

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 95001573

Date Listed: 1/19/96

Polebridge to Numa Ridge Phoneline  
Property Name

Flathead  
County

MT  
State

Glacier National Park MPS  
Multiple Name

-----  
This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

*Paul R. Lugin*  
Signature of the Keeper

1/19/96  
Date of Action

=====

Amended Items in Nomination:

Period of significance:

The exceptional nature of the resource is not justified up to the 1988 end date. The revised period of significance (1925-1945) ends at the date established in the cover context and reflects the period during which the line played an important role in the development of park communications.

U.T.M. Coordinates:

The correct UTM coordinates should read:

- A. 11 699900 5406900
- B. II 705425 5412210
- C. II 706830 5418150

This information was confirmed with Kathy McKoy of the NPS.

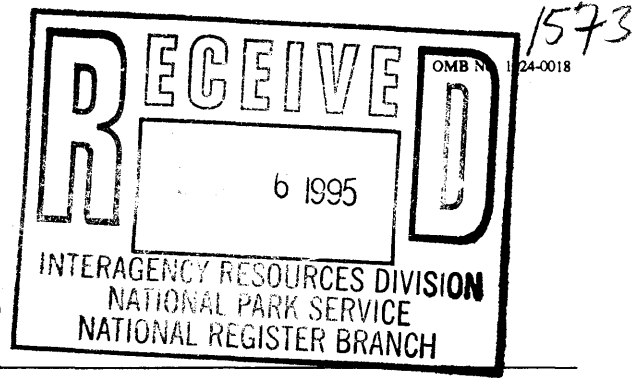
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DISTRIBUTION:

National Register property file  
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM



1. Name of Property

historic name: Polebridge to Numa Ridge Phoneline

other name/site number: N/A

2. Location

street & number: N/A

not for publication: n/a

vicinity: North Fork Drainage/Polebridge to Numa Ridge; Glacier National Park (GLAC)

city/town: West Glacier

state: Montana code: MT county: Flathead code: 29 zip code: 59936

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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    nationally    statewide X locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

12.5.95

National Park Service

State or Federal agency or bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

SEP 29 1995

Montana State Historic Preservation Office

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  
   see continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register  
   see continuation sheet
- determined not eligible for the National Register  
   see continuation sheet
- removed from the National Register  
   see continuation sheet
- other (explain)

Signature of the Keeper

Entered in the National Register

Date of Action

*for*  
Guy M. Rapsberg

1/19/96

Name of Property

County and State

**5. Classification**

|   |  |                        |                    |
|---|--|------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Ownership of Property:</b> Public-Federal  | <b>Number of Resources within Property</b> |                        |                    |
| <b>Category of Property:</b> Site   | <b>Contributing</b>                        | <b>Noncontributing</b> |                    |
| <b>Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register:</b> 2             | _____                                      | _____                  | <b>building(s)</b> |
| <b>Name of related multiple property listing:</b> Glacier National Park Multiple Property Listing | <u>1</u>                                   | <u>1</u>               | <b>sites</b>       |
|   | _____                                      | _____                  | <b>structures</b>  |
|   | _____                                      | _____                  | <b>objects</b>     |
|   | <u>1</u>                                   | <u>1</u>               | <b>Total</b>       |

**6. Function or Use**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Historic Functions:</b><br>Government/Communications (phoneline) | <b>Current Function:</b><br>Abandoned: Not in Use |
|---|---|

**7. Description**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Architectural Classification:</b><br>N/A | <b>Materials:</b><br>foundation: N/A<br>walls: N/A<br>roof: N/A<br>other: single-strand phone line; ceramic insulators |
|---|--|

**Narrative Description**

The Polebridge Ranger Station to Numa Ridge phoneline traverses a heavy mixed forest interspersed with small meadows. The Bowman Lake Road loosely parallels the line from the North Fork Road (Glacier Route 7) to the Bowman Ranger Station (5 miles). The line then parallels Bowman Lake, through heavy timber, for approximately two miles before turning northwest for the steep and heavily timbered climb to the Numa Ridge Lookout. The lookout provides views of the Bowman Drainage, the Akokala Drainage, much of the North Fork Valley, the eastern edge of the Whitefish Range, and into Canada. The historic Skyland Camp/Bowman Ranger Station and the Numa Ridge Lookout, line terminals, were listed in the NRHP in February of 1986. Although much of the historic Polebridge Ranger Station burned in the 1988 Red Bench Fire, the ranger's residence and phone terminal are extant.

The phoneline is largely a single-strand system using an earth ground. While wire was originally strung through ceramic insulators mounted on trees or on pole tripods, those supports between Polebridge and Bowman Lake were largely destroyed by the Red Bench Fire; this portion of the line, although largely intact within its historic alignment, is now down, hidden beneath duff, thick vegetation and logs. A scattered number of insulator trees remain standing; one- to two millimeter wire hangs suspended from only a few. The line contains numerous splices of undeterminable era and two distinguishable methods (wire-wrapped and crimped). Although grounded line is frequently tangled, in a few areas it remains intact, running along its original course. Often, the grounded wire has intact ceramic insulators attached, ripped off the trees during the fire and subsequent blow-downs.

From Bowman Lake to Numa Ridge, the line continues within its historic alignment, loosely parallel to the Numa Ridge Lookout Trail. Long sections of uncut -- although grounded -- wire remain. Insulators are brown ceramic, many held closed with a wire wrap. Splices -- both crimped and wire-wrap -- are numerous. Suspended line is attached to

Name of Property

County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:**

**Applicable National Register Criteria:** A; C

**Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):** N/A

**Significant Person(s):** N/A

**Cultural Affiliation:** N/A

**Areas of Significance:** Government; Communications; Engineering

**Period(s) of Significance:** ca.1925-1988

**Significant Dates:** 1927; 1956

**Architect/Builder:** National Park Service

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

The Polebridge to Numa Ridge line was a key component of administration of the remote North Fork region until 1985, serving as a critical link in fire protection and visitor safety. Similar systems throughout the West provided critical assistance in the maintenance of vast and remote natural resources. That section of line from Bowman Lake to Numa Ridge remains eligible to the NRHP as a last remaining example of the park's - and the West's -- once-extensive single-line crank telephone network (criterion A). The period of significance extends from the line's construction in 1927 until the 1985 discontinuation of its use. This property is a component of the Circulation Systems property type, as defined in the Glacier National Park Multiple Property Listing, and is significant at the local level. The line is eligible at the local level.

The line from Polebridge to Bowman Lake is a noncontributing component of this system: physical integrity has been significantly impaired by the Red Bench Fire.

Development of communication services in the Glacier region lagged behind much of the rest of the country due to the area's relative inaccessibility and limited population. In the park's earliest years, the Great Northern Railway's telegraph wires paralleling its main line served as virtually the only communication link between Glacier's eastern and western halves. Park officials began rectifying the problem by constructing a government telephone network in the park.

Work began with the first park construction season of 1911, when some \$1,400 was spent on 42.5 miles of line from Belton to Apgar, Logging Creek and Sperry. The North Fork line, a primitive, earth grounded affair, had been extended some 45 miles to Kishenehn by 1914. Other short routes in the Belton area were also erected, including a direct line from Headquarters to the Belton railroad station to facilitate the sending of confidential telegrams.

The 1920s saw spur lines extended to isolated west side ranger stations and lookout sites, including Bowman Ranger Station and Numa Ridge lookout. By 1932, a total of 251 miles of line and 91 telephone units were in operation. All ranger stations and fire lookouts were provided with telephone service. A central park switchboard was maintained in the Headquarters area.

The system was operated and maintained by park service crews. Linemen were employed to handle major maintenance projects, while rangers and lookouts handled much of the day-to-day repair. Lines varied greatly in construction standards and frequency of use. While some segments saw daily, year-round use, more remote sections (such as the primitive Brown Pass line) often faced service interruptions of weeks or months due to storms, slides, or deadfall. It was a major project each spring to reopen the entire network and prepare it for a summer of reliable operation. A typical winter resulted in "miles of grounded line in poor condition due to wind whipping and breaking." In 1927, park crews replaced the "old No. 32 wire" used on the North Fork system with 9 wire, "making the entire North Fork Circuit a #9 line which greatly reduces resistance and does not break easily."

The telephone system had reached its zenith by the late 1930s, but its heyday was to be relatively short-lived. As early as 1935, park officials "hoped to replace [miles of line] with radio." By the early 1950s an FM radio communication network served much of the park; many lines faced abandonment and negotiations began to transfer other telephone operations to the local public utility. A system operated by the Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company finally supplanted the old NPS lines the night of May 6, 1956.

**9. Major Bibliographic References**

Hufstetler, Mark. *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form; Glacier National Park Historic Telephone System*. July 1988. On file at the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, MT.

Sherfy, Marcella, Montana State Historic Preservation Officer, to Lorraine Mintzmyer, Regional Director, NPS RMRO, March 20, 1989. Correspondence provided by RMRO.

Glacier National Park Superintendent's Annual Report, 1917, 1935.

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Location of Additional Data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property: 24

| UTM References          | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|-------------------------|------|---------|----------|
| Point A (Polebridge RS) | 11   | 699680  | 5407100  |
| Point B (Bowman RS)     | 12   | 705425  | 5412210  |
| Point C (Numa Ridge)    | 12   | 706830  | 5418150  |

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundaries form an approximately 10-mile corridor, 10-feet wide, from just north of the Polebridge Ranger Station to the Numa Ridge lookout, via the Bowman Lake Ranger Station.

**Boundary Justification**

These boundaries generally incorporate the area of historic use and development; however, survey crews did not locate evidence of the line until a point just north of the Polebridge Ranger Station, near the Bowman Creek campground. This point forms the southern terminus of the site.

**11. Form Prepared By**

**name/title:** Ann Hubber/Historian. Based on Draft nomination prepared by Mark Hufstetler (1987).  
**organization:** Historical Research Associates, Inc. **date:** 6/1995 **street & number:** P.O. Box 7086 **telephone:** (406) 721-1958  
**city or town:** Missoula **state:** MT **zip code:** 59807-7086

**Property Owner**

**name/title:** National Park Service **street & number:** Park Headquarters **telephone:** (406)888-5441  
**city or town:** West Glacier **state:** MT **zip code:** 59936

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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MT.

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trees at heights varying from eight to thirteen feet and is frequently broken by deadfall. No man-made poles were located. In areas of heaviest timber, evidence of a phone-line excavation remains.

The wooden interior telephone and metal exterior phone remain in place at Bowman Lake. The Numa Ridge phone is also extant. One of the three historic phones within the Polebridge Ranger Station complex was destroyed in the fire. Those in the district ranger's residence are extant.

(Additional unevaluated components of the larger North Fork system include phone poles standing in the meadows just south of Kishenehn Ranger Station, the northern terminus of the North Fork system.)

### Integrity

Due to the nature of the resource and of the local environment, the Polebridge to Numa Ridge line was frequently downed by falling trees, high winds, and fire; it was thus repaired seasonally, with new line spliced to old. While it is extremely unlikely that the line retains a majority of original or even historic components, maintenance techniques until the line's abandonment mirrored those used during the historic period and do not significantly impair physical integrity. The general alignment between Bowman Lake and Numa Ridge remains unchanged and the retention of both terminal points contributes significantly to the historical value and interpretive potential of that segment of line.

The line from Polebridge to Bowman Lake is extremely difficult to follow, with large sections of tangled line and extensive deadfall. Insufficient poles remain to indicate the alignment. Similarly, the fire has destroyed all evidence of a maintained selective tree cut within the vicinity of the line. Polebridge-to-Bowman Lake has been classified as a non-contributing component of the communication system.

### 8. Statement of Significance, cont.

Soon only isolated segments remained intact and in use. Lines from Chief Mountain to Belly River, from West Glacier to Kintla Lake, and from Polebridge to Bowman Lake and Numa Ridge, remained operational well after the system's official abandonment, due to the largely volunteer efforts of local NPS staff. Service continued to Numa Ridge through 1985 and the Polebridge to Bowman line was operational until 1988 when the Red Bench Fire destroyed much of the line.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number

Photographs

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Polebridge to Numa Ridge Phoneline, Flathead  
Co., MT.

### Photographs

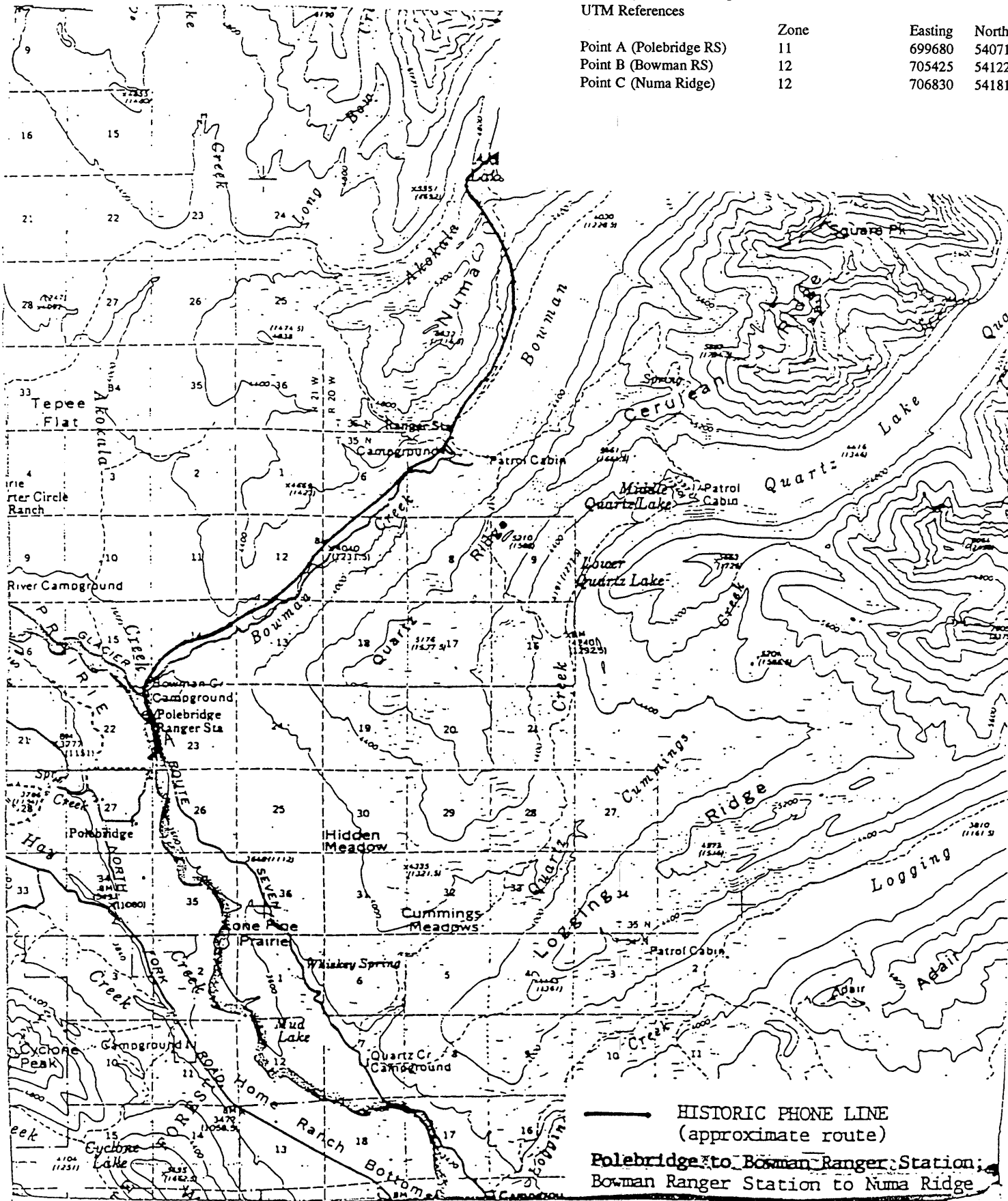
The following information applies to all photographs listed below:


- 1) Photographer: Jason Wilmot
- 2) Date of Photographs: September 1993
- 3) Location of Negatives: National Park Service, RMR-RC, Denver, CO

| PHOTO NUMBER | DESCRIPTION                                     | DIRECTION OF VIEW |
|--------------|---|-------------------|
| 1            | Crank Phone<br>(@ Numa Ridge Lookout [HS #611]) | View to E         |
| 2            | Insulators                                      | Detail            |
| 3            | Tree Attachment                                 | Detail            |

Polebridge to Numa Ridge Phoneline  
UTM References

|                         | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|-------------------------|------|---------|----------|
| Point A (Polebridge RS) | 11   | 699680  | 5407100  |
| Point B (Bowman RS)     | 12   | 705425  | 5412210  |
| Point C (Numa Ridge)    | 12   | 706830  | 5418150  |



 HISTORIC PHONE LINE  
 (approximate route)  
**Polebridge to Bowman Ranger Station;**  
**Bowman Ranger Station to Numa Ridge**

U.S.G.S. 7 1/2' Topo Quad Polebridge  
 Sec. 6, 7, 4, 13, 14, 22 Rng 200, 210  
 County Flathead





United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

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SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 86000337

Date Listed: 02/14/1986

Polebridge Ranger Station  
Historic District  
Property Name

Flathead  
County

MT  
State

Glacier National Park MRA  
Multiple Name

-----  
This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

*[Handwritten Signature]*  
Signature of the Keeper

12/6/02  
Date of Action

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Amended Items in Nomination:

Resource Classification:

The Resource Classification for the nominated property is: *district*

These revisions were confirmed with the NPS staff.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)



Numa Ridge Lookout  
(HS 611)

Crank Phone  
View to East  
Phone Line

Glacier NP, MT, Flathead  
Co.

Photo #1



Insulators  
On Ground  
Phone Line  
Glacier NP, MT, Flathead Co.

Photo #2



Phone line Tree Attachment  
View to East

Phone line

Glacier NP, MT, Flathead Co.

Photo #3