



February 18, 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 | Bigfork West Trunk Sewer Main and Harbor Heights Boulevard Water Main Replacement |
| Location | Bigfork, Montana |
| Project Number | WPCSRF: C304257 DWSRF: WRF# 24-2102 |
| Total Cost | \$4,110,000 (Sewer) and \$1,632,000 (Water) |

In May of 2022, The Bigfork Water and Sewer District (Bigfork) completed a preliminary engineering report (PER) to evaluate its wastewater collection and treatment systems, identify deficiencies, and analyze alternatives. The West Trunk Sewer (WTS) serves as the primary transmission main from a large portion of the community to the wastewater treatment plant (WWTP). Several service areas were annexed to the system in the 1990s that have pushed the WTS beyond design capacity. This section of sewer main also has sags that hinder flow and contribute to a risk of sewer backups. Another area of Bigfork, the West Collection Basin, has experienced spikes in infiltration and inflow (I/I) during precipitation events, contributing excess flow to lift stations and the WWTP.

The proposed wastewater project consists of replacing 4,400 feet of the West Trunk Sewer with 15-inch polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipe from the WWTP to Chapman Hill Road and rehabilitating West Collection Basin manholes. Additionally, emergency generators for the North and Harbor Village #1 lift stations are included in the project's scope, thereby eliminating the challenges of maintaining operation using portable generators at these locations during prolonged power outages.

In addition to the wastewater improvements, the proposed project includes replacement of approximately 1,500 linear feet of 8-inch PVC pipe in Harbor Heights Boulevard, with installation of new fire hydrants and looping of the new water main pipe to increase fire flow and improve water capacity in the area. The water main improvements were identified in a memorandum from Bigfork's engineer to the DEQ in November of 2024. The existing 8-inch steel water main in Harbor Heights Boulevard is old and leaky, and lays along part of the route of the WTS. Replacing the deficient water main in conjunction with the WTS main replacement project provides Bigfork with cost savings and less disruption to local traffic and residents.

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 detail, is available for review on the DEQ web site (<https://deq.mt.gov/public/water-public>) and at the following locations:

Michele Marsh, P.E.
Department of Environmental Quality
1520 East Sixth Avenue
P.O. Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

Tom Cahill, District President
Bigfork Water and Sewer District
PO Box 1108
Bigfork, MT 59911

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 release of the FONSI.

Sincerely,

Mike Abrahamson

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

BIGFORK COUNTY WATER AND SEWER DISTRICT
BIGFORK WEST TRUNK SEWER MAIN AND
HARBOR HEIGHTS BOULEVARD WATER MAIN REPLACEMENT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

I. COVER SHEET

A. PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

Applicant: Bigfork County Water and Sewer District
Address: PO Box 1108
Bigfork, MT 59911
Project Number: WPCSRF Project # C304257
DWSRF Project WRF# 24-2102

B. CONTACT PERSON

Name: Tom Cahill, District President
Address: PO Box 1108
Bigfork, MT 59911
Telephone: (406) 837-4566

C. ABSTRACT

In May of 2022, The Bigfork Water and Sewer District (Bigfork) completed a preliminary engineering report (PER) to evaluate its wastewater collection and treatment systems, identify deficiencies, and analyze alternatives. The West Trunk Sewer (WTS) serves as the primary transmission main from a large portion of the community to the wastewater treatment plant (WWTP). Several service areas were annexed to the system in the 1990s that have pushed the WTS beyond design capacity. This section of sewer main also has sags that hinder flow and contribute to a risk of sewer backups. Another area of Bigfork, the West Collection Basin, has experienced spikes in infiltration and inflow (I/I) during precipitation events, contributing excess flow to lift stations and the WWTP.

The proposed wastewater project consists of replacing 4,400 feet of the West Trunk Sewer with 15-inch polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipe from the WWTP to Chapman Hill Road and rehabilitating West Collection Basin manholes. Additionally, emergency generators for the North and Harbor Village #1 lift stations are included in the project's scope, thereby eliminating the challenges of maintaining operation using portable generators at these locations during prolonged power outages.

Bigfork's proposed wastewater improvements, including administration, engineering, and construction are estimated to cost \$4,110,000. The project will be funded with a Montana Coal Endowment Program (MCEP) grant in the amount of \$500,000; a Renewable Resource Grant and Loan (RRGL) Program grant in the amount of \$125,000; \$5,000 in local funds; and \$3,480,000 in a Water Pollution Control State Revolving Fund (WPCSRF) loan, with \$750,000 of the loan amount forgiven.

In addition to the wastewater improvements, the proposed project includes replacement of approximately 1,500 linear feet of 8-inch PVC water main pipe in Harbor Heights Boulevard, with installation of new fire hydrants and looping of the new pipe to increase fire flow and improve water capacity in the area. The water main improvements were identified in a memorandum from Bigfork's engineer to the DEQ in November of 2024. The existing 8-inch steel water main in Harbor Heights Boulevard is old and leaky, and lays along part of the route of the WTS. Replacing the deficient water main in conjunction with the WTS main replacement project provides Bigfork with cost savings and less disruption to local traffic and residents.

The proposed water main improvements, including administration, engineering, and construction are estimated to cost approximately \$1,632,000. It is anticipated that the project will be funded through \$5,000 in local funds and a low interest loan (2.5%, 20-year term) obtained from the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) loan program in the amount of \$1,627,000.

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, growth, and sludge disposal 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 DEQ has reviewed and approved the plans and specifications for the project. Under the Montana Water Pollution Control State Revolving Fund Act, DEQ may loan money to municipalities for construction 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

Bigfork West Trunk Sewer Main

Bigfork's WTS is constructed of vitrified clay, asbestos cement, and PVC. Vitrified clay and asbestos cement become brittle and susceptible to failure as they age. The sewer pipes are reaching the end of their useful lives, and sags and flat pipe grades were identified that could hinder flow, causing backup of sewage into homes. Additionally, as the community has expanded, wastewater flows have pushed existing mains beyond their design capacity, increasing risk of sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs). In the 1990s, Bigfork annexed the Eagle Bend Golf Course and subdivision, adding a significant amount of flow to the WWTP. The original WTS to the WWTP was not upsized at that time and has been operating at or slightly above its rated capacity.

Bigfork's western collection basin has recorded spikes in infiltration and inflow (I/I) during precipitation and snow melt events. Visual inspection identified inflow through manhole lids. These spikes in I/I use up collection system and lift station capacity, increase energy use at lift stations, and disrupt processes within the WWTP.

Bigfork has historically seen power outages that exceed 24 hours. The community's lift stations without emergency backup power, which include the Harbor Village #1 and North lift stations, raise concerns about SSOs. Bigfork's design standards require that lift stations serving more than 50 dwellings must have emergency backup power.

Harbor Heights Boulevard Water Main Replacement

The existing 8-inch steel water main in Harbor Heights Boulevard is old and is strongly suspected of leakage. Because it is along the same route as the West Trunk Sewer (WTS) main replacement project, Bigfork decided to include replacement of this water main with the trunk sewer project to provide the district with cost savings and less traffic disruption and inconvenience to residents, as compared to completing the projects separately. The new water pipe will be tied into nearby mains at three points to provide looping, which improves fire protection and water system pressures. New fire hydrants will be installed.

III. ALTERNATIVES INCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION AND COSTS

A. Bigfork West Trunk Sewer Main

Bigfork's PER identified and ranked nineteen collection system alternatives and eight treatment system alternatives to address wastewater system deficiencies. The district chose to create the current project from the top four collection system alternatives, all of which were considered in a ranking process that considered cost plus the non-monetary factors of urgency, risk mitigation, and public acceptance. The No Action alternative and the four top collection system alternatives are described below.

ALTERNATIVE C1 No Action – Taking no action means that the existing WTS will remain undersized with sags potentially causing issues. The West Collection Basin will continue to have increased inflow and infiltration and both lift stations will remain without dedicated emergency power. Due to the severe impacts of these deficiencies, No Action is not a viable alternative.

ALTERNATIVE C2 West Trunk Sewer Rehabilitation Phase 1 - This alternative proposes replacement of the WTS from the WWTF to Chapman Hill Road. This would consist of replacing approximately 4,400 feet of pipe with 15-inch PVC pipe. The sewer main would be capable of handling design flows.

ALTERNATIVE C4- West Collection Basin Rehabilitation - This alternative consists of rehabilitating the West Collection Basin in Lake Pointe and Harbor Village to reduce high I/I, and includes the replacement of manhole chimneys and the installation of watertight manhole covers and manhole liners on manholes that are leaking below the chimney.

ALTERNATIVE C10 – Install Backup Power at Harbor Village #1 Lift Station - This alternative proposes to install a new backup generator (50 kw, natural gas) with integration to the District's Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system. Currently a portable generator is shared between lift stations.

ALTERNATIVE C11 – Install Backup Power at North Lift Station - This alternative proposes to install a new backup generator (50 kw, natural gas) with integration to the District's Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system. Currently a portable generator is shared between lift stations.

- B. Harbor Heights Boulevard Water Main Replacement
Only No Action and replacement of the Harbor Heights Boulevard water main were considered as alternatives, as described below:

ALTERNATIVE A1 – No Action – This alternative keeps the existing water main in place. This is an old main and thought to be a significant source of Bigfork's water loss. Therefore, this alternative is not considered to be a viable option and is not recommended for Bigfork.

ALTERNATIVE A2 – Harbor Heights Water Main Replacement – This alternative includes replacing the existing old, leaky water main in Harbor Heights Boulevard with an 8-inch PVC water main. The new water main will reduce area water loss and improve water capacity and fire flows. This project will be completed in conjunction with the WTS replacement to minimize traffic disruption and road disturbance and costs.

C. 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 (O&M) costs occur over the life of the alternative. Because the Bigfork wastewater collection system and water main improvements will result in more reliability, labor hours are expected to decrease, resulting in less repairs. Therefore, no additional O&M costs are identified for the alternatives considered outside of No Action and a present worth analysis is not necessary. Alternatives are listed below with their project costs.

TABLE 1 BIGFORK WEST TRUNK SEWER MAIN COSTS

| Alternative | Total Project Cost * |
|--|----------------------|
| Alternative C2: West Trunk Sewer Rehabilitation Phase 1 | \$2,705,000 |
| Alternative C4: West Collection Basin Rehabilitation | \$531,000 |
| Alternative C10: Backup Power at Harbor Village #1 | \$197,000 |
| Alternative C11: Backup Power at North Lift Station | \$197,000 |

* Project costs include engineering, administration, and construction costs.

TABLE 2 HARBOR HEIGHTS BOULEVARD WATER MAIN REPLACEMENT COST

| Alternative | Total Project Cost * |
|--|----------------------|
| Alternative A2: Harbor Heights Water Main Replacement | \$2,705,000 |

* Project costs include engineering, administration, and construction costs.

D. BASIS OF SELECTION OF PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Bigfork West Trunk Sewer Main

To assist in selection of a preferred collection system alternative, a qualitative ranking process was utilized. The wastewater collection system alternatives were compared with respect to project cost, urgency, risk mitigation, and public acceptance. Each alternative was given a total score ranging from 0 to 85. The criteria were weighted in relation to each other, with the criteria most important to Bigfork receiving higher points. Maximum points were assigned as follows: Capital cost – 25, Urgency – 20, Risk Mitigation – 20, and Public Acceptance – 20. The four selected collection system alternatives scored higher than the remaining alternatives and are shown for comparison in the matrix below alongside the No Action alternative.

TABLE 3 – WASTEWATER TREATMENT SELECTED ALTERNATIVES RANKING

| Criterion | Weight | Alternative C1 | Alternative C2 | Alternative C4 | Alternative C10 | Alternative C11 |
|-------------------|--------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | | Points | Points | Points | Points | Points |
| Project Cost | 5 | | | | | |
| Alternative Score | | 5 | 3.5 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Weighted Score | | 25 | 17.5 | 20 | 20 | 20 |
| Urgency | 4 | | | | | |
| Alternative Score | | 0 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Weighted Score | | 0 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 20 |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|----|------|----|----|----|
| Risk Mitigation | 4 | | | | | |
| Alternative Score | | 0 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 |
| Weighted Score | | 0 | 20 | 16 | 20 | 20 |
| Public Acceptance | 4 | | | | | |
| Alternative Score | | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Weighted Score | | 4 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 |
| Overall Score | | 29 | 69.5 | 68 | 72 | 72 |

The estimated total project cost (including administration, engineering, and construction) for the selected alternatives is \$4,110,000. Bigfork will assume supervision of the project and oversee engineering and construction management through their contracted engineer. The project will be funded with a Montana Coal Endowment Program (MCEP) grant in the amount of \$500,000; a Renewable Resource Grant and Loan (RRGL) Program grant in the amount of \$125,000; \$5,000 in local funds; and \$3,480,000 in a Water Pollution Control State Revolving Fund (WPCSRF) loan, with \$750,000 of the loan amount forgiven.

The current wastewater monthly rate is \$74.60. This rate will increase by \$12.72 per month because of the proposed project, resulting in a monthly residential sewer rate of \$87.32. 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 1.74% of the monthly median household income. Based on EPA guidance for project affordability, the increased sewer rates will have moderate impacts on some households.

TABLE 3 - PROJECT AFFORDABILITY

| | |
|---|---------|
| Monthly sewer user cost | \$87.32 |
| Monthly median household income (mMHI) ¹ | \$5,006 |
| User rate as a percentage of mMHI | 1.74% |

¹ Based on 2015-2019 American Communities Survey data.

Harbor Heights Boulevard Water Main Replacement

Alternative A2, Harbor Heights Water Main Replacement, was chosen on the basis of completing the project in conjunction with the West Trunk Sewer main replacement, rather than deferring replacement to the future. Additionally, this reduces disruption to residents.

The proposed water main improvements, including administration, engineering, and construction are estimated to cost approximately \$1,632,000. It is anticipated that the project will be funded through \$5,000 in local funds and a low interest loan (2.5%, 20-year term) obtained from the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) loan program in the amount of \$1,627,000.

The current monthly water user rate for a Bigfork residential customer is \$51.91. The combined water and sewer rate before improvements is \$126.51, which exceeds the combined water and sewer Montana Department of Commerce Target rate of \$115.15.

IV. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

A. PLANNING AREA AND MAPS

Bigfork is located at the northeast corner of Flathead Lake in western Montana near the junction of Highways 35, 82, and 83 (Figure 1). The district planning area encompasses the community of Bigfork, including Eagle Bend and Harbor Village, plus future areas which may be annexed to the District. The planning area is located at the mouth of the Swan River along the northeastern shore of Flathead Lake in the southern portion of Flathead County. It is bordered on the southwest by Flathead Lake, on the west by the Flathead River, on the south by Lake County, and on the east and north by Highway 83. The Bigfork Water and Sewer District boundary and planning area are shown in Figure 2. Figure 3 shows the West Trunk Sewer route. Figure 4 shows the area of the West Basin sewer improvements, and Figure 5 shows the location of the Harbor Heights water main replacement.

B. POPULATION AND FLOW PROJECTIONS

Bigfork's population has been steadily increasing over recent years. The population fluctuates throughout the year with significantly more people during summer months from tourism. The PER uses a conservative estimate of 2.5% growth rate for the district. The current population served by the Bigfork WWTP is 4,560 and the projected 2042 population is 7,473. The reported average summer wastewater daily flow is 0.348 million gallons per day (MGD) or 85 gallons per capita day (gpcd). Using the average summer value of 85 gpcd wastewater generation with the design population of 7,473 results in a 2042 design flow of 0.635 mgd. Table 4 summarizes the current and projected population and average daily flow data.

TABLE 4 – EXISTING AND PROJECTED POPULATION AND WASTEWATER FLOWS

| Year | Population | Average Daily Flow |
|------|------------|--------------------|
| | | (MGD) |
| 2022 | 4,560 | 0.348 |
| 2042 | 7,473 | 0.635 |

C. NATURAL FEATURES

Bigfork is surrounded by mountainous forest land and valleys typical of western Montana. The Swan River flows from the south and enters Flathead Lake at Bigfork. The Flathead River flows from the north and enters Flathead Lake two miles west of Bigfork. The planning area's topography consists of hilly, steep slopes, with flat valley land to the west. The elevation is 2,900 feet at Flathead Lake.

Bigfork's climate is classified as semi-arid. Annual average precipitation is 20 inches, with most of this occurring between May and September.

V. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF PROPOSED PROJECT

A. DIRECT AND INDIRECT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

1. Land Use/Prime Farmland – Soils in the developed portions of Bigfork are loamy fine sand to gravelly loam. No prime farmland will be impacted by the WTS or Harbor Heights Boulevard water main replacements, since all work will be conducted within developed areas.
2. Floodplains – Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) mapping shows the existence of a 100-year floodplain along the Swan River, Flathead River, and Flathead Lake. This floodplain is primarily located in the river channels or along the lakeshore and does not cover a significant portion of the planning area. The WTS portion of the project is not located in the floodplain. The West Collection Basin area is partly in the 100-year floodplain of the Flathead River and Flathead Lake. The work in the basin work consists of repairs to existing manholes with no new construction proposed; therefore, no impact to a regulated floodplain is anticipated.
3. Wetlands – Several wetlands are located to the west and east of the project area along Flathead Lake and the Swan River channel. There are no wetlands located within the proposed project area and no wetlands will be impacted by the project.
4. Cultural Resources and Historical Sites – No impacts to cultural resources are anticipated. The WTS will be placed in areas previously disturbed by road construction and the West Collection Basin rehabilitation work will be replacing existing structures, making it unlikely that cultural resources will be impacted. SHPO's comments are summarized at the end of this report.
5. Fish and Wildlife – The project area consists of developed residential and roadway areas that do not provide habitat for wildlife. Therefore, no wildlife habitat is anticipated to be disturbed as part of this project. The project is not located in sage grouse habitat. A summary of wildlife agency comments is found at the end of this report.
6. Water Quality – The Bigfork Community is supplied by 300-foot-deep groundwater wells located north of Bigfork and upgradient of the WWTP. The proposed water main replacement will help conserve water that is currently leaking from the old, existing main.

Deficiencies in the WTS could potentially cause sewer overflows to Flathead Lake. Replacement and upsizing of the WTS will address this concern. Rehabilitation work in the West Collection Basin will reduce I/I in the sewer mains, thereby allowing the WWTP to operate more effectively during high flow events. The proposed wastewater improvements will reduce potential impacts to surface and groundwater sources.

7. Air Quality – 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. No long-term impacts to air quality are expected.

8. Public Health – Public health will be improved by the proposed project, which will reduce potential SSO concerns and excess I/I flow to the WWTP. Replacement of the water main in Harbor Heights Boulevard will improve fire flows in the area, offering better fire protection.
9. Energy – The consumption of energy resources directly associated with construction of the recommended improvements is unavoidable but will be a short-term commitment. There will be a long-term decrease in energy consumption due to reduced inflow and infiltration in the West Collection Basin, resulting in less wastewater requiring treatment at the WWTP.
10. Noise – 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 construction disturbances. The highest rated sound enclosure that is made by the manufacturer will be specified. Furthermore, generator cycle periods will not occur during times that would be disruptive to residences, usually mid-morning on a weekly basis. No significant long-term impacts from noise should occur.
11. Sludge Disposal – There will be no sludge disposal associated with this project.
12. 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.
13. Wild and Scenic River Act – The proposed project will not impact any rivers wild and scenic rivers as designated by Congress or the Secretary of the Interior.
14. Growth – The replacement of the WTS will increase the capacity of the wastewater collection system and allow for further development within the Bigfork planning area. The project will not directly result in a population increase but will allow the system to handle planned future growth.
15. Cumulative Effects – There are no anticipated cumulative effects from the proposed project.

B. UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE IMPACTS

Short-term construction-related impacts (i.e., noise, dust, etc.) will occur, but should be minimized through proper construction management.

VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The district held a public meeting on March 30, 2022, where the presentation by Bigfork's engineer included an explanation of the existing deficiencies, treatment alternatives, and the proposed funding scenario. A second public meeting was held on April 25, 2022, which summarized the improvement alternatives for both the water and sewer systems and discussed a funding strategy.

VII. AGENCY ACTION, APPLICABLE REGULATIONS AND PERMITTING AUTHORITIES

All proposed improvements will be designed to meet state standards in accordance with Circular DEQ 1 and Circular DEQ-2 and will be constructed using standard construction methods. Best management practices will be implemented to minimize or eliminate pollutants during construction. No additional permits will be required from the State Revolving Fund (SRF) section of DEQ for this project after the review of the submitted plans and specifications. However, coverage under the stormwater general discharge permit and groundwater dewatering discharge permit, if necessary, must be obtained from the DEQ Water Protection Bureau prior to the beginning of construction. A 124 Permit from the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, a 404 Permit from the U.S. Corps of Engineers, and a 318 Authorization from the Department of Environment Quality will be obtained for any work that occurs in a streambed or (jurisdictional) wetlands, should it become necessary. Construction within the floodplain will need to be permitted by governing jurisdictions.

VIII. RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

EIS More Detailed EA No Further Analysis

Rationale for Recommendation: Through this EA, DEQ has verified that none of the adverse impacts of the proposed Bigfork wastewater improvements 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. Preliminary Engineering Report Bigfork County Water and Sewer District; May 2022; Prepared by Morrison Maierle.
2. Uniform Application Form for Montana Public Facility Projects; submitted by the Bigfork County Water and Sewer District; dated June 23, 2023.
3. Bigfork Harbor Heights Water Main, WRF# 24-2102 Memorandum; November 22, 2024, Prepared by Jeff Cicon.

X. AGENCIES CONSULTED

As part of the Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) process, the following agencies were contacted regarding the proposed construction of this project:

1. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was solicited for comments twice and did not provide comments.
2. The Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) reviewed the proposed project. They commented that if there will be no disturbance to structures over fifty years of age, there is low likelihood cultural properties will be impacted. They felt that a recommendation for a cultural resource inventory was unwarranted at this time. However, should structures need to be altered or cultural materials be inadvertently discovered during the project, SHPO must be contacted, and the site investigated.
3. The U.S. Department of the Army Corps of Engineers (USCOE) provided comments on the proposed project. They indicated that if any work is proposed below the ordinary high-water mark of stream channels, lakes, or wetlands adjacent to these waters, then a Section 404 permit would apply and authorization from USCOE would be needed. Additionally, if any work is proposed within jurisdictional waters, then a Nationwide Permit 58 for utility line activities for water and other substances may be required. The USCOE recommended that the project area be evaluated for the presence of wetlands or waters of the US.
4. The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) was solicited for comments twice and did not provide comments.
5. The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) Kalispell Regional Office was contacted in 2024 with respect to potential floodplain impacts from the proposed wastewater project. DNRC did not have any comments on the proposed project.

EA Prepared by:

Michele Marsh

2/18/2025

Michele Marsh, P.E.

Date

EA Reviewed by:

Mike Abrahamson

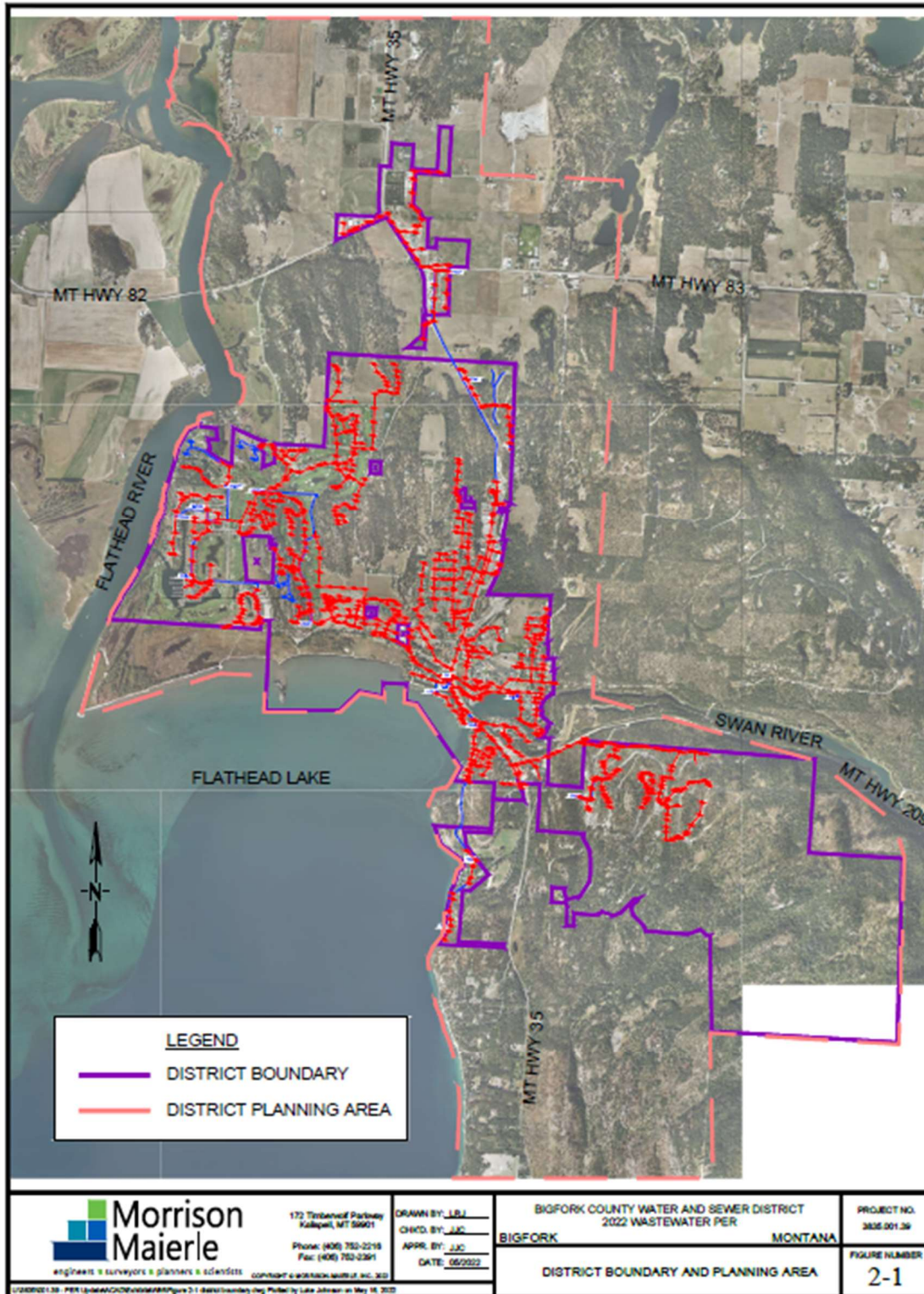
2/18/25

Mike Abrahamson, P.E.

Date



**FIGURE 1
LOCATION**



**FIGURE 2
PROJECT AREA**

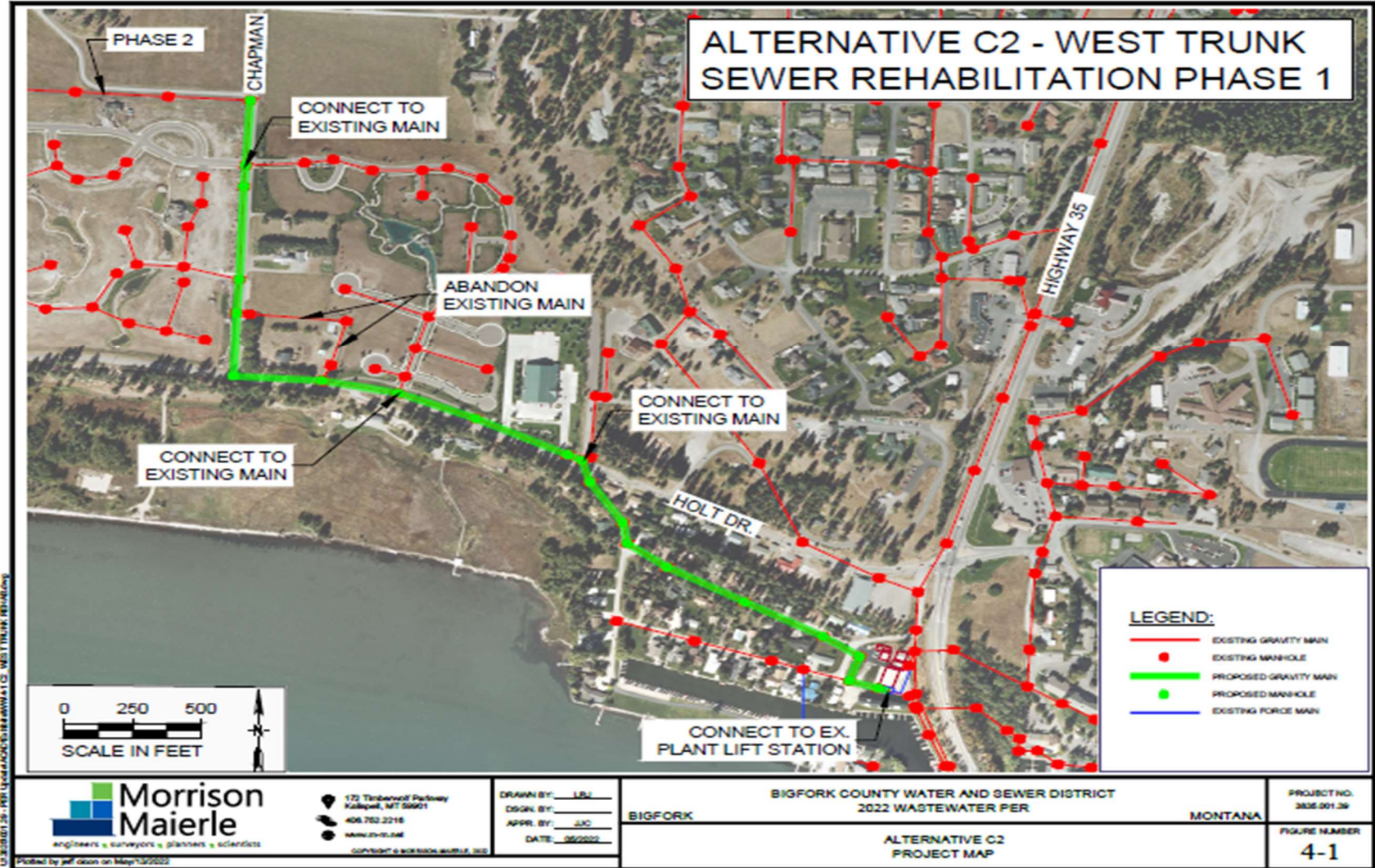


FIGURE 3
WEST TRUNK SEWER PLAN

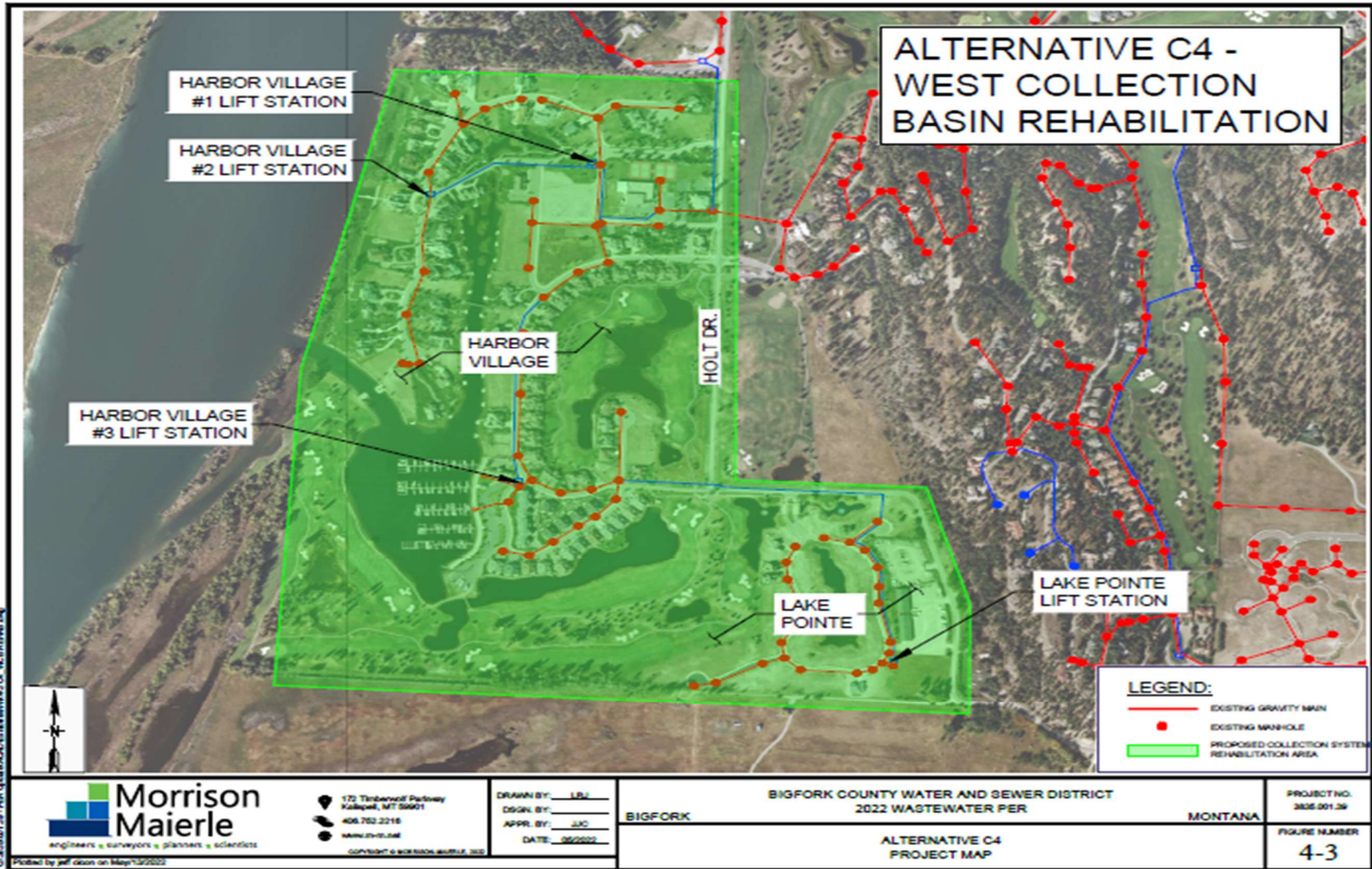


FIGURE 4
WEST COLLECTION BASIN PLAN



FIGURE 5
HARBOR HEIGHTS WATER MAIN PLAN