach where a narrow strip of vegetation (trees) will be largely removed. The Assessment notes that removal of these trees could potentially affect foraging sites and flight paths of bald eagles. It is also noted that, if construction occurs between fall and spring, it is possible that birds intending to roost or perch in these trees and in the general vicinity may be temporarily displaced by noise, dust and construction activities. The Assessment further notes that widening of the highway may result in higher vehicular travel speeds, which could conceivably result in collisions between eagles and vehicles if the former are attracted to road-killed animals that would serve as food items. Finally, it is noted that if the numbers of eagles using this area during the winter period should eventually return to the levels of use existing a few years ago (prior to a sharp reduction in the migratory kokanee salmon population in this area), then it is possible that clearance of the trees along the 1/4 mile reach of Flathead River may contribute to a cumulative effect on wintering eagles due to the project, logging in the vicinity, and other developments in the general area.

Mr. Daniel M. Norderud
January 4, 1991
Page 2

The draft Assessment concludes that these affects are likely to be "insignificant or discountable relative to local or regional populations" (page 4). Regulations implementing Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, as amended, provide for an exception to formal consultation if the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) concurs in writing that a project is not likely to adversely affect a listed species. Service policy implementing these regulations provide that activities found to have beneficial, discountable or insignificant effects on listed species or their critical habitats may be deemed to be in compliance with Section 7(a)2 without formal consultation. Beneficial effects are those actions which have positive impacts. Discountable affects relate to the size of the impact, while insignificant effects are those that are extremely unlikely to occur. While these conditions may arguably be met by the project, such a conclusion does not appear necessarily obvious from the information provided in the draft Biological Assessment. We have been advised through guidance from higher authority within the Service that the conclusion "not likely to adversely affect" does not apply to situations where any (non-beneficial) effect has been predicted, even though the action Agency may have agreed to offsetting measures during informal consultation that would eliminate most impacts but that would leave a basis for predicting some residual effects that are not necessarily clearly "discountable" or "insignificant". In such situations, there must be formal consultation. If appropriate, offsetting measures may be utilized to ensure that there is no likelihood of jeopardy.

For the above reasons, we believe the final Biological Assessment must include additional information before a determination can be made on whether a "not likely to adversely affect" is justified with regard to the bald eagle.

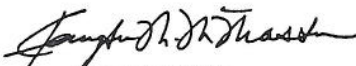
In that regard, we recommend the following: 1) the final Assessment should present a brief summary of what is known or available from appropriate agencies and experts about present/recent winter use of Badrock Canyon by bald eagles; this summary should include quantitative data, as well as qualitative information; 2) the discussion of tree removal should be expanded to disclose the area/approximate number of trees to be removed and express the extent to which these can be preserved, especially in the critical 1/4 mile identified in the draft Assessment; 3) a specific commitment should be made to conduct the work in the canyon area in the "off" season, or more information provided regarding the possibility of, and constraints on, this option; 4) an explanation of by whom and just how "road-kills" will be removed should be presented; and 5) a discussion should be presented of the prospects or likelihood that kokanee populations may return to historic levels (based on

discussions with relevant fishery managers in the area) and some analysis of Mr. Daniel M. Norderud
January 4, 1991
Page 3

expert opinion about resultant eagle wintering populations included; in this regard, it would be helpful to discuss any known conservation measures that it might be possible to implement in the case of an eventual return to high winter use of the canyon by eagles.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the draft Assessment. Questions regarding this letter may be directed informally to Mr. Gary Wood of my staff at our Billings Suboffice FTS: 585-6750.

Sincerely,


Kemper McMaster
Field Supervisor
Montana/Wyoming Field Office

JGW/dc/ndg

(B:NORDERUD)

cc: Dale Paulson, Federal Highway Administration (Helena, MT)
Asst. Regional Director, USFWS, Fish & Wildlife Enhancement (Denver, CO)
Suboffice Coordinator, USFWS, Fish & Wildlife Enhancement (Billings, MT)

Marcella Sherfy
Page 2
August 1, 1991

The first steel girder and floor beam bridges were constructed in Montana for the railroads in the late 1880s. The design was particularly suited to the railroads since the bridges were structurally stable and were able to accommodate fast-moving heavy traffic. Ninety-eight steel girder and floor beam bridges for vehicular traffic have been constructed in Montana since 1909. The first steel girder and floor beam bridge was built in 1909 by Jefferson County construction crews and is located three miles north of Cataract Creek; the bridge was rebuilt in 1979. Although this type of bridges was constructed continually by the Montana Highway Department from the 1930s, most of the spans were constructed in conjunction with interstate projects during the 1960s (34 steel girder and floor beam bridges in Montana are associated with interstate highways). Of the 98 bridges constructed in Montana, all are still in use and only 14 have been rehabilitated.

Four steel girder and floor beam bridges are located in Flathead County: the South Fork of the Flathead River at Hungry Horse (1938), the Flathead River northwest of Big Fork (1955), the South Fork of the Flathead River near Coram (1960) and the Middle Fork of the Flathead River at Essex (1968). While the South Fork of the Flathead River Bridge was the earliest steel girder and floor beam structure constructed in the county, there are 15 bridges older than that bridge in Montana--five of which are located in the northwest part of the state: Pinkham Creek southwest of Eureka (1914), Sweathouse Creek near Victor (1917), in Mineral County near Alberton (1933) and two on the East Fork of the Bitterroot River southeast of Conner (1937). Only six of the 15 pre-1938 bridges have been rehabilitated by the Montana Department of Transportation.

The South Fork of the Flathead River Bridge was one of 137 bridges built by the Montana Highway Department in 1938. The majority (93) were timber bridges constructed under Works Progress Administration (WPA) sponsorship--primarily in eastern Montana. Twelve counties (Richland, Teton, Blaine, Carter, McCone, Cascade, Park, Yellowstone, Fallon, Phillips, Big Horn and Valley) accounted for 75% of the bridges built that year.

The South Fork of the Flathead River Bridge at Hungry Horse is not eligible for the National Register since it does not display any unusual design features and is common to the style. The first steel girder and floor beam bridge was built in Jefferson County in 1909 and the last was constructed in

Marcella Sherfy
Page 3
August 1, 1991

1988 in Dawson County. The design of the bridge has changed little since 1909; the only difference is in the quality of the building material used in the bridge's superstructure.

Since there are 98 steel girder and floor beam bridges located on Montana's primary and secondary highways and only 14 of them have been rehabilitated, this indicates that 84 bridges retain considerable integrity of design, materials, feeling and association with the history and development of this style bridge. The South Fork of the Flathead River Bridge does not display any unusual design features and is not singularly important to our understanding of the history and development of bridge construction in Montana. There are 43 steel girder and floor beam bridges located on the state's primary and secondary road system and 55 bridges located on the Interstate system--all are nearly identical in design. Until recently, the steel girder and floor beam bridge was commonly used by the Montana Department of Highways for spanning obstacles wider than 130-feet. Since the deck is supported by two girders on this type of bridge, failure of one of the girders jeopardizes the usefulness of the bridge. Currently, the MDT relies on four beam girder bridges since the failure of one girder does not force the closure of the bridge. We are requesting your concurrence that the South Fork of the Flathead River Bridge is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Jon Axline at 444-6258.

Edrie Vinson

Edrie L. Vinson, Supervisor
Environmental Section

ELV:JA:D:ENV:143.mb

cc: D. S. Johnson
C. S. Peil
P. R. Ferry
J. T. Weaver
E. L. Vinson
File

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS **RECEIVED**

OCT 18 1991

STAN STEPHENS, GOVERNOR

2701 PROSPECT AVE.

STATE OF MONTANA

ROBERT PECCIA
& ASSOCIATES

HELENA, MONTANA 59620



October 7, 1991

Marcella Sherfy
State Historic Preservation Officer
Montana Historical Society
225 North Roberts
Helena, MT 59620

Subject: F 1-2(39)138 (1290)
Columbia Heights - Hungry Horse

This letter is to document that the proposed Berne Road realignment and the adjacent recreational area along Highway 2 in Flathead County, will have no effect on significant cultural resources.

The project area inventory conducted by Montana Department of Transportation archaeologist Marilyn Wyss identified three cultural resource properties during the survey. Two of the properties, one historic and the other prehistoric, were recommended as not eligible for inclusion to the National Register of Historic Places. This recommendation received SHPO concurrence. The third property, 24FH454 required testing for adequate assessment of potential significance (see attached testing report). Tests conducted on this site were instrumental in recommending the property as not eligible. The determination is based on the paucity of cultural material associated with the site.

Testing conducted at the other sites following SHPO suggestion, provided additional information but did not substantially alter the original conclusions.

MDT has determined that there will be no impact on significant cultural properties within the project area;

Marcella Sherfy
Page 2
October 7, 1991

therefore, the Columbia Heights - Hungry Horse project will have no effect.

Edrie Vinson

Edrie L. Vinson, Supervisor
Environmental Section

ELV:MW:D:ENV:15.si

cc: D. S. Johnson
C. S. Peil
J. T. Weaver
P. R. Ferry
Environmental Section
File

w/attach (NOT INCLUDED WITH DEIS, BUT AVAILABLE @ MDT OFFICES IN HELENA)

VI-37



State Historic Preservation Office Montana Historical Society

Mailing Address: 225 North Roberts • Helena, MT 59620-9990
Office Address: 102 Broadway • Helena, MT • (406) 444-7715

October 25, 1991

Edrie L. Vinson, Supervisor
Environmental Section
Montana Department of Transportation
2701 prospect Ave
Helena, Montana 59620

**MASTER
FILE
COPY**

RECEIVED

JAN 28 1992

ROBERT PECCIA
& ASSOCIATES

Re: Determination of Eligibility of 24FH454 [Columbia Heights-Hungry Horse F1-2(39)138(1290)]

Dear Edrie:

Thank you for requesting our comments on the archaeological testing report prepared by MDOT Archaeologist Marilyn Wyss to resolve the eligibility of 24FH454, a prehistoric site identified during survey of the Columbia Heights-Hungry Horse park and road realignment project.

Based on the results of subsurface testing described in the report, we concur that 24FH454 is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion D.

Thank you also for your consideration of our earlier comments on the determinations of eligibility of 24FH453 (Prehistoric Site) and 24FH455 (Historic Logging Camp). We agree that the supplementary testing described at these two sites does not alter the original determination that these are not National Register eligible properties.

Thank you for consulting with us.

Sincerely,

Mark F. Baumler, Ph.D.
Deputy SHPO/Archaeologist

File: MDOT/Columbia Heights-Hungry Horse/F1-2(39)138

MDOH1025.ELG



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
FISH AND WILDLIFE ENHANCEMENT
FEDERAL BUILDING, US COURTHOUSE
301 S PARK
P O BOX 10023
HELENA MT 59626

TAKE
PRIDE IN
AMERICA

M.17 FHWA Columbia Heights/Hungry Horse

Paul R. Ferry, P.E.
Acting Consultant Design Engineer
State of Montana
Department of Highways
2701 Prospect Ave.
Helena, MT. 59620

Date	Recd.	Preconst.	MAIL ROUTE	Attach	Initial
			30 Preconst Engr		
			30 Assistant		
NOV 11		11/18/91	31 Safety Mgmt.		
			32 Road Design		
			33 Environment		
			34 Hydraulics		
			35 Survey & Mapping		
			36 Traffic Eng.		
			37 Traffic Operations		
			39 Consultant Dan.		
			File		

Dear Mr. Ferry,

This is in response to your October 28, 1991 letter requesting Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) review of the biological assessment pertaining to Federally listed threatened and endangered species for the proposed Project F1-2(39) 138 Reconstruction of U.S. Highway 2 between Columbia Heights and Hungry Horse Flathead County, Montana.

The Service has reviewed the biological assessment and disagrees with the determination that the proposed project is not likely to adversely affect the endangered bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*). The Service believes that the proposed action may effect the endangered bald eagle, therefore, pursuant to the Section 7 Interagency Cooperation Regulations 50 CFR 402.14, formal consultation is required.

As you know the purpose of formal consultation is to determine whether or not the effects of the action, plus any additional cumulative effects of State and private actions reasonably certain to occur in the action area, are likely to jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat.

A written request to initiate formal consultation should be submitted to the Service at the above-referenced letterhead address. If we can be of any further assistance please contact Rob Hazlewood at (406) 449-5225 or FTS 585-5225. Your cooperation in meeting our joint responsibilities

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under the Endangered Species Act are appreciated.

Sincerely,



Dale Harms
State Supervisor
Montana State Office

RMH/rmh

cc: E. L. Vinson
D. W. Paulson

VI-39



MASTER
FILE

COPY

State Historic Preservation Office

Montana Historical Society

Mailing Address: 225 North Roberts • Helena, MT 59620-9990
Office Address: 102 Broadway • Helena, MT • (406) 444-7715

December 17, 1991

Edrie L. Vinson, Chief
Environmental and Hazardous Waste Bureau
Highways
Department of Transportation
2701 Prospect
Helena, MT 59620

Re: F 1-2(39)138
Columbia Heights-Hungry Horse
Control No. 1290

Environmental Bureau		Date Received: 12-18-91
ACT	INFO	Distribution:
		Adm. Engineering
		Adm. Operations
✓		Preconstruction / Eval. / Des.
		Construction
		Environ
		Right-of-Way
		Materials
	✓	Legal
	✓	FHWA
	✓	

Dear Edrie:

I am glad to respond to your letter of December 10, commenting on the significance of the South Fork of the Flathead River Bridge for Section 4(f) of 49 U.S.C. 303 purposes.

I am glad to concur that we have not and do not anticipate finding that bridge specifically significant (or insignificant) under any legal authority. Having agreed to a Programmatic Agreement for Montana's Roads and Bridges, within the framework of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, we concur in your work on the products specified by that document rather than reverting to property-by-property review of specific roads or bridges for any legal authority.

Sincerely,



Marcella Sherfy
State Historic Preservation Officer

File: COMP, MDOH



U.S. Department
of Transportation
Federal Highway
Administration
Montana Division

RECEIVED

DEC 23 1991

ROBERT PECCIA
& ASSOCIATES

301 South Park Street
Room 448
Helena, Montana 59626

December 20, 1991

HPP-MT

Dale Harms, State Supervisor
United States Department of Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
Federal Building, US Courthouse
301 S. Park, Box 10023
Helena, MT 59626

Dear Mr. Harms:

Subject: F 1-2(39)138 Columbia Heights - Hungry Horse
Biological Assessment

This is in reply to your November 4, 1991 letter to the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) concerning the biological assessment on the subject project.

You disagreed with the determination in the biological assessment and asked that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) initiate formal consultation. Please consider this letter to be our request to initiate formal consultation.

We are including a supplemental discussion of minor impacts that may occur if the MDT jointly develops a river access and a historic exhibit area in cooperation with the United States Forest Service (USFS). The concept for this joint development project surfaced during cooperating agency meetings. Through this process it was determined that there is an existing need for safe access to the river for recreational purposes and the USFS was interested in providing this service to the public. At the same time a need exists to mitigate road related impacts to Bernie Park. The idea for a joint development project to meet agency needs and at the same time provide a needed amenity for the public, was born out of this process. However, because the Draft Environmental Impact Statement has not been released to the public the FHWA respectfully request that this intergovernmental exchange be withheld under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

The FHWA believes that premature release of this material to any segment of the public gives some sectors an unfair advantage and has a chilling effect on intergovernmental coordination and the success of the cooperating agency concept. For this reason we respectfully request that the public not be given access to this information until the Draft Environmental Impact Statement has been released.

We look forward to working with you to meet our joint responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act and would be happy to help with any additional conservation measures that you believe should be incorporated into the project. We would also be happy to review and comment on the draft environmental opinion. If you need any additional information on any aspect of the project please do not hesitate to contact Dale Paulson at (406) 449-5310 or FTS 585-5310.

Sincerely,

Duane C. Lewis
Assistant Division Administrator

c: Dan Norderude - Peccia
c: Mark Leighton - State
c: Edrie Vinson - State

VI-40



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest Service
RECEIVED

Region 1

Federal Building
P.O. Box 7669
Missoula, MT 59807

JAN 20 1992

Reply to: 7720

ROBERT PECCIA
& ASSOCIATES

Date: JAN 8 1992

Jim Weave

Ms. Edrie L. Vinson, Chief
Environmental & Hazardous Waste Bureau
Montana Department of Transportation
2701 Prospect Avenue
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Ms. Vinson:

This is in response to your December 16, 1991, letter concerning the proposed reconstruction of U.S. Highway 2 - Columbia Heights Hungry Horse.

Hungry Horse District Ranger Allen Christophersen has reviewed the project proposal on the ground to determine the potential impacts to the Middle Fork of the Flathead River, which is designated as Recreation in the Wild & Scenic Rivers system. The only portion of the project to be located within the Wild & Scenic River Corridor is in the extreme southwest corner of Section 6 (Government Lot 14, 0.64 acres). The proposed reconstruction within the Corridor is located away from the Middle Fork. A copy of the District Ranger's March 12, 1991, letter to Mr. Robert Newhouse is enclosed for reference.

We do not believe that a Section 7(a) determination is required for the proposed bridge reconstruction. The bridge site is not within the Wild & Scenic Corridor, and the reconstruction will not effect the portion of the Middle Fork of the Flathead River designated as Recreation.

James A. Lawrence
JOHN M. HUGHES
Acting Regional Forester

Enclosure

cc:
WRCR - T. Donahue
FLHD - L. Reesman, R. VanNatta
E - B. Harper

Date Recd. Preconst 01-15-92

Act	Info	MAIL ROUTE	Attach	Initial
		30 Preconst Engr		
		30 Assistant		
		30 Office Mgr		
		31 Safety Mgmt.		
		32 Road Design		
		33 Environment		
		34 Hydraulics		
		35 Survey & Mapping		
		36 Traffic Eng.		
		37 Traffic Operations		
		39 Consultant Dsn.		



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
FISH AND WILDLIFE ENHANCEMENT
FEDERAL BUILDING, US COURTHOUSE
301 S PARK, P O BOX 10023
HELENA MT 59626



IN REPLY REFER TO:

Duane C. Lewis
Assistant Division Administrator
U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration, Montana Division
301 So. Park Street, Room 448
Helena, Montana 59626

March 24, 1992

Dear Mr. Lewis,

This is the Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) Biological opinion prepared in response to the Federal Highway Administration, Montana Division, December 20, 1991 request to initiate formal consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 as amended (Act) for Project F1-2(39) 138 Reconstruction of U.S. Highway 2 between Columbia Heights and Hungry Horse, a River Access site and exhibit area and construction of a new bridge in Flathead County, Montana. Your December 20, 1991 letter was received by this office on December 23, 1991. The Service has examined the proposed project in accordance with the Section 7 Interagency Cooperation Regulations (50 CFR 402, FR 51(106):19957-19963). This biological opinion refers only to the potential effects on the bald eagle and not the overall environmental acceptability of the proposed action.

BIOLOGICAL OPINION

It is the Service's biological opinion that implementation of the proposed reconstruction project is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the Pacific bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) Population. The Service also concurs with the conclusions in the Federal Highway Administrations Biological Assessment that the project will not adversely affect the endangered gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) and peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) and the threatened grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed action is the reconstruction of U.S. Highway 2 between Columbia Heights and Hungry Horse in Flathead County, Montana. The reconstruction consists of making the two lane highway into a 64-foot-wide four-lane highway consisting of four 12-foot driving lanes and two 10-foot shoulders. The project is located on U.S. Highway 2 between Columbia Heights and Hungry Horse in Flathead County, Montana. The project begins east of Columbia Falls near the intersection of U.S. 2 and Secondary Route 206 and extends northeasterly for some 4.4 miles across the South Fork of the Flathead River to Hungry Horse. From the project beginning at milepost (MP) 138.3 to about MP 140.5 the existing highway passes through suburban and rural residential development. Columbia Heights contains a small but densely developed commercial strip. The highway enters Badrock Canyon at about MP 140.5, where it parallels

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or is adjacent to the main stem of the Flathead River for two miles. The road crosses the South Fork of the Flathead River just west of Hungry Horse. In Badrock Canyon, U.S. Highway 2 passes through a moderately thick forest with the steep north slope of Columbia Mountain to the south of the highway and the main stem of the Flathead to the north. A riprap fill, placed during previous improvements on U.S. 2, encroaches on the river for 1/2 mile adjacent to Berne Memorial Park. A strip of vegetation between the river and the highway near Berne Memorial Park in the Canyon supports mature cottonwoods and conifers. A supplemental discussion of impacts was provided to the Service on December 20, 1991, which describes Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) additional proposals to develop a river access and a historic exhibit area on approximately nine acres of land located next to the House of Mystery and construction of a new bridge over the South Fork of Hungry Horse. The new four-lane structure would be constructed parallel to and slightly downstream from the existing bridge.

CURRENT STATUS OF THE SPECIES

The bald eagle is listed as endangered in 43 of the 48 conterminous United States. The bald eagle population in Montana is listed as endangered.

Montana falls within the Pacific States Bald Eagle Recovery Plan area (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1986). The primary objective of the Bald Eagle Recovery Plan is to outline steps that will provide secure habitat for bald eagles in the 7-state Pacific recovery area and increase populations in specific geographic areas to levels where it is possible to delist the species. Reclassification from the bald eagles current endangered status should occur on a regionwide basis and should be based on four criteria. First, a minimum of 800 pairs nesting in the 7-state recovery area. Second, these pairs should be producing an annual average of at least 1.0 fledged young per pair, with an average success rate per occupied site of not less than 65% over a 5-year period. Third, population recovery goals must be met in at least 80% of the management zones with nesting potential. Finally, a persistent, long term decline in any sizeable (greater than 100 birds) wintering aggregation would provide evidence for not reclassifying the species. In 1990, 861 pairs were located in the seven-state recovery area and wintering populations appear to be stable or slightly increasing.

The management zone approach is central to the recovery process because establishment of well-distributed eagle populations and habitats is important to recovery of the species in the Pacific recovery area. Seven bald eagle management zones were identified for Montana in the Bald Eagle Recovery Plan and Montana Bald Eagle Management Plan (Montana Bald Eagle Management Plan 1986). Implementation of recovery actions and achievement of goals are applied on a zone-by-zone basis. The project area lies within zone 7 Upper Columbia Basin of the Recovery Plan.

The bald eagle may live up to 45 years, achieve sexual maturity at 4-5 years, and produce 1-3 young per year. Publications by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (1979), Lincer et al. (1979), Brown and Amadon (1968), and Snow (1973) provide references on the biology of the species. What is known of the biology and behavior of the bald eagle in Montana is generally consistent with the literature. Bald eagles occur year-round in Montana, but their numbers fluctuate dramatically between seasons. The greatest numbers occur during the spring and fall migration periods. Migration peaks during March and November when large numbers of bald eagles move through the state to and from more southerly wintering areas. Between 1980 and 1990 number of eagles counted during winter surveys ranged from 290 to 620 with an average of 420 counted per year. Adult to immature ratio averaged 2.7:1 (Flath et al. in prep.).

Bald eagles wintering in Montana tend to congregate near bodies of water. Major river drainages and large lakes constitute the majority of winter habitat use. Open water and food availability dictate areas of use throughout the winter months. Upland areas may receive considerable use when carrion is available. During migration and at wintering sites, eagles that concentrate on locally abundant food tend to roost communally. Communal roosts usually are located in stands of mature of oldgrowth conifers or cottonwoods, and roosts may be several miles from feeding sites.

Nesting chronology in Montana is well documented. Nest maintenance and construction occurs during winter months. Eggs are laid between late February and late April, with peak laying during early March. Fledging dates vary accordingly, with most fledging about mid-July. Little is known of post-fledging behavior in Montana. Bald eagles nested in stands of mature or over-mature timber with old growth characteristics near significant water bodies. Wright and Escano (1986) described nest site characteristics for Montana. Most nests are located in timber stands three acres or larger with canopy closure of less than 80 percent. Live trees most often selected are ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*), Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) and cottonwood (*Populus* sp.). Snags of these species are also utilized. Most nests are in mature or over-mature dominant or co-dominant trees with open crowns and sturdy horizontal limbs. Most nests are found on flat to moderately sloping terrain with northern aspects and in line of sight to a lake or reservoir greater than 80 acres in size, or fourth order or larger stream. All nests are within one mile of a water body with and adequate food supply.

Comprehensive surveys to determine the status of bald eagles in Montana began in 1980, but preliminary database was compiled from data gathered earlier. The nesting population grew an average of 14.5% per year from 25 viable territories to 108 between 1980 and 1990. Increase was comprised of both known age and unknown age territories. Mean brood size for the decade was 1.812. Number young fledged increased from 29 in 1980 to 130 in 1990. Percent nesting success and productivity of bald eagles was positively correlated with age of the nesting territory. In 1991, 63 active territories were found in the Upper Columbia Basin zone. Of the 63 active territories 55 were successful producing 94 young.

BASIS OF OPINION

Environmental Baseline

Studies of bald eagle migration and habitat use during the past 14 years have clearly documented the use of the Flathead River, including Badrock Canyon, as a major flyway and foraging area for eagles (Young 1983, McClelland P.T. in prep.). Based on review of the project area, Flath (personal communication) reported that bald eagles occur on a year-round basis and that in addition to winter and migration habitat sufficient foraging habitat is present to accommodate summer non-breeders and perhaps an additional nesting territory in the future. On December 4, 1985 McClelland reported 41 eagles between the House of Mystery and Hungry Horse Reservoir. At least 7 bald eagle roosts have been identified on the east side of Columbia Mountain. Many of the eagles from these roosts use the river corridor in the project area. Potential nesting habitat exists within the project area. The Flathead River and riparian habitat corridor associated with the river in the project area are considered year-round bald eagle habitat.

DIRECT EFFECTS

New South Fork River Crossing - Minor amounts of riparian vegetation would be cleared to accommodate the construction of the new bridge (0.35 acres of riparian cottonwoods and conifers on the west side of the South Fork, immediately north of the existing bridge). The riparian area affected by the proposed bridge construction is unvegetated within the floodplain of the South Fork and is bordered by a narrow (75-100 feet wide) stand of riparian cottonwood and conifers. Similar vegetation in the Badrock Canyon is used as perching and foraging sites for bald eagles.

Proposed River Access Site - The construction of the boat ramp will require that an area of riparian vegetation approximately 40 feet by 80 feet be cleared to accommodate the new ramp to the river. This construction would produce a 40 footwide disruption in the continuous screen of riparian shrub vegetation dominated by willows, redosier dogwood, Rocky Mountain maple, and alder. Additionally, construction of a vehicle parking area and an access road to the boat ramp would require the clearing of an area some 50 feet by 300 feet from the same vegetation community. The total required clearing at this site is estimated to be 0.4 acres.

Highway Reconstruction - The proposed road construction would remove riparian vegetation that serves as perching sites and provides screening for eagles to forage along the river bank. Construction of this four-lane alternative would remove trees and other vegetation from an estimated 2.7 acres of riparian cottonwood and conifer habitat that exists between Berne Road and Hungry Horse. MDT will incorporate 1.5:1 fill slopes into the design of the proposed action in Badrock Canyon which will encroach on the Flathead River.

Primary Direct Effects - The proposed action would directly affect bald eagles due to habitat modifications by removing perch, screening, foraging and potential nesting vegetation from the river bank in Badrock Canyon, the proposed River Access Site and Bridge Construction area. Other direct effects such as disturbance and displacement would also result from construction activities as the project area is considered year-round bald eagle habitat.

Indirect Impacts - One of the greatest indirect impacts of the proposed action would be the potential for inducing human population growth and increased recreation use due to the improved access and facilities provided by the project. Assuming that commercial access is improved and enhanced, strip commercial and private development along the river associated with tourism could increase causing more people to move to the area. The proposed action has the potential to accelerate and concentrate growth and recreational use in the project area. Loss of screening vegetation would result in increased disturbance to bald eagles in the project area. Human disturbance can seriously affect bald eagles during nesting, wintering and migration seasons. Eagles may react to people walking, bicycling, driving vehicles or snowmobiles, boaters stopping near nests or passing near feeding sites, blasting, shooting, tree-harvesting operations, or operation of loud equipment (Knight 1984, Magaddino 1989, Harmata in prep.). These activities can disrupt breeding and feeding activities, force eagles to desert a nesting territory or potential nesting habitat, or displace eagles to less desirable habitats. Wintering, migrating and nesting eagles may be unduly stressed by human activities if their feeding or normal social behavior is disrupted. Eagles on the ground, whether feeding or standing, are more sensitive to disturbances, and eagles will fly greater distances when flushed from river bars or banks than when flushed from trees (Knight 1984). Human disturbance may also

disrupt use of communal roosts, or displace birds to less suitable habitat (Stalmaster 1987). Bald eagles are less likely to be disturbed by human activities which are screened by vegetation (Stalmaster and Newman 1978). Although loss of screening vegetation will only occur on the highway side of the river, this loss will preclude bald eagle use in the areas across from, within and adjacent to the areas proposed for vegetation removal.

CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

Cumulative effects are those effects of future State or private activities on endangered and threatened species or critical habitat that are reasonably certain to occur within the action area of the Federal action subject to consultation. Future Federal actions will be subject to the consultation requirements established in Section 7 and, therefore, are not considered cumulative in the proposed action.

The continued fragmentation of habitat and loss of riparian vegetation due to vegetation removal may eventually affect the eagles ability to adequately use the prey base or other important habitat features. The Montana Bald Eagle Management Plan emphasized that even though bald eagle populations have increased in recent years, the continued alteration and removal of suitable habitat due to human activities may affect the long-term success of recovery efforts. McClelland, in his letter of May 7, 1991 to MDT, states that although bald eagle nesting success in Montana has shown some encouraging signs in recent years, we continue to "whittle away" at remaining habitat. McClelland further points out that the whittings are cumulative and this is a long-term concern in relation to migrating eagles as well as those that nest in the state which will ultimately effect the long term recovery of the bald eagle in Montana.

Habitat fragmentation and loss of riparian habitat would be expected to continue as secondary development in the project corridor could create a demand for new public services and facilities. Tourism and the resident population in northwestern Montana have increased in recent years. Flathead County population grew approximately 14% during the period 1980-1990 and was considered one of the fastest growing counties in the state. Year-long distribution of visitors and types of recreational pursuits have changed from seasonal peaks, mainly spring, summer and fall, to year-round activity. Residential and recreation homesites are also increasing in northwestern Montana. Development in floodplains has, and will continue to have, a cumulative impact on bald eagles through loss of habitat and continued displacement due to human disturbance.

The Service does not believe that the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of the proposed project would reduce appreciably the likelihood of both survival and recovery, or alter appreciably the habitat of the Pacific Bald Eagle Population in the wild by reducing the reproduction, numbers, or distribution of the species.

INCIDENTAL TAKE

Section 9 of the Act, as amended, prohibits any taking (harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture or collect, or attempt to engage in any such conduct) of listed species without a special exemption. Harm is further defined to include significant habitat modification or degradation that results in death or injury to listed species by significantly impairing

behavioral patterns such as breeding, feeding, or sheltering. Under the terms of Section 7(b) (4) and Section 7(0)(2), taking that is incidental to and not intended as part of the agency action is not considered taking within the bounds of the Act provided that such taking is in compliance with the incidental take statement. The Service does not anticipate that the proposed action will result in any incidental take of the bald eagle. Accordingly, no incidental take is authorized. Should any take occur, the Federal Highway Administration must reinstate formal consultation with the Service and provide a description of the circumstances surrounding the take. The incidental take statement provided in this opinion satisfies the requirements of the Endangered Species Act, as amended. This statement does not constitute an authorization for take of listed migratory birds under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act or any other Federal statute.

CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Section 7(a)(1) of the Act directs Federal agencies to utilize their authorities to further the purposes of the Act by carrying out conservation programs for the benefit of endangered and threatened species. The term conservation recommendations has been defined as Service suggestions regarding discretionary agency activities to minimize or avoid adverse effects of a proposed action on listed species or critical habitat or regarding the development of information. The recommendation provided here relates only to the proposed action and does not necessarily represent complete fulfillment of the agency's 7(a)(1) responsibility for this species.

1. A study should be undertaken by the Montana Department of Transportation to evaluate enhancement opportunities and/or purchase of riparian and riverine habitats within the project area.

In order for the Service to be kept informed of actions that either minimize or avoid adverse effects or that benefit listed species or their habitats, the Service requests notification of the implementation of any conservation recommendations.

CONCLUSION


This concludes formal consultation on this action. Reinitiation of formal consultation is required if the amount or extent of incidental take is exceeded, if new information reveals effects of the action that may impact listed species or critical habitat in a manner or to an extent not considered in this opinion, if the action is subsequently modified in a manner that causes an effect to the listed species or critical habitat that was not considered in this opinion, or if new species is listed or critical habitat designated that may be affected by the action.

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Your cooperation and assistance in meeting our joint responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act are appreciated.

Sincerely,



Dale R. Harms
State Supervisor
Montana State Office

cc: ARD, FWE, FWS Denver Co.
AFWE/EHC, Washington, D.C.
Chief, Environmental Bureau, Montana Dept. of Transportation, Helena, Mt.



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION VII, MONTANA OFFICE
FEDERAL BUILDING, 301 S. PARK, DRAWER 10096
HELENA, MONTANA 59626-0096

Ref: 8MO

May 21, 1992

Mr. Daniel M. Norderud
Transportation Planner
Robert Peccia & Associates
P.O. Box 5653
825 Custer
Helena, Montana 59604

RECEIVED

MAY 21 1992

ROBERT PECCIA
& ASSOCIATES

Re: Federal Aid Highway Project
Columbia Heights-Hungry Horse
Project F 1-2 (39) 138
Environmental Impact Statement

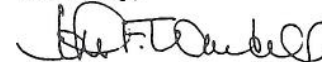
Dear Mr. Norderud:

This is in response to your letter of May 19, 1992 requesting the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provide comments or concerns on the above-referenced project.

The EPA appreciates this coordinated effort to address our concerns prior to the issuance of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The EPA will, however, reserve any comment until the DEIS can be fully reviewed.

If you have any questions or we can be of assistance, please feel free to contact Jeff Bryan of my staff at 406 449-5486.

Sincerely,



John F. Wardell, Director
Montana Office

cc: Bill Engle, 8MO

VI-45



United States Department of the Interior
RECEIVED
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
 1000 GLACIER NATIONAL PARK
 WEST GLACIER, MONTANA 59936

DEC 23

(406) 888-5441
 FAX: (406) 888-5581

IN REPLY REFER TO:

ROBERT PECCIA
 & ASSOCIATES

December 19, 1990

Mr. Robert R. Newhouse
 Consultant Design Engineer
 State of Montana, Dept. of Highways
 2701 Prospect Avenue
 Helena, Montana 59620

Dear Mr. Newhouse:

Thank you for meeting with Bob Dunkley and Brace Hayden last week to discuss revisions to the Preliminary Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Biological Assessment for the Columbia Heights-Hungry Horse, F 1-2 (39) 138, section of U.S. Highway 2.

The following are our revised comments:

1. The statement of need should be strengthened to make a more convincing case for upgrading this segment of highway. Problems with safety, congestion, and inconvenience should be referenced in addition to the need to meet design standards and a higher level of service.
2. A stronger justification for selection of the preferred alternative (alternative 2) should be provided given the considerable public support for a two-lane alternative shown during the scoping process for this project. A clearer comparison of the differences between alternatives 2 and 3 should be presented in light of the fact that the former provides many of the stated objectives for this project while placing less fill in the river, less cut into the hillside, and imposing less of a barrier to wildlife movements.
3. Strip development along Highway 2 is a significant issue for the management of Glacier National Park and for many of the park visitors. Furthermore, there is a high public expectation that scenic values be considered on a par with other objectives in highway planning. Improvements made to the highway between Hungry Horse and West Glacier have undoubtedly been one factor contributing to the hastening of strip development along the corridor.

The 1982 Scenic Beautification Plan for the earlier Highway 2 reconstruction project included a program to purchase scenic easements along the highway corridor. However, few such easement were ever purchased and it is our understanding that these funds were later allocated to other highway projects. We hope that follow through on any similar efforts associated with this project are more successful.

Date Recd. 12/19/90
 Section: [redacted]
 Title: [redacted]
 File: [redacted]

Wester

To the credit of the MDOH, FHWA and USFS, an effort is being made to preserve the scenic qualities of the Berne Park area by purchasing the total land holdings of the Simpson and Clark Trust in the project area. We strongly support this effort and find it to be consistent with statements made in the Flathead County Master Plan which establishes as a policy "discouraging additional commercial development within the planning jurisdiction along Highway 2". The Master Plan also encourages the "development of viable, compact rural commercial centers located in existing communities".

We also encourage the incorporation of measures such as buffer plantings, increased right-of-way limits, underground utilities and acquisition of additional scenic easements as part of this project.

4. We suggest that a park-and-ride facility at Columbia Heights be included in the scope of this project. Such a facility would be a service to the more than 100 permanent and seasonal employees of the park that live beyond Columbia Heights, many of whom carpool. Forest Service and private sector employees would also benefit from such a facility. The advantages of providing for and encouraging carpooling include energy conservation, reducing the number of vehicles on the highway and cost savings for the users.

6. Of the three alternatives for replacement of the Berne Park facility and provision of a river access site, we prefer the one that consolidates the facilities at the most downstream site. This will reduce the number of entrances on the highway and will improve safety, and ease of access. It will also lend itself to combined use of support facilities such as toilets and trash receptacles.

8. We disagree with statements made in the biological assessment that eagle use along this segment of the highway is declining and that perching trees are plentiful. We feel that the loss of perching or roosting trees in this area is significant. We encourage you to discuss this issue with park biologists by contacting either Gary Gregory or Riley McClelland at 888-5441.

We appreciate this opportunity to provide our comments on the document and for participating as a cooperating agency. Should you have any questions, please contact Mr. Brace Hayden of our staff at 888-5441.

Sincerely,

H. Gilbert Lusk

H. Gilbert Lusk
 Superintendent

cc: RMR-PP, Mr. Gardner
 RMR-MR, Mr. Schiller
 Al Christopherson, District Ranger, Hungry Horse, R.D.

V-46



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service
(406) 387-5243

Hungry Horse Ranger District
PO Box 340
Hungry Horse, MT 59919-0340

Reply to: 1560

Date: March 12, 1991

RECEIVED

MAR 22 1991

ROBERT PECCIA
& ASSOCIATES

Mr. Robert Newhouse
Montana Department of Highways
2701 Prospect Avenue
Helena, MT 59820

Dear Mr. Newhouse

The Columbia Heights - Hungry Horse Highway Construction Project F1-2(39)138 will cross a small portion of the Middle Fork of the Flathead Wild and Scenic River Corridor. With this in mind, I felt it appropriate to offer additional comments concerning potential impacts to the Recreational River Corridor. The land within the Corridor which may be effected by the Project is within the Hungry Horse Ranger District, Flathead National Forest lying within Lot 14 in the extreme south west corner of Section 6, Township 30 N, Range 19 W, MPM. This tract is approximately 0.64 acres in size. The following comments are relative to this tract of land which is within the boundary of the Wild and Scenic River Corridor and to other project activities that have the potential to effect values in the Wild and Scenic River Corridor.

Background

The Project proposal is to reconstruct US Highway 2 from Columbia Heights to Hungry Horse. A small portion of the project is on National Forest land. The existing highway has been in place on an established right-of-way since the 1930's. On Forest land the project will entail constructing a bridge across the South Fork of the Flathead and reconstructing the Highway adjacent to the South Fork for a distance of approximately 2600 feet to the Forest boundary. The South Fork joins the Middle Fork of the Flathead Wild and Scenic River approximately one half mile below the proposed bridge. Within the Middle Fork Wild and Scenic River Corridor, construction activities will be within the existing right-of-way. Alternatives being considered range from an improved two lane design to a four lane facility. A no action alternative is also being considered. Within the river corridor impacts from action alternatives will be similar except that construction of the four lane facility will involve an additional ten feet of land each side of center line.

Free Flowing Status

None of the alternatives will alter the free flowing status of the Middle Fork of the Flathead Wild and Scenic River. There will be no construction in or in close proximity to the channel of the Middle Fork.

Water Quality

Along the South Fork of the Flathead River a vegetative screen will be maintained between the river and the construction project. This screen will reduce the possibility of road construction sediment reaching the South Fork and eventually the Middle Fork Wild and Scenic River. Construction of the bridge may introduce sediment to the South Fork which could eventually reach the Middle Fork Wild and Scenic River. By following accepted construction practices for riparian areas, sediment production can be minimized. The State Department of Highways will obtain appropriate permits from the Corps of Engi-

neers and state agencies to further insure that potential impacts to water quality are mitigated. Any reduction of water quality in the Wild and Scenic River will be minimal and short term. Long term water quality will not be effected.

Recreation

Lands within the Wild and Scenic River Corridor effected by this project receive little recreation use other than by people traveling through the area on the highway. Any action alternative will disrupt highway related recreation during the construction period. Other land based activities will not be significantly effected by the project.

At the present time float use on the Middle Fork Wild and Scenic River, in the vicinity of the project, is light due to the lack of a suitable take out point. Those people who do use the river may be impacted by the sights and sounds of construction activities. These impacts are short term and not significant. If an action alternative is selected, and if a new river access site is constructed as a part of the mitigation for the impacts to the Berne Park area, recreation opportunities on the Wild and Scenic river will be enhanced.

There is a very limited amount of floating use on the South Fork (which is not a classified river) as it runs through the River Corridor to the confluence with the Middle Fork. These river users will be impacted by the short term sights and sounds of construction. None of their launch points will be impacted by the project. There are no safe or accepted take out points within the project area. Floating opportunities on the South Fork will be enhanced by the construction of the new river access site.

Cultural Resources

There are no known cultural resource sites within the portion of the Wild and Scenic River Corridor that will be effected by the project.

Geology

The surface geology within that portion of the Wild and Scenic River Corridor impacted by the project is not unique from a scientific standpoint and does not contribute significantly to the scenic qualities of the area. The massive rock outcrops that are a prominent geologic feature of Bad Rock Canyon are outside and down stream of the Wild and Scenic River Corridor. Disturbance to these features would not be visible from the Corridor.

Fish and Wildlife

Other than the potential for minor short term sedimentation from construction activities, there will be no impacts to fisheries in the Wild and Scenic River Corridor.

Wildlife use in the River Corridor adjacent to the project area is limited. The small size of the tract (0.64 acres) makes it generally insignificant from a wildlife standpoint.

The Corridor and adjacent Forest lands south of the project are classified as Situation 2 Grizzly Bear Habitat. By definition Situation 2 areas are lands that lack distinct grizzly population centers, where highly suitable habitat generally does not exist. There are no known grizzly travel routes within the River Corridor nor has bear presence been documented in the area.

The River Corridor is also within essential Bald Eagle habitat. Eagles are know to use the area as a migratory flyway during the fall and early winter. A few eagles have been observed wintering in the general project area. They may make some use of the River Corridor. There are no known nest sites in the area. Within the Corridor, the proposed highway construction is away from the water so there will be no impacts to perch sites.

Other Unique Features

There are no other special or unique features within the Middle Fork Wild and Scenic River Corridor that will be adversely effected by the project.

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Summary

Other than the short term impacts cited above, the proposed project should have no significant impacts to the Middle Fork of the Flathead Wild and Scenic River Corridor.

Sincerely,



ALLEN L. CHRISTOPHERSEN
District Ranger

CC: R.Vanetta, SO



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
CORPS OF ENGINEERS, OMAHA DISTRICT
215 NORTH 17TH STREET
OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68102-4978



March 28, 1991

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

Planning Division

Mr. David C. Miller
Federal Highway Administration
Montana Division
301 S. Park
Drawer 10056
Helena, Montana 59626

Dear Mr. Miller:

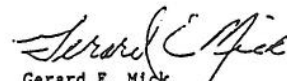
The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on the Columbia Heights-Hungry Horse reconstruction of U.S. Highway 2 between Columbia Heights and Hungry Horse has been reviewed.

Our particular responsibility as a cooperating agency in the preparation of this document is ensuring that it satisfies our Section 404 permitting requirements. This DEIS generally does a fine job of addressing the environmental consequences of the proposed action and fulfilling necessary requirements of a DEIS.

Please note the following comments:

- a. Statement on section 404 permit requirements (p. S-6) should be revised as follows: If the proposed action ... issue the appropriate Section 404 permit before there is any placement of fill ...
- b. The alternatives analysis apparently covered all practicable alternatives. It seems reasonable to continue the four-lane highway through this corridor. The existing two-lane roadway through the canyon can be a traffic bottleneck, especially during the tourist season.
- c. The rock prominences in the canyon are unique features and the disturbance on them from the preferred alternative should be minimized.
- d. Wetland mitigation (p. IV-18): The Draft EIS should include a thorough mitigation plan, if possible. Mitigation plans for the fill into the Flathead River should be more detailed when the permit application is submitted for the wall and bridge.

Sincerely,



Gerard E. Mick
Chief, Environmental
Analysis Branch
Planning Division

RECEIVED
1991 APR -1 AM 9:24
MONTANA DIVISION





Department of Energy
Bonneville Power Administration
P.O. Box 3621
Portland, Oregon 97208-3621

NOV 19 1992

RECEIVED
NOV 22 1992
MONT. DEPT. OF NATURAL
RESOURCES & CONSERVATION

2

In reply refer to: EFBG

Mr. Kevin Hart
State of Montana
Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
1520 East Sixth Avenue
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Kevin:

This letter is to confirm our telephone conversation regarding the role the State of Montana's Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) will have in the Hungry Horse-Columbia Falls Line Rebuild Project.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) has identified a need to improve the electric reliability of the existing 115,000-volt (115-kV) transmission system which supplies power to the Columbia Falls area loads. The current system runs the risk of overloading under certain operating conditions. BPA is proposing to rebuild the existing single-circuit 115-kV line to 230-kV single-circuit between Hungry Horse Dam to the Columbia Falls substation, a distance of about 8 miles. The construction of this project would be completed in two phases. Phase I would involve (1) building the 230-kV line from the Hungry Horse switching station to Columbia Falls Substation; (2) building a temporary line from the dam to the new 230-kV line; and (3) removal of the existing 115-kV line from the dam to Columbia Falls Substation. The line would operate at 115 kV capability until Phase II. Phase II will be completed when the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) budgets for the upgrade at the Hungry Horse switching station. It involves the (1) installation of a new bay at Hungry Horse switching station (BOR action); (2) removal of the temporary line from the dam to the new 230-kV line; (3) re-termination of the 230-kV line at the Hungry Horse switching station; and (4) removal of a 115-kV structure, addition of a 230-kV structure, and restringing the line from the structure to the Columbia Falls Substation. A combination of new 230-kV line and existing 230-kV line will be used to avoid the lines crossing each other. See attached photo and map for further details and explanation.

The environmental assessment is in the early stages of being prepared. BPA has conducted field reviews of the proposed route, and resource specialists have gathered the necessary data and are preparing the impact analysis for the following resources: wetlands, health and safety, agriculture, soils, visual, threatened and endangered species (plants and wildlife), other wildlife, cultural resources, water quality, floodplains, recreation, undesirable plants, and local zoning. As we discussed, the project may necessitate actions by other state agencies, in which case we would need

to be in compliance with state laws and regulations. Montana DNRC's role would be to contact the various Montana state agencies (you had mentioned the Montana Department of Health and Environmental Sciences and the Department of Transportation), facilitate discussions with them, and perform liaison duties for input from them. We will also be asking DNRC to review the draft working papers and provide comments at that time.

We are hoping to have the draft EA ready to go out for review in late December. We would appreciate your comments and those from state agencies no later than December 11, 1992.

If you have any further questions regarding the project, please feel free to call. We appreciate your support and involvement in this project.

Sincerely,

Leslie Kelleher
Environmental Specialist

V-49