

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Montana City parcel land banking proposal
Proposed Implementation Date:	Summer 2005
Proponent:	Montana. DNRC
Location:	E2W2, section 12 T9N R4W
County:	Jefferson

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The DNRC is proposing to nominate this 160-acre parcel for sale under the provisions of the Land Banking statute (77-2-361 through 367 MCA). The proceeds from the sale of the State Trust land would be held temporarily, pending the purchase of other land, easements or improvements for the beneficiaries of the respective beneficiary. The goals of the Land Banking program are to diversify land holdings in order to minimize risk of loss, to maximize the sustained rate of return to the trusts, to improve access to State Trust land, and to consolidate State Trust ownership.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

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

The following were notified via mail about the proposed action: the lessee, adjacent landowners, Jefferson County, other possible interested parties per the attached Scoping List (Exhibit 1). Legal ads were also run in the Boulder Monitor and the Helena Independent Record.

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

NA

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative 1. No action – The land would not be sold.

Alternative 2. Recommend to DNRC and Board of Land Commissioners to proceed with the sale proposal.

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.

Currently there is an unreclaimed fill and riprap pit in the southern portion of the parcel. The pit has seen no commercial activity for over thirty years. A sale under Alternative 2 would include surface minerals and gravel, but not subsurface mineral rights. The potential for commercial mineral development for all

surface and subsurface minerals on the parcel is considered low to none. The value of any residual material should be recouped in the sale process of Alternative 2.

Approximately 25 acres of the parcel were farmed for dryland agriculture in the past but converted to grass in the 1990s. Future conversion to agriculture under Alternative 1 would not be likely because the parcel doesn't meet DNRC criteria for breaking.

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.

Currently there are no surface or developed ground water resources on the parcel. An ephemeral drainage is present on the north end of the parcel. Little Prickly Pear Creek and its riparian corridor are near, but not on the southeast corner of the parcel.

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.

None. Neither alternative would impact air quality.

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 Montana Natural Heritage Program reported there are no rare plants or cover types on the parcel. Previously disturbed areas have persistent weed problems with Dalmation Toadflax and Whitetop.

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.

No Impact. Mule deer and several non-game species make some use of the parcel and the adjacent Ash Grove (a large commercial cement plant) property, however the habitat value is limited by the small size (160 acres) and the developed nature of land immediately to the south and west (Montana City).

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.

No impact. No threatened or endangered species or unique resources are expected to be impacted by the proposal. The Montana Natural Heritage Program reported that a review of their database found no record of species of special concern.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

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

On March 29-30, 2005, the DNRC staff Archaeologist completed a Class III level intensity inventory of cultural and paleontologic resources on a contiguous block of 160 acres of state owned land legally

described as the E1/2-W1/2 of Section 12, T9N R3W in Jefferson County, Montana. During the course of inventory one cultural resource site was identified, evaluated and formally recorded. This cultural property consists of three single tiered cairns (rock heaps or clusters) of unknown age. The archaeological site was evaluated and determined to be an insignificant resource. Transferal of this property to private ownership will have No Adverse Effect to state owned Heritage Properties.

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.

No impact. The parcel is located immediately north of Montana City, a rapidly growing community, but is not a prominent feature.

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 impact. The parcel is near Montana City subdivision on two sides and the Ash Grove cement plant to the south.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this parcel. 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.

No impact. The area is covered under zoning guidelines by Jefferson County. The current classification is Basic Resource (minimum size 160 acres with one primary residence).

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>RESOURCES</i> potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.• Explain <i>POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS</i> following each resource heading.• Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.

None. The sale of the parcel will not impact the human population. Any future activity on the parcel will be governed by local and state regulation.

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

None. The sale of the parcel will not impact the human health and safety. Any future activity on the parcel will be governed by local and state regulation

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

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

The sale of the parcel will not impact industrial or commercial activities and production. The existing grazing lease would be cancelled, which would be a minor impact to the lessee. The lessee leases the surrounding Ash Grove land for grazing. Any future activity on the parcel would be governed by local and state regulation

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.

None. Neither alternative would have impacts on 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.

In the event a non-tax exempt entity purchased the parcel under Alternative 2 any income derived from the taxable value would increase taxes paid to Jefferson County.

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

None. No impacts are anticipated under either alternative. Any changes would be addressed by local planning and zoning regulations.

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.

The parcel currently is leased for grazing under a DNRC grazing lease (# 4088). Additionally, easements have been issued for power lines and an access road. Any sale would be subject to current easements and agreements. The parcel is located in an area zoned as a Basic Resource area by Jefferson County, which has a 160 acre minimum acreage limitation

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

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

None. Currently, the parcel is accessible by a county road to the west boundary. However due to its small size and location, a minimal amount of use is occurring. The parcel provides recreational use for walking by local residents. It is located adjacent to the Ash Grove property which currently allows walking access to the public.

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.

None. No impact is expected under either alternative. Current county regulations would regulate any development under Alternative 2. The current regulations require minimum lot size of 160 acres and allows one principle building.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

None. No impact is expected under either alternative.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

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

None. No impact is expected under either alternative.

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.

Current income from the parcel to the trust is \$257.76 yearly based on \$45.00 from farm program payments and \$212.76 from grazing rental. Yearly income per acre is \$1.61. Income from all sources is not expected to change significantly under current management. Assuming a land value of \$1,000.00 per acre the return on asset value would be 0.16%. It should be noted that an appraisal has not yet been completed so actual value may differ from the assumed value.

Comparatively the estimated return on asset value for all agricultural and grazing land in the Central Land Office is 0.37%. This would indicate the parcel presently returns a lower return on asset than average values for Central Land Office, and also a lower return than the statewide agricultural and grazing land average of 0.25 percent. This indicates a higher return on asset value could be expected under Alternative 2.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Robert Vlahovich	Date: March 14 2005
	Title: Special uses coordinator	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

I have selected Alternative 2, and recommend continuation of the land sale proposal.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The transfer of ownership of the 160 acre parcel in Jefferson County will not result in any significant effects to the human or natural environment. Any future land use changes will be regulated by local and statewide regulations.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

☐ EIS

☐ More Detailed EA

☒ No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: D.J. Bakken
	Title: Helena Unit Manager
Signature:	Date: 3/18/2005

Exhibit 1

DNRC

Garry Williams
Kevin Chappell
Jeff Collins
Gary Frank
Patrick Rennie
Dan Bushnell

Jim Skinner
2755 Valley Drive
Helena, MT 59635

Chris Burrell
P.O. Box 4403
Helena, MT 59604

Jeff Hagener, Director
Dept. of Fish, Wildlife & Parks
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701

DEQ

1520 East Sixth Avenue
Helena, MT 59620

Anne Hedges
Montana Environmental
Information Center
PO Box 1184
Helena MT 59624

Bill Orsello/Stam Frasier
Montana Wildlife
Federation
PO Box 1175
Helena MT 59624

Bob Vogel
Montana School Boards
Association
One South Montana Ave
Helena, MT 59601

Daniel Berube
27 Cedar Lake Dr.
Butte, MT 59701

Dore Schwinden
Deadhead
Dept. of Labor and Industry

Ellen Engstedt
Montana Wood Products
Po Box 1149
Helena MT 59624

Gordon Morris
Montana Association
Of Counties
2715 Skyway Dr.
Helena, MT 59601

Jack Atcheson, Sr
3210 Ottawa
Butte MT 59701

Janet Ellis
Montana Audubon
PO Box 595
Helena MT 59624

Jeanne Holmgren
DNRC
P.O. Box 201601
Helena, MT 59620-1601

Leslie Taylor
MSU Bozeman
P.O. Box 172440
Bozeman, MT 59717-0001

Nancy Schlepp
MT Farm Bureau Federation
502 S 19th, Suite 4
Bozeman MT 59715

Ray Marxer
Matador Cattle Co.
9500 Blacktail Rd.
Dillon, MT 59725

Rosi Keller
Univ. of Montana
32 Campus Dr
Missoula, MT 59812-0001

State Historic Preservation
Office
P.O. Box 201202
Helena, MT 59620

Environmental Quality
Council
P.O. Box 201704
Helena, MT 59620-1704

Tribal Historic Preservation
Office
Confederated Salish &
Kootenai Tribes
P.O. Box 278
Pablo, MT 59855

Public Lands Access
Association, Inc.
Attn: John Gibson
2518 Broadwater
Billings, MT 59102

Montana Environmental
Information Center
Attn: Jim Jensen, Ann
Hedges,
P.O. Box 1184
Helena, MT 59624

Montana Wildlife Federation
Attn: Dave Majors
3289 Wood Duck Lane
Stevensville, MT 59870
MonTRUST
P.O. Box 457
Helena, MT 59624

The Nature Conservancy
Bernie Hall
32 South Ewing, Suite 215
Helena, MT 59601

MT Coalition for
Appropriate Mgmt of
State Lands
Attn: Jack Atcheson
3210 Ottawa
Butte, MT 59701

MT Audubon Council
Attn: Janet Ellis
P.O. Box 595
Helena, MT 59624

Stuart Lewin
615 Third Avenue North
Great Falls, MT 59401

Jefferson County Planning
County Courthouse
Boulder, MT 59632

Ash Grove Cement Co.
6720 SW Macadam Ave,
Suite 300
Portland, OR 97219-2370

Gary and Dawn Wheelock
111 Microwave Hill Road
Clancy, MT 59634

Ash Grove Cement Company
100 Highway 518
Clancy, MT 59634

Figure 1. A text description of the zoning can be obtained by contacting the DNRC, 8001 N. Montana Ave, Helena, MT, or the Jefferson County Planning and Zoning Office.

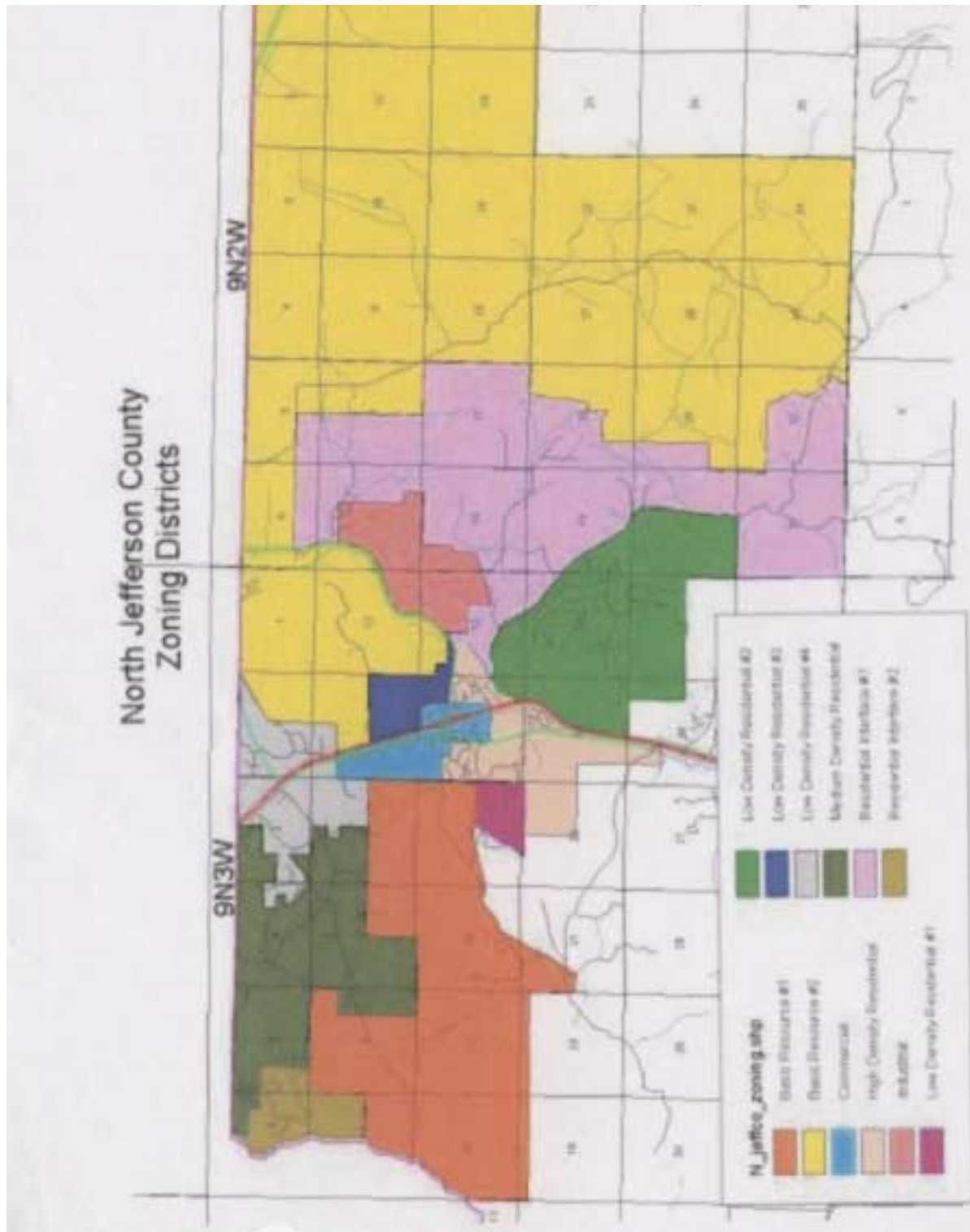


Figure 2 Topographic Map of the Montana City Land Banking Parcel.

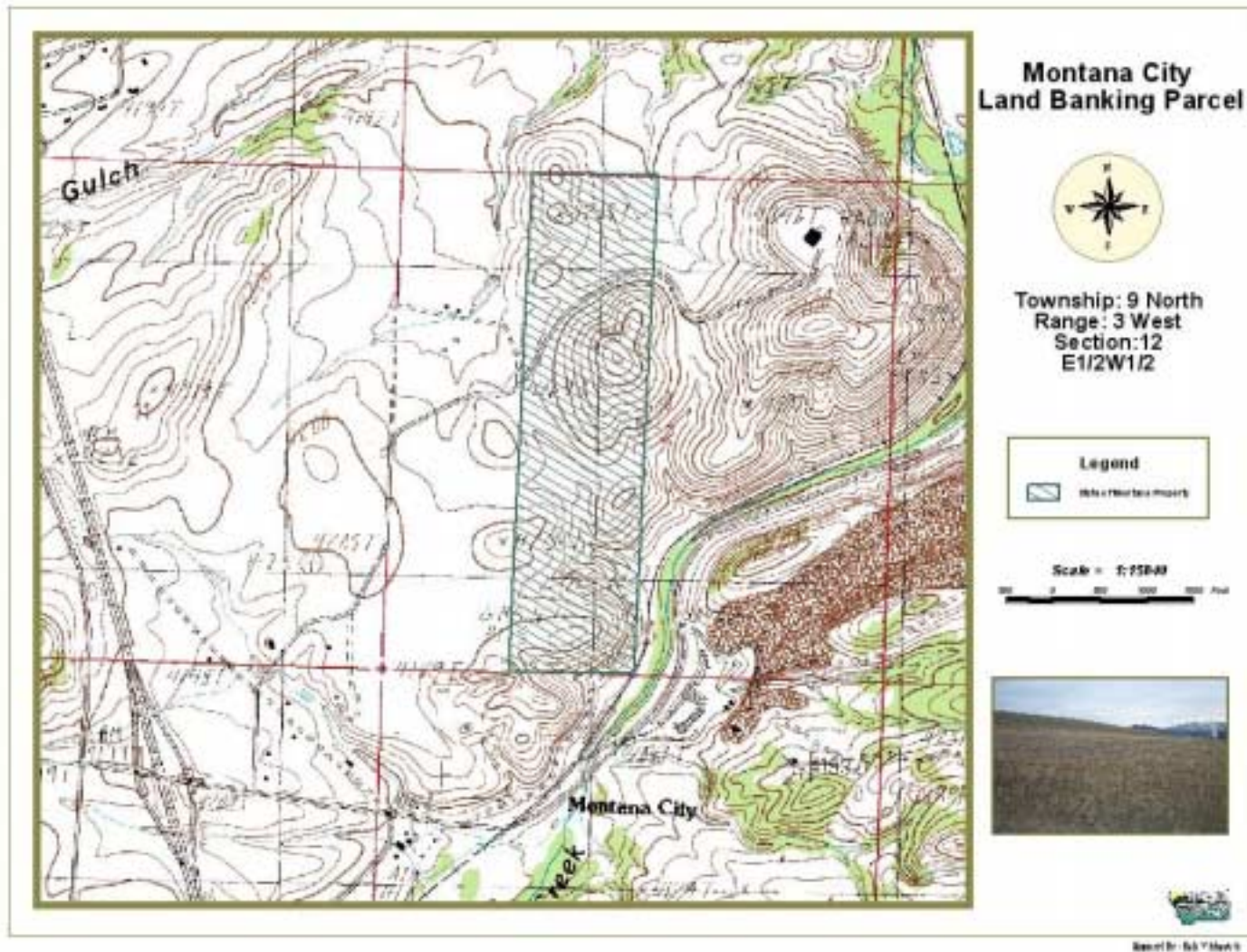


Figure 3. Aerial Photograph of the Montana City Land Banking Parcel.

