# Draft
# Environmental Assessment

# HARPER'S BRIDGE
# FISHING ACCESS SITE (FAS)
# DEVELOPMENT

**June 2010**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

# Harper's Bridge Fishing Access Site (FAS) Development
# Draft Environmental Assessment
# MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST

## PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

**1. Proposed state action:**
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes development of the Harper's Bridge Fishing Access Site (FAS) along the Clark Fork River in Missoula County near Missoula, MT to improve public access to this stretch of river. Proposed development includes site signage, boundary fencing and barrier rock, an access road into the property, a designated parking area for 24-36 vehicles, a concrete vault latrine and a concrete boat launch with a cable mat. A 50-foot riparian buffer would be protected and enhanced to reduce impacts to water quality from developments at the site. Development would be phased in as budget allows.

**2. Agency authority for the proposed action:**
The 1977 Montana Legislature enacted statute 87-1-605, Montana Code Annotated (MCA), which directs FWP to acquire, develop and operate a system of fishing accesses. FWP has the authority to develop outdoor recreational resources in the state per 23-1-101, MCA: *"for the purpose of conserving the scenic, historic, archaeologic, scientific, and recreational resources of the state and providing their use and enjoyment, thereby contributing to the cultural, recreational, and economic life of the people and their health."*

Furthermore, state statute 23-1-110 MCA and Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) 12.2.433 guides public involvement and comment for the improvements at state parks and fishing access sites, which this document provides. ARM 12.8.601 requires the Department to consider the wishes of users and the public, the capacity of the site for development, environmental impacts, long-range maintenance, protection of natural features and impacts on tourism as these elements relate to development or improvement to fishing access sites or state parks. This document will illuminate the facets of the proposed project in relation to this rule. See Appendix 1 for HB 495 qualification.

**3. Name of project:** Harper's Bridge FAS Development

**4. Project sponsor:**
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804
406-542-5500

**5. Estimated Schedule of Events:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Public Comment Period: | June 18—July 19, 2010 |
| Decision Notice Published: | July 2010 |
| Estimated Construction/Commencement Date: | Late Summer 2010 |
| Estimated Completion Date: | Fall 2010 (Initial Development) |
| Estimated Completion Date: | Fall 2011 (Final Development) |
| Current Status of Project Design (% complete): | 15% |

**6. Location:**

Missoula County, Township 14 North, Range 21 West, Section 36

**Figure 1:** Highway map of area around Harper's Bridge FAS

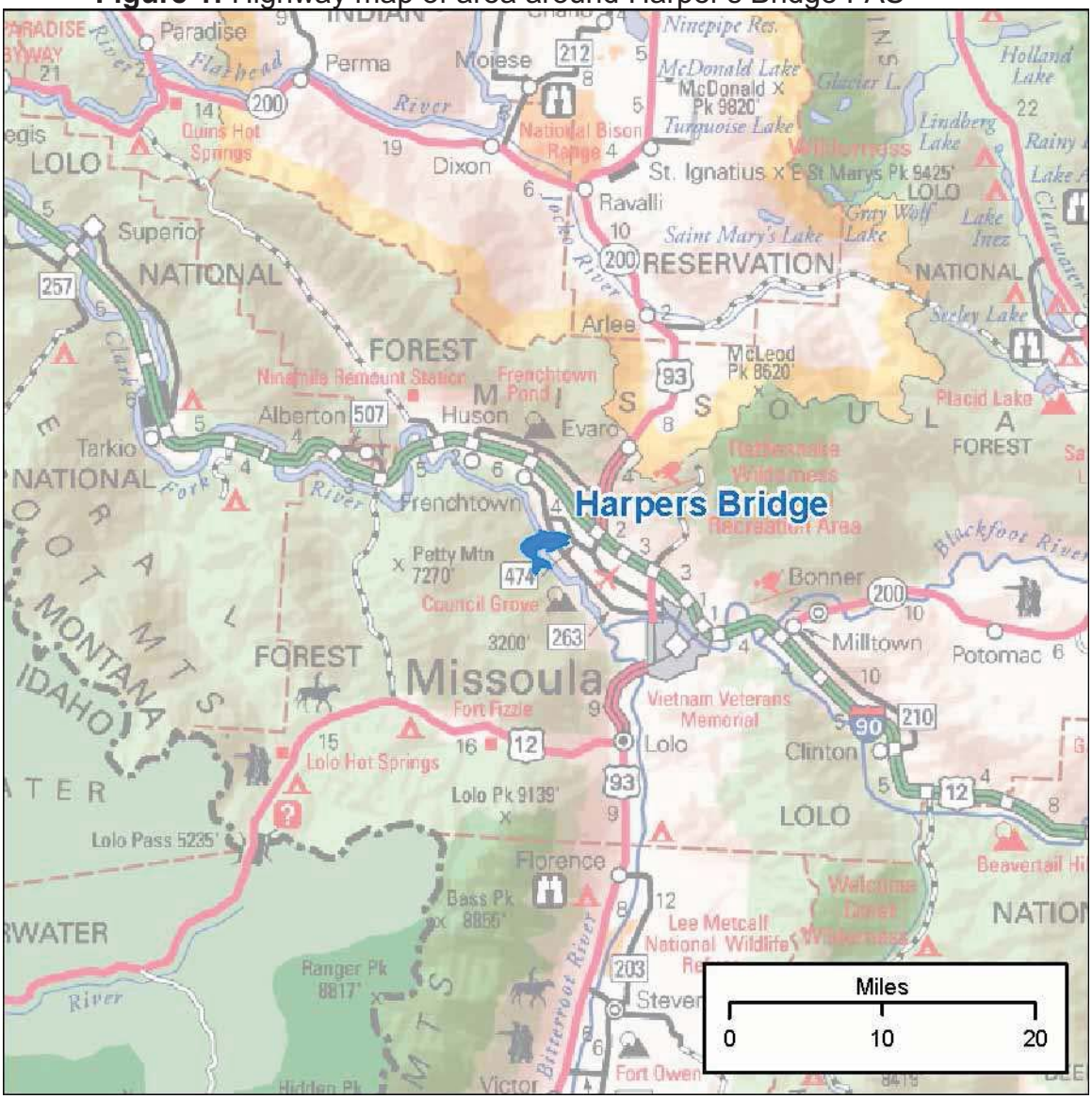


**Figure 2: Aerial view of Harper's Bridge FAS and Deep Creek FAS**

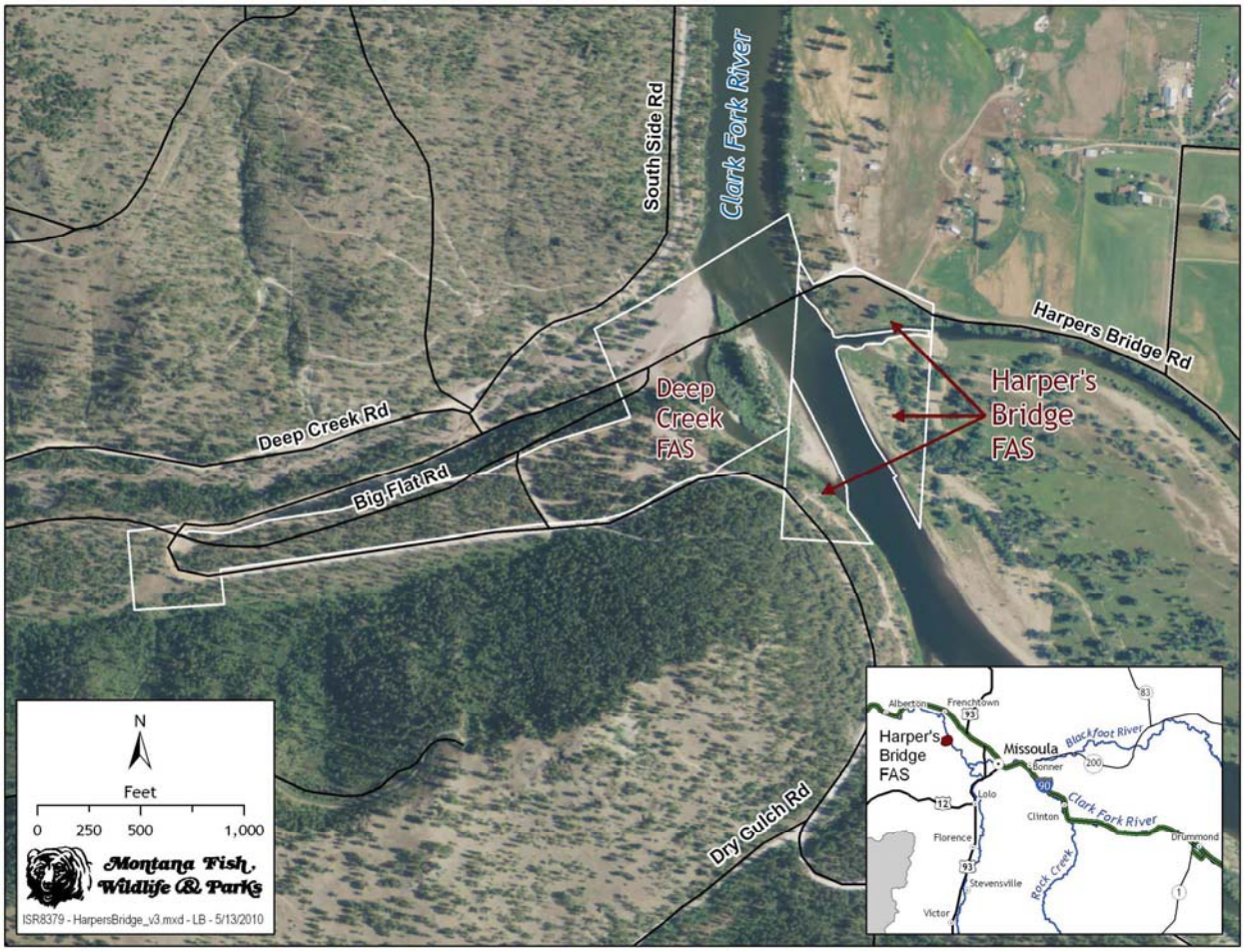
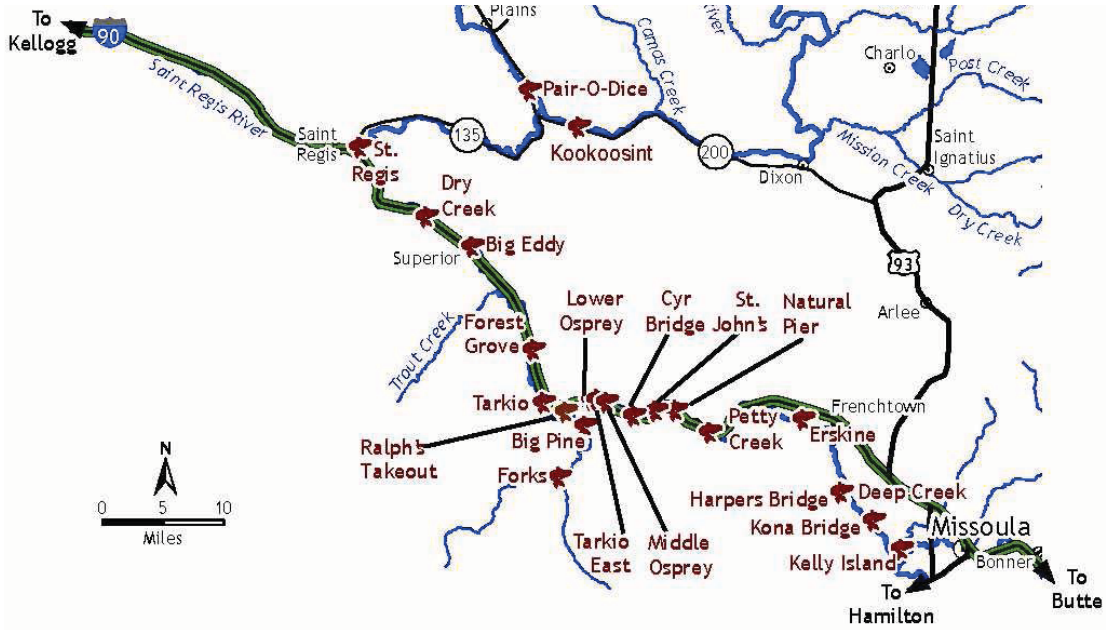



**Figure 3: Fishing Access Sites on the Lower Clark Fork River**



**7. Area Affected:**

| | Acres | | Acres |
|---|---|---|---|
| (a) Developed: | | (d) Floodplain/Riparian | <1 |
| Residential | 0 | | |
| Industrial | 0 | (e) Productive: | |
| | | Irrigated cropland | 0 |
| (b) Open Space/ | <1 | Dry cropland | 0 |
| Woodlands/Recreation | | Forestry | 0 |
| (c) Wetlands/Riparian | <1 | Rangeland | 0 |
| Areas | | Other | 0 |

NOTE: Harper's Bridge FAS parcels total 12.34 acres. The parcel southwest of the river is 3.91 acres and the parcel to the northeast of the river is 8.43 acres. The development would affect less than 1 acre of the entire property.

**8. Other Local, State or Federal overlapping or additional jurisdiction:**

**a) Permits: Permits will be filed 60 days prior to work**

| Agency Name | Permit |
|---|---|
| Missoula County | Approach, Floodplain and Sanitation Permits |
| Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) | 124 MT Stream Protection Act |
| Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality | 318 Short-Term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity and Stormwater Discharge |
| US Corps of Engineers | 404 Federal Clean Water Act |

**b) Funding**: MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks FAS Development $50,000

**c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:**

| Agency Name | Type of Responsibility |
|---|---|
| Natural Heritage Program | Species of Concern (See Appendix 2) |
| State Historic Preservation Office | Cultural Clearance |
| US Fish & Wildlife Service | Bald & Golden Eagle Protection Act |
| US Fish & Wildlife Service | Migratory Bird Treaty Act |
| Montana Bald Eagle Working Group | Montana Bald Eagle Management Plan |
| Missoula County Weed District | Weed Management Coordination and Approval of Weed Management Plan |

**9. Summary of the Proposed Action:**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to develop the Harper's Bridge Fishing Access Site (FAS) along the Clark Fork River. The property is approximately 8 miles northwest of Missoula (Figures 1-3 on pages 3 and 4). The property contains primarily cottonwood and willow trees, but also some ponderosa pine trees and red osier dogwood and wild rose shrubs, and shows use by waterfowl, shorebirds and songbirds, and white-tailed deer.

The Clark Fork River headwaters originate at the confluence of Silver Bow and Warm Springs creeks near Warm Springs, Montana. The river flows north and west 350 miles through broad, semi-arid valleys, high mountain ranges, and steep-sided valleys and terminates in Lake Pend Oreille, Idaho. The Middle Clark Fork River extends about 115 river miles from Milltown Dam to its confluence with the Flathead River and is entirely free flowing. Its drainage is mountainous and covered with large forested tracts, with grazing and cropland areas in the lower valleys. From Thompson Falls Dam, its upper boundary, the Lower Clark Fork River flows through sedimentary formations and a landscape sculpted by the massive outflows of glacial Lake Missoula. It runs into Cabinet Gorge Dam, just outside the Montana border. When the Clark Fork crosses the Idaho border, it is Montana's largest river, carrying an average 22,060 cubic feet of water per second.

The bridge structure itself at Harper's Bridge is privately owned, although not much remains. A private party purchased the bridge from Missoula County years ago, once the bridge was no longer in use. A fire in the late 1990s destroyed a large portion of the bridge. The bridge at one time was a major means of getting motorists across the Clark Fork River west of Missoula. The proposed project involves approximately 1 acre of the 12-acres adjacent to the bridge that FWP recently acquired in 2008. See Figure 2 for parcel boundaries and Appendix 5 for the Draft Concept Site Plan. Historically, the public has used this area to access the Clark Fork River. Missoula County has expressed support of the acquisition and development of this location to ease the congestion of public parking along the county roadway. Missoula County has agreed to assist in the removal of the bridge remnants, pending approval from the current owner.

Proposed development includes a designated parking area for 24-36 vehicles, boundary fencing, barrier rock, a new concrete vault latrine, a concrete boat launch with cable mat, and revegetation of the 50-foot buffer of the riparian area. The development would be phased in with most work occurring in Fall 2010 and completed during Fall 2011, contingent on funding available.

Need and Benefits:

Currently the site is totally unimproved and there is no parking available within the FWP property. The popularity of the site has grown and unfortunately increased parking along the county road increases the potential for traffic hazards and congestion problems for local residents.

It is anticipated the Harper's Bridge FAS, once fully developed, would be used by anglers both for bank and float fishing as well as launching and taking out both non-motorized and motorized watercraft. The purpose of the proposed development is to improve public access along the Clark Fork River and to restore the riparian shoreline. The lower Clark Fork River is a very popular river for float and bank angling, as well as a variety of recreational uses including

floating, swimming, walking, picnicking, and wildlife viewing. The proposed development would provide access for floaters along the Clark Fork. The Clark Fork River is excellent for trout fishing and currently heavily used, but lacks adequate public access for floaters. The proposed development at Harper's Bridge FAS (Clark Fork river mile 199.5 – 199.6) would also function as a put-in location for the FWP Petty Creek FAS located approximately 20 miles downstream as well as access for a shorter float from Kona Bridge FAS located about three miles upstream. Deep Creek FAS is a more difficult to reach undeveloped FWP FAS directly across from Harper's Bridge FAS.

According to FWP survey data, the section of Clark Fork River from the Bitterroot River mouth to the Flathead River confluence supports between 38,000-65,000 days of fishing annually. Game fish opportunities in the river include rainbow trout, westslope cutthroat trout, rainbow x cutthroat hybrids, brown trout, mountain whitefish and northern pike. Other fish species include northern pikeminnow, longnose sucker, largescale sucker, peamouth chub, redside shiner, and sculpin. Fishing regulations require release of cutthroat trout and bull trout, but three brown trout and rainbow trout less than 15 inches can be kept per day, with no limit on pike. Boating is currently open year-round to motorized and non-motorized use in the immediate reaches. The Clark Fork River in this reach is considered proposed bull trout critical habitat. Sensitive fish species include the bull trout (federally threatened and on the list of Montana species of concern) and westslope cutthroat trout (Montana species of concern).

Improvements, Maintenance and Public Use:

Development would include an improved access road, boundary fencing and barrier rock, a concrete vault latrine, a concrete boat launch with cable mat, parking area for 24-36 vehicle/boat trailer combinations. The development would be phased in as funding allows. See Appendix 5 for the preliminary draft concept site plan. FWP would install directional, information and regulation signs, and boundary or right-of-way fences would be built and maintained. FWP staff would implement the FWP Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan to mitigate the spread of noxious weeds.

The property would be regulated under existing FWP public use regulations. Management of the proposed development includes routine maintenance and enforcement of department recreation regulations as outlined in the Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM). Protection of the natural resources, the health and safety of visitors and consideration of neighboring properties would be considered and incorporated into development plans for this site. Development of the parking area and latrine will enhance visitor use of this site as well as provide long-term protection for the resources not impacted by the development footprint. The site would be managed for day-use only.

FWP Commercial Use Rules would apply for commercial use at this site, as is the case for all other FWP FAS's. Hunting will not be permitted due to proximity to homes and livestock grazing in the area.

**10. Alternatives:**

**Alternative A: No Action**

If FWP were not to develop the Harper's Bridge FAS, continued use of the unimproved public access would likely continue. Without a designated parking area with improved access for trailered boats, parking would continue on the county road, creating increased traffic hazards and congestion along the road as well as haphazard pioneered parking degrading adjacent vegetation. Without a latrine, health and safety issues would likely continue and become worse as visitors increase in number without proper sanitation facilities. Under this alternative, the Deep Creek FAS would continue to be used as the primary river access point for this reach. Vehicle access to the Deep Creek area is difficult and inconvenient for motorists as it lies on the west bank of the river, opposite from an existing paved road network. If FWP were not to develop the Harper's Bridge FAS, management of the site would remain at a minimal level with weed maintenance and periodic site visits by FWP regional staff.

**Preferred Alternative B: Proposed Action**

FWP proposes to develop the Harper's Bridge FAS. Development would include boundary fencing and barrier rock, site signage, designated parking area for 24-36 vehicles, a concrete vault latrine, a concrete boat launch with cable mat, and revegetation of a 50-foot riparian buffer. The development would be phased in as funding allows, with primary construction during Fall 2010 and completed during Fall 2011. The proposed development would enhance visitor use of this site, provide a safer, more organized and sanitary site as well as provide long-term protection and revegetation of the riverbank.

**11. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:**

The Montana Bald Eagle Management Guidelines recommend a buffer of at least ½ mile for construction of access sites. The proposed development of the Harper's Bridge FAS falls outside of these recommended buffers for all bald eagle nests in the area. While bald eagles were officially delisted in 2007, the US Fish and Wildlife Service has jurisdiction protecting this species under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). Furthermore, state pesticide use laws and regulations will be followed. Application records will be submitted to the Montana Department of Agriculture as required, and these records will be available upon request.

Control measures are associated with the proposed actions for decreasing the impacts of the construction work during the ramp construction. Control measures include timing the earthwork to coincide with the period of low flow to minimize bed-load transport of redistributed bank and channel materials during the construction of the boat launch so that any materials mobilized into the stream channel would have minimum energy for transport. Thus, while sediment will be mobilized, only the silt, clay, and fine sand sized particles will move any distance downstream and, it is unlikely these particles will travel more than 200-300 yards before dropping out.

State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has given their clearance for the proposed development work to proceed based on a cultural survey conducted at the Harper's Bridge FAS. If cultural materials are discovered during the project, the work would be stopped in order to allow time to notify appropriate agencies and conduct a more in depth investigation to determine how to proceed.

Montana Stream Protection Act (SPA-124) guidelines (administered by FWP), Missoula County Floodplain regulations, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers jurisdiction and other stream protection measures are in place on the Clark Fork River at the project location. Stream Protection Act consultation resulted in a recommended minimum 50-foot buffer between normal bankfull elevation (high-water mark) and project disturbance to ensure protection of riparian vegetation, as well as other stipulations to protect water quality and natural stream integrity.

## PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

The analysis of the physical and human environments discussed on the following pages is limited to Alternative B as the proposed action and preferred alternative. As previously noted under Alternative A (No Action), the rustic nature of the Harper's Bridge property would remain and the status quo would be maintained at site if no improvements were initiated.

**Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.**

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

| 1. LAND RESOURCES<br>Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | Can Impact Be Mitigated * | Comment Index |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Unknown * | None | Minor * | Potentially Significant | | |
| a. **Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure? | | | X | | YES | 1a. |
| b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility? | | | X | | YES | 1b. |
| c. **Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features? | | X | | | | |
| d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake? | | | X | | YES | 1d. |
| e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard? | | X | | | | |

1a. Soil and geologic substructure would remain stable during and after the proposed work through revegetation and mitigation measures. Developing a boat launch will disturb a small portion of the bank, but impacts should be localized and short-term. Increased use at the site may potentially lead to soil instability along the waterfront from foot traffic and use by recreationists based on experience at neighboring sites.

1b. There currently is not a boat launch at this location and to prevent pioneered use of the site, the proposed boat launch is intended to prevent the bank from eroding and also to eliminate the need to pioneer new boat launches along the bank. Increased use at the site may potentially lead to soil instability along the waterfront from foot traffic and use by recreationists based on experience at neighboring sites.

Furthermore, providing a designated parking area would prevent uncontrolled/pioneered parking and would prevent degradation of the vegetation, protecting the soil from compaction and reducing the spread of noxious weeds.

1d. When the concrete boat launch is added, the launch may slightly change the current deposition pattern in a short reach of the river, but will have no long term effects on the river channel.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

| 2. AIR<br>Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | Can Impact Be Mitigated * | Comment Index |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Unknown * | None | Minor * | Potentially Significant | | |
| a. **Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).) | | | X | | YES | 2a. |
| b. Creation of objectionable odors? | | | X | | Positive | 2b. |
| c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally? | | X | | | | |
| d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants? | | X | | | | |
| e. ***For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a.) | | NA | | | | |

2a. During the construction work, temporary amounts of dust may be generated during the soil excavation and placement in the flood plain. If additional materials are needed off-site, loading at the source site will generate minor amounts of dust. There would be a temporary increase of diesel exhaust from the construction equipment during the road improvements but this would be short-term and minor. FWP follows the Best Management Practices (BMP's) during all phases of construction to minimize risks and reduce dust. See Appendix 4 for the BMP's. See Appendix 5 for the preliminary concept site plan.

2b. The latrine would be installed and maintained regularly to avoid offensive odors. A county sanitation permit would be obtained prior to installation. Placement of a vault latrine at this FAS would decrease public health concerns.

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| 3. WATER<br>Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | Can Impact Be Mitigated* | Comment Index |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Unknown * | None | Minor * | Potentially Significant | | |
| a. *Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity? | | | X | | YES | 3a. |
| b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff? | | | X | | YES | 3b. |
| c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows? | | X | | | | |
| d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body? | | X | | | | |
| e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding? | | X | | | | |
| f. Changes in the quality of groundwater? | | X | | | | |
| g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater? | | X | | | | |
| h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater? | | | X | | YES | 3h. |
| i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation? | | X | | | | |
| j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality? | | X | | | | |
| k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity? | | X | | | | |
| l. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.) | | NA | | | | 3l. |
| m. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.) | | NA | | | | |

3a. The launch work would cause temporary and minor amounts of turbidity during construction. Construction is planned during low flow to ensure minimal impact. FWP would follow the permit requirements for the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) for Permit 318 Short Term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity. Parking lot and road approaches would be sloped appropriately so that runoff is not routed to the river.

3b. There would be minor increases in the amount and rate of runoff from the site due to the change from an “undisturbed” area to compact gravel. The historic drainage pattern would be preserved as much as possible and no nearby facilities would be negatively impacted. Parking lot and road approaches will be sloped appropriately so that runoff is not routed to the river. FWP would follow the permit requirements for the DEQ permit for Stormwater Discharge. Riparian buffers will be protected and enhanced to reduce impacts to water quality from developments at the site.

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3h. FWP follows the Best Management Practices during all phases of construction to minimize sediment delivery to the river. See Appendix 4 for the BMP's. Development of the site would encourage increased use by the public and potential dumping and spillage of contaminants in the parking lot, roads and launch adjacent to the Clark Fork River. These potential impacts would be mitigated through proper sloping of roads on the site, riparian buffers and appropriate signage. The noxious weeds are managed within the guidelines of the FWP Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan. The use of herbicides would be in compliance with application guidelines and applied by people trained in safe handling techniques in accordance with product labels and as provided for under state law. Weeds would also be controlled using mechanical or biological means in certain areas to reduce the risk of chemical spills or water contamination.

3l. The site includes a portion of the floodplain and would be protected by statewide floodplain regulations under state ownership/easement holdings.

| **4. VEGETATION**<br>**Will the proposed action result in?** | **IMPACT *** | | | | **Can Impact Be Mitigated*** | **Comment Index** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Unknown *** | **None** | **Minor *** | **Potentially Significant** | | |
| a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)? | | | X | | YES | 4a. |
| b. Alteration of a plant community? | | | X | | | 4b. |
| c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species? | | X | | | | 4c. |
| d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land? | | X | | | | |
| e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds? | | | X | | YES | 4e. |
| f. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland? | | NA | | | | 4f. |

4a. Construction of the boat launch, parking lot, fencing and latrine would have a minor impact on the vegetation, removing existing vegetation in the area of construction and altering the diversity of the plant community on the site. Species known to exist on site primarily include cottonwoods, willows, some ponderosa pines, as well as some red-osier dogwood, roses, and grasses. Some grassland vegetation would be removed to develop a designated parking area, but overall will positively impact upland vegetation, by restricting parking to designated areas. Without designated parking the vegetation would be degraded from indiscriminate parking which would likely increase the spread of noxious weeds. A minimum of a 50-foot buffer of the riparian zone next to the river would be protected and revegetated in coordination with the FWP Fisheries Bureau. Protecting riparian vegetation from anticipated increased use at the site may require signage and fencing to discourage degradation.

4b. This area is characterized by open stands of cottonwoods, willows and mixed grasses and a few ponderosa pines, red osier dogwood and roses. The 2009 weed survey by

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Department of Agriculture noted noxious weed species present: spotted knapweed, leafy spurge, Dalmatian toadflax, sulfur cinquefoil, houndstongue. FWP sprayed the northern portion of this site in 2009 for a cost of $325.00 with good treatment/control. This site is scheduled this season (2010) with an estimated cost of $325.00, and again in 2011.

4c. A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program's (MNHP) species of concern database found pointed broom sedge in the vicinity of the FAS. Pointed broom sedge is a vascular plant on the Montana species of concern that is in the area around Council Grove State Park, but not within the boundaries of the proposed development at the Harper's Bridge FAS.

4e. Approximately 25% of this property currently has infestation of knapweed and a minor amount of houndstongue, leafy spurge, Dalmatian toadflax, and sulfur cinquefoil. FWP utilizes the Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan to control the noxious weeds on the property by using chemical, biological and mechanical methods. Furthermore, adding designated parking spaces will help deter motorized vehicles from indiscriminate parking, which disturbs the natural vegetation and results in the spread of weeds.

4f. This area is not considered prime or unique farmlands. Some of the property has been used as private pasture land previously for cattle. Wetlands occur along the river and will be afforded wetland protection under state ownership and federal laws. No construction is planned in wetlands.

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| ** 5. FISH/WILDLIFE<br>Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | Can Impact Be Mitigated * | Comment Index |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Unknown * | None | Minor * | Potentially Significant | | |
| a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat? | | X | | | | |
| b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species? | | X | | | | |
| c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species? | | X | | | | |
| d. Introduction of new species into an area? | | X | | | | |
| e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals? | | X | | | | |
| f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species? | | | X | | YES | 5f. |
| g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)? | | | X | | YES | 5g. |
| h. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.) | | NA | | | | |
| i. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.) | | NA | | | | |

The development of the FAS will not affect the abundance of game and nongame species that move through the property. White-tailed deer are known to use the property. Other big game that may be in this area includes elk, moose, mountain lion and black bear. The habitat in the area is also conducive to ruffed grouse and pheasants. The river bottom area is also habitat for numerous small mammals and a variety of birds. A portion of the land is in a floodplain and riparian area that serves as important habitat for a variety of mammal, bird and fish species. This stretch of the Clark Fork River is considered critical fish habitat for bull trout according to FWP fisheries biologist, Ladd Knoteck.

5f. A search of the Natural Resources Information System provided by the Montana Natural Heritage Program revealed 14 species of concern known to be generally distributed in the vicinity of the Harper's Bridge FAS. Eight of the species identified are ranked as sensitive including the bald eagle, peregrine falcon, westslope cutthroat trout, gray wolf, fisher, wolverine, western toad, and bobolink, as well as two species listed as threatened the Canada lynx and the bull trout. The grasshopper sparrow, western skink, a millipede are not ranked. There are no endangered species found to be in the area of the parcel.

Eagles are known to use the river corridor year-round for forage and as a travel route. The development should not impact the eagles that use the river area. The nearest bald eagle and peregrine nests are over a mile to the north. The primary concern with peregrine falcons, bald eagles, and other raptors is their tolerance to human activities.

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**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

Research has shown that raptors are less tolerant of stationary human activities within view of their nest. As long as recreationists float by nests and do not stop to rest or recreate with ¼ mile of nests then impacts should not be significant.

Gray wolves are currently delisted and monitored in the Northwest Montana Recovery Area by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), considered sensitive by the United States Forest Service (USFS), and a special status species by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), in Tier 1 of the FWP Comprehensive Fish and Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CFWCS) and S3/G4 by Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP). The ranking by MNHP indicates the species is potentially at risk of extirpation in the state and uncommon, but not rare globally. In 2002, wolves met the recovery criteria set by the USFWS and are therefore biologically recovered. The gray wolf was officially delisted from the federal Endangered Species Act as of May 4, 2009. Montana's state laws, regulations and management plan replace federal regulations. Gray wolves are managed as a Montana species in need of management. FWP wolf specialist Liz Bradley has no concerns with this project impacting gray wolves. Although it is possible for wolves to travel through the project area, none have been sighted in the immediate area. The wolf population in western Montana is strong and wolves may pass through just about any area including this site.

Westslope cutthroat trout are common in this stretch (approximately 25-50 per mile), according to FWP survey data. Bull trout primarily use the area as a migratory corridor mainly during the spring or early summer periods. Their abundance in this section of the river is extremely low (approximately two per mile) and would not be impacted by the development directly. There may be minor short-term impact to the fish during the construction of the boat launch, but would be minor and temporary, and once completed should not impact the fishery directly. Anticipated increased use in this Clark Fork River reach is expected to increase angling pressure on sensitive species. Population level impacts of increased pressure are not expected as protective angling regulations are already in place and the site is not adjacent to any known congregation or staging areas for bull trout or westslope cutthroat trout.

Fishers, Canada lynx and wolverines are typically found in upper elevation habitat consisting of dense timber, yet there may be an occasional animal that passes through the valley bottom. Due to their habitat associations and limited use of the river bottom riparian areas these species will not be significantly impacted by the development.

Western toads prefer habitat that includes streams and mixed ponderosa pine/cottonwood/ willow sites. They have been documented to the south of this property along the Clark Fork. Western skinks can be found in western Montana preferring grasslands with gentle rolling terrain with rocky areas imbedded, to rocky and steep terrain with scattered ponderosa pine.

Montana is part of the summer range for Bobolink and Grasshopper sparrow, both preferring open prairies and grasslands, with documented sightings to the east of this property. A millipede may be found year round in this general vicinity.

Please see Appendix 2 Montana Natural History Program (MNHP) Native Species Report.

5g. The proposed development should not increase negative conditions that stress wildlife populations and should have a neutral impact on the fishery. Regulation and information signs and routine presence of FWP staff should help prevent undesirable human activities.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

## B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

| 6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS<br>Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | Can Impact Be Mitigated * | Comment Index |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Unknown * | None | Minor * | Potentially Significant | | |
| a. Increases in existing noise levels? | | | X | | | 6a. |
| b. Exposure of people to severe or nuisance noise levels? | | | X | | | 6b. |
| c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property? | | X | | | | |
| d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation? | | X | | | | |

6a. Construction equipment would cause a temporary increase in noise levels at this site.

6b. If construction noise levels exceed a level deemed unsafe over a workday time frame, all workers would be required to wear proper ear protection and adjacent landowners notified. FWP will follow the Best Management Practices during all phases of construction to minimize risks. See Appendix 4 for BMP's.

| 7. LAND USE<br>Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | Can Impact Be Mitigated * | Comment Index |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Unknown * | None | Minor * | Potentially Significant | | |
| a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area? | | | X | | | 7a. |
| b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance? | | X | | | | |
| c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action? | | X | | | | |
| d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences? | | X | | | | |

7a. The proposed development would alter the historic use of a portion of the property from private grazing to a public recreation area. Vegetation will be left in a natural state with the exception of noxious weeds, which will be managed per the FWP Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan. There may be a temporary inconvenience during the proposed construction of the designated parking area and boat launch. A portion of the land is in a floodplain and riparian area that serves as important habitat for a variety of mammal, bird and fish species.

A minimum of a 50-foot riparian buffer would be maintained around the bank and re-vegetated as necessary to maintain the 50-foot buffer.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

| 8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS<br>Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | Can Impact Be Mitigated * | Comment Index |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Unknown * | None | Minor * | Potentially Significant | | |
| a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption? | | | X | | YES | 8a. |
| b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan? | | X | | | | |
| c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard? | | X | | | | |
| d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a) | | NA | | | | |

8a. FWP already manages for noxious weeds on the property following the Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan utilizing a combined method of managing weeds. The use of herbicides would be in compliance with application guidelines and applied by people trained in safe handling techniques in accordance with product labels and as provided for under state law. Weeds would also be controlled using mechanical or biological means in certain areas to reduce the risk of chemical spills or water contamination. The proposed project includes revegetation to reduce the spreading of noxious weeds. Weed management will continue, but if no action is taken, the potential for indiscriminate parking increases the spread of the noxious weeds, requiring more weed management.

Operation of heavy equipment proximal to a surface water body presents a temporary potential risk of fuel or lubricating oil release into the surface water. Contractors would have on site absorbent materials to minimize any hydrocarbon releases, as well as conduct startup inspection of all hydraulic lines and cylinder seals daily to reduce the potential for a release. FWP will follow the Best Management Practices during all phases of construction to minimize risks. See Appendix 4 for BMP's.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

| 9. COMMUNITY IMPACT<br>Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | Can Impact Be Mitigated * | Comment Index |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Unknown * | None | Minor * | Potentially Significant | | |
| a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area? | | X | | | | |
| b. Alteration of the social structure of a community? | | X | | | | |
| c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income? | | X | | | | |
| d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity? | | X | | | | |
| e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods? | | | X | | Positive | 9e. |

9e. The new boat launch will give boaters and floaters another opportunity in this area to access the Clark Fork River. The proposed development would increase the traffic on the county road but reduce traffic hazards by design and signage and having designated parking rather than pioneered and roadway parking. Unfortunately, the popularity of the site has grown and increased parking along the county road resulting in potential traffic hazards and congestion problems for local residents. Ample designated parking should improve traffic safety and congestion. The proposed development should not alter the distribution of population in the area, although public loitering may become more prevalent. Development of the site would likely have a positive economic benefit to retail and service businesses in the area since visitors might purchase supplies and gasoline from local vendors.

FWP would install road signs identifying the site, as well as informational signs of “no camping,” “pack it in - pack it out,” “respect the river and adjacent property,” “aquatic nuisance species,” “noxious weeds,” and relevant regulations. The site would be managed for day-use only. Hunting would not be permitted due to the proximity of adjacent homes and grazing cattle.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

| 10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES<br>Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | Can Impact Be Mitigated * | Comment Index |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Unknown * | None | Minor * | Potentially Significant | | |
| a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify: | | X | | | | |
| b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues? | | X | | | | 10b. |
| c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications? | | X | | | | |
| d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source? | | X | | | | |
| e. **Define projected revenue sources | | | X | | | 10 e. |
| f. **Define projected maintenance costs. | | | X | | | 10f. |

10b. No change in tax base as FWP would pay an amount equal to that of a private individual by making payment in lieu of taxes.

10e. Commercial outfitters that may use this FAS and others along the Clark Fork already pay for a Commercial Use Permit, so it is not likely that new revenue would be generated, but the outfitters will have another location to use under their existing permits.

10f. Expenditures associated with the maintenance of the site are anticipated to be $3,500 annually from the FWP Region 2 maintenance budget. This expense will be for noxious weed management, latrine maintenance, caretaker work including litter removal, and routine patrols and enforcement at the site.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

| ** 11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION<br>Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | Can Impact Be Mitigated * | Comment Index |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Unknown * | None | Minor * | Potentially Significant | | |
| a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view? | | | X | | YES | 11a. |
| b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood? | | X | | | | |
| c. **Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.) | | | X | | Positive | 11c. |
| d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.) | | NA | | | | |

11a. The new boat launch would be visible from the river and the parking lot and FAS signage will be visible from the Harper's Bridge Road. The proposed concrete vault latrine would have a brown exterior to blend in with the natural environment.

11c. The public access to this stretch of the Clark Fork River would be improved by creating access for a float from Kona Bridge FAS to Harper's Bridge FAS allowing for more use of the Clark Fork and would provide a better distribution of recreational use.

As a result of the proposed action, it is likely that there would be an increase in opportunity for recreationists for fishing and floating activities in this section of the Clark Fork. Furthermore, the property will be closed to hunting due to the proximity to the Harper's Bridge county road, adjacent neighbors and grazing cattle. Firearms use would be prohibited and would be posted on regulation signs for the protection of both recreationists and neighboring land use.

FWP would expand their routine maintenance to include this site to keep the latrine clean and the area litter-free. The area would be posted with informational signs including "pack it in, pack it out", "day-use only"," no camping allowed", as well as respect the river and adjacent private property.

During construction, there will be a temporary inconvenience to the general public using the site. See Appendix 3 for the Department of Commerce Tourism Report.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

| 12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES<br>Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | Can Impact Be Mitigated * | Comment Index |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Unknown * | None | Minor * | Potentially Significant | | |
| a. **Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric, historic, or paleontological importance? | | X | | | | |
| b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values? | | X | | | | |
| c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area? | | X | | | | |
| d. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.) | | NA | | | | |

12. A cultural survey has been conducted at the Harper's Bridge FAS. State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has given their clearance for the work to proceed. If cultural materials are discovered during the project, work would be stopped in order to allow time to notify appropriate agencies and conduct a more in depth investigation to determine how to proceed.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

## SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

| 13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE<br><br>Will the proposed action, considered as a whole: | IMPACT * | | | | Can Impact Be Mitigated * | Comment Index |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Unknown * | None | Minor * | Potentially Significant | | |
| a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.) | X | | | | | 13a. |
| b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur? | | X | | | | |
| c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan? | | X | | | | |
| d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed? | | X | | | | |
| e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created? | | X | | | | |
| f. ***For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.) | | X | | | | |
| g. ****For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required. | | X | | | | |

13a. The proposed improvements would improve accessibility by establishing designated parking, boat launch and latrine. FWP evaluated taking no action to leave the site undeveloped, but believes the proposed improvements would enhance visitor experience at this site and would prevent unnecessary degradation and prevent sanitation issues at the site.

During the construction of the proposed improvements, there may be minor and temporary impact to the physical environment, but the impact will be short-term and the improvements benefit the community and recreational opportunities over the long term.

The proposed action is expected to generate very little public controversy, set a precedent, or have considerable impacts to the physical and human environment.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

## PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The proposed development of the Harper's Bridge FAS along the Clark Fork River will provide FWP with the opportunity to establish a formal recreation area for anglers, vacationers and other recreationists in the Missoula area.

The development will not have significant impacts on the physical environment (i.e. geological features, fish and wildlife, and water resources) and direct impacts would be minor and temporary during construction. This area is characterized by open stands of cottonwoods, willows, some ponderosa pine and mixed grasses. Developing a boat launch would help ensure access for all types of desired recreational use and may encourage soil stability along the bank. When the boat launch is added, the launch may slightly change the current deposition pattern in a short reach of the river, but would have no long-term effects on the river channel. Furthermore, providing a designated parking area would prevent uncontrolled/pioneered parking and prevent degradation of the vegetation and the spread of noxious weeds. The application of herbicides to manage the existing noxious weeds would be done per the guidelines presented in the FWP Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan. Increase in gravel surface and traffic may increase dust levels to adjacent lands. In the long-term, the proposed development would improve dust and particulate issues by eliminating indiscriminate vehicle use.

The proposed project will affect the human environment (i.e. land use, recreation, and utilities) in a limited fashion. Most of these effects will be positive in quality, in that additional public access along the Clark Fork River will become available for the enjoyment of the natural surroundings and water-based activities. The minor impacts to the current environment are needed for noxious weed management on the property and to ensure the public's safety when accessing the area. The proposed development would alter the historic use of the property from grazing to a public recreation area. Vegetation will be left in a natural state with the exception of noxious weeds and the establishment of a graveled parking area and concrete boat launch and cable mat. A minimum of a 50-foot buffer of the riparian zone next to the river would be protected and re-vegetated in coordination with the FWP Fisheries Bureau. Protecting riparian vegetation from anticipated increased use at the site may require signage and fencing to discourage degradation. There may be a temporary inconvenience during the proposed improvements. A portion of the land is in a floodplain and riparian area under the protection of statewide floodplain regulations and serves as important habitat for a variety of mammal, bird and fish species.

State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has given their clearance for the proposed development work to proceed based on a cultural survey conducted at the Harper's Bridge FAS.

The proposed development would be phased in with primary development during Fall 2010 and completed during Fall 2011, contingent on funding available.

## PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

**1. Public Involvement:**

The public will be notified in the following manners to solicit comment on this proposed project and its EA::

- One legal notice in the *Missoulian;*
- One legal notice in the Helena *Independent Record;*
- One statewide press release;
- Direct mailing to adjacent landowners and interested parties;
- Public notice and posting of the EA on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: http://fwp.mt.gov. ("Recent Public Notices")
- Copies will be available for public review at FWP Region 2 Headquarters.

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope, having minor physical and human impacts. If requested within the comment period, the department may arrange a public meeting.

**2. Duration of comment period:**

The public comment period will extend for a minimum of 30 (thirty) days beginning June 18. Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., July 19, 2010 and can be mailed to:

Harper's Bridge Fishing Access Site (FAS) Development
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Region 2 Headquarters
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804

Or email comments to: rzarling@mt.gov
Or phone comments to: Rory Zarling at 406-542-5561

## PART V. EA PREPARATION

**1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? (YES/NO)?** No

**If an EIS is not required, explain <u>why</u> the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.**

Based upon the above assessment, which has identified a limited number of minor impacts from the proposed action, an EIS in not required and an environmental assessment is the appropriate level of review.

**2. Persons responsible for preparing the EA:**

Rory Zarling
Fishing Access Site Manager
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804
406-542-5561

Pam Boggs
EA Coordinator
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
PO Box 200701
Helena MT 59620-0701

**3. Agencies/organizations consulted during preparation of the EA:**

Missoula County Weed District
Montana Department of Commerce – Tourism
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- Director's Office Lands Unit
- Director's Office Legal Unit
- Fish & Wildlife Division
- Parks Division

Montana Natural Heritage Program – Natural Resources Information System (NRIS)
Montana State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO)

## Appendices

1. HB 495 Project Qualification Checklist
2. Sensitive Plants and Animals in the Harper's Bridge FAS Area (Montana Natural Heritage Program [MNHP] Native Species Report)
3. Tourism Report (Department of Commerce)
4. FWP Best Management Practices for FASs
5. Draft FWP Preliminary Concept Plan for Harper's Bridge FAS Proposed Development

# APPENDIX 1

HB495

PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

**Date:** April 22, 2010 **Person Reviewing** Pam Boggs

**Project Location:** Harper's Bridge FAS is along the Clark Fork River 8 miles northwest of Missoula. It is located within T14N, R21W, Section 36 in Missoula County.

**Description of Proposed Work:** Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks proposes to develop a parking lot, boat launch, and latrine on the Clark Fork River at Harper's Bridge FAS.

The following checklist is intended to be a guide for determining whether a proposed development or improvement is of enough significance to fall under HB 495 rules. (Please check all that apply and comment as necessary.)

**[Y] A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?**
Comments: Some new roadway to enter into the new parking lot and to access the boat launch.

**[ ] B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?**
Comments: No new buildings other than vault latrine.

**[Y] C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?**
Comments: Some excavation for the parking lot, boat launch, and latrine.

**[Y] D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?**
Comments: There is no parking lot currently so a designated parking lot will be developed to accommodate up 24-36 parking spaces. Visitors are currently parking on the county road.

**[ ] E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a doublewide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?**
Comments: A new single wide concrete boat ramp with cable mat will be installed.

**[Y] F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?**
Comments: A new single wide gravel boat launch will be added at this site.

**[ ] G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?**
Comments: A cultural survey has been conducted and received SHPO clearance. If artifacts are discovered in areas excavated, work would cease and be brought to the attention of SHPO and other appropriate agencies would be contacted.

**[ ] H. Any new above ground utility lines?**
Comments: There are above ground utility lines in the area but no new lines proposed.

**[ ] I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?**
Comments: Day-use only. Camping would not be allowed.

**[Y] J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern; including effects of a series of individual projects?**
Comments: The proposed work will develop a new parking area, boat launch, and latrine, where none currently exist. The public currently uses some of the property to access the water.

If any of the above are checked, HB 495 rules apply to this proposed work and should be documented on the MEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST. Refer to MEPA/HB495 Cross Reference Summary for further assistance.

# Appendix 2

## SENSITIVE PLANTS AND ANIMALS IN THE HARPER'S BRIDGE FAS AREA

### Species of Concern Terms and Definitions

A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) element occurrence database (http://nris.mt.gov) indicates no known occurrences of federally listed threatened, endangered, or proposed threatened or endangered plant species in the proposed project site. The search did indicate the project area is within habitat for Bald Eagle, Gray Wolf, Bull Trout, Western Cutthroat Trout, Western Toad, Canada Lynx, Fisher, Wolverine, Peregrine Falcon, Grasshopper Sparrow, Western Skink, Bobolink, A Millipede, and Pointed Broom Sedge. Please see the next page for more information on these species.

**Montana Species of Concern.** The term **"Species of Concern"** includes taxa that are at-risk or potentially at-risk due to rarity, restricted distribution, habitat loss, and/or other factors. The term also encompasses species that have a special designation by organizations or land management agencies in Montana, including: Bureau of Land Management Special Status and Watch species; U.S. Forest Service Sensitive and Watch species; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Threatened, Endangered and Candidate species.

**Status Ranks (Global and State)**

The international network of Natural Heritage Programs employs a standardized ranking system to denote global (**G** -- range-wide) and state status (**S**) (Nature Serve 2003). Species are assigned numeric ranks ranging from 1 (critically imperiled) to 5 (demonstrably secure), reflecting the relative degree to which they are "at-risk". Rank definitions are given below. A number of factors are considered in assigning ranks -- the number, size and distribution of known "occurrences" or populations, population trends (if known), habitat sensitivity, and threat. Factors in a species' life history that make it especially vulnerable are also considered (e.g., dependence on a specific pollinator).

Tier I of the FWP CFWCS is the greatest conservation need. Montana FWP has an obligation to use its resources to implement conservation actions that provide direct benefit to these species. Species identified in this section have included the tier level to help identify those in greatest need of conservation.

**Status Ranks**

| Code | Definition |
|---|---|
| **G1 S1** | At high risk because of extremely limited and/or rapidly declining numbers, range, and/or habitat, making it highly vulnerable to global extinction or extirpation in the state. |
| **G2 S2** | At risk because of very limited and/or declining numbers, range, and/or habitat, making it vulnerable to global extinction or extirpation in the state. |
| **G3 S3** | Potentially at risk because of limited and/or declining numbers, range, and/or habitat, even though it may be abundant in some areas. |
| **G4 S4** | Uncommon but not rare (although it may be rare in parts of its range), and usually widespread. Apparently not vulnerable in most of its range, but possibly cause for long-term concern. |
| **G5** | Common, widespread, and abundant (although it may be rare in parts of its |

**S5** range). Not vulnerable in most of its range.

## Sensitive Plants and Animals in the vicinity of Harpers Bridge FAS

### 1 Haliaeetus leucocephalus (Bald Eagle)

| Natural Heritage Ranks: | Federal Agency Status: |
|---|---|
| State: **S3** | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:**DM** |
| Global: **G5** | U.S. Forest Service: **Threatened** |
| | U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive** |

FWP CFWCS Tier 1
Four Element Occurrence of Bald Eagle were reported in the proximate area of this parcel. Last observation date was 2007.

### 2 Canis lupus (Gray Wolf)

| Natural Heritage Ranks: | Federal Agency Status: |
|---|---|
| State: **S3** | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: **DM** |
| Global: **G4** | U.S. Forest Service: **Sensitive** |
| | U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive** |

FWP CFWCS Tier 1
No Element Occurrence data reported of wolves in the proximate area of this parcel.

### 3 Salvelinus confluentus (Bull Trout)

| Natural Heritage Ranks: | Federal Agency Status: |
|---|---|
| State: **S2** | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: |
| Global: **G4T3** | U.S. Forest Service: **Sensitive** |
| | U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive** |

FWP CFWCS Tier 1
No Element Occurrence data reported of Bull Trout in this stretch of the Clark Fork River and are considered rare in this reach of the river. Fishing regulations require release of Bull Trout.

### 4 Oncorhynchus clarkii lewisi (Westslope Cutthroat Trout)

| Natural Heritage Ranks: | Federal Agency Status: |
|---|---|
| State: **S2** | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: |
| Global: **G4T3** | U.S. Forest Service: **Sensitive** |
| | U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive** |

FWP CFWCS Tier 1
No Element Occurrence data reported of Westslope Cutthroat Trout in the proximate area of this parcel, but are considered common in this reach of the Clark Fork River. Fishing regulations require release of Westslope Cutthroat Trout.

### 5 Bufo boreas (Western Toad)

| Natural Heritage Ranks: | Federal Agency Status: |
|---|---|
| State: **S2** | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: |
| Global: **G4** | U.S. Forest Service: **Sensitive** |
| | U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive** |

FWP CFWCS Tier 1
One Element Occurrence of Western Toad was reported in the proximate area of this parcel. Last observation date was 1967 south of the area closer to Council Grove.

### 6 Lynx canadensis ( Canada Lynx)

| Natural Heritage Ranks: | Federal Agency Status: |
|---|---|
| State: **S3** | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: **LT** |
| Global: **G5** | U.S. Forest Service: **Threatened** |
| | U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Special Status** |

FWP CFWCS Tier 1
The Element Occurrence shows one observation in 2004 of Canada Lynx south of the area near Council Grove.

### 7 Martes pennanti (Fisher)

| Natural Heritage Ranks: | Federal Agency Status: |
|---|---|
| State: **S3** | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: |
| Global: **G5** | U.S. Forest Service: **Sensitive** |
| | U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive** |

FWP CFWCS Tier 2
The Element Occurrence data has one observation in 2006 for the Fisher south of the area closer to Council Grove.

### 8 Gulo gulo (Wolverine)

| Natural Heritage Ranks: | Federal Agency Status: |
|---|---|
| State: **S3** | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: |
| Global: **G4** | U.S. Forest Service: **Sensitive** |
| | U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive** |

FWP CFWCS Tier 2
The Element Occurrence data has one observation in 2005 for the Wolverine south of this parcel.

### 9 Falco peregrinus (Peregrine Falcon)

| Natural Heritage Ranks: | Federal Agency Status: |
|---|---|
| State: **S3** | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: **DM** |
| Global: **G4** | U.S. Forest Service: **Sensitive** |
| | U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive** |

FWP CFWCS Tier 2
No Element Occurrence data reported of Peregrine Falcon in the proximate area of this parcel.

### 10 Ammodramus savannarum(Grasshopper Sparrow)

| Natural Heritage Ranks: | Federal Agency Status: |
|---|---|
| State: **S3B** | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: |
| Global: **G5** | U.S. Forest Service: |
| | U.S. Bureau of Land Management: |

FWP CFWCS Tier 2
No Element Occurrence of Black-backed Woodpecker was reported in the proximate area of this parcel. The last observation date was 2005 north east of the area.

### 11 Eumeces skiltonianus (Western Skink)

| Natural Heritage Ranks: | Federal Agency Status: |
|---|---|
| State: **S3** | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: |
| Global: **G5** | U.S. Forest Service: |
| | U.S. Bureau of Land Management: |

FWP CFWCS Tier 2
Two Element Occurrence data reported of Western Skink in the proximate area of this parcel. Last observation date was 1959.

### 12 Dolichonyx oryzivorus (Bobolink)

| Natural Heritage Ranks: | Federal Agency Status: |
|---|---|
| State: **S3B** | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: |
| Global: **G5** | U.S. Forest Service: |
| | U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive** |

FWP CFWCS Tier 3
One Element Occurrence data reported of Bobolink in the proximate area of this parcel. The last observation was in 2003 east of this area.

### 13. Austrotyla montani (A Millepede)

| Natural Heritage Ranks: | Federal Agency Status: |
|---|---|
| State: **S1S3** | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: |
| Global: **G1G3** | U.S. Forest Service: |
| | U.S. Bureau of Land Management: |

FWP CFWCS Tier
One Element Occurrence data reported of A Millepede in the proximate area of this parcel. The last observation date reported was 1965.

### 14. Carex scoparia (Pointed Broom Sedge)

| Natural Heritage Ranks: | Federal Agency Status: |
|---|---|
| State: **S1S2** | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: |
| Global: G5 | U.S. Forest Service: |
| | U.S. Bureau of Land Management: |

FWP CFWCS Tier
Pointed Broom Sedge is a vascular plant with one Element Occurrence in the proximate area of this parcel. The last observation date reported was 1985 south east of this parcel in the area known as Council Grove.

Information courtesy of Montana Natural Heritage Program.

*NOTE: This appendix is information provided by the Montana Natural Heritage Program from their database of the Natural Resources Information System. FWP Biologists have addressed the species identified in this appendix in this EA in PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST in section 5. Fish/Wildlife. FWP R2 Biologists have no concerns with the project impacting wildlife in the area. This stretch of the Clark Fork River is considered critical fish habitat for bull trout but they are rare in this stretch of the river and the fishing regulations require release of both bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout.*

## Appendix 3

# TOURISM REPORT

MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA) & MCA 23-1-110

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has initiated the review process as mandated by MCA 23-1-110 and the Montana Environmental Policy Act in its consideration of the project described below. As part of the review process, input and comments are being solicited. Please complete the project name and project description portions and submit this form to:

Carol Crockett, Visitor Services Manager
Travel Montana-Department of Commerce
301 S. Park Ave.
Helena, MT 59601

**Project Name:** Harper's Bridge FAS Development

**Project Description:** FWP is proposing improvements to the Harper's Bridge fishing access site on the Clark Fork River 8 miles northwest of Missoula in Missoula County. The public already uses this site and the proposed development of this site would help establish a better distribution of fishing use, providing opportunities for fishing, boating and floating, hiking, picnicking, bird watching and waterfowl hunting. Proposed development includes a boat ramp, designated parking area, fencing and barrier rocks, a concrete vault latrine, routine maintenance and FWP informational, regulation and highway signs.

1. Would this site development project have an impact on the tourism economy?
   NO **YES** If YES, briefly describe:

Yes, as described, the project has the potential to positively impact the tourism and recreation industry economy. We are assuming that the agency has determined it has the necessary funding for the on-going operations and maintenance once this project is complete.

2. Does this impending improvement alter the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings?
   NO **YES** If YES, briefly describe:

Yes, as described, the project has the potential to improve the quality and quantity of tourism and recreational opportunities. We are assuming that the agency has determined it has the necessary funding for the on-going operations and maintenance once this project is complete.

Signature Carol Crockett, Visitor Services Manager Date: 4/26/2010

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# Appendix 4

## MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR FISHING ACCESS SITES

10-02-02

Updated May 1, 2008

I. ROADS

A. Road Planning and location

1. Minimize the number of roads constructed at the FAS through comprehensive road planning, recognizing foreseeable future uses.
    a. Use existing roads, unless use of such roads would cause or aggravate an erosion problem.
2. Fit the road to the topography by locating roads on natural benches and following natural contours. Avoid long, steep road grades and narrow canyons.
3. Locate roads on stable geology, including well-drained soils and rock formations that tend to dip into the slope. Avoid slumps and slide-prone areas characterized by steep slopes, highly weathered bedrock, clay beds, concave slopes, hummocky topography, and rock layers that dip parallel to the slope. Avoid wet areas, including seeps, wetlands, wet meadows, and natural drainage channels.
4. Minimize the number of stream crossings.
    a. Choose stable stream crossing sites. “Stable” refers to streambanks with erosion-resistant materials and in hydrologically safe spots.

B. <u>Road Design</u>

1. Design roads to the minimum standard necessary to accommodate anticipated use and equipment. The need for higher engineering standards can be alleviated through proper road-use management. “Standard” refers to road width.
2. Design roads to minimize disruption of natural drainage patterns. Vary road grades to reduce concentrated flow in road drainage ditches, culverts, and on fill slopes and road surfaces.

C. <u>Drainage from Road Surface</u>

1. Provide adequate drainage from the surface of all permanent and temporary roads. Use outsloped, insloped or crowned roads, installing proper drainage features. Space road drainage features so peak flow on road surface or in ditches will not exceed their capacity.
    a. Outsloped roads provide means of dispersing water in a low-energy flow from the road surface. Outsloped roads are appropriate when fill slopes are stable, drainage will not flow directly into stream channels, and transportation safety can be met.
    b. For insloped roads, plan ditch gradients steep enough, generally greater than 2%, but less than 8%, to prevent sediment deposition and ditch erosion. The steeper gradients may be suitable for more stable soils; use the lower gradients for less stable soils.

c. Design and install road surface drainage features at adequate spacing to control erosion; steeper gradients require more frequent drainage features. Properly constructed drain dips can be an economical method of road surface drainage. Construct drain dips deep enough into the sub-grade so that traffic will not obliterate them.

2. For ditch relief/culverts, construct stable catch basins at stable angles. Protect the inflow end of cross-drain culverts from plugging and armor if in erodible soil. Skewing ditch relief culverts 20 to 30 degrees toward the inflow from the ditch will improve inlet efficiency.
3. Provide energy dissipators (rock piles, slash, log chunks, etc.) where necessary to reduce erosion at outlet of drainage features. Cross-drains, culverts, water bars, dips, and other drainage structures should not discharge onto erodible soils or fill slopes without outfall protection.
4. Route road drainage through adequate filtration zones, or other sediment-settling structures. Install road drainage features above stream crossings to route discharge into filtration zones before entering a stream.

D. Construction/Reconstruction

1. Stabilize erodible, exposed soils by seeding, compacting, riprapping, benching, mulching, or other suitable means.
2. At the toe of potentially erodible fill slopes, particularly near stream channels, pile slash in a row parallel to the road to trap sediment. When done concurrently with road construction, this is one method to effectively control sediment movement and it also provides an economical way of disposing of roadway slash. Limit the height, width and length of these "slash filter windrows" so not to impede wildlife movement. Sediment fabric fences or other methods may be used if effective.
3. Construct cut and fill slopes at stable angles to prevent sloughing and subsequent erosion.
4. Avoid incorporating potentially unstable woody debris in the fill portion of the road prism. Where possible, leave existing rooted trees or shrubs at the toe of the fill slope to stabilize the fill.
5. Place debris, overburden, and other waste materials associated with construction and maintenance activities in a location to avoid entry into streams. Include these waste areas in soil stabilization planning for the road.
6. When using existing roads, reconstruct only to the extent necessary to provide adequate drainage and safety; avoid disturbing stable road surfaces. Consider abandoning existing roads when their use would aggravate erosion.

E. Road Maintenance

1. Grade road surfaces only as often as necessary to maintain a stable running surface and to retain the original surface drainage.
2. Maintain erosion control features through periodic inspection and maintenance, including cleaning dips and cross-drains, repairing ditches, marking culvert inlets to aid in location, and clearing debris from culverts.
3. Avoid cutting the toe of cut slopes when grading roads, pulling ditches, or

plowing snow.

4. Avoid using roads during wet periods if such use would likely damage the road drainage features. Consider gates, barricades or signs to limit use of roads during wet periods.

II. RECREATIONAL FACILITIES (parking areas, campsites, trails, ramps, restrooms)

A. Site Design

1. Design a site that best fits the topography, soil type, and stream character, while minimizing soil disturbance and economically accomplishing recreational objectives. Keep roads and parking lots at least 50 feet from water; if closer, mitigate with vegetative buffers as necessary.
2. Locate foot trails to avoid concentrating runoff and provide breaks in grade as needed. Locate trails and parking areas away from natural drainage systems and divert runoff to stable areas. Limit the grade of trails on unstable, saturated, highly erosive, or easily compacted soils
3. Scale the number of boat ramps, campsites, parking areas, bathroom facilities, etc. to be commensurate with existing and anticipated needs. Facilities should not invite such use that natural features will be degraded.
4. Provide adequate barriers to minimize off-road vehicle use

B. Maintenance: Soil Disturbance and Drainage

1. Maintenance operations minimize soil disturbance around parking lots, swimming areas and campsites, through proper placement and dispersal of such facilities or by reseeding disturbed ground. Drainage from such facilities should be promoted through proper grading.
2. Maintain adequate drainage for ramps by keeping side drains functional or by maintaining drainage of road surface above ramps or by crowning (on natural surfaces).
3. Maintain adequate drainage for trails. Use mitigating measures, such as water bars, wood chips, and grass seeding, to reduce erosion on trails.
4. When roads are abandoned during reconstruction or to implement site-control, they must be reseeded and provided with adequate drainage so that periodic maintenance is not required.

III. RAMPS AND STREAM CROSSINGS

A. Legal Requirements

1. Relevant permits must be obtained prior to building bridges across streams or boat ramps. Such permits include the SPA 124 permit, the COE 404 permit, and the DNRC Floodplain Development Permit.

B. Design Considerations

1. Placement of boat ramp should be such that boats can load and unload with out difficulty and the notch in the bank where the ramp was placed does not encourage bank erosion. Extensions of boat ramps beyond the natural bank can also encourage erosion.

2. Adjust the road grade or provide drainage features (e.g. rubber flaps) to reduce the concentration of road drainage to stream crossings and boat ramps. Direct drainage flow through an adequate filtration zone and away from the ramp or crossing through the use of gravel side-drains, crowning (on natural surfaces) or 30-degree angled grooves on concrete ramps.
3. Avoid unimproved stream crossings on permanent streams. On ephemeral streams, when a culvert or bridge is not feasible, locate drive-throughs on a stable, rocky portion of the stream channel.
4. Unimproved (non-concrete) ramps should only be used when the native soils are sufficiently gravelly or rocky to withstand the use at the site and to resist erosion.

C. Installation of Stream Crossings and Ramps

1. Minimize stream channel disturbances and related sediment problems during construction of road and installation of stream crossing structures. Do not place erodible material into stream channels. Remove stockpiled material from high water zones. Locate temporary construction bypass roads in locations where the stream course will have a minimal disturbance. Time the construction activities to protect fisheries and water quality.
2. Where ramps enter the stream channel, they should follow the natural streambed in order to avoid changing stream hydraulics and to optimize use of boat trailers.
3. Use culverts with a minimum diameter of 15 inches for permanent stream crossings and cross drains. Proper sizing of culverts may dictate a larger pipe and should be based on a 50-year flow recurrence interval. Install culverts to conform to the natural streambed and slope on all perennial streams and on intermittent streams that support fish or that provide seasonal fish passage. Place culverts slightly below normal stream grade to avoid culvert outfall barriers. Do not alter stream channels upstream from culverts, unless necessary to protect fill or to prevent culvert blockage. Armor the inlet and/or outlet with rock or other suitable material where needed.
4. Prevent erosion of boat ramps and the affected streambank through proper placement (so as to not catch the stream current) and hardening (riprap or erosion resistant woody vegetation).
5. Maintain a 1-foot minimum cover for culverts 18-36 inches in diameter, and a cover of one-third diameter for larger culverts to prevent crushing by traffic.

# Appendix 5

Draft FWP Preliminary Concept Plan for Harper's Bridge FAS