## CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

| | |
|---|---|
| **Project Name:** | Town of Jordan, MT, McCone Electric Electrical Easement |
| **Proposed Implementation Date:** | 2025 |
| **Proponent:** | Town of Jordan |
| **Location:** | T18N R38E S16 NW4 |
| **County:** | Garfield County |

## I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The Town of Jordan (Henceforth referred to as proponent) has requested a permanent easement for the construction and operation of an overhead powerline easement upon the above-referenced state tract, which will be developed and operated by McCone Electric. The powerline will power the electric pump that will pump effluent from existing sewage lagoons to a newer facility.

## II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

### 1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

*Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.*

The DNRC has been acting in cooperation with Stahly Engineering, operating on behalf of the proponent, and the proponent regarding the proposed easement since 2020. During this time, the proponent and Stahly Engineering have cooperated with the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) (see below). It was at this time that surveying, lessee notification and permitting work began.

This above-ground powerline is a key part of the project, and will power the electric pump that will pump effluent from existing sewage lagoons to a newer facility.

The proponent submitted easement applications to the DNRC Eastern Land Office in April of 2025. DEQ finalized their EA for the sewage lagoon project in June of 2025.

The DNRC Eastern Land Office has tiered this environmental assessment check list to the DEQ Environmental Assessment for this Project. The Environmental Assessment is available for review from the DEQ.

In regards to Public Notice and Comment, the DEQ Environmental Assessment notes:

> ***"The town discussed the proposed project at advertised public meetings on April 22, 2014, and August 6, 2019. At the meetings, the proposed project was explained, including the project's need, scope, budget, schedule, source of funding, and cost impacts to local citizens. These meetings were open to the public. No comments were received."***

### 2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

Montana Department of Environmental Quality. Section 10 of the Environmental Assessment provided by DEQ notes:

> **"The following agencies have been contacted regarding the proposed construction of this project.**
>
> **1. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was solicited for comments and stated they had no comments on the proposed project.**
>
> **2. The Montana Historical Society's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) reviewed the proposed project. According to their records, there have been a few previously recorded sites within the designated search locales. SHPO stated that if any structure over 50 years old is to be**

**altered, it is recommended that they be recorded and a determination of their eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places be made. They indicated that as long as there will be no disturbance or alteration to structures over 50 years of age, there is low likelihood cultural property will be impacted. They stated that since the project is located on state lands, the State Lands Archaeologist for their input on concerns. Based on the lack of pervious inventory and ground disturbance required for the project, they recommended a cultural resource inventory be conducted. Should structures need to be altered or if cultural materials are inadvertently discovered during this project, their office must be contacted, and the site investigated.**

**3. The U.S. Department of the Army Corps of Engineers (USCOE) reviewed the proposed project. The USCOE is responsible for administering Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, which regulates the excavation or placement of dredged or fill material below the ordinary high-water mark of our nation's rivers, streams, lakes or in wetlands. They indicated that based on the information provided, they were unable to determine if regulated activities are proposed or if jurisdictional waters of the U.S. are present within the project area. If the final design includes any placement of fill material in any jurisdictional area, then a Department of the Army (DA) permit will be required.**

**4. The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) reviewed the proposed project and stated that fish passage to and beyond the site must be maintained, the force main must be bored under the creek instead of trenched, and a 100-foot buffer was recommended between stream banks and the new lagoon cell.**

**5. The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) reviewed the proposed project and stated that they had no comments on the proposed project.**

**6. The State Land archeologist, Patrick Rennie, completed a cultural resources inventory on November 19, 2020, and concluded that proposed developments should result in no effect to heritage properties as defined in the Montana State Antiquities Act. No further archaeological or historical investigation work was recommended.**

**7. The Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program reviewed the project and determined that habitat would be impacted. A mitigation plan was required to be submitted and the Town of Jordan chose to make a contribution to the stewardship program to meet alternative mitigation requirements since disturbance of habitat could not be avoided. Funds will be encouraged to be applied to the Central Service Area that Jordan is a part of for offsite mitigation efforts."**

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**3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:**

Alternative A- Project Alternatives are addressed in Section 3 of the DEQ Environmental Assessment. The DNRC accepts and tiers to the alternatives listed in the Environmental Assessment.

Alternative B- No Action

## III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

**4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:**

*Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.*

Alternative A- Some soil disturbance may occur within the project area. Most soil structures in the area consist of a silty, sandy and shallow complex. There are very few areas of compactable or fragile soil structures. Cumulative impacts to the soil quality, stability or moisture should be minimal.

Possible impacts to soils in the project area are addressed in Section 5, Sub-Section A , Items 4 and 13, and in Sub-Section B, of the DEQ Environmental Assessment. The DNRC accepts and tiers to the impacts listed in the Environmental Assessment.

Alternative B- No Impact.

**5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:**

*Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.*

Alternative A- Possible impacts to Water Quality are addressed in Section 5, Sub-Section A, Items 2 and 5, of the DEQ Environmental Assessment. The DNRC accepts and tiers to the impacts listed in the Environmental Assessment.

Alternative B- No Impact

**6. AIR QUALITY:**

*What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.*

Alternative A- Possible impacts to Air Quality are addressed in Section 5, Sub-Section, A Item 6, of the DEQ Environmental Assessment. The DNRC accepts and tiers to the impacts listed in the Environmental Assessment.

Alternative B- No Impact

**7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:**

*What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.*

Alternative A- Where the construction and maintenance takes place there may be disturbance to the vegetation cover. Vegetation is comprised mainly of Western Wheatgrass (*Agropyron smithii*), Needle-and-Thread (*Stipia* comata), Prairie Junegrass (*Koeleria* pyramidata), Blue Grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), Crested Wheatgrass (*Agropyron cristatum*), Inland Saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*), Silver Sage (*Artemesia cana*), and various sedges, forbs, and shrubs.

Alternative B- No Impact

**8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:**

*Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.*

Alternative A- A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program Database shows fourteen sensitive species that have been observed in the general project areas (see attached SOC Occurrences Report for the Project Area). While these species may be present, no impact is expected due to this project.

These projects are located within sage grouse habitat. Consultation with the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program has occurred (Project # 6898). The program has responded with mitigation recommendations, which were accepted by the proponent.

Possible impacts to terrestrial, avian, and aquatic life and habitats are addressed in Section 5, Sub-Section A, Items 2 and 4, of the DEQ Environmental Assessment. The DNRC accepts and tiers to the impacts listed in the Environmental Assessment.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:**
*Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.*

Alternative A- Possible impacts to unique, fragile or limited species and habitat are addressed in Section 5, Sub-Section A, Items 2 and 4, of the DEQ Environmental Assessment. The DNRC accepts and tiers to the impacts listed in the Environmental Assessment.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:**
*Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.*

Alternative A- Possible impacts to unique, fragile or limited species and habitat are addressed in Section 5, Sub-Section A, Item 3, of the DEQ Environmental Assessment. The DNRC accepts and tiers to the impacts listed in the Environmental Assessment.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**11. AESTHETICS:**
*Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.*

Alternative A- Alteration of the view may occur during the clearing, construction and restoration activities. Some areas of the project are remote and are not visible from populated areas while others are visible from county roads and state highways. Construction activities may leave a scar on the vegetative community which should recover fully after restoration is complete generally within 3 years or less.

Additional possible impacts to aesthetics are addressed in Section 5, Sub-Section A, Item 14, of the DEQ Environmental Assessment. The DNRC accepts and tiers to the impacts listed in the Environmental Assessment.

Possible impacts upon noise levels addressed in Section 5, Sub-Section A, Item 9, of the DEQ Environmental Assessment. The DNRC accepts and tiers to the impacts listed in the Environmental Assessment.

Alternative B- No Impact

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**12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:**
*Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.*

Alternative A- Possible demands on environmental resources are addressed in multiple sections in Section 5, Sub-Sections A and B of the DEQ Environmental Assessment. The DNRC accepts and tiers to the impacts listed in the Environmental Assessment.

Alternative B- No Impact

**13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:**
*List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.*

As noted in Section 9 of the DEQ Environmental Assessment:

> ***"The following documents have been utilized in the environmental review of this project and are part of the project file:***
>
> ***1. Town of Jordan Wastewater Treatment Upgrade, August 2020, prepared by Stahly Engineering & Associates, Inc.***
>
> ***2. Uniform Environmental Checklist; prepared by Stahly Engineering & Associates, Inc.; signed by the Town of Jordan on April 24, 2024."***

## IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

**14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:**
*Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.*

Alternative A- Potential Impacts to human health and safety are addressed in multiple sections in Section 5, Sub-Section A, Items 7 and 11, and Sub-Section B, of the DEQ Environmental Assessment. The DNRC accepts and tiers to the impacts listed in the Environmental Assessment.

Alternative B- No Impact

**15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:**
*Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.*

Alternative A- Potential economic impacts are noted the DEQ Environmental Assessment as follows (taken from Section 5, Sub-Section A, Item 1):

> **"Within town limits, land use is predominantly residential with a variety of commercial and industrial businesses located throughout. Land use outside the town limits is primarily open rangeland that supports ranching and farming."**

Alternative B- No Impact

**16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:**
*Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.*

Alternative A- This project has the potential to create jobs---most of this is short term construction related employment. The amount of full time permanent employment as a result of the project is unknown at this time.

Alternative B- No Impact

**17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:**

*Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.*

Alternative A- No Impacts expected

Alternative B- No Impact

**18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:**

*Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services*

Alternative A- No Impacts expected

Alternative B- No Impact

**19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:**

*List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.*

Alternative A- As noted in DEQ's Environmental Assessment, Section 10, Item 7:

> **"The Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program reviewed the project and determined that habitat would be impacted. A mitigation plan was required to be submitted and the Town of Jordan chose to make a contribution to the stewardship program to meet alternative mitigation requirements since disturbance of habitat could not be avoided. Funds will be encouraged to be applied to the Central Service Area that Jordan is a part of for offsite mitigation efforts."**

The Sage Grouse Program Project Number is 6898.

Alternative B- No Impact

**20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:**

*Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.*

Alternative A- No Impacts expected

Alternative B- No Impact

**21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:**

*Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.*

Alternative A- No Impacts expected

Alternative B- No Impact

**22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:**

*Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.*

Alternative A- This project has the potential to have a minimal and temporary disruption of native or traditional lifestyles. This disruption should cease and return to pre-project levels once the construction and reclamation phases are completed.

Alternative B- No Impact

**23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:**

*How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?*

Alternative A- The project will connect to the existing sanitation infrastructure, as well as new infrastructure being developed. Cultural uniqueness may be affected by new infrastructure being added to existing infrastructure where no previous infrastructure existed.

Alternative B- No Impact

**24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:**

*Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.*

Alternative A- This project would require the purchase of a permanent easement upon state trust land. The price of affected acreage, determined to be grazing acreage, is $550.00 per acre. This value was determined using the DNRC 2024 Surface Tracts Valuation Map. The total value of the permanent easement across state trust land, affecting 0.47 acres, would be $258.50.

The total anticipated revenue to the trust from this project is **$258.50**.

Alternative B- No Impact

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **EA Checklist Prepared By:** | **Name:** | Seth Urick | **Date:** | 08-08-2025 |
| | **Title:** | Land Use Specialist | | |

## V. FINDING

**25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:**

Alternative A

**26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:**

The granting of the requested easement upon state owned trust land for the proposed Town of Jordan, MT McCone Electric Electrical Easement Project should not result in nor cause significant environmental impacts. The predicted environmental impacts have been identified and mitigation measures addressed in the DEQ Environmental Assessment as well as DNRC general and site-specific easement and license stipulations. The proposed action satisfies the trusts fiduciary mandate and ensures the long-term productivity of the land. An environmental assessment checklist is the appropriate level of analysis for the proposed action.

**27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:**

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| [ ] | EIS | [ ] | More Detailed EA | [X] | No Further Analysis |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **EA Checklist Approved By:** | **Name:** | Chris Pileski |
| | **Title:** | Eastern Land Office; Area Manager |
| **Signature:** | | **Date:** 8/8/25 |

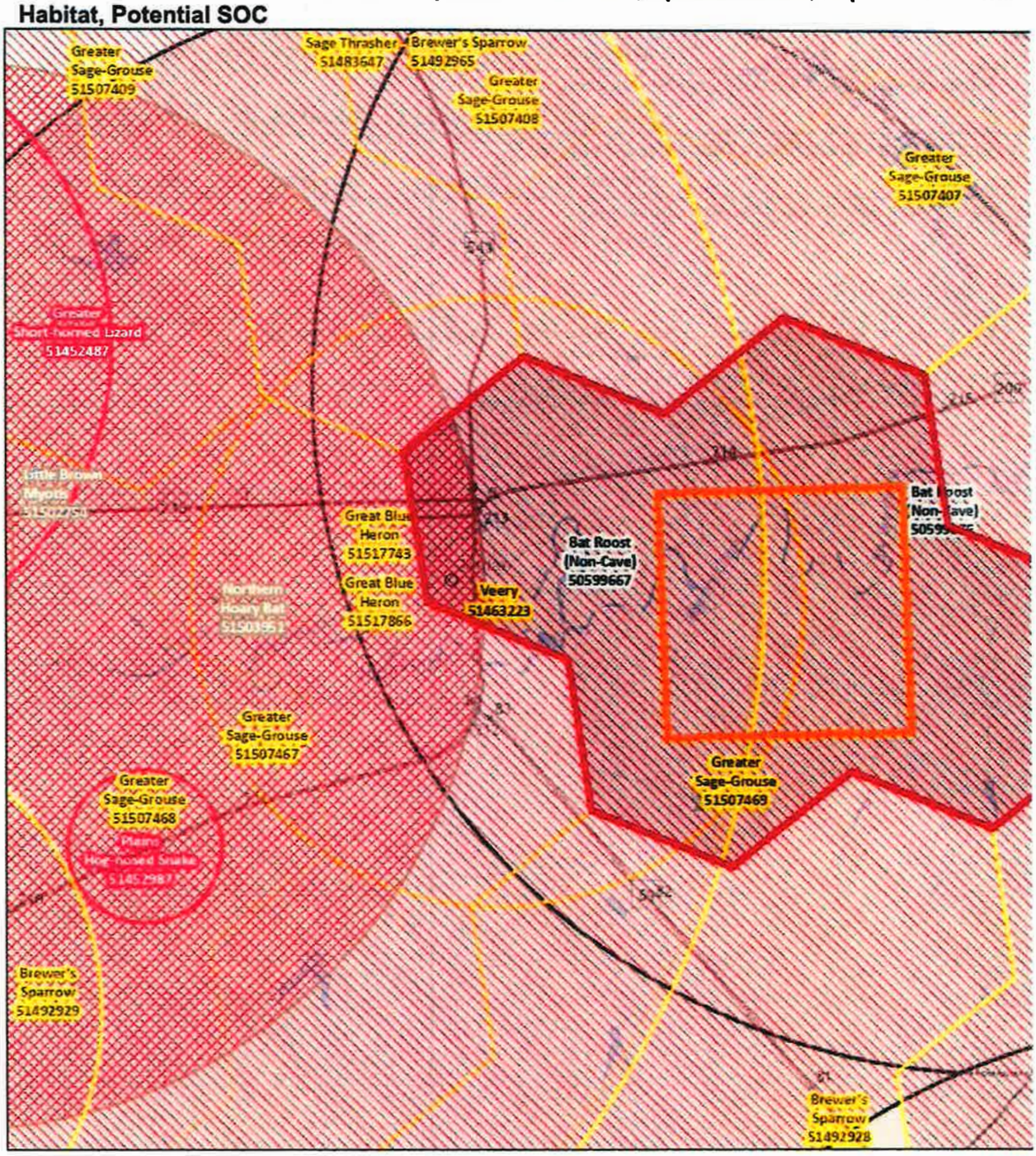
MONTANA STATE LIBRARY
NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM
A program of the **Montana State Library's Natural Resource Information System.**

| Latitude | Longitude |
|---|---|
| 47.28498 | -106.77805 |
| 47.35366 | -106.99273 |

# Montana SOC Occurrences Report

## SOC Occurrences with MT Status = Species of Concern, Special Status, Important Animal Habitat, Potential SOC

Report generated 6/12/2025 11:53:46 AM




⊞ **Mammals - Eastern Red Bat** *(Lasiurus borealis)*

**SO Count**: 1 **Obs Count**: 4 **Earliest Obs**: 2013 **Recent Obs**: 2014

⊞ **Mammals - Little Brown Myotis** *(Myotis lucifugus)*

**SO Count**: 2 **Obs Count**: 9 **Earliest Obs**: 2006 **Recent Obs**: 2014

⊞ **Mammals - Long-eared Myotis** *(Myotis evotis)*

**SO Count**: 1 **Obs Count**: 8 **Earliest Obs**: 2013 **Recent Obs**: 2014

⊞ **Mammals - Northern Hoary Bat** *(Lasiurus cinereus)*

**SO Count**: 2 **Obs Count**: 2 **Earliest Obs**: 2009 **Recent Obs**: 2013

⊞ **Birds - Brewer's Sparrow** *(Spizella breweri)*

**SO Count**: 3 **Obs Count**: 4 **Earliest Obs**: 2001 **Recent Obs**: 2017

⊞ **Birds - Great Blue Heron** *(Ardea herodias)*

**SO Count**: 2 **Obs Count**: 2 **Earliest Obs**: 2010 **Recent Obs**: 2010

⊞ **Birds - Greater Sage-Grouse** *(Centrocercus urophasianus)*

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **SO Count:** 10 | **Obs Count:** 105 | **Earliest Obs:** 1979 | **Recent Obs:** 2024 |
| ⊞ **Birds - Loggerhead Shrike** *(Lanius ludovicianus)* | | | | |
| | **SO Count:** 1 | **Obs Count:** 1 | **Earliest Obs:** 2021 | **Recent Obs:** 2021 |
| ⊞ **Birds - Sage Thrasher** *(Oreoscoptes montanus)* | | | | |
| | **SO Count:** 1 | **Obs Count:** 1 | **Earliest Obs:** 2002 | **Recent Obs:** 2002 |
| ⊞ **Birds - Veery** *(Catharus fuscescens)* | **SO Count:** 1 | **Obs Count:** 1 | **Earliest Obs:** 2021 | **Recent Obs:** 2021 |
| ⊞ **Reptiles - Greater Short-horned Lizard** *(Phrynosoma hernandesi)* | | | | |
| | **SO Count:** 1 | **Obs Count:** 1 | **Earliest Obs:** 2009 | **Recent Obs:** 2009 |
| ⊞ **Reptiles - Plains Hog-nosed Snake** *(Heterodon nasicus)* | | | | |
| | **SO Count:** 1 | **Obs Count:** 1 | **Earliest Obs:** 2016 | **Recent Obs:** 2016 |
| ⊞ **Reptiles - Snapping Turtle** *(Chelydra serpentina)* | | | | |
| | **SO Count:** 1 | **Obs Count:** 1 | **Earliest Obs:** 2002 | **Recent Obs:** 2002 |
| ⊞ **Amphibians - Great Plains Toad** *(Anaxyrus cognatus)* | | | | |
| | **SO Count:** 1 | **Obs Count:** 1 | **Earliest Obs:** 1998 | **Recent Obs:** 1998 |
| ⊞ **Other -** ***Bat Roost (Non-Cave)*** (Bat Roost (Non-Cave)) | | | | |
| | **SO Count:** 3 | **Obs Count:** 3 | **Earliest Obs:** 2019 | **Recent Obs:** 2019 |

**Citation for this report:**
Montana SOC Occurrences Report
SOC Occurrences with MT Status = Species of Concern, Special Status, Important Animal Habitat, Potential SOC
Within Lat/Long: (47.28498,-106.77805) to (47.35366,-106.99273)
Natural Heritage Map Viewer. Montana Natural Heritage Program.
Retrieved on June 12, 2025, from https://mtnhp.org/MapViewer/SOReport.aspx

DEQ
Montana Department
of Environmental Quality

June 10, 2025

# FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

## TO ALL INTERESTED GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES AND PUBLIC GROUPS

As required by state and federal rules for determining whether an Environmental Impact Statement is necessary, an environmental review has been performed on the proposed action below:

| | |
|---|---|
| Project | Jordan Wastewater Treatment Upgrade |
| Location | Jordan, Montana |
| Project Number | WPCSRF: C301312 |
| Total Cost | $ 4,215,700 |

The Town of Jordan completed a Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) in August of 2020 to evaluate its three-cell facultative lagoon that has had near-continuous noncompliance with its Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (MPDES) permit since its last upgrades were completed in 2008. Local industrial dischargers contribute between 300 to 500 pounds of Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) daily which consistently overwhelms the wastewater treatment system and leads to permit violations. In November of 2012, the Town of Jordan entered into an Administrative Order on Consent (AOC) with the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to address violations of its MPDES permit. The PER evaluated alternatives to improve Jordan's wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) and achieve compliance with the AOC.

The selected PER alternative and proposed project entails construction of an additional lagoon cell, 32 acres in size, to convert the existing lagoon into a total retention wastewater system and eliminate its surface water discharge. A lift station and force main under Big Dry Creek will also be installed to transport wastewater effluent from the existing lagoon cells to the new fourth cell.

Federal and State grant/loan programs will fund the project. Environmentally sensitive characteristics such as wetlands, floodplains, threatened or endangered species, and historical sites are not expected to be adversely impacted because of the proposed project. Additional environmental impacts related to land use, water quality, air quality, public health, energy, noise, and growth were also assessed. Public participation during the planning process demonstrated support for the selected alternative. No significant long-term environmental impacts were identified.

An environmental assessment (EA), which describes the project and analyzes the impacts in more details, is available for public scrutiny on the DEQ web site (https://deq.mt.gov/public/water-public) and at the following locations:

Travis Dunkle, P.E.
Department of Environmental Quality
1520 East Sixth Avenue
P.O. Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901
travis.dunkle@mt.gov

Town of Jordan
451 Main Street
Jordan, MT 59337
tojordan@midrivers.com

Comments on this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or on the Environmental Assessment (EA) may be submitted to the Department of Environmental Quality at the above address. Comments must be postmarked no later than 30 days after the publication date of this FONSI in the newspaper. After evaluating comments received, the department will revise the EA or determine if an environmental impact statement is necessary. If no substantive comments are received during the comment period, or if substantive comments are received and evaluated and the environmental impacts are still determined to be non-significant, this FONSI will stand. No administrative action will be taken on the project for at least 30 calendar days after the release of the FONSI.

Sincerely,

Mike Abrahamson

Mike Abrahamson, P.E.
WPCSRF Section Supervisor
Water Quality Division
Montana Department of Environmental Quality

TOWN OF JORDAN
WASTEWATER TREATMENT UPGRADE

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

## I. COVER SHEET

### A. PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

Applicant: Town of Jordan

Address: 451 Main Street
Jordan, MT 59337

Project Number: C301312

### B. CONTACT PERSON

Name: Tom Spillum, Mayor

Address: 451 Main Street
Jordan, MT 59337

Telephone: (406) 557-2692

### C. ABSTRACT

The Town of Jordan completed a Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) in August of 2020 to evaluate its three-cell facultative lagoon that has had near-continuous noncompliance with its Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (MPDES) permit since its last upgrades were completed in 2008. Local industrial dischargers contribute between 300 to 500 pounds of Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) daily which consistently overwhelms the wastewater treatment system and leads to permit violations. In November of 2012, the Town of Jordan entered into an Administrative Order on Consent (AOC) with the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to address violations of the MPDES permit. The PER evaluated alternatives to improve Jordan's wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) and achieve compliance with the AOC.

The selected PER alternative and proposed project entails construction of an additional lagoon cell, 32 acres in size, to covert the existing lagoon into a total retention wastewater system and eliminate its surface water discharge. A lift station and force main under Big Dry Creek will also be installed to transport wastewater effluent from the existing lagoon cells to the new fourth cell.

The proposed improvements, including administration, engineering, and construction, are estimated to cost $4,215,700. The town will fund the project through $2,814,161 in grants from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA); a low interest loan (2.5%, 30-year term) in the amount of $678,000 and principal

forgiveness in the amount of $638,470 from the Water Pollution Control State Revolving Fund (WPCSRF); and the remainder with local funds.

Environmentally sensitive characteristics such as wetlands, floodplains, threatened/endangered species, and historical sites are not expected to be adversely impacted because of the proposed project. Additional environmental impacts related to land use, water quality, air quality, public health, energy, noise, and growth, were also assessed. No significant long-term environmental impacts were identified.

Under Montana law, (75-6-112, MCA), no person may construct, extend, or use a public sewage system until the DEQ has reviewed and approved the plans and specifications for the project. Under the Montana Water Pollution Control State of public sewage systems.

The DEQ, Engineering Bureau, has prepared this Environmental Assessment to satisfy the requirements of the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

D. COMMENT PERIOD

Thirty (30) calendar days

## II. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

The Town of Jordan has a three-cell facultative lagoon that discharges to Big Dry Creek and consistently violates its MPDES permit. The town entered into an AOC with the DEQ on November 9, 2012, to address its many permit violations. The 2008 Jordan lagoon upgrade design estimated a daily average flow of 46,500 gallons and an influent BOD load of 124 pounds/day. Wastewater from industrial dischargers increases the BOD load to a much higher level than anticipated. The treatment system has consistently been overloaded and has violated MPDES permit limits since its initial operation in 2009. With Big Dry Creek having a critical low-flow condition of zero cubic feet per second, there is no dilution of effluent and future permit limits would require major upgrades to the existing system. To comply with the AOC and with consideration of expected stricter MPDES limits, the Town chose to investigate removal of the discharge to Big Dry Creek through a PER.

## III. ALTERNATIVES INCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION AND COSTS

A. Four alternatives to address the collection system deficiencies were considered:

- No Action Alternative
- Alternative 1 – Treatment and Total Retention
- Alternative 2 – Aerated Pretreatment Cell
- Alternative 3 – Facultative Lagoon Polishing System

NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE – The "no-action" alternative would not eliminate or reduce the risks of failing to meet discharge standards. With the community under an AOC to address discharge violations, the "no-action" alternative was

not determined to be a viable option and will not be given further consideration.

ALTERNATIVE 1 – TREATMENT AND TOTAL RETENTION – This alternative involves the installation of a new lift station, installing a force main under Big Dry Creek, and constructing a 32-acre evaporation lagoon cell northeast of the existing lagoon. The existing discharge would be eliminated, and all effluent would flow to the evaporation lagoon cell.

ALTERNATIVE 2 – AERATED PRETREATMENT CELL – This alternative consists of constructing a single, covered, aerated cell ahead of the existing facultative lagoon cells. This new pond would be covered to retain heat and mechanically aerated to provide BOD and ammonia treatment to reduce slug loading from industrial waste and overloading of the facultative lagoon. A disinfection system would also be installed to meet effluent *E. coli* permit limits.

ALTERNATIVE 3 – FACULTATIVE LAGOON POLISHING SYSTEM – This alternative consists of installing Level 2 fixed film biological treatment modules to the existing lagoon system. The modules would provide additional BOD and nitrogen removal to produce a cleaner effluent. A disinfection system would also be installed to meet effluent *E. coli* permit limits.

B. COST COMPARISON - PRESENT WORTH ANALYSIS

The present worth analysis is a means of comparing alternatives in present day dollars and can be used to determine the most cost-effective alternative. An alternative with low initial capital cost may not be the most cost-efficient project if high monthly operation and maintenance costs occur over the life of the alternative. Table 1 provides a summary of the present worth analysis of the three feasible treatment alternatives over the 20-year planning period.

**TABLE 1 - ECONOMIC EVALUATION OF TREATMENT ALTERNATIVES**

| Alternative | Total Capital Cost * | Present Worth of Annual O&M Cost Increase | Present Worth of Salvage Value | Net Present Worth |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Alternative 1**: Treatment and Total Retention | $2,192,000 | $90,000 | $330,000 | $1,952,000 |
| **Alternative 2**: Aerated Pretreatment Cell | $959,000 | $500,000 | $29,000 | $1,430,000 |
| **Alternative 3**: Lagoon Polishing System | $1,291,200 | $665,000 | $170,500 | $1,785,700 |

C. BASIS OF SELECTION OF PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

To assist in selection of the preferred alternative, a qualitative ranking process was utilized. The three viable treatment alternatives were compared with respect to financial feasibility, technical feasibility, environmental impacts, public health and safety, operation and maintenance, and public input.

Each criterion for each alternative was given a score from 1 to 10, with 10 being the most desirable option. The criteria were weighted in relation to each other, with the criteria most important to the town receiving higher weighting factors. The three viable treatment system alternatives are scored for comparison in the matrix below:

**TABLE 2 – WASTEWATER TREATMENT SELECTED ALTERNATIVES RANKING**

| Criterion | Weight | Alternative 1 | Alternative 2 | Alternative 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Points | Points | Points |
| **Financial Feasibility** | 10 | | | |
| Alternative Score | | 8 | 10 | 8 |
| Weighted Score | | 80 | 100 | 80 |
| **Technical Feasibility** | 5 | | | |
| Alternative Score | | 10 | 8 | 8 |
| Weighted Score | | 50 | 40 | 40 |
| **Environmental Impacts** | 5 | | | |
| Alternative Score | | 7 | 5 | 5 |
| Weighted Score | | 35 | 25 | 25 |
| **Public Health & Safety** | 10 | | | |
| Alternative Score | | 5 | 7 | 7 |
| Weighted Score | | 50 | 70 | 70 |
| **Operation & Maintenance** | 7 | | | |
| Alternative Score | | 10 | 5 | 7 |
| Weighted Score | | 70 | 35 | 49 |
| **Public Input** | 5 | | | |
| Alternative Score | | 10 | 5 | 5 |
| Weighted Score | | 50 | 25 | 25 |
| **Overall Rank** | | 335 | 295 | 289 |

Alternative 1, Treatment and Total Retention, ranked the highest in the matrix with a score of 335 points, and is therefore the chosen treatment project. The proposed improvements, including administration, engineering, and construction, are estimated to cost $4,215,700. The town will fund the project through $2,814,161 in grants from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA); a low interest loan (2.5%, 30-year term) in the amount of $678,000 and principal forgiveness in the amount of $638,470 from the Water Pollution Control State Revolving Fund (WPCSRF); and the remainder with local funds.

The current wastewater monthly rate is $29.10. This rate will increase by $36.79 per month because of the proposed project, resulting in a monthly residential

sewer rate of $65.89. The financial impact of this project on the system users is shown in Table 3. The proposed project will result in a monthly sewer cost per household that is 1.81% of the monthly median household income. Based on EPA guidance for project affordability, the increased sewer rates may pose an economic hardship on some households.

**TABLE 3 - PROJECT AFFORDABILITY**

| | |
|---|---|
| Monthly sewer user cost | $65.89 |
| Monthly median household income (mMHI)[1] | $3,632 |
| User rate as a percentage of mMHI | 1.81% |

[1] Based on US Census Bureau American Communities Survey (ACS) data, 2023.

## IV. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

### A. PLANNING AREA AND MAPS

Jordan is the county seat for Garfield Country and is located 84 miles northwest of Miles City and half mile north of the intersection of State Highways 200 and 59 (See Figure 1). The Town's planning area includes the Town of Jordan, the existing lagoons east of town, and the state land northwest of the lagoon and is shown on Figure 2. The existing lagoons are located east of town and the proposed new lagoon cell will be located across Big Dry Creek to the northwest (See Figure 3).

### B. WASTEWATER FLOW PROJECTIONS

The existing wastewater treatment system receives 36,600 gallons per day (gpd) domestic and 900 gpd industrial flows for a total of 37,500 gpd from the town's 366 residents. Average daily design flows for the proposed improvements are 46,530 gpd for the estimated population of 423.

### C. NATURAL FEATURES

Fort Peck Reservoir and Charles M. Russell National Wildlife refuge are located approximately 20 miles north of Jordan. Surface soils are stratified loamy alluvium that is well-drained. Topography within the planning area is rolling with relatively flat slopes trending to the east at approximately 1 to 3%. The elevation of the town varies from 2,580 along Big Dry Creek to 2,640 feet on the northern edge of town.

Average annual precipitation in the area is 11.93 inches, with the wettest months typically being May and June. Historical records show that the average maximum temperature for July is 89.6 degrees Fahrenheit and the average minimum temperature in January is 28.9 degrees Fahrenheit.

## V. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF PROPOSED PROJECT

### A. DIRECT AND INDIRECT INVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

1. Land Use/Prime Farmland – All work will occur within close proximity to the existing lagoon and northeast across Big Dry Creek. The new lift station will be constructed at the existing lagoon site. The force main will be bored under Big Dry Creek. The new evaporation cell will be constructed on State Trust land that the town has leased, with a total footprint of 32 acres of potential prime farmland. In accordance with the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA), the WPCSRF Program completed and submitted the required USDA Farmland Conversion Impact Rating Form AD-1006 to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the 32 acres were determined to not be subject to FPPA.

   Within town limits, land use is predominantly residential with a variety of commercial and industrial businesses located throughout. Land use outside the town limits is primarily open rangeland that supports ranching and farming.

2. Floodplains and Wetlands – The lift station and force main of the proposed project will be in the 100-year floodplain of Dry Creek. The proposed evaporation lagoon cell is outside of the mapped floodplain. A floodplain permit will be required and obtained prior to construction.

   The proposed lift station, force main, and evaporation lagoon cell will be located outside of any jurisdictional wetlands. Connecting the existing lagoon to the new evaporation cell will require crossing Big Dry Creek by jack and bore. A US Army Corps of Engineers 404 Permit may be required if jurisdictional areas are impacted.

3. Cultural Resources and Historical Sites – No impacts to cultural resources are anticipated. A Cultural and Palaeontologic Resource Inventory was conducted in November 2020 by the State Land Trust archeologist. The report determined that the project would have no effect to heritage properties as defined in the Montana State Antiquities Act and no further investigative work was required.

4. Fish and Wildlife – Animal life will not be significantly affected by the proposed project. The project is located within general sage grouse habitat and the town will pay a fee for area to be disturbed to meet the conservation requirements set by the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program. The US Fish and Wildlife Service (US FWS) does not anticipate adverse impacts to any federally listed threatened, endangered, candidate or proposed species. The proposed construction will occur on Montana State Land and will remove 32 acres of potential natural habitat. Any habitat temporarily disturbed during construction will be restored to previously existing conditions. Care will be taken during construction to protect water quality and habitat in Big Dry Creek.

5. Water Quality – Big Dry Creek is located within the proposed project area and the sewer force main will be bored underneath it. The contractor will be required to implement best management practices to eliminate sediment transport to surface water. The contractor may need to obtain a construction dewatering discharge permit from the DEQ if groundwater is

encountered in trenches. The proposed improvements will have an overall beneficial impact to water quality by eliminating the current lagoon discharge that has not been meeting its MPDES permit limits, set to preserve and protect water quality.

Big Dry Creek is classified as C-3 water. Waters classified as C-3 are to be maintained suitable for bathing, swimming, recreation, growth and propagation of non-salmonid fishes and associated aquatic life. With Big Dry Creek adjacent to the project, shallow alluvial groundwater is anticipated to be encountered during construction. A plan for controlling stormwater, dewatering, and protecting surface water quality will be required.

6. Air Quality – No long-term impacts to air quality are anticipated. Short-term negative impacts on air quality are expected to occur during construction from heavy equipment in the form of dust and exhaust fumes. Proper construction practices will minimize this problem. Project specifications will require dust control.

7. Public Health – Public health will not be negatively affected by the proposed project. The proposed project will be outside of the town limits and will improve public health by removing the wastewater discharge to Big Dry Creek that is not meeting its MPDES permit limits.

8. Energy –The new lift station will require energy to operate, while the existing lagoon system has no energy costs associated with it. The consumption of energy resources directly associated with construction of the recommended improvements is minimal, unavoidable, and will be short-term.

9. Noise – No long-term impacts from noise should occur. Short-term impacts from excessive noise levels may occur during construction activities. The construction period will be limited to normal daytime hours to avoid early morning or late evening disturbance to area residents.

10. Sludge Disposal – Sludge disposal is not associated with this project.

11. Environmental Justice – Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898: The proposed project will not result in disproportionately high or adverse human health or environmental effects on minority or low-income populations. No disproportionate effects among any portion of the community are expected. Grants and low-interest loans have been pursued to offset impacts to ratepayers.

12. Growth – The projected growth rate was set at 0.5% to provide a conservative estimate of growth and prevent the lagoon from being undersized. However, census data has shown a steady decline in population for the Town of Jordan and Garfield County from 1960. Growth is not anticipated to have an impact on the project.

13. Cumulative Effects – The proposed improvements to the WWTP are not expected to have any cumulative effects. Should any new residential or

cumulative development be proposed in Jordan, there are existing town, county, and state regulations already in place (i.e., zoning regulations, comprehensive planning, subdivision laws, etc.) that control the density and development of property with regards to water supply, sewage disposal, solid waste disposal, transportation, and storm drainage.

14. Wild and Scenic River Act – The proposed project will not impact any rivers designated as wild and scenic by Congress or the Secretary of the Interior.

B. UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE IMPACTS

Short-term construction related impacts (i.e., noise, dust, traffic disruption, etc.) will occur, but should be minimized through proper construction management. Energy consumption during construction cannot be avoided.

## VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The town discussed the proposed project at advertised public meetings on April 22, 2014, and August 6, 2019. At the meetings, the proposed project was explained, including the project's need, scope, budget, schedule, source of funding, and cost impacts to local citizens. These meetings were open to the public. No comments were received.

## VII. AGENCY ACTION, APPLICABLE REGULATIONS AND PERMITTING AUTHORITIES

All proposed improvements will be designed to meet state standards in accordance with Design Standards for Public Sewage Systems (Circular DEQ-2) and will be constructed using standard construction methods. No additional permits will be required from the State Revolving Fund (SRF) section of the DEQ for this project after the review and approval of the submitted plans and specifications. However, coverage under the storm water general discharge permit and a groundwater dewatering discharge permit, will be required from the DEQ Water Protection Bureau prior to the beginning of construction. A Section 404 permit from the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, a 124 Permit from the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and a 318 Authorization from the Department of Environment Quality will be required for any work that impacts surface water and will be obtained if necessary.

## VIII. RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

[ ] EIS [ ] More Detailed EA [ X ] No Further Analysis

Rationale for Recommendation: Through this EA, DEQ has verified that none of the adverse impacts of the proposed Town of Jordan Retention Pond project are significant. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. The environmental review was conducted in accordance with the Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) 17.4.607, 17.4.608, 17.4.609, and 17.4.610. The EA is the appropriate level of analysis because none of the adverse effects of the impacts are significant.

## IX. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

The following documents have been utilized in the environmental review of this project and are part of the project file:

1. Town of Jordan Wastewater Treatment Upgrade, August 2020, prepared by Stahly Engineering & Associates, Inc.

2. Uniform Environmental Checklist; prepared by Stahly Engineering & Associates, Inc.; signed by the Town of Jordan on April 24, 2024.

## X. AGENCIES CONSULTED

The following agencies have been contacted regarding the proposed construction of this project.

1. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was solicited for comments and stated they had no comments on the proposed project.

2. The Montana Historical Society's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) reviewed the proposed project. According to their records, there have been a few previously recorded sites within the designated search locales. SHPO stated that if any structure over 50 years old is to be altered, it is recommended that they be recorded and a determination of their eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places be made. They indicated that as long as there will be no disturbance or alteration to structures over 50 years of age, there is low likelihood cultural property will be impacted. They stated that since the project is located on state lands, the State Lands Archaeologist for their input on concerns. Based on the lack of pervious inventory and ground disturbance required for the project, they recommended a cultural resource inventory be conducted. Should structures need to be altered or if cultural materials are inadvertently discovered during this project, their office must be contacted, and the site investigated.

3. The U.S. Department of the Army Corps of Engineers (USCOE) reviewed the proposed project. The USCOE is responsible for administering Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, which regulates the excavation or placement of dredged or fill material below the ordinary high-water mark of our nation's rivers, streams, lakes or in wetlands. They indicated that based on the information provided, they were unable to determine if regulated activities are proposed or if jurisdictional waters of the U.S. are present within the project area. If the final design includes any placement of fill material in any jurisdictional area, then a Department of the Army (DA) permit will be required.

4. The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) reviewed the proposed project and stated that fish passage to and beyond the site must be maintained, the force main must be bored under the creek instead of trenched, and a 100-foot buffer was recommended between stream banks and the new lagoon cell.

5. The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) reviewed the

proposed project and stated that they had no comments on the proposed project.

6. The State Land archeologist, Patrick Rennie, completed a cultural resources inventory on November 19, 2020, and concluded that proposed developments should result in no effect to heritage properties as defined in the Montana State Antiquities Act. No further archaeological or historical investigation work was recommended.

7. The Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program reviewed the project and determined that habitat would be impacted. A mitigation plan was required to be submitted and the Town of Jordan chose to make a contribution to the stewardship program to meet alternative mitigation requirements since disturbance of habitat could not be avoided. Funds will be encouraged to be applied to the Central Service Area that Jordan is a part of for offsite mitigation efforts.

EA Prepared by:

Travis Dunkle

Travis Dunkle, P.E. — Date: 6/5/25

EA Reviewed by:

Michele Marsh

Michele Marsh, P.E. — Date: 6/6/2025

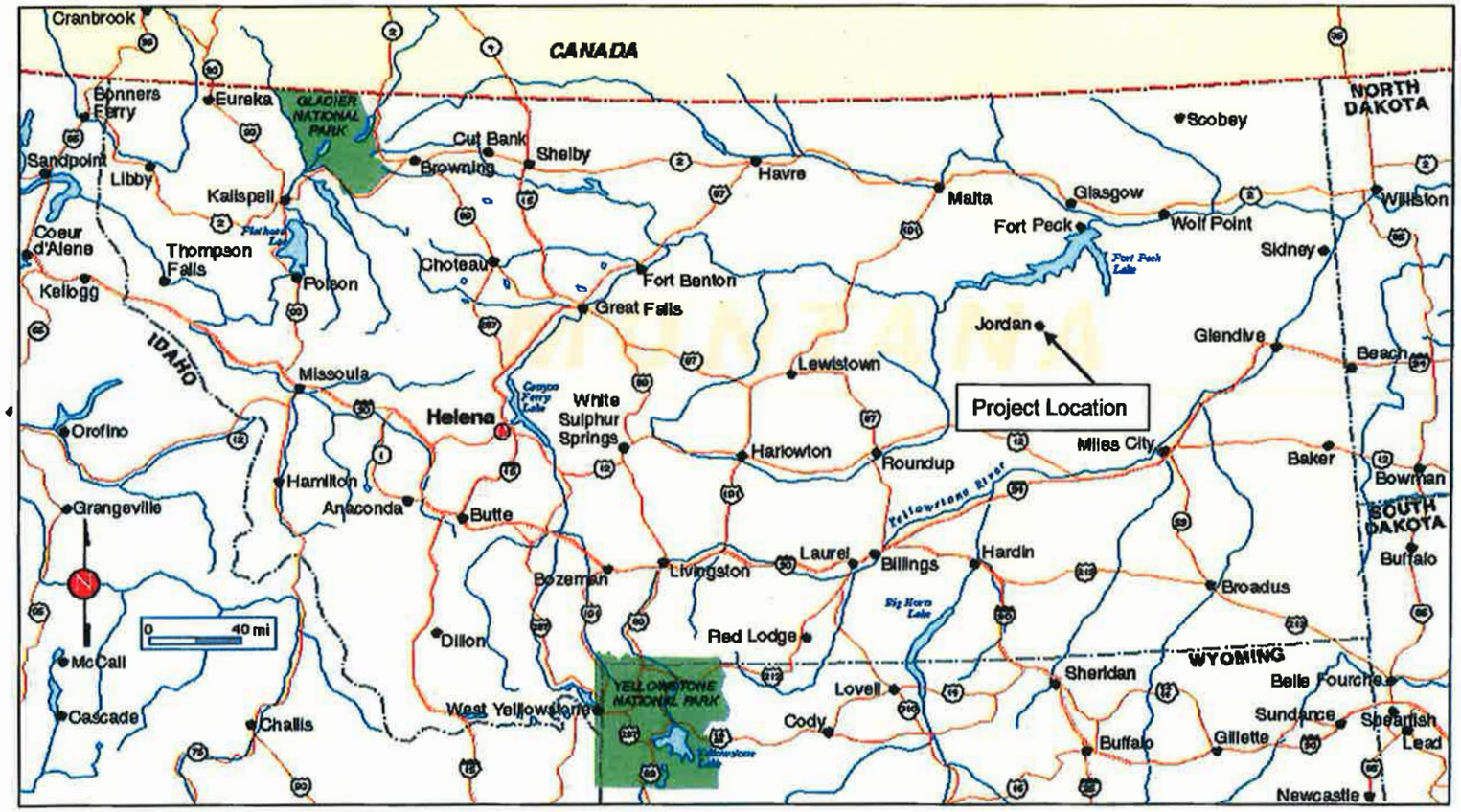



**Figure 1. Site Location Map – Town of Jordan**