

## CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

<b>Project Name:</b>	Fleming Bridge Replacement Along Main Boulder Road
<b>Proposed Implementation Date:</b>	August 2025
<b>Proponent:</b>	Sweet Grass County
<b>Location:</b>	NE¼NW¼ of Section 13, Township 5 South, Range 12 East (Public Land Trust Nav Rivers)
<b>County:</b>	Sweet Grass County

### I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The proponent, Sweet Grass County, has applied for an easement for an existing bridge that has been in existence since 1930 that is in poor condition with load restrictions and is beyond repair. They are replacing this bridge with a new bridge adjacent to the existing location and are getting formal easement for the State Ownership now during construction. The proponent is also applying for a Land Use License (309-2500052-.77 ±ACRES) to temporarily occupy a portion of the river adjacent to the easement area to allow for construction. The Fleming Bridge crosses over the Boulder River on Section 13, Township 5 South, Range 12 East.

The proponent is asking for an easement for the new bridge to occupy a +/-0.0229-acre area over the Boulder River.

### II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

No formal public scoping was performed by DNRC for this proposed project.

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

The following permits are required and will be obtained before any work shall commence:

- Stillwater Conservation District - 310 Permit
- Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) – SPA 124 Permit
- Sweet Grass County Floodplain Administrator – Floodplain Permit
- U.S. Army Corp of Engineers – Section 404 Permit, Section 10 Permit
- Montana Department of Environmental Quality – 318 Authorization, 401 Certification

#### 3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

**Proposed Alternative:** Approve the issuance of an easement and land use license to allow Sweet Grass County to replace the Fleming Bridge with a ±0.0229-acre area adjacent to the existing bridge on Section 13 of Township 5 South, Range 12 East.

**No Action Alternative:** Deny the issuance of an easement and land use license to allow Sweet Grass County to replace the Fleming Bridge with a ±0.0229-acre area adjacent to the existing bridge on Section 13 of Township 5 South, Range 12 East.

### 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.*

The proponent is requesting to occupy a ±0.0229-acre area adjacent to the existing bridge on Main Boulder Road. The easement area and project area lay within the Boulder River. Minor channel work will be necessary to tie the new abutments into the existing channel, place riprap and remove the existing piers and wingwalls. The proposed action will utilize the existing bank upstream and downstream to limit additional channel alteration. No significant long-term adverse impacts to geology and soil quality, stability is expected as a result of implementing the proposed alternative

#### 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.*

The proposed easement will allow the proponent to occupy a ±0.0229-acre area adjacent to the existing bridge on Main Boulder Road. The easement area and project area lay within the Boulder River. Minor channel work will be necessary to tie the new abutments into the existing channel, place riprap and remove the existing piers and wingwalls. The proposed action will utilize the existing bank upstream and downstream to limit additional channel alteration. No significant adverse impacts to water quality, quantity or distribution are anticipated by implementing the proposed action.

#### 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.*

There may be short-term isolated impacts in the form of particulate emissions from heavy construction equipment used to clear and construct the new bridge. Due to the relatively short duration of the project and remote location, no significant adverse impacts are anticipated implementing the proposed action.

#### 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.*

The proposed easement will allow the proponent to occupy a ±0.0229-acre area adjacent to the existing bridge on Main Boulder Road. The easement area and project area lay within the Boulder River. No significant long-term adverse impacts to vegetative cover, quantity or quality are expected as a result of implementing the proposed 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.*

A variety of big game (Elk, Grizzly Bear, Deer), small mammals, raptors, songbirds and turkeys may traverse the subject sections. The impact area is adjacent to an established roadway called the Main Boulder Road. There may be temporary displacement of wildlife while the bridge is being constructed, but upon completion the

area will not significantly change or alter. No significant adverse impacts to terrestrial, avian and aquatic life and habitats are expected to occur as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

---

**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.*

A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program database indicated the following species of concern have been observed in the proposed section:

- **Rocky Mountain Cutthroat Trout** (*Oncorhynchus virginalis*), **Harlequin Duck** (*Histrionicus histrionicus*)
- **Pinus albicaulis** (*Whitebark Pine*)
- **Grizzly Bear** (*Ursus arctos*), **Canada Lynx** (*Lynx canadensis*), **Wolverine** (*Gulo gulo*)

The easement is replacing an existing bridge that has been in place since 1930 and construction will occur on the embankment causing little to no disturbance to wildlife. Minor channel work will be necessary to tie the new abutments into the existing channel, place riprap and remove the existing piers and wingwalls. The proposed action will utilize the existing bank upstream and downstream to limit additional channel alteration. The project may temporarily alter stream flow, but will not interfere with fish migration patterns.

While these species may be present in the general project area, no direct or lasting impacts are expected to occur to sensitive species in regard to the bridge project. Due to the relatively short duration and minimal disturbance, the project will have minimal impact to the environment and habitat on State Land.

---

**10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:**

*Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.*

No cultural and paleontological surveys have previously been performed on this section.

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 state land portion of the APE. Because the APE on state land is inundated, no project related disturbance is expected. No additional archaeological investigative work will be conducted for the state land portion of the APE. 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.

The proposed project will have *No Effect* to *Antiquities* as defined under the Montana State Antiquities Act. Formal reports of findings are available through the DNRC and the Montana State Historic Preservation Officer.

---

**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.*

The proposed action will allow the proponent to put in a new crossing over the Boulder River. No significant adverse impact to aesthetics is expected as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

---

**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.*

No significant adverse impacts to environmental resources of land, water, air or energy are expected to occur as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.



---

**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.*

There are no other known studies or future actions planned for this Navigable Water Way.

---

**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.*

No significant adverse impacts to human health and safety would occur as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

---

**15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:**

*Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.*

No significant adverse impacts to industrial, commercial and agricultural activities and production would occur as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

---

**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.*

The proposed action will have no significant impact on the quantity and distribution of employment.

---

**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.*

The proposed action will have no adverse impact on tax revenue.

---

**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*

The implementation of the proposed alternative will not generate any additional demands on governmental services. By executing the proposed alternative, it will allow safe passage across the Boulder River and provide for easy emergency access.

---

**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.*

Implementation of the proposed alternative will not conflict with any locally adopted plans.

---

**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.*

The subject parcel is bifurcated by the Main Boulder Road, which is a publicly accessible road. The granting of the easement will allow public access to continue camping and trailheads safely. The proposed action will have no adverse effects on the access to and quality of recreational use.

---

**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.*

No significant adverse impacts to density and distribution of population and housing would occur as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

---

**22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:**

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

There are no native, unique or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity that would be impacted by the proposed alternative.

---

**23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:**

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

The proposed alternative will not have a significant adverse impact on cultural uniqueness or diversity.

---

**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.*

Public Land Trust Navigable Rivers Fund will benefit by receiving a one-time payment of \$160.00.

<b>EA Checklist Prepared By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Michelle Yeager	<b>Date:</b> June 3, 2025
	<b>Title:</b> Area Planner, Southern Land Office	

---

**V. FINDING**

---

**25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:**

The proposed alternative has been selected, and it is recommended the easement and land use license be issued to allow the proponent, Sweet Grass County, to install a new bridge adjacent to an existing bridge that has been in existence for since 1930 that is in poor condition with load restrictions and is beyond repair. This new bridge will occupy a +/-0.0229-acre area over the Boulder River. The proponent is seeking formal easement for the State Ownership with the construction of the new bridge and a land use license for temporary construction during the bridge replacement. The Fleming Bridge crosses over the Boulder River on Section 13, Township 5 South, Range 12 East.

---

**26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:**

The potential for significant adverse impacts to the Trust lands listed above are minimal due to the nature of the proposed action, which is to construct a new bridge to replace an existing deteriorating bridge over the Boulder River. There are no natural features that could produce adverse impacts or species of concern occupying the area that are expected to be impacted by implementing the proposed action

---

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

☐


EIS

☐

More Detailed EA

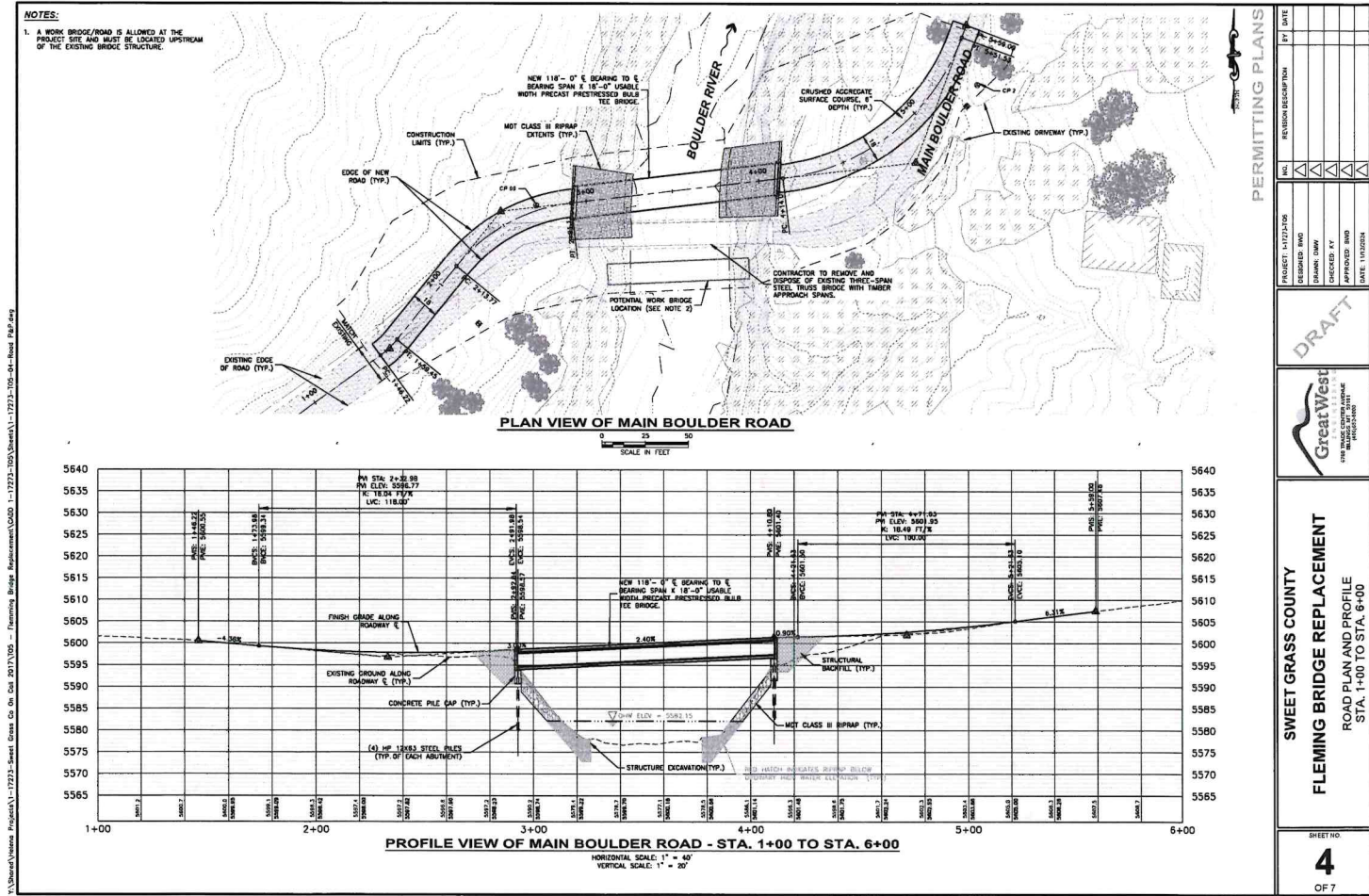
☒

No Further Analysis

<b>EA Checklist Approved By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Joe Holzwarth
	<b>Title:</b> Southern Land Office Area Manager
<b>Signature:</b> 	
<b>Date:</b> 6/28/25	

**Exhibit A – Proposed Easement Area**





Y:\SweetGrass\Projects\17723-Sweet Grass Co. Rd. 2017\02 - Fleming Bridge Replacement\023 - 17723-103\Drawings\17723-103-05-Site Photos.dwg



EXISTING BRIDGE OVERALL LOOKING DOWNSTREAM



EXISTING BRIDGE (WEST LOOKING EAST)




EXISTING BRIDGE PILES AND WINGWALL (EAST SIDE LOOKING WEST)



EXISTING BRIDGE PILES AND WINGWALL (EAST SIDE LOOKING DOWNSTREAM)

PERMITTING PLANS	
NO.	REVISION DESCRIPTION
1	PROJECT 17723-103
2	DESIGNED: MWD
3	DRAWN: DAW
4	CHECKED: KY
5	APPROVED: MWD
6	DATE: 11/15/2018



Great West  
ENGINEERING & ARCHITECTURE  
17723-103-05-Site Photos.dwg

SWEET GRASS COUNTY

**FLEMING BRIDGE REPLACEMENT**

SITE PHOTOS (1)

SHEET NO.

**5**

OF 7