



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

1400 South 19th Avenue
Bozeman, MT 59718

June 25, 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

Jack Jones, 3014 Irene St., Butte, MT 59701

Herman Christiansen, 6568 Hauser Dam Rd, Helena, MT 59602

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The enclosed Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared for the proposed Black Sandy Campground Improvement Project. The proposed action is to initiate campground improvement projects within Black Sandy State Park which would include the asphalt paving of the interior campground road and spurs and the installation of electrical pedestals 29 of the 33 campsites.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks invites you to comment on the attached proposal. The public comment period will be accepted beginning July 1, 2009 until 5:00 pm, July 27, 2009 and a public meeting will be held if requested. Comments should be sent to the following:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Craig Marr
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59602-0701

Or e-mailed to: cmarr@mt.gov

Sincerely,

Gerald Walker
Region 3 Parks Manger
Attachment

Draft
Environmental Assessment
Black Sandy State Park
Campground Improvement Project



June 2009



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

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 initiate a campground improvement projects within Black Sandy State Park which would include the asphalt paving of the interior campground road and spurs and the installation of electrical pedestals at 85% of campsites. There are 34 campsites within the park, and 29 are expected to have pedestals installed at them.
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 state parks.

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.

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

5. **Location:**
Black Sandy State Park is located in Lewis and Clark County, T12N R03W S32.



Area map showing the location of Black Sandy State Park on Hauser Reservoir.

6. 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:	
		Irrigated cropland	<u>0</u>
(b) Open Space/Woodlands/Recreation	<u>5</u>	Dry cropland	<u>0</u>
		Forestry	<u>0</u>
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas	<u>0</u>	Rangeland	<u>0</u>
		Other	<u>0</u>

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

(a) Permits:

State Electrical Permit secured by contractor.

(b) Funding:

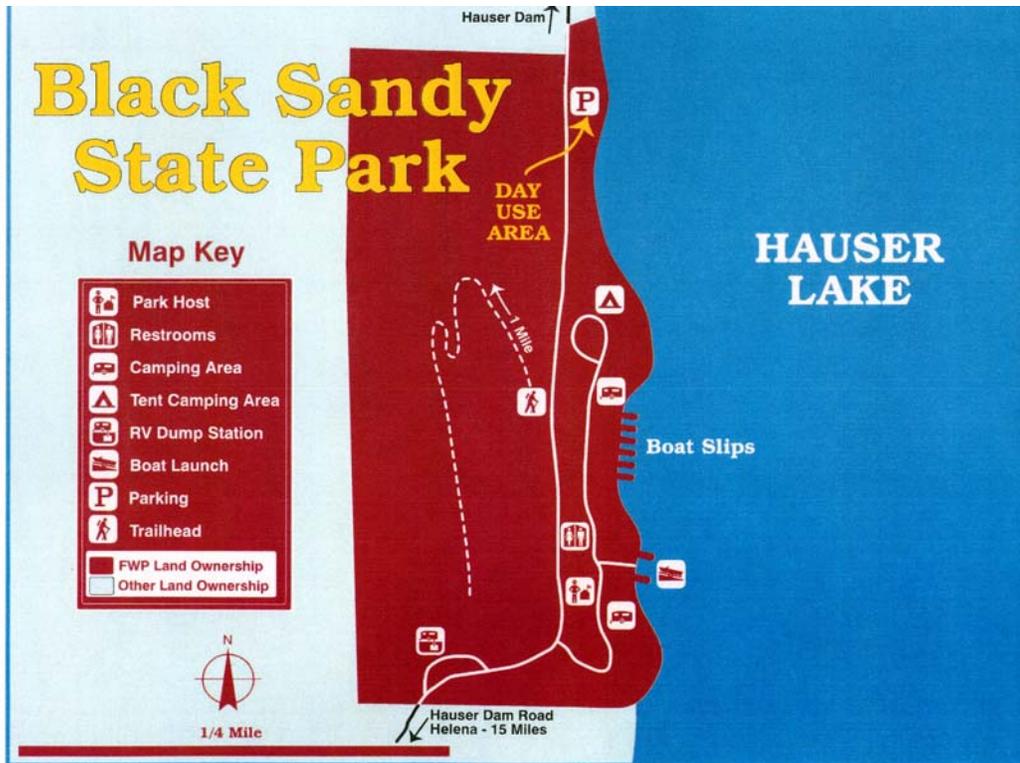
FWP	\$130,000
Federal (Wallop-Breaux)	\$120,000

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

Montana State Historic Preservation Office – cultural and historic resources
 MT Dept. of Environmental Quality – Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan

8. Narrative summary of the proposed action:

Black Sandy State Park is a 15-acre park on Hauser Reservoir in central Montana. The Park includes a day-use area with a boat-launch, latrines, picnic areas, and a campground area with 34 camping sites, a campground host, restroom facilities, and a hiking trail (see map below). The Park is extremely popular, with approximately 45,000 visitors annually, mainly in the summer months. The Park is open all year.



Paving Project

The popularity of the Park and the corresponding number of vehicles in the Park has been an issue for several years. The majority of the Park road surface is gravel with a low percentage of clay in the gravel to act as a binder to keep the road surface stable and tightly compacted (see Fig. 1). During the summer peak use season when the road surface becomes totally dry, the Park road generates tremendous clouds of dust with every passing vehicle, especially in the campground loop and park entrance area. This dust covers everything with a fine layer of dirt; people, food, campers, and other camping gear (see Fig. 2). Visitors love this beautiful Park, but complain earnestly about the amount of dust they encounter. The dust not only detracts from visitor's experience, but also under extreme conditions can create safety hazards such as low visibility and health issues for people with any type of respiratory distress. The current gravel/organic road surface also generates mud during inclement weather, which can make the campground loop difficult to maneuver towing vehicles in.



Figure 1. Photo showing popularity of Black Sandy State Park with RV's



Figure 2. Photo showing dust at Black Sandy State Park

FWP has tried to reduce the dust and particulate level at the Park for years with limited success. FWP has applied magnesium chloride (MgCl) to the interior road surface as dust abatement for the past seven years, but this compound requires some humidity to be effective and there is minimal moisture in the air in the peak of the summer season when dust abatement is needed the most.

Creating a hardened road surface within the campground loop would drastically decrease airborne particulate from vehicles which would significantly improve air quality and visitor experience. Paving would also allow speed bumps to be installed, where needed, and for the lining and striping of the parking areas. Motorized vehicles are restricted to a 5 m.p.h. speed limit, however some two-wheeled and four-wheeled motorized vehicles are driven above that limit which can create a public safety problem. The delineation of parking areas and spots will allow the more efficient use of the Park's developed space and reduce conflicts when vehicles are parked on vegetation or in the path of other vehicles.

Electrification Project

FWP managers propose to establish electrical services to users of Black Sandy State Park's campground based on demand. The proposed project will install electrical pedestals at 29 of the 34 campsites. Over 60% of overnight visitors use motor homes or full-size travel trailers for their accommodations, and many would like on-site electricity since all new RVs and campers have provisions to connect to electrical power. Furthermore, many visitors (RV and tent campers) complain that noise from generators used in the Park is excessive and detracts from their experience. Quiet hours in the Park are set for 10 pm until 7 am when campers are expected to turn off equipment that contribute to nuisance noise in the campground.

The design of the proposed electrification project is such that all utility connections will be underground with only the pedestals at the campsites visible. This design will limit the intrusion of man-made objects to the natural environment of the Park. The trenching of the conduits will require some disturbance of native vegetation and road crossings which is why all electrical work would be completed before beginning paving work in the campground. FWP is planning to limit trenching within 10-15 feet of mature trees whenever possible to limit potential impact to them. (See Part II for a more in depth discussion of potential impacts.) Preliminary designs

include the installation of a new transformer and electrical panel to upgrade the electrical infrastructure to required levels in order to support the pedestals. These new structures will be placed in locations so not to detract from the natural quality of the environment.

The addition of individual electrical campsite pedestals will allow campers to enjoy their electrical comforts (A/C, TV, and recharging cell phones and boating items) and medical equipment without the use of their generators, which is expected to increase visitor satisfaction. Currently, the noise from gas-powered generators does create some visitor complaints and user conflicts which are expected to decrease after the pedestals are installed.

In addition to providing new service for campers, the option for campers to plug in versus using their generator could reduce the chance of carbon monoxide poisoning. The use of light duty generators in enclosed spaces or outdoors near an open door, window, or vent have been attributed to 6% of the total yearly estimated carbon monoxide poisoning deaths based on data compiled by the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

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, and 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. Those electrified sites have now become the preferred sites for many visitors. This success is also expected to be seen at this state park.

PART II. ALTERNATIVES

1. Alternative A: No Action

If no action is taken, the interior Park roads and parking areas within Black Sandy State Park campground would not be paved, and electric pedestals would not be added to each campsite. This alternative would not resolve the issues impacting public health and safety or natural resource protection. By choosing the "No Action" alternative, the known safety, resource, and aesthetic issues at Black Sandy State Park would not be addressed. The roads will continue to generate high levels of dust during the summer season causing irritation and discomfort to Park visitors and workers which is sometimes severe. The gravel surface also prohibits permanent road paint from being applied which causes inefficient parking and confusion.

If electrical service is not added to campsites, noise from generators will continue to be high which detracts from the recreational experiences of both traditional campers and RV users alike. If no action is taken, the public will likely continue to register concerns and complaints about the lack of on-site electricity and road and parking conditions in Black Sandy State Park.

2. Alternative B: Pave all interior road and parking surfaces in the campground and install electrical pedestals at 29 campsites

This is the Preferred Alternative. The electric pedestals would be installed prior to the paving of the campground. The campground road and parking spurs would be paved with a 2" asphalt lift. The issues in the campground require attention, and it makes sense to do one project to complete all the improvements at one time rather than spreading out the disruption to Black Sandy State Park visitors over two or more summers.

3. Alternative C: Only pave interior road surfaces

Like the preferred Alternative, FWP would proceed with plans to pave all interior road and parking surfaces within Black Sandy State Park. In this Alternative, roads and campground spurs would be paved, however no electric pedestals would be provided. This alternative is not preferred by FWP managers because it would be much better to install the underground utility infrastructure and electrical pedestals prior to paving. FWP managers feel that Alternative B would be the best and most efficient use of resources and funding. Public interest in electric hook ups is not likely to diminish, and returning after the roads are paved adds significantly to the cost of the project.

4. Alternative D: Only install electrical pedestals at the remaining 29 campsites

In this Alternative, the electric infrastructure and pedestals would be installed. However, the roads and parking spurs would remain gravel. This alternative would be significantly less expensive, but is not preferred because the dust and associated problems caused by the campground road would continue.

PART III. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

If the No Action Alternative were chosen, FWP would continue to provide existing services and maintenance to the campground loop and associated areas. The use of MgCl would likely continue to be applied to existing graveled areas to decrease the amount of dust generated within the campground and the use of this chemical will continue to contribute to the deteriorating health of adjacent trees and other vegetation.

Issues currently faced by Park staff, such as management of parking and traffic hazards within the Park and oversight of the use of RV generators during quiet hours, will continue to challenge staff into the future.

1. Evaluation of the impacts of Alternative B, since Alternatives C and D are included within that option.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. **Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?			X		Yes	1a
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?		X				1b
c. **Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				1c
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/c. No unique geologic features would be destroyed, covered, or modified by the proposed action.

1b. Soil structure and permeability should be improved by curtailing the use of magnesium chloride (MgCl) for dust control. MgCl is a salt which changes soil structure and can inhibit moisture uptake by plants. Surfacing the road should eliminate the need for dust abatement, and the salts applied in past years should eventually leach away from the soil and root zone.

The design of the proposed project will require the digging of trenches for all the infrastructure improvements as well as for the conduits connecting each of the pedestals to one another and to the electrical panel. The trenches are expected to be 24" in depth and approximately 10" in width to accommodate a 3" conduit and necessary fill material. After the installation of the conduits is complete, the disturbed soils will be replaced and compacted so that natural understory vegetation can be re-established.

1d. The road system in the Park drains into predominantly vegetated areas. Surfacing the road is unlikely to cause any changes in sedimentation or drainage patterns into Hauser Reservoir.

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

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

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

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

2. <u>AIR</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. **Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)			X positive			2a
b. Creation of objectionable odors?			X positive			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				2e

2a/e. Paving should dramatically reduce dust from the road. This would improve air quality in the general vicinity of the Park road during the summer season. Particulate (dust) from vehicle traffic on the road currently creates health and safety issues on the road and an unpleasant experience for Park visitors. Minor and temporary dust and vehicle emissions will be created by heavy equipment during construction but would end after completion of the project. The proposed project will not conflict with any federal or state air quality regulations.

2b. Providing electrical service to campsites would reduce the use of generators which can sometimes create objectionable petroleum-based odors.

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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.

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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		yes	3b
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				3l
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				3m

3a/m. It is possible that the proposed project would result in a small discharge of sediment into adjacent surface water during construction & paving. FWP would ensure that Best Management Practices were employed during construction to minimize that risk. Storm water retention basins are already in place on site.

3b. Run-off patterns from water leaving the road surface may be altered by the project in some areas. Best Management Practices (BMP) would be used during paving to mitigate any sediment entering the lake. These can include but are not limited to constructing gravel bars to trap sediment, sediment fencing, directing run-off into vegetative zones, and developing sediment catch basins.

3l. Black Sandy State Park is located within a designated floodplain, however the proposed action will not alter the floodplain.

* 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		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				4e
f. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		X				4f

4a/b. The proposed electrical work would require the disturbance and/or removal of some grasses, forbs, and small shrubs within the path of the conduit trench. The design will attempt to minimize disturbance by running lines along roadways whenever possible. No mature trees would be removed. To minimize potential impacts caused by trenching for the electrical lines, FWP will limit digging within 10-15 ft. of trees.

FWP expects overall vegetative health in areas previously affected by MgCl will improve in the future by not being exposed to continued applications of the chemical.

4c. A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program's (MNHP) species of concern database found three species of concern: long-styled thistle, lesser rushy milkvetch, and divide bladderpod. This project will have no impact because vegetation will not be removed or impacted during this project and the species have not been found on the site of the proposed project.

4e. The installation of the pedestals may increase the possibility of noxious weeds becoming established because of the soil disturbing activities, especially along the campground. Reseeding disrupted soils after construction will limit the potential for additional weed infestation by providing competition from a mix of native vegetation. Noxious weed control efforts will follow the guidelines presented in the FWP's 2008 Noxious Weed Management Plan which includes the use of herbicides and mechanical efforts.

4f. The proposed action does not require the disturbance of any wetland or riparian areas.

* 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				5a
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.)		X				5h
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				5i

5a. Impacts to fish habitat would be minimized by implementing stream/riparian management zone BMP's. Road improvements directly adjacent to the reservoir would move all work away from the water's edge with appropriate measures to prevent sediments from entering the surface waters. During construction, standard BMP's would be used to mitigate any sediment entering the reservoir. These can include, but are not limited to, constructing gravel bars to trap sediment, sediment fencing, directing runoff into vegetative zones, and development of sediment catch basins.

5b. The proposed project is unlikely to cause any negative impacts to animal species within the Park or greater area. However, the proposed action would improve air quality within the project area. Any surface discharge that did occur during the project would be unlikely to affect fish populations within Hauser Reservoir as warm summer temperatures cause fish to seek deeper water away from the shallow zones along the shore.

5f/h/i. A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Database found there are six species of concern known to be present within the vicinity of the Park. Those species are gray wolf, the wolverine, Townsend's big eared bat, spotted bat, bald eagle, and the peregrine falcon. None of this species are known to use the Park because of human presence, and it is unlikely that this project would have any effect on the listed species.

FWP believes none of the sensitive species will be affected by the proposed project since their presence in the Park is not documented and they will likely avoid the area because of normal human activities.

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

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- 5g. There may be intermittent and temporary displacement of game and non-game animals due to noise and activity during the three to four month construction period. Normal animal movements are expected to return after the construction is completed.

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				

- 6a. There would be a temporary increase in noise level during implementation of the proposed action but would end after completion of the project. It is unlikely that any residences would be affected by the noise. The level of noise from generators would be reduced after implementation of the electrical work which would be a positive impact to the Park and its visitors.

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. Conflict 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				

There would be no alteration or interference with the existing land use at Black Sandy State Park.

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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 *				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 positive			8c
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		N/A				

8a /d. There is a slight risk of small petroleum leaks or spills from heavy equipment during the proposed paving project. This risk can be minimized by the use of Best Management Practices (BMP's) during all phases of the project.

Chemical spraying is part of FWP's weed management plan to limit the infestation of noxious weeds within the Park which is traditionally completed by a contractor. The licensed professional would conduct weed treatment and storage and mixing of the chemicals would be in accordance with standard operating procedures.

8c. In addition to improving traffic flow and maneuverability, the proposed project would increase available parking within the Park.

Providing campers with a choice of using the electrical hook-ups versus depending upon their generators could reduce the possibility of carbon monoxide poisoning.

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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. 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					9d
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?			X			9e

9d. One campground in the area of Black Sandy State Park offers electrical hookups. H&C Campground is privately owned and rents campsites for the entire season. Electrical hook ups at Black Sandy State Park would not have a significant impact on use at H&C Campground. H&C Campground is typically filled to capacity for the entire season.

University of Montana's Institute of Tourism and Recreation Research survey of traveler characteristics based from April 2007 reflected a slightly higher percentage of the respondents stayed overnight in private campgrounds versus public ones when visiting Lewis & Clark Country.

If campers want a higher level of service or additional amenities, park staff will continue to refer those visitors to private campgrounds in the area.

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

9e. The proposed project would improve traffic flow, maneuverability, and available parking within the Park. The installation of speed bumps would slow traffic and increase public 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			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 existing and possible, new transformers in order to provide electricity to new outlet pedestals.

10d. The proposed electrification of the camp sites at Black Sandy State Park is expected to increase the Park's consumption of electricity since many visitors will use the new service to power their RV's and peripheral equipment.

10e. If Alternative B (electrification) 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 = 29
Number of campsites proposed for electrification: 29 (5 tent sites would not be electrified)
Season: ½ May, June, July, August, ½ September = 120 days

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

Occupancy (#of days x # of campsites x camp fee x % occupied)		Less Cost of electric	Net Revenue
75%	(120 days) (29 sites) (\$20/night) = \$52,200	- \$10,440	\$41,760.00

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

10f. Under the preferred alternative, the project would eliminate the need for road grading and dust abatement within the Park, and short-term maintenance costs would be sharply reduced. In 10-15 years, some pavement maintenance would likely be necessary. Alternatives with less projected paving would necessarily continue to require substantial yearly road maintenance.

The lifespans of the pedestals are anticipated to be 50-years with normal wear and maintenance based on FWP's experience of the existing campground host pad pedestals and other outdoor electrical outlets.

* 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. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u>	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Will the proposed action result in:	Unknown *	None	Minor *		
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. **Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.)			X			11c
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		X				

11c. The proposed action will improve the quality of the aesthetics and recreational experience for many visitors to Black Sandy State Park. Surfacing the road would greatly decrease dust, improving the visitor experience at the Park. However, the proposed project is not expected to significantly increase day-use of the Park which is already at capacity most summer weekends. Overnight visitation in the campground would likely increase as a result of the improvements. See *Appendix B* for the Tourism Report.

Depending if the installation of the proposed electrical pedestals and paving occurs when the Park is open to campers and other visitors, some vehicle movement may be inconvenienced because of the presence of trenching or asphalt equipment while the improvement efforts are implemented. FWP will try to schedule the proposed improvement projects prior to or after peak summer visitations times at the Park to minimize any conflicts or inconveniences.

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

12a/d. FWP's Heritage Resources Program Manager will determine if a cultural resource survey is needed prior to the implementation of the proposed improvements and will consult with the State Historic Preservation Office as necessary. If any previously unrecorded cultural resource sites are discovered during construction, the Heritage Resource Program Manager will work with project engineers and the Park manager to develop a project design that avoids further disturbance to these sites.

- * Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.
- ** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).
- *** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- **** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
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				13f
g. ****For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		X				13g

13f/g. This EA found no significant impacts to the human or physical environment from the proposed action. Negative cumulative impacts from this project are not expected, but some public debate could occur.

* 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. FWP engineers will design other portions of the project. 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 two-years, and these records will be available to state investigators upon request.

PART IV. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

This EA only revealed negligible impacts to the physical and human environment stemming from the proposed action. It is unlikely that any threatened or endangered species would be affected, and no unique or physical features would be disturbed. The proposed action would benefit visitors to Black Sandy State Park by improving the ease and safety of vehicular travel within the Park in addition to providing a more positive recreational experience. Providing electrical service at the Park's campsites would cater to the requests of visitors and reduce noise from electrical generators. Disruption of wildlife, recreation, and other public uses at Black Sandy State Park would be temporary and occur intermittently during the construction period. Following the completion of the project, resource impacts would likely be minimized through better defined roadways which aid in preventing user-pioneered road and parking areas, less road dust particulate being generated in the air, and discontinued use of dust abatement chemicals.

The proposed project would increase public health, safety, and comfort while in the Park, and environmental resources would be better protected. In short, the proposed project would considerably increase visitor enjoyment and customer service satisfaction at Black Sandy State Park without causing significant adverse affects to the environment.

PART V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Public involvement:

The public will be notified by way of a statewide press release, legal notices in the *Great Falls Tribune*, *The Montana Standard* and the *Helena Independent Record*, and by public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: <http://fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices>.

Individual notices will be sent to the region's standard EA distribution list and to those that have requested one. If requested, FWP will hold a public meeting for the proposal.

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having few minor impacts for the enhancements to the campground.

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 27, 2009 and can be mailed to the address below:

Craig Marr
Black Sandy State Park Improvement Project
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620
Or email: cmarr@mt.gov

PART VI. 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 under the Montana Environmental Protection Act (MEPA), this environmental review found no significant impacts from the proposed project. In determining the significance of the impacts, FWP 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, growth-inducing or growth inhibiting aspects of the impact, the importance to the state and to society of the environmental resource or value affected, and precedent that would be set as a result of the proposed action that would commit FWP to future actions; and potential conflicts with local, federal, or state laws. Therefore, an EA is the appropriate level of review and an EIS is not required.

2. Persons responsible for preparing the EA:

Jerry Walker
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Region 3 Park Supervisor
1400 South 19th Ave
Bozeman, MT 59718
(406) 994-3552

Craig Marr
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Park Manager
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620
(406) 495-3260

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

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:

Design & Construction Bureau
Legal Bureau
Wildlife Division

Fisheries Division
Parks Division

Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)

Montana Department of Commerce – Tourism

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

Appendices

A – HB495 Project Qualification Checklist

B – MT Department of Commerce Tourism Report

APPENDIX A

HB495 PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

Date June 15, 2009

Person Reviewing Craig Marr

Project Location: Black Sandy State Park, Lewis and Clark County, T12N R3W section 32

Description of Proposed Work: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to pave all interior roads and add electrical pedestals to campsites.

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: *No.*
- 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.

APPENDIX B
Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA)/HB495
Tourism Report

The Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks has initiated the review process as mandated by HB 495 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 the form to:

Carol Crockett, Visitor Services Manager
Montana Promotion Division
Department of Commerce
301 South Park
Helena, MT 59620-0533

Project Name: **Black Sandy Campground Improvement Project**

Project description: **Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to initiate a campground improvement project within Black Sandy State Park, which would included the asphalt paving of the interior campground road and spurs and the installation of electrical pedestals at the majority of campsites. The project would reduce long term maintenance costs and improve the air quality by reducing airborne dust particles. Visitor satisfaction is expected to improve.**

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 has the potential to improve the quality and quantity of tourism and recreational opportunities.

Signature Carol Crockett, Visitor Services Manager Date: 5/29/09