

Misc

April 8, 2002

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
RR1 - 4210  
Glasgow, MT 59230

Environmental Quality Council  
Montana Department of Environmental Quality  
Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation  
    Northeastern Land Office  
    Glasgow Unit Office  
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
    Fisheries Division  
    Design and Construction Bureau Office  
    Glasgow Regional Office  
Montana State Library, Helena  
MT Environmental Information Center  
Montana Audubon Council  
Valley County Conservation District  
U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, Helena  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Helena  
State Historic Preservation Office, Helena

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Please find enclosed an Environmental Assessment (EA) addressing the proposed School Trust Fishing Access Site (FAS) which would be located on the Missouri River, approximately five miles downstream of the Fort Peck Lake Dam, Fort Peck, Montana. The writing of this EA is required by the Montana Environmental Protect Act and is beneficial for all interested in this proposed project. This projected FAS would accommodate public access on a section of the Missouri River where there is a precedent of demand for boat use in order to get into worthy fisheries.

Please submit any comments that you have by 5:00 P.M., May 10, 2002 to the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks in Glasgow, Montana at the address listed above. Completion of this project and selection of an alternative action is contingent upon the contents of this EA and public comments. Department of Natural Resources & Conservation Area Manager and myself will grant final decisions and approval. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at (406)228-3700. Please note that this draft EA will be considered as final if no substantive comments are received by the deadline listed above.

Sincerely,

Jim Satterfield  
Regional Supervisor

ENCL/ATT

# Environmental Assessment

For proposed project:

## *School Trust Fishing Access Site*

Project sponsors:

Montana Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation  
and  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

EA Prepared by:  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
Glasgow, MT

April 2002

# MEPA/NEPA, ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

## PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. **Type of Proposed State Action:** Request for a parcel of Montana state school trust land to be used as a public Fishing Access Site (FAS). This request is to the land managing agency, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), from the FAS managing agency, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). This Environmental Assessment (EA) document also encompasses proposed alternatives for development of the proposed FAS. The general makeup of the proposed FAS would include a gravel roadway, a five vehicle parking area with a turn-around area, a latrine outhouse, and a gravel boat ramp.

### 2. **Agency Authority for the Proposed Action:**

77-1-204 M.C.A. authorizes DNRC to sell, lease, or exchange certain state lands. 1) The State Land Board is authorized to lease state lands for uses other than agriculture, grazing, timber harvest, or mineral production under such terms and conditions which best meet the duties of the board as specified in 77-1-202 and 77-1-203. The lease period for such leases, except for power school site leases may not be longer than 40 years. 2) The board shall have full power and authority to sell, exchange or lease lands under its jurisdiction by virtue of 77-1-214 when, in its judgement, it is advantageous to the state to do so in the highest orderly development and not be contrary to the terms of any contract which it has entered into.

87-1-209 M.C.A. authorizes Fish, Wildlife & Parks to acquire and develop properties for fishing access and outdoor recreation purposes. 87-1-605 directs FWP to utilize fishing license dollars to maintain and develop a system of fishing access sites throughout the state. Finally, 23-1-110 establishes a procedure whereby proposed improvements to fishing access sites are subject to notification and acceptance of public comment on the advisability and acceptability of the proposal.

### 3. **Name of Project:** School Trust Fishing Access Site

### 4. **Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsors**

- 1) Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation (DNRC),  
 Glasgow Unit Office  
 630 Third Avenue South  
 P.O. Box 1007  
 Glasgow, MT 59230-1007
  
- 2) Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP)  
 Region 6 Headquarters  
 RR 1 - 4210  
 Glasgow, MT 59230

**5. If Applicable:**

Estimated Construction/Commencement Date  
Fall of 2002

Estimated Completion Date  
Late Fall of 2002

Current Status of Project Design (% complete)  
The concept plans have been completed

**6. Location Affected by Proposed Action (county, range and township)**

Township 27 North, Range 41 East, SE corner of Section 36.

**7. Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:**

(a) Developed:  
 residential... -0-acres  
 industrial..... -0-acres

(d) Floodplain...\*1 acre  
 (\* only Alternative action "B")

(b) Open Space/Woodlands/  
 Recreation.....-acre

(e) Productive:  
 irrigated cropland...-0-acres  
 dry cropland.....-0-acres  
 forestry.....-0-acres  
 rangeland.....-0-acres  
 other.....-0-acres

(c) Wetlands/Riparian  
 Areas.....-3-acres

**8. Map/site plan: attach an original 8 1/2" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map showing the location and boundaries of the area that would be**

**affected by the proposed actions. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.**

Maps – See Appendix: *Map 1, Map 2, Map 3*

Site Plan - See Appendix : *Concept Plan-Alternative A and Concept Plan-Alternative B*

## **9. Narrative Summary of the Proposed Action or Project including the Benefits and Purpose of the Proposed Action.**

Due to public demand and a FWP mandate to provide river access to Montana's streams, lakes and reservoirs FWP has petitioned DNRC to lease School Trust lands in order to accommodate and manage a public Fishing Access Site (FAS). The proposed site would be along the Missouri River, approximately 5 miles downstream from the Fort Peck Lake dam (See Appendix – Map1). If the license is granted, FWP proposes to develop a FAS with minimal improvements. The developed site will provide a safe and reliable graveled vehicular access roadway from a Valley County road to the banks of the Missouri River. The designated FAS will provide parking for five vehicles with boat trailers, a gravel boat ramp, a turn-around approach for vehicles with boats and trailers, and a vault toilet outhouse. The total area for these improvements will not exceed three acres.

Historically, the described state land has been used for 1) livestock grazing, and for 2) public recreation use. The existing DNRC grazing parcel includes approximately 80 acres of State School Trust land. The proposed project is located in the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$  (Alternative A) or the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$  (Alternative B) within the existing grazing lease in Sec 36, T27N, R41E (See Appendix: Map 2, Map 3)

Montana State Law requires the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) to manage state school trust land in a manner that produces revenue. Legally accessible state lands that are not closed or restricted are open for general recreational purposes to anyone possessing a valid Recreational Use License. General recreation is defined as all non-commercial/non-concentrated recreational activities. Legally accessible state land is state land that can be accessed by dedicated public roads, public rights-of-way or easement, by public waters, by adjacent federal, state, county or municipal land if the land is open for public use, or by adjacent private land if permission to cross the private land is granted. Parking by recreationist on state land is allowed within 50 feet of a access point. Presently, recreationist can not legally use this parcel to gain vehicular access to the river to put a boat in or out of the water.

Access, to and from the river for boating purposes, across T27N, R41E Section 36 is currently not authorized. In the spring of 1999, DRNC officials brought this rule to the publics attention by providing signs on the section that highlighted the Recreational Use Laws on state lands.

In order to gain access to the river, recreationist requested DNRC and FWP for a solution to provide legal and environmentally sensible vehicle access to the Missouri River in this reach of the river. Two of the three alternative/options described in this document would address the need for recreational river access for this part of the Missouri River. Both Alternative A and Alternative B would provide legal access to the Missouri River, while mitigating resource impacts. The third alternative, Alternative C, is "no action," eliminating the proposition of development of any FAS project within this described area.

As illustrated in the concept plan, both Alternatives A and B would provide a five vehicle parking area, a boat ramp, and a turn-around area (See Appendix - Concept Plans-Alternative A and B). The entire developed boat ramp/parking area would present a effectively level, raised graveled area with sufficient room for a pick-up truck with boat trailer to negotiate loading/unloading and parking. Both alternative sites would have a 16-ft. wide interior roadway leading to the boat ramp/parking area from the county road. This access road would be a raised, gravel roadway

A perfected Valley County right-of-way exist between section Section 36, Township 27N, Range 41E and Section 31, Township 27N, Range 42E (See Appendix - Map 2 and Map 3). Presently, approximately ½ mile of this easement is an undeveloped dirt road that is unpassable various times throughout the year. The proposed project would allow FWP to construct a developed road within the boundaries of the perfected Valley County right-of-way. The construction of the roadway would meet the Valley County Commissioner requirements. Although the primary purpose of developing a roadway within the ½ mile long easement is to provide adequate vehicle access to the proposed FAS, this road would be open to all public.

## **DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES**

### **Alternative A**

The proposed action under Alternative A (See Appendix - Concept Plan A), is the “upstream” site of the two alternative project locations. Alternative A site would be located in the area where historical vehicle use had been accessing the river. The terrain of this alternative site would require a comparatively minor amount of change in order to develop the boat ramp/parking area. The interior access roadway to the river would require the cutting and removal of one to three cottonwood trees, and very little ground disturbance in order to construct the road. Due to the higher terrain and open environment, FWP engineers advise that this alternative site presents a more ideal area to develop the FAS, and in turn would produce a site with the least amount of required periodic site maintenance and repairs. Due to the comparatively high elevation of Alternative A, a vault toilet facility could be safely and legally installed near the boat ramp/parking area.

Alternative A would present two concerns of the grazing leaseholder. Due to the location of the interior access roadway meandering through a portion of the their existing lease, the lease holder questions 1) the alterations the traffic would have on the livestock’s behavior, mainly during livestock movement to the river and riparian area for water and forage. The lessee also is concerned of 2) the damage, liability and financial loss if one of their animals were hit by a vehicle or if animals caused harm to users of the access site FWP would address these concerns during the construction of the project and continuously during the existence of the FAS.

For Alternative A, a chain-linked fence has been recommended around the perimeter of the “historical” barges. The selection of Alternative A would provide the signing of the barge with a historical interpretation sign and “keep out” signs.

### **Alternative B**

The proposed action under Alternative B (See Appendix – Concept Plan B), is the “downstream” site of the two alternative project locations. Alternative B site would be located next to section/property line which separates

the state section 36 with the adjacent private landowner. The entire interior access road and a portion of the boat ramp/parking area would be within the undeveloped Valley County roadway right-of-way.

The interior access road would require the cutting of 11 to 16 cottonwood trees, along with the removal of a few Russian olive trees. Compared to Alternative A, a higher amount of cut and fill would be required to the landscape in order to develop Alternative B roadway. The roadway would go through one bank, which would require some cutting, and two wetland areas demanding fill, water culverts and wetlands mitigation. The parking and turn-around area, located within a floodplain, would require a comparatively large amount of fill to lift the area above the existing gravel beach landscape. Floodplain mitigation would be required. Both the access road and the parking area would demand "armored" protection (rip-rap) to prevent erosion from the occasional high water from the river and upland runoff. It is foreseen that periodic maintenance would be required in order to restore the roadway and parking area in this alternative due to the occasional high water levels.

The proposed project includes the placement of outside toilet facilities. Due to the location of Alternative B being in wetlands and in a floodplain, a latrine with a vault toilet could not be installed on or near the boat ramp/parking area. The toilet would have to be placed on higher ground, anywhere from 50 to 100 yards away from boat ramp/parking area. FWP prefers to place restroom services conveniently closer to the actual recreation site in order to minimize the improper placement of human waste by users.

Besides the loss of a small portion of productive grassland, Alternative B would not cause the grazing leaseholder any tribulations with the presence of their livestock in the area. Both the concerns of 1) an alteration in behavior of the livestock and 2) the possibility of vehicle-livestock contact would be a non-issue.

The selection of this alternative would not require any mitigation measures for the "historical" barges.

### **Alternative 3 (No Action Option)**

A third option would be to do nothing (no action). This option would eliminate the concerns of the grazing leaseholder. This option would ignore the request from local anglers and a local sportsman club to provide a legal public access for vehicle entry and boat ramp to and from the Missouri River in this particular reach of the river. This option would prevent the improvement by FWP of the approximate ½ mile in length of roadway within the described Valley County road easement/right-of-way.

## **GENERAL CONCERNS OF PROJECT**

Grazing lessee, adjacent landowners, and recreationists have raised concerns with the proposed project. If DNRC leases the approximate three acres of this land to FWP for the proposed FAS, FWP will attempt to address all reasonable concerns.

Some of the particular concerns expressed by the construction and presence of the site include: 1) impacts on the lessee's livestock's behavior; 2) contacts between vehicles and livestock, and people and livestock; 3) late night parties; 4) vehicles driving outside of the designated FAS roadway system; 5) illegal campfires and accidental starting of fires; 6) the spread of noxious weeds; 7) preseveration of a historical barge; and 8) increase of traffic on the county road leading to the access site; 9) need for an efficient, trouble free, and easily accessible boat launching site.

Methods and strategies to minimize the likelihood of vehicles harassing or hitting livestock will be put into action by FWP. As with other FAS's throughout the state where livestock is present along the interior access roadways, FWP will provide fencing, cattle guards and advisory signing.

Administered by FWP, the proposed FAS would be a "day use only" public access area. Overnight camping and the use of campfires would not be encouraged or permitted. Regulatory signs will be posted on site prohibiting these activities. During times of high fire danger, additional sign posting would be employed, along with the increase in patrols to the site.

The presence of "beer parties", late night use and overnight use would be dealt with as inappropriate use for the proposed FAS, and appropriate action(s) would be taken. Like other FAS sites in the state, maintaining a respectable relationship with neighboring landowners and lessees is a high priority for FWP, and will be a top priority with the Region 6 (Glasgow, MT) office.

With both alternatives (A and B), barbed wire fencing would be placed around the perimeter of the actual access parking pads, turn-around area and boat ramp. A cattle guard would be appropriately placed to prevent livestock from entering the boat ramp/parking area. For Alternative A, the roadway leading to the parking/ramp area would be appropriately posted with regulatory signs to lessen or eliminate illegal vehicular traffic off of the designated roadway. Both sides of the roadway leading to Alternative B would be fenced.

The control and elimination of noxious weeds is a high priority with FWP throughout the state. As with other FAS's, a weed management program would be established by the Department and approved by the County Weed District. Also, the DNRC/FWP lease agreement would require FWP (the lessee) to develop a weed management plan, and in turn the plan will have to be approved by DNRC. Currently, noxious weeds species of foremost concern on the proposed site include Canada thistle and leafy spurge.

As required with all Fishing Access Sites in Montana, appropriate directional signing will be posted. Signs would be posted on Highway 117 ("the Nashua-Fort Peck Highway"), and at two places along the county road leading to the proposed site. If the site is established, the site would be listed in statewide FAS brochures distributed by FWP.

Both Alternatives A and B offer a natural, existing gravel riverbank that would allow boat launching and loading throughout the year. Due to water flow levels some years and seasons will have more favorable launching conditions compared to other times.

Agency concerns:

- Construction of the Fishing Access Site in a method that allows the DNRC to manage the land to its fullest extent possible for the present and the future.
- FWP's desire to develop a Fishing Access Site which can be engineered in an effective and efficient manner that will present minimal environmental and human impacts, minimal periodic maintenance repairs and will produce a convenient and easily accessible boat launching site.

**10. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction**

**(a) Permits:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>	<u>Date Filed/#</u>
*U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	404 Permit (Federal Clean Water Act)	
*Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality		
*Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	124 Permit (Montana Steam Protection Act)	
*Montana Health & Environmental Sciences	3A (Short-Term Exemption from Surface Water Quality Standards)	
*Valley County Floodplain Adm.	Floodplain Development Permit	

(\* This permit needed only if Alternative B is selected)

**(b) Funding:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	\$50,000 (initial development cost)
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	\$ 400 (annual rental for existence of site)

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

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Type of Responsibility</u>
Montana Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation	Lessor and Manager of School Trust lands
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	Lessee and Manager of Fishing Access Sites

**11. List of Agencies Consulted During Preparation of the EA:**

- Valley County Sanitarium and Floodplain Administrator – Glasgow, MT
- Valley County Commissioners - Glasgow, MT
- Valley County Road Department - Glasgow, MT
- Army Corps of Engineers – Fort Peck Lake Office – Fort Peck, MT

- Army Corps of Engineers – Federal Regulatory Office – Helena, MT
- Montana DNRC - Glasgow Unit Office – Glasgow, MT
- Montana DNRC – Northeastern Land Office – Lewistown, MT
- Montana DNRC – Division of Trust Land Mgmt. – Helena, MT
- Montana Department of Commerce Tourism Development – Helena, MT
- Montana Natural Heritage Program – Montana State Library – Helena, MT
- Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks – Glasgow, MT
- Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks – Helena, MT

**PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

1. Evaluation of the Impacts of the Proposed Action Including Secondary and Cumulative Impacts on the Physical and Human Environment:

**IMPACTS**

**PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

UNKNOWN	NO IMPACTS	MINOR IMPACTS:	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT	CAN IMPACTS BE MITIGATED	COMMENT INDEX
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**1. LAND RESOURCES**

Will the proposed action result in:

a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?

b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil which would reduce productivity or fertility?

c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?

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?

e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?

f. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

		IMPACTS:		MITIGATED	
	X				
		X			Below
	X				
	X				
	X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed): 1b. The construction of the boat ramp/parking area along with the access roadway leading to the river will result in some over-covering of soil. Presently, much of the ground in the vicinity of the proposed boat ramp/parking area is covered with gravel and sand. The impact to productivity or fertile soil will be minimal. The access roadway in both proposed Alternatives, A and B, will result in over-covering of some fertile soil. The minimal impacts associated with the proposed project will be balanced with reclamation of the pioneered trails and existing undeveloped boat access area.

**IMPACTS**

**PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**  
(Continued)

**2. AIR**

Will the proposed action result in:

a. Emission of air pollutants

UNKNOWN	NO IMPACTS	MINOR IMPACTS:	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS:	CAN IMPACTS BE MITIGATED	COMMENT INDEX

or deterioration of ambient air quality?

b. Creation of objectionable odors?

c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?

d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?

e. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

	X				
	X				
	X				
	X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

**IMPACTS**

**PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**  
(Continued)

**3. WATER**

Will the proposed action result in:

a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?

b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?

c. Alteration of the course

UNKNOWN	NO IMPACTS	MINOR IMPACTS:	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS:	CAN IMPACTS BE MITIGATED	COMMENT INDEX
	X				
		X			Below
		X			Next Page

or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?

d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?

e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?

f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?

g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?

h. Increase in the risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?

i. Violation of the Montana Non-Degradation Statute?

j. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?

k. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?

l. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?

m. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

	X				
	X				
	X				
	X				
	X				
	X				
	X				
	X				
	X				
	X				
					Next Page

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed): 3b. With both proposed alternative sites, the development of a gravel roadway would make changes in the existing location, rate and amount of surface water runoff. Alternative A, the "upper site," would have minimal impacts, with the need of possibly one culvert. Whereas, the roadway and parking area for Alternative B, the "lower site," would cause more significant impacts and changes to the current surface runoff. At this stage of planning it is estimated several culverts and ditches will be required. Alternative B would require a vast amount of fill to be delivered in order to elevate the roadway and develop an adequate parking and turn-around area.

3c. The roadway and the parking area of Alternative B would cause alterations of the course of floodwaters. All attempts would be made to minimize the total size of development without jeopardizing the necessary area required for vehicle parking and turn-around. Culverts and ditches would be positioned to allow floodwaters to run into existing watercourses with Alternative B. Armoring (i.e. rip-rap) over the required fill in this Alternative would be placed to minimize the damage and loss of fill caused by high water flows. If Alternative B is selected, a Floodplain Development Permit would be required through the Valley County Flood Plain Administrator. Whereas, Alternative A, a Floodplain Development Permit would not be required.

3h. The proposed project includes the placement of outside toilet facilities. Due to the location of Alternative B being in wetlands and in a floodplain, a latrine with a vault toilet could not be installed on or near the boat ramp/parking area. The toilet would have to be placed on higher ground, anywhere from 50 to 100 yards away from boat ramp/parking area. FWP prefers to place restroom services conveniently closer to the actual recreation site in order to minimize the improper placement of human waste by users. Due to the comparatively higher elevation of Alternative A, a vault toilet facility could be safely and legally installed at the boat ramp/parking area.

**PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**  
(Continued)

4. VEGETATION

Will the proposed action result in:

a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?

b. Alteration of a plant community?

c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or

**IMPACTS**

UNKNOWN	NO IMPACTS	MINOR IMPACTS:	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS:	CAN IMPACTS BE MITIGATED	COMMENT INDEX
	X	X			Below

endangered plant species?	X				Below
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?	X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?					
i. Other: _____		X			Below

Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated. Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Vegetation Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

4a. The proposed construction of the boat ramp, parking area, interior roadway and the upgrading of the 1/2 mile of County road would necessitate the removal of small amounts of vegetation, mostly grasses, but also a small number of trees. The interior road to Alternative A boat ramp/parking area would require the cutting of 1-3 cottonwood trees. The interior road to Alternative B boat ramp/parking area would require the cutting of between 11 and 16 cottonwood trees. Alternative B would also require the removal of 4 to 5 Russian olive trees along with the removal and covering of wetland species of rushes and sedges. The approx. 1/2 mile of county of easement road upgrade would also require the removal of 4-5 trees. Tree removal would be kept to the absolute minimum in order to fit in either alternative sites and the upgrade of the county road.

4c. There are none known threatened or endangered species of vegetation in the area (Montana Natural Heritage Program, 1/02)

4e. Any project such as this proposed FAS has the potential to provide seedbed for noxious weeds. The project proposal would require contractors to seed any disturbed areas with native grass seed. The control of noxious weeds would continue to be a high priority maintenance activity and would follow guidelines and procedures outlined in FWP's Weed Management Plan and EA. All weed control activities in Valley County are closely coordinated with the County Weed Supervisor.

**IMPACTS**

**PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT (Continued)**

	UNKNOWN*	NO IMPACTS	MINOR IMPACTS:	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS:	CAN IMPACTS BE MITIGATED*	COMMENT INDEX
<b>5. FISH/WILDLIFE</b>						
Will the proposed action result in:						
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?

f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?

g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?

h. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

	X				
	X				Below
	X				

Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Fish/Wildlife Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

5f. Although pallid sturgeon, shortnose gar, and paddlefish may travel the Missouri River through this area, it is not critical habitat such as spawning and rearing area. There are none known threatened or endangered species of wildlife on the proposed project site or within a two mile radius of the site (Montana Natural Heritage Program, Jan./02 and FWP Fisheries Division Feb./02).

**IMPACTS**

**HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

**6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS**

Will the proposed action result in:

a. Increases in existing noise levels?

b. Exposure of people to severe or nuisance noise levels?

c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?

d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?

e. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

	UNKNOWN*	NO IMPACTS	MINOR IMPACTS:	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS:	CAN IMPACTS BE MITIGATED	COMMENT INDEX
		X				
			X			Below
		X				
		X				

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Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

**Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Noise/Electrical Effects (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):**

6b. There is likely to be a temporary increase in the existing noise levels during construction phase of the proposed project caused by heavy equipment such as dump trucks, backhoes, and graders. The increase in noise levels would be temporary in nature and would cease at the conclusion of the project.

**HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**  
(Continued)

**IMPACTS**

**7. LAND USE**

Will the proposed action result in:

a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?

b. Conflict with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?

c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?

d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?

e. Other:

	UNKNOWN*	NO IMPACTS	MINOR IMPACTS:	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS:	CAN IMPACTS BE MITIGATED	COMMENT INDEX
			X			Below
		X				
			X			Below
		X				

Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

explain why the

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Use (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

7a. Both alternatives A and B will cover or remove some productive grasses currently allocated for the existing grazing lease. It is estimated that both alternative sites along with the interior road leading to the sites would eliminate the maximum of two acres productive grass land. The chosen project site will require contractors to seed any disturbed areas with native grasses. The total acres required to develop the chosen proposed site, including interior roadway, will be withdrawn from the grazing lessee's cost with DNRC.

7c. The proposed project has possible conflicts with existing land use practices. With Alternative A, the presence of the interior road leading to the boat ramp/parking area could cause alterations in the behavior of the livestock currently using the area. There is also the possibility of collisions of vehicles and livestock, or contacts between people and livestock with this alternative, causing a concern of liability. If Alternative A is selected, the grazing lessee and both agencies will mitigate all possible ways of lessening conflicts between livestock and vehicles. As with other FAS's found throughout the state where livestock grazing is present on roads leading to the access site, possible methods of mitigation would include fencing, signing, and road design that will force traffic to move at a slow speed.

Whereas, Alternative B would secure the interior road leading to the boat ramp/parking area with a road corridor fence, eliminating any potential contact between vehicles and livestock.

**IMPACTS**

**HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**  
(Continued)

	UNKNOWN*	NO IMPACTS	MINOR IMPACTS:	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS:	CAN IMPACTS BE MITIGATED	COMMENT INDEX
<p>8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u></p> <p>Will the proposed action result in:</p> <p>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?</p> <p>b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create a need for a new plan?</p> <p>c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?</p> <p>d. Other: _____</p>		X				
		X				
		X				

\*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Risk/Health Hazards (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

**HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**  
(Continued)

**9. COMMUNITY IMPACTS**

Will the proposed action result in:

a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?

b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?

c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?

d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?

e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and good

f. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**IMPACTS**

UNKNOWN	NO IMPACTS	MINOR IMPACTS:	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS:	CAN IMPACTS BE MITIGATED	COMMENT INDEX
	<p style="text-align: center;">X</p> <p style="text-align: center;">X</p> <p style="text-align: center;">X</p> <p style="text-align: center;">X</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">X</p>			<p style="text-align: center;">Below</p>

Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Community Impacts (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

9e. It is likely there would be an increase of vehicular traffic on the county roads leading to the proposed FAS from Highway 117. There are no estimations available of this increased use. There would be FAS directional signs posted that would decrease or eliminate the possibility of FAS users becoming disoriented when traveling to and from the site. These signs should prevent FAS users from unintentionally traveling on adjoining county roads and/or trespassing on private property.

**IMPACTS**

**HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**  
(Continued)

UNKNOWN	NO IMPACTS	MINOR IMPACTS:	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS:	CAN IMPACTS BE MITIGATED	COMMENT INDEX
<p>10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/ TAXES/UTILITIES</u></p> <p>Will the proposed action:</p> <p>a. 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: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>b. Have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?</p> <p>c. 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?</p>		X			Below
		X			Next Page
	X				

d. Result in increased used of any energy source?

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e. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Public Services/Taxes/Utilities (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

10a. The approximate ½ mile of county undeveloped roadway right-of-way leading to the proposed project site on DNRC land, will be improved. Through an agreement with Valley County, FWP will design, develop and maintain a gravel road with a raised roadbed. This improved road will be open to public all year round, but will not be maintained during the winter months.

10b. The acreage of the proposed FAS, owned by the state and managed by DNRC, which is part of the existing grazing lease would be withdrawn from the cost of the annual grazing lease. In turn, FWP would pay an annual Land Use Lease (LUL) for the area of the proposed project. It is projected that the lease agreement with FWP would be more than the revenue lost from the grazing lease deductions.

**HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**  
(Continued)

**IMPACTS**

**11. AESTHETICS/  
RECREATION**

Will the proposed action result in:

a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?

b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?

c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational opportunities and settings?

d. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

UNKNOWN*	NO IMPACTS	MINOR IMPACTS:	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS:	CAN IMPACTS BE MITIGATED*	COMMENT INDEX
		X			Below
	X				
		X			Below

\*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Aesthetics/Recreation (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

11a. Both alternative sites (A and B) will create development that will be seen within the view shed while on the river. Both the fencing and gravel in and around the boat ramp/parking area will be visible to river users. In turn, the final product of the proposed access site will reclaim areas of past vehicular traffic and will provide a better defined boat ramp area. If Alternative A is selected, DNRC's Archaeologist has recommended a six foot high chain link fence around the perimeter of the "historic" barges. (See Cultural/Resource Impacts, next page). This fence will be visible from the river, boat ramp/parking area, and along the access road.

11c. This proposed project is expected to positively impact the quality and quantity of recreational opportunities, and have minimum impacts to tourism opportunities. (See Appendix - Tourism Report.)

**IMPACTS**

**HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**  
(Continued)

**12. CULTURAL/  
HISTORICAL  
RESOURCES**

Will the proposed action result in:

a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric, historic, or paleontological importance?

b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?

c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?

d. Other:

UNKNOWN*	NO IMPACTS	MINOR IMPACTS:	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS:	CAN IMPACTS BE MITIGATED*	COMMENT INDEX
		X			Below
	X				
	X				

\*Include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Cultural/Historical Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

12a. On May 2, 2001, Patrick Rennie, DNRC Archaeologist, conducted an on-site inspection and cultural resources inventory of the proposed project area. In January of 2002, Rennie composed *CUTURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY OF THE PROPOSED GARWOOD FISHING ACCESS SITE: VALLEY COUNTY, MONTANA*. The report's summary stated the main concern within the area of the proposed site is the presence and protection of the remains of two wooden barges, which were once employed for the construction of Fort Peck Dam. The report states that "alternative B will have no impact on cultural or paleontologic resources." Whereas, alternative A is "sufficiently close" to the barges therefore, "the potential for impacts to the historic barges are heightened as the fishing access site alternative would draw increased attention by recreation." In order to mitigate this concern, "if alternative A is selected, then it is recommended that the FWP erect a 6 ft. high chain link fence around the perimeter of the barges and attach 'No Trespassing' and brief historic summary signage to that fence." (*CUTURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY OF THE PROPOSED GARWOOD FISHING ACCESS SITE: VALLEY COUNTY, MONTANA*, January 2002. Available through the Glasgow, Montana offices of DNRC and FWP.)



## **PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (Continued)**

### **2. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented (this is an overview of information previously stated in Part 1 (9) Description of Alternatives:**

As illustrated in the concept plan, both Alternatives A and B would provide a five vehicle parking area, a boat ramp, and a turn-around area (See Appendix - Concept Plans-Alternative A and B). The entire developed boat ramp/parking area would present a effectively level, raised graveled area with sufficient room for a pick-up truck with boat trailer to negotiate loading/unloading and parking. Both alternative sites would have a 16 ft. wide interior roadway leading to the boat ramp/parking area from the county road. This access road would be a raised, gravel roadway.

Both Alternatives A and B offer a natural, existing gravel river bank that would allow boat launching and loading throughout the year. Due to water flow levels some years and seasons will have more favorable launching conditions compared to other times.

#### **Alternative A**

The proposed action under Alternative A (See Appendix - Concept Plan-Alternative A), is the "upstream" site of the two alternative project locations. Alternative A site would be located in the area where illegal historical vehicle use had been accessing the river. The terrain of this alternative site would require a comparatively minor amount of change in order to develop the boat ramp/parking area. The interior access roadway to the river would require the cutting and removal of one to three cottonwood trees, and very little ground disturbance in order to construct the road.

Due to the higher terrain and open environment, FWP engineers advise that this alternative site presents a more ideal area to develop the FAS, and in turn would produce a site with the least amount of required periodic site maintenance and repairs. Due to the comparatively high elevation of Alternative A, a vault toilet facility could be safely and legally installed near the boat ramp/parking area.

Alternative A would present two concerns of the grazing lease holder. Due to the location of the interior access roadway meandering through a portion of the their existing lease, the lease holder questions 1) the alterations the traffic would have on the livestock's behavior, mainly during livestock movement to the river and riparian area for water and forage. The lessee also is concerned of 2) the damage, liability and financial loss if one of their animals were hit by a vehicle, or by people-livestock contacts. FWP would address these concerns during the construction of the project and continuously during the existence of the FAS.

For Alternative A, a chain linked fence has been recommended around the perimeter of the "historical" barges. The selection of Alternative A would provide the signing of the barge with a historical interpretation sign and "keep out" signs.

## **Alternative B**

The proposed action under Alternative B (See Appendix - Concept Plan-Alternative B), is the “downstream” site of the two alternative project locations. Alternative B site would be located next to section/property line which separates the state section 36 with the adjacent private landowner. The entire interior access road and a portion of the boat ramp/parking area would be within the undeveloped Valley County roadway right away.

The interior access road would require the cutting of 11 to 16 cottonwood trees, along with the removal of a few Russian olive trees. Compared to Alternative A, a higher amount of cut and fill would be required to the landscape in order to develop Alternative B roadway. The roadway would go through one bank which would require some cutting, and two wetland areas demanding fill, water culverts and wetlands mitigation. The parking and turn-around area, located within a floodplain, would require a comparatively large amount of fill to lift the area above the existing gravel beach landscape. Floodplain mitigation will be required. Both the access road and the parking area would demand “armored” protection (rip-rap) to prevent erosion from the occasional high water from the river and upland runoff. It is foreseen that periodic maintenance would be required in order to restore the roadway and parking area in this alternative due to the occasional high water levels.

Besides the loss of a small portion of productive grassland, Alternative B would not cause the grazing lease holder any tribulations with the presence of their livestock in the area. Both the concerns of 1) an alteration in behavior of the livestock and 2) the possibility of vehicle-livestock contact would be a non-issue.

The selection of this alternative would not require any mitigation measures for the “historical” barges.

## **Alternative 3 (No Action Option)**

A third option would be to do nothing (no action). This option would eliminate the concerns of the grazing leaseholder. This option would ignore the request from local anglers and a local sportsman club to provide a legal public access for vehicle entry and boat ramp to and from the Missouri River in this particular reach of the river. This option would prevent the improvement by FWP of the approximate ½ mile in length of roadway within the described Valley County road easement/right-of-way.

### **3. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the**

**agency or another government agency:**

-Both alternative site proposals would involve a Land Use Lease (LUL) agreement between the Fishing Access Site management agency, FWP and the land management agency, DNRC.

-Both alternative site proposals (Alternative A and B) would involve an agreement with Valley County and FWP for the improvements provided by FWP to the existing approximate ½ mile of county road right-of-way.

-With both alternatives, tree removal will be kept to a minimum when developing the proposed interior access road.

-Both alternative site proposals will entail continuous correspondence from the local FWP office with the grazing lessee of the state section and the adjacent private landowner. All reasonable concerns of the lessee and the adjacent landowner have will be responded to in a quick and effective manner.

-All contracted work must comply with FWP time frames, safety requirements, bidding procedures and specifications.

-If Alternative A is selected for the proposed project the following will be mitigated:

- Methods and strategies to minimize the likelihood of vehicles harassing or hitting livestock, people-livestock contacts, will be put into action by FWP. As with other FAS throughout the state where livestock is present along the interior access roadways, FWP will provide fencing, cattle guards and advisory signing.
- To protect the remnants of the two historic barges, it has been recommended to FWP to install a six-foot high chain link fence around the perimeter of the structures and post "Keep Out/No Trespassing" signs. In order to educate the public of the historical significance of the barges FWP will erect an interpretation sign near the structures. FWP will work directly with DNRC Archaeologist and local history buffs with the wording and designing of the interpretive sign.

-If Alternative B is selected for the proposed project the following will be mitigated:

- In order to address the filling of the two wetland areas and the placement of fill material below the high water mark, a Section 404 permit under the Clean Water Act will be required. FWP will request this permit through the Helena, Montana Regulatory Office of Army Corps of Engineers. Once further inspection of proposed site and detailed development plans are established further permits and certification may be required through Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). FWP would mitigate accordingly. If Alternative B is selected, a Floodplain Development Permit will be required through the Valley County Flood Plain Administrator.
- To minimize the predicted periodic erosion and destruction of the roadway and parking area caused by high water levels and water movement, FWP will armor the site with rip rap. There will also be the placement of culverts to divert water back into the natural existing drainage

### **PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT**

This proposed project conforms to Fisheries Program goals as spelled out in the Fisheries Program Strategic Plan

(Fisheries Beyond 2000). Specifically, Goal Three of the Fishing Access Element reads, "provide management and funding for the Fishing Access Site Program to assure continued opportunities for public use." The proposed project could also address the vision stated in the FWP's Six-year Plan to "identify and develop several new fishing access sites on the lower Missouri River... to unlock this historic area for public use-including hunting and fishing." This proposed project precisely follows this philosophy.

## **PART IV. EA CONCLUSION SECTION**

### **1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? YES / NO If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action:**

This proposal will **not** require the preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS). An environmental assessment (EA) is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed actions and alternatives due to the minimal nature of impacts to the natural and human environments.

### **2. Describe the level of public involvement for this project if any and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?**

A public meeting facilitated and sponsored by the Valley County Sportsman Club on October 10, 2001 in Glasgow, Montana preceded the proposal presented in this EA. Sixteen (16) people attended this presentation and interactive discussion.

On January 4, 2002, one hundred and six letters were sent to individuals known to have an interest in the potential FAS, and the use of School Trust lands. The letter in basic terms, described the proposed project and that three alternative actions were being addressed in an EA conducted by FWP and DNRC.

This EA will be posted on the state's bulletin board. Paid legal notices stating the availability of the EA will be published in the Glasgow Courier newspaper. Postcards will be sent to the 106 people who received the previous letter of correspondence informing them of the availability of the EA. In addition, a news release concerning the proposal will be prepared and distributed to the newspaper listed above.

After a 30-day comment period, DNRC and FWP administrators will determine if there is a need for any further public involvement on the contents of this EA.

### **3. Duration of comment period if any:**

A 30-day public comment period will be conducted from April 9 to 5:00 p.m. May 10, 2002. Comments may be sent to:  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
Parks Division

RR 1 - 4210  
Glasgow, MT 59230

**4. Name, title, addresses and phone number of the Person(s) Responsible for Preparing the EA:**

Woody Baxter  
Regional Park Manager  
RR 1 - 4210  
Glasgow, MT 59230

(406) 228-3707

