MONTANA STATE PARKS

stateparks.mt.gov

Region 2 Headquarters
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804-3101
Phone 406-542-5500

June 4, 2012

Dear Interested Parties:

Enclosed, you will find for your review the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for a Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposal to install a campground host site at Painted Rocks State Park located on Painted Rocks Reservoir on the West Fork of the Bitterroot River in Ravalli County. This host site would provide for a regular volunteer host presence at the park to assist with public safety and compliance issues.

To review the proposal and draft environmental assessment, go to fwp.mt.gov under "Submit Public Comments," then "State Parks," and then "Environmental Assessments." Copies of the EA are also available for public review at Region 2 FWP Headquarters in Missoula.

Comments on this draft EA must be received by FWP no later than 5:00 pm on July 5, 2012. Comments should be mailed to Loren Flynn, Travelers' Rest State Park, PO Box 995, Lolo, MT 59847 or emailed to LFlynn2@mt.gov. If you have questions, please phone Flynn at (406) 273-4253.

Sincerely,

Lee Bastian

Lee Bastian
Regional Park Manager

Enclosure: Draft EA for Painted Rocks State Park—Proposed Campground Host Site

Painted Rocks State Park
Campground Host Site Project
Draft Environmental Assessment
MEPA, NEPA, MCA23-1-100 CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of Proposed State Action. Montana State Parks, a division of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks proposes to install a campground host site at Painted Rocks State Park.

2. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action. The 1939 Montana State Legislature passed MCA 23-1-101, which states that a State Park System would be established "for the purpose of conserving the scenic, historic, archeological, scientific, and recreational resources of the state and providing for their use and enjoyment, thereby contributing to the cultural, recreational, and economic life of the people and their health." Montana statute 23-1-102 (4) gives MFWP "jurisdiction, custody, and control of all state parks, recreational areas, public camping grounds, historical sites, and monuments."

3. Name of Project Painted Rocks State Park Campground Host Site Development Project

4. Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor (if other than the agency) Montana State Parks is the project sponsor.

5. If Applicable:

Estimated Construction/Commencement Date: Summer 2012
Estimated Completion Date: Fall 2012
Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 40%

6. Location Affected by Proposed Action (county, range and township) Ravalli County, T2S, R22W, Section 10. 17 miles south of Hamilton on US Highway 93, then 23 miles SW on Route 473 (West Fork Road). *(Lat 45.681, Lng -114.301)*

7. Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

(a) Developed:
residential.....__ acres
industrial .....__ acres
Recreation (campground) 1 acres

(b) Open Space/Woodlands/

(c) Wetlands/Riparian
Areas .....__ acres

(d) Floodplain .....__acres

(e) Productive:
irrigated cropland.....__ acres
dry cropland.....__ acres
forestry.....__ acres
rangeland.....__ acres
other .....__ acres

8. Map/site plan: attach an original 8 1/2" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map showing the location and boundaries of the area that would be affected by the proposed action. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.

See Figure 1, Painted Rocks State Park Campground Map and Figure 2, location of Painted Rocks State Park.

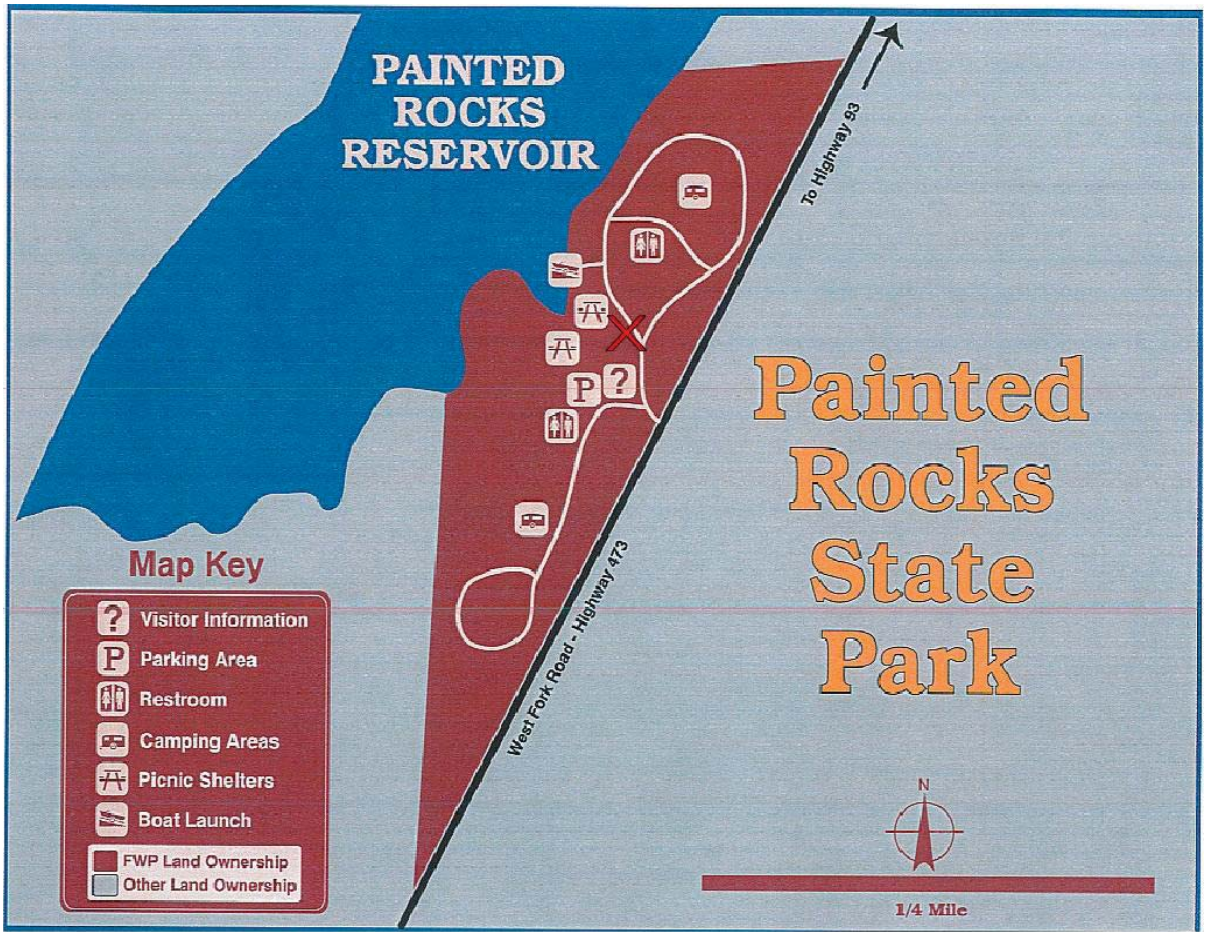

Figure 1 - Painted Rocks State Park Campground Map. The proposed location of the campground host site is marked with the red "X"

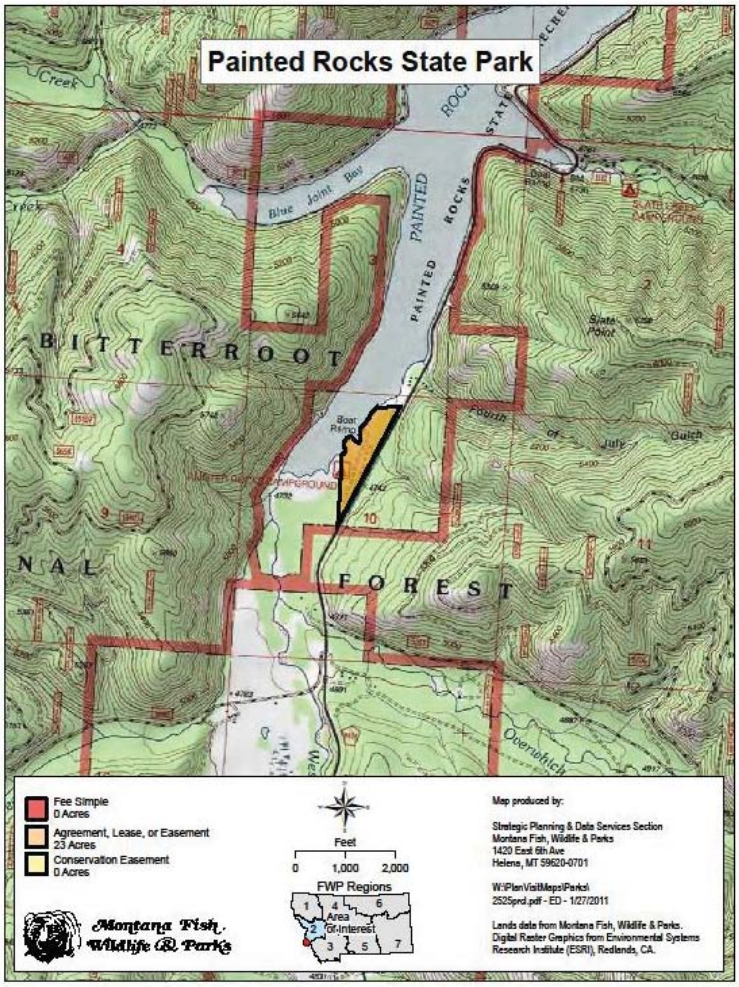

Figure 2 – Location of Painted Rocks State Park

9. Narrative Summary of the Proposed Action or Project including the Benefits and Purpose of the Proposed Action.

Painted Rocks State Park is located in MFWP Region 2, south and west of the town of Darby. The park encompasses 23 acres on the shores of Painted Rocks Reservoir, with an elevation of approximately 4700 feet and is owned by the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC). Montana State Parks manages and administers the park for the benefit and enjoyment of the public as part of the Montana State Park system through a 30 year lease.

Located in the scenic West Fork of the Bitterroot Valley, the Park, open year-round, is a popular spot for water based recreation, camping and access to the surrounding National Forest lands. Painted Rocks Reservoir (owned and operated by the Water Projects Bureau of DNRC) offers water skiing, boating, fishing, and swimming. There is a boat ramp and dock to provide access to the reservoir.

Overnight camping is available at 22 designated campsites. Fire rings, grills and picnic tables are provided at the campsites, as well as a latrine in each of the campground loops.

Painted Rocks SP is located in a fairly remote location in the Bitterroot Valley. At this time, there are no full-time staff members assigned to Painted Rocks SP. The park is administered through the nearest State Parks office at Travelers' Rest State Park, approximately 85 miles north of Painted Rocks State Park. A caretaker visits the park twice a week to clean latrines, collect fees, check the grounds and deal with any obvious issues, but it is often difficult to detect and effectively deal with any problems in such a limited time. Due to the remote location of the park and the lack of staff presence, park rules ore often ignored leading to vandalism, littering, user conflicts and social issues, and the destruction of natural resources.

In light of these problems and concerns, state park managers propose installing a site for campground hosts to stay for extended periods of time during the summer season. This will help park managers monitor and assist park visitors.

Campground hosts are typically private citizens who volunteer to serve in private and public campgrounds nationwide. These hosts fulfill a wide range of duties, including helping visitors find suitable campsites; explaining park policies, regulations, and attractions; monitoring the park and its guests, serving as first responders in emergencies and providing routine site clean up and maintenance and serving as ambassadors for the park system. In exchange for providing the services, volunteer campground hosts receive free camping in the park and are provided a rewarding opportunity to serve as ambassadors and stewards of Montana State Parks.

Competent volunteer campground hosts are highly desirable because of the many services they provide at little cost to parks. However, it is often difficult to persuade volunteers to stay long term at parks without basic water, sewer and electricity hookups for their private recreational vehicles. Volunteer campground hosts who agree to stay in unimproved sites tend to be unreliable or last a short time. Neither scenario is satisfactory for the needs of park visitors and resources.

Painted Rocks SP does not currently have a campground host site. This installation would begin in the summer of 2012 and be completed by the fall of the year. The proposed campground host site would be located on the west side of the loop road, immediately after the road forks just inside the campground entrance. This location would provide easy access and close monitoring of the boat ramp area, the most heavily used area of the park. This location is also centrally located to all the campsites in the park, making it highly visible and easy for visitors to find if they need assistance or information. The campground host site would include a graveled vehicle pull-out and pad with space for an RV and additional single vehicle parking, electricity with hook-ups and a septic tank with drain field. Construction of water & electrical service lines would come from an existing well & utilities approximately 150 yards away. (See Figure 3 – Painted Rocks Site Plan).

Figure 3 - Painted Rocks Site Plan

Additionally, a small parking area would be created to access the picnic area adjacent to the campground host site. This would consist of a graveled pad with parking for up to 4 vehicles and would be reserved for people using the day-use picnic shelter.

Trees in the area of the campground host site consist primarily of lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta)* with some aspen near the eastern edge of the park. However, a fuels reduction project in 2010-11 removed many beetle infested dead and dying trees from the campground, greatly reducing the risk to campers associated with hazard trees. The primary ground cover is a variety of forbs and grasses. Approximately 2-4 existing trees and several square yards of understory would need to be removed in order to complete the proposed project.

Figure 4 – Proposed location of campground host pad

In summary, park managers believe that the addition of a campground host site to Painted Rocks State Park will greatly increase site protection and stewardship of the park and service to park visitors. Volunteer campground host(s) will help monitor visitors, thereby greatly reducing incidents involving vandalism, littering, drug and alcohol abuse, and destruction of natural resources within the park. Campground hosts will alert park managers or law enforcement officials to any serious problems, but usually the mere presence of a campground host deters most common park violations. Campground hosts also assist visitors by providing information about the Park, the region, and the state as a whole and serve as ambassadors for the Montana State Park system. The project would have no significant environmental effects and will help to increase public enjoyment of Painted Rocks State Park.

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

(a) Permits:

Agency Name	Permit	Date Filed/#
Ravalli County		

(b) Funding:

Agency Name	Funding Amount
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks	$30,000

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

Agency Name	Type of Responsibility
State Historic Preservation Office	historic preservation clearance

11. List of Agencies Consulted During Preparation of the EA:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:
- Region 2 State Parks
- Montana State Parks Design and Construction Bureau, Helena
- Montana State Parks Operations Bureau, Helena
- FWP Legal Bureau, Helena
- FWP Wildlife and Fisheries Division, Missoula

Montana Natural Heritage Program, Species of Concern database
Montana Ground Water Information Center database
Natural Resources Conservation Service Web Soil Survey
US Department of Agriculture, Soil Survey Database
US Fish and Wildlife Service, Wetlands Database

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

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				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				
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				
f. Other						

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

1a. The excavation trench for the electric line and water pipeline will not affect geologic substructure or soil stability.

1b. Soil would be disturbed to clear ground to expand the gravel pad, for the septic drain field and for the installation of the pipeline and electrical hook-up.

1d. The proposed site is at such a distance from the reservoir that it would have no affect on the reservoir or the associated stream.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

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

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

2a. Minor and temporary dust and vehicle emissions would be created by heavy equipment during the construction, but would end after completion of the project.

Ɔ 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 can not be evaluated.

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

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

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

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

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				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?			X			3b.
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of flood water 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			3f
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?			X			3g.
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)						
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. Other:						

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

3b. The gravel pad and parking area(s) will increase surface run-off in that area but the effect will be negligible.

3f. The establishment of a drainfield for use by the host pad will have minimal impact on the groundwater quality.

3g. The presence of a campground host will result in increased water usage for the hosts personal use.

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PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

4. VEGETATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X			4a
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?		X				
f. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?						
g. Other:						

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

4a. Approximately 200 square feet of vegetation will be altered for the drain field, the host pad and parking area. This area will be reseeded after completion.

Ɔ 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 can not be evaluated.

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

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PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

< 5. FISH/WILDLIFE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
h. For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f)						
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)						
j. Other:						

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

The Montana Natural Heritage Program lists 14 Species of Concern (SOC) for the Painted Rocks State Park location. While minor impacts to these species may occur during construction of the host pad, long term impacts will not increase as the site is already located in a developed campground.

Ɔ 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 can not be evaluated.

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

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

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

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS 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 severe or nuisance noise levels?			X (positive)			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				
e. Other:		X				

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

6a. Increased noise levels will occur during construction.

6b. Long term noise levels may decrease due to increased staff presence in the form of a volunteer campground host.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

7. LAND USE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other: _____						

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

Ɔ 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 can not be evaluated.

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

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

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

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

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				
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)						
e. Other:						

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

8c. Construction workers will be exposed to normal risks associated with this type of project during construction.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				.
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?			X			
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				
f. Other:						

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

9d. Services provide by the campground host will result in improved camping conditions which in turn may bring more campers into the area and have a positive influence on local business revenues.

Ɔ 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 can not be evaluated.

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

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

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES Will the proposed action:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. 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: police protection, septic systems, solid waste disposal			X			10a.
b. Have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Result in increased use of any energy source?			X			10d.
< e. Define projected revenue sources			X			10e.
< f. Define projected maintenance costs.			X			10f
g. Other:_____						

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

10a. Primary law enforcement activities are conducted by FWP with support from the Ravalli County Sheriff's Dept. Additionally, the addition of a campground host should reduce the need for a law enforcement presence at PRSP.

10d. Electricity will be made available at the host site for use by the volunteer host at the hosts personal recreational vehicle.

10e. Camping fees will be charged beginning in 2012. Additionally, a campground host will likely result in a higher rate of compliance on the payment of camping fees.

10f. Estimated maintenance costs of the host pad and associated development is $300 per year.

Ɔ 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 can not be evaluated.

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

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

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
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 (positive)			See Appendix B: Tourism Report
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)						
e. Other:						

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

11c. A campground host will improve the quality of public recreation at Painted Rocks State Park by providing local and area information to the public; relating park and state rules and regulations; assisting visitors in campsite selection and recreational opportunities; providing improved emergency response to the park and surrounding area; and providing improved site cleanliness and routine maintenance.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
< a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				12d
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?						
e. Other:						

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

12d. Montana State Parks Heritage Resource Program Manager surveyed the site during the week of May 21, 2012. Her preliminary report to park managers concludes “In terms of resource concerns, the project will have no impact on historic or archaeological sites”.

Ɔ 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 can not be evaluated.

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

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

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

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 which 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)						
g. For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.						

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

Ɔ 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 can not be evaluated.

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

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

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

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

1. Painted Rocks State Park is managed by Montana State Parks to provide quality, water-based recreation for residents of the upper Bitterroot Valley and visitors to the area. The Park also provides a gateway to other recreational opportunities in the West Fork of the Bitterroot River drainage, including OHV use, hiking, fishing, rafting and hunting.

Due to the remote location of the park and the distance from other Montana State Park units, Painted Rocks SP is vulnerable to vandalism and violation of parks rules and regulations. It is the responsibility of Montana State Parks to provide a safe, lawful and enjoyable experience to the users of all state parks and to protect the park infrastructure and natural resources. With the very limited staff available and the travel time and cost required to manage Painted Rocks State Park, a campground host is a viable alternative to provide an important management presence on the site.

Because a water well and electricity already exist at the park, the installation of a campground host site can be done at a relatively small cost and with minimal environmental impacts. Campground hosts at Painted Rocks SP will serve to improve service, safety, and stewardship in the park and in turn create long-lasting value to the people of the State of Montana and the users of Painted Rocks State Park.

2. **Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented**:

Alternative 1. No Action
Under the no action alternative, FWP would not install the campground host site or provide a volunteer on site to provide services to the public or remind visitors of park rules and state regulations. The status quo would prevail.

Alternative 2. *Preferred Alternative.* Develop a host site for a campground host at Painted Rocks State Park.
Under this alternative, Montana State Parks will install the campground host site as described in this document. This will provide a regular summer season presence at Painted Rocks State Park, assisting in fee compliance, visitor services, rule compliance, and site maintenance.

3. **Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:**
Disturbance of surrounding vegetation during construction will be limited to the immediate vicinity to lessen the impacts from dust, surface runoff, elimination of non-native plant species, and weed encroachment. Planting native vegetation in disturbed areas will minimize the impacts of erosion and weed infestation.

Noxious weeds are a primary concern, and an integrated weed management program is part of the overall park management.

4. **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:
This environmental review revealed no significant negative impacts due to the proposed action, therefore an EIS is not necessary and an Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of analysis.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. **Describe the level of public involvement for this project if any and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?**

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on the EA, the proposed action, and the alternatives:

- One statewide press release;
- Legal notices in the *Bitterroot Star* (Stevensville), *Independent Record* (Helena), *Missoulian*, and *Ravalli Republic* (Hamilton) newspapers;
- Notification and posting the Draft EA on FWP's website http://fwp.mt.gov/ ("Public Notices," then "Environmental Assessments").

Due to the minor impacts identified in the preparation of the Draft EA, a public meeting is not scheduled for public comment on the project. Notification of the available EA will be mailed to neighboring landowners and other interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the proposed action and provide a venue to request the document. Comments are welcome, and can be submitted as listed below.

The opportunities for public input listed above are appropriate for the proposed actions since few negative environmental impacts are identified and the campground is already developed.

2. **Duration of comment period if any:**

Thirty days following the publication of the legal notices will be provided for public comment. Comments will be accepted until 5:00 P.M. on July 5, 2012, and can be mailed to:

Painted Rocks State Park Campground Host EA
PO Box 995
Lolo, MT 59847

Or emailed to: LFlynn2@mt.gov (Loren Flynn)

Or phoned to: 406-273-4253 (Loren Flynn)

Or submitted online: http://fwp.mt.gov/ ("Submit Public Comments," then "State Parks," then "Environmental Assessment/Improvement").

PART V. EA PREPARATION

1. **Name, title, address and phone number of the Person(s) Responsible for Preparing the EA:**

Loren Flynn
Park Manager
Travelers' Rest, Fort Owen and Painted Rocks State Parks
PO Box 995
Lolo MT 59847-0995
(406) 273-4253

Appendix A:

PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST
HB 495

Date May 10, 2012 Person Reviewing Loren Flynn

Project Location: Painted Rocks State Park, Ravalli County, MT. Township 2S, Range 22 W, Section 10..

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED WORK: Construct a campground host site for a volunteer campground host at Painted Rocks State Park.

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). Capital Construction projects - Prepared by D & C; Force Account Projects - Prepared by Region.

[ ] A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?

[ ] B. New building construction (buildings < 100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?

[√] C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?
Comments: Excavation for a drain field to be used by the campground host.

[ ] D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?

[ ] E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a double wide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?

[ ] F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?

[ ] G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?

[ ] H. Any new above ground utility lines?

[ ] I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?

[ ] J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern; including effects of a series of individual projects.

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.

cc: Park Managers, Region
Project File

Appendix B:

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, Visitor Services Manager
Travel Montana-Department of Commerce
301 S. Park Ave.
Helena, MT 59601

Project Name: Painted Rocks State Park Campground Host Site Development

Project Description: Montana FWP proposes to construct a campground host site at Painted Rocks State Park. This site will be used by a volunteer campground host. It is expected that the host will assist park visitors, providing information about the park and the surrounding area; relate park rules and regulations; improve customer service; and be the main point of contact for any emergency response.

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 if properly maintained. We are assuming the agency has determined it has necessary funding for the on-going operations and maintenance once this project is complete.

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 quality and quantity of tourism and recreational opportunities if properly maintained. We are assuming the agency has determined it has necessary funding for the on-going operations and maintenance once this project is complete.

Signature Carol Crockett, Visitor Services Manager Date May 14, 2012

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