

Draft Environmental Assessment



PELICAN FISHING ACCESS SITE Improvement Project

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JANUARY 2008



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

Pelican FAS Improvement Project 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 (MFWP) proposes to implement various site improvement and protection projects at the Pelican Fishing Access Site near the town of Reedpoint. Projects include building an internal road to the east end of the site, constructing a gravel parking lot, and installing a new latrine.

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2. **Agency authority for the proposed action:** The 1977 Montana Legislature enacted statute 87-1-605, which directs Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) to acquire, develop and operate a system of fishing accesses. The legislature established an earmarked funding account to ensure that this fishing access site function would be established.

3. **Name of project:** Pelican Fishing Access Site Improvement Project.

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4. **Name, address and phone number of project sponsor (if other than the agency):**
Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks
2300 Lake Elmo Drive
Billings, MT 59105
406-247-2940.

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5. **If applicable:**
Estimated start of construction: Summer 2008
Estimated completion of construction: Fall 2008
Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 25%

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6. **Location affected by proposed action (county, range and township):** That part of Township 1 South / Range 16 East Sections 8, 9, & 16 in Sweetgrass County.

7. **Project size -- estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:**

	<u>Acres</u>		<u>Acres</u>
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	_ 5
Residential	_ 0		
Industrial	_ 0	(e) Productive:	_ 0
		Irrigated cropland	_ 0
(b) Open Space/Woodlands/Recreation	_ 4	Dry cropland	_ 0
		Forestry	_ 0
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas	_ 0	Rangeland	_ 0
		Other	_ 0

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

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(a) Permits: permits will be filed at least 2 weeks prior to project start.

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>
U.S. Army Corp of Engineers 1629 Ave. D Building A Billings, MT 59102	404 Clean Water Act Federal Rivers & Harbors Act
DNRC 1371 Rimtop Dr. Billings, MT 59105	MT Land Use License Easement on Navigable Waters
DEQ PO 200901 Helena, MT 59620-0901	Short-term Exemption from Montana's Surface Water Quality Standards

(b) Funding:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	\$35,000

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Type of Responsibility</u>
N/A	

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

The Pelican Fishing Access Site consists of 123 acres bordering the Yellowstone River. This access site lies between Big Timber, 12.2 to the west and Reedpoint, 12 miles to the east. Greycliff is the closest community; it is approximately ½ mile to the northeast. This area is accessible by exiting I-90 at Exit 392 to North Frontage Road, west 12.2 miles, then north 0.3 miles on Lower Sweet Grass Road. Pelican FAS is located at river mile 442. The closest upstream FAS is Otter Creek located near Big Timber at river mile 454. The next downstream site is Indian Fort FAS located near Reedpoint at river mile 430.

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Figure 1. Pelican FAS location

This site currently has a day-use parking area, latrine and boat ramp at the upstream end of the site. The proposed project is to build a road from the existing developed area to a popular pioneered camping area downstream. The proposed road would be approximately 600 L.F. with occasional camping and passing pullouts. The road would be constructed parallel to the river connecting the existing parking/boat launch area with the proposed camping spurs. The road would end with a camp loop in the area where people are currently camping. An unimproved road that passes through a box culvert below the railroad tracks currently accesses this area. This is not suitable to be used by the public and would be closed. The existing fence will have to be moved away from the river to facilitate the new road. Moving the road further from the riverbank will establish a vegetative buffer preventing sediment delivery to the river. A new latrine would be installed in conjunction with the new camping spurs.

Rainbow, brown, cutthroat trout, brook trout and whitefish are the dominant game fish species in this area. Low water levels and warm water temperatures have made late summer fishing difficult in recent years in this area.

Deleted: Recreational fishing for these species is considered to be very good in the spring and fall, especially during the brown trout fall spawning run.

Deleted: Public access to the Little Blackfoot south of Elliston has long been limited to a handful of pullouts along state and county bridges and by permission of private landowners. Fishing pressure on the Little Blackfoot is relatively low due to the lack of public access and because of the proximity of better-known fly-fishing rivers like the Big Blackfoot and the Clark Fork. However, the Little Blackfoot does see more use than many people probably realize. In 2005 there were 4,854 angler days on the river between Elliston and Garrison. ¶



Figure 2. Current road and parking situation at Pelican FAS.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

- 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 downstream portion of the Pelican FAS would remain undeveloped and receive limited use. The camping area would be closed and the site would be limited to day use only. Public access to this site would remain in concentrated areas. The pioneered camping area will be closed to vehicle access because of erosion and excessive damage to the vegetative cover caused by vehicles. There would be an increased spread of noxious weeds due to this same activity. Use would continue to be concentrated in unsuitable areas that are not in the best interest of the land.

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Preferred Alternative B: Proposed Action

In the preferred alternative, FWP would proceed with plans to implement various improvements to the Pelican FAS and open it to the public. These improvements include expansion of the gravel road and parking lot, improved camping areas, barrier

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rock, fencing, signage, and a latrine. The benefits of the proposed action include the provision of greater public access to a high-quality fishery and the establishment of site protection measures. The additional development of the FAS would add to public recreational opportunities in the Region.

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Deleted: The Little Blackfoot FAS is the only designated public FAS on the Little Blackfoot River, and FWP would like to provide better public access to this high-quality fishery.

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. 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				
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				
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):

- 1b. Soil would be disturbed and covered during the construction of the parking area. Negative impacts can be mitigated by the adherence to Best Management Practices (BMP's) during all phases of construction. A road pioneered into the site would be closed and rehabilitated. This would reduce erosion and protect the ephemeral streambed that the pioneered road runs through.

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

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

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

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

2. AIR 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		no	2a.
b. Creation of objectionable odors?			X		yes	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.)		X				
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 and temporary dust and vehicle emissions will be created by heavy equipment during construction of the parking lot and approach.
- 2b. Latrines can sometimes emit offensive odors. This impact can be mitigated by regular maintenance of the latrine.

* 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. 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				
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.)		X				
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.)		X				
n. Other:		X				

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

3a. It is unlikely that the proposed project would result in any discharge into adjacent surface water. FWP would ensure that Best Management Practices were employed during construction to minimize that risk.

* 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		no	4a.
b. Alteration of a plant community?			X		no	4b.
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		yes	4e.
f. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		x				
g. Other:		X				

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

- 4a. The proposed project would require the removal of approximately 1/2 acre of vegetation for the parking lot. Vegetation in the project area is composed of grasses and forbs, with some small trees. These plant species are common and well represented locally and regionally. The overall effect would not be significant. The old road would be revegetated, providing improved diversity and health in the plant community.
- 4b. Please see comment 4a.
- 4e. Disturbed soils at the edges of the proposed parking lot could become colonized by noxious weeds. FWP would re-seed disturbed areas and actively manage the entire site for noxious weeds under the FWP Region Five Weed Management Plan.

* 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				
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				5f.
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?			X		yes	5g.
h. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)		X				
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.)		X				
j. Other:		X				

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

- 5f. A search of the Natural Resources Information System provided by the Montana Natural Heritage Program showed that the project area is within possible bald eagle, black-tailed prairie dog and bobolink habitat. There have been no observations of habitat for black tailed prairie dogs at the site, but there is a colony 3 miles from the fishing access. There have not been any nests identified at the site for bald eagles or bobolinks, but they do most likely move through the area.
- 5g. The increased presence of recreationists on the property could cause stress to wildlife populations. However, visitation would not be expected to ever be high, and most wildlife species present on the parcel are probably accustomed to human presence, given the site's proximity to I-90 and area ranches.

Deleted: The proposed action would increase public access to the Little Blackfoot River, which would likely result in more fishing pressure and more game fish mortality. Department fisheries biologists feel that fish populations in the Little Blackfoot can support the expected increase in pressure. Game wardens regularly patrol FAS' to ensure that anglers are complying with state regulations. The removal of vegetation for the parking lot would likely result in the displacement of several small non-game animal species in the immediate area.

Deleted: A search of the Natural Resources Information System provided by the Montana Natural Heritage Program showed that the project area is within possible gray wolf, Canada lynx, and bald eagle habitat. No observations of wolves or lynx have been recorded at this location, but it is possible that they have moved through the area. Bald eagles have been recorded in the river valley southwest of the project area, so it is likely that this species is an occasional visitor to this area.

* 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

Deleted: The increased presence of recreationists on the property could cause stress to wildlife populations. However, visitation would not be expected to ever be high, and most wildlife species present on the parcel are probably already accustomed to human presence, given the site's proximity to Hwy 12 and area ranches.

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 a temporary increase in noise level during construction that would end after completion of the project. Adjacent landowners would not be affected.

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. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u> 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)		X				
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 5 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.

Deleted: 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		yes	9e.
f. Other:		X				

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

- 9e. By closing an uncontrolled access onto the frontage road; traffic hazards would be reduced. All visitors would utilize the existing site entrance that has good visibility and control.

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

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

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

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

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES 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 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):

10e. The cost of the proposed improvements would be approximately \$100,000. Currently, \$35,000 has been secured for the improvements. Therefore, improvements to the site will need to be done in phases.

10f. Pelican Fishing Access Site is currently part of a regular maintenance route. Costs are not expected to increase; annual costs are expected to average \$600.

Deleted: The cost of the proposed improvements is estimated to be \$45,000. The revenue source would be the Capitol Improvement Fund.

Deleted: Because the Little Blackfoot FAS is not on a caretaker's established route, the Department has explored the option of having Region 3 staff maintain the FAS, as travel time and costs would be less. Another option would be to hire a caretaker in the Avon or Elliston area where per diem for travel would be minimal. It is estimated it would cost approximately \$400 for weed control in years 2008 and 2009, dropping to about \$100 a year thereafter to maintain control. Total maintenance cost estimates for the site are pending.

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

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

11 c. The proposed project will improve recreational opportunities and will increase the quality of recreation at this site. There may be a moderate increase in the quantity of visitors due to the improvements.

Deleted: The proposed acquisition would increase public access to the Little Blackfoot River, thereby improving recreational opportunities in the area and Region.

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
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.)		X				
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. A cultural resource inventory has been prepared. See attached FWP letter with concurrence from the State Historic Preservation Office.

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

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.

PART IV. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The proposed development would increase public recreational opportunities with no significant negative impacts. Montana FWP would like to provide better public access to area anglers with an improved FAS on the Yellowstone River.

Deleted: The Little Blackfoot River is an important tributary to the Clark Fork River and is a high-quality if lesser-known and visited fishery. Brook trout, westslope cutthroat trout and brown trout exist in sufficient numbers to support greater fishing pressure than the present. The development of an FAS at this site would be in line with FWP's Six-Year Operation Plan for the Fisheries Program, which has as a stated goal to "identify waters in need of additional access and develop strategies to meet these needs", and to "pursue access opportunities to high-quality, non-floatable (small/medium) streams." ¶

Deleted: Little Blackfoot.

PART V. 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 by way of press releases in the *Helena Independent Record* and the *Billings Gazette*. A public notice will also be posted on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: <http://fwp.state.mt.us/publicnotices>. Individual notices will be sent to those interested parties that have requested one.

- 2. Duration of comment period, if any.**
A 30-day comment period is proposed. This level of public involvement is appropriate for this scale of project.

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 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, Fish, Wildlife and 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 the growth-inducing or growth-inhibiting 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, and 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:

Terri Walters
Park Manager
3200 Lake Elmo Drive
Billings, MT 59105
(406)247-2940

Doug Habermann
Region 5 Park Manager
2300 Lake Elmo Drive
Billings, MT 59105
(406) 247-2940

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

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Parks Division
Wildlife Division
Fisheries Division
Design & Construction Bureau
Lands Division
Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
Montana Department of Commerce – Tourism
Montana Natural Heritage Program – Natural Resources Information System (NRIS)

Deleted: ¶
Lee Bastian Allan Kuser Linnaea
Schroeer-Smith¶
Region 5 Park Supervisor Fishing
Access Site
Coordinator Independent Contractor¶
3201 Spurgin Road 1420 East 6th
Ave 1027 9th Ave¶
Missoula, MT 59804 He

**APPENDIX 1
HB495**

PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

Date January 7, 2008

Person Reviewing Terri Walters

Deleted:

Project Location: Pelican FAS

Deleted: NE1/4 of Section 1, Township 9N, Range 9W in Powell County.

Description of Proposed Work:

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.)

Deleted: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks proposes to implement various site improvement and protection projects at the Little Blackfoot River FAS near the town of Avon. Projects include building a new approach, constructing a 10-stall gravel parking lot, and installing a latrine.¶

- A. **New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?**
Comments: Gravel surface road will be constructed over undisturbed land for the access road. An existing pioneered road will be closed.
- B. **New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?**
Comments: No
- C. **Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?**
Comments: No. Road cuts may require excavation. An existing gravel pit on site may be utilized following proper regulations and permitting.
- D. **New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?**
Comments: No. The proposed parking area would be constructed in the same location as an existing road loop.
- E. **Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a doublewide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?**
Comments: No
- F. **Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?**
Comments: No
- G. **Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?**
Comments: SHPO clearance has been obtained for the proposed project.
- H. **Any new above ground utility lines?**
Comments: No
- I. **Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?**
Comments: No. The accessed area is already used for camping.

- J. **Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern; including effects of a series of individual projects?**
Comments: No

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

Appendix 2

Sensitive Plants and Animals in the Pelican FAS Area

Species of Concern Terms and Definitions

Montana Species of Concern. The term "**Species of Concern**" includes taxa that are at-risk or potentially at-risk due to rarity, restricted distribution, habitat loss, and/or other factors. The term also encompasses species that have a special designation by organizations or land management agencies in Montana, including: Bureau of Land

Management Special Status and Watch species; U.S. Forest Service Sensitive and Watch species; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Threatened, Endangered and Candidate species.

▼ **Status Ranks (Global and State)**

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

Status Ranks

Code	Definition
G1 S1	At high risk because of extremely limited and/or rapidly declining numbers, range, and/or habitat, making it highly vulnerable to global extinction or extirpation in the state.
G2 S2	At risk because of very limited and/or declining numbers, range, and/or habitat, making it vulnerable to global extinction or extirpation in the state.
G3 S3	Potentially at risk because of limited and/or declining numbers, range, and/or habitat, even though it may be abundant in some areas.
G4 S4	Uncommon but not rare (although it may be rare in parts of its range), and usually widespread. Apparently not vulnerable in most of its range, but possibly cause for long-term concern.
G5 S5	Common, widespread, and abundant (although it may be rare in parts of its range). Not vulnerable in most of its range.

1. *Cynomys ludovicianus* (Black-tailed Prairie Dog)

Natural Heritage Ranks:
State: **S3**
Global: **G4**

Federal Agency Status:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
U.S. Forest Service: **Sensitive**
U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

Deleted: ¶
Deleted: ¶

2. *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* (Bobolink)

Natural Heritage Ranks:
State: **S2B**
Global: **G5**

Federal Agency Status:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
U.S. Forest Service:

U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

3. *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* (Bald Eagle)

Natural Heritage Ranks:

State: **S3**

Global: **G5**

Federal Agency Status:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:DM

U.S. Forest Service: **Threatened**

U.S. Bureau of Land Mangt.: **Special Status**

ATTACHMENT 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:

Carol Crockett
Tourism Development Specialist, Travel Montana

Montana Commerce Department
301 South Park Avenue
Helena, MT 59601
406-841-2796, FAX 406-841-2871
ccrockett@mt.gov

Project Name: Pelican Fishing Access Site Improvement Project

Project Location: Pelican Fishing Access Site, Township 1 South / Range 16 East
Sections 8, 9, & 16 in Sweetgrass County.

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Project Description: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to implement various improvement and site protection measures at the Pelican FAS, including the construction of a new approach, a gravel parking area, and the installation of fencing, barrier rock, and a latrine.

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

As described, the project has the potential to positively impact the tourism & recreation industry economy.

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

← - - - Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

As described, the project would improve the quality and quantity of tourism & recreational opportunities.

Signature _____ Date: _____