DECISION NOTICE:
SALMON LAKE CAMPGROUND
IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804
(406) 542-5500

Proposed Action

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) proposes campground improvements for Salmon Lake State Park (located on Highway 83, about 7 miles south of Seeley Lake, Missoula County). Improvements include asphalt paving of the interior campground road and camp spurs and the installation of electrical pedestals at the 23 campsites.

Montana Environmental Policy Act

The Montana Environmental Policy Act requires Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MEPA) to assess significant potential impacts of a proposed action to the human and physical environment. In compliance with MEPA, an Environmental Assessment (EA) was completed for the proposed project by FWP and released for public comment on July 10, 2009.

Public Process and Comment

The EA was sent out and the public comment period began July 10, 2009, and ran through August 10, 2009. Legal notices were published in the Missoulian, the Helena Independent Record and the Seeley Swan Pathfinder. There were 10 full copies, 6 electronic versions, and 79 post card notes about the EA sent to interested parties consisting of neighbors, friends, conservation groups, Montana state legislators, county & state departments or agencies, and federal agencies. Also, there was a statewide press release and a posting on the FWP website. The EA is still available for review at http://fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices/notice_1061.aspx.

Alternative A: No Action

If no action is taken, the interior park roads and parking areas within Salmon Lake State Park campground would not be paved, and as a secondary part of that project, electric pedestals would not be provided at the campsites. This alternative would not resolve the issues impacting public health and safety or natural resource protection. The roads will continue to generate high levels of dust during the summer season, causing irritation and discomfort to park visitors and workers, sometimes severe. The gravel surface also prohibits permanent road paint from being applied, which causes inefficient parking, driver confusion, and contributes to some instances of speeding violations.

If electrical service is not provided as an option, noise from generators will continue to be high, which detracts from the recreational experiences of campers. If no action is taken, the public will continue to register concerns and complaints about the lack of on-site electricity and the road and parking conditions in Salmon Lake State Park.

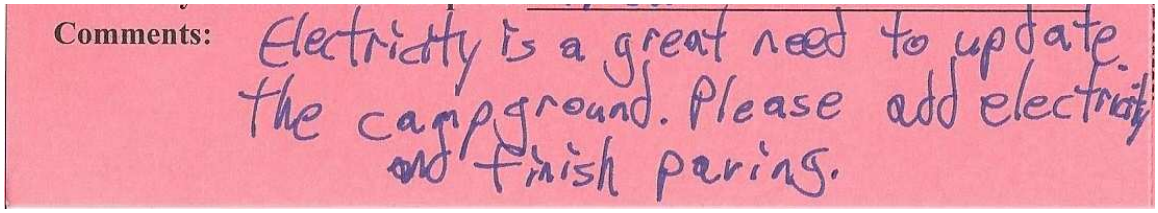
Alternative B: Pave the interior road, camp spurs and parking areas in the campground and install electrical pedestals at 23 public campsites
This is the preferred alternative. The electric pedestals would be installed prior to the paving efforts. The campground road and parking spurs would be paved with a 2" lift of asphalt. Trenching and installing the pedestals before paving the interior road and spurs will ensure resurfacing of trenching across the road's path is not necessary and costs of the improvements are kept within budget. Additionally, if the two improvements are implemented in progression of one another, inconveniences to visitors will be kept to a minimum.

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 the park. In this Alternative, roads and campground spurs would be paved; however, no electric pedestals would be installed. This alternative is not preferred as it would be much more efficient to install the underground utility infrastructure and electrical pedestals prior to paving. Public interest in electric hook ups is not likely to diminish, and returning later to install electric hookups after the roads are paved would add significantly to the cost of the project.

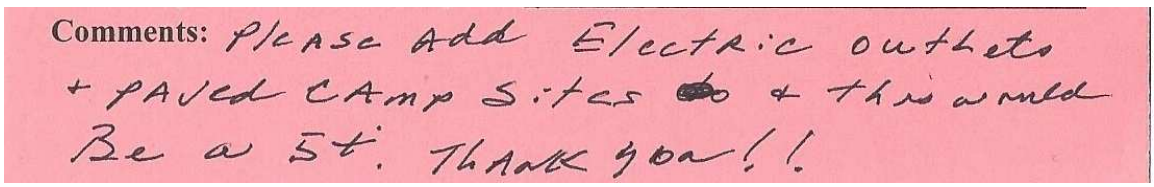
Alternative D: Only install electrical pedestals at the 23 public campsites
In this Alternative, the electric infrastructure and pedestals would be installed; however, the roads and parking spurs would remain gravel. This alternative would be less expensive than Alternative B, but dust and associated road and parking issues would remain.

Summary of Public Comment
A total of 75 responses were received regarding this proposal. There were 55 post cards directly received from the public recreating at the park, 15 e-mails received at the R-2 headquarters, and 5 comments received by phone or in person. The proposed development within Salmon Lake State Park consisted of two elements, electrifying campsites, and paving the interior road system within the campground.

A.) <u>Comments in support of electrifying & paving campground.</u> For electrifying campsites, 60 of the 75 responses were in favor of the proposal. For paving the campground, 55 of the 75 were supportive of this element. Here is a sampling of the supportive comments:



Comments: Electricity is a great need to update the campground. Please add electricity and finish paving.



Comments: Please Add Electric outlets + paved camp sites & this would Be a 5t. Thank you!!

Comments: Would liked to see park payed and power! Also garbage cans by dock!

phone nu
If you ca
406-444-
at www.f

Comments: Seriously Please consider putting electricity in this Park There are alot of people That would use it.

Comments: Electricty would be great at the park
Todd Koster 542-086

As Director of the Missoula Convention and Visitors Bureau, I would like to comment on the proposed addition of electrical pedestals to Placid Lake, Salmon Lake and Beavertail Hill State Parks. From a tourism perspective this is an important and much needed improvement to our State Parks. Travel and tourism has changed immensely over just the last ten years. Although people are coming to Montana in order to get away, the largest demographic of travel, and the group that will only continue to grow and dominate the tourism industry, are baby boomers. They are a demographic that enjoys adventure and getting away from their busy lives, but also have expectations of a level of service no matter where they go. It is the beginning of the generations that are connected no matter where they are in the world, through cell phones and computers. Their idea of getting away has changed from tent camping to a fully equipped travel trailer. They want the amenities of home, away from home and because of this electricity in campgrounds is an expectation. State Parks is an integral partner in Montana's tourism industry – an industry that is being hit hard by our current economic crisis. People are looking for places to go that are affordable and family friendly and Montana fits perfectly into that scenario, but in truth so do many of the Rocky Mountain States. If Montana State Parks cannot, or will not, offer the same amenities that travelers can find in other State Parks across the West, they will not choose Montana. The two complaints that we hear in the visitor center from tourists about our State Parks is no electricity and no reservation system. The addition of the electrical pedestals at these State Parks will go a long way in the right direction toward alleviating one of these issues.

Thank you for your time. If you have any questions or need further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

The Visit was great The Parking In the Camping area could use Pavins and Electric Though!

electricity would be great
Paving is wonderful —
especially for those
of us with Asthma

'a quite campground'? Ha! Unless it's off road there is no such thing. There
is no camping experience worse than being next to a generator, usually a loud
one because they're the cheapest, that the camper deems necessary to run air
conditioners, tv, medical oxygen generators or even wheelchair lifts and
that's a shame for state parks. An adamant YES for paving and electricity and
a fee would be a priviledge.

YES, yes yes, I am in favor of putting in electricity in our state parks. Electricity is less polluting , quieter, and safer than using generators. Our state parks should be for all citizens, not just those who don't want electricity. I don't see it as being in competition with private campgrounds but as an in-between accommodation, with commercial campgrounds also offering on site water and sewer.

I have traveled throughout the western states and our parks are pitiful next to other states. Twenty years ago Oregon state parks offered electricity and I noticed the "tenters" enjoying it too, using it for an electric shaver or blow dryer or a frying pan or lighting. For several years a choice has been made as to whether or not to pay a $4 yearly fee when paying vehicle taxes. I have chosen to pay the fee in the hopes that our state parks would be upgraded. I am totally in favor of your proposal and hope that you will begin with the parks currently under consideration and expand to include more. I would very much like to see our new Lincoln Ranch State Park become one of the electrified choices.

Paving is great @ day use
It cuts down on dust. Be
nice if camp ground was
paved. Electricity would be
great @ Campground. PtJ
Hall

Comments:
Impressed w/ pavement and
please add electricity. Nice improvements

Have campground and
add electricy, Nice park
nice people

Comments:
Would be nice if Camp ground was paved.
Boat launch ~~pay~~ paving was AWSOME. Also some
hook ups for an RV would be nice.

Comments: Would like to have the
Camp ground paved + electrified

Comments: Love the paving. Would like to
see electrical + paving in campground

Comments: PAVING + ELECTRICAL OUTLETS WOULD BE VERY
NICE, WE ARE OLDER but ENJOY the outdoors - WOULD
BE NICE SO KIDS DON'T WORRY

Comments:
We approve the improvement of
the camp ground & blacktop & electric.

Dear FWP, I just thought I would let you know how great the newly paved parking area looks. It would be great if they would also pave the camping area. It would make Parking more organized, easier on small cars and would create less pollution from the air. It would also be nice if there were Power hook ups for RV's Andrea Kuehn Thank you

I support "Alternative B" as outlined in the EA. My only concern is the growing congestion on Salmon Lake and the safety of recreational users and wildlife. I suggest considering the following:

1.) Limit the number of daily boats and jet skis allowed on the lake during weekends or place rangers on the water to enforce boater safety. Boats and jet skis frequently create large wakes in the boat dock area making it unsafe to load and unload watercraft. Jet skis are probably the biggest abuser as they frequently buzz the dock and spray water on their friends. When the lake is heavily congested safe boating distances and right-of way dictated by state law are frequently ignored making the use of Salmon Lake unsafe. If a limit on boating was enforced, I think property owners around the lake should be given some deference.
2.) Extend a no-wake zone in the very south bay of Salmon Lake from the church camp to the Clearwater River. There are a lot of fisherman, canoes, kayaks, and wildlife (eagles, deer, foxes, etc.) frequenting this area and boats towing tubes or other objects create large waves causing bank erosion and noise pollution that affects wildlife.
3.) Increase the amount of toilets available around the lake. Under heavy use, people frequently find other places around the lake to "relieve" themselves other than the two bathrooms at the boat dock. Perhaps additional toilets should be installed on the south and north ends of the lake.
4.) Consider making some areas of the lake "special use" during high activity periods. For example, reserve the northeast end for waterskiing, northwest end for fishing and the south end for boats towing tubes or wakeboards (these uses create extremely large wakes). The middle could be used for general use and jet skis. If you created a no-wake zone as suggested in #2 above, this area of the lake could be reserved for fishermen, canoes, and kayakers.

Salmon Lake is a beautiful piece of Montana – let's keep it that way. Thank you for the opportunity to give feedback on your improvement plans.

FWP Response: The four suggestions are outside the scope of this EA. However, we appreciate the concerns as outlined and will file for future management discussions.

I understand FWP is proposing improvements to Salmon lake campground which would include paving the interior and spurs and installing electrical hookups. This campground is beautiful and we have spent many years RV'ng there. However, we hate the dust generated by not having paved roads so in recent years we've been going elsewhere, i.e., Georgetown, Lochsa area, etc.

Having just returned from an RV trip to Washington and Oregon, Montana definitely needs to take a lesson from them on what our state parks should look like..... paved roads, sites, and electric hook-ups. What a difference it makes and it wasn't just RVers staying there, lots of tent campers too.

I encourage you to pave Salmon Lake and put in electrical hook-ups. You already have great restroom/shower facilities and these additional amenities would be a great addition. It's for sure we'd spend more time in that park.

I would be very supportive of the improvements at Salmon Lake Campground. We love camping there and always have a family gathering annually. We would be very supportive of the improvements to the road as well as hookups. Thanks.

I am **in favor of installing electricity pedestals** in State Park campgrounds. I believe electricity would be of benefit not only to those with RV's but to those who say they want a "quieter, natural like experience". I think if electricity was available there would virtually no noise from generators. I one is plugged into electricity there is no need to run a generator to re-charge batteries.

I have camped in Oregon State Parks (they have electricity) on numerous occasions and you just don't hear generators. We also camp at the BLM Campgrounds on Holter Lake and you can hear generators almost anytime.

I am willing to pay the extra $5 fee for electricity.

I also think there is no need to install street lights. Keep the dark night sky as much as possible.

AS far as the state competing with private facilities, there are no private facilities at many of the lakes and parks. I think it is almost a non-issue and certain Legislators make comments just to protect specific individuals at the expense of the vast majority of Montanans.

I understand that you are seeking public opinion on your proposal for improvements at Salmon Lake campground. My husband and I spend time there and we would **love** to see the campground paved!!! During the hot summer months, it is always so dusty and dirty and we feel this would be a great improvement!!! We also think putting in electrical outlets would be a great idea to cut down on the generator noise and for those with no generators.

The Missoula City-County Health Department supports the proposed improvements to the Salmon Lake Campground including both the paving and electrical service portions of the project.

It is the position of the Health Department that the benefit of paving in protecting human health is somewhat understated in the EA. PM-10 particulate is generated in significant amounts from unpaved roads. PM-10 particulate is small enough to enter the lung airways when people, especially children, are breathing through their mouth. Inhaled particulate exposure is significant in this situation because children are often running, playing etc. at a campground.

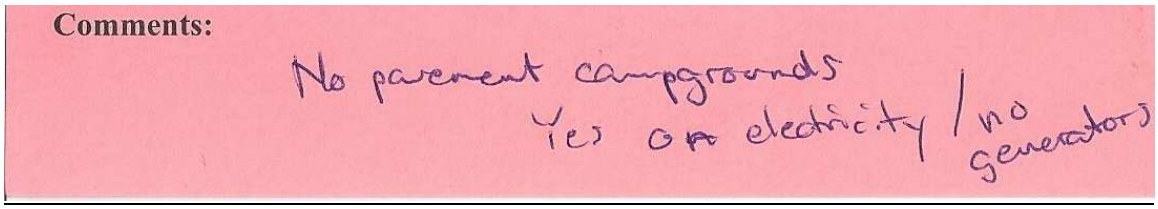
Additionally, the EA does not note that deposition of dust onto the lake can be a significant source of turbidity and phosphorus. Paving will have a positive benefit in reducing deposition of dust onto the Lake.

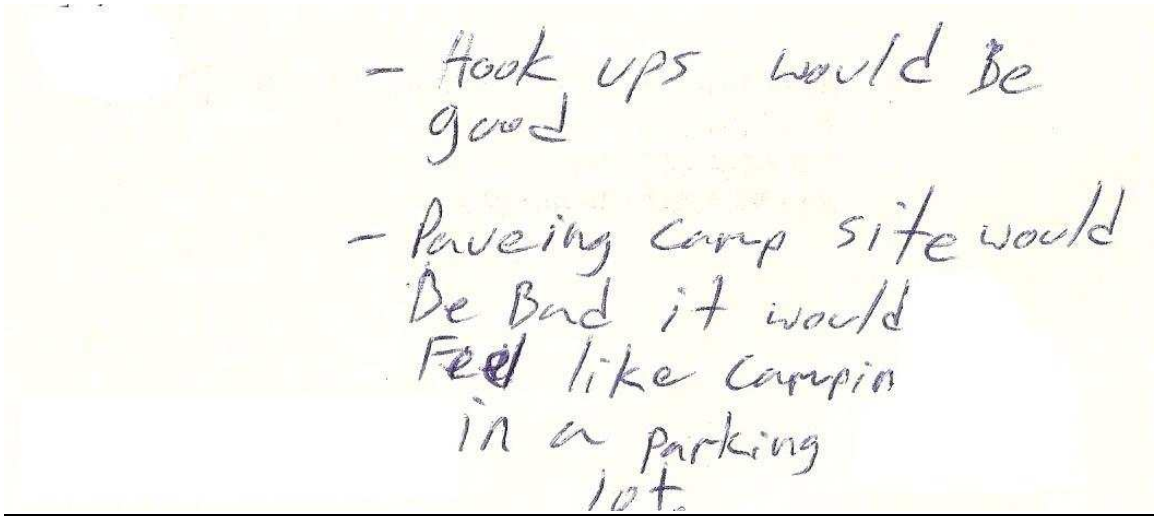
Jim Carlson
Director of Environmental Health
Missoula City-County Health Department

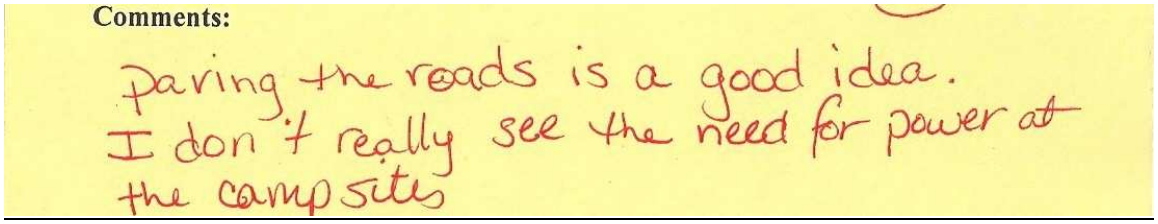
B.) <u>Comments that were mixed on electrifying & paving the campground</u>. Of the 75 responses, 7 were mixed. Some thought electrifying was good and paving not good and vice versa. Here is a sampling of the comments:

Comments:
Paving is a good IDea
Power not so much

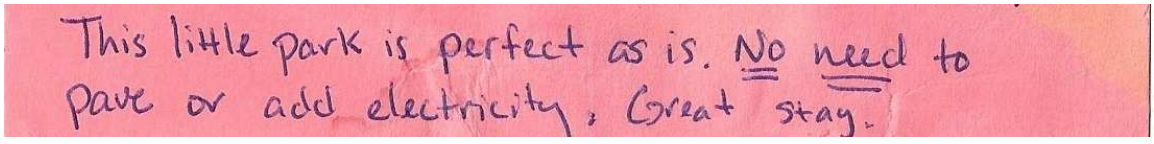
Paving would be good
Reserve judgement on elec. 7/26/09

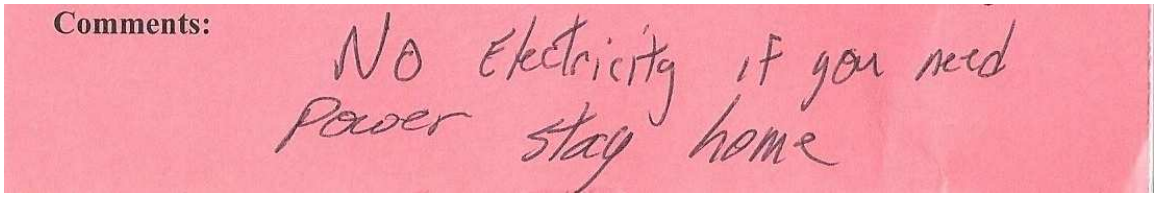






C.) <u>Comments in opposition to electrifying & paving the campground.</u> Of the 75 responses, 15 were opposed to electrifying campsites. For paving, there were 4 responses opposed to it. Here is a sampling of the comments:





Please don't electrify our state parks.

He does not think electrified campsites is a necessary improvement for any of these 3 state parks. He says that if FWP wanted to put in a few electrified campsites, for some specific justification or need, maybe OK. But he doesn't see the reason or need.

He states that it raises the cost of the campground/camping. "20 dollars a night is a lot of money." This "puts the cost out of reach for more people."

Makes the campgrounds more like some main highway campground. Takes away from the spirit of camping.

I am responded to the request for comment that was in the Pathfinder newspaper.

I do not think that Salmon Lake and Placid Lake campgrounds should get electric hook-ups. I have camped in campgrounds with and without electrical hook-ups and I think the ones with electrical hook-ups attract a different kind of camper (meaning the person's philosophy toward camping) and also larger rigs. I think there are enough campgrounds with electrical hook-ups for campers that really think they need them.

The state and national parks and BLM land seem to be the places to camp to avoid the campgrounds with electrical hook-ups. If even the state parks get electrical hook-ups, there won't be campgrounds without hook-ups, and it won't be like camping anymore.

I live in Seeley Lake year-round and moved here two years ago. I don't think Salmon Lake and Placid Lake campgrounds need electric hook-ups and with the limited FWP resources available, that money could be spent better elsewhere.

I am writing to oppose any proposal to add electrical outlets for campers at the MT Salmon Lake State Park Campground.

There are plenty of places that 'campers' who drive around in RVs and want electricity to run their air-conditioners and Direct TVs and strings of holiday lights can spend the night.

Camping is supposed to be about getting back to nature. Being surrounded by people who can't bear to be away from every form of creature comfort destroy this concept, and they are not to be encouraged in our state parks. I camp in state parks and avoid private RV parks specifically for this reason. People in RVs may think that what they're doing is camping, but it's not, and people with my perspective rely on state parks without electrical service to avoid all the negatives RVs bring with.

This also a terrible idea from an economic standpoint. Since there's no mention of metering the use of electricity, the citizens of MT will wind up essentially subsidizing its use. How ironic that would be, paying RV users to come to natural settings so they can destroy the atmosphere of natural peace and quiet.

Moreover, providing this subsidized electricity will impact private businesses that are designed to serve this segment of 'campers' and put the state government in direct competition with them. That's not something our government should be doing.

This was a terrible idea when it was first proposed over a year ago and it remains a terrible idea now. Please do not provide electrical hookups in this park.

FWP Response: Everyone's definition of "camping" is different. Montana State Parks does not discriminate between one type of camping or another. Our 2006 visitor survey shows that already over 50% of the campers in our state parks are using motor-homes and full size hard-sided

campers. From our other campground facilities that have electricity, the $5 per night fee is covering the cost of providing electricity and therefore, it is not being subsidized.

Lee, this is in response to the EA's proposing electrification of campsites at West Shore, Beavertail Hill, Salmon Lake, Placid Lake, Big Sandy and Lewis & Clark Caverns State Parks prepared by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. I realize the deadline has passed for the latter two but still need to comment about those two parks. Preparing separate EA's for each park seems counterintuitive when each EA addresses the same issues and the same actions. At first glance this would seem to be an attempt for an end run around the process which is disappointing to see coming from FWP. Having read the EA's I have several comments. Electrification of all of these campsites would destroy the night skies and quite solitude of each of these campsites. My family and I have used all of these campsites over the years and light pollution and increased noise will definitely be a problem. These campgrounds are almost always full (especially Salmon and Placid Lakes) during the summer months, adding electricity will not generate more use of these campgrounds. Electrification of all of these campsites runs counter to the very need to conserve electricity. Unmetered electrical use sends the wrong message about the need for conserving energy and reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and reducing our carbon foot print. From my professional experience, FWP has greater needs than spending scarce dollars on program which may or may not return revenue to the agency. FWP, and Montana sportsmen and women, would be better suited if you would take that 750,000 and spend it on backlogged maintenance at these parks instead. Finally, the EA's acknowledge a lack of hard data supporting the need for such an action, citing only anecdotal evidence. Anecdotal evidence does not qualify as data necessary to determine an appropriate course of action. Anecdotal evidence does not belong in any assessment of any type; your agency needs to be taken to task for relying on such inadequate documentation. If you have any questions or need clarification, please feel free to contact me. Thank you.

FWP Response: We felt that it was necessary to prepare individual EA's for each state park, especially, since each park is located differently geographically and may have different resource issues to address. Obviously, there are many similarities to each proposal; however, there are also some differences that we felt were important to point out. Electrification will not lead to the night skies being lit up any more than they are now when people camp. We are NOT proposing to install streetlights, only provide electrical pedestals that a camper could plug into to run appliances, various camping equipment, or health equipment without running their generators. Electricity is one of the more energy efficient forms of electricity than the use of fossil fuels. The spending of state park dollars to provide this service to campers is meeting a need that will not only enhance tourism but also meet the emerging needs of today's "baby boomer" generation. Even comments from Missoula's Convention and Visitors Bureau indicate that the lack of electricity in our Montana State Parks is a very common complaint by tourists visiting Montana. Many anglers to our state parks rely on batteries to power their boats & fishing gear and have to run generators to charge them up. More and more of our camping public carry medical equipment needed for their health.

I have received notification of improvements (electrification projects) for Beavertail Hill State Park, Placid Lake State Park, Salmon Lake State Park, Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park and Black Sandy State Park.

I am of the opinion that NONE of these projects may proceed without the approval of the Legislature. However, I was not active in the 2009 Legislature to know if you received approval in advance.

Please note that 23-1-126(4) MCA requires that "any development in state parks and fishing access sites beyond those defined as maintenance in 23-1-127 must be approved by the legislature. No where in 23-1-127 MCA is it permissible to electrify any park or FAS.

Perhaps the 2009 legislature approved these projects in a bill I am unaware of. If so, please advise how I may find that action. If not, please advise how it is that your agency intends to get around this legal requirement.

Additionally, 23-1-110(2)(g) states "The department shall prepare a public report regarding any project that is subject to the provisions of subsection (1). The report must include conclusions relating to the following aspects of the proposal: (g) site-specific modifications as they relate to the park or fishing access site system as a whole." A purpose of this section of law is to insure that maintenance is up-to-date before additional development takes place. You have a noxious weed and/or noxious plant (Salt Cedar and Russian Olive) problem all across the park/FAS system and yet you are developing sites before this maintenance is addressed. Many sites need improved toilet facilities and improved toilet and trash maintenance. So, how does additional development at this time comply with the intent of the law?

When and where are the public meetings on the developments as provided for in 23-1-110?

Referenced statutes are copied below.

Please observe that I have copied this inquiry to the Attorney General, Governor, Hal Harper, FWP Commission members and others.

No need for me to go beyond comments, which exactly echo my thoughts AGAINST the plan to electrify 5 Montana State Parks. We have worked for too many years, through too many fads, to not realize that this plan significantly increases the maintenance costs for state parks, destroys the natural setting, and caters to a dwindling, resource-consuming sector of the so-called "camping" populace.

For all the reasons enunciated, I will go on record OPPOSING these five projects so that I can join in the inevitable appeal before the FWP Commission.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

FWP Response: After consulting with our legal bureau, and reviewing the analysis of the Legislative Services Division, the Department has in fact received the appropriate legislative approval for this project [Sec. 23-1-126(4)]. The Department adheres strictly to the Legislative process of getting authorization for capital improvements.

Draft environmental assessments (EA) represent the public involvement and reporting requirement specified in statute. The opportunity for public meetings was also presented and discussed in each EA. These EA's are the established forum for public comments for proposed projects. All public comments received are evaluated and considered.

Finally, should an individual be dissatisfied with the decision reached by the Department following the public comment period, the decision may be appealed to the Department Director and ultimately to the FWP Commission.

Decision
Based on the analysis in the Environmental Assessment (EA) and the applicable laws, regulations and policies, I have determined that this action will not have a significant effect on the natural or human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

It is my decision to implement Alternative B. Pave all interior road and parking surfaces in the campground and install electrical pedestals at 23 public campsites.

Appeal
In accordance with FWP policy, this project is subject to appeal, which must be submitted to the Director of FWP in writing and must be postmarked or received within 30 days of this decision notice. The appeal must specifically describe the basis for the appeal, explain how the appellant has previously commented to the department or participated in the decision-making process, and lay out how FWP may address the concerns in the appeal. The appeal should be mailed to: Mr. Joe Maurier, Director, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, PO Box 200701, Helena, MT 59620-0701.

9/29/2009

Lee Bastian **Date**
Regional Parks Manager