LITTLE BIGHORN BATTLEFIELD NATIONAL MONUMENT GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT NHPA SECTION 106 COMPLIANCE

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation regulations, 36 CFR Part 800, the National Park Service (NPS) is seeking comment on the new Visitor Center and Appropriate Curatorial Facility Project, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, Bighorn County, Montana (LIBI). Concurrence with NPS determinations of eligibility resulted from a project proposal submitted in 2006 to the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Crow Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) for an earlier proposed plan. This current submission contains revised project information.

This document describes the inventory and evaluation efforts for this project and NPS determinations of eligibility and effect. Based on these efforts, the National Park Service has determined that historic properties are present within the area of potential effect, but that the undertaking will have no adverse effect on them. The National Park Service at this time seeks to reengage with the tribal historic preservation office, state historic preservation office, and other interested parties for concurrence with its "no adverse effect" determination for this project proposal.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The National Park Service proposes building a new visitor center in the location of the existing visitor center and returning at minimum priority museum objects, if not all museum collections, to the park or vicinity through the provision of an appropriate curatorial space. These changes would improve interpretive and educational programming, return much of the collection to the park or vicinity by providing a state of the art collections storage facility, and honor the longstanding trust relationship between the National Park Service and the tribes historically associated with the site. The provision of an appropriate curatorial space would allow irreplaceable artifacts related to the Battle of Little Bighorn currently stored in an NPS facility in Arizona to be returned home. Another purpose of the plan is to provide better access to the collections and the information in the archives to the tribes and other stakeholders.

This undertaking would build a new visitor center in the location of the existing visitor center. The new visitor center would be approximately 10,600 square feet on two floors or approximately the same size as the existing building, which is also a two-story building with a garden level and main floor. In contrast to the existing 1952 concrete-block building, the new visitor center would be designed to blend with the surrounding landscape, reducing visual impacts on any historic properties present by using measures such as vegetative screening, appropriate construction materials, and scale and massing of buildings.

A curatorial space could either be incorporated into the new visitor center rebuild or annexed to or adjacent to the NPS administrative office. The new curation center would be approximately 7,000 square feet and would be built within the previously disturbed area adjacent to the administrative office. It is estimated that a minimum of 17,600 square feet is required to meet all Visitor Center and curatorial needs. Approximately 4,200 square feet of this estimate would be new ground disturbance and would be located adjacent to the existing footprint of the administrative building.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT DISMISSED

Other alternatives were considered but dismissed in order to meet the purpose and need for this planning process. They are described in more detail in chapter 1 of the *Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument General Management Plan Amendment / Environmental Assessment* (attachment).

AREA OF POTENTIAL EFFECT

Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument is 17 miles south of Hardin, Montana. The National Monument is surrounded by the Crow Indian Reservation. It encompasses a roughly rectangular main area on the east bank of the Little Bighorn River, the much smaller Reno-Benteen area approximately two miles south of the main area, and a two-lane road connecting these areas. The area of potential effect (APE) includes areas of both direct and indirect potential effects on any of the characteristics that make historic properties in the area of potential effect eligible for or listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) (see figure 1).

Area of Direct Potential Effect

The area of direct potential effect is equal to the construction footprint for the replacement visitor center and the curatorial facility space annexed to or adjacent to the administrative building, and project staging and materials laydown areas (figures 1, 2, and 11). The area of direct potential effects considers effects on both aboveground and belowground historic resources, while the area of indirect potential effects only considers aboveground resources.

There are two discontiguous construction footprints for the project: the visitor center and the potential curatorial facility, annexed or adjacent to the administrative building. The total footprint would be approximately 17,600 square feet for the two buildings: 4,200 square feet for the curation center and 13,400 square feet for the replacement visitor center. All construction activities would take place within areas previously disturbed by construction of a recent and non-historical nature, including large-scale earth moving for foundations and/or mass grading for the construction of the visitor center and LIBI administrative area (figure 2).

It is proposed that all staging and laydown areas will be in areas already used for similar purposes in the maintenance yard, administrative parking areas, and various park storage areas. Visitor parking areas will be used during construction, but it is not anticipated the tour road would be used for construction traffic.

Area of Indirect Potential Effect

The area of indirect potential effect takes into account reasonably foreseeable potential indirect effects resulting from the proposed project including visual effects and changes in use of historic resources, traffic flow, and noise. For the purposes of this project, the area of indirect potential effect has been defined as a ¼-mile buffer from the construction footprints of the visitor center and potential curatorial space near the administrative building, as the proposed buildings would be difficult to see farther than ¼-mile away (figure 1).

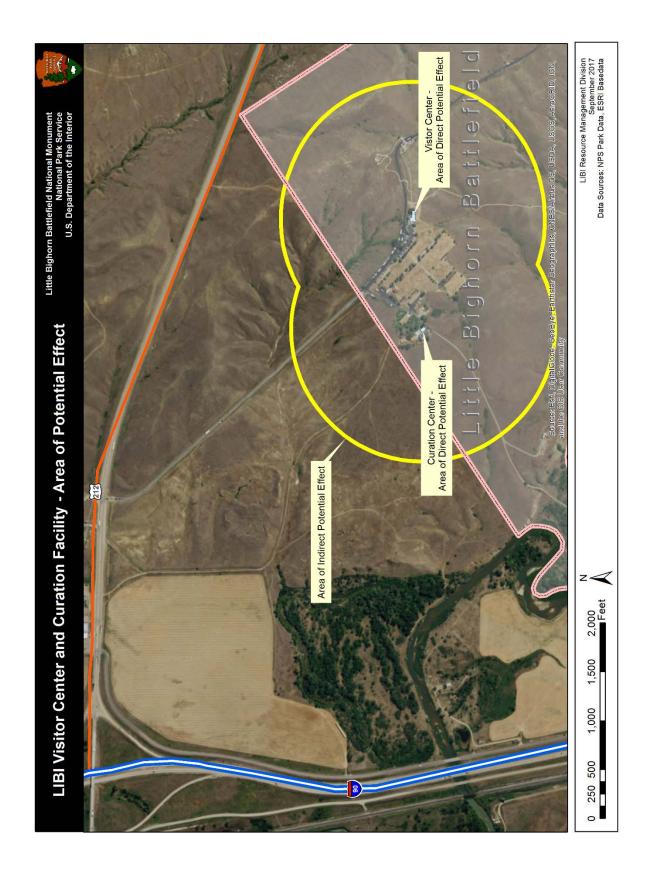


Figure 1. Map of the areas of direct and indirect potential effect.

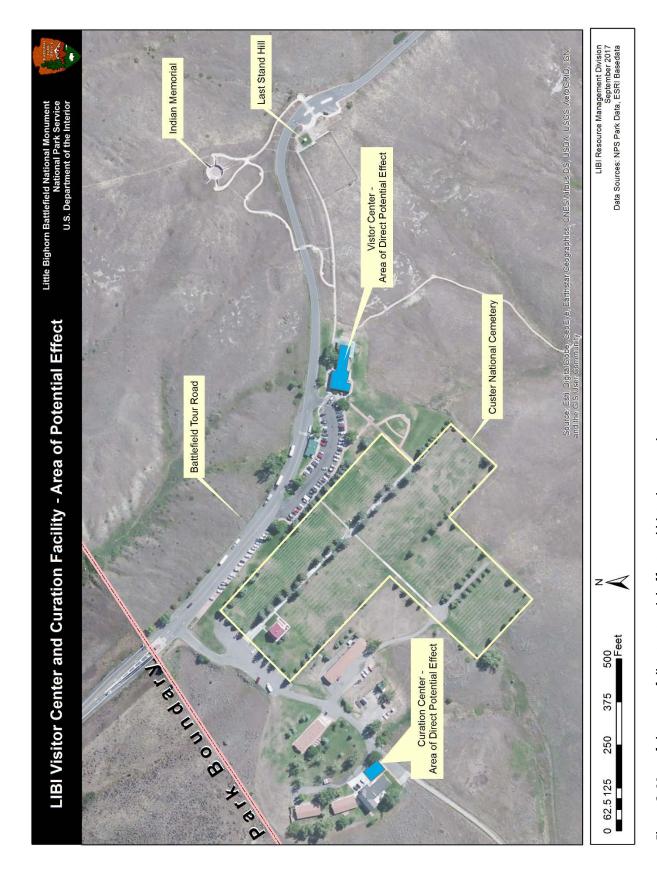


Figure 2. Map of the area of direct potential effect and historic properties.

IDENTIFICATION OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

A search of NPS records and a cultural records search for the area of potential effect completed by the Montana SHPO on February 17, 2017, show that historic resources eligible for or listed in the National Register of Historic Places within the area of potential effect include archeological site 24BH2175 (the Custer Battlefield itself), and the Custer Battlefield Historic District, including these contributing resources: Last Stand Hill, the Custer National Cemetery, the Seventh Cavalry Markers on Last Stand Hill, and the Battlefield Tour Road Route (figure 2). In 2010, the National Park Service completed a cultural landscape inventory (CLI) that comprehensively inventoried all culturally and historically significant features at Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. A complete inventory of such resources is included in the cultural landscape inventory and is incorporated herein by reference (NPS 2010).

The National Park Service completed many well-documented efforts to identify and analyze historic properties within and beyond the area of potential effect prior to this project. These studies were routinely submitted to historic preservation officers for review and comment, and some are recognized as seminal works in the field of battlefield archeology (e.g., Fox 1983, Scott et al. 1989, Scott and Fox 1987). In addition to the cultural landscape inventory, the National Park Service also completed an NRHP nomination for Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, examining park historic properties in detail. Because of this record of intensive efforts to identify historic properties of all kinds within and beyond the area of potential effect, the National Park Service determines that no new efforts to identify historic properties need be undertaken for this project.

Archeological Resources

Archeological surveys in and around the area of potential effect were undertaken in 1958, 1977, 1983, 1984, 1998, 2002, 2004, 2006, and 2015. According to Fox (1983), much or all of the area within the area of potential effect has been disturbed by park facility development. Documented disturbances include the old park entrance road, the current tour road, utilities and water lines, parking lots, the 1952 visitor center, and the 1961 park administration and housing campus, including buildings, drives, and parking lots, the 1894 superintendent's lodge, and several areas where earlier buildings and lanes once existed. These disturbed areas did not yield battle period artifacts during those archeological surveys (see table 1).

In 2004, an archeological survey was conducted on the lawns adjacent to the visitor center, roughly the area from the current covered patio to the tour road and northeast to the edge of the grassy lawn. The survey encompassed approximately one acre, employing metal detector and visual methods. The area had been previously inventoried during the 1984 archaeological investigations (Scott and Fox 1987), and no 19th-century artifacts were recorded. During the 2004 investigation, no prehistoric or historic sites, features, or objects were located. Metal detectors located numerous objects dating to the post-1950s use of the area as a visitor center. The National Park Service determined that the area is previously disturbed with no archeological integrity, with Montana SHPO concurrence.

Aboveground Resources

In 2010, the National Park Service completed a cultural landscape inventory that comprehensively inventoried all culturally and historically significant landscapes at Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. The cultural landscape inventory determined that "Visually, although many of the primary on, off, and of-site views retain near-historic authenticity, the encroachment of the visitor center on Last Stand Hill, parking lots, and vehicles moving along Battle Ridge Road, along with off-site views of development on adjacent and distant lands reduce the overall visual integrity" (2010: 64).

In 2006, the visitor center's building was determined to be ineligible as an individual building for listing in the national register because of the lack of historic integrity. The Montana SHPO concurred with the determination. The 2010 cultural landscape inventory determined that the administrative buildings post-date the period of significance and are non-contributing features to the cultural landscape. The cultural landscape inventory also determined that the placement of the current visitor center creates "a significant intrusion within the immediate viewshed of Last Stand Hill" (2010:111), and, conversely, that the onsite view of the visitor center does not contribute to the significance of the cultural landscape.

Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument was initially listed in the National Register of Historic Places on October 15, 1966, by administrative action. A detailed nomination form was entered in the National Register of Historic Places on May 1, 1987. In 2010, the National Park Service completed a cultural landscape inventory for Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument.

The CLI boundaries are the same as the historic district boundaries, which match the National Monument boundaries. The cultural landscape inventory proposed an adjustment to the period of significance from 1875-1899 to 1875-1940 and added a higher level of detailed descriptions of the features and the cultural landscape as a whole.

EFFECTS ANALYSIS

The park has produced photographs from various points along the battlefield to aid in the assessment of visual impacts of the current and proposed buildings on the cultural landscape (figures 2-10). These views are representative of the experiences of the viewer from contributing features of the site from which the new buildings might be seen, including Last Stand Hill and the Custer Cemetery. Because the proposed visitor center will be of similar size and placement to the current building, the appearance of the current visitor in these images is a reasonable approximation of the appearance of the proposed replacement structure within the LIBI landscape. Similarly, the proposed siting and design choices for the curation center should result in minimal or no change in views toward the administrative area from contributing features of the site. Therefore, appearance of administrative area in these images is a reasonable approximation of the appearance of the proposed replacement structure within the LIBI landscape.

The proposed project would not change the eligibility defining characteristics of the scenic views and vistas. The existing visitor center and associated roads, parking lots, paved trails, and visitor support buildings are a long-standing component of the landscape at Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. While the visitor center and other parts of the built environment of the site are intrusions on the landscape, its 67-year presence has made it a de facto part of the visitor experience, and specifically experiencing the views from Last Stand Hill and the Custer Cemetery. The cultural landscape inventory recognizes these contrasting aspects of the historic district, stating that:

"Despite external encroachment and ever-increasing visitation, Little Bighorn largely retains its qualities of remoteness and history. The natural setting of the battlefield appears much as it did in 1876, with its scattered markers in isolation or in larger clusters poignantly expressing a moment frozen in time that can be felt and appreciated by visitors to the site. Overall, the strong commemorative message of this memorial landscape has changed only modestly since the time of the War Department administration, and still retains much of its historic character." (2010:69)

The cultural landscape inventory also notes that while the modern buildings and the Custer Cemetery are intrusions on the historic battlefield, their presence has at the same time created contributing features of the cultural landscape, including important vistas. The cultural landscape inventory determined that vistas within the cultural landscape include intentionally designed views

of the battlefield and the surrounding landscape, including the view from the east side of the visitor's center toward Monument Hill and out into the battlefield (2010:131-2). The current proposal intends to preserve and carry over in design this critical part of the visitor experience of the battlefield.

The cultural landscape inventory determined that despite the impacts created by internal site modifications to accommodate visitors, the overall visual landscape is acceptably intact and possesses integrity (2010:131). A replacement visitor center of similar size and placement as the existing building would not diminish the integrity of the site's eligibility defining characteristics as described in the cultural landscape inventory. It is contemplated that a replacement visitor center built using a context sensitive design would reduce the current degree of intrusion by giving design consideration to massing, textures, colors, vegetative screening, and other mitigating measures not considered in 1950. Additionally, any construction-related disturbances (visual, noise, etc.) would be temporary and would last only as long as the period of construction. The proposed project also would not change the use of historic resources beyond the period of construction by altering access or pedestrian or traffic flow within the area of indirect potential effect.

DETERMINATION OF EFFECT

In accordance with the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the National Park Service has completed an assessment of effect for this project. The area of potential effect is entirely located in areas for which resource inventories have been completed. None of those inventories documented the presence of belowground cultural resources. The area of potential effect for direct effects is entirely located in previously disturbed soils, which do not contribute to the eligibility of or listing in the National Register of Historic Preservation of site 24BH2175, the Custer Battlefield, or any other park cultural resources. Construction activities, including equipment storage and materials laydown, will occur in previously disturbed areas such as park maintenance lots.

The proposal does not introduce indirect effects that would alter the integrity of the property's location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, or association. The existing visitor center would be removed and replaced by a building on the footprint of the existing visitor center. It is proposed that the new building will be designed and built using a context sensitive design that will reduce visual impacts to historic properties relative to those of the existing building. The concrete block used on the existing visitor center reflects a lack of sensitivity to the contextual use of materials in earlier eras. The new design would take into account the quality and richness of historically appropriate materials. To ensure that the new design is sensitive to the historic setting, the design process would include progressive design review by the Crow Tribal Historic Preservation Office and other interested parties.

Any construction-related disturbances (visual, noise, etc.) would be temporary and would last only as long as the period of construction. The proposed project would not change the use of historic resources or traffic flow within the area of indirect potential effect. Areas of ground disturbance would be revegetated to their prior state. Therefore, the National Park Service has determined that implementation of the proposed undertaking would have no adverse effect on cultural resources and is in keeping with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.

CONCLUSION

We request concurrence with the results of NPS efforts to identify historic properties within the area of potential effect, and the determination of "no adverse effect" as a result of this project. In the unlikely event that cultural materials are inadvertently discovered during this project, work will be suspended in the area and the state historic preservation office and tribal historic preservation office will be notified.

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- 2005 *Montana Cultural Resource Inventory Form: 24BH 2175.* Crow Agency, Montana: Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument (on file).
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- 2002 Archeological Investigations of the 'Horse Cemetery Site'. NPS Midwest Archeological Center (on file)
- 2006 Archeological Mitigation of the Federal Lands Highway Program Plan to Rehabilitate Tour Road, Route 10, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, Montana. NPS Midwest Archeological Center Technical Report No. 94.

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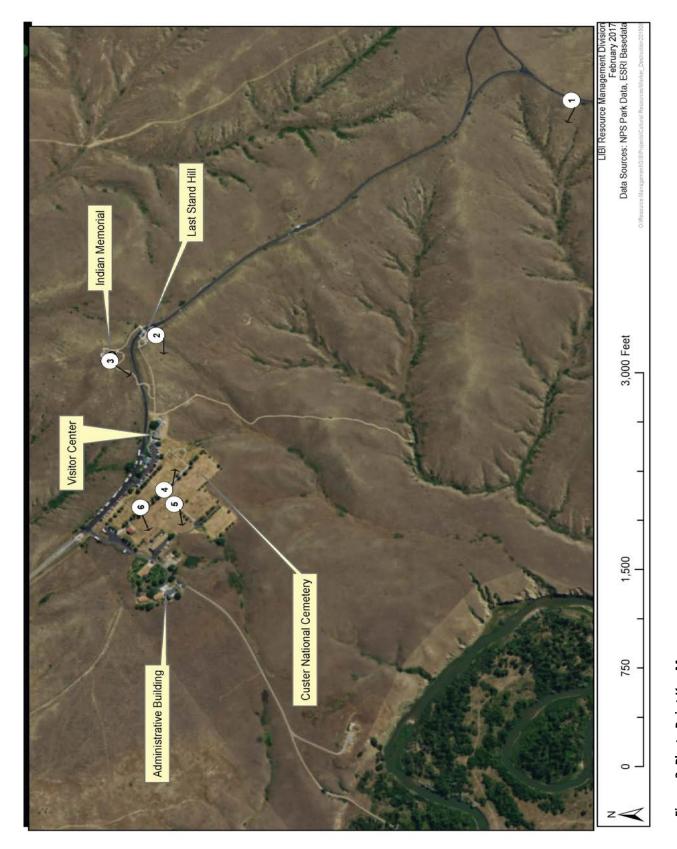


Figure 3. Photo Point Key Map.



Figure 4. View of Administration Area and Visitor Center from Battlefield Tour Road (Photo point 1 on Figure 3 map).



Figure 5. View of Visitor Center from Last Stand Hill. (Photo point 2 on Figure 3 map).



Figure 6. View of Visitor Center from Indian Memorial (Photo point 3 on Figure 3 map).



Figure 7. View of Visitor Center from Custer National Cemetery (Photo point 4 on Figure 3 map).



Figure 8. View of Administration Building from Custer National Cemetery (Photo point 5 on Figure 3 map).



Figure 9. View of Administration Area from Custer National Cemetery (Photo point 6 on Figure 3 map).



Figure 10. Administration building as viewed from Maintenance Shop (Photo point 6 on Figure 3 map).

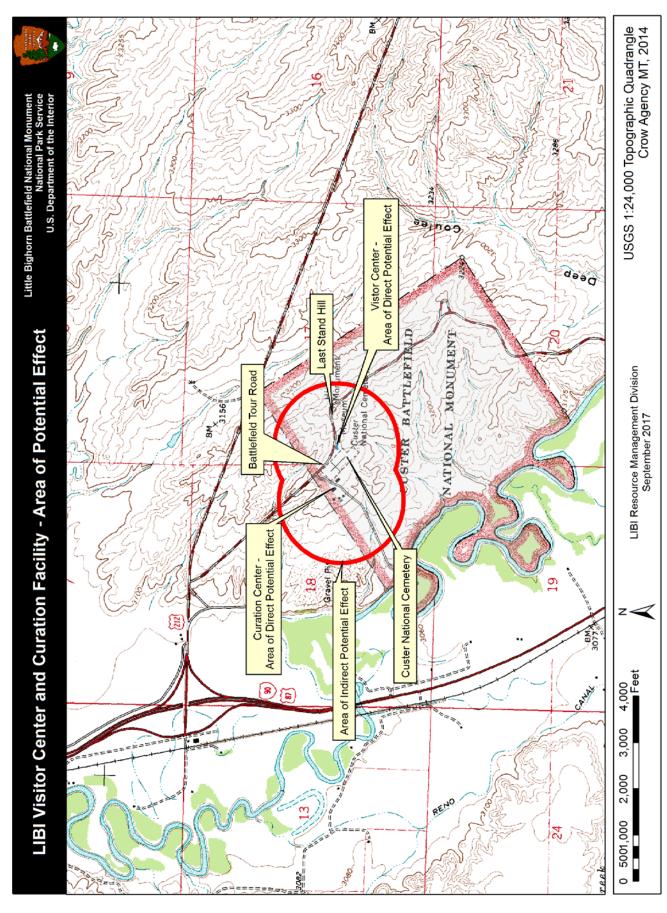


Figure 11. 1:24,000 scale USGS topographic quadrangle showing project area and historic properties. 1" = 2,000

Table 1. Archeological Inventories in the Area of Potential Effect

Report Date	Title	Report	TRS
1/1/1985	ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS INTO THE CUSTER BATTLE	BH 6 793	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section: 17
4/1/1987	ROCKY MOUNTAIN ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT REPORT PREHISTORIC RESOURCES OF CUSTER BATTLEFIELD	BH 6 796	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section:
1/1/1988	ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE BATTLE OF THE LITTLE BIGHORN	BH 6 797	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section:
11/1/1983	1983 ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT CUSTER BATTLEFIELD NATIONAL MONUMENT	BH 6 786	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section: 17
6/1/1991	PAPERS ON LITTLE BIGHORN BATTLEFIELD ARCHAEOLOGY: THE EQUIPMENT DUMP, MARKER 7, AND THE RENO CROSSING	BH 6 12528	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section: 17
3/24/1995	WASTE WATER SYSTEM, LITTLE BIGHORN BATTLEFIELD NM	BH 6 17913	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section: 17
1/1/1997	OSTEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF HUMAN SKELETONS EXCAVATED FROM THE CUSTER NATIONAL CEMETARY	BH 6 19420	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section: 17
1/1/1997	A GOOD WALK AROUND THE BOUNDARY: ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVENTORY OF THE DYCK AND OTHER PROPERTIES ADJACENT TO THE LITTLE BIGHORN BATTLEFIELD NATIONAL MONUMENT	BH 6 19474	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section: 17
12/31/1999	BATTLEFIELD-EAST HIGHWAY 212 CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY IN BIG HORN COUNTY, MONTANA	BH 4 22619	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section: 17
2/1/2005	ARCHAEOLOGICAL MITIGATION OF THE FEDERAL LANDS HIGHWAY PROGRAM PLAN TO REHABILITATE TOUR ROAD, ROUTE 10, LITTLE BIGHORN BATTLEFIELD NATIONAL MONUMENT, MONTANA	BH 6 27976	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section: 17
8/1/1996	LITTLE BIGHORN BATTLEFIELD NON-INTRUSIVE CHARACTORIZATION SURVEY FIELD PROJECT, GPR SURVEY. 2 VOLS.	BH 6 32181	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section: 17
1/1/1994	EXHUMATION OF HUMAN REMAINS ON THE PITSCH PROPERTY NEAR LITTLE BIG HORN NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD AND HUMAN OSTEOLOGY OF THE PITSCH BURIALS	BH 6 32188	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section:
4/8/1986	EXHUMATION GRAVE 402, BLOCK B, CUSTER BATTLEFIELD NATIONAL CEMETERY	BH 6 32189	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section: 17

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9/1/1989	TESTING AND EVALUATION OF TWO PREHISTORIC SITES AT CUSTER BATTLEFIELD NATIONAL MONUMENT	BH 6 32190	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section: 17
5/1/1995	OSTEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF SCATTERED HUMAN BONES FROM THE LTTLE BIGHORN BATTLEFIELD NATIONAL MONUMENT	BH 6 32191	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section: 17
7/1/1994	BACK TO THE LITTLE BIGHORN. IN JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION, VOL. 125, JULY1994	BH 6 32193	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section: 17
1/1/2000	HUMAN SKULL AND MANDIBLE (LIBI 1996 HR-1 AND HR-2) ATTRIBUTED TO AND NON HUMAN BONES (LIBI HR-3-HR -6) FOUND ON THE BIGHORN BATTLFIELD, MONTANA	BH 6 32196	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section: 17
1/1/1995	THE CUSTER BATTLEFIELD NATIONAL CEMETERY HUMAN REMAINS IDENTIFICATION PROJECT, CUSTER BATTLEFIELD HISTORICAL AND MUSEUM ASSOC. SYMPOSIUM, 8TH ANNUAL	BH 6 32208	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section: 17
1/1/2010	UNCOVERING HISTORY: THE LEGACY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT THE LITTLE BIGHORN BATTLEFIELD NATIONAL MONUMENT, MT	BH 6 32214	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section: 17
1/1/1991	OH! WHAT TALES BONES COULD TELL AND OFTEN DO. IN GREASY GRASS VOL.7	BH 6 32221	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section: 17
1/1/1988	NAMELESS FACES OF CUSTER BATTLEFIELD	BH 6 32223	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section:
6/1/2008	CUSTER'S LAST DRAG: AN EXAMINATION OF TOBACCO USE AMONG THE SEVENTH CAVALRY DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY	BH 6 32374	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section: 17
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11/4/1999	WATER GAUGING STATION ON THE LITTLE BIGHORN RIVER	BH 6 22413	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section: 18
12/31/1999	BATTLEFIELD-EAST HIGHWAY 212 CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY IN BIG HORN COUNTY, MONTANA	BH 4 22619	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section: 18
3/21/2000	SELECT PORTIONS OF THE WORDEN TO CROW FIBER OPTIC CABLE PROJECT- CHICAGO, BURLINGTON AND QUINCY RAILROAD	BH 5 22779	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section: 18
3/1/2000	INVENTORY AND ASSESSMENT: REINFORCED CONCRETE T-BEAM BRIDGES	ZZ 4 24227	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section: 18
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7/1/2002	ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS OF THE "HORSE CEMETERY" SITE, LITTLE BIGHORN BATTLEFIELD NATIONAL MONUMENT	BH 6 28999	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section: 18
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10/1/2010	INVESTIGATING THE OXBOWS AND TESTING METAL DETECTION EFFICIENCY AT THE LITTLE BIGHORN BATTLEFIELD NATIONAL MONUMENT, MONTANA	BH 6 32678	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section: 18
11/1/2013	MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION: CULTURAL RESOURCE INVESTIGATION OF THREE AREAS UNDER CONSIDERATION AS A REST AREA AND ASSOCIATED FACILITIES NEAR CROW AGENCY, MONTANA.	BH 4 37568	Township:3 S Range:35 E Section: 18