

Draft Environmental Assessment



Alberton Gorge Recreational Corridor Addition

October 2006



***Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks***

**Alberton Gorge Recreational Corridor Addition
Draft Environmental Assessment
MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST**

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. **Type of proposed state action:** Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to acquire approximately 20 acres in the Alberton Gorge along the Clark Fork River. FWP would purchase the property from Stranie Ventures for \$220,000.

2. **Agency authority for the proposed action:**

MCA 23-1-102. Powers and duties of Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks. (1) The Department shall make a study to determine the scenic, historic, archaeological, scientific, and recreational resources of the state. The Department may by purchase, lease, agreement, or acceptance of donations acquire for the state any areas, sites, or objects that in its opinion should be held, improved, and maintained as state parks, state recreational areas, state monuments, or state historical sites. The Department, with the consent of the commission, may acquire by condemnation, pursuant to Title 70, chapter 30, lands or structures for the purposes provided in 87-1-209(2).

87-1-209. Acquisition and sale of lands or waters. (1) The Department, with the consent of the commission and, in the case of land acquisition involving more than 100 acres or \$100,000 in value, the approval of the board of land commissioners, may acquire by purchase, lease, agreement, gift, or devise and may acquire easements upon lands or waters for the purposes listed in this subsection. The Department may develop, operate, and maintain acquired lands or waters:

 - (a) for fish hatcheries or nursery ponds;
 - (b) as lands or water suitable for game, bird, fish, or fur-bearing animal restoration, propagation, or protection;
 - (c) for public hunting, fishing, or trapping areas;
 - (d) to capture, propagate, transport, buy, sell, or exchange any game, birds, fish, fish eggs, or fur-bearing animals needed for propagation or stocking purposes or to exercise control measures of undesirable species;
 - (e) for state parks and outdoor recreation;
 - (f) to extend and consolidate by exchange, lands or waters suitable for these purposes.

3. **Name of project:** Alberton Gorge Recreational Corridor Addition

4. **Name, address and phone number of project sponsor (if other than the agency):** Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is the project sponsor.

9. Narrative summary of the proposed action or project including the benefits and purpose of the proposed action:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks proposes acquiring approximately 20 acres of riverfront property along the Clark Fork River within the Alberton Gorge (Figures 1 and 2). If acquired, the property would become a part of the Alberton Gorge Recreational Corridor.

In 2004 FWP completed a complex four-way land exchange within the Alberton Gorge. This transaction placed 306 acres along the Clark Fork River into FWP ownership. This recreational area is commonly referred to as the Alberton Gorge Recreational Corridor, a seven-mile segment of the Clark Fork River located near the town of Alberton, approximately thirty miles northwest of Missoula. The Alberton Gorge is known regionally for its rugged scenic canyon and excellent Class II and III white-water rapids that support water-based recreation activities for over 25,000 users annually. The corridor also provides high-quality trout fishing opportunities and a ribbon of riparian habitat important to black bears, deer, elk, eagles, osprey and many other species.

The parcel considered for acquisition is commonly known as the "Stranahan Property". It was purchased approximately 5 years ago by Stranie Ventures; a conservation buyer, with the intent to sell it to FWP at a future date. The Department is now in a position to purchase the property, and the seller is anxious to do so. The values of the parcels have increased substantially since their purchase, but Stranie Ventures will still sell it to FWP for the original purchase price. By doing so, the seller is in essence giving FWP a substantial discount on the property. As the property is an in-holding, FWP feels it is especially important to acquire it; as such actions have been identified as a strategic priority for Montana State Parks. This property will make a valuable addition to the contiguous public lands currently held by the Department in the Alberton Gorge Recreational Corridor, which have a long history of public recreational use.

The parcel is generally considered to be a low elevation, dry, ponderosa pine/Douglas fir bench land with grasses and little understory (Figure 3). There are no above-ground water resources and the property does not have any flood plain or wetland function or value. The property, like much of western Montana, is moderately infested with spotted knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*). If FWP does acquire the property, weed control on the property would begin in the spring of 2007 and continue regularly as part of the Region 2 Weed Management Plan. Other site protection measures that would be implemented include the installation of a gate across the two-track access road and some fencing that would help to keep vehicles from traveling off-road into meadows and other areas.

The parcel is currently unimproved besides the two-track access road but the topography of the site lends itself to possible future improvements such as parking areas and camping sites. As the parcel is within the Alberton Gorge, the majority of the river frontage is high bank (Figure 4), but it is possible to access the river for wade fishing, etc. Views of the Alberton Gorge from the property are quite spectacular (Figure 5). Specific improvements are not planned at this time and are not covered in this EA, but the site does have many outstanding characteristics in regard to public



Figure 3. Photo of interior of Stranahan Property.



Figure 4. High bank area on the Stranahan property.



Figure 5. View from the Stranahan property.

recreation and its proximity to Cyr Bridge FAS is very useful. FWP is confident that the addition of this parcel would greatly add to public recreational opportunities in the Region.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

1. 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:

Alternative A: No Action

If no action were taken, the parcels in question would be sold to another buyer, who would likely develop the land into residential home sites. As the parcel would probably be closed to public access under this scenario, opportunities for public recreation would be lost. In addition, the presence of houses or other development within the Alberton Gorge would detract from the wilderness experience and flavor that is so important to the typical visitor to the Gorge. These tourists and locals who recreate in and around the Gorge are an important source of revenue to the local economy.

Alternative B:

In Alternative B, FWP would lease the property from the current owner instead of purchasing it outright. This Alternative is no longer being considered because the owner wishes to sell the property outright and is not interested in leasing it over a long period of time.

Preferred Alternative C: Proposed Action

Note: A detailed evaluation of the Proposed Action is included in Part VI. Environmental Review Checklist beginning on page 8.

In the preferred alternative, FWP would acquire approximately 20 acres from Stranie Ventures by fee title. By acquiring this land, FWP would gain ownership of an in-holding within 306 acres already under Department ownership. Acquiring in-holdings and thus consolidating FWP lands is a stated priority of the Department, as it allows for better and easier management of Department lands. In addition, the parcels in question have high inherent public recreational value, and FWP wishes to preserve public access to the Clark Fork River in this location.

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

There are no mitigation, stipulations, or other controls associated with the actions. Therefore, no evaluation is necessary.

3. Private Property Regulatory Restrictions:

Actions described in this environmental analysis do not regulate the use of private, tangible personal property, and therefore do not require an evaluation of regulatory restrictions on private property.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The population of western Montana has been growing quickly over the past two decades, and demand for public recreational opportunities has increased even faster, as changing lifestyles propel more people of every age group to enjoy the many recreational opportunities available in the state. As existing facilities and sites become increasingly crowded, FWP is alert to opportunities to acquire property in areas of high recreational demand and value. This property fulfills those requirements, as well as having the additional value of being an inholding and offered to FWP at a discount. The proposed acquisition would increase public recreational opportunities with no significant negative impacts.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- 1. 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?**

The public would be notified of this proposal by way of: a statewide press release in newspapers; by legal notices in the *Mineral Independent* (Superior), *Independent Record* (Helena), and the *Missoulian* newspapers; and by public notice on the FWP web page <http://fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices/>. A copy of the draft EA will be mailed to any party who indicates or has indicated an interest in this proposal.

After reviewing public input received no later than November 28, Region 2 FWP Supervisor Mack Long would select a preferred alternative and issue the Decision Notice on this Draft EA. Based on the outcome of the Decision Notice, this project proposal would be presented to the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission for final action at its regularly scheduled meeting in December. FWP believes this level of public involvement is appropriate for this scale of project.

- 2. Duration of comment period, if any.**

A minimum 30-day comment period is proposed to begin October 27, 2006, and comments must be received no later than November 28, 2006.

Comments should be addressed to Lee Bastian at Region 2 FWP, 3201 Spurgin Rd., Missoula, MT 59804-3101; emailed to lbastian@mt.gov; or telephoned to 406-542-5517.

PART V. EA PREPARATION

- 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.**

Proposed finding:

Based on an evaluation of the primary, secondary, and cumulative impacts to the physical and human environment, this environmental review found no significant impacts from the proposed action. In determining the significance of the impacts, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks assessed the severity, duration, geographic extent, and frequency of the impact, the probability that the impact would occur or reasonable assurance that the impact would not occur. FWP assessed various aspects of the impact, the importance to the state and to society of the environmental resource or value affected, any precedent that would be set as a result of an impact of the proposed action that would commit FWP to future actions; and potential conflicts with local, federal, or state laws. As this EA revealed no significant impacts from the proposed actions, the EA is the appropriate level of review and an EIS is not required.

- 2. Name, title, address and phone number of the person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:**

Lee Bastian
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Region 2 Parks Manager
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(406) 542-5517

Darlene Edge
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PO Box 200701
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Linnaea Schroeer-Smith
Independent Contractor
1027 9th Ave
Helena, MT 59601
(406) 495-9620
(406) 495-9620

- 3. List of agencies consulted during preparation of the EA:**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:
Parks Division
Fisheries Division
Lands Unit
Legal Unit

PART VI. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

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

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u> 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				1a.
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?		X				
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				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other:		X				

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

- 1a. The proposed action involves only an acquisition of property and does not include development or physical alteration of the property.

* 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. <u>AIR</u> 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				2a.
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
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.)						
f. Other:		X				

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

2a. The proposed action involves only an acquisition of property and does not include development or physical alteration of the property.

* 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.

3. <u>WATER</u> 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				3a.
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
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				
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.)						
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.)						
n. Other:		X				

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

3a. The proposed action involves only an acquisition of property and does not include development or physical alteration of the property.

* 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.

4. VEGETATION 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 positive			4a.
b. Alteration of a plant community?			X positive			
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X positive			4e.
f. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?						
g. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Vegetation (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- 4a. The Stranahan property has a moderate (approximately 20%) infestation of noxious weeds, primarily spotted knapweed, and the current owners do not actively practice weed control. If FWP gains ownership of the parcels, managers would initiate a weed control program, which would include spraying, biological control, and hand pulling as needed. The diversity of the remaining plant community would likely increase as a result.
- 4b. Please see comment 4a.
- 4e. If FWP acquires the property; weed control measures would be implemented shortly after acquisition. The proposed action would decrease the likelihood of weeds being spread from the site or of becoming more prevalent within 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.

** 5. FISH/WILDLIFE 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		yes	5b.
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				
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.)						
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.)						
j. Other:		X				

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

- 5b. The proposed action would result in increased public access to the Clark Fork River, which would likely result in more fishing pressure and more game fish mortality. Department fisheries biologists feel that fish populations in the Clark Fork River can support current levels of pressure. Game wardens regularly patrol Department lands to ensure that anglers are complying with state regulations.
- 5g. The acquisition itself would not affect wildlife populations. However, once the site became open to the public, the presence of recreationists on the property could cause stress to wildlife populations. However, if FWP did not acquire the site, the property would likely be developed into residential home sites, which would displace wildlife and cause stress to remaining populations.

* 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. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u> 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 serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
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				
e. Other:		X				

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

- 6a. There would be no increase in noise from the proposed action. Once the site became (officially) open to the public there would be a very slight increase in noise. There is a small 2-3 acre parcel on the southeast edge of the Stranahan property that is privately owned, but the potential future impact to these landowners is expected to be minor. All other adjacent land is owned by FWP.

7. <u>LAND USE</u> 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				
e. Other:		X				

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

- 7a. The proposed action would not alter or interfere with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use, nor does it conflict with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance.

* 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 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)						
e. Other:		X				

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

- 8a. The FWP Region 2 Weed Management Plan calls for an integrated method of managing weeds, including the use of herbicides. The use of herbicides would be in compliance with application guidelines and conducted by people trained in safe handling techniques. Weeds would also be controlled using mechanical or biological means in certain areas to reduce the risk of chemical spills or water contamination.

* 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 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				
f. Other:		X				

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

9e. The proposed acquisition is not expected to cause any impact to the local community.

* 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. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u> 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						10e.
f. **Define projected maintenance costs.						10f.
g. Other:		X				

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

10b. The proposed action would result in a slight decrease to Mineral County tax rolls, as Parks are tax-exempt and therefore do not pay property taxes. The loss of taxes would be approximately \$550/yr.

10e. Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks: Parks Acquisition Account.

10f. Projected maintenance costs of the unimproved site would be approximately \$400/yr.

* 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	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Will the proposed action result in:	Unknown *	None	Minor *		
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
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			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.)						
e. Other:		X				

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

- 11c. The proposed acquisition would increase public access to the Clark Fork River, thereby improving recreational opportunities in the area and Region. Please see Tourism Report, Appendix A.

* 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. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u> 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				12a.
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.)						
e. Other:		X				

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

12a. The proposed action would not destroy or alter any site, structure or object of historic importance. The State Historic Preservation Office would be consulted prior to any future development of the property.

* 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 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.)						
g. ****For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Significance Criteria (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

13a. This EA found no significant impacts to the human or physical environment from the proposed action .

* 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.

Appendix A.

TOURISM REPORT MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA)/HB495

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has initiated the review process as mandated by HB495 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:

Victor Bjornberg, Tourism Development Coordinator
Travel Montana-Department of Commerce
PO Box 200533
1424 9th Ave.
Helena, MT 59620-0533

Project Name: Alberton Gorge Recreational Corridor Addition

Project Location: Two parcels of land located in Government Lot 4 and 5 in Section 35 and Government Lots 3,4 and 5 in Section 36, all in Township 15 North, Range 24 West, P.M.M., Mineral County, MT and more particularly described on Certificate of Survey No. 529 of the New Plat Book, records of Mineral County, Montana, and designated as Parcels 2 and 3 thereon.

Project Description: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks proposes to acquire 20 acres along the Clark Fork River in Mineral County for inclusion in the Alberton Gorge Recreational Corridor. The property is surrounded by 306 acres of land currently owned by FWP. The parcel has a low bank making public access to the Clark Fork River fairly easy. The site is unimproved at this time except for a gravel entrance road.

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

As described, the project provides easier public access to this recreation area as well as add to the public property available for use. This could expand use of the area providing benefits for businesses and communities service this recreation area's users.

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

As described, the project appears to increase the quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings the area.

Signature Victor A. Bjornberg, Tourism Development Coordinator, MT Commerce Dept.
Date October 26, 2006