Draft
Environmental Assessment

Carter Ferry Fishing Access Site Enhancement

November 21, 2006

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Carter Ferry Fishing Access Site Enhancement
Draft Environmental Assessment
MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of Proposed Action:

Development	___X___
Renovation	_____
Maintenance	_____
Land Acquisition	_______
Equipment Acquisition	_____
Other (Describe)	_____

2. Agency authority for the proposed action: The 1977 Montana Legislature enacted statute 87-1-605 MCA, which directs Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) to acquire, develop, and operate a system of fishing accesses. The legislature established a funding account to ensure that this function would be accomplished. Sections 12-8-213, 23-1-105, 23-1-106, 15-1-122, 61-3-321, and 87-1-303, MCA, authorize the collection fees and charges for the use of state park system units and fishing access sites, and contain rule-making authority for their use, occupancy and protection. See Appendix 1 for HB 495 qualification.

3. Name of Project:
Carter Ferry Fishing Access Site Enhancement

4. Name, Address, and Phone Number of Project Sponsor:

Allan Kuser	Roger Semler	Jon Jourdonnais
Fishing Access Site Coordinator	Regional Parks Manager	PPL Montana
Montana FWP, HQ	Montana FWP, Region 4	45 Basin Creek Road
PO Box 200701	4600 Giant Springs Road	Butte, MT 59701
Helena, MT 59620	Great Falls, MT 59405	406-533-3443
406-444-7885	406-454-5859	

5. Estimated Construction/Commencement Date: Fall 2007
Estimated Completion Date: Winter 2007
Current Status of Project Design (50% complete):

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

Carter Ferry FAS is located on the Missouri River at river mile 2081 on the left hand side as you float down stream. The site is 27 miles north of Great Falls on Hwy 87 and 6 miles east on Ferry Road. The site is located in NE ¼ Sec 13 and in SE ¼ of Sec 12, Township 23 North, Range 6 East, Chouteau County, Montana. The site is 20.3 acres.

Figure 1: Blue fish delineates location of Carter Ferry FAS.

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

(a) Developed:
Residential ..... 0 acres
Industrial ..... 0 acres

(b) Open Space/Woodlands/
Recreation..... 20.2 acres

(c) Wetlands/Riparian
Areas..... 0 acres

(d) Floodplain..... 0.1 acres

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

7. Map/site plan:

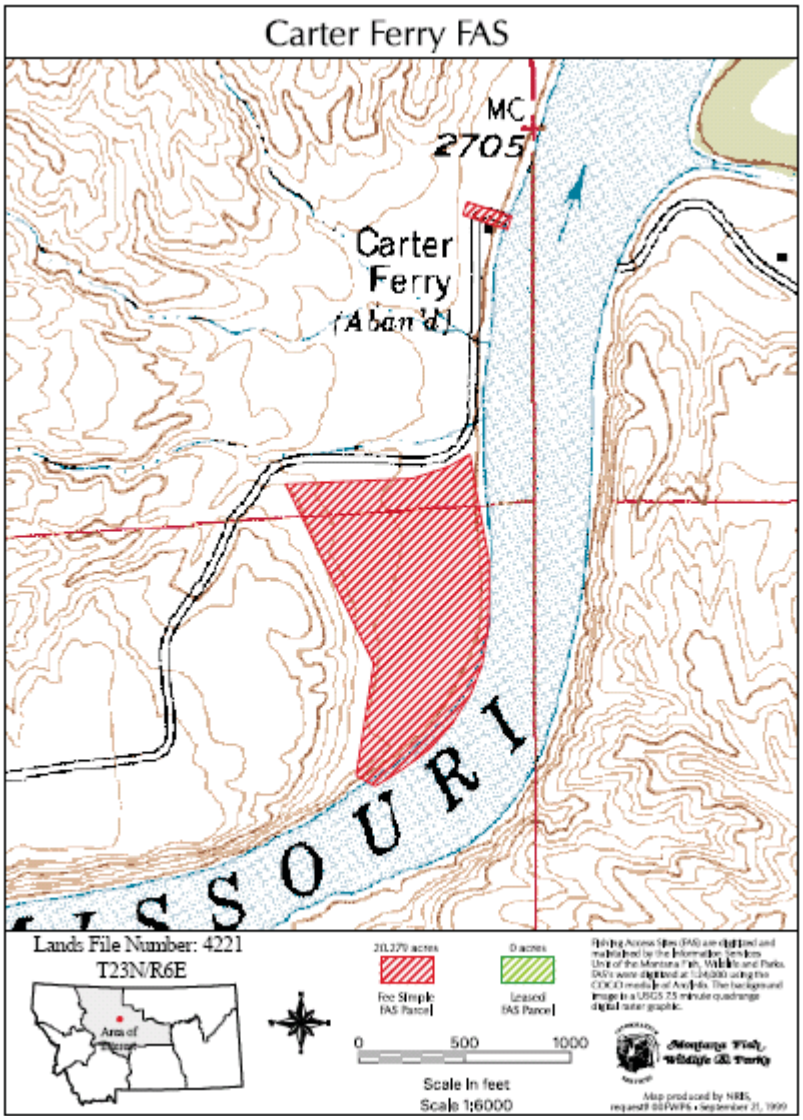


Figure 2: Topographic map depicting approximate boundaries (red shaded polygons; 20.3 acres) of FWP Carter Ferry FAS.

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

(a) Permits:

Agency Name	Permit	Date Filed/#
Montana Department of Environmental Quality	318	
Montana Stream Protection Act	124	
Army Corps of Engineers	404	
Chouteau County	Floodplain Permit	

(b) Funding:

Agency Name	Funding Amount
PPL Montana, LLC	$62,450

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

Agency Name	Type of Responsibility
PPL Montana, LLC	Cooperate with other governmental entities in the acquisition, development, and/or improvement of public access sites to the Missouri River.

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

Carter Ferry Fishing Access Site Description and Background

Carter Ferry FAS is located on the Missouri River at river mile 2081 on the left hand side as you float down stream. The site is 27 miles north of Great Falls on Hwy 87 and 6 miles east on county road. The closest public launch downstream is located at Fort Benton, approximately 15 miles. The site is divided into 2 areas. Currently there is a strip of FWP owned land near the Carter Ferry for boat launching and parking (Figure 3). The bulk of the property (19 acres) is located just upstream of the Carter Ferry launch site on a flat bench above the Missouri River (Figure 4). There is a slope down to the river where anglers and boaters have access to the water. Across the river, there are steep cliffs that distinguish this section of the Missouri River. The vegetation at the site is predominately crested wheatgrass with some ponderosa pines, elm, Russian olive, and lilac. There are a few willows and young cottonwoods near the bank of the Missouri River. Spotted knapweed, leafy spurge, and mullen are also present at the site.

Figure 3. Carter Ferry FAS boat launch is adjacent to the Carter Ferry.

Figure 4. Upstream portion of FAS. Picture was taken looking northeast.

In 2003 and angler survey identified this section of the Missouri River (river mile 2,044.4 - 2095.2) as the 97th most fished body of water in Montana. The Regional

rank was 17 and there were 6,094 days fished with 135 trips on this section. Game fish opportunities at the FAS include channel catfish, goldeye, sauger, smallmouth bass, and walleye. Other fish species present at this site are bigmouth buffalo, black crappie, blue sucker, brown trout, burbot, common carp, emerald shiner, fathead minnow, flathead chub, freshwater drum, Iowa darter, longnose dace, longnose sucker, mottled sculpin, mountain whitefish, northern pike, rainbow trout, river carpsucker, shorthead redhorse, shovelnose sturgeon, smallmouth buffalo, stonecat, white sucker, and perch.

The Montana Natural Heritage Program located blue sucker, sauger, spiny softshell, and bald eagles within one mile of the FAS. According to Graham Taylor FWP Region 4 Wildlife Manager, the FAS is within the nesting territory of a bald eagle pair; however, the nest used in previous years is at least one-quarter mile southwest of the property on private land.

The FAS was purchased in 1969 by FWP. Development has been minimal due to funding and ownership concerns. Prior to November 1982, there was a question raised as to whether the property boundary extended to the river. Based upon a recent Montana Supreme Court Case, FWP owns the land bordering the Missouri River to the edge of the river at low-water line. Therefore, FWP is confidant that the public has a right to access the river from this FWP ownership. PPL Montana, LLC (PPLM) will pay the cost to develop the site. PPLM is required to develop public access sites on the Missouri River to comply with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Project 2188 License (FERC License) and the corresponding Missouri-Madison Comprehensive Recreation Management Plan (Recreation Plan). PPLM has consulted with FWP and other agencies on the location, acquisition, and development of these sites. Through this consultation process, Carter Ferry FAS was selected for development.

Proposed Action, Purpose, and Benefits of the Action

FWP proposes to develop the Carter Ferry FAS according to the site plan that is attached as Appendix 2. PPLM will provide funding support to develop the site as a FAS. Development will include

1. Construction of a 20 foot wide gravel main road (figure 5)
2. Construction of a 16 foot wide gravel camp loop road (16 foot by 50 foot; Figure 6 and 7)
3. Construction of seven graveled camping spurs delineated with barrier rocks. Each campsite will be designated with a site marker and outfitted with a picnic table and steel fire grate.

Figure 5. Location of proposed main road. Picture was taken looking west from parking area.

4. Construction of a parking area with 6 truck/trailer parking spaces (Figure 8)
5. Construction of a 16 foot wide concrete boat ramp (Figure 9)
6. Installation of a precast concrete vault latrine with ADA accessible parking pad and access walkway
7. Reclamation of existing two-track road (Figure 7)
8. Installation of corner boundary monuments, perimeter boundary fencing, and signs

Figure 6. Proposed camp loop location. Picture was taken looking south from the Missouri River.

Figure 7. Proposed camp loop location. Picture was taken looking east. Current access road would be reclaimed.

The current boat ramp is located 0.5 miles downstream from the proposed development, immediately adjacent to the County operated Carter Ferry. The combination of ferry patrons and boaters at times results in congestion at the boat ramp. In addition, parking is limited and boaters must yield the right-of-way to the ferry during launch activities. There are also significant public safety hazards associated with the boat launch adjacent to the ferry, including river turbulence caused by the ferry as well as the risk to boaters posed by the ferry cable suspended across the river. Since the majority of boaters launching at the current ramp are headed upstream, the cable presents a significant risk. The construction of a new boat ramp at the upstream site will accommodate the usage at the current boat ramp, reduce congestion, and reduce public safety risks. FWP will evaluate the need to continue to maintain this ramp once there has been an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the new boat during low and high water periods.

Currently at the proposed site, there is a mowed area for parking. This area is large enough for current use; however, the construction of the boat ramp will require more parking at the site. Establishing parking will also prevent off road use at the site. The current plan allows for increasing parking capacity if necessary.

Establishing a camping area will increase user access at the site and allow for site (vegetation) protection. The campground will be located on the bench above the Missouri River, with a beautiful view of the cliffs across the river. Camping is currently permitted at the undeveloped site. The establishment of the boat ramp on the site may increase camping. Developing a designated camping area will allow users to have more amenities at the site, including a vault latrine, picnic tables, and fire rings.

Site protection is a large priority for the site. With the development of the campground and day use area, signs will be posted with regulations, and fencing will be installed to prevent off road use and to protect neighboring land. In addition, a vault latrine will be installed. Finally, the current two-track road will be reclaimed to prevent usage and increase aesthetics of the site. Removal of the road will allow campsites to be located along the bank of the Missouri River and not near traffic from the entrance road. Best Management practices will be employed during construction to minimize sediment delivery to the water.

Figure 8. Current parking area would be expanded to the west. Picture was taken looking west.

Figure 9. Proposed boat launch would be located along this bank of the Missouri River. Picture was taken looking northwest.

Maintenance and Operation of the Site

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks will assume responsibility for routine maintenance of the site including campground management and maintenance, restroom cleaning and stocking, vault toilet pumping, boat ramp maintenance, sign installation and maintenance, road maintenance, litter and refuse pick up, mowing and brushing, fence maintenance, and general site upkeep.

An assessment of hazard trees and limbs will be conducted by a certified arborist and appropriate hazard mitigation measures will be taken.

The campground at the FAS will be managed similarly to other campgrounds at FASs in Montana. The cost for camping will be:

- $12 per night if no one in the party has a valid Montana fishing license.
- $7 per night if one person in the party has a valid Montana fishing license.
- $6 per night if one person in the party is a Montana resident over 62 years of age or disabled and this person does not have a valid Montana fishing license
- $3.50 per night if one person in the party is a Montana resident over 62 years of age or disabled and this person has a valid Montana fishing license.

There are noxious weed present at the FAS. FWP will contract with the Chouteau County Weed department for weed control. Herbicides would be used as well as bio-control and mowing.

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 comparison of the alternatives with the proposed action/preferred alternative:

Alternative A: No Action
Do not develop the Carter Ferry FAS. The site will remain in its current undeveloped state. There will continue to be public access to the river for boat launching, bank fishing, and camping at the upstream site.

Alternative B: Proposed Action
Development of the Carter Ferry FAS will include constructing a main access road, a campground loop road with three pullouts, seven camping spurs with delineated campsites, a parking area (6 truck/trailer spaces), and a concrete boat ramp. In addition, an ADA accessible precast concrete vault latrine, boundary fencing, and signs will be installed. Reclamation of the existing road will also occur. This type of development is appropriate for the site. It will improve access to meet users' expectations, protect the site from degradation, prevent congestion at the current boat ramp, and enhance public safety for boaters using the river. The proposed action would include the opportunity for lawful harvest of wildlife, including hunting of big game, upland game birds and waterfowl, in accordance with established hunting seasons, regulations, and possible weapons discharge restrictions to protect public safety.

Alternative C: Develop the Upstream Site and Remove and Rehabilitate the Existing Downstream Boat Ramp and Latrine
Development of the upstream site will include a boat ramp and latrine, potentially making the existing boat ramp and latrine unnecessary. In addition, the development upstream will eliminate safety concerns, congestion, and inconvenience at the existing boat ramp. Consideration was initially given to eliminating the existing structures at the same time the new facilities were being constructed. A decision on this concept is being postponed until after the new boat ramp is constructed. Visitor usage and maintenance of both boat ramps will be evaluated for the first year or two before making a decision to keep or rehabilitate the existing boat ramp.

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

There is no mitigation, stipulations, or other controls associated with this action. Therefore, no evaluation is necessary. This analysis did not reveal any significant impacts to the human or physical environment. Therefore, an environmental Impact Statement is not required.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The proposed project will minimally impact the physical environment. Best Management Practices (see Appendix 4) will be utilized to minimize impacts to the land and water (i.e., surface runoff, erosion, and drainage patterns) during design and construction of the access road, camp loop, parking area and boat launch. Regulations signs and fire rings will be installed to decrease the potential for wild fires. The proposed project will minimally impact the diversity and abundance of game and nongame species in the area. The development is occurring in an area that already receives recreational use. Posted regulation signs and enforcement activities will help prevent activities that adversely impact wildlife and their habitat.

The proposed project will minimally affect the human environment. Noise will increase during construction and due to the installation of a camp loop and boat launch. Best Management Practices (see Appendix 4) will be utilized in the planning and construction of the new access road and camp loop to minimize traffic hazards. The proposed project will not alter public services, taxes, or utilities. The proposed project will provide benefits for tourism in this area through improved services, amenities, and better management of the area. There is a paucity of data on cultural resources in the proposed project area. Consequently, no construction will occur until after a cultural resource inventory has occurred and the State Historic and Preservation Office has determined there will be no impact on cultural resources.

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 will be notified in the following ways to comment on the EA for the Carter Ferry Fishing Access Site Enhancement

1. Legal notices will be published in the *Great Falls Tribune* and the *Helena Independent Record.*
2. Legal notice and the draft EA will be posted on the Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks web page: *http://fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices*
3. Direct notice will be given to adjacent landowners.

This level of public involvement is appropriate for a project of this scale.

2. Duration of comment period, if any.

The public comment period will be 30 days, beginning on November 21, 2006 and closing on December 20, 2006. Comments may be emailed to rsemler@mt.gov, or written comments may be sent to the following address:

Roger Semler
Regional Parks Manager
Montana FWP, Region 4
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, MT 59405
406-454-5859

PART V. EA PREPARATION

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

Based on an evaluation of impacts to the physical and human environment under MEPA, this environmental review revealed no significant negative impacts from the proposed action: therefore, an EIS is not necessary and an environmental assessment is the appropriate level of analysis.

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

Allan Kuser	Roger Semler	Sally Schrank
FWP FAS Coordinator	FWP Regional Parks Manager	Independent Contractor
1420 East Sixth Ave	4600 Giant Springs Road	112 Riverview C
Helena, MT 59601	Great Falls, MT 59405	Great Falls, MT 59404
(406) 444-7885	(406) 751-4550	(406) 268-0527

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

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- Parks Division, Region 4
- Wildlife Division, Region 4
- Fisheries Division, Region 4
- Lands Section
- Design and Construction Bureau

Montana Department of Commerce—Tourism
PO Box 200533
1424 9th Ave.
Helena, MT 59620-0533

Montana Natural Heritage Program—Natural Resources Information System
PO Box 201800
1515 East Sixth Avenue
Helena, MT 59620-1800

State Historic Preservation Office
Montana Historical Society
1410 8th Avenue
Helena, MT 59620

PART VI. MEPA CHECKLIST

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

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES **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		Yes	1b.
c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?			X			1d.
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?			X			1e.
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 project will not alter geologic substructure, and will minimally impact soil stability. The boat launch will be located in the 100-year flood plain area. Erosion is expected to be minor. Surface runoff should be minimal due to the low slope (4-8%) and the Yamacall loam. Best Management Practices (see Appendix 4) will be utilized to minimize these impacts during design and construction of the proposed project.

1b. The proposed project will cause minor erosion of the riverbank due to the establishment of boat launch. This impact will be minimized, as vehicle traffic and boat-launching activities will be confined to a small area. The entrance road, parking area, campground, and latrine will cause over-covering of soil. These areas will be fenced to minimize disturbance, to confine vehicle traffic, and to prevent bank erosion.

1d. Establishment of a boat launch will cause minor changes to the siltation, deposition, and erosion patterns of the river; however, these changes will not modify the channel of the river. Best Management Practices (see Appendix 4) will be utilized to minimize these impacts during design and construction of the proposed project.

1e. Establishment of a campground increases the potential for untended campfires. Campfire rings will be located at each campsite and regulations regarding fires will be posted and enforced.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

2. AIR **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			2b.
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a)		NA				
f. Other		X				

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

2a. Minor amounts of dust will be temporarily created during construction. Best Management Practices (see Appendix 4) will be utilized to minimize the dust during construction.

2b. Vault latrines can create foul odors; but regular latrine maintenance will help to minimize offensive odors. Current design of vault toilets minimizes odors by using black, passively—heated vent pipe to increase airflow through the structure and remove objectionable odors. Not having a latrine would likely result in sanitation problems that could potentially lead to health and safety issues.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

3. WATER **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			3b.
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of flood water 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)		NA				
m. For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a)		NA				
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 plan will cause a minor increase in the discharge of sediments into the river due to construction of the boat ramp. Best Management Practices (see Appendix 4) will be utilized to minimize these impacts during design and construction of the proposed project.

3b. To help minimize changes in drainage pattern caused by construction, the parking area, campground, access road, and latrine will be located on an area with low slope (4-8%). The proposed plan may increase surface runoff, due to changes in vegetative cover. A vegetative buffer will be left to trap sediments.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

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

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

4a. Approximately 5 acres of grassland will be disturbed to construct the access road, campground loop, and parking area. Some grassland area will be increased due to reclamation of the current access road. There are several dead elm trees at the FAS. An assessment of hazard trees and limbs will be conducted by a certified arborist. Appropriate hazard mitigation measures will be taken of the site with sensitivity to wildlife habitat trees.

4c. The Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) found no records of unique, rare, threatened, or endangered plant species within one mile of the site.

4e. Spotted knapweed, leafy spurge, and mullen are at the FAS. Public usage of the FAS will likely increase weeds at the FAS. FWP will contract with the Chouteau County Weed Department to eradicate this problem. Herbicides would be used along the roads and parking area.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

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			5b.
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?			X			See 5b.
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				5f.
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
h. For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f)		NA				
i. For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d)		NA				
j. Other:		X				

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

5b. The proposed project will minimally impact the diversity and abundance of game and nongame species in the area. The development is occurring in an area that already receives recreational use.

5f. The MNHP located blue sucker, sauger, spiny softshell, and bald eagles within one mile of the FAS. Blue sucker is listed as sensitive by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and S2S3/G3G4 by the MNHP. This ranking by MNHP indicates the species is at risk or potentially at risk of extirpation statewide and potentially at risk or rare globally. Sauger is listed as sensitive by the BLM and S2/G5 by MNHP. This ranking by MNHP indicates the species is at risk of extirpation statewide and common globally. Spiny softshell is listed as sensitive by the BLM and S3/G5 by the MNHP. This ranking by MNHP indicates the species is potentially at risk of extirpation statewide and common globally. Bald eagle is listed as threatened by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Forest service, listed as special status by the BLM, and S3/G5 by MNHP. This ranking by MNHP indicates the species is potentially at risk of extirpation statewide and common globally.

Increased recreational use at the site from the proposed project will minimally impact sauger and blue sucker in the area. Sauger will be protected through angling regulations. There is no harvest of blue sucker. The proposed project will not alter habitat of either fish species. An FWP 2006 turtle survey did not located spiny softshell in the area of the proposed project. As described the proposed project will not alter habitat of the spiny softshell and should minimally affect the species. According to Graham Taylor, FWP Region 4 Wildlife Manager, the FAS is within the nesting territory of a bald eagle pair; however, the nest used in previous years is at least one-quarter mile from the FAS. The nest site is southwest of the property on the same side of the river. This site is located on private land. Mr. Taylor stated that it is unlikely that the bald eagles will be disturbed by development of the FAS, as visitors to the FAS will not have access to this land.

The proposed action would include the opportunity for lawful harvest of wildlife, including hunting of big game, upland game birds and waterfowl in accordance with established hunting seasons and regulations.

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS 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		Yes	6a.
b. Exposure of people to severe 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 Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

6a. An increase in existing noise levels will occur with increased public access to the FAS, due to vehicle traffic and recreationists at the FAS. FWP will follow the guidelines of the good neighbor policy for public recreation lands (MCA 23-1-126.) to have “no impact upon adjoining private and public lands by preventing impact on those adjoining lands from noxious weeds, trespass, litter, noise and light pollution, streambank erosion and loss of privacy.”

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

7. LAND USE 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 Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

7a. The proposed project will not alter land use in the area. All construction will be occurring at an established Fishing Access Site.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

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-1~~, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		NA				
e. Other:		X				

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

8a. The FWP Region 4 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.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

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			9e.
f. Other:		X				

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

9e. The proposed plan will establish a new access road and camp loop road at the FAS. Traffic hazards are possible with the establishment of a new road and camp loop. Best Management Practices (see Appendix 4) will be utilized in the planning and construction of the new access road to minimize traffic hazards.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES 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				
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 used of any energy source?		X				
e. Define projected revenue sources						10e.
f. Define projected maintenance costs.						10f
g. Other:_____						

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

10e. The campground at the FAS will be managed similarly to other campgrounds at FASs in Montana. The cost for camping will be:

- $12 per night if no one in the party has a valid Montana fishing license.
- $7 per night if one person in the party has a valid Montana fishing license.
- $6 per night if one person in the party is a Montana resident over 62 years of age or disabled and the person does not have a valid Montana fishing license.
- $3.50 per night if one person in the party is a Montana resident over 62 years of age or disabled and this person has a valid Montana fishing license.

Additional revenue may be generated from commercial use permits issued for commercial activities occurring on the site in accordance with the Commercial Use Rule.

10f. It will cost approximately $5,000 per year for FWP to operate the site, enforce regulations, and maintain access road, camp loop road, parking area, boat launch, fences, toilet, signs, weeds, and grounds.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
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-1~~, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c)		NA				
e. Other:		NA				

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

11c. The proposed project will improve both the quality and quantity of recreation & tourism opportunities in this area. The proposed project will provide benefits for the tourism activity in this area. The improved services and amenities will provide expected services for visitors and allow better management and use of the area. The proposed action would include the opportunity for lawful harvest of wildlife, including hunting of big game, upland game birds and waterfowl, in accordance with established hunting seasons, regulations and possible weapons discharge restrictions to protect public safety. Please see Appendix 3, Tourism Report.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES 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-1~~, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? **Attach SHPO letter of clearance.** (Also see 12.a)		NA				
e. Other:						

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

12a. There is a paucity of data on cultural resources in the proposed project area. The State Historic Preservation Office has recommended that a cultural resource inventory of the site be conducted prior to construction. Consequently, no construction will occur until after a cultural resource inventory has occurred and the State Historic Preservation Office has determined there will be no impact on cultural resources.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

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 which create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
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			13e.
f. For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e)		NA				
g. For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		NA				

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

13e. Prior to November 1982, there was a question raised as to whether the property boundary extended to the river. Based upon a recent Montana Supreme Court Case, FWP owns the land bordering the Missouri River to the edge of the river at low-water line. Therefore, FWP is confidant that the public has a right to access the river from this FWP ownership. The neighboring landowner has been notified in writing of FWP's position and that FWP intends to develop this FAS. A copy of the EA will be distributed to this neighboring landowner for comment during the public comment period.

APPENDIX 1
HB495
PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

Date July 30, 2006 **Person Reviewing** Sally Schrank

Project Location: Carter Ferry FAS is located on the Missouri River at river mile 2081 on the left hand side as you float down stream. The site is 27 miles north of Great Falls on Hwy 87 and 6 miles east on county road. The site is located in NE ¼ Sec 13 and in SE ¼ of Sec 12, Township 23 North, Range 6 East, Chouteau County, Montana. The site is 20.3 acres.

Description of Proposed Work: FWP proposes to develop the Carter Ferry FAS. Development will include

1. Construction of a 20 foot wide gravel access road
2. Construction of a 16 foot wide gravel campground loop road with three pullouts
3. Construction of seven camping spurs with seven delineated campsites outfitted with a picnic table and steel fire grate
4. Construction of a parking area with 6 truck/trailer parking spaces
5. Construction of a 16-foot wide concrete boat ramp
6. Installation of an ADA accessible precast concrete vault latrine
7. Reclamation of existing two-track road
8. Installation of boundary monuments, perimeter fencing and signs

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

[Y] A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?
Comments: A 20-foot wide gravel main road and a 16-foot wide camp loop road will be constructed over undisturbed land.

[ ] B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?
Comments:

[Y] C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?
Comments: The construction of the main road and camp loop road will cause an excavation of grater than 20 c.y.

[Y] D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?
Comments: A new parking lot will be constructed with six truck/trailer parking spaces.

[ ] E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a double wide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?
Comments:

[ ] F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?
Comments:

[ ] G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?
Comments:

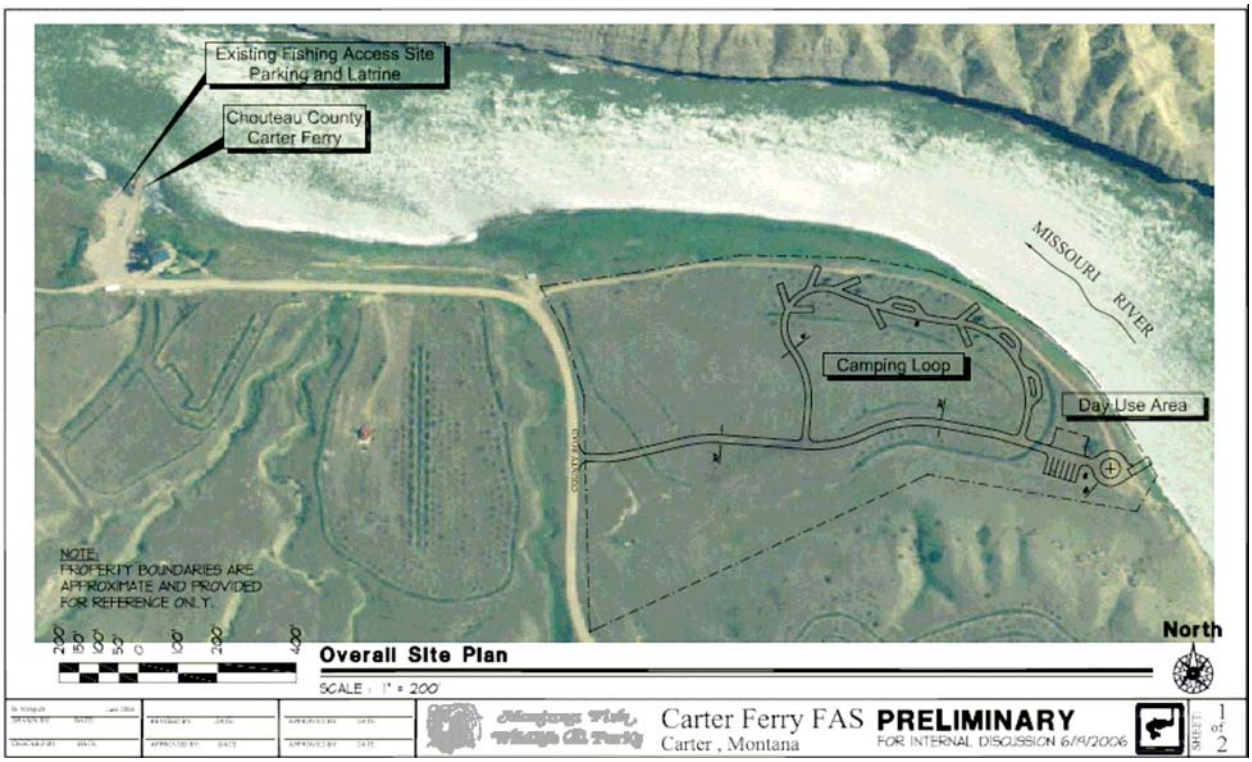
[ ] H. Any new above ground utility lines?
Comments:

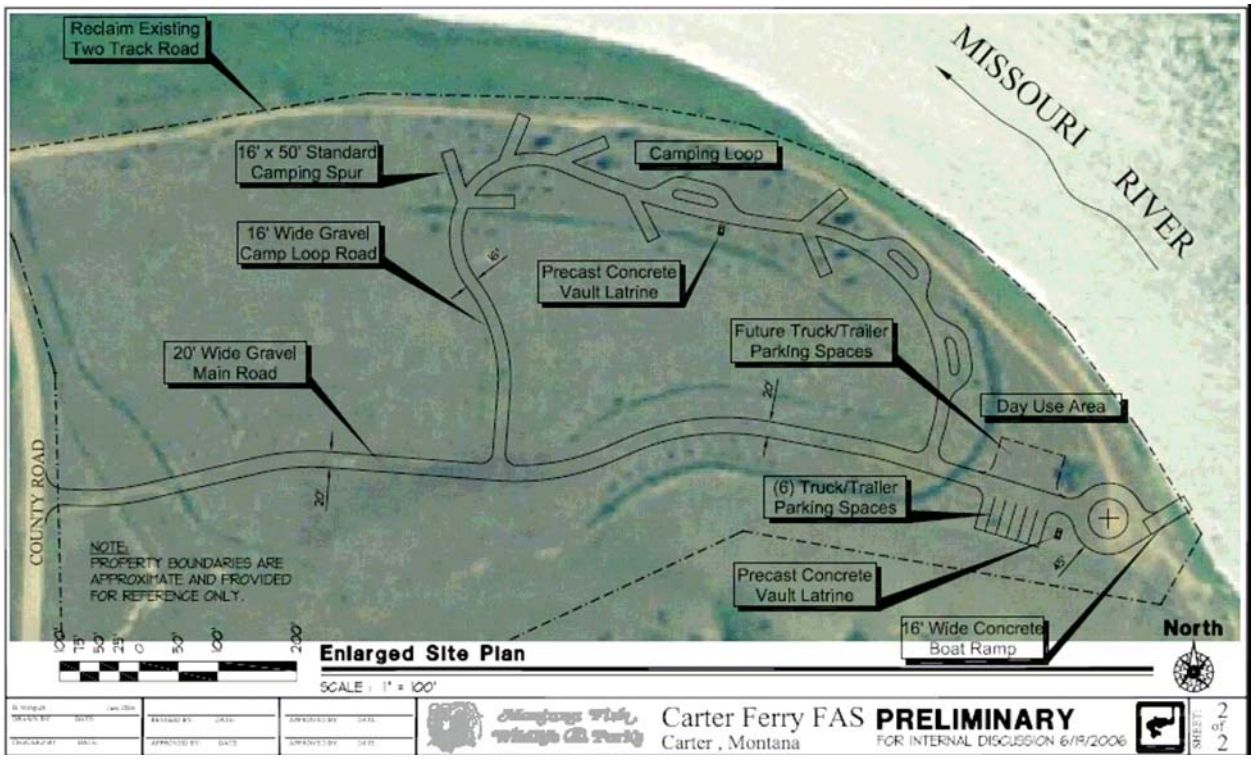
[Y] I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?
Comments: A new campground will be established with seven campsites.

[ ] J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern; including effects of a series of individual projects?
Comments:

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

Appendix 2
Site Plan





APPENDIX 3
TOURISM REPORT
MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA)/HB495

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & 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, 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: Carter Ferry Fishing Access Site Enhancement

Project Description: Carter Ferry FAS is located on the Missouri River at river mile 2081 on the left hand side as you float down stream. The site is 27 miles north of Great Falls on Hwy 87 and 6 miles east on county road. The site is located in NE ¼ Sec 13 and in SE ¼ of Sec 12, Township 23 North, Range 6 East, Chouteau County, Montana. The site is 20.3 acres. Development a the Carter Ferry FAS will include constructing a main access road, a camp loop road with three pullouts and seven camping spurs, a parking area (6 truck/trailer spaces) and a boat ramp. In addition, a precast vault latrine, fencing, and signs will be installed. Reclamation of the existing entrance road will also occur. This type of development is appropriate for the site to improve access to meet users' expectations, to protect the site from degradation, and to prevent congestion at the current boat ramp.

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

As described, the Carter Ferry FAS project appears to provide benefits for the tourism activity in this area. The improved services and amenities will provide expected services for visitors and allow better management and use of the area.

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

The project will improve both the quality and quantity of recreation & tourism opportunities in this area.

Signature Victor A. Bjornberg, Tourism Development Coordinator, MT Commerce Dept.
Date: August 3, 2006

Appendix 4

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS
BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR FISHING ACCESS SITES
10-02-02

I. ROADS

A. Road Planning and location

1. Minimize the number of roads constructed at the FAS through comprehensive road planning and recognizing foreseeable future uses.

2. Use existing roads, unless use of such roads would cause or aggravate an erosion problem.

3. Fit the road to the topography by locating roads on natural benches and following natural contours. Avoid long, steep road grades and narrow canyons.

4. Locate roads on stable geology, including well-drained soils and rock formations that tend to dip into the slope. Avoid slumps and slide-prone areas characterized by steep slopes, highly weathered bedrock, clay beds, concave slopes, hummocky topography, and rock layers that dip parallel to the slope. Avoid wet areas, including seeps, wetlands, wet meadows, and natural drainage channels.

5. Minimize the number of stream crossings.

6. Choose stable stream crossing sites. "Stable" refers to streambanks with erosion-resistant materials and in hydrologically safe spots.

B. Road Design

1. Design roads to the minimum standard necessary to accommodate anticipated use and equipment. The need for higher engineering standards can be alleviated through proper road-use management. "Standard" refers to road width.

2. Design roads to minimize disruption of natural drainage patterns. Vary road grades to reduce concentrated flow in road drainage ditches, culverts, and on fill slopes and road surfaces.

C. Drainage from Road Surface

1. Provide adequate drainage from the surface of all permanent and temporary roads. Use outsloped, insloped or crowned roads, installing proper drainage features. Space road drainage features so peak flow on road surface or in ditches will not exceed their capacity.

a. Outsloped roads provide means of dispersing water in a low-energy flow from the road surface. Outsloped roads are appropriate when fill slopes are stable, drainage will not flow directly into stream channels, and transportation safety can be met.

b. For in-sloped roads, plan ditch gradients steep enough, generally greater than 2%, but less than 8%, to prevent sediment deposition and ditch erosion. The steeper gradients may be suitable for more stable soils; use the lower gradients for less stable soils.

c. Design and install road surface drainage features at adequate spacing to control erosion; steeper gradients require more frequent drainage features. Properly constructed drain dips can be an

economical method of road surface drainage. Construct drain dips deep enough into the subgrade so that traffic will not obliterate them.

2. For ditch relief/culverts, construct stable catch basins at stable angles. Protect the inflow end of crossdrain culverts from plugging and armor if in erodible soil. Skewing ditch relief culverts 20 to 30 degrees toward the inflow from the ditch will improve inlet efficiency.

3. Provide energy dissipators (rock piles, slash, log chunks, etc.) where necessary to reduce erosion at outlet of drainage features. Crossdrains, culverts, water bars, dips, and other drainage structures should not discharge onto erodible soils or fill slopes without outfall protection.

4. Route road drainage through adequate filtration zones, or other sediment-settling structures. Install road drainage features above stream crossings to route discharge into filtration zones before entering a stream.

D. Construction/Reconstruction

1. Stabilize erodible, exposed soils by seeding, compacting, riprapping, benching, mulching, or other suitable means.

2. At the toe of potentially erodible fill slopes, particularly near stream channels, pile slash in a row parallel to the road to trap sediment. When done concurrently with road construction, this is one method to effectively control sediment movement and it provides an economical way of disposing of roadway slash. Limit the height, width, and length of these “slash filter windows” so not to impede wildlife movement. Sediment fabric fences or other methods may be used if effective.

3. Construct cut and fill slopes at stable angles to prevent sloughing and subsequent erosion.

4. Avoid incorporating potentially unstable woody debris in the fill portion of the road prism. Where possible, leave existing rooted trees or shrubs at the toe of the fill slope to stabilize the fill.

5. Place debris, overburden, and other waste materials associated with construction and maintenance activities in a location to avoid entry into streams. Include these waste areas in soil stabilization planning for the road.

6. When using existing roads, reconstruct only to the extent necessary to provide adequate drainage and safety; avoid disturbing stable road surfaces. Consider abandoning existing roads when their use would aggravate erosion.

E. Road Maintenance

1. Grade road surfaces only as often as necessary to maintain a stable running surface and to retain the original surface drainage.

2. Maintain erosion control features through periodic inspection and maintenance, including cleaning dips and crossdrains, repairing ditches, marking culvert inlets to aid in location, and clearing debris from culverts.

3. Avoid cutting the toe of cut slopes when grading roads, pulling ditches, or plowing snow.

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

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

A. Site Design

1. Design a site that best fits the topography, soil type, and stream character, while minimizing soil disturbance and economically accomplishing recreational objectives. Keep roads and parking lots at least 50 feet from water; if closer, mitigate with vegetative buffers as necessary.

2. Locate foot trails to avoid concentrating runoff and provide breaks in grade as needed. Locate trails and parking areas away from natural drainage systems and divert runoff to stable areas. Limit the grade of trails on unstable, saturated, highly erosive, or easily compacted soils

3. Scale the number of boat ramps, campsites, parking areas, bathroom facilities, etc. to be commensurate with existing and anticipated needs. Facilities should not invite such use that natural features will be degraded.

4. Provide adequate barriers to minimize off-road vehicle use

B. Maintenance: Soil Disturbance and Drainage

1. Maintenance operations minimize soil disturbance around parking lots, swimming areas and campsites, through proper placement and dispersal of such facilities or by reseeding disturbed ground. Drainage from such facilities should be promoted through proper grading.

2. Maintain adequate drainage for ramps by keeping side drains functional or by maintaining drainage of road surface above ramps or by crowning (on natural surfaces).

3. Maintain adequate drainage for trails. Use mitigating measures, such as water bars, wood chips, and grass seeding, to reduce erosion on trails.

4. When roads are abandoned during reconstruction or to implement site-control, they must be reseeded and provided with adequate drainage so that periodic maintenance is not required.

III. RAMPS AND STREAM CROSSINGS

A. Legal Requirements

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

B. Design Considerations

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

2. Adjust the road grade or provide drainage features (e.g. rubber flaps) to reduce the concentration of road drainage to stream crossings and boat ramps. Direct drainage flow through an adequate filtration zone and away from the ramp or crossing through the use of gravel side-drains, crowning (on natural surfaces) or 30-degree angled grooves on concrete ramps.

3. Avoid unimproved stream crossings on permanent streams. On ephemeral streams, when a culvert or bridge is not feasible, locate drive-throughs on a stable, rocky portion of the stream channel.

4. Unimproved (non-concrete) ramps should only be used when the native soils are sufficiently gravelly or rocky to withstand the use at the site and to resist erosion.

C. Installation of Stream Crossings and Ramps

1. Minimize stream channel disturbances and related sediment problems during construction of road and installation of stream crossing structures. Do not place erodible material into stream channels. Remove stockpiled material from high water zones. Locate temporary construction bypass roads in locations where the stream course will have a minimal disturbance. Time construction activities to protect fisheries and water quality.

2. Where ramps enter the stream channel, they should follow the natural streambed in order to avoid changing stream hydraulics and to optimize use of boat trailers.

3. Use culverts with a minimum diameter of 15 inches for permanent stream crossings and cross drains. Proper sizing of culverts may dictate a larger pipe and should be based on a 50-year flow recurrence interval. Install culverts to conform to the natural streambed and slope on all perennial streams and on intermittent streams that support fish or that provide seasonal fish passage. Place culverts slightly below normal stream grade to avoid culvert outfall barriers. Do not alter stream channels upstream from culverts, unless necessary to protect fill or to prevent culvert blockage. Armor the inlet and/or outlet with rock or other suitable material where needed.

4. Prevent erosion of boat ramps and the affected streambank through proper placement (so as to not catch the stream current) and hardening (rip-rap or erosion resistant woody vegetation).

5. Maintain a 1-foot minimum cover for culverts 18-36 inches in diameter, and a cover of one-third diameter for larger culverts to prevent crushing by traffic.

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