# **FINAL Report**

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# Yellowstone River Human Impacts Timeline



Prepared for:

Yellowstone River Conservation District Council



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### **1 Introduction**

This report describes the results of a Human Impacts Timeline assessment of the Yellowstone River corridor within three counties (Stillwater, Yellowstone and Dawson). The focus of the timeline is the determination of approximate construction dates of physical features within the corridor such as dikes, levees, armor, and transportation encroachments. The report describes the procedures utilized and provides a preliminary summary of results. This study is intended to be a Pilot Study for assessing the practicality of the mapping process and for reviewing the types of analysis that may be possible from the mapping. The study supports the Yellowstone River Conservation Districts Council's (YRCDC) ongoing efforts to prepare a Cumulative Effects Study for the Yellowstone River Corridor.

This work was performed for the Custer County Conservation District and the Yellowstone River Conservation Districts Council.

The physical features mapping consists of the following primary tasks:

- For Stillwater, Yellowstone and Dawson Counties, review the 1950s, 1976-77, 1995 and 2004 photography for evidence of physical features within the river corridor;
- Map the extent of each feature as lines within the project Geographic Information System  $(GIS)$ :
- Attribute each feature with information describing the feature type, function, and presence/absence at the time of photography;
- Perform a preliminary analysis of the resulting data;
- Review the results for evidence of temporal and spatial trends; and
- Make recommendations for continued mapping.

The Human Impacts Timeline contract also contains a second task, which is to compile a series of tables that describe Relevant Historical Occurrences. This task involves reviewing available information for the three counties describing the timing and location of other noteworthy events within the corridor, including ice jams, historic floods, and bridge construction. The results of this task will be provided in a separate document.

The methodology and results used for the Physical Features Mapping are discussed in detail in the following sections.

# **2 Methodology**

Mapping physical features as a function of time of construction within the Yellowstone River Corridor is a multistep process. The steps include: compiling available feature mapping, reviewing imagery, attributing and analysis. Even with this process of integrating multiple data sources and reviewing imagery, it is difficult to capture all the features existing on the ground. Additionally, attributing each feature properly can be challenging due to variable image quality, vegetation cover, and other factors. In all cases, every attempt was made to ensure the resulting GIS data accurately captures the conditions on the ground.

It should be noted that the goal of this project is a *timeline* of physical features. This implies that features have a temporal aspect to them. Features may be present in early photography, but not visible in later photography. This change may be due either to removal of the feature by human or natural events, or the feature may not be visible in later photography due to changes in vegetation. In these cases, visual clues such as the lack of bank migration or the expression of a linear feature on the LiDAR imagery were used to assess whether a feature is present or absent. In other cases, a feature may be included in the dataset that is not visible in any photography. These features were most likely mapped as part of the original Rapid Aerial Assessment (RAA) and were assumed to be present, even though they were not clearly evident in the photography.

One final component to the data that is considered is the functional nature of each feature. For this study, "*functionality"* reflects the level of influence of the feature on the natural channel processes of lateral migration and floodplain inundation. Examples of functional features are riprapped alluvial channel margins, diversion structures, and levees along the river bank. Nonfunctional features include bank armor that protects a non-alluvial valley wall. As features were developed over time, a feature that was functional in the 50's may become non-functional at a later date as other features take precedence. This is a complex, time-consuming process in the GIS, but important for understanding the influence of human features on the river over time.

Each of these complexities is captured in the attributes assigned to each feature. The actual process for developing the data set, along with the associated attributes are discussed in detail in the following sections.

# **2.1 Compilation of Existing Mapping**

For this project, much of the initial physical feature data compilation was performed by Jim Robinson (DNRC). All available data GIS sources defining physical features for Stillwater, Yellowstone and Dawson counties were integrated into a single data set. These included:

- Physical Features Inventory from the Rapid Aerial Assessment,
- NRCS field mapping, and
- Feature mapping from 2004 LiDAR/high-resolution digital photography.

The resulting data provided the best 'current' (2004) data set of physical features available and formed the starting point for the Human Impacts Timeline mapping effort.

#### **2.2 Base Map Imagery**

The project work scope calls for assessing physical features using the 1950, 1976, 1995 and 2004 image data sets. To provide the most complete mapping available, as well as to assist in

assessing the features in the core data sets, the imagery from 2001 (color infrared) and 2005 (color NAIP) were also assessed. Additionally, shaded relief LiDAR (2004) data was referenced to help identify hidden or subtle features. By using the complete suite of available imagery there were more clues available to assess the existence, functionality, extent, and timing of each feature.

The ground resolution and image quality of each of the data sets plays a large role in feature recognition. Within the project area, the image quality ranges from excellent (2001) to poor (1950). The general conditions of each image set are described in Table 2-1 below. The reliability of the mapping for each feature is directly related to the quality of the imagery, along with other factors such as vegetation cover and shadows. This variability is captured in the HI\_Reliability attribute discussed in Section 2.4.3.



#### **Table 2-1. Summary characteristics of project imagery used in mapping effort.**

#### **2.3 Digitizing Methodology**

To detect temporal changes in the distribution of physical features, the digitizing process involved examining each suite of imagery and assessing each length of riverbank for the presence or absence of physical features. To ensure mapping consistency, features were mapped forwards through time, starting with the 2004 high-resolution orthophotos as a baseline, and moving to successively newer photography. The general workflow sequence is as follows:

- 1) Assess the 2004 imagery.
	- a. Review each feature in the *current* dataset and confirm its existence using visual clues.
	- b. Remove or flag suspect features.
	- c. Add additional features that were missing in the dataset.
	- d. Assign the appropriate attributes to each feature.
- 2) Review the LiDAR shaded relief to identify any hidden or incorrectly mapped features.
- a. Add any missing features.
- b. Remove or flag suspect features.
- c. Assign the appropriate attributes.
- 3) Review the 1950 imagery.
	- a. Assess whether the mapped features are present. Attribute each feature as necessary to reflect the presence or absence of the feature in the 1950 imagery.
	- b. Split existing feature lines to reflect the extent of feature in 1950. For example, a section of bank protection may be shorter in 1950 than it was in 2004. Here the 2004 line is split. One piece shows presence in both 2004 and 1950, while the other piece only shows existence in 2004.
	- c. Add any missing features.
	- d. Assign the appropriate attributes.
- 4) Repeat Step 3 for the remaining imagery (1976, 1995, 2001 and 2005).

#### **2.4 Feature Attributes**

A variety of attributes were assigned for each feature to reflect the feature class (i.e. irrigation, transportation, etc.), type (riprap, diversion, levee, etc.), existence at time of photography, and functionality at time of photography. These attributes are discussed in detail in the following sections. The goal of the attributes is to allow the analysis of the mapped features and identify trends in physical feature development throughout the period of record as they relate to both river reach and geomorphic channel type.

#### **2.4.1 Feature Classes (FEATURECLASS):**

The feature class defines the base function of the feature. Is it an irrigation, transportation, bank protection, or other on/off channel feature? A feature may actually bridge two different feature class categories. For example, riprap bank protection may provide both stream stabilization, as well as irrigation ditch protection. In this case, the feature would be marked as an Irrigation Feature, as it protects irrigation infrastructure.

The range of values in the feature class domain include the following:

- 1) Irrigation Feature Dikes, levees and other features associated with irrigation infrastructure:
	- a. Ditches
	- b. Canal levees
	- c. Pump station protection
- 2) Other Off Channel Feature Dikes, levees, and other features that are off channel:
	- a. Field edges
	- b. Random dirt/gravel push-up berms that are behind other features
	- c. Power line tower stands
- 3) Transportation Encroachment Feature any feature associated with transportation:
	- a. County Road includes paved roads and major unpaved roads
	- b. Railroad
	- c. Interstate
	- d. Bridge approaches
	- e. Other roads (minor gravel roads, ranch roads, driveways)
- 4) Stream Stabilization Feature a feature that stops bank erosion and prevents lateral channel migration. These features include:
- a. Riprap
- b. Car bodies
- c. Flow deflectors
- d. Levees that are on the river bank
- 5) Other any other features, such as:
	- a. Sewage plants
	- b. Refineries

#### **2.4.2 Feature Types (FEATURETYPE):**

The Feature Type attribute defines the actual type of structure.

Possible values in the domain include the following:

- 1) Bridge Approach Any road or railroad, existing or historic, that ramps up to a bridge crossing.
- 2) Car Bodies Car bodies are usually not identifiable in the GIS. These features have been identified in the NRCS Physical Features Inventory.
- 3) Concrete Riprap or Rock Riprap– It is generally impossible to indentify the type of riprap in any photography. Any riprap that is noted as concrete or rock was likely mapped in the field by the NRCS and no further field investigation has been undertaken to verify this mapping. If additional NRCS-mapped features were extended, they generally were attributed as the same type (concrete or rock) as the original feature. Note: For riprap features digitized by DTM, it was impossible to determine the actual type of material used. In this case, the feature took on the attributes of adjacent bank protection, or it was assumed to be rock.
- 4) County Road County road features consist of any road other than the Interstate that has, or appears to have, a sizeable road prism. This includes both paved and dirt roads. In many cases a dirt road may convert to a paved road over time, and no additional attributing was made to note the change. Minor roads, driveways, and temporary features are generally mapped as "Other".
- 5) Floodplain Dike/Levee any dike or levee. These features include canal dikes, streambank protection, field berms, etc.
- 6) Flow Deflector Flow deflectors consist of erosion control features such as barbs. Although these are typically point features, they were digitized as linear features comprising the entire series of deflectors. Where the flow deflectors are in association with other bank protections such as riprap or levees, they are attributed as flow deflectors.
- 7) In-Channel Diversion An in-channel diversion is any features that extends across a stream channel. This includes permanent dams, rock diversions, and semi-permanent diversions such as maintained gravel berms.
- 8) Interstate The Interstate feature type specifically identifies embankments associated with I-90 and I-94.
- 9) Other Minor roads, driveways or other linear features that do not appear to have a road prism and thus do not impact the river corridor or floodplain are described as "other".
- 10) Railroad The railroad grade commonly encroaches into the stream corridor. These linear embankments are specifically identified as rail lines.

11) Steel Retaining Wall – a single retaining wall occurrence just below Billings was attributed as such.

#### **2.4.3 Mapping Reliability (HI\_Reliability):**

The Mapping Reliability attribute assigns a reliability rank to each individual mapped feature. The purpose of assigning a reliability rank is to estimate the degree of uncertainty associated with a particular mapped feature. Some of the mapped features are not clearly visible on a particular photo set; their presence is inferred based on indirect information such as the photo interpreter's knowledge of channel behavior and visible evidence in other photo suites. In general, if features were visible on the imagery, they were marked as High Reliability. If they were not visible, or interpreted from other information or sources, then they were marked as Moderate or Low Reliability.

The values associated with the Reliability domain include the following:

- *High Reliability* Feature is clearly visible.
- *Medium Reliability* Feature is inferred from other information.
- *Low Reliability* Feature is not visible and no evidence of the feature was noted, but existence was noted from other sources.

#### **2.4.4 River Function (Function):**

The functionality of a feature refers to its relative level of influence on the active river channel at the time of photography. Some interpretation is used here to flag features that have the potential to influence processes such as lateral channel migration. In general, it is fairly straightforward to identify the functionality of bank armor, as that functionality is dictated by position relative to an active channel bankline. In contrast, the functionality of dikes and levees that are located out of the active channel corridor is difficult to discern without information regarding their hydraulic impacts on floodwaters. Dikes and levees were attributed in terms of apparent functionality with respect to either their impacts on channel migration, side channel access, or overbank flow patterns. However, due to inherent uncertainties in that attribution, the data for these features are summarized as total length of the mapped features, with no assumption regarding their overall impacts on flooding extents.

In the mapping effort, attempts have been made to avoid duplicating the function of features that run parallel to each other. For example, if a road is behind a riprapped bank, then the riprap would have a 'Yes' for Function, while the road would be 'No'. See Figure 2-1 below for an example.

- Yes The feature is clearly influencing, or has the potential to restrict the lateral migration of the river.
- Maybe These tended to be major features that were a moderate distance from the active channel, but still have the potential to restrict the flow of water, or the lateral migration of the channel in flood events.
- No The feature is usually a great distance from the channel, is behind other bank protection features, or is along a non-alluvial boundary.



**Figure 2-1. 2004 image and features from reach A18. The orange levee behind the green/blue riprap is not functional, while the riprap is functional.** 

# **3 Human Impacts Timeline Analysis**

For each time series evaluated, the total length of mapped physical features has been quantified to determine their spatial and temporal distributions. The following sections include a series of preliminary plots that reflect that summary data, including cumulative length of stream stabilization measures, irrigation features, and transportation-related encroachments. The lengths of these features are summarized by the time frames defined by the aerial photography, as well as by county, geomorphic reach, and geomorphic reach type.

### **3.1 County-Based Summaries**

The physical features data have been summarized by county to show general trends in their distribution and rate of emplacement. The extents of the features are described in terms of the percent of bankline affected to allow direct comparison of the three counties (Stillwater, Yellowstone, and Dawson).

#### **3.1.1 Irrigation Feature Class**

The majority of irrigation features, which include dikes, levees, ditches, and pump protection armor, were largely in place by 1950 (Figure 3-1). In both Stillwater and Yellowstone Counties, the length of these features is equivalent to just over 10 percent of the 2001 primary channel bank length, and in Dawson County, the length of functional irrigation features is approximately 6 percent of the primary channel bank length.



**Figure 3-1. Irrigation feature extents for each county as percent of primary channel bankline, 1950-2005.** 

A plot of the percent change in total length of irrigation features since 1950 shows a continual increase in Yellowstone County through time, and consistent conditions in Dawson County (Figure 3-2). In Stillwater County, the total length of these features increased a few percent between 1950 and 2001, and no change has been identified since 2001.



**Figure 3-2. Percent increase in irrigation features relative to 1950 by county.** 

#### **3.1.2 Stream Stabilization Feature Class**

Stream stabilization measures include features that protect the bankline and limit lateral channel migration. For this summary, only those stabilization measures identified as functional at the time of photography are included. Because stream stabilization measures are placed on both the main channel and side channels, the length of bankline present at any given time frame is not truly represented by the primary channel alone. In order to more accurately reflect the percent of bankline affected by armor, it was necessary to calculate the total amount of primary and side channel bankline present in each time frame. To determine the length of bankline that would potentially be armored, the channel length was calculated in terms of primary plus anabranching channel length for each reach. This value was then doubled to estimate the total amount of bankline present in 1950, 1976, 1995, and 2001. Because flowlines have not been digitized on any photography post-2001, the 2001 bankline lengths were used to estimate the extent of armor present in 2004 and 2005.

All three counties show increases in stream stabilization lengths from 1950 to 2005 (Figure 3-3). Currently, Yellowstone County has the most extensive stabilization, with approximately 9% of the entire bankline affected (the bankline length includes the primary channel plus any anabranching side channels). In Dawson County, less than 2% of the total bankline is affected by stabilization measures.



**Figure 3-3. Stream stabilization feature extents for each county as percent of total bankline, 1950-2005.** 

Although Dawson County has the lowest total percent of bankline affected by stream stabilization measures, it shows the greatest relative increase in bank protection length since 1950 (Figure 3-4). The vast majority of this increase, which is on the order of a five-fold increase, occurred between 1950 and 1976, resulting from armor associated with the Glendive levee. During this time frame, the functional stream stabilization measures in Dawson County increased from 1,689 feet (1950) to 10,508 feet (1976). From 1950 to 2005, all three counties show continual increases in percent of stabilized bankline.



**Figure 3-4. Percent increase in stream stabilization features relative to 1950 by county.** 

#### **3.1.3 Transportation Encroachment Feature Class**

Roads, railroads, and bridge approaches that encroach into the river corridor were largely in place in all three counties by 1976 (Figure 3-5). However, all counties show a considerable increase between 1950 and 1976 (Figure 3-6). In Yellowstone County, the length of features attributed as transportation encroachment increased almost 30% between 1950 and 1976. Note that the slight dips in the percent of transportation encroachment in some years reflects a removal of some features as a bridge was removed or replaced.



**Figure 3-5. Transportation encroachment feature extents for each county as percent of total bankline, 1950- 2005.** 



**Figure 3-6. Percent increase in encroaching transportation features relative to 1950 by county.** 

#### **3.1.4 Dikes and Levees Feature Types**

The total lengths of dikes and levees in the river corridor through time have been summarized by feature type. A summary of the total length of dikes and levees presented as a percent of the 2001 main channel bank length indicates that Yellowstone County has the largest overall extent of mapped dike and levee features, amounting to over 40% of the total 2001 primary channel bank length (Figure 3-7). Yellowstone County shows a continual increase in dike/levee extent through time. In Stillwater County, the total length of dikes and levees is equivalent to just over 5% of the primary channel bankline, and in Dawson County, that value is approximately 13%. It is important to note, however, that the functionality of these features is unknown; numerous dikes and levees are shadowed by other features or located on the margin of the active floodplain. Thus the 40% value for Yellowstone County overestimates the length of dikes and levees that markedly affect channel migration, side channel access, and flooding patterns in the stream corridor.



**Figure 3-7. Dike and levee feature type extents for each county as percent of total bankline, 1950-2005.** 

In order to assess the increase of dike/levee length in each county through time, the data have been summarized in terms of annualized increase in feature type length (Figure 3-8). For this calculation, 1900 was assumed as the onset of dike and levee construction. The results of this calculation indicate that, assuming that dikes and levees were not present in 1900, the most rapid phases of dike construction occurred in Yellowstone County from 1900-1950 (2601 feet per year), and from 1995-2001 (3167 feet per year). If dikes and levees were constructed prior to 1900, then the 1900-1950 rate of change is overestimated.



**Figure 3-8. Dike and levee length in terms of annual increase (ft/year) for each county.** 

#### **3.1.5 Bank Armor Feature Types**

A summary of functional bank armor feature types, which include rock riprap, concrete riprap, flow deflectors, car bodies, and steel retaining walls, shows continual increases through time in all three counties (Figure 3-9). When the total length of mapped armor is normalized in terms of the total bank length provided by both the primary and side (anabranching) channels, approximately 8% of the bankline within Yellowstone County is armored. Just over 5% of the bankline in Stillwater County is armored, and in Dawson County, bank armor is present on less than 2% of the total bankline. These values do not include armor that is along bedrock valley margins.



**Figure 3-9. Bank armor feature type extents for each county as percent of total available bankline, 1950- 2005.** 

When the bank armor extent data are summarized in terms of annual increase in bank armor length (ft/year), results indicate that the greatest rate of armor construction occurred in Yellowstone County between 1995 and 2001 (~4500 feet per year; Figure 3-10). In contrast, Dawson County has never exceeded an annual construction rate of 500 feet per year of bank armor.



**Figure 3-10. Bank armor length in terms of annual increase (ft/year) for each county.** 

A breakdown of types of functional bank armor indicates that car bodies, concrete riprap, and flow deflectors are most prevalent in Yellowstone County, whereas rock riprap is most extensive in Stillwater County (Figure 3-11).



**Figure 3-11. Percent of bankline protected by specific types of armor techniques, summarized by county.** 

#### **3.1.6 Shadowed Features**

Over the last 55 years, numerous features present in the stream corridor have been superseded by a more recent feature, which has likely made them ineffective with regard to their original purpose. A plot of the types of features that can be described as "shadowed" by another, more recent feature, is shown in Figure 3-12. The results of this summary indicate that the vast majority of shadowed features are located in Yellowstone County, and consist of road embankments, railroad embankments, and dikes and levees. This supports previous comments regarding the variable functionality of dikes and levees (Section 3.1.4).



**Figure 3-12. Lengths of features that became shadowed by another feature from 1950-2005.** 

#### **3.2 Reach-Based Summaries**

As part of the Cumulative Effects Assessment of the Yellowstone River corridor, the river has been divided into four major regions, referred to as Region A through Region D. Region A extends from near the Park/Sweetgrass County Line to the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone confluence near Laurel. Region B extends from the Clarks Fork to the Bighorn River, and Region C reaches from the mouth of the Bighorn to the mouth of the Powder River. Region D extends from the Powder River confluence to the Missouri River in McKenzie County, North Dakota. Within these regions, the river has been further divided into a series of 66 reaches that reflect general channel form as observable on aerial photography (AGI and DTM, Inc., 2004). These reach types reflect varying types of channel forms that are observable on aerial photography.

The reaches evaluated in this effort include Reaches A10 through A16 in Stillwater County, Reaches A17, A18, and B1 through B12 in Yellowstone County, and Reaches D3 through D9 in Dawson County. For a description of these reaches, see the report entitled *"Geomorphic Reconnaissance and GIS Development Yellowstone River, Montana: Springdale to the Missouri River Confluence"* (AGI and DTM, Inc., 2004).

#### **3.2.1 Irrigation Feature Class**

When summarized by reach, the human impacts timeline assessment shows that the largest relative extents of irrigation related features occur in reaches A17 and A18, and in Reach D9. Reaches A17 and A18 are located near Laurel, and Reach D9 is located at Intake. In each of these reaches, irrigation feature lengths exceed 40% of the total primary channel bank length.



**Figure 3-13. Irrigation feature class extents for each reach as percent of total bankline, 1950-2005.** 

#### **3.2.2 Stream Stabilization Feature Class**

With respect to functional stream stabilization features, Reaches A18 through B4 all show in excess of 10% total bankline affected (Figure 3-14). These reaches extend from Laurel through Billings to the Huntley Diversion Dam.



**Figure 3-14. Stream stabilization feature class for each reach as percent of total bankline, 1950-2005.** 

#### **3.2.3 Transportation Encroachment Feature Class**

The features mapped as transportation encroachments affect the greatest proportion of the stream corridor in Reach A10, where a corridor length equivalent to over 90% of the total bank length is affected by county roads, interstate, and the railroad (Figure 3-15). This reach is located at Reed Point. Transportation encroachments are also consistently high downstream of Reed Point to Reach A14, near Columbus. From Pompey's Pillar (B8) to the Bighorn River confluence (B12), transportation encroachments exceed 30% of the bankline length, and at Glendive (D6) that value exceeds 40%.



**Figure 3-15. Transportation encroachment feature class for each reach as percent of total bankline, 1950- 2005.** 

#### **3.3 Channel Type-Based Summaries**

The classification approach adopted for the Cumulative Effects Assessment reflects the overall channel pattern (straight, meandering, braided, or anabranching), as well as the relative role of the valley wall or inset high terraces in confining the river corridor (unconfined, partially confined, confined). A total of 10 channel types have been developed for the entire river, and 7 of those types are present in the three assessed counties (Table 3-1). In order to identify the trends within a given reach type, the physical features have been summarized by these 7 channel types. For a more detailed description of the geomorphology of each of these reaches, see the report entitled *"Geomorphic Reconnaissance and GIS Development Yellowstone River, Montana: Springdale to the Missouri River Confluence"* (AGI and DTM, Inc., 2004).

<b>Type</b> Abbrev.	<b>Classification</b>	<b>Reaches</b>	<b>Slope</b> (f t / ft)	<b>Planform/</b> <b>Sinuosity</b>	<b>Major Elements of Channel Form</b>	
<b>UA</b>	Unconfined anabranching	A17, A18, B5, B9, B12,	< 0.0022	Mult. Channels	Primary thread with vegetated islands	
<b>PCA</b>	Partially confined anabranching	A14, A16, B8, B11, D5, D7, D8	< 0.0023	Mult. Channels	Partial bedrock control; Primary thread with vegetated islands	
$_{\text{UB}}$	Unconfined braided	B1, B3, B7	< 0.0024	Mult. Channels	Primary thread with unvegetated gravel bars; Average braiding parameter generally $>2$ for entire reach	
<b>PCB</b>	Partially confined braided	A11, A12, A15, B2, B6	< 0.0022	Mult. Channels	Partial bedrock control; primary thread with gravel bars; Average braiding parameter generally $>2$	
<b>PCM</b>	Partially confined meandering	<b>B</b> 10	< .0014	Sinuosity $>1.2$	Partial bedrock control; main channel thread with point bars; average braiding parameter $<$ 2	
<b>PCS</b>	Partially confined straight	A <sub>10</sub> , B <sub>4</sub>	< .0020	Sinuosity $<$ 1.3	Partial bedrock control; low sinuosity channel along valley wall	
PCM/I	Partially confined meandering/islands	D <sub>4</sub> , D <sub>6</sub> , D <sub>9</sub>	< .0007	Mult. Channels	Partial bedrock control; sinuous main thread with stable, vegetated bars	

**Table 3-1. Reach classification summary.** 

#### **3.3.1 Dikes and Levees**

The total length of dikes and levees summarized by reach type indicates that the Partly Confined Straight (PCS) channel type has the highest extent of dikes/levees relative to the total bank length in the reach (Figure 3-16). This reach type includes reach B4, which is a long straight reach that includes Huntley Diversion Dam. In the other PCS reach type (A10), no levees were mapped. Hence the extensive feature length for this reach type is likely related directly to infrastructure associated with Huntley Diversion Dam. This suggests that this reach may be "forced" into its channel type due to human impacts.





The Unconfined Anabranching reach type has dikes/levees that constitute over 25% of the total bank length (Figure 3-16). This reach type is typified by split flow and a dynamic planform, which has likely driven the construction of levee and dike features. The Partially Confined Meandering/Islands (PCM/I) channel type shows a major increase in percent of bankline levees between 1950 and 1976. This increase is associated with the installation of the Glendive levee.

#### **3.3.2 Bank Armor**

A plot of bank armor extent summarized by reach type includes that the most extensive bank protection is found in the PCS channel type, which includes the Huntley Diversion Dam reach (B4). The relatively high bank protection extent values in this reach type are due to the length of the armor in Reach B4, as well as the shortage of side channels in reach (lower total bank length). These data, in combination with the dike/levee results described above, suggest that Reach B4 may be a forced channel type due to human impacts.

The remaining reach types that have relatively high extents of armored bank include the Unconfined Anabranching (UA), Unconfined Braided (UB), and Partially Confined Braided (PCB) reach types. The braided reach types are characterized by split flow, extensive open gravel bars, and relatively rapid rates of bank erosion. The relatively high extents of bank armor are likely the result high rates of channel migration characteristic of the braided reach types. Reaches that are meandering (PCM/I), or anabranching reaches that follow the valley wall (PCA) tend to have relatively low extent of functional armoring.



**Figure 3-17. Percent of total bankline affected by "functional" armor, summarized by geomorphic reach type.** 

#### **3.4 Urban vs. Rural Reach Summaries**

Although reach type appears to have some influence on the extents of bank armor and levees in the assessed area, the level of development within the reaches is quite variable. In order to discern the extents of these features in rural versus urban reaches, each reach was generally

classified in terms of its level of development. Urban reaches are those located within the communities of Reed Point, Columbus, Laurel, Billings, and Glendive (Table 3-2).

<b>County</b>	<b>Reach</b>	<b>Reach Type</b>	<b>Urban/Rural</b>	<b>Community</b>
Stillwater	A10	<b>PCS</b>	Urban	Reed Point
	A11	<b>PCB</b>	Rural	
	A12	<b>PCB</b>	Rural	
	A13	<b>PCA</b>	Urban	Columbus
	A14	<b>PCA</b>	Rural	
	A15	<b>PCB</b>	Rural	
	A16	<b>PCA</b>	Rural	
Yellowstone	A17	<b>UA</b>	Rural	
	A18	<b>UA</b>	Urban	Laurel
	B1	<b>UB</b>	Urban	U/S Billings
	B2	<b>PCB</b>	Urban	<b>Billings</b>
	B <sub>3</sub>	<b>UB</b>	Urban	<b>Billings</b>
	B <sub>4</sub>	<b>PCS</b>	Rural	
	B <sub>5</sub>	<b>UA</b>	Rural	
	<b>B6</b>	<b>PCB</b>	Rural	
	B7	<b>UB</b>	Rural	
	<b>B8</b>	<b>PCA</b>	Rural	
	<b>B9</b>	<b>UA</b>	Rural	
	<b>B10</b>	<b>PCM</b>	Rural	
	<b>B11</b>	<b>PCA</b>	Rural	
	<b>B12</b>	<b>UA</b>	Rural	
Dawson	D <sub>4</sub>	PCM/I	Rural	
	D <sub>5</sub>	<b>PCA</b>	Rural	
	D <sub>6</sub>	$\text{PCM}/\text{I}$	Urban	Glendive
	D7	${\rm PCA}$	Rural	
	D <sub>8</sub>	<b>PCA</b>	Rural	
	D <sub>9</sub>	PCM/I	Rural	

**Table 3-2. Urban and rural reach designations.** 

#### **3.4.1 Dikes and Levees**

A summary of dike extent for each reach, sorted by channel type, indicates that in most channel types, the urban reaches have a relatively extensive network of dike and levee features. The exceptions to this trend are in rural Reach B4 at Huntley Diversion (PCS channel type), and in rural Reach A17 just upstream of Columbus (UA channel type), both of which have a relatively high extent of dike/levee features.



**Figure 3-18. Dike and levee extents through time for each reach sorted by reach type, with urban reaches highlighted.** 

A summation of total length of dikes and levees in rural and urban reaches for a given reach type shows that with the exception of straight channel types (PCS), urban reaches cumulatively depict a longer extent of dike features relative to rural reaches of the same type. The anomalous trend in the straight reach type reflects reach B4 at Huntley Diversion, which is a rural reach that shows a large extent of diking (Figure 3-19).



**Figure 3-19. Extent of dikes and levees in rural and urban reach types.** 

#### **3.4.2 Bank Armor**

Bank armor extents for reaches designated as urban or rural are shown in Figure 3-20 and Figure 3-21. The results indicate that urban reaches tend to have a higher extent of bank armor than rural reaches. The primary exception to this is Reach B4 at Huntley Diversion. Also, Reach D6, which includes portions of Glendive, has relatively low armoring extents.



**Figure 3-20. Functional bank armor extents through time for each reach sorted by reach type** 



**Figure 3-21. Extent of functional bank armor in rural and urban reach types.** 

# **4 Conclusions**

This project focused on developing an emplacement timeline for a series of physical features located in the Yellowstone River corridor within Stillwater, Yellowstone and Dawson Counties. To address this goal, aerial photography from the 1950's, 1976-77, 1995, 2001, 2004 and 2005 were assessed for the presence and functionality of features such as bank protection, diversions, dikes and levees.

From this work, the following general conclusions can be drawn from the data.

- The single biggest factor driving bank armoring appears to be urbanization. Reaches in more developed communities tend to have higher armor extents, regardless of reach type.
- Reach B4, which is a rural reach at the Huntley Diversion, has a markedly large extent of both dike/levee features as well as bank armor. The length of active bankline in the reach is relatively low due to limited side channel extent; these data suggest that this may be a geomorphic reach type (currently Partly Confined Straight; PCS) that has been "forced" from another, more dynamic reach type.
- Braided (UB, PCB) and Unconfined Anabranching (UA) reach types in both rural and urban areas consistently show a relatively high extent of bank armoring. When normalized to the high flow bankline length present at the time of photography, the urban braided reaches show consistent increases from 1950 to 2005, from less than 5% bank armor in 1950 to over 10% in 2005. Unconfined Anabranching reach types, which are those reaches with extensive split flow around islands and little valley wall influence, all exceed 5% in total armoring; the urban UA reach evaluated (A18 at Laurel) shows 19% armor.
- Yellowstone County has shown a steady increase in the length of Dike/Levee features throughout the period of record, with the greatest increase happening between 1995 and 2001. This corresponds to a similar increase in functional bank armoring in Yellowstone County, again with the greatest increase occurring between 1995 and 2001. On average, over 5,500 feet of Dike/Levee (1,000 feet) and Bank Armor (4,500 feet) per year was added during that time period. This increase may reflect a response to the high water years of 1996 and 1997, as well as increased pressure to develop near the river.
- Stillwater and Yellowstone counties show a steady increase in total length of functional stream stabilization features from 1950 through 2001. After 2001, the rates of increase largely level off. Dawson County shows a large jump in stream stabilization features between 1950 to 1976. This is associated with the installation of the Glendive levee. A second, smaller increase is seen between 1995 and 2001.
- In Yellowstone County, thousands of feet of road, railroad, and levee features have been eclipsed by more recent features since 1950.
- Features associated with irrigation activities were largely in place by the 1950s. Yellowstone County does show a slight (2%) increase in irrigation features from 1950 to 2005.
- While there was a slight jump in the total length of transportation features for all three counties between 1950 and 1976, since that time, the totals have been stable.

The detailed mapping of physical features in Stillwater, Yellowstone and Dawson Counties showed strong correlations between the locations of physical features, their growth over time, and the types of channels they are associated with. With the exception of channel type, no additional analysis has been made using other geomorphic parameters such as braiding, sinuosity, or Reach Complexity Index (RCI). Additionally, no attempt was made to correlate the presence or absence of physical features with other data sets such as changes in Riparian Vegetation or the Restricted Migration Areas of the Channel Migration Zone work. A logical next step for this work is to look for additional relationships within these other data sets on the reach scale.

# **5 References**

AGI and DTM, Inc., 2004. Geomorphic Reconnaissance and GIS Development, Yellowstone River, Montana: Springdale to the Missouri River Confluence: Report prepared for Custer County Conservation District, Miles City, MT., 108p.



# **Appendix A. Summary of Results (Normalized to 2001 Primary Channel Bank Length)**





























# **Appendix B. Stream Stabilization Feature Class Results**

**(Normalized to High Flow Bank Length at Time of Photography)**













*\*2004 and 2005 features normalized to 2001 bank length*