

Montana Department of Commerce  
Treasure State Endowment Program  
**Environmental Assessment**

**HIGHLAND ROAD BRIDGE**

**BLAINE COUNTY, MONTANA**

**Proposed Action:** The Highland Road Bridge is a structurally deficient bridge that provides primary access to agricultural and residential users. Blaine County proposes to replace the structure with a new, single-span corrugated box-shaped culvert. The new Highland Road Bridge will: provide a two-lane crossing, increase safety, ensure long-term access, handle legal loading requirements, and maintain waterway adequacy.

**A. Environmental Checklist:**

**DRAFT**

**As the engineer that prepared the preliminary engineering report, I Cole Peebles, PE have reviewed the information presented in this checklist and believe that it accurately identifies the environmental resources in the area and the potential impacts that the project could have on those resources. In addition, the required state and federal agencies were provided with the required information about the project and requested to provide comments on the proposed public facility project. Their comments have been incorporated into and attached to the Preliminary Engineering Report.**

**Engineer's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DRAFT**

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST**

<b>NAME OF PROJECT:</b>	Highland Road Bridge Replacement
<b>PROPOSED ACTION:</b>	Bridge Replacement
<b>LOCATION:</b>	<u>Blaine County</u> , Montana

**Key Letter:**

**N:** No Impact; **B:** Potentially Beneficial; **A:** Potentially Adverse; **P:** Approval/Permits Required; **M:** Mitigation Required

**PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

KEY	1	<b>Soil Suitability, Topographic and/or Geologic Constraints (e.g., soil slump, steep slopes, subsidence, seismic activity)</b>
N		<i>Response and source of information:</i>  USDA, NRCS Soil Maps indicate the soil at the bridge site is classified as Glendive Fine Sandy Loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes. This soil is composed of loams and sandy loams. There are no identified topographical or geological constraints. Prior to construction, a Geotechnical analysis will be undertaken in order to verify the most efficient foundation design based on the in-situ soils in the project vicinity.  - Cole Peebles, P.E. - USDA National Cooperative Soil Survey
KEY	2	<b>Hazardous Facilities (e.g., power lines, EPA hazardous waste sites, acceptable distance from explosive and flammable hazards including chemical/petrochemical storage tanks, underground fuel storage tanks, and related facilities such as natural gas storage facilities &amp; propane storage tanks)</b>
N		<i>Response and source of information:</i>  A file search of the State Hazard Mapping (DEQ) and State Digital Atlas (NRIS) revealed <u>no</u> underground storage tanks, petroleum leak sites, or related facilities in the project vicinity. An overhead power line is located approximately 20 feet upstream of the upstream edge of the existing bridge. According to Triangle Communications, there is a Fiber Optic line buried roughly 70 feet west of the existing bridge. This communications cable is located well outside the anticipated construction envelope. There is a possibility of other underground utilities in the area. Prior to construction, a detailed inspection will be undertaken by contacting a utility location service. If utilities are located within the affected area, they will be relocated or supported/protected during construction. Typically, such work can be completed by the utility company at no cost to the County.  - Cole Peebles, P.E. - Digital Mapping Index, Montana DEQ - Bruce Kudrna, Triangle Communications - Construction Engineering Division

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KEY	<b>3</b>	<b>Effects of Project on Surrounding Air Quality or Any Kind of Effects of Existing Air Quality on Project (e.g., dust, odors, emissions)</b>
<b>N</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The only impacts on air quality may be temporary dust during construction. Reasonable efforts will be taken during construction to minimize these temporary impacts.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>
KEY	<b>4</b>	<b>Groundwater Resources &amp; Aquifers (e.g., quantity, quality, distribution, depth to groundwater, sole source aquifers)</b>
<b>N</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>Given the nature of the construction activities, the proposed project should not have any impact on groundwater resources and aquifers. Based on a preliminary review of site information, the local groundwater table is anticipated to lie sufficiently below the excavation envelope for the project.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>
KEY	<b>5</b>	<b>Surface Water/Water Quality, Quantity &amp; Distribution (e.g., streams, lakes, storm runoff, irrigation systems, canals)</b>
<b>P</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>Some temporary adverse effects to water quality are typical during bridge construction. The Fort Belknap Canal has no significant native fish populations. According to Cody Nagel, local FWP field biologist, the proposed project is not anticipated to present any immediate threats to the local aquatic communities. The preferred alternative for this structure is a single-span box-shaped culvert with a cast-in-place concrete foundation. Typically, the Canal runs from May 1<sup>st</sup> to September 15<sup>th</sup> (occasionally until Sept. 30<sup>th</sup>). Blaine County intends to coordinate the proposed project with the Fort Belknap Canal Company (FBCC) such that much of the work can be implemented in the dry. As such, the project is not anticipated to have significant impacts on water quality or the canal bed. The new structure will be installed in the approximate location of the existing bridge. Best Management Practices (BMP's) will be utilized during construction to minimize adverse impacts to water quality.</p> <p>The existing crossing will be closed in the vicinity of the structure during construction. In order to convey local traffic and facilitate construction activities, Yantic Road (located north and east of the existing structure) will be utilized as a detour. The detour route is approximately 7.6 miles long.</p> <p>All necessary stream permits will be acquired prior to construction, and the contractor will be required to abide by the conditions set forth by these permits.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.  - Cody Nagel, FWP  - Dennis Kleinjan, Fort Belknap Canal Company</p>

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KEY	<b>6</b>	<b>Floodplains &amp; Floodplain Management (Identify any floodplains within one mile of the boundary of the project.)</b>
<b>P</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The bridge is located in approximate Zone A Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) floodplain. As the proposed bridge replacement is located within a designated floodplain, a County Floodplain Development Permit will be required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</li> <li>- Robert Neihart, P.E., CFM, Blaine County Floodplain Administrator</li> <li>- John Connors, P.E. CFM, DNRC</li> <li>- FEMA Community Panel 30005C1325E</li> </ul>
KEY	<b>7</b>	<b>Wetlands Protection (Identify any wetlands within one mile of the boundary of the project.)</b>
<b>N</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>Based on information collected from site visits and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Survey National Wetlands Inventory, there do not appear to be any wetlands areas that will be affected by the proposed bridge replacement project. The nearest catalogued wetland zones consist of be riverine and freshwater emergent systems associated with the Milk River. These wetlands are located at least 700 feet from the proposed construction envelope. Therefore, the proposed project should not impact any wetland areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</li> <li>- USFWS National Wetlands Inventory</li> </ul>
KEY	<b>8</b>	<b>Agricultural Lands, Production, &amp; Farmland Protection (e.g., grazing, forestry, cropland, prime or unique agricultural lands) (Identify any prime or important farm ground or forest lands within one mile of the boundary of the project.)</b>
<b>B</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The Highland Road Bridge over the Fort Belknap Canal is located in a rural area surrounded primarily undeveloped agricultural properties. Preliminary investigations indicate that the surrounding lands are designated as Farmlands of Statewide Importance (NRCS Soils Map). Tilled farmlands are located on all four corners of the existing bridge and at their nearest occur 70 feet to the northwest of the bridge. The predominant crop in this area is wheat with interspersed pulse crops (peas, beans, and lentils). As the structure replacement will likely be located within the 60-foot County easement, which is not tillable land, no negative impacts are anticipated. No forest lands exist within one mile of the project. If the bridge is not improved and becomes closed, agricultural operations would be forced to detour to different roadways in order to access their farms, agricultural interests, and grazing pasture. A new structure will ensure access to the area for 75 to 100 years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</li> <li>- USDA, NRCS Soil Survey</li> </ul>

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KEY	<b>9</b> <b>Vegetation &amp; Wildlife Species &amp; Habitats, Including Fish and Sage Grouse (e.g., terrestrial, avian and aquatic life and habitats)</b>
<b>P</b>	<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The proposed project is not expected to have any permanent effects on vegetation and wildlife. Any construction effects on plant species will be re-seeded to promote re-vegetation and reduce erosion.</p> <p>A database search conducted using the Montana Natural Heritage Program website and by the USFWS found eight possible species of special concern in the area: Hoary Bat, Little Brown Myotis, Sprague's Pipit, Black-footed Ferret, Pallid Sturgeon, Bald Eagle, and Golden Eagle (as well as other migratory birds). However, Jodi Bush of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service notes that <i>"Given the limited scope, location, and nature of the project... we do not anticipate adverse effects to threatened, endangered, or candidate species to result..."</i> Local FWP Fisheries Biologist in the area, Cody Nagel, has indicated that he has no immediate concerns regarding project impacts to fisheries.</p> <p>Based on a review of the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program (MSGHCP) Mapper (<a href="https://sagegrouse.mt.gov/projects">https://sagegrouse.mt.gov/projects</a>), the proposed project is mapped as being in an area of General Sage Grouse Habitat. Figure 5 and general guidance from the Montana Natural Heritage Program's Predictable Suitable Habitat Model for Sage Grouse, indicate that the proposed project location is in a location mapped as having low suitability for Sage Grouse Habitat.</p> <p>Following the award of TSEP grant funds, and within 12 months of the proposed construction date, the County will consult with the MSGHCP regarding the work. As necessary, a permit application will be submitted for MSGHCP review. Depending on the outcome of the permit application, some form of mitigation may be required in order to implement the project.</p> <p>According to the Montana Field Guide, the Greater Sage Grouse's Courtship season starts in early March and persists to into May. Typically, Sage hens prefer to nest on sagebrush covered benches from June to July. When forbs on bench habitats begin to dry, Sage Grouse tend to migrate to alfalfa fields or greasewood bottoms. Where feasible, construction activities will be coordinated such that disruptive and/or destructive impacts to Sage Grouse can be avoided. Where avoidance is not feasible, best management practices will be implemented in order to minimize impacts and reasonable efforts will be made to restore damages. As such, Sage Grouse are not anticipated to be adversely affected by this work. The need for compensatory mitigation is not anticipated as a result of the relatively small footprint (less than half an acre) of the proposed project.</p> <p>The Fort Belknap Canal does not support significant aquatic or wildlife populations. No specific fish window for in-stream construction has been identified by permitting agencies. All necessary stream permits will be acquired prior to construction, and the Contractor will be required to adhere to all guidelines outlined in these documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</li> <li>- Cody Nagel, FWP</li> <li>- Jodi Bush, USFWS</li> <li>- Montana Natural Heritage Program</li> <li>- Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program</li> </ul>

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KEY	<b>10</b>	<b>Unique, Endangered, Fragile, or Limited Environmental Resources, Including Endangered Species (e.g., plants, fish or wildlife)</b>
<b>P</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>A database search conducted using the Montana Natural Heritage Program website and by the USFWS found eight possible species of special concern in the area: Hoary Bat, Little Brown Myotis, Sprague's Pipit, Black-Footed Ferret, Pallid Sturgeon, Bald Eagle, and Golden Eagle (as well as other migratory birds).</p> <p>The USFWS believes that adverse impacts to any species of concern are unlikely due to the limited construction extents.</p> <p>Local FWP Fisheries Biologist in the area, Cody Nagel, has indicated that he has no immediate concerns about the replacement project regarding impact to fisheries.</p> <p>All necessary stream permits will be acquired prior to construction, and the Contractor will be required to adhere to all guidelines outlined in these documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</li> <li>- Cody Nagel, FWP</li> <li>- Jodi Bush, USFWS</li> <li>- Montana Natural Heritage Program</li> </ul>
KEY	<b>11</b>	<b>Unique Natural Features (e.g., geologic features)</b>
<b>N</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>There are no unique, natural features located in the vicinity of the proposed project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</li> </ul>
KEY	<b>12</b>	<b>Access to, and Quality of, Recreational &amp; Wilderness Activities, Public Lands and Waterways and Public Open Space</b>
<b>B</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The Highland Road Bridge serves approximately 100 vehicles per day including access to private homes, agricultural properties, and the Fort Belknap Canal. Closure of the bridge would have significant impacts to agricultural, irrigation district, and residential access as well as access to (and quality of experience of) public lands. The bridge also lies in hunting district 600, which affords hunters opportunities to pursue multiple species of game including elk, deer and antelope. The new structure would ensure access to the area for 75 to 100 years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</li> </ul>

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<b>HUMAN POPULATION</b>		
KEY	<b>1</b>	<b>Visual Quality – Coherence, Diversity, Compatibility of Use and Scale, Aesthetics</b>
<b>N</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The project is not anticipated to adversely impact the visual quality of the area.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>
KEY	<b>2</b>	<b>Nuisances (e.g., glare, fumes)</b>
<b>N</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The proposed project may cause temporary nuisances such as noise and exhaust fumes from construction equipment, and traffic detours will be necessary while the bridge is under construction. However, no long term impacts have been identified, and efforts will be made to minimize nuisances and address specific problems as they occur.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>
KEY	<b>3</b>	<b>Noise - suitable separation between noise sensitive activities (such as residential areas) and major noise sources (aircraft, highways &amp; railroads).</b>
<b>N</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>Nearby residences may be temporarily affected by noise from the construction of this bridge. However, as the bridge is not intended to increase use of the Highland Road, no additional noise sources are anticipated.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>
KEY	<b>4</b>	<b>Historic Properties, Cultural, and Archaeological Resources</b>
<b>N</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>As a general rule, all bridges that are 50 years or older are considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The Highland Road Bridge is a steel beam stringer bridge with a timber deck and wooden abutments on timber piling. It was constructed in 1933 and is approximately 83 years old. The County has been doing periodic deck replacements since the structure was built. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) requested that Blaine County consult with MDT in order to make a determination of the bridge's eligibility for National Register Listing. According to MDT Historian, Jon Axline, the bridge does <u>not</u> meet the criteria for the National Register of Historic Places, therefore the need for mitigation is not anticipated to be necessary. No other culturally significant sites are located in the immediate project area.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.  - Jon Axline, MDT Historian  - Damon Murdo, State Historical Preservation Office</p>

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<b>KEY</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Changes in Demographic (population) Characteristics (e.g., quantity, distribution, density)</b>
<b>N</b>		<i>Response and source of information:</i>
		<p>The proposed project is not anticipated to affect any changes in demographics to the area. The proposed replacement will be capable of safely supporting legal loads including agricultural loads, bus, and delivery truck traffic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</li> <li>- Jeremy Fadness, Blaine County Planner</li> </ul>
<b>KEY</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>General Housing Conditions - Quality, Quantity, Affordability</b>
<b>B</b>		<i>Response and source of information:</i>
		<p>The Highland Road Bridge provides primary access to several residences and agricultural operations in adjacent properties. The proposed project will allow residents and ranch/farm owners to continue to have the most direct access to their properties. If the bridge is not improved and becomes closed, residents would be forced to detour to different roadways in order to access their homes and properties. A new structure will ensure access to the area for 75 to 100 years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</li> </ul>
<b>KEY</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Displacement or Relocation of Businesses or Residents</b>
<b>B</b>		<i>Response and source of information:</i>
		<p>The proposed project will allow residents and agricultural property owners to continue to have the most direct access to their properties. If the bridge is not improved and closes, residents and agricultural operations would be unable to use the most convenient access to their homes and properties. This would cause hardship for the local farming community, especially during the harvest season. Depending on the direction of a travel, the detour route would add up to 7.6 additional miles for those accessing areas beyond the bridge. A new structure will ensure access to the area for 75 to 100 years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</li> <li>- Dirk Drugge, Blaine County Road Supervisor</li> <li>- Dennis Kleinjan, Fort Belknap Canal Company</li> </ul>

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<b>KEY</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Public Health and Safety</b>
<b>B</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>Based on recent bridge inspection(s), the structure is in poor condition, structurally deficient, and should be viewed as a potential threat to public safety. The superstructure, consisting of steel W-flange stringers, is too narrow to meet County Bridge Standards. The bridge substructure is in poor condition, with cracks, rot, and signs of crushing. Many of the existing abutment piles contain dry rot and decay. The existing timber backwalls are untreated and are showing signs of deterioration.</p> <p>The narrowness of the existing bridge is another safety concern. The existing bridge provides a useable width of 19-feet, which is too narrow to safely handle two-way travel. The new structure should be designed with a minimum useable width of 24-feet (wider if technically feasible to support passage of large farm equipment).</p> <p>The current bridge rail configuration is not crash tested. It consists of timber railing with timber posts which are in poor condition. Several instances of damage have been noted by the County Road Department staff as a result of the passage of large agricultural equipment. Many of the timber posts exhibit decay, which has led to flimsy and loose rail. In its current condition, the bridge rail likely provides minimal protection to stray vehicles that impact the rail. Adequate clear zones or bridge rail and guardrail terminal end sections should be incorporated with the upgraded structure as required by the County Bridge Standards.</p> <p>The existing bridge should be replaced with a new structure that can adequately handle legal loads, remedy the existing structural concerns, and provide width for two-way travel. A new crossing would eliminate all structural deficiencies and provide a useful life of 75 to 100 years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</li> <li>- MDT Bridge Inspection Report</li> <li>- GWE Bridge Inspection Report</li> </ul>
<b>KEY</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Lead Based Paint and/or Asbestos</b>
<b>M</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>There is no known lead based paint or asbestos at this site. However, recent requirements from Montana DEQ require an inspection for asbestos (performed by an accredited inspector) prior to any demolition taking place. This inspection may be waived depending on the type of the bridge structure and its components.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</li> </ul>
<b>KEY</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>Local Employment &amp; Income Patterns – Quantity and Distribution of Employment, Economic Impact</b>
<b>N</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The proposed structure replacement should not create any significant effects on local employment and income patterns. A new structure will ensure access to the area for 75 to 100 years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</li> </ul>

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KEY	<b>11</b>	<b>Local &amp; State Tax Base &amp; Revenues</b>
<b>N</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The proposed project should have no impact on local and state tax base and revenues.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>
KEY	<b>12</b>	<b>Educational Facilities - Schools, Colleges, Universities</b>
<b>B</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>According to the Chinook Public School District, the bridge is currently located on a designated school bus route. Additionally, parents utilize the road to transfer children to and from the Chinook School District. Therefore, the schools would benefit from the proposed bridge replacement project.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E. - Darin Hannum, Superintendent Chinook Public Schools</p>
KEY	<b>13</b>	<b>Commercial and Industrial Facilities - Production &amp; Activity, Growth or Decline</b>
<b>B</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>A new bridge will allow oversized vehicles and wide, heavy equipment to cross the structure providing access for local ranchers and farmers.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>
KEY	<b>14</b>	<b>Health Care – Medical Services</b>
<b>B</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The Highland Road Bridge provides primary access to several residences and agricultural operations. If the bridge is not improved and becomes closed, medical, fire, and law enforcement personnel would be forced to travel longer distances to reach residents north of the bridge. A new structure will ensure access to the area for 75 to 100 years.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>
KEY	<b>15</b>	<b>Social Services – Governmental Services (e.g., demand on)</b>
<b>B</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The Highland Road Bridge provides primary access to several residences and adjacent properties. If the bridge is not improved and becomes closed, services such as the United States Postal Service would be forced to detour to different roads in order to deliver mail to homeowners. A new structure will ensure access to the area and access to government services for 75 to 100 years. No additional demand on government services is anticipated as a result of the bridge replacement.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E. - Ruth Hawley, Chinook USPS Office</p>

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KEY	<b>16</b>	<b>Social Structures &amp; Mores (Standards of Social Conduct/Social Conventions)</b>
<b>N</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The proposed project should not have any impact on social structures and mores.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>
KEY	<b>17</b>	<b>Land Use Compatibility (e.g., growth, land use change, development activity, adjacent land uses and potential conflicts)</b>
<b>B</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The Highland Road Bridge provides primary access to numerous residences and agricultural operations. The proposed project will allow residents and business owners (including ranchers and farmers) to continue to have the most direct access to their properties. If the bridge is not improved and becomes closed, residents would be forced to detour to different roads for access. A new structure will ensure access to the area for 75 to 100 years. Jeremy Fadness, Blaine County Planner, has stated that the project area is not anticipated to experience changes in population growth and is not located within specifically identified growth areas.</p> <p>According to the County Planner, the proposed bridge replacement fits the goals of the Blaine County Growth Policy. Specifically, Goal #1 for Community Infrastructure developments states that Blaine County shall maintain existing roads and work to reduce maintenance and operations costs via strategic bridge replacements, which seek out potential funding partnerships.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E. - Jeremy Fadness, Blaine County Planner</p>
KEY	<b>18</b>	<b>Energy Resources - Consumption and Conservation</b>
<b>B</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The proposed project will ensure that the current, most direct routes utilized by local residents and agricultural traffic will continue to be available. If the bridge were to close, travelers would be forced to utilize alternate routes. As a result, more fuel will likely be consumed by taking longer alternate routes.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>
KEY	<b>19</b>	<b>Solid Waste Management</b>
<b>B</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The proposed project will ensure that current routes utilized by local residents and business traffic will continue to be available. A new structure will ensure access to the area for 75 to 100 years.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>

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KEY	<b>20</b>	<b>Wastewater Treatment - Sewage System</b>
<b>N</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>Not applicable to this project.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>
KEY	<b>21</b>	<b>Storm Water – Surface Drainage</b>
<b>N</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The proposed bridge design, including the new roadway design, will take BMP's into account. Where practicable, the new crossing will incorporate features to direct storm water (which may contain sediment, salt, or other contaminants) away from State Waters.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E. - Bonnie Lovelace, MDEQ Regulatory Affairs Manager</p>
KEY	<b>22</b>	<b>Community Water Supply</b>
<b>N</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>Not applicable to this project.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>
KEY	<b>23</b>	<b>Public Safety – Police</b>
<b>B</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The Highland Road Bridge provides primary access to several residences, agricultural operations and adjacent properties. County DES Manager, Haley Gustitis has expressed concerns with delayed emergency response times if the bridge is not improved and becomes closed. Medical, fire, and law enforcement personnel would be forced to travel longer distances to reach residents opposite the bridge. A new structure will ensure access to the area for 75 to 100 years.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E. - Haley Gustitis, Blaine County Disaster and Emergency Services</p>
KEY	<b>24</b>	<b>Fire Protection – Hazards</b>
<b>B</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>If the bridge is not improved, firefighting personnel and equipment may be forced to travel longer distances to reach property north of the crossing. A new structure will ensure access to the area for 75 to 100 years.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>

<b>Key Letter:</b>		
<b>N:</b> No Impact; <b>B:</b> Potentially Beneficial; <b>A:</b> Potentially Adverse; <b>P:</b> Approval/Permits Required; <b>M:</b> Mitigation Required		
KEY	<b>25</b>	<b>Emergency Medical Services</b>
<b>B</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The Highland Road Bridge provides primary access to several residences in adjacent properties. County Ambulance Co-Chiefs, Laurie Huestis and Jim Doyle have expressed concerns with delayed medical response times if the bridge is not improved and becomes closed. Medical and fire personnel would be forced to travel longer distances in order to reach residents north of the bridge. A new structure will ensure access to the area for 75 to 100 years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</li> <li>- Laurie Huestis and Jim Doyle, Blaine County Ambulance Co-Crew Chiefs</li> </ul>
KEY	<b>26</b>	<b>Parks, Playgrounds, &amp; Open Space</b>
<b>N</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>No adverse effects to parks, playgrounds, and open space are anticipated at this time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</li> </ul>
KEY	<b>27</b>	<b>Cultural Facilities, Cultural Uniqueness &amp; Diversity</b>
<b>N</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>As a general rule, all bridges that are 50 years or older are considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The Highland Road Bridge is a steel beam stringer bridge with a timber deck and wooden abutments on timber piling. It was constructed in 1933 and is approximately 83 years old. The County has been doing periodic deck replacements since the structure was built. According to MDT Historian, Jon Axline, the bridge does <u>not</u> meet the criteria for the National Register of Historic Places, therefore the need for mitigation is not anticipated to be necessary. No other culturally significant sites are located in the immediate project area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</li> <li>- Jon Axline, MDT Historian</li> </ul>
KEY	<b>28</b>	<b>Transportation Networks and Traffic Flow Conflicts (e.g., rail; auto including local traffic; airport runway clear zones - avoidance of incompatible land use in airport runway clear zones)</b>
<b>B</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The proposed project is not anticipated to adversely affect current transportation networks and traffic flow conflicts. A new structure will increase the efficiency of the local transportation network, by ensuring that the structure is kept open and continues to offer the most direct access.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</li> </ul>

<b>Key Letter:</b>		
<b>N:</b> No Impact; <b>B:</b> Potentially Beneficial; <b>A:</b> Potentially Adverse; <b>P:</b> Approval/Permits Required; <b>M:</b> Mitigation Required		
KEY	<b>29</b>	<b>Consistency with Local Ordinances, Resolutions, or Plans (e.g., conformance with local comprehensive plans, zoning, or capital improvement plans)</b>
<b>B</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The project is in accordance with the recommendations and priorities set forth in the Blaine County Bridge Evaluation &amp; Bridge Capital Improvements Plan. The existing bridge does not comply with the current standards. According to the County Planner, the proposed bridge replacement fits the goals of the Blaine County Growth Policy. Specifically, Goal #1 for Community Infrastructure developments states that Blaine County shall maintain existing roads and work to reduce maintenance and operations costs via strategic bridge replacements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</li> <li>- Jeremy Fadness, Blaine County Planner</li> <li>- 2016 Blaine County Bridge Evaluation and Capital Improvement Plan</li> </ul>
KEY	<b>30</b>	<b>Is there a Regulatory Action on Private Property Rights as a Result of this Project? (Consider options that reduce, minimize, or eliminate the regulation of private property rights.)</b>
<b>N</b>		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>There proposed project should not have any impact on private property rights.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</li> </ul>

**DRAFT**

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW FORM**

**Answer the following as they apply to your proposed project:**

1. **Alternatives:** Describe reasonable alternatives to the project.

Several bridge alternatives were explored including; no action, repair/rehabilitation, and replacement options. As the original structure requires either complete replacement (or salvage) of the existing steel stringers and timber deck, and significant work to replace the deteriorated substructure, it is in the best interest of the County to replace the bridge rather than conduct repairs (or perform rehabilitation). A new structure would have a useful life of 75 to 100 years and require a substantially less amount of maintenance. A single-span corrugated metal box-shaped culvert with concrete footings was found to be the most technically and economically feasible bridge replacement option. Wide clear zones may be provided for this option in-lieu-of crash railing. The selected alternative will provide a number of benefits, specifically: ease of maintenance, increased width for two-way travel and equipment passage, increased load handling, and enhanced public safety.

2. **Mitigation:** Identify any enforceable measures necessary to reduce any impacts to an insignificant level.

Contract documents will require contractors to follow the requirements of any stream permits issued to perform the work. Contract documents for construction will require contractors to follow the requirements of the permits, any specified construction window, necessary utility location and adhere to Best Management Practices (BMP's) during construction. The Montana DEQ requires an asbestos inspection be performed by an accredited inspector prior to bridge component demolition/removal. The DEQ may exercise its right to waive the asbestos inspection requirement depending on the type of bridge structure and its components.

3. **Is an EA or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) required?** Describe whether or not an EA or EIS is required, and explain in detail why or why not.

Based on our analysis, the EA is an adequate level of environmental review. An EIS is not required.

4. **Public Involvement:** Describe the process followed to involve the public in the proposed project and its potential environmental impacts. Identify the public meetings -- where and when -- the project was considered and discussed, and when the applicant approved the final environmental assessment.

The public was provided opportunities for comment prior to the project being submitted for grant funding. Bridge alternatives were discussed during a regularly scheduled County Commissioners Meeting on March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Also, a public hearing was held on Tuesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016. Written comments were also accepted until 1 p.m. on March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2016. Notices advertising the availability of the draft Environmental Assessment and Public Hearing were published in the Blaine County Journal on March 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of 2016. There have been several letters of support, but to date, no written or verbal negative comments from the general public concerning the project. The Blaine County Commission determined whether (or not) to adopt the EA immediately following the Public Hearing on March 22<sup>nd</sup>.

5. **Person(s) Responsible for Preparing:** Identify the person(s) responsible for preparation of this checklist.

Cole Peebles, P.E. – Great West Engineering

6. **Other Agencies:** List any state, local, or federal agencies that have over-lapping or additional jurisdiction or environmental review responsibility for the proposed action and the permits, licenses, and other authorizations required; and list any agencies or groups that were contacted or contributed information to this Environmental Assessment (EA).

Other Agencies:

- Blaine County
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service
- Army Corps of Engineers
- Montana Department of Environmental Quality
- Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program

Contributors to EA:

- Blaine County
- MT Department of Transportation
- MT Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
- State Historic Preservation Office
- Montana Natural Heritage Program
- Blaine County Ambulance Department
- Blaine County Disaster Emergency Services
- Triangle Communications
- Fort Belknap Canal Company
- United States Postal Service
- Chinook Public Schools

\_\_\_\_\_  
Authorized Representative Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Blaine County Commission

Frank DePriest – Commission Chair