CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Twin Bridges Water and Sewer Main Navigable River Easement
Proposed Implementation Date:	Summer 2027
Proponent:	Town of Twin Bridges, Montana
Location:	SW1/4 NW1/4 Section 27, Township 3 South, Range 6 West (Public Land Trust-Beaverhead Riverbed)
County:	Madison

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The Town of Twin Bridges has applied for two Navigable Waters Utility Right-of-Way Easements to install a new public water main and a sewer main under a navigable portion of the Beaverhead River.

The proposal consists of a new public water main extension to serve the McCallie School campus located west of the Beaverhead River. The water main will connect to the Town of Twin Bridges' existing public water system on the east side of the river via a connection point near the west end of West 8th Avenue. The HDD installation will include placement of a 10-inch HDPE water main pipe beneath the riverbed. The water main will encumber an area that is 86.80 feet long by 20 feet wide for 0.04 acres more or less.

The purpose of the new sewer force main is to serve the McCallie School campus located west of the Beaverhead River. The force main will discharge to the Town of Twin Bridges' existing gravity sewer system on the east side of the river. The HDD bore for the forced sewer main consists of a 2-inch high-density polyethylene (HDPE) sanitary sewer force main installed within a 10-inch HDPE sleeve beneath the Beaverhead River. The sleeve will be installed using horizontal directional drilling(HDD) to avoid disturbance to the active channel and banks. The sewer main will encumber an area that is 72.28 feet long by 20 feet wide for 0.03 acres more or less.

Temporary surface disturbance will be limited to upland drill entry and exit areas located outside the streambanks and outside the ordinary high-water mark. Since this is not land owned by the State of Montana or within its jurisdiction, these disturbances are outside the scope of this analysis. No construction activities, excavation, or placement of materials will occur within the stream channel with the HDD being an exception.

Ownership, operation, and maintenance of the public sewer improvements will be of and by the Town of Twin Bridges. Total acres encumbered by these river crossings is 0.07 acres.

Exhibits:

- Exhibit A: Vicinity Map
- Exhibit B: Aerial Photo with Project Area Indicated
- Exhibit C: Site Photos

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

This is a project occurring within the town of Twin Bridges and Madison County at the behest of the Town Council of Twin Bridges to provide water and sewer services to the McCallie School campus. The local residents have been informed through the Town of Twin Bridges and Madison County's public process. Regulatory Agencies and entities with authority and jurisdiction over Montana's waterbodies and streams have been informed through the Joint Application for Proposed Work in Montana's Streams, Wetlands, Floodplains, and Other Waterbodies process submitted in June of 2026. No surface lessees exist as this is a navigable river project with no other State Trust Land surface ownership.

Patrick Rennie, MT DNRC Archeologist was consulted for a review 9/3/2026

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

A Joint Application for Proposed Work in Montana's Streams, Wetlands, Floodplains, and Other Waterbodies process was submitted on June 2, 2026, by TD&H Engineering for the proponent.

Approval of the project is contingent on the proponent obtaining all necessary and lawful permits, licenses, and authorizations from the appropriate entities

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Proposed Action Alternative: Recommend to the Montana Board of Land Commissioners to grant approval to the town of Twin Bridges to obtain two utility easements to bore under a navigable portion of the Beaverhead River to install a 10" HDPE casing pipe for effluent and a 10" HDPE pipe for water to provide water and sewer services.

No-Action Alternative: Deny recommending approval to the Montana Land Board to grant the Town of Twin Bridges a utility easement to bore under a navigable portion of the Beaverhead River to provide water and sewer services.

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.

Action Alternative: This alternative would allow installation of two 10" HDPE pipelines under the Beaverhead River using the horizontal directional drilling process. The action would not cause any disturbance within the streambed of the river. No long-term or cumulative effects to soils or geology of the area would be anticipated under this alternative.

No-Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no disturbance of geology or soils along the banks or under the Beaverhead River.

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.

Action Alternative: This alternative would allow installation of two 10" HDPE pipelines under the Beaverhead River using the horizontal directional drilling process. The action would not cause any disturbance within the high-water mark of the river. No long term or cumulative effects to water quality, quantity and distribution would occur.

No-Action Alternative: Under this alternative no disturbance of the Beaverhead River will occur and there will be no changes to water quality or quantity.

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.

Neither of the proposed alternatives would have long term or cumulative effects on air quality. The action alternative could cause a small increase in air particulates during the boring and installation of the water and sewer pipes.

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.

Action Alternative: Some minor disturbance of the riverbank vegetation could occur under this alternative. This disturbance is not on State Trust land or not within DNRC authority and is outside the scope of this analysis. Still, the disturbance is anticipated to be very minor. No long-term or cumulative impacts to the Beaverhead River vegetation are anticipated.

No-Action Alternative: No vegetation disturbance would occur under this alternative.

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.

Action Alternative: The Beaverhead River corridor is used by a large variety of wildlife, birds, and fish. The disturbance caused by the installation of the two pipes would be small, and any disturbance will be for a short duration of time. Long term or cumulative impacts to terrestrial, avian, and aquatic life or their habitat would not be anticipated from this alternative.

No-Action Alternative: Under this alternative no impacts to terrestrial, avian, or aquatic life or their habitats would occur.

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.

Action Alternative: The Big Hole River and portions of the Beaverhead River near Twin Bridges have documented use by Arctic grayling, a sensitive species and species of concern. This alternative, however, should not have any negative impacts on the river or fish habitat. These river crossings are immediately adjacent to or within the town of Twin Bridges and are not considered critical habitat for any other sensitive species or species of concern. No long-term or cumulative impacts would occur under this alternative.

No-Action Alternative: Under this alternative no impacts to sensitive or endangered species would occur.

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

Neither of the proposed alternatives will impact historical or archeological sites. DNRC Archeologist, Patrick Rennie, was contacted on September 3, 2026. No historical or archeological sites were identified in this area of analysis.

A Class I (literature review) level review was conducted by the DNRC staff archaeologist for the area of potential effect (APE). This entailed inspection of project maps, DNRC's sites/site leads database, land use records, General Land Office Survey Plats, and control cards. The Class I search revealed that no

cultural or paleontological resources have been identified in the APE. Because the area of potential effect on state land is restricted to the bed of the Beaverhead River, no additional archaeological investigative work will be conducted in response to this proposed development. However, if previously unknown cultural or paleontological materials are identified during project related activities, all work will cease until a professional assessment of such resources can be made.

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.

Action Alternative: The installation of new underground pipe casings will not affect the aesthetics of the Beaverhead River or the Town of Twin Bridges.

No-Action Alternative: Under this alternative no changes to aesthetics would occur.

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.

Neither of the proposed alternatives would negatively impact demands on environmental resources of water, air, or energy in the Twin Bridges community.

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.

The MT DNRC is unaware of any new, relevant environmental documents pertinent to the immediate area in Twin Bridges, MT, on this specific stretch of the Beaverhead River.

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.

Minor, mitigatable health or safety risks are posed by the proposed project. Expected work-related risk associated with heavy equipment use (horizontal directional drill) would occur during the installation phase. Also, construction work along municipal streets will require proper signage and traffic management. Locating any other buried, underground utilities would be the responsibility of the proponent to avoid these utilities during installation.

The no-action alternative will have no impact on human health or safety in the Twin Bridges community.

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

There is a water gauging station on the east bank adjacent to the southern crossing for the sewer main. The proponent is required to notify the operator/authority for the station and to coordinate the installation of the utility with the operation of the gauging station.

Action Alternative: Installing the water and sewer infrastructure pipelines under the riverbed will provide

service to the McCallie School campus and perhaps additional customers in the future.

No-Action Alternative: This alternative would not allow the installation of new water and sewer infrastructure to provide service to the McCallie School campus and perhaps additional customers in the future.

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.

No or minimal impacts to the quantity and distribution of employment in the Twin Bridges community are anticipated from either alternative.

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.

No or minimal impacts to the local and state tax base in the Twin Bridges community or Montana are anticipated from either alternative.

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.

No or minimal impacts to the demand for government services in the Twin Bridges community are anticipated from either alternative.

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.

Neither of the proposed alternatives would negatively impact any locally adopted environmental plans or goals.

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.

Neither of the proposed alternatives will negatively impact access to public lands or the quality of recreational and wilderness activities in the Twin Bridges area.

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.

Minimal impacts to the density and distribution of population and housing in the Twin Bridges community are anticipated from either alternative.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:
Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Action Alternative: This alternative is expected to have a positive impact to social structures by providing services to new customers in the area.

No-Action Alternative: This alternative would not impact current social and traditional structures and mores in the area.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:
How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

Action Alternative: This alternative is expected to have a small, positive impact to cultural uniqueness and diversity by providing service to new customers in the area, especially regarding McCallie School Campus.

No-Action Alternative: This alternative would not impact current social and traditional structures and mores in the area.

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.

Action Alternative: The State of Montana Public Land Trust would benefit by receiving a one-time fee for the easement. The fee for the easement is based on surrounding land values (surface land values are divided in half for riverbed values) on a square feet basis and will be determined by the Real Estate Management Bureau.

- 20-foot-wide Water Main $8,350 (1,736 sq. ft. x $4.81/sq. ft.)
- 20-foot-wide Sewer Main $6,953 (1,446 sq. ft. x $4.81/sq. ft)

Totals: 3,182 square feet or 0.07 acres for $15,303 to the Public Land Trust

Important water and sewer services would be provided to a new area in the Twin Bridges.

No-Action Alternative: This alternative would not generate any income for the Public Land Trust nor this alternative would allow the installation of water and sewer infrastructure under the Beaverhead River**.**

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:**	Andy Burgoyne	**Date:**	October 20, 2026
	Title:	Trust Land Program Manager- Central Land Office		

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Two Alternatives presented and analyzed in the EAC.

- Action Alternative: Recommend to the Montana Board of Land Commissioners to grant approval to the town of Twin Bridges to obtain two utility easements to bore under a navigable portion of the Beaverhead River to install a 10” HDPE casing pipe for effluent and a 10” HDPE pipe for water to provide water and sewer services.

- No-action alternative. The proposed project would not be recommended to be approved by the Montana Land Board.

On behalf of the DNRC, I have selected the Action Alternative.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

As proposed, the installation of two 10” HDPE pipelines beneath the riverbed of the Beaverhead River will not cause or result in any long-term, cumulative, negative impacts to State Trust Lands in the project area. Mutually, the project will result in benefits to the trust beneficiary and the community of Twin Bridges, MT.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

☐	EIS	☐	More Detailed EA	X	No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:**	Cody Nelson
	Title:	Dillon Unit Manager, MT DNRC
Signature: Cody Nelson	**Date**:	October 20, 2026

Exhibit A-Vicinity Map

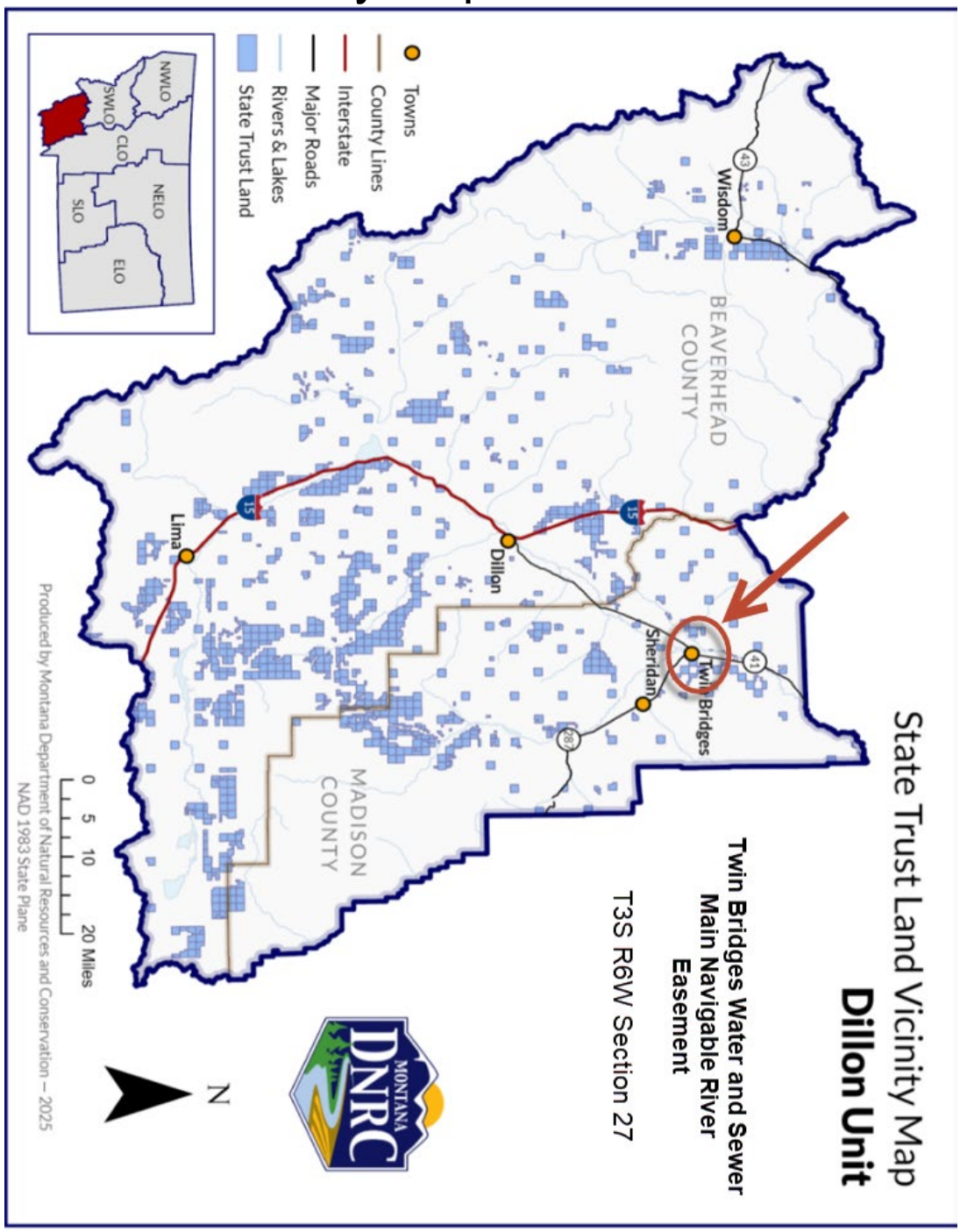


Exhibit B-Aerial Photo of Project Area

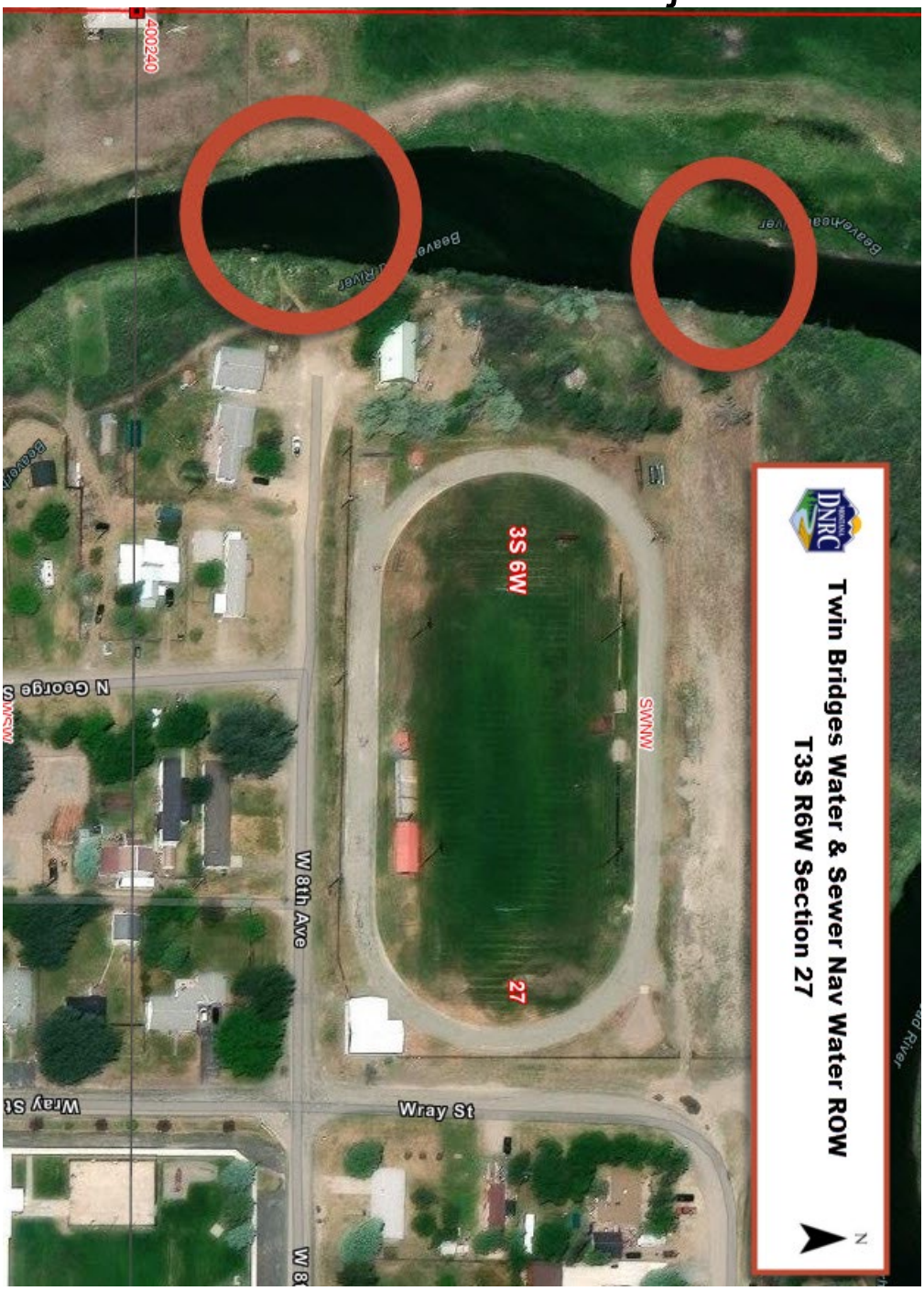


Exhibit C-Photos of Project Area



Southern Crossing-Approximate



Southern Crossing-Approximate



Northern Crossing-Approximate