



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

1400 South 19th Avenue
Bozeman, MT 59718

June 24, 2009

To: Governor's Office, Mike Volesky, State Capitol, Room 204, P.O. Box 200801, Helena, MT 59620-0801
Environmental Quality Council, State Capitol, Room 106, P.O. Box 201704, Helena, MT 59620-1704
Dept. of Environmental Quality, Metcalf Building, P.O. Box 200901, Helena, MT 59620-0901
Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation, P.O. Box 201601, Helena, MT 59620-1601
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:

Director's Office	Parks Division	Lands Section	FWP Commissioners
Fisheries Division	Legal Unit	Wildlife Division	Design & Construction

MT Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, P.O. Box 201202, Helena, MT 59620-1202

MT State Parks Association, P.O. Box 699, Billings, MT 59103

MT State Library, 1515 E. Sixth Ave., P.O. Box 201800, Helena, MT 59620

James Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, P.O. Box 1184, Helena, MT 59624

Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624

George Ochenski, P.O. Box 689, Helena, MT 59624

Jerry DiMarco, P.O. Box 1571, Bozeman, MT 59771

Montana Wildlife Federation, P.O. Box 1175, Helena, MT 59624

Wayne Hurst, P.O. Box 728, Libby, MT 59923

Sam Little, Jefferson County, P.O. Box H, Boulder, MT 59632

Jim & Maxine Molenda, PO Box 2, Whitehall, MT 59759

Cardwell Store & RV Park, Mr. Sonny Huckaba, P.O. Box 55, Cardwell, MT 59721

Senator Terry Murphy, 893 Boulder Cutoff Rd., Cardwell, MT 59721

Camp Three Forks, 15 KOA Road, Three Forks, MT 59752

Mr. & Mrs. Harvey & Paige Perez, P.O. Box 1009, Whitehall, MT 59759

Sarah Bannon, Gold West Country, 1105 Main Street, Deer Lodge, MT 59722

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The enclosed Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared for the proposed Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park Project. This project proposes to enhance the campground amenities by installing electrical hook-ups for recreation vehicles in a portion of the campground.

This Draft EA is available for review in Helena at FWP's Headquarters, the State Library, and the Environmental Quality Council. It also may be obtained from FWP at the address provided above, or viewed on FWP's Internet website: <http://www.fwp.mt.gov>. If requested by the public, FWP will conduct a public meeting on this proposal.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks invites you to comment on the attached proposal. The public comment period will be accepted until 5:00 p.m. July 24, 2009. Comments should be sent to the following:

Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park
Campground Improvement Project
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
PO Box 489
Whitehall, MT 59759

Or email comments to: kempcaverns@in-tch.com

Sincerely,

Gerald Walker
Regional Parks Manager

Attachment

Draft Environmental Assessment

Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park Campground Improvement Project

Revised Version



June 2009



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

Draft Environmental Assessment MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. **Proposed state action:** Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to install approximately (9) campsite electrical pedestals within campground Loop E at Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park. This project will improve (9) of the (40) existing campsites or 23% of the available sites within the Park. Additionally, the proposed project will include electrical infrastructure improvements, such as an electrical panel, to support the new pedestals.

2. **Agency authority for the proposed action:**
FWP has the authority to develop outdoor recreational resources in the state per 23-2-101 MCA.

Furthermore, state statute 23-1-110 MCA and ARM 12.2.433 guides public involvement and comment for the improvements at state parks and fishing access sites, which this document provides.

Administrative Rule 21.8.602 requires the Department to consider the wishes of users and the public, the capacity of the site for development, environmental impacts, long-range maintenance, protection of natural features and impacts on tourism as these elements relate to development or improvement to fishing access sites or state parks. This document will illuminate the facets of the proposed project in relation to this rule.

3. **Project sponsor:**
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1400 South 19th Ave.
Bozeman, MT 59718-5496
406-994-4042

4. **Anticipated Schedule:**
Estimated Construction Commencement Date: Fall 2009
Estimated Completion Date: Fall 2009
Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 50%

5. **Location affected by proposed action:**
Jefferson County, Section 21, T1N, R2W. The park is 22 miles west of Three Forks on Montana Hwy 2 or 18 miles east of Whitehall on Montana Hwy 2 and is comprised of 2,920 acres.

plan and issues related to the proposed changes were presented to the public for feedback through an environmental assessment process.

Need and Proposed Action

Over the past five years, Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park has received an average of 62,000 visitors annually. Of those, only approximately 10% chose to stay overnight in the Park's campground. In recent years, the Park's staff has noticed fewer and fewer tent campers staying overnight in the Park with more visitors arriving in recreational vehicles (RVs). The change from tent camping to large, more comfortable camping vehicles at the Park is not surprising since the sales and rentals of recreation vehicles within the U.S. has grown significantly over the last five years based upon a survey by the University of Michigan. Approximately 65% of all campground users nationwide are currently driving RVs, and all new hard-sided camping vehicles are equipped to connect to electrical power.

Another trend that a 2006 park survey revealed is that as much as 60% of the visitors to the Park are 55-years or older and they choose to enjoy the conveniences of RVs when traveling. Park staff have recorded an increase in the number of inquiries and complaints from potential campers who call to research the campground's amenities and then chose not to stay within the Park because of the lack of hook ups. Campers that do choose to stay in the campground often ask when hook-ups will be installed.

Currently, overnight campers who operate generators for conveniences or medical equipment are asked to shut off the generator at 10pm in observance of the Park's 'quiet hours.' This park rule has come under pressure periodically when a camper needs power for supplementary oxygen or other medical equipment through the night.

By providing an opportunity for RV campers to utilize on-site electrical hook-ups, FWP anticipates campground usage will increase by those campers needing electricity for medical equipment and other who desire camper comforts. Additionally, Park staff field complaints because of the noise created by operating gas-powered generators, and this noise creates user conflicts.

FWP experiences from previous campground electrification efforts have shown that some campers do appreciate the opportunity to use campsite pedestals instead of individual generators. Prior to 2007, there were no state parks providing campers the opportunity to utilize electricity for powering medical equipment, camper comforts, or recharging boating equipment. Feedback through visitor satisfaction surveys completed at the Cooney, Hell Creek, and Tongue River Reservoir State Parks, in addition to visitor comment cards, showed there was a contingent of campers that desired electricity within the campgrounds. Of the 110 visitor comment cards FWP received in 2005 at Hell Creek, 39 visitors asked if pedestals could be added to the Park's facilities. The visitor survey completed at Tongue River Reservoir in 2007 reflected that 62% of respondents felt that electrical hook-ups at some of the campsites were important or very important. After the pedestals were installed at Cooney, Hell Creek, Tongue River Reservoir State Parks, comment cards and comments given directly to Park staff reflected that many campers appreciated the campground improvements and the opportunity to plug in instead of using their own generators. Now, those electrified sites have become the preferred sites for many visitors. This success is also expected to be seen at this state park.

Existing Environment

The park currently has two electrical pedestals available at the campground, one for the campground host and one for the campground caretakers, which are dedicated to Park staff

throughout the entire visitor season and are not available to the public.

Over the past three years, visitors have submitted comment cards specifically reflecting that the sounds from generators used in the Park by campers was excessive and should be restricted to a limited number of hours because it diminished the quiet environment of the Park. With the installation of additional electrical hookups, campers would be less reliant on using their own generators, thus decreasing noise levels and improving camper satisfaction.

Proposed Improvements

With this growing segment of camping enthusiasts coming to more Montana State Parks, FWP proposes to enhance the campground amenities by installing 9 campsite hook-ups (pedestals) to provide electricity for recreation vehicles in campground Loop E. (See *Appendix A* for the Campground Map.)

The design of the proposed electrification project includes all utility connections underground with only the pedestals and required infrastructure components at the campsites visible. This design will limit the intrusion of man-made objects with the natural environment of the Park. The trenching of the conduits will require some disturbance of vegetation at and in close proximity to the camping pads. (See Part II for an in depth discussion of potential impacts.) Preliminary designs include the installation of an electrical panel at the comfort station and an upgrade to the existing transformer to improve the electrical infrastructure to required levels in order to support the pedestals.

The opportunity for campers to use electrical power within state park campground may be appear to be in competition with local privately owned campgrounds. However, only a small portion of the campground's site will have the pedestals installed at them, and Park staff will continue to recommend the private campgrounds to those campers seeking additional services or amenities.

10. Alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action

If the campground at Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park is not improved to accommodate this portion of campers, visitors may choose to recreate elsewhere, thus reducing the potential income generated by camping fees at the Park and camper satisfaction could decline further.

Alternative B: Proposed Action - To install nine electrical pedestals within Lewis and Clark Caverns campground.

The proposed enhancement to the campground at Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park with the electrification of some of the campsites would provide an additional service provided by FWP for camper comforts (i.e. medical equipment, TV, air conditioning, kitchen appliances, etc.). This effort would be within campground Loop E.

Furthermore, the new outlets will reduce the need for visitors to rely on noisy generators to power their camper's utilities.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

The analysis of the physical and human environments discussed on the following pages is limited to Alternative B. The reason for this is because based on the description of Alternative A, FWP would not pursue the campground improvements. The facilities at Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park would remain status quo within the campground area with routine maintenance being complete as needed.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
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				

1a. The proposed project does require a limited amount of disturbances to localized soils but the project does not require any changes to geologic substructures.

1b/d. Due to the nature of the improvements, specifically for the underground electrical conduits, groundbreaking activities will be required for the trenching. The trenches are expected to be 24" in depth and approximately 10" in width to accommodate a 3" conduit and necessary fill material. The construction and displacement of soil will cause some temporary soil instability, but Best Management Practices (erosion control and compaction techniques) will implemented to ensure limited runoff and erosion. Soil disturbed by the construction will be compacted and reseeded with native grasses after the infrastructure upgrades and conduits are in place.

The three soil types present in the project area are: Floweree silt loam, Bronec very gravelly loam, and Sixbeacon-Vendome complex.

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

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

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

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

2. <u>AIR</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
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 regulations? (Also see 2a.)		N/A				

2a/b. Minor and temporary dust and vehicle emissions would be created by trenching equipment during the installation of the conduit system and minor infrastructure improvements. After the completion of the conduit and pedestal installation, air quality levels should return to normal conditions.

A benefit of the proposed electrification effort will be the decrease of RV enthusiasts' reliance on individual generators to power camping conveniences. Accordingly, nuisance odors from the generators will decline.

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

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

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

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

3. <u>WATER</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. *Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		X				
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.)		N/A				
m. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)		N/A				

The proposed electrification of a portion of the campground at Lewis & Clark Caverns will not impact any water resources.

The campground has an existing irrigation system for trees near campground Loops A, B, and E. Additionally, there is a drain field southwest of the comfort station. Neither one of these components will be affected by the electrical system upgrades and pedestal installations.

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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.

4. <u>VEGETATION</u> Will the proposed action result in?	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X		Yes	4a
b. Alteration of a plant community?			X		Yes	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		Yes	4e
f. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		N/A				

- 4a/b. The proposed construction and improvements at Lewis & Clark State Park will disturb small areas of vegetation as below ground conduits and infrastructure systems are established and connected. Areas that are disturbed by construction efforts will be reseeded with a native dryland seed mix. The effects of these changes will constitute negligible changes to the diversity or abundance of the plant species in the area.
- 4c. A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program's (MNHP) species of concern database did not identify any vascular or non-vascular plants of significance in the area where the project is expected to take place.
- 4e. Construction at the site may increase the possibility of noxious weeds becoming established. Reseeding disrupted soils after construction will mitigate additional weeds by providing competition from a mix of native, local grasses. Currently, Park staff works closely with the Jefferson County Weed Supervisor to manage established noxious weeds within and near the Park. Control efforts will follow the guidelines presented in the FWP Integrated Noxious 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. <u>FISH/WILDLIFE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
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				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.)		N/A				
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.)		N/A				

The proposed project will not take place in an area that is designated of critical habitat to a sensitive species and it will not cause changes to wildlife diversity or abundance.

5b/c/f/g. Some resident wildlife species may be affected by the noise generated by the implementation of the proposed project for a limited time. These species largely will avoid the campground area but will return to the site when the proposed project is completed and noise levels return to normal. Bob Brannon, FWP Regional 3 Wildlife Biologist, was contacted and made this assessment.

In 2003, FWP conducted a small mammal inventory at Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park and identified 43 species within its boundaries. None of the survey locations within the Park occurred in vicinity of the campground. The closest sampling station was located north of the campground where the access road's grade begins to ascend to the Caverns Visitor Center. The survey did record various sightings of numerous bird species in the campground including common nighthawk, mountain chickadee, and Clark's nutcracker. As with the game species identified above, small mammals (deer mice, striped skunks, and mountain cottontails) and birds will likely be displaced for the duration of the proposed installation period but will revisit the area when a normal routine returns.

A search of the Montana Natural Heritage database revealed three sensitive species in the vicinity of the proposed areas of construction. The three species are Townsend's big-eared bat, spotted bat, and the fringed myotis. All these species are known to move through the area accessing the caverns for roosting. It is the opinion of FWP's non-game wildlife biologist the proposed projects will not have any negative impacts on the species. (Per Kristi DuBois, FWP Non-Game Wildlife Biologist)

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

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

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

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

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Increases in existing noise levels?	X					6a
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?	X					6b
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				

- 6a/b. There would be a temporary increase in noise levels at Lewis & Clark Caverns due to the addition of the trenching equipment within the campground. The anticipated duration of the construction will be 2-3 weeks. After the completion of the project, noise levels are expected to improve to below pre-installation levels since it is expected some campers will use the pedestals for electricity instead of their own gas-powered generators.

The project is intended to occur in the fall of 2009 which will limit the inconveniences the proposed project might have on visitors in the campground because the traditional tourist season will have passed.

7. <u>LAND USE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
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				

- 7a. The proposed enhancement to campground Loop E will not change the existing use of the area. The fee increase for the use of the campsites with electrical hook-ups is expected to pay for the electricity used.

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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.

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
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)		N/A				

8a. Chemical spraying may be used to deter the establishment and growth of noxious weeds in the proposed construction areas. Weed treatment would be conducted only by a trained professional licensed in the State of Montana under the guidelines of FWP's 2008 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.

9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
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				9d
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				

9d. The electrification of a portion of the campsites within Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park is unlikely to affect nearby private campgrounds. Given the small number of sites being electrified, no impacts are anticipated.

The closest private campgrounds are located in Cardwell, which is 7 miles west, and Three Forks, which is 19 miles east of the park on Hwy 2. Each of these private campgrounds charge from \$24 to \$38 per night, but each facility does offer additional services that are not available at the Caverns campground such as sewer, water hook-ups, and in the case of the Three Forks KOA, WiFi service and a pool. An additional difference between the private campgrounds and the one at the Caverns is that FWP limits campers' overnight stays to 7 days within a 30 day period, whereas at the campgrounds at Cardwell and Three Forks patrons can choose to stay as long as they desire during the summer season.

University of Montana's Institute of Tourism and Recreation Research survey of traveler characteristics based from Summer 2005 statistics reflected a slightly higher percentage of the respondents stayed overnight in private campgrounds versus public ones when visiting Gold West Country which includes Jefferson, Lewis & Clark, Beaverhead, Madison, and Silver Bow Counties.

Additionally, Park staff will continue to promote private campgrounds for visitors seeking higher levels of services or amenities.

Through the competitive bidding process for services, it is possible that a locally-owned electrical business could be chosen for the project which would support the local economy and residents of the 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.

10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
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			10c
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?			X			10d
e. **Define projected revenue sources						10e
f. **Define projected maintenance costs.						10f

10c. The proposed action will require the establishment of new underground electrical conduit lines between a new electrical panel near the comfort station and the camp side pedestals.

10d. The proposed electrification of a portion of the campsites at Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park is expected to increase the Park's consumption of electricity since most camping visitors at the electrified campsite are expected to be using self-contained "RV-type" camping units. The convenience of the camp-side outlets will provide visitors the opportunity to recharge cell phones and other electronic equipment.

10e. If Alternative B was completed, the Park could expect an increase in revenue. The following chart shows the revenue estimates based on different levels of occupancy:

Total campsites = 40

Number of campsites proposed for electrification: 9, which are 23% of total campsites

Season: ½ May, June July August, ½ September, ¼ October = 130 days

Assumes an average of 75% occupancy over the entire season.

Occupancy (#of days x # of campsites x camp fee with hook up)		Less Cost of Electricity per night *	Net Revenue
75%	(130 days)(9 sites)(\$20/night) = \$17,550	-\$ 3,510	\$14,040

* Assume \$4 cost of electricity per night, first year

10f. Only very minor increases to current maintenance costs are expected by the proposed improvements, which would be wrapped into the Park's existing operating budget.

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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.

** 11. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
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				11b
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.)		N/A				

11b. The anticipated design of the electrification project will have all electrical conduits underground with only the outlet pedestals and electrical panel visible. This design will ensure the natural beauty of the state park is maintained.

11c. There will be no impact on tourism opportunities at the site. See *Appendix D* for the Tourism Report.

There is the possibility the campground loop may need to be closed to campers for a limited amount time if the campground is still open when trenching through the camp pads is required. Potentially, this type of inconvenience is unlikely to occur since the implementation of the proposed project will be after the campground closes for the season.

12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
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.)		N/A				

12a. A cultural assessment of the site was completed by the State Historical Preservation Office, which found that no historically or culturally sensitive areas exist at the site. See *Appendix E* for the recent SHPO concurrence letter.

* 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 *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
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				
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.)		N/A				
g. ****For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		N/A				

If Alternative B (proposed action) were initiated, it would not have long-term, major impact on the physical or human environments at the Park.

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

Final plans and specifications for the project will be developed by the state appointed engineering consultant in conjunction with FWP engineering staff. All state and federal permits will be obtained by FWP. A private contractor selected through the State's competitive bid process will complete construction. Final inspection will be the responsibility of the FWP Design and Construction Bureau.

State pesticide use laws and regulations will be followed. Application records will be submitted to the Montana Department of Agriculture as required every five years, and these records will be available to state investigators upon request.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The proposed campground electrification project within Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park will meet the increasing needs and desires of campers wanting utilize electricity to charge batteries and power camping comforts such as air conditioning, heaters, refrigerator, and TVs. The electrified campsites will decrease nuisance noise produced by individual generators in use by campers and the complaints from other campers related to the bothersome sounds.

Because of the scope of the proposed improvements, negligible impact to the human and physical environment is expected. However the majority of those influences, which were previously noted, are expected to be only for the duration of the short construction period with no lasting negative effects on the local environment. For those actions that cause impacts requiring mitigation, such as trenching for the electrical conduits, efforts will be taken to reseed disturbed areas. The reseeded at those disturbed sites will minimize the chance of noxious weeds being established and will limit new erosion patterns from being established.

Finally, the proposed action will work towards meeting one of the goals of the Lewis & Clark State Park Management Plan whereby addressing the intended improvements to the campground through the installation of a limited number of electrical hooks-ups.

The campground improvement is expected to increase camper satisfaction which may ensure returning visitors and increase revenue generated by camping fees for future Park enhancements to the Park's facilities.

Additionally, the proposed project was reviewed and its anticipated impacts were compared with those noted in 23-1-110 MCA (ARM 12-8-601-608) to determine if the improvements to be those that significantly change park or fishing access site features or use patterns (i.e. construction of new roads, large excavations, above-ground utilities, shore alterations, etc.). It is the option of this reviewer that the proposed campground electrification project will not significantly alter Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park's physical features or alter user patterns within the Park.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Public involvement:

The public will be notified of the public comment period for this EA by the following methods

- Two public notices in each of these papers: *Helena Independent Record*, *The Butte Standard*, and *Bozeman Daily Chronicle*
- One statewide press release
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: <http://fwp.mt.gov>.

Copies of this environmental assessment will be distributed to the neighboring landowners and interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project. If requested by the public, FWP will conduct a public meeting on this proposal.

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having limited impacts, many of which can be mitigated.

2. Duration of comment period:

The public comment period will extend for (30) thirty days following the publication of the second legal notice in area newspapers. Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., July 24, 2009 and can be mailed to the address below:

Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park
Campground Improvement Project
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
PO Box 489
Whitehall, MT 59759
406-287-3541

Or email comments to: kempcaverns@in-tch.com

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 the criteria provided by MEPA Model Rule III to assess if an EIS is required, this environmental review revealed no significant long-term, negative impacts would be created from the proposed action. Therefore, an EIS is not necessary and an EA is the appropriate level of analysis.

2. Persons responsible for preparing the EA:

Jerry Walker
Region 3 Parks Manager
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1400 South 19th Ave.
Bozeman, MT 59718
406-994-3552

Lynette Kemp, Manager
Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park
PO Box 489
Whitehall, MT 59759
406-287-3541

Rebecca Cooper
MEPA Coordinator
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1420 E. 6th Ave., Helena MT 59601
406-444-4756

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

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Parks Division
Wildlife Division
Design & Construction Bureau
Legal Bureau

Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
Montana Department of Commerce – Tourism
Montana Natural Heritage Program – Natural Resources Information System (NRIS)
U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service
University of Montana – Institute of Tourism and Recreation Research

APPENDICES

- A. Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park Map
- B. Concept Map of the Improvements
- C. Tourism Report – Department of Commerce
- D. Clearance Letter – State Historic Preservation Office
- E. HB 495 Checklist

APPENDIX A



Campground Loop selected for electrification.

Alternative B

APPENDIX B

Preliminary Concept Plan for Electrification of Campground Loops D and E

Estimated conduit paths are drawn in red.



Although this concept plan shows two campground loops targeted. Electrification of camp loop D is not being considered at this time.

APPENDIX C

TOURISM REPORT MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA) & MCA 23-1-110

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has initiated the review process as mandated by MCA 23-1-110 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-Department of Commerce
301 S. Park Ave.
Helena, MT 59601

Project Name:

Project Description: The installation of camp-side electrical hook-ups within the campgrounds at Wayfarers State Parks (on Flathead Lake) and Lewis & Clarks Caverns State Park (near Whitehall). It is anticipated twenty pedestals will be installed at Wayfarers and ten at the Caverns. The electrical hook-ups will meet the needs of RVs and 5th-wheel recreationalists at those sites.

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 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:

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

Signature Carol Crockett Date 9-9-07

APPENDIX E



MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

225 North Roberts ♦ P.O. Box 201201 ♦ Helena, MT 59620-1201
♦ (406) 444-2694 ♦ FAX (406) 444-2696 ♦ www.montanahistoricalsociety.org ♦

August 1, 2007

Paul Valle
FWP
PO Box 200701
Helena MT 59620-0701

RE: POWER INSTALLATION FOR PLACID LAKE, LEWIS & CLARK CAVERNS,
COONEY, AND WAYFARERS STATE PARKS. SHPO Project #: 2007080101

Dear Mr. Valle:

I have conducted a cultural resource file search for the above-cited projects. According to our records there have been a few previously recorded sites within the designated search locales. In addition to the sites there have been a few previously conducted cultural resource inventories done in the areas.

We feel that there is a low likelihood cultural properties will be impacted. We, therefore, feel that a recommendation for a cultural resource inventory is unwarranted at this time. However, should cultural materials be inadvertently discovered during this project we would ask that our office be contacted and the site investigated. Thank you for consulting with us.

If you have any further questions or comments you may contact me at (406) 444-7767 or by e-mail at dmurdo@mt.gov.

Sincerely,

Damon Murdo
Cultural Records Manager

File: FWP/PARKS/2007



STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE ♦ 1410 8th Ave ♦ P.O. Box 201202 ♦ Helena, MT 59620-1202
♦ (406) 444-7715 ♦ FAX (406) 444-6575

APPENDIX F

HB495 PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

Date Feb 29, 2009

Person Reviewing Rebecca Cooper

Project Location: Jefferson County, T1N R2W Section 21

Description of Proposed Work: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to improve the electrical infrastructure of campground Loop Eat Lewis & Clark State Park in order to install campsite electrical hook-ups.

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: *No*
- B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?
Comments: *No*
- C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?
Comments: *The exact amount of soil that will be disturbed is unknown but is expected to be much less than 20 cubic yards.*
- D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?
Comments: *No*
- E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a double wide 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: *No*
- H. Any new above ground utility lines?
Comments: *No, all new electrical lines would be buried.*
- I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?
Comments: *No*

- 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.