

Amended Draft Environmental Assessment



Raynolds' Pass FISHING ACCESS SITE Improvement Project

September 2008
Amended January 2009



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

**Raynolds' Pass Fishing Access Site
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 (FWP) proposes to construct a new parking area and a hand-launch site for watercraft, improve an existing pedestrian trail, as well as extend the guardrail along the eastern highway boundary at Raynolds' Pass Fishing Access Site (FAS) on the Upper Madison River east of Hwy 87.
2. **Agency authority for the proposed action:** The 1977 Montana Legislature enacted Montana Section 87-1-605 (MCA), 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:** Raynolds' Pass FAS Improvement Project Amended January 2009.
4. **Name of project sponsor:** Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks.
5. **Estimated Project Timeline:**
 Estimated start of construction: Spring 2009
 Estimated completion of construction: Summer 2009
 Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 50
6. **Location affected:** Raynolds' Pass Fishing Access Site is located in Madison County. T11S, R02E, Sec 33.

7. Project size:

	<u>Acres</u>		<u>Acres</u>
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	<u> 0</u>
Residential	<u> 0</u>		
Industrial	<u> 0</u>	(e) Productive:	
(b) Open Space/Woodlands/Recreation	<u> 1/2</u>	Irrigated cropland	<u> 0</u>
		Dry cropland	<u> 0</u>
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas	<u> 0</u>	Forestry	<u> 0</u>
		Rangeland	<u> 0</u>
		Other	<u> 0</u>

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

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

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks	124
Montana Department of Transportation	Guardrail

(b) **Funding:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	\$25,000
PPL-Montana	\$25,000
Total	\$50,000

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

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Type of Responsibility</u>
State Historic Preservation Office	Cultural Clearance

9. Narrative summary of the proposed action:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to implement several site improvements to Reynolds' Pass FAS. Based on the original Environmental Assessment, public comment, and FWP evaluation, the originally proposed improvements to develop the undeveloped eastern portion of the site will not be implemented. A preferred alternative to further develop the western portion of the site is outlined in this amended EA. The original EA can be accessed on the FWP website at <http://fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices>.

Reynolds' Pass is a large 162-acre site along the north bank of the Madison River with approximately one mile of river frontage (see Figures 1 and 2). Reynolds' Pass is the first FWP-managed access site on the Madison after it flows into Montana at river mile 98. The FAS currently consists of a parking/camping area and a latrine on the west side of Highway 87, and an informal, pioneered parking area and boat launch on the east side (see Figures 3 and 4). Access to the river on the developed (west) side has no area to launch watercraft, and the new preferred alternative will add a gravel hand launch site and add a parking area for approximately 10 vehicles and 4 truck/trailers as well as improve the pedestrian trail. The hand launch site will not support the size and weight of vehicles and will have barriers to prevent trailer launching. The watercraft must be carried by hand to the river.

The pioneered site on the upstream side of the bridge (eastern side of the highway) will remain open until the proposed development is complete. After that, it will be closed to vehicle access. In addition, the guardrail boarding the eastern side of the highway will be extended to promote revegetation of the ground cover in that area.

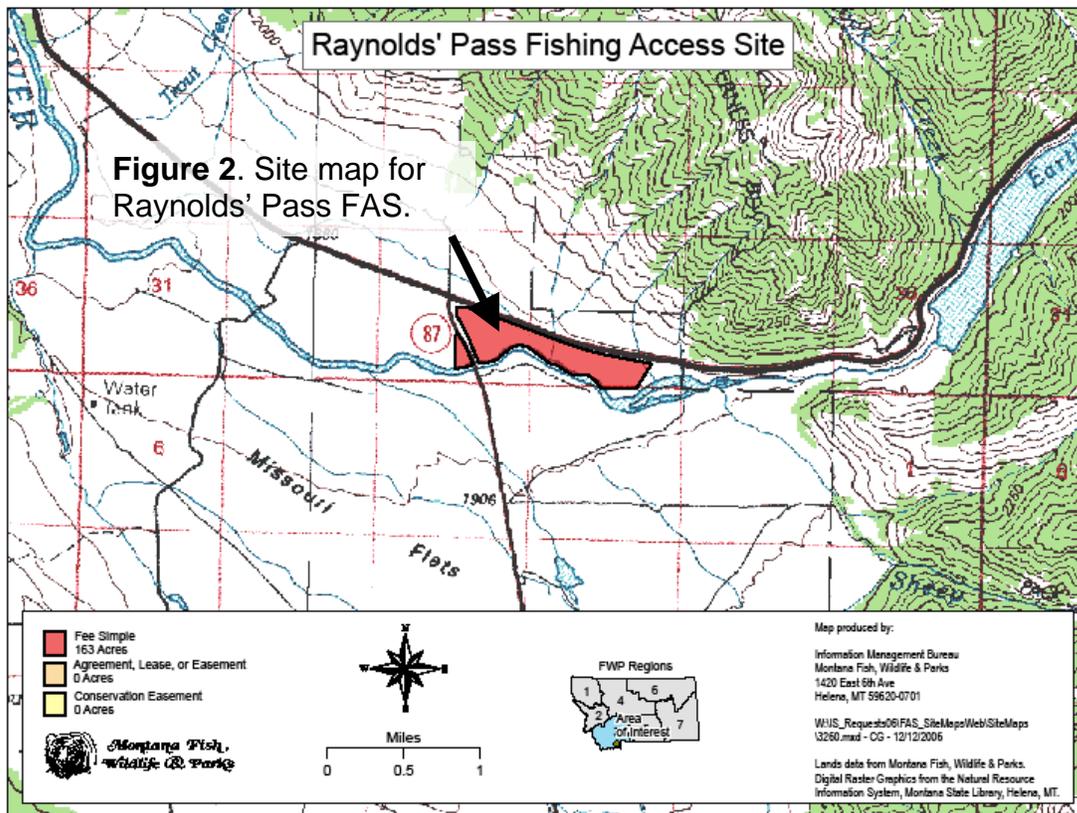
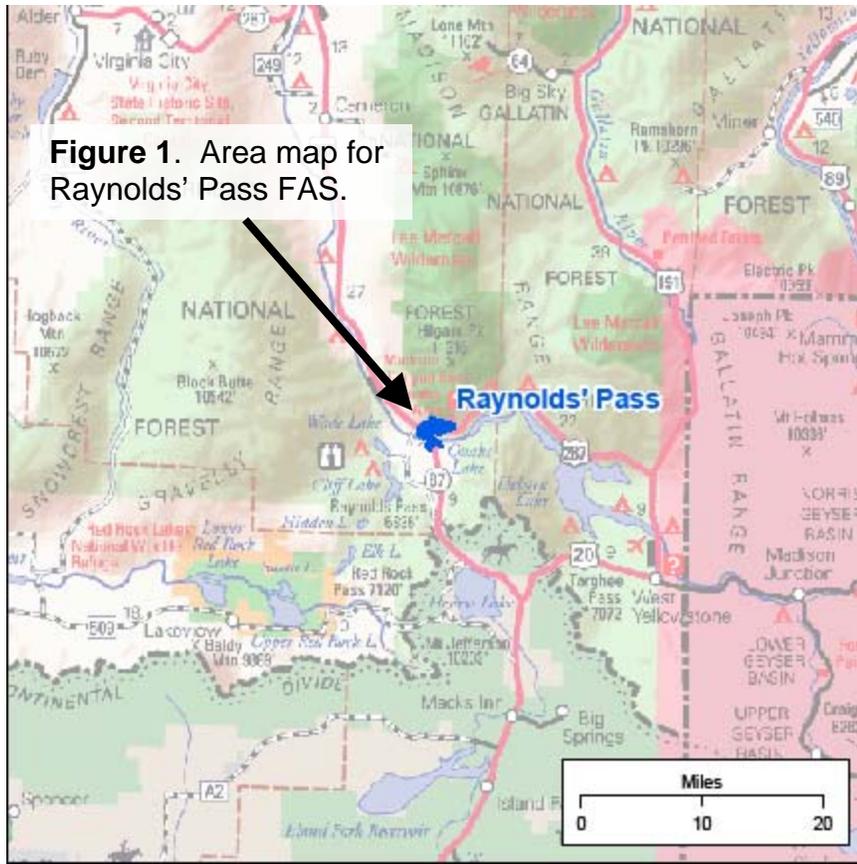




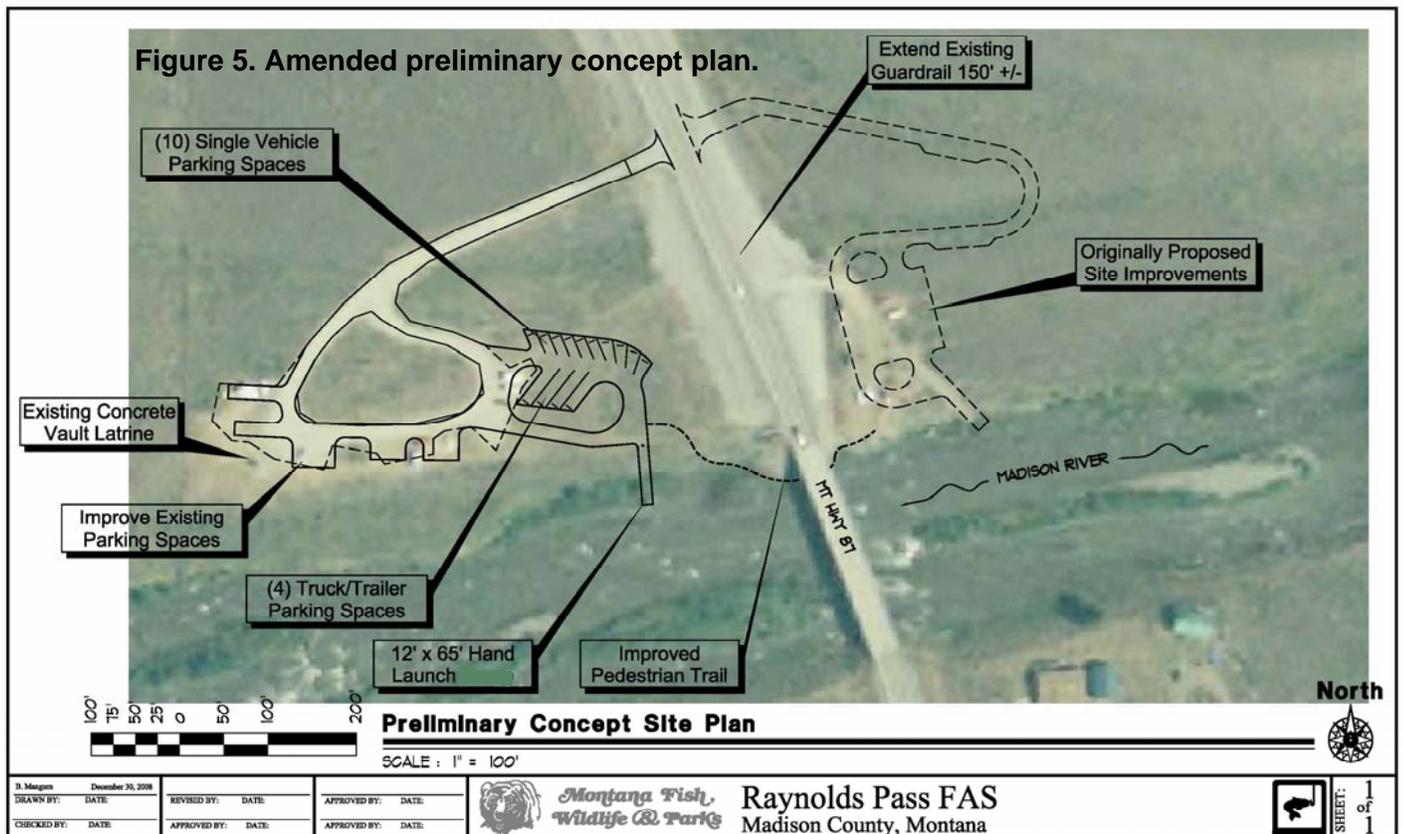
Figure 3. Aerial photo showing area of originally proposed improvements.

Area of existing development and newly proposed improvements described in this amended EA.

The access to the pioneered parking area off the highway is steep and makes getting off and onto the highway surface unsafe. Also, the informal use of the upstream portion of the FAS is causing damage to the bank and vegetation of the site due to vehicle use. The proposed project in the original EA would have included adding a new approach to Hwy 87, constructing an entrance road and 15-20 stall gravel parking area, improving the existing pioneered boat launch, and installing a concrete vault latrine. Based on the original Environmental Assessment, public comment, and FWP evaluation, the originally proposed improvements to develop the undeveloped eastern portion of the site will not be implemented and a preferred alternative to further develop the western portion of the site is discussed below.



The pioneered boat launch will be closed upon completion of the new proposed hand launch site. The new proposed project parking area would be designed for an additional capacity of approximately 10 vehicles plus 4 spaces for trucks with trailers. The new parking area would constrain vehicles to a smaller area than is presently being impacted by indiscriminate parking and driving. As part of this project, limiting traffic to confined areas will allow vegetation to recover as well as reducing erosion and sedimentation (see conceptual design, Figure 5 below).



PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

1. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action

If no action is taken, the Department would not construct a parking area or hand launch facility, would not improve the pedestrian trail on the western portion of Reynolds' Pass FAS, and would not extend the guard rail on the eastern portion. The public would presumably continue to use the unsafe approach, pioneered road, parking area, and boat launch that currently exist on the eastern portion and continue to impact soil, plant, and water resources. These negative impacts will likely require the site to be closed to public use at some point in the future.

Preferred Alternative B: Proposed Action

In the preferred alternative, FWP would proceed with plans to construct approximately 10-stall vehicle plus 4-stall truck/trailer gravel parking area and a hand-launch gravel site as well as improve the pedestrian trail. The guardrail will be extended on the eastern portion of the highway. The pioneered site on the upstream side of the bridge will remain open until the proposed development is complete and will then be closed to vehicle access. These measures would provide better and safer access and recreational opportunities to the public as well as protect the site from uncontrolled vehicle use and negative impacts to the resources.

Alternative Considered but Eliminated from Further Consideration

In the original EA for this site, FWP considered improving the section of the FAS on the east side of the highway. This would have included an improved highway approach to the FAS, construction of a 15-20-stall gravel parking area, and hand-launch gravel site.

Although this alternative would have met FWP's improvement and safety goals for the site, it was eliminated as an alternative based upon public feedback received during the original public comment period and some re-evaluation by FWP. Further analysis determined safety concerns and natural resource protection issues could be mitigated with less funding by improving the existing western side.

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.

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		Positive	1d.
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other:		X				

- 1b. Soil would be disturbed and over-covered during the construction of the parking area and gravel hand launch site. Also, more than 20 cubic yards of fill would be required for the new parking lot. Negative impacts will be mitigated by the adherence to Best Management Practices (BMP's) during all phases of construction. BMP's can be found in Attachment D of the original EA. The original EA can be accessed on the FWP website at <http://fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices>.
- 1d. The construction of the new gravel hand launch site would cause minor changes to a small area of riverbank. The hand launch site will not support the size and weight of vehicles and will have barriers to prevent trailer launching resulting in carrying of watercraft by hand to the river.

The pioneered boat launch currently used on the eastern side of the highway will be closed after the proposed development is complete to reduce erosion and sedimentation and to allow revegetation of ground cover.

* 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			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				

- 2a. Minor and temporary dust and vehicle emissions will be created by heavy equipment during construction of the new approach, access road, parking area, and gravel hand launch.
- 2b. Latrines can sometimes emit offensive odors; however, there is already a latrine on site. A concrete vault toilet with proper venting and regular maintenance can mitigate this potential impact. Not providing a latrine typically leads to human waste/sanitation problems in vegetated areas in and around the FAS.

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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		Yes	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			3h.
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)		NA				
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				

3a. Short-term increases in turbidity may occur in the immediate vicinity of the gravel hand launch during project construction. The Department will follow Best Management Practices in all aspects of the project to minimize sediment delivery to the river (see Attachment D in original EA for list of BMP's). The original EA can be accessed on the FWP website at <http://fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices>. The Department will obtain all necessary permits 2 weeks prior to construction.

3h. There is a slight risk of water contamination from petroleum products from heavy machinery used in the construction of the hand launch and other aspects of the project on the site.

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

- 4a. The proposed project would require the removal of approximately 1/8 acre of vegetation for the parking lot and ½ acre of vegetation for the entrance road. Vegetation in the project area is comprised mainly of native and non-native grasses and forbs. This plant community is common and well represented locally and regionally, and the overall effect would not be significant. About 1/3 acre currently being used upstream will be positively affected when closed to vehicles to promote revegetation of the ground cover in that area.
- 4b. Please see comment 4a.
- 4c. A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Database did not reveal any plant species of concern within the larger project area.
- 4e. Disturbed soils could become colonized by noxious weeds. FWP would re-seed or re-vegetate all disturbed areas and actively manage the entire site for noxious weeds under the FWP Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan.

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** 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				5b.
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?			X			5c.
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				

- 5b. There is a low likelihood that the proposed project would cause any changes in the diversity or abundance of game species in the larger project area as human presence is already fairly prevalent at the site and there is too little cover on the site for most game animal and bird species.
- 5c. The proposed project has the potential to impact the diversity and abundance of nongame species at the site. Small rodents and ground-dwelling birds would be displaced by the proposed access road. It is unlikely that the parking area would cause additional impact as the site is already being used.
- 5f. 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 (an endangered species), grizzly bear and lynx (threatened species), and wolverine and greater sage-grouse (sensitive species) habitat. No observations of any of these species have been recorded at this location, but it is possible that they move through the area. The type of construction proposed in this project is unlikely to have an impact on these species because of the project's small footprint and the existing human presence in the area. See Appendix 2 for complete listing of species of concern found in the larger project area.

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

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

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

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

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

6a. There would be a temporary increase in noise level during construction, but it would end after completion of the project. It is unlikely that adjacent landowners would 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				
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				

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.

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

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**** 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)		NA				
e. Other:		X				

8a. Noxious weed control at Reynolds' Pass FAS is continuous and ongoing in compliance with the FWP Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan. 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. In recent years, FWP has been working closely with Madison County and the Madison Valley Ranch Group to improve weed control within the upper Madison Valley.

9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u> 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.

9e. The proposed project is not expected to cause any impacts to the community surrounding Reynolds' Pass FAS and should positively impact traffic movement and pedestrian safety.

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

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

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

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

10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
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.

10e. The total funding for this project is \$50,000 of which \$25,000 is Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks FAS funds and \$25,000 is from PPL Montana. The proposed work will be completed within the \$50,000 funding available.

10f. Yearly maintenance costs for the site are estimated at \$1,200, which includes latrine pumping and noxious weed control.

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** 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. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u> 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 positive			11a.
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. **Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.)			X			11c.
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		NA				

11a. The proposed project would improve the aesthetics of Raynolds' Pass FAS by establishing a developed parking area and closing the pioneered parking area damaging ground cover due to indiscriminate driving and parking in the pioneered area. Furthermore, addition of a developed gravel hand launch and closure of the pioneered boat launch will protect the ground cover and reduce erosion and sediment into the river also improving the aesthetics at Raynolds' Pass FAS.

11c. Please see Attachment A for Tourism Report.

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

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

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

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

12a. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) will be contacted prior to the proposed work. In the original EA, SHPO recommended that a cultural resource inventory be conducted at the site in order to determine whether or not cultural sites exist and if they will be impacted. FWP contracted with GCM Services to conduct a cultural survey as recommended by SHPO. The survey concluded, and FWP concurred, that there is a low likelihood of adverse impacts to cultural resources from the originally proposed project on the eastern side of the highway. Since the inventory did not access the already developed western side of the FAS, FWP will contact SHPO to obtain their clearance that the proposed work in the developed area of Reynolds' Pass FAS will not impact historical or cultural resources.

12b. Please see Comment 12a.

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SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

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

13a. This EA found no significant impacts to the human or physical environment from the proposed action. The proposed project may positively impact traffic flow and pedestrian safety, will provide revegetation of the ground disturbed by indiscriminate driving and parking in the pioneered parking area, and use of the pioneered boat launch area.

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PART IV. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The Madison River is a blue-ribbon trout fishery and the most popular river to fish in Montana. The proposed development would provide better access to this stretch of the river and improve the recreational experience for anglers and other recreationists using the site. The project would also protect land, water, and plant resources at the site.

The proposed project would increase public recreational opportunities with no significant impacts to the human or physical environment. Montana FWP, in conjunction with PPL-Montana, would like to provide better public access to the Madison River by implementing these improvements to Reynolds' Pass FAS.

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 2 legal notices and one statewide press release in the *Bozeman Chronicle*, the *Madisonian* and the *Helena Independent Record* and by public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: <http://fwp.state.mt.us>. Individual notices will be sent to those that have requested one.

Public meetings to address questions for this EA can be sent upon request.

- 2. Duration of comment period.**

A 30-day comment period is proposed. This level of public involvement is appropriate for this scale of project. The comment period will extend for 30 days following publication in area newspapers. Comments will be accepted until 5pm March 9, 2009. Public meetings to address questions for this EA can be set upon request.

Comments should be:

Mailed to: Todd Garrett
Region Three Fishing Access Site Manager
1400 South 19th.
Bozeman, MT 59718

Emailed to: tgarrett@mt.gov

Phoned to: Todd Garrett at 406-994-6987

PART V. EA PREPARATION

1. **Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? (YES/NO)?** No
If an EIS is not required, explain 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, an EA is the appropriate level of review and an EIS is not required.

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

Pam Boggs
EA Coordinator
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
406-444-5203

Jerry Walker
Regional Parks Manager
1400 South 19th.
Bozeman, MT 59718
(406) 994-3552
gwalker@mt.gov

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 Department of Commerce – Tourism

Montana Natural Heritage Program – Natural Resources Information System (NRIS)

APPENDIX 1
HB495
PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

Date: January 21, 2009 **Person Reviewing** Pam Boggs

Project Location: Raynolds' Pass Fishing Access Site is located in Madison County. T11S, R02E, Sec 23.

Description of Proposed Work: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to construct a new parking area and gravel hand-launch site at Raynolds' Pass FAS on the Upper Madison River.

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.)

- A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?**
Comments: Approximately 1/3 acre for parking area over undisturbed land and 900 ft of gravel-surface road would be constructed over undisturbed land for the entrance road.
- B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?**
Comments: None
- C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?**
Comments: The construction of the parking area and river access will require excavation of more than 20 cy.
- D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?**
Comments: The proposed parking area would be constructed over undisturbed land, and once completed the old pioneered parking area on the eastern side of the highway will be closed allowing revegetation of the ground cover in that area.
- E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a double wide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?**
Comments: None.
- F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?**
Comments: New gravel hand launch site will be added and the pioneered area currently used closed to prevent erosion and revegetate ground cover in that area.

APPENDIX 1 (continued)

HB495

PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST (continued)

- G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?**
Comments: SHPO clearance would be obtained prior to project start.
- H. Any new above ground utility lines?**
Comments: None
- I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?**
Comments: None.
- J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern; including effects of a series of individual projects?**
Comments: None

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 Reynolds' Pass 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**) (NatureServe 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.

Appendix 2

Sensitive Plants and Animals in Reynolds' Pass FAS Area (continued)

1. *Canis lupus* (Gray Wolf).

Natural Heritage Ranks:

State: **S3**

Global: **G4**

Federal Agency Status:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: **LE, XN**

U.S. Forest Service: **Endangered**

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

No observational data exists for this specific site, but the project area is within wolves estimated range. There is a low likelihood that the proposed project would negatively impact this species.

2. *Centrocercus urophasianus* (Greater Sage-grouse).

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**

There are no active leks within or immediately surrounding the proposed project site. There is a low likelihood that this species would be negatively impacted by the project.

3. *Lynx Canadensis* (Canada Lynx).

Natural Heritage Ranks:

State: **S3**

Global: **G5**

Federal Agency Status:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: **LT**

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

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

The Madison, Gallatin, Absaroka, Beartooth and Dear Creek mountain ranges have relatively continuous habitat for this species. There is a low likelihood that this species would be negatively impacted by this project as the site is already developed and does not contain preferred lynx habitat.

Appendix 2

Sensitive Plants and Animals in Reynolds' Pass FAS Area (continued)

4. *Ursus arctos* (Grizzly Bear)

Natural Heritage Ranks:

State: **S2S3**

Global: **G4**

Federal Agency Status:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: **LT, XN, DM**

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

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

The USFWS estimates populations of greater than 500 animals within the Yellowstone Distinct Population Segment. On March 22, 2007, the USFWS announced the delisting of the grizzly bear from the Endangered Species Act as a result of the achievement of recovery goals. Due to the existing development and human presence on the site, there is a low likelihood that the proposed project would impact this species.

5. *Gulo gulo* (Wolverine)

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**

The Madison, Gallatin, Absaroka, Beartooth and Dear Creek mountain ranges have relatively continuous habitat for this species. There is a low likelihood that this species would be negatively impacted by this project as the site is already developed and does not contain preferred wolverine habitat.

Information courtesy of Montana Natural Heritage Program

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: Raynolds' Pass FAS Improvement Project.

Project Location: Raynolds' Pass Fishing Access Site is located in Madison County. T11S, R02E, Sec 33.

Project Description: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to construct a new entrance road and parking area and install a hand-launch boat ramp at Raynolds' Pass FAS on the Upper Madison River.

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

Yes, as described, the project has the potential to positively impact the tourism and recreation industry economy.

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

Yes, as described, the project could improve the quality and quantity of the tourism and recreational opportunities.

Signature Carol Crockett Date April 25, 2008