

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Lander Road-New Fork River Crossing

Other names/site number: New Fork Crossing, 48SU7341

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

## 2. Location

Street & number: 1371 Paradise Rd. 23-136 (West Side of New Fork River)

City or town: Boulder State: WY County: Sublette

Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☒

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination      request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets      does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

     national X statewide      local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A      B      C X D

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property      meets      does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title :

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency/bureau  
or Tribal Government

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register  
☐ determined eligible for the National Register  
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register  
☐ removed from the National Register  
☐ other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private: ☒
- Public – Local ☐
- Public – State ☐
- Public – Federal ☐

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s) ☐
- District ☐
- Site ☒
- Structure ☐
- Object ☐

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Transportation/pedestrian related  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Landscape/park  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: N/A

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The Lander Road-New Fork River Crossing site is comprised of sections of the Lander Road where it crosses the New Fork River and associated 19th century emigrant campsites situated on the western portion of a historic island and the contiguous 19<sup>th</sup> century western river bank. The New Fork River Crossing of the Lander Road is a portion of the Fort Kearny-South Pass-Honey Lake Wagon Road; more commonly known as the Lander Trail or Lander Cut Off. This crossing is mentioned in Frederick W. Lander's emigrant guide published in 1859 as a good river crossing and camping site. Numerous emigrant journals from the period mention this location. Lander and his survey crew also likely camped at this crossing during the survey and construction phase of the road. The nominated property, site 48SU7341, is located less than 20 miles south of Pinedale, Wyoming and approximately 2/3 of a mile north of State Highway 351 in Sublette County along the west bank of the New Fork River. Today this portion of the Lander Road and the surrounding landscape is managed as the New Fork River Crossing Historical Park by the Sublette County Historical Society. This 104.64 acre parcel of land contains three identified segments of the Lander Road, 19<sup>th</sup> century emigrant campsites, and historical material associated with its use. Additionally, site 48SU1447, a prehistoric lithic scatter, is located within the park boundaries and is considered non-contributing because it doesn't have any associations to the period of

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significance for this nomination. An additional site, the Bertram Homestead, site 48SU961, is located directly outside the nominated boundary. The occupation period of the homestead post-dates the period of significance and does not share the same historic associations as the crossing, therefore it is not included in the nominated boundary. The New Fork River Crossing is considered eligible for listing in the National Register under Criteria A and D for its association with 19<sup>th</sup> century Westward expansion and emigration and the presence of intact, subsurface deposits associated with these events.

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## Narrative Description

### Environmental

Site 48SU7341 is located in west-central Wyoming in Sublette County. The site is largely within the modern floodplain and alluvial terraces of the New Fork River with a minor (western) portion on an upland bench. The elevation ranges from approximately 2090 to 2095 m (6858 to 6875 ft) AMSL. The ecosystem in the vicinity of the site is largely riparian dominated by a cottonwood overstory with understory species of willows, grasses, and forbs (Figure 1). The upland portions of the site are dominated by sagebrush steppe species. Plant species within the site boundaries include narrow-leaf cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia*), willow (*Salix* spp.), rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus visidiflorus*), sagebrush (*Artemisia* spp.), tufted hair-grass (*Deschampsia caespitosa*), various forbs and grass species (e.g. *Bromus* spp., *Carex* spp., *Poa* spp.) and others.

The climate of Wyoming is generally considered semiarid, particularly in the rain shadow of the mountains where orographic effects influence the distribution of precipitation. Temperatures are typically cool with long winters and a short growing season. Sometimes known as the “Ice Box of the Nation,” Big Piney has one of the coldest climates among inhabited locations in the lower 48 states with an average annual mean temperature of 35.1<sup>0</sup>F. Precipitation is low with an annual mean of 7.37 inches. July is the warmest month and the majority of precipitation comes during the spring and summer months. Weather conditions are largely influenced by Pacific airflow. Agricultural crops in the region are dominated by native grass and hay. The nearest weather station to the project area is in Big Piney, Wyoming, located 15 miles southwest.

Mean annual precipitation in the immediate area is 10-12”, occurring mostly in the form of snow. Frost-free period ranges from 45-60 days. Soils present in the area are dominated by three soil types the Newfork-Rendezvous complex (about 80%), the Dillon Loam (about 10%), and the Sand branch-Obadia-Forelle complex (about 10%) (NRCS 2012). The Newfork-Rendezvous complex consists of alluvium floodplain deposits varying from loam (surface deposits) to gravelly loam below about 40 inches. The Dillon Loam is found along flood plain steps and consists of alluvium varying from loam (surface deposits) to gravelly coarse sand below about 55 inches. The Sandbranch-Obadia-Forelle complex is found along drainages and alluvial fan remnants. It consists of slope alluvium and varies from fine sandy loam to clay loam (NRCS 2012).

A soil profile description was prepared by Utah State University geomorphologist Gary O’Brien along the west facing cutbank of the New Fork River (Figure 2). The profile illustrates

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approximately one meter of alluvial deposition, as well as evidence of pre-contact archaeological deposits.

Sublette County possesses a diversity of wildlife including deer (both mule *Odocoileus hemionus* and white-tailed *Odocoileus virginianus*), antelope (*Antilocapra americana*), elk (*Cervus canadensis*), moose (*Alces alces*), and bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis*). Large predators can be found including mountain lions (*Puma concolor*), black bears (*Ursus americanus*), grizzly bears (*Ursus arctos horribilis*), and wolves (*Canis lupus*). Further, a variety of bird species occur in the county including various grouse species, water fowl (including Canada geese, sand hill cranes, trumpeter swans, and ducks), bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), golden eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*), as well as various falcons, ospreys, owls, and more. The numerous lakes and streams of Sublette County provide habitats for native cutthroat trout and mountain whitefish as well as, various non-native salmonid species (rainbow, brown, brook, char, lake, and golden trout), kokanee salmon, and grayling (Sublette County Planning Commission 2005:58).

Over the course of the past 100+ years the park landscape has been altered by both natural and human processes. The most dynamic of these has been the movement of the modern river channel (Figure 3). During the Lander Road period the New Fork River flowed to the west, but sometime after 1944 the river shifted to the east and cut through the “large island” described by Lander in his *Emigrant Guide* (Lander 1859 reproduced in Harstad 2010:19): “From Grass Spring to New Forks of Green River (18.56 miles): This distance can be shortened by striking toward a clump of timber to the right and finding good camping grounds; then by following downstream to the left a short distance you strike the road at the crossing, which is good. There is a large island in the centre, and the stream on each side is from twenty to thirty yards wide. In the spring it is from three to four feet deep. You had better raise the beds of your wagons. Timber on the island and western bank.”

With the meandering and cutting of the river it has exposed evidence of pre-contact occupation of the area (Figure 4). Human processes have also altered the original landscape. During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century James Bertram homesteaded north of the current park boundary. Associated with the homestead (48SU961), Bertram built a system of ditches across the project area as well as two-track roads, and barbwire fences (Figure 5). Following the use of the project area for homesteading and agriculture, the area was used for recreation. Modern disturbances include the construction of a small cabin and ancillary facilities, two-track roads, recreational target shooting, hunting, fishing, irrigation systems and livestock grazing. While these impacts have occurred, the majority of the landscape remains largely as it was during the *Emigrant Period*. This gives visitors a sense of what the land was like during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

A more detailed investigation of the geomorphic history of the park is proposed as part of ongoing investigations. Historic river runoff, weather records, and dendrochronology are a few of the methods that may inform on the nature of the landscape during the Lander Road era. However, a brief description annotated on the 2005 aerial photograph provides some information on the dynamics of the NFRCHP landscape (Figure 6). The dynamic nature of the system is most evident in the series of abandoned meanders and associated scroll bars. These scroll bars are the result of continuous lateral migration of the meander loops. These are most visible as light colored areas associated with the migration of meanders to the east and southeast on the Olson property. A series of scroll bar formations are also present and associated with the westward migration of the sequence of meanders. The most western of these is still an active channel that is occupied during high water events.

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### **Period of use**

Archaeological investigations suggest that the New Fork Crossing and surrounding area saw human use dating back at least to the Middle Plains Archaic period, ca. 5,000 B.P., based on the presence of a diagnostic projectile point. The presence of a Rose Spring projectile point also indicates site use dating to between 500 to 1500 years ago (Adams et al. 1993; Kornfeld et al. 2010:547; Miller 1988).

Of interest to this nomination is the use of the New Fork Crossing of the Lander Road during the Historic Period. Numerous artifacts recovered from recent archaeological investigations at the site indicate the crossing was used by Euroamerican emigrants during the middle to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first documentation of Euroamerican activity at this location dates to the summer of 1857 when the Lander Road was being surveyed. Site use continued intermittently for the next two years as the road was constructed. Regular use of the crossing began in 1859 with the opening of the Lander Road (Cannon et al. 2013:15-16). The Lander Road continued to see Euroamerican activity for decades, although traffic slowed with the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869. The road saw resurgence in popularity from 1877 to 1920 as cattlemen and families traveled through the region in search of open range (Cannon et al. 2013:17). The last known emigrant wagon to use the Lander Road was in 1912. (Bagley 2014:224)

### *Historic Period*

The Historic period began when direct, sustained contact between native populations and Euroamericans was established. In the High Plains and Rocky Mountain regions of Wyoming this occurred as a result of the expansion of Euroamerican fur trading activities. Small numbers of trappers reached the region by at least the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and their numbers continued to grow into the 1820s. The opening of the Rocky Mountain fur trade region and the establishment of the Rendezvous, an annual summer gathering of Euroamerican fur trappers and Native Americans, helped to formalize these native/Euroamerican trade relations. Every year from 1825 to 1840 the annual Rendezvous was held in what is now western Wyoming, northern Utah, or eastern Idaho. These trade fairs saw hundreds of Euroamericans and Native Americans alike gather to exchange furs for trade goods and supplies brought in from St. Louis. The result of the early fur trading activity associated with the Rendezvous was the establishment of a well-defined trail system across Wyoming and over the Rocky Mountains that was able to be traveled by wagon as early as 1832 (Todd 2002:49).

1832 saw the construction of the first fur trading post in Wyoming - Fort Bonneville. Three additional posts were constructed in the following eight years. These trading establishments were the first permanent Euroamerican structures and settlements in Wyoming. While these early posts were primarily constructed to take advantage of the Euroamerican/Native American beaver pelt trade, those established after 1840 had a different purpose. These posts positioned themselves primarily along the major riverine and overland trail transportation routes cutting east/west across southern Wyoming. These trading establishments were situated to engage in the native bison hide trade as well as to capture the burgeoning Euroamerican emigrant trade.

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As early as the 1830s Euroamerican missionaries, government expeditions, and explorers had begun moving across the fur traders' trails. However, the numbers of these individuals remained small through the end of the decade. This changed in the 1840s as thousands of Euroamerican emigrants began to travel the trails west through Wyoming into California and Oregon. By the 1850s yearly emigrant counts numbered in the tens of thousands. As emigration increased so too did United States governmental involvement in the process.

Many emigrants moving across the Wyoming trail system settled on the west coast in what would become the states of California, Oregon, and Washington. The US government was invested in this process as the settlement of these regions provided a legitimate claim to their ownership and helped to fulfil the doctrine of manifest destiny. Due to this, energy and capital were invested to provide reliable communication from east to west along the trail in the form of a stagecoach line, pony express stations, and telegraph lines; the US military was mobilized along the trails to protect not only the emigrants but the stations, posts, bridges, and ferries that were necessary for their movement; and new routes were surveyed and constructed to facilitate the quick and safe movement of Euroamerican emigrants into these new western territories.

Part of this process saw the United States congress pass legislation providing for funding to improve and upgrade the emigrant trail system from Fort Kearny past Independence Rock to South Pass and on to Honey Lake in California (Cannon et al. 2013:15). The legislation was passed into law in 1857 and the survey crews, led by Frederick W. Lander, were in the field by the summer of that year. The central portion of his new road, called Lander's Cut-off or Lander's Trail, was completed by October 1858. It was at this point, after decades of Euroamerican use of the region, the New Fork crossing was utilized on a regular basis by Euroamerican populations. The New Fork Crossing, part of the Lander Road, was featured in the Emigrant Guide Lander created for distribution to emigrants on the trails. In 1859, the first year the new road was open, 13,000 people and thousands of stock animals crossed the road (BLM 2009). Given the relatively short season that emigrants regularly used the crossing, this averages to about 300 people per day at the crossing. Emigrants continued to travel the trail west for at least the next decade. The Lander Road, and much of the rest of the emigrant trail system, continued to be used into the 20<sup>th</sup> century by emigrants, cattlemen, and settlers moving into and through the West.

### **Previous investigations**

Modern recordation of the Lander Road began in 1966 when the US Forest Service contracted Dr. Peter Harstad to survey and evaluate the resource (Swanson 1966). Archaeological investigations of the vicinity began with a 1993 pedestrian survey conducted by the Office of the Wyoming State Archaeologist (Adams et al. 1993). These investigations identified 48SU961, a historic homestead, and 48SU1447, a prehistoric lithic scatter. The sites have been re-surveyed and re-recorded multiple times as part of larger compliance projects. In 2009, site 48SU7341, the New Fork Crossing of the Lander Road, was documented by BLM archaeologists conducting a historic property evaluation of the resource. This evaluation included historic document research, pedestrian survey, and metal detecting.

In 2010 the Lander Road New Fork River Crossing Historical Park was established to mitigate significant gas field development impacts to the setting of the Lander Road through public land on the Pinedale Anticline five miles east of the park. Section 106 consultation involved twelve government, corporate, and non-profit organizations led by the BLM, the

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Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the SHPO, and industry (Shell, Ultra and PacifiCorp). This resulted in two coordinated programmatic agreements that created one larger, collective mitigation project instead of trying to individually mitigate hundreds of individual impacts. As mitigation, industry partners provided funds to purchase the off-site private property which permanently preserves a significant emigrant site and provides the public unique access to an emigrant river crossing setting. (Gilchrist 2016:96). The park is managed by the non-profit Sublette County Historical Society and was developed with significant guidance from the National Park Service and the Oregon-California Trails Association.

Since this purchase archaeological investigations have focused on identifying site components contemporary with the 19<sup>th</sup> century construction and subsequent emigrant use of the Lander Road. USU Archaeological Services conducted the first such project in August of 2011. Archaeological investigations during the 2011 field season included an intensive pedestrian survey of the entire 82 acre parcel using 15 meter interval transects, shovel testing, metal detecting surveys, and geophysical investigations with ground penetrating radar and magnetic gradiometer (Cannon et al. 2012:iv). Archaeological investigations identified artifacts contemporary to the 19<sup>th</sup> century emigrant use of the crossing. Additionally, this work found the potential for intact, buried cultural deposits from this same period to be present on-site. Geophysical investigations recorded a number of subsurface anomalies which may be related to 19<sup>th</sup> century emigrant use of the trail. Researchers found the data collected during the 2011 field investigations to be “highly encouraging” and believed that it suggested deposits associated with the Emigrant Period Lander Road were present (Cannon et al. 2012:81). The report recommends further work including the expansion of the metal detecting and geophysical surveys as well as the placement of excavation units, particularly on the island itself.

In September 2012, USU Archaeological Services returned to the New Fork Crossing to conduct additional investigations. Work focused on ground truthing geophysical anomalies via excavation as well as conducting additional metal detecting and geophysical surveys. Geophysical investigations detected several additional anomalies. Researchers posited that some of these anomalies may be trail remnants or buried hearth features. They recommended these features be excavated and dated through methods such as OSL or radiocarbon dating. Metal detecting recovered artifacts contemporary to the emigrant era such as bullets, percussion caps, melted lead globs, a tent stake, a hand forged horseshoe nail, a wagon staple, and a hog scraper candlestick holder. Test excavations also recovered emigrant era materials as well as identified features which may represent wagon ruts and activity areas. Researchers feel the data collected during the 2012 field season provides compelling evidence that intact emigrant era deposits are present on both the east and west portions of the bisected island. Future work should include additional geophysical survey as well as continued excavations (Cannon et al. 2013:57).

### **Environmental conditions during the period of use**

Based on contemporary accounts, it appears that environmental conditions at the New Fork Crossing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were similar to today. A review of modern temperatures in Big Piney, WY, the closest town to the New Fork Crossing Site, shows hot days in the 80s and 90s and cool nights in the 50s, 40s, and even 30s. This variability is reflected in emigrant journals recording hot days (Case 1859; Harstad 2010:38, 80-81; Hewitt 1863) and cold nights (Bushnell 1862; Harstad 2010:67-68, 80-81, 104; Hewitt 1863; McClung 1862). One account even

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describes the weather as “December” cold in August (Bishop Moore 1859; Harstad 2010:50). While this is decidedly cold for modern daytime temperature norms for the region, it does fall within the extreme temperature ranges the area can see in the late summer months.

Even as the region would have been semi-arid during this time period (Cannon et al. 2012:6), the New Fork Crossing itself would have been comparatively lush with ample water. This is due to the fact that the crossing sits primarily in a riparian zone consisting of the New Fork River’s floodplain and associated alluvial terraces. The vegetation on the floodplain would have been dominated by cottonwood, willows, grasses, and other forbs. The alluvial terrace portions of the site are dominated by sagebrush steppe flora (Cannon et al. 2012:5).

The site was recorded by passing emigrants in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as having sandy sediments (Collins 1904; Dunlap 1864; Harstad 2010:75, 80-81, 104, 154-155, 159; Hewitt 1863; Lack 1965; McClung 1862) dominated by sagebrush with grasses along the riparian zones (Harstad 2010:104; McClung 1862). Many other visitors record the presence of sagebrush (Durfee 1864; Harstad 2010:75, 80-81, 91, 164; Hewitt 1863; Judson 1862; Lack 1965), willows (Harstad 2010:114; Manville 1862), grasses (Babcock 1859; Emery 1863; Harstad 2010:27, 101, 104, 124, 150; Luark 1862; McClung 1862; Smedley 1916), and even gooseberries (Harstad 2010:75; Lack 1965). A number of emigrants mention the presence of mosquitos, sometimes in overwhelming numbers, at the crossing (Butterfield 1927; Cummings 1859; Harstad 2010:42, 56, 75, 101, 124; Lack 1965; Luark 1862; Smedley 1916).

The river itself was described as large (Dunlap 1864; Harstad 2010:35, 159; Stewart 1970) with deep, fast moving waters (Babcock 1859; Bushnell 1862; Butterfield 1927; Case 1859; Collins 1904; Evans 1860; Harstad 2010:27, 35, 38, 47, 53, 56, 67-68, 75, 80-81, 104, 118, 124, 154-155, 169-170; Hewitt 1863; Hull 1859; Lack 1965; Loughary 1864; McClung 1862; Scott 1862; Smedley 1916; Stewart 1970). Undoubtedly the river was subject to fluctuations based on rainfall and snow melting conditions in the mountains as was recorded by Mrs. W. A. Loughary (1864) when she camped on-site in June and July of 1864. Still almost all emigrant accounts record swift moving currents and deep water that had to be navigated to cross the river.

### **Physical characteristics**

The site is comprised of Lander Road sections crossing the New Fork River and associated 19<sup>th</sup> century campsites. The crossing occurs at a point in the river where it splits around a large island measuring approximately 700 meters wide east to west and 300 meters wide north to south. Currently the river channel has changed, bisecting the island down the middle. Archaeological investigations and a review of the historic accounts have documented visible trail segments believed to be remnants of the original Lander Road as well as a number of artifacts and features believed to represent 19<sup>th</sup> century emigrant use of the area. To date, the only direct physical evidence of the Lander Road in the vicinity of the New Fork Crossing was observed within the island (Cannon et al. 2012:34). Archaeological investigations have also identified prehistoric artifacts and features as well as artifacts associated with the 19<sup>th</sup> century homesteading and 20<sup>th</sup> century activities on the island and in the surrounding area (Cannon et al. 2012:35). The nominated property encompasses the western portion of this historic island and the western bank of the 19<sup>th</sup> century river channel.

Inventories of the area have not identified any artifactual surface manifestations of the 19<sup>th</sup> century emigrant use of the area (Cannon et al. 2012:27). However, metal detecting and test unit

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excavations conducted during the 2009, 2011, and 2012 field seasons have revealed the presence of artifacts associated with Lander Road use (Cannon et al. 2012: 27, 35-38; Cannon et al. 2013:25, 42). These were recovered from the south central portion of the island (Cannon et al. 2012:70; Cannon et al. 2013:40), near where it has been bisected by the river in the modern era.

Test unit excavations also revealed the presence of one thermal feature, an activity area, and linear U-shaped depressions. The placement of the thermal feature led investigators to suggest it may be a historic hearth, although they caution that additional investigation and radiocarbon dating would be necessary to verify (Cannon et al. 2013:47). The activity area, containing percussion caps and melted lead globs, has been dated to the emigrant era based on the presence of diagnostic artifacts (Cannon et al. 2013:57). Finally, the linear U-shaped depressions are believed to be possible wagon ruts based on their profile and the results of geophysical investigations which identified linear subsurface anomalies aligning with the depressions identified via excavation (Cannon et al. 2013:44, 48).

Geophysical surveys in the central portion of the island also revealed the presence of additional features. At least four hearth features, four circular subsurface disturbances, and additional trail segments have been identified in the area west of the current river channel (Cannon et al. 2013:48). East of the river, investigators identified at least six additional hearth features, one linear subsurface disturbance, and a possible foundation (Cannon et al. 2013:51). Hearth features and trail segments identified via geophysical investigations still need to be ground truthed through excavation as well as OSL or C-14 dating (Cannon et al. 2013:57).

### **Current and past impacts**

Current impacts to the site include stock grazing, erosion caused by the active river channel, surface deflation cause by wind, and development activities such as road, fence, and facilities construction. Future impacts from development activities should be somewhat limited as the nominated property is now owned by the Sublette County Historical Society and managed as the Lander Road New Fork River Crossing Historical Park. The primary purpose of this park is to preserve the remains of the Lander Road and its use at the New Fork Crossing for future generations (Cannon et al. 2013:2-3). Prior to the purchase of the property by the Sublette County Historical Society, recreational target shooting, camping, hunting, and fishing also occurred at the site.

Historically, the Bertram Homestead was located adjacent to the New Fork Crossing. James Bertram received his Homestead Patent in 1907 and began developing the property soon after. This development included the construction of roads, fences, and a large ditch referred to as the Bertram Ditch. Most of this activity took place northeast of the island and the crossing itself although the ditch may intersect the Lander Road north of the crossing and 19<sup>th</sup> century homesteading activity may have impacted the site itself.

Additionally, aerial photos of the area reveal multiple abandoned river channels, confirming the dynamic nature of the New Fork River at this location. River migration has undoubtedly impacted the site over the course of the past 150 years. The most obvious impact to the site was the movement of the river channel sometime after 1944. A 1944 aerial image clearly shows the island intact with the river splitting to the south and running east and west around the island only to converge again to the north. However, a 2005 aerial photograph shows the landscape as it sits today with the east and west channels abandoned and the river flowing directly through the

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middle of the island (see Figure 3). As archaeological investigations have recovered emigrant era remains from the east and west portion of the island adjacent to the river, it seems highly likely that some archaeological deposits associated with the Lander Road have been destroyed.

### **Integrity**

The New Fork Crossing site displays a very high degree of integrity of location, design, materials, and association. These four elements are considered the most relevant when evaluating site integrity for archaeological sites being nominated under Criterion D (Hardesty and Little 2000:60). The site also has a very high integrity of design, feeling, and workmanship as well as a high degree of integrity of setting

#### *Location*

Site 48SU7341 maintains a very high level of integrity of location as the site has not moved since it was used in the middle to late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

#### *Materials*

There is a very high degree of integrity of materials at the New Fork Crossing. Hundreds of artifacts have been recovered from the site, including bullet cartridges, nails, and lithics. Artifacts associated with the 19<sup>th</sup> century emigrant use of the crossing include a tent stake, wagon components, a candle holder, nails, horse trapping components, grommets and buttons, an axe head, bullet casings, a cavalry spur, percussion caps, and round shot.

The variety of the artifact assemblage is important as it covers the range of artifact types and associations one would expect to see at a site related to emigrant trail use. There are military items, perhaps related to the survey and construction of the road. There are also artifacts connected with many aspects of emigrant lives including household items, clothing components, articles associated with their wagons and livestock, and munitions associated with hunting and/or personal protection. The diversity of items at this site has the potential to give us insight into a number of aspects of emigrant life in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

#### *Design*

The New Fork Crossing retains a very high level of integrity of design. This site was selected as a crossing point for the Lander Road due in part to the ability to cross the river without a bridge or ferry and because of the availability of dry camping with access to water and abundant timber. These benefits are mentioned in Lander's 1859 emigrant trail guide where the New Fork Crossing and the island are listed as a destination along the trail. Portions of the road itself are still visible and others have been located via remote sensing investigations. The river channels which once defined the island are also visible components of the landscape. Additionally, discrete activity areas and features associated with emigrant use of the crossing have been identified through remote sensing and excavation. Further investigation of these, and like features, have the ability to advance our understanding of 19<sup>th</sup> century methods and frequency of use of the New Fork Crossing.

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*Workmanship*

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Workmanship, as related to issues of integrity for National Register sites, has been defined as “the evidence of an artisan’s labor and skill in constructing a building, structure, object, or site” (Little et al. 2000:41). Most often this has been applied to structures; however, it can also be applied to the site as a whole or to site components. Most appropriately, in this case, is the application of workmanship to the visible trail segments which represent the intentionally manufactured portion of the site.

Three extant Lander Road segments have been identified at site 48SU7341. Researchers determined that each segment met all of the Oregon-California Trail Association’s “Four Cardinal Rules of Trail Verification”, a metric used to address the probability that a trail segment has been accurately located and verified (BLM 2009). The trail segments were also classified according to the Office of National Trails Preservation Oregon-California Trails Association Emigrant Trail Classification Categories, a classification system used to rank trail segment integrity. Class 1 is the most pristine classification and Class 5 trails are those with the highest levels of disturbance. The New Fork Crossing segments were assigned Class 1 (Unaltered Trail), Class 2 (Used Trail), and Class 3 (Verified Trail) ratings. The presence of a Class 1 trail segment on-site indicates the integrity of workmanship at site 48SU7341 is very high (OCTA 2002).

### *Setting*

The New Fork Crossing and associated emigrant camps has a high degree of integrity of setting. While the area has seen some historic and modern development, including the construction of ditches, fences, two track roads and trails, the crossing itself has not been subjected to the same transformations as other trail crossings have. In fact, well preserved river crossings of historic trails are relatively rare due to their placement on the landscape. Most river crossings by historic trails were located in prime homesteading or agricultural lands and thus were developed for farming, ranching, and/or residential activities. Fortunately, the unique landscape of the New Fork crossing with its split channel, island, and multitude of abandoned channels made this location unfavorable for such developments. Thus, the setting remains strikingly similar to that which emigrants would have encountered 150 years ago (Cannon et al. 2012:iv). The intact setting is seen in the cottonwoods, meadows, unaltered soils, and wetlands that reflect 19<sup>th</sup> century conditions.

### *Feeling*

Site 48SU7341 maintains a very high level of integrity of feeling. With minimal development of the surrounding landscape, similar environmental conditions, and with the visibility of portions of the Lander Road, this location likely appears much as it did in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and conveys a sense of this period in time.

### *Association*

The National Register Bulletin *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (National Park Service 1997:45) states that “a property retains association if it is the place where

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the event or activity occurred and is sufficiently intact to convey that relationship to the observer". The 2009 historic property evaluation conducted by the BLM determined that there was documentary, cartographic, and physical evidence definitively linking this location and the New Fork River Crossing of the Lander Road (BLM 2009). This evidence comes in the form of emigrant journals, government documents, historic maps, archaeological features and artifacts, and extant trail segments. These trail segments were determined to meet all four of the Oregon-California Trail Association (OCTA) "Four Cardinal Rules of Trail Verification" (Oregon-California Trail Association 2002). The rules are:

**Coherence Rule:** There must be a linear uniformity so that trail segments form a continuous sequence; i.e. the trail segment under investigation has to link coherently with the trail segments that precede and follow it.

**Corroborative Rule:** There must be confirming documentary evidence of the trail; i.e. the trail segment under investigation has to have written or cartographic evidence to support its authenticity.

**Collateral Rule:** There must be accompanying physical and/or topographic evidence of the trail; i.e. the trail segment under investigation has to have some geomorphic or artifact evidence to support it as an authentic trail.

**Correlation rule:** There must be agreement between all types of evidence; i.e. the evidence resulting from the first three cardinal rules have to be mutually supporting (not contradicting one another) in order to verify the location of the trail.

Archaeological investigations in 2009, 2011, and 2012 have recovered and identified artifacts and features dating to the construction and/or use of the crossing by Euroamerican emigrants in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Cannon et al. 2012; Cannon et al. 2013; BLM 2009). The archaeological data are contained, at least in part, in intact subsurface deposits which can be used to better investigate and understand 19<sup>th</sup> century emigrant use of the trail and crossing. Under Criterion A the New Fork Crossing has a very high degree of integrity of association as there are multiple line of evidence clearly showing this site is in fact the New Fork Crossing mentioned in Lander's 1859 emigrant guide and evidence of 19<sup>th</sup> century emigrant activity is present on-site.

For properties eligible under Criterion D the strength of integrity of association is directly related to the relationship of the site and associated materials and their ability to address important research questions (Hardesty and Little 2000:48-49). Using this as the metric, the New Fork Crossing site has a very high degree of integrity of association as the site and its artifact assemblage have the ability to address numerous research questions relating to the emigrant era, westward expansion, and Euroamerican/Native American interactions in the region during this time period.

Most immediately, archaeological investigations at the New Fork Crossing can provide a more complete understanding of the site itself. To date, most of the archaeological work has focused on the area just to the west and east of the current river channel in what would have been the south-central portion of the historic island. While this work has proved useful in identifying features and artifacts associated with the Lander Road use of the area, these initial investigations

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were limited in their scope. Future investigations have the potential to explore the rest of the historic island as well as the northwest and southeast river banks where the trail crossed the historic channel. Data recovered from geophysical survey and excavation investigations would assist in confirming or expanding existing site boundaries through the identification of additional artifacts, associated features, new trail segments, and emigrant activity areas.

The results of this work would allow the New Fork Crossing dataset to be used as a means of investigating a range of 19<sup>th</sup> century emigrant activities and lifeways. National Register nominations for emigrant trail sites in Kansas have suggested archaeological data from 19<sup>th</sup> century emigrant camps may provide insight into patterns of trail use and change over time; evolving patterns in emigration; changes in trade patterns; issues relating to cultural interactions on the trail; and may provide better insight into campground activities including campsite use, discard patterns, and wagon repair activities (Kansas Historical Society 2013a:12-13; Kansas Historical Society 2013b:16; Kansas Historical Society 2013c:9). This work also found that excavation data can assist in developing better “estimates of the frequency of use during various phases of history; the role played by various ethnic and social groups, and the nature of trail users, material culture, and the production, distribution, and consumption of commodities” (Kansas Historical Society 2013b:16). Researchers investigating the Old Spanish Trail/Mormon Road found that archaeological data can provide information on impacts to the environment; 19<sup>th</sup> century travel patterns; time period of trail use; and eating, drinking, and living practices of trail users (Myhrer et al. 1990:13-14). Other work has determined that emigrant caches have the ability to inform researchers on topics such as emigrant behavior, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, gender, age, and/or social values; and emigrant camps can help answer questions relating to emigrant lifeways, consumption, transportation, and identity (Sechrist 2014:4). A study on trading posts in Wyoming found that an examination of the material remains associated with emigrant camps can provide information on Euroamerican 19th century life in Wyoming, economic exchange networks, and the American settlement and development of the West in general (Pierce 2012:89). The New Fork Crossing dataset has the potential to tackle many of these issues, including issues of social organization, the spatial use of the landscape, the impact of emigration on the natural environment, and the nature of Native American/Euroamerican interactions.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☒ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations N/A

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Exploration/Settlement  
Archaeology/Historic-non aboriginal  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1857-1869  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

Euroamerican  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance for site 48SU7341 begins in 1857 and lasts until 1869. It was during this 12 year span that the Lander Road and the New Fork River Crossing were primarily used for the purpose for which they were built. Undoubtedly the location was used well into the 20th century. However, the significance of this site is integrally linked to 19th century emigration. 1857 marks the year United States legislation passed authorizing the construction of the Fort Kearny-South Pass-Honey Lake Wagon Road. Crews began survey of the road that year. The central portion of the road, called Lander's Trail or Lander's Cut-off was completed the following year. This work would have included the New Fork River Crossing locale. Emigrant traffic began the following year and continued into the next decade. While wagon use of the road would continue for some decades, and undoubtedly some of the individuals using the trail were emigrants, historians have traditionally used 1869 to mark the end of the Emigrant Era (BLM and SHPO 2014:64). 1869 marked the year the Transcontinental Railroad was completed making crossing the continental United States faster, easier, and safer. This, combined with the growing settlement of the Wyoming Territory, drastically reduced the number of emigrants using the trails each year. For this reason 1869 is used to mark the end of the period of significance for the New Fork River Crossing of the Lander Road.

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Lander Road-New Fork Crossing is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and D for its significance in exploration/settlement and historic archaeology. The site contains visible segments of the New Fork River Crossing of the Lander Road as well as associated 19th century campsites. It is eligible under Criterion A due to its relationship with overland exploration and settlement associated with the 19<sup>th</sup> century use of the Oregon-California Trail. This segment of trail, the crossing, and the associated campsites are integrally linked to the settlement of the West. The Fort Kearny-South Pass-Honey Lake Wagon Road, of which the Lander Road and the New Fork River Crossing are a part, was the one of the first federally funded and constructed roads west of the Mississippi (BLM 2009:29). The construction of the Fort Kearny-South Pass-Honey Lake Wagon Road reflected the growing governmental interest in the settlement of western portions of North America in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Lander Road was constructed to improve the emigrant experience in creating a more efficient, safer, and quicker route west. During the 1850s and 1860s and the remainder of the twentieth century tens of thousands of individuals used this route.

Recent archaeological investigations have identified buried, intact cultural deposits contemporary with the emigrant use of the trail in the middle to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Well preserved river crossings and emigrant campsites are relatively rare as they tend to be located in prime homestead lands which were developed for ranching, farming, and/or residential activities. Fortunately, this type of development has not destroyed significant portions of the archaeological record at the New Fork crossing location. While previous archaeological investigations have focused on conducting a historic property evaluation of the site to accurately determine if it was

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in fact a portion of the Lander Road, a number of more complex research questions can be addressed through the implementation of additional archaeological investigations at this location.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Many of the corridors that would eventually become the Oregon-California Trail saw Euroamerican use by at least the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in the form of trapper and trader routes which were used to support fur trading activities in the Rocky Mountain and High Plains regions of the West. These trails transported people and goods into the region to engage in beaver trading activities with native tribes. With the growth of the fur trade and the establishment of the yearly Rendezvous, a summer trade fair held in the Rocky Mountains, the routes became more formalized and saw more intense usage. By the 1830s wagons were regularly used along these corridors and an ever-increasing number of missionaries, government expeditions or officials, and explorers were joining the traders and trappers in their use of the trails.

By 1840 there were new travelers moving through the West. Emigrants were intent on traversing the width of the continent to settle new lands in what would become the Oregon, California, or Utah territories. While initial numbers of emigrants were modest, numbering in the thousands per year, by the 1850s the trails saw tens of thousands of individuals crossing every season (Unruh 1993:119-120). Along these routes stage, telegraph, and pony express stations were established and trading posts, ferries, and bridges were constructed. These amenities were all put in place to facilitate communication with new western communities and to facilitate the movement of large numbers of people and livestock in a quick and secure manner.

Several factors caused the United States government to become more interested in protecting and promoting emigration and the supporting infrastructure including the expanding settlement of the West following the Mexican War (1846-1848), the Compromise of 1850 that provided statehood to California, western gold rushes, and the tragedy of the Donner Party (Cannon et al. 2013:1). Along with an increase in the military presence in the region these efforts resulted in discussions about the development of a transcontinental rail, reliable mail service between the coasts, and government funding for the emigrant trails. These new projects would seek to improve existing trails and/or develop quicker, safer, or more efficient routes. In 1857 a transcontinental railroad was debated and routes were surveyed. Funding was also approved, after several failed attempts, for improvements to the emigrant trails (Harstad 2010:3-5).

This legislation allowed for the construction of the Fort Kearny-South Pass-Honey Lake Wagon Road which was to provide a northern diversion of the Oregon-California Trail (Figure 7) from South Pass to the Ross Fork of the Snake River (Figure 8) and eventually to California. The purpose of this new road was to provide easier and safer travel to the western territories (Harstad 2010:3-5). Specifically a practicable route that avoided the Big Sandy Desert, didn't require the use of a ferry or bridge, and provided adequate grass was desired. The Lander Road and the New Fork River Crossing were a part of this Congressionally-funded road system.

Outgoing President Franklin Pierce signed the act into law on February 17, 1857, but it was implemented by incoming President James Buchanan. The newly appointed Secretary for the Department of Interior, Jacob Thompson, entrusted the technical responsibilities of the road design and construction to Albert Campbell, Chief Engineer for the United States. Campbell also

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had the additional title of General Superintendent of the Pacific Wagon Roads and was responsible for the creation of the Pacific Wagon Roads Office (PWRO).

Campbell and the staff of the PWRO developed an initial plan for the improvement and upgrade to the Oregon-California Trail from Fort Kearny past Independence Rock to South Pass and then southwest through the Great Salt Lake Valley and on to Honey Lake in California. However, a series of political and logistical issues forced potential reroutes to be considered. An acquaintance of Campbell's, Frederick W. Lander, who had developed a reputation for being a competent civil engineer, explorer, and leader during surveys for the northern railroad route to the Pacific, proposed an alternative route he had personally explored on his return trip from the railroad surveys. The impression Lander made upon Campbell with his knowledge and experience led to his appointment as chief engineer of the Fort Kearny-South Pass-Honey Lake Wagon Road (Ecelbarger 2000; Harstad 2010; Jackson 1952; Wight 1993).

The challenge given to Lander was to develop a route that avoided some of the common issues and difficulties that emigrants faced. Emigrants had to deal with sections of road that crossed through areas devoid of water and game for sustenance as well as grass and vegetation for their animals. Another consideration was increasing tension between the Federal government and Mormons in the Utah Territory. These tensions led to an armed conflict in 1857-1858. Mormons controlled several ferries along the Oregon Trail and it was feared that prolonged conflict would significantly disrupt emigrant travel.

Survey of the new route from South Pass across the Green River Valley to Fort Hall began with the arrival of Lander and his crew at South Pass on July 15, 1857. They spent the next two months investigating a route between the pass and Soda Springs as suggested by the Department of Interior. By October of 1857 Lander and his men had covered 3,000 miles of exploration and surveyed several practical routes for the road. On November 30, 1857 Lander presented the results to Congress. Lander promoted the advantages of his selected route and also suggested an alternate route in case the tensions with the Mormons intensified. In January 1858, Secretary Thompson appointed Lander Superintendent of the Fort Kearny-South Pass-Honey Lake Wagon Road. Orders for the work to proceed were presented to Lander in March of 1858 and construction began in mid-June (Harstad 2010; Wight 1993).

The initial crew of 50 men coordinated plowing and blading of the road, removing trees and vegetation, building grades, river fords, and small bridges through the Green River Valley. The terrain of the Wyoming Range provided a series of challenges and an additional 50 men were hired from Salt Lake City. The central portion of the road between South Pass and Fort Hall, known as Lander's Cut-off or Lander's Trail, was completed by October 1858. Lander proclaimed that the trail was "so located as to avoid the tolls of bridges, alkali plains and deleterious and poisonous waters, and to furnish fuel, water, and grass to the ox-team emigration" (Bagley 2014:212). The team had constructed 229.64 miles of road, excavated 62,310 cubic yards of sediments, cleared 34 miles of trees and brush, and graded almost 32 miles (BLM 2009; Ecelbarger 2000; Harstad 2010; Jackson 1952; Wight 1993).

During the summer of 1858, Lander presented a progress report to the 35th Congress which also included his Emigrant Guide. The Emigrant Guide provided detailed advice to travelers on the speed and distance to travel each day, the best places to camp, where to ford rivers, sources of fuel, and where to access water and grass for stock. The guide was distributed to emigrants along the trail in the spring of 1859 (Harstad 2010).

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Work on the road continued for two more years, until 1860. During the first year of operation (1859), 13,000 people and thousands of stock animals utilized the road (BLM 2009). However, that year also brought some unanticipated hazards; unusually heavy precipitation had swollen the river causing the loss of many stock animals and a least one emigrant's life. In 1860, Lander received reports that the ford at Green River had become nearly impractical to use. Lander gathered petitions from emigrants during the next two years and presented the signatures to Congress for funds to construct a bridge. However, by this time Congress was focused on the Civil War and no bridge was ever constructed (BLM 2009).

Lander's Road continued in use over the decades, although travel dwindled with the construction of the transcontinental railroad in 1869. Army volunteers, as well as the emigrants, were tasked with maintaining the road. From about 1877 to 1920, the trail experienced a resurgence in use as cattlemen and families traveled east and west in search of open range (BLM 2009). While emigrant use of the Lander Road slowed after the transcontinental railroad it did not entirely cease. Diaries and other first-hand account point to emigrant use during the first portions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

During the emigrant era the New Fork River Crossing represented an important destination and stopping point along the Lander Road. The crossing was located at the end of an 18 mile waterless desert crossing. Most emigrants did the desert crossing in one day then camped at New Fork. The site was prominently featured in Lander's 1859 Emigrant Guide. The "New Forks of Green River", as the site was referred to by Lander, is said to have good camping grounds, a good crossing, and available timber. This coupled with the natural availability of water made the area quite attractive to passing emigrants. Locations such as this helped to facilitate westward emigration by lending a measure of stability and reliability to a journey fraught with the unknown. They did so by providing known locations on the landscape with reliable resource bases that allowed travelers to more effectively plan their journey and pick their routes.

Previous research has found that the Lander Road, and by extension the New Fork River Crossing, represents "an important artifact of the emigrant experience during the mid-nineteenth century and the settlement of the western United States" and that the New Fork Crossing "provides a unique opportunity to explore archaeologically the record of this history" (Cannon et al. 2013:17). This assertion is supported by recent archaeological investigations recovering items which may be associated with the survey and/or construction of the road in 1857 and 1858 by Lander and his crew (BLM 2009:25, 28-29) and more definitively with the emigrant use of the road in the 1850s and 1860s (Cannon et al. 2012:35; Cannon et al. 2013:57; BLM 2009:28-29).

The ability of the New Fork River Crossing to contribute to our understanding of 19<sup>th</sup> century emigration is compounded when one considers the unique geographic distribution of the site. Well preserved river crossings and emigrant road campsites are relatively rare as they are generally located in prime homestead lands that were developed for farming, ranching, and/or residential activities long ago. Additionally, by their very nature these features are situated near active fluvial channels. The movement of these channels over time can obscure intact features via depositional episodes and/or destroy archaeological deposits through erosion. However, due to the unique nature of the landscape with the split channel, historic island, and old abandoned channels, the area was never favorable for development, leaving the archaeological record relatively intact.

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The relatively well preserved nature of the archaeological record at this important site has the ability to inform researchers on 19<sup>th</sup> century activities and behaviors relating to western migration and settlement, offer data on the implications of these activities on the local environment, and provide valuable information for modern management of these historic resources. To date, archaeological investigations on-site have focused on simply identifying and recording evidence of 19<sup>th</sup> century emigrant activity. Future work would most immediately benefit from confirming the results of the prior investigations and identifying new archaeological resources associated with the Lander Road, the New Fork River crossing, and the associated 19<sup>th</sup> century campsites. With this completed, there are a range of research questions which can be addressed with the New Fork data. These questions include, but are not limited to:

**How were socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and/or gender expressed on the trail and how was this impacted by the migration experience?**

Emigrants maintained the social order seen in the eastern United States while on the trails west. Similar social classes, religions, and ethnic backgrounds often traveled together and the wealthier members of a wagon train were frequently elected as leaders or placed in positions of authority (BLM and SHPO 2014:28). While some of these differences would have been equalized due to the rigors and demands of the journey, divisions by socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and religious affiliation would have been apparent. Research questions that could be explored include, how is this behavior manifested in the archaeological record, how can this data be used to understand social ordering on the trails, and did an experience such as emigration act as a social equalizer?

The 2014 context on National Historic Trails finds that emigrant camps “should contain archaeological deposits including temporally and functionally diagnostic artifacts and faunal remains that could augment the written record concerning the nineteenth-century emigrant experience, including such questions as the social organization of pioneer parties.” (BLM and SHPO 2014:92). Other work has found that emigrant caches can give researchers insight into socioeconomic status, ethnicity, gender, age, and social values based on the items they were willing to leave behind (Sechrist 2014:4). The New Fork River Crossing has the ability to address many of the aforementioned questions as well as how social values and social status may have changed as one moved across the trail. Parkman (1849:103) recounts how items with high value in the east were discarded as one moved further along the trail as the value of these items was diminished when the difficulties of the journey made them liabilities in an environment where survival became the primary concern. Investigating the types of material discarded at the New Fork Crossing, when compared to other trail sites may give researchers some insight into shifting values and priorities of emigrants as they moved further west.

Social status may also be examined through an evaluation of emigrant camp locations in regard to desirable resources or the better protected portions of the landscape; the types, qualities, and variable distribution of high status household or personal items across the landscape; and/or the manner in which the types, qualities, and distribution of foodstuffs differed between emigrant camps or portions of the greater landscape. Differences in these areas may reflect differences in social status and differential access to goods and amenities between emigrant parties.

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### **How was the landscape used spatially by Euroamerican emigrants?**

A spatial analysis of the New Fork River Crossing data would help researchers develop a better understanding of the manner in which the area was used. The primary question being, how did trail users situate themselves on the landscape? Understanding this would not only give researchers better insight into 19<sup>th</sup> century behaviors at this site but would also allow for improved trail maintenance at other locations. A corridor having a width of one-quarter mile on either side of the trail has been considered acceptable for the physical protection of the trail trace. It has been the general assumption this half-mile wide corridor will encompass associated sites such as campsites, graves, forts, ferries, and stage stations (BLM and SHPO 2014:78). However, in many ways we really do not have a good understanding of how the landscape adjacent to the trail was used. There are a myriad of questions relating to trail use for which there are no well-defined answers or which answers vary dramatically from site to site. These questions include, but are not limited to: How far out did people camp from the trail? Is there a higher density of camping closer to the trail with campsites diminishing in number as one moves away from the trail? If so, what should we define as the actual corridor of use? Were different activities undertaken in different proximities to the trail? Trailside activities and /or features include camping, latrines, food processing, wagon repair, livestock quartering, and human burials. Did these activities occur in discrete locations or were they evenly distributed?

The New Fork Crossing site has the potential to provide information on many of these activities which will provide for a better understanding of how emigrants used the landscape adjacent to the trails. This, in turn, will help to inform future research and management practices. In fact, this type of investigation is necessary to support National Park Service management recommendations that the half-mile corridor not be rigidly applied, but rather a flexible accordion approach (varying widths) be employed in establishing appropriate widths for management corridors along designated high-potential segments. The widths for individual trail sections would be determined by factors such as land ownership, viewshed, level of integrity, documented historic use of the trail and surrounding landscape, compatibility with existing resource uses, social values, and other considerations.” (NPS 1999:68).

### **How did 19<sup>th</sup> century emigration impact the natural environment?**

Data from the New Fork River Crossing site can also provide researchers with a better understanding of how emigrants used and impacted the natural environment as they moved along the trails. Recent investigations have suggested geomorphic investigations be undertaken at the site in order to better understand the history of the landform during the 19th century. Geomorphic investigations would include an examination of “historic river gauge records, historic climate records, aerial photographs, detailed mapping of the landform, dendrochronology of cottonwoods to document landform change, backhoe trenching and hand auguring, and the application of OSL dating” (Cannon et al 2012:82). This information could be used as a starting point from which to investigate the manner in which emigrants impacted the environment.

Lander determined that 13,000 people crossed his trail in 1859 with another 10,000 in 1860. Additionally, he found that exceptionally large herds of livestock were driven over the trail. Some herds were upwards of a thousand animals (United States Congress House 1861:1-27).

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These types of activities would have undoubtedly impacted the natural environment adjacent to the trails. The movement of the wagons, livestock, and the emigrants themselves would have impacted native ecosystems by trampling and disturbing the vegetation and water resources along the trail corridor. Livestock and people alike would have contributed to plant and animal resource depletion due to grazing, hunting, fishing, and food gathering activities. Hunting, as well as the movement of thousands of people and animals across the landscape, led to the disruption of game movements and the depletion of game resources (BLM and SHPO 2014:53-54). Native Americans cited issues such as loss of game, overgrazing of the prairies, and the depletion of water and timber resources caused by passing emigrants when demanding compensation from the United States government in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Pierce 2012:29)

Potential research questions include, what were the environmental impacts of emigrant activity at the New Fork Crossing, how are these manifested archaeologically, and what are the modern repercussions of these impacts? At New Fork one would expect to find deforestation on the island and surrounding areas due to firewood collecting, a reduction in animal and plant resources, overgrazing which may have caused erosion or river channel impacts, and impacts to the river channel caused by the crossing of hundreds of wagons and thousands of people and livestock. Geomorphic, geophysical, and archaeological investigations have the ability to provide insight into these processes thereby allowing researchers the opportunity to better understand transformation in the natural environment brought about by 19th century emigration.

### **What does the archaeological record of the New Fork Crossing tell us about Euroamerican/Native American relationships in the 1850s and 1860s?**

Increased emigration as well as its impact on the environment undoubtedly influenced Euroamerican relations with Native Americans in the region. Euroamerican/Native American interactions during the 1840s were relatively peaceful. Passing emigrants would solicit directions from local populations and hire Native Americans as scouts, guides, or to provide river crossings (Unruh 1993:156-157). Conflicts during this period were often localized and relatively minor when compared to later periods. As emigration increased so too did Euroamerican/Native American conflicts. Into, and through, the 1850s relationships on the trail deteriorated resulting in a cycle of depredation and reprisal which culminated in all-out war between some of the tribes in the region and the United State government by the 1860s.

Use of the Lander Road began after the deterioration of emigrant/native relations but before all-out war broke out. The presence of Native Americans in the region during the emigrant era was well documented by contemporary sources. Furthermore, it is known that in many cases Native American camps and trading sites were often located along important river crossings (BLM and SHPO 2014:92). Researchers have the opportunity at New Fork to investigate emigrant/native relationships during a tumultuous period in the West. Native American artifacts were recovered from the site, although their relationship with the historic use of the crossing has not yet been demonstrated. The identification of Native American items or campsites in and among or adjacent to emigrant camps could shed light on peaceful interactions between two or more cultural groups using the crossing at similar points in time. Larger issues of emigrant/native trade, cooperation, and/or contemporary, peaceful use of this locale could also be addressed. Additionally, the identification of spent munitions, burials, and/or large-scale burning events could point towards more violent encounters.

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**How can data from this site help to inform trail management and preservation efforts at other locations?**

Finally, the examination of the trail segments themselves could advance future historic preservation efforts at the New Fork Crossing and other emigrant trail sites across the country. The emigrant trails stretched from the mid-western United States to the Pacific coast, traversing more than a dozen states. Extant remnants of these trails can be found at a number of locations in a range of physical environments, each having seen varying levels of disturbances, impacts, and preservation. Private, state, and federal agents have conducted studies and generated contexts, suggestions, and/or guidelines for the identification, interpretation, and preservation of these resources for at least the last 35 years (BLM and SHPO 2014:67). A more complete examination of the trail segments at the New Fork Crossing in relation to current and past environmental conditions combined with the documentation of the physical characteristics of the trail remnants could yield significant information relating to the preservation of trail portions (Kansas Historical Society 2013a:13; Kansas Historical Society 2013b:16). Work such as this, which helps to improve our understanding of trail impacts and positive methods of trail preservation, will help to meet the goals set forth in the 1986 BLM Oregon/Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trails Management Plan.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A**

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested  
☐ previously listed in the National Register  
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register  
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark  
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office  
☐ Other State agency  
☐ Federal agency  
☐ Local government  
☐ University  
☐ Other  
Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** 48SU7341

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acres of Property** 104.64 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☒ NAD 1983

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1. Zone: 12	Easting: 593835	Northing: 4718933
2. Zone: 12	Easting: 594463	Northing: 4718872
3. Zone: 12	Easting: 594487	Northing: 4718708
4. Zone: 12	Easting: 594272	Northing: 4718264
5. Zone: 12	Easting: 594113	Northing: 4718103
6. Zone: 12	Easting: 593806	Northing: 4718117
7. Zone: 12	Easting: 593807	Northing: 4718309

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The southeast corner of the site sits at the intersection of the boundary line between Township 31 North and Township 30 North and the New Fork River, which bounds the site to the east. The southern portion of the site extends approximately 300 meters west along the township line. The southern boundary ends at Paradise Road. From here the west site boundary runs approximately 800 meters due north to the point where it intersects the location of the 19th century emigrant trail corridor. The northern boundary runs due east from this location, more than 500 meters, to the New Fork River.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Site 48SU7341 is defined by the boundaries of the Lander Trail New Fork Crossing Historical Park. This land was purchased by Shell, Ultra, and PacifiCorp and donated to the Sublette County Historical Society as part of the Pinedale Anticline mitigation agreement. The property consists of the western portion of the historic island, which was bisected by the river in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the western bank of the New Fork River. These general boundaries are used to define the site based on Lander's 1859 emigrant guide which describes the crossing and the available timber on the western bank, making this location desirable for camping.

The eastern portion of the island has been omitted. This is due primarily to the fact that it is privately owned and the landowners have not provided permission to include this parcel in the nomination. Additionally, relatively little archaeological work has been done in this location when compared to the western portion of the island. The work that has been conducted is promising, returning a number of artifacts possibly dating to the emigrant era (Cannon et al. 2013:43, 51-55). However, additional archaeological investigations would need to be done to confirm these results and to define the extent of the archaeological resources at this location. Should this work be completed with positive results, and should permission for this portion of the site to be listed be obtained, then the boundaries of this nomination could be expanded to include the entire historic island.

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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Greg Pierce/ WY State Archaeologist; Kenneth P. Cannon, President, USU  
Archeological Services, Inc.; edited by Judy K. Wolf, WY State Historic Preservation Office  
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e-mail: greg.pierce@wyo.gov  
telephone: 307-766-5564  
date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

## Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

## Photo Log

Name of Property: Lander Road-New Fork Crossing

City or Vicinity: Boulder vicinity

County: Sublette

State: WY

Photographer: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Photographed: July, 2015

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: \_\_\_\_\_

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Island area of the New Fork Crossing.

1 of 7.

Northern portion of the site showing the Bertram Homestead

2 of 7.

Emigrant camp area on west side of site.

3 of 7.

Emigrant camp area in north portion of site along Class 2 trail.

4 of 7.

View of emigrant era river channel with island in the background.

5 of 7.

Portion of island where majority of emigrant era artifacts have been found.

6 of 7.

Current New Fork River at high water level.

7 of 7.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

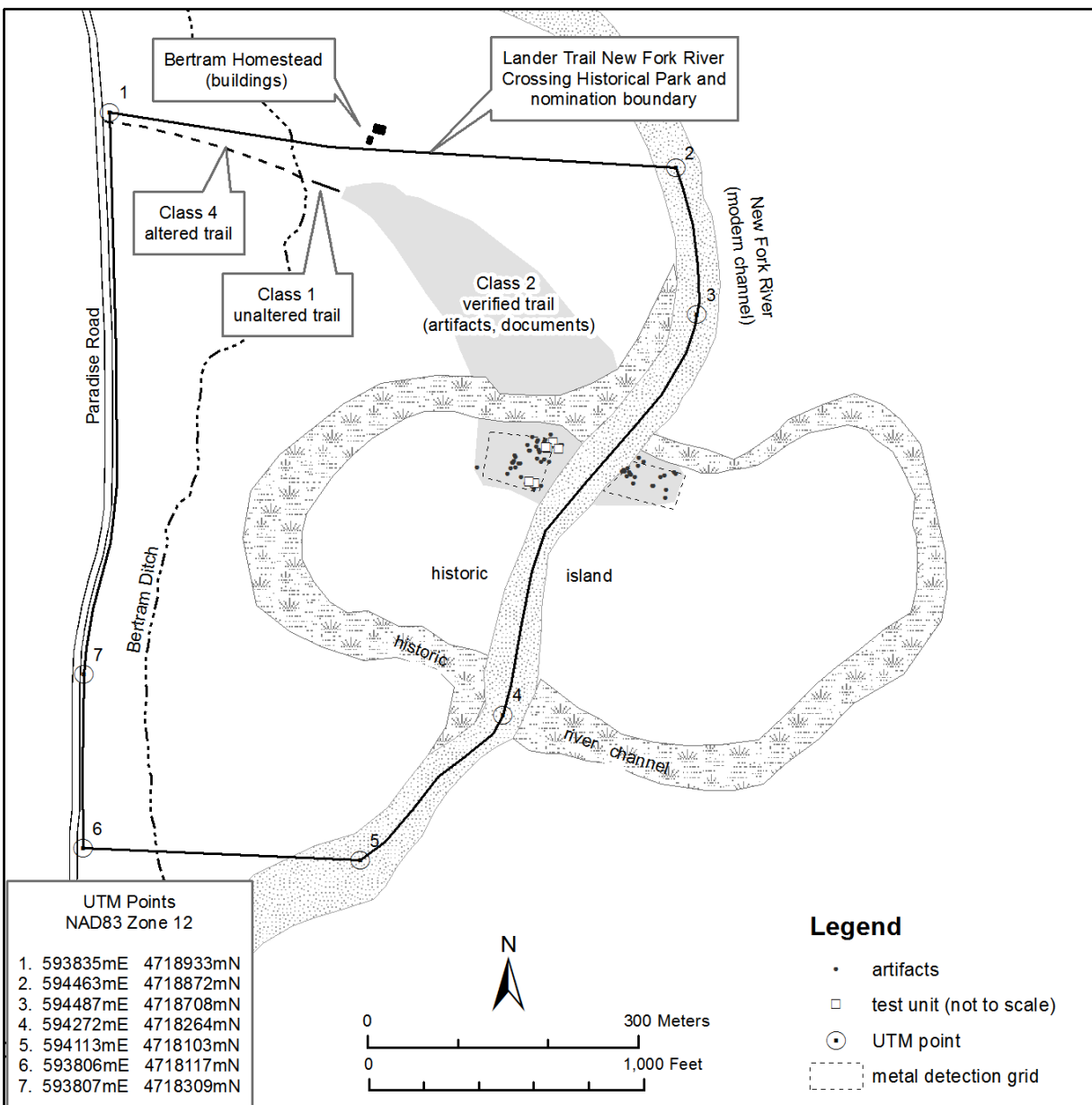
**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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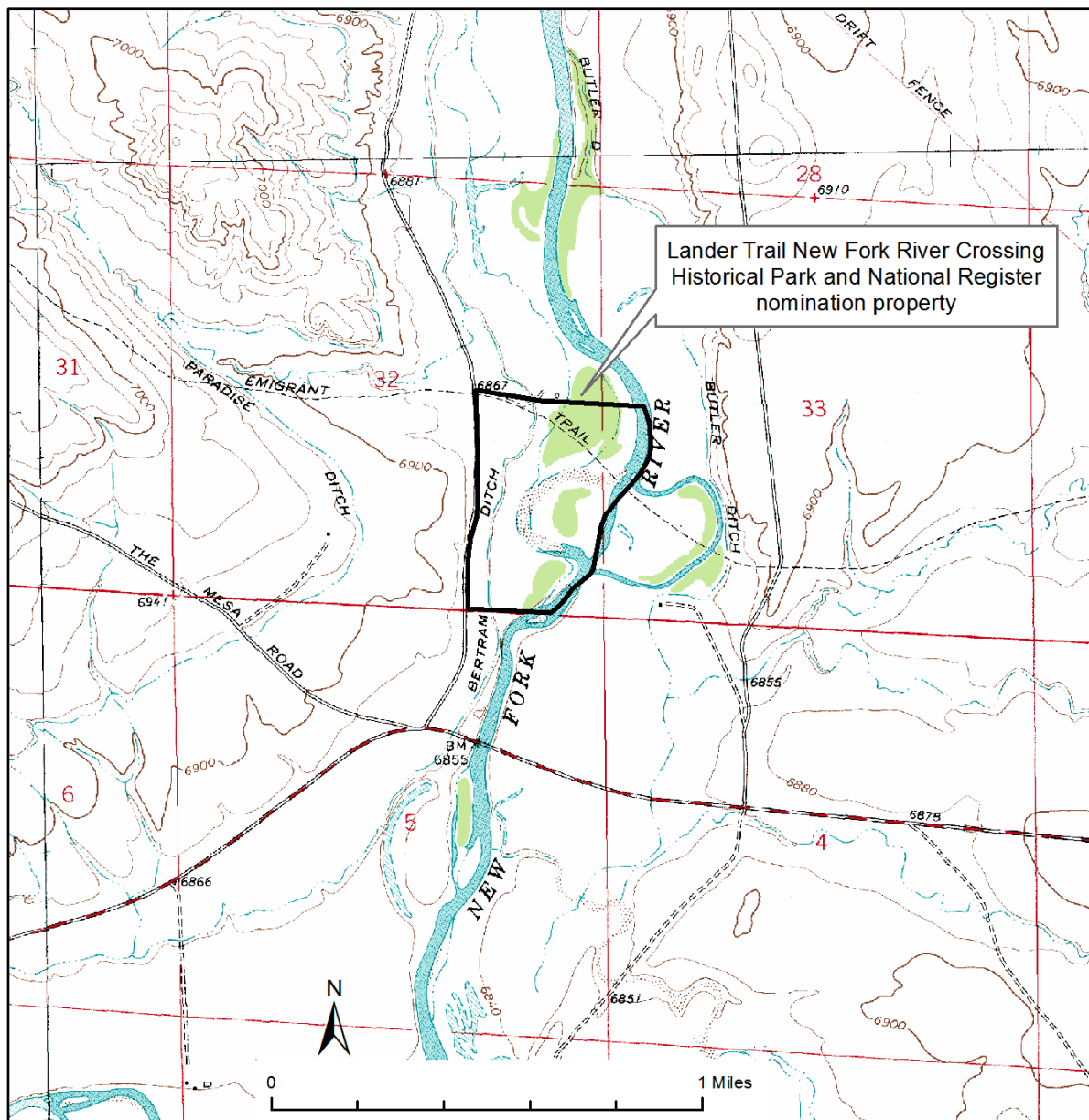
County and State



Sketch map of the Lander Trail New Fork River Crossing Historical Park and National Register nomination property. Artifacts, test units, and metal detection grid after Cannon et al. (2013:4, 43). Depiction of Trail classes modified from Crowley (2009).

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Portion of the USGS Olsen Ranch 7.5' topographic map showing the Lander Trail New Fork River Crossing Historical Park and National Register nomination property. The property is in Sections 32 and 33, T. 31 N., R. 109 W., Sublette County, Wyoming.