Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

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

June 6, 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 implement a site improvement and protection project at the River Junction Fishing Access Site (FAS) near the town of Ovando in Powell County. Projects include making repairs to the access road, creating a parking area with 8-12 parking spaces, relocating the existing campsites and adding up to three more, and improving the pioneered boat ramp. The purpose is to accommodate existing public recreational use, prevent further degradation of the site and reduce impacts to the Blackfoot River.

The EA may also be obtained by: mailing to the address above; phoning 406-542-5500; emailing shrose@mt.gov; or viewing FWP's Internet website http://fwp.mt.gov ("Public Notices," beginning June 6).

Comments should be submitted to Chet Crowser at FWP by: mailing to the address above, emailing ccrowser@mt.gov, or phoning 406-542-5562. Comments on this Draft EA and proposal must be received by FWP no later than 5:00 pm on July 6, 2012.

As part of the decision making process under MEPA, I expect to issue the Decision Notice for this EA soon after the end of the comment period.

Sincerely,

Mack Long
Regional Supervisor

ML/sr

Draft
Environmental Assessment

RIVER JUNCTION FAS
SITE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

May 2012

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

River Junction FAS Site Improvement Project
Draft Environmental Assessment
MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. **Proposed state action:** Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes site improvements at the River Junction Fishing Access Site (FAS) including creating a parking area with 8-12 parking spaces, relocating the existing campsites and adding up to three more, and improving the pioneered boat ramp. The proposed work would provide better separation of the parking area, camping and day use areas while protecting riparian vegetation and reducing human caused sedimentation into the Blackfoot River. The purpose of the proposed project is to accommodate public recreational use of the site and to prevent further degradation along this stretch of river.

2. **Agency authority for the proposed action:** The 1977 Montana Legislature enacted statute 87-1-605, Montana Code Annotated (MCA), which directs FWP to acquire, develop and operate a system of fishing accesses. FWP has the authority to develop outdoor recreational resources in the state per 23-2-101, MCA: *"for the purpose of conserving the scenic, historic, archaeologic, scientific, and recreational resources of the state and providing their use and enjoyment, thereby contributing to the cultural, recreational, and economic life of the people and their health."*

   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. ARM 12.8.602 requires the Department to consider the wishes of users and the public, the capacity of the site for development, environmental impacts, long-range maintenance, protection of natural features and impacts on tourism as these elements relate to development or improvement to fishing access sites or state parks. This document would illuminate the facets of the proposed project in relation to this rule. See Appendix A for HB 495 qualification.

3. **Name of project:** River Junction FAS Site Improvement Project

4. **Project sponsor:** Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks Region 2
   3201 Spurgin Road
   Missoula, MT 59804
   406-542-5500

5. **Anticipated Timeline:**
   Estimated Construction/Commencement Date: Late Summer 2012
   Estimated Completion Date: Fall 2012
   Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 10%

6. **Location:** River Junction FAS is located along the Blackfoot River at the confluence of the Blackfoot and North Fork Blackfoot Rivers. It is 38 miles east of Bonner on Montana Highway 200, then southeast on an unmarked county road (FAS sign at the junction) for 9 rough miles. It is located within T14N, R12W, Sections 8 and 9 in Powell County. The FAS is situated in the Blackfoot valley between the Swan range to the north and the Garnet range to the south. See Figure 1 for location map, Figure 2 for topographic map and Figure 3 for an aerial map.

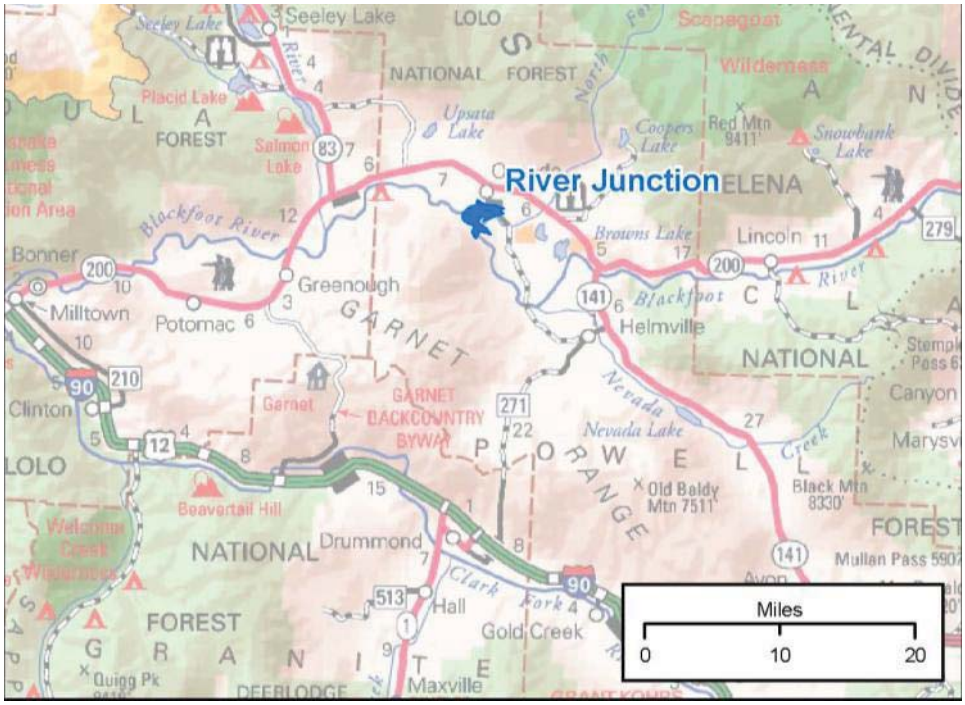

Figure 1. River Junction FAS location map.

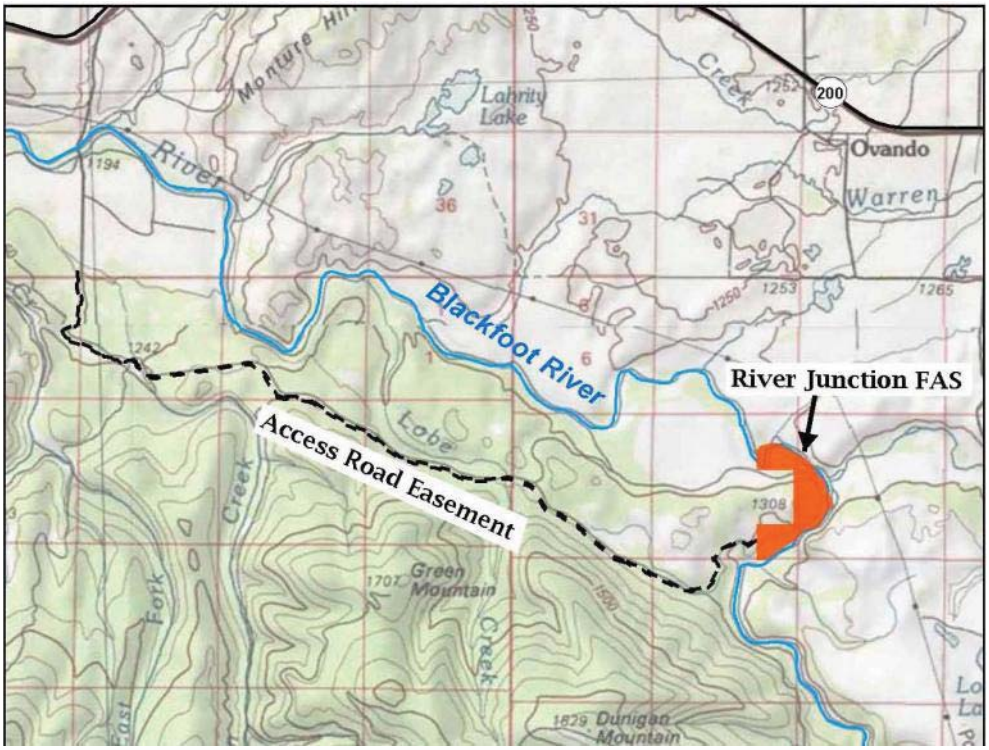

Figure 2. River Junction FAS topographic map.

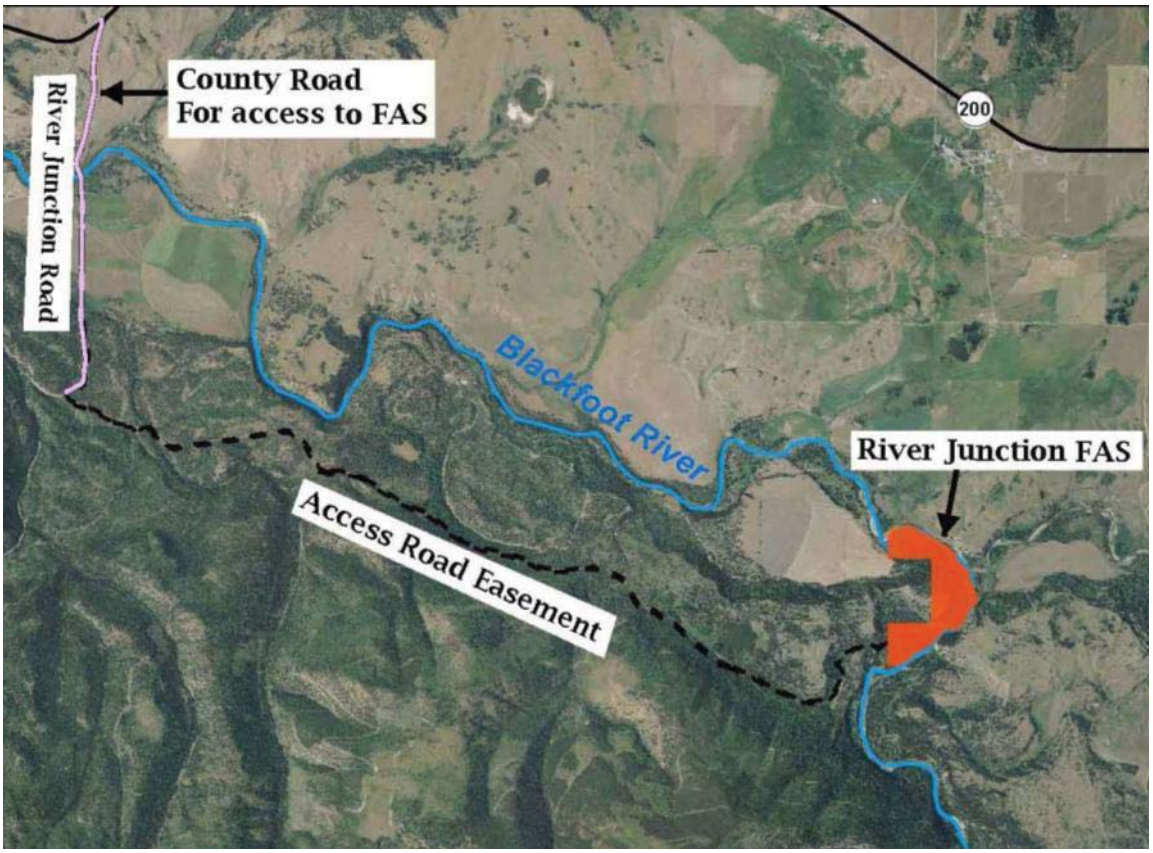

Figure 3. River Junction FAS aerial map.

7. Project size:

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

8. Local, State or Federal agencies with overlapping or additional jurisdiction:

a) Permits: Permits would be filed 60 days prior to work

Agency Name	Permit
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP)	124 MT Stream Protection Act
Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality	318 Short Term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity
US Corps of Engineers	404 Federal Clean Water Act
Powell County	Floodplain Permit

b) Funding: Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks FAS Development $ 74, 500

c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

Agency Name	Type of Responsibility
Natural Heritage Program	Species of Concern (See Appendix B)
State Historic Preservation Office	Cultural Clearance
US Fish & Wildlife Service	Bald & Golden Eagle Protection Act
US Fish & Wildlife Service	Migratory Bird Treaty Act
Montana Bald Eagle Working Group	Montana Bald Eagle Management Plan
Powell County Weed Board	Weed Management Plan Approval

9. Narrative summary of the proposed action:

This project proposes several site improvements at the River Junction (FAS) including creating an upper and lower parking area with 8-12 parking spaces total, improving the existing campsites and adding up to three more, and improvements to the pioneered boat ramp. The proposed work would provide separation of the parking area, day use and camping while protecting riparian vegetation and reducing human caused sedimentation into the Blackfoot River. The purpose of the proposed project is to accommodate public recreational use of the site while preventing further degradation of the natural resources along this stretch of river.

The site currently has seven campsites, a pioneered boat ramp, a vault latrine and limited parking. The existing pioneered boat ramp would be improved as a gravel boat ramp. Parking would be re-directed to two designated parking areas to eliminate the indiscriminate parking that occurs along the river, road and campsites. The proposed work would provide better separation for a day use area and designated camping area.

Montana FWP expects to allow continued public access to area anglers, floaters, boaters and campers during construction. The work would be done in the fall of 2012 to accommodate low water flows. The exact timing of the work would depend on the design, bidding and water flows.

This site is a popular float from River Junction FAS to Russell Gates Memorial FAS or Harry Morgan FAS. This site is a stop-over for floaters for lunch or overnight camping. Proposed parking improvements would increase safety, reduce dust and would prevent further degradation of the vegetation. Along the river wetland vegetation includes various willow species, wild roses, buffalo berry, choke cherry, sedges and grasses.

Recent surveys conducted by FWP show that the Blackfoot River supports over 57,000 angler days per year, with an average of over 17,000 angler days per year in the stretch from the Clearwater River to the North Fork of the Blackfoot, where River Junction FAS is located (river miles 51.8-53.4). This stretch of river is considered a red-ribbon stream, the highest rating of outstanding. Game fish opportunities in the river include brown trout, mountain whitefish, rainbow trout, and westslope cutthroat trout.

In addition to angling, the River Junction also provides access to some nice floating and rafting opportunities in the Blackfoot. High flows on the Blackfoot create class II and class III white water attracting both private and commercial use. As is currently in effect, FWP Commercial Use Rules for commercial outfitters who use the site for river access and the Special Recreation Permit (SRP) permitting commercial, competitive and organized groupings would continue to apply for use of the Blackfoot River.

10. Alternatives:

A. No Action Alternative:

If no action is taken, users of this site would continue to park haphazardly and degrade current vegetation along the road and around the trees. Without an established footprint for parking and camping, pioneered areas would likely continue and expand over time. Without improvements to the access road, the road would continue to degrade and over time become more difficult to access the site.

B. Preferred Alternative B: Improve Access Road, Parking Area, Campsites and Boat Ramp:

The preferred alternative would develop an upper and lower parking area with approximately 8-12 designated parking spaces to protect the native vegetation. The pioneered boat ramp would be improved as a gravel boat ramp. The proposed work would also provide better separation of the parking, day use area, and the designated camping areas. See Appendix E for the preliminary concept plan for this preferred alternative.

Currently the project budget is $74,500 and the preferred alternative is within that budget and best meets the objectives to accommodate the numbers of users of the site.

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

No bald eagle nests are located on the River Junction FAS parcel; however, bald and golden eagles are seen in the area foraging along the Blackfoot River. There is a nest approximately ½ mile from the parcel boundary. No construction would occur along this boundary. While bald eagles were officially delisted in 2007, the US Fish and Wildlife Service have jurisdiction protecting this species under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). At the state level, the Montana Bald Eagle Working Group was formed in 1982 and is composed of representatives from federal and state agencies, tribes, universities, conservation groups, and private industry. In 1994 the group developed a "Montana Bald Eagle Management Plan" to provide information and guide landowners and resource managers in conserving eagle habitat.

Control measures associated with the proposed actions for decreasing the impacts of the construction work during the ramp construction include timing the earthwork to coincide with the period of lowest flow (August, September) to minimize bed-load transport of redistributed bank materials and of channel materials during the ramp construction. Construction during low flow means that any materials mobilized into the stream channel would have minimum energy for transport. Thus, while sediment would be mobilized, only the silt, clay, and fine sand sized particles would move any distance downstream and, it is unlikely these particles would travel more than 200-300 yards before dropping out.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

Evaluation of the impacts of the Preferred Alternative including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

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			1a.
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?			X		YES Positive	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		YES Positive	1d.
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				

1a. Soil and geologic substructure would remain stable during and after the proposed work.

1b. The proposed work is intended to reduce sediment delivery into the river. Furthermore, the uncontrolled/pioneered parking is degrading the upland vegetation causing additional sedimentation into the river and generating a lot of particulate (dust) causing health and safety issues for campers and people using the site, and results in compaction of the soil making revegetation less likely. The preferred alternative B mitigates both of these issues.

1d. Improving the existing pioneered boat ramp as a gravel boat ramp would also have a positive impact on the current erosion at the site.

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

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

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

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

2. AIR Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. **Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)			X		YES	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.)		NA				

2a. During the construction work in the preferred alternative B, temporary amounts of dust may be generated during the soil excavation and placement in the flood plain. If additional materials are needed off-site, loading at the source site would generate minor amounts of dust. See Appendix E for the preliminary concept site plan for the preferred Alternative B. FWP follows the Best Management Practices (BMPs) during all phases of construction to minimize risks and reduce dust. See Appendix D for the BMPs.

Alternative A (no action) does not correct the dust and particulate issues at the campsites. Dust is generated by vehicle traffic passing through the camping area causing health and safety issues for humans and contributing to fine sediments into the river.

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3. WATER Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. *Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?			X		YES	3a.
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?			X			3c.
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		YES	3h.
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)		NA				
m. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)		NA				

3a. The ramp work in preferred alternative B would cause temporary and minor amounts of turbidity during construction. Construction is planned during low flow to ensure minimal impact.

3c. Improving the boat launch would reduce the human impacts to the riparian vegetation and decrease silt introduced into the river during high flow periods.

3h. FWP follows the Best Management Practices during all phases of construction to minimize sediment delivery to the river. See Appendix D for the BMPs.

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

4a. After the completion of the proposed improvements, revegetation of the riverbank would require seeding or sod placement altering the diversity of the plant community on the site. Any plant additions such as grasses and willows would improve the present mix of native and introduced species. Species known to exist on site primarily includes ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, rocky mountain juniper, willows, wild roses, buffalo berry, choke cherry, with abundant wildflowers including arnica, bluebells, chickweed, Indian paintbrush, kinnikinnick, lupine, penstemon, prairie smoke, pussy toes, sticky geranium, stone crop, wild strawberries, and yarrow as well as various grasses but also includes areas of noxious weeds including spotted knapweed, Canada thistle, yellow toadflax, oxeye daisy, houndstongue, sulfur cinquefoil. Riparian habitat would be increased with the improvements to the boat ramp.

Alternative B provides designated parking areas that would positively impact the vegetation by preventing continued degradation of the vegetation that has resulted from the haphazard indiscriminate parking along the road and under the trees. A minimal number of trees may be removed to provide open space for additional parking and some upland grassland vegetation may be removed from the parking area, but overall would positively impact vegetation, by restricting parking to designated areas. If no action is taken (Alternative A) the indiscriminate haphazard parking would continue to degrade vegetation in the area and is more likely to increase the spread of noxious weeds.

4b. This area is characterized by open stands of ponderosa pine and open prairie. Mixed grasses including horsetails and a variety of shrubs dominate the prairie vegetation. Along the river wetlands include various willow species, wild roses, sedges and grasses. Evergreens above the wetlands include ponderosa pine, Douglas fir and Rocky Mountain juniper. Various grasses and spotted knapweed is also seen throughout. Other noxious weeds identified during the site visit included toadflax, sulfur cinquefoil, houndstongue, Canada thistle, and oxeye daisy. Because the public already uses the property, the proposed work should not negatively impact the plant community and should help protect the existing ground cover. For preferred alternative B should improve the vegetation through site protection measures including signage and designated parking should have a positive impact by not allowing indiscriminate vehicle parking.

4c. A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program's (MNHP) species of concern database found no vascular or non-vascular plant Species of Significance within the boundaries of the River Junction FAS. Howell's Gumweed (Grinelia howellii) was identified in the report in this general area, but not on the property (see Appendix B for the Species of Concern report) and is considered sensitive status by USFS and BLM. Statewide is ranked potentially at risk because of limited and/or potentially declining numbers, range, and/or

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habitat, making it vulnerable to global extinction or extirpation in the state, even though it is abundant in some areas in the Ovando valley. But globally it is potentially at risk and is not vulnerable in most of its range. Howell's Gumweed is a species of concern in Montana but not listed as a threatened species. Invasive weeds are a threat to many occurrences, as the habitat occupied by Howell's Gumweed is also favorable for many weedy species. Application of herbicides to control these weeds, especially along roadsides may also have a direct, negative impact.

4e. This property currently has infestations of spotted knapweed, with some Canada thistle, sulfur cinquefoil, hounds tongue, oxeye daisy and common crupina. Approximately 10% of the site infested with noxious weeds. FWP utilizes the Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan to control the noxious weeds on the property by using chemical, biological and mechanical methods approved by the Powell County Weed District and in conjunction with the Blackfoot Challenge. The Blackfoot Challenge is a landowner-based group that coordinates management of the Blackfoot River, its tributaries, and adjacent lands. The Blackfoot River Challenge Leafy Spurge Project starts at River Junction FAS and works downstream to the mouth of the Blackfoot River. The Leafy Spurge Project is in its 11th year and no leafy spurge is currently found at River Junction. An aggressive weed management program would facilitate the restoration of native vegetation. Adding designated parking spaces would help deter motorized vehicles from using the roadways and other open space for parking, which disturbs the natural vegetation and results in the spread of weeds. Informative signage should also help prevent the spread of weeds. See Figures 4 and 5 for the FWP Weed Inventory Maps conducted in 2009 and 2006.

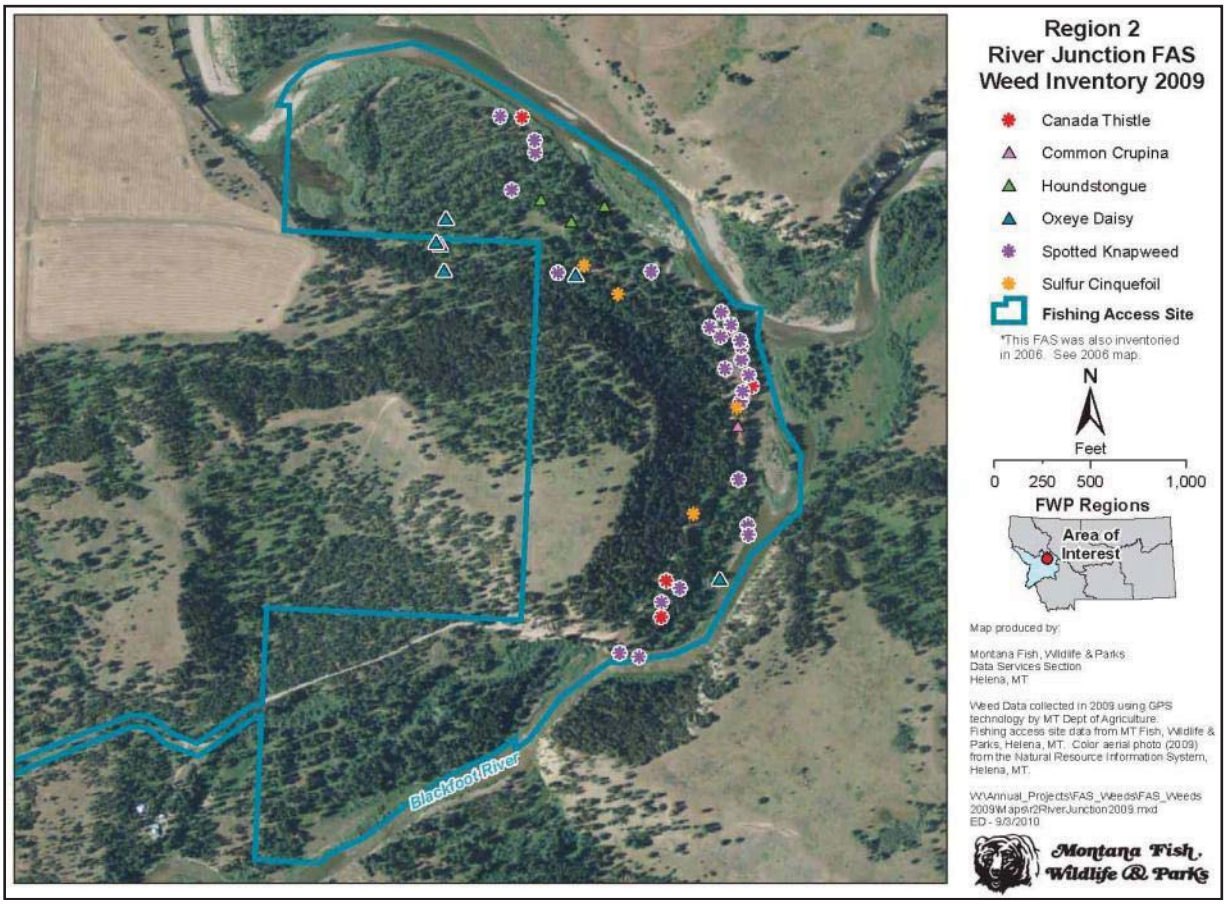

Figure 4. Weed inventory of River Junction FAS by FWP in 2009.

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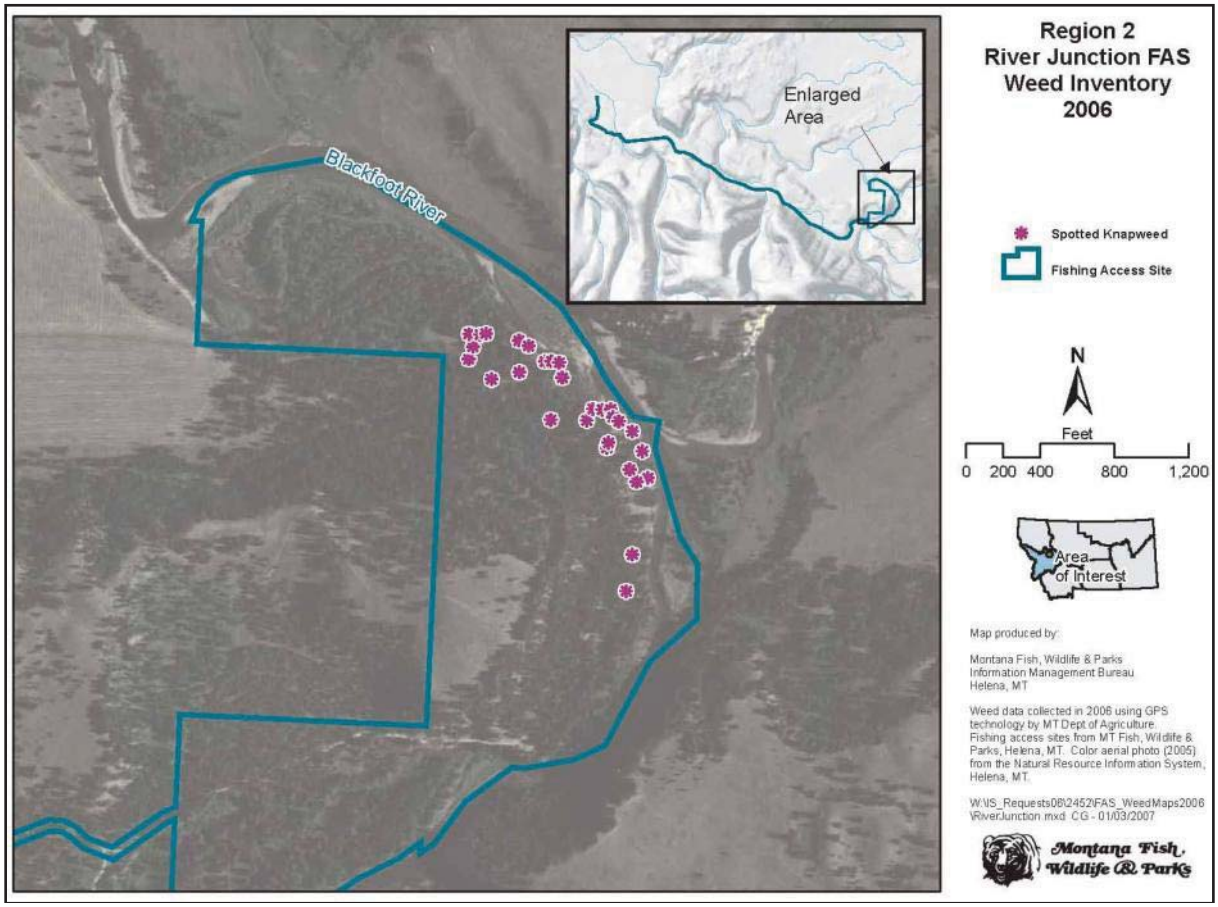

Figure 5. Weed inventory of River Junction FAS by FWP in 2006.

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** 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.)		NA				
i. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		NA				

5a. For preferred Alternative B the improvements planned for River Junction FAS are designed to minimize impacts to wildlife habitat. A minimal number of trees may be removed for the designated parking areas, but every effort would be made to preserve all large healthy trees. Some beetle-killed trees may be removed in the development of the parking area. This stretch of the Blackfoot is not considered critical fish habitat although the waters upstream are critical but the proposed work would not impact the river upstream.

5b/c. No change in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species is expected for either Alternatives A or B. Located near Junction River FAS is the 50,000-acre Blackfoot Clearwater Wildlife Management Area, which has high seasonal concentrations of big game and their predators. Black bears and grizzly bears use the area and the precautions to maintain sanitary food and garbage storage are posted at the FAS. A bear-proof food storage area is provided at River Junction FAS. Improving the site is intended to help meet the current use. This site is used by floaters and campers and the better separation of day-use and overnight use and the improved boat ramp and increased parking opportunities would enhance the visitor experience at the site, but is not expected to increase use at the site. More use on the river may impact waterfowl, but the amount of work at the site is not expected to increase use. Riparian habitat provides critical habitat for many species of songbirds and supports a higher density and diversity of birds than any other habitat. Improved riparian habitat would help non-game species.

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5f. A search of the Natural Resources Information System provided by the Montana Natural Heritage Program showed that no endangered species are in the vicinity of the property. However, the property is potential habitat for bull trout (federally classified as threatened) and westslope cutthroat trout, bald eagle, northern goshawk, long-billed curlew, black-backed woodpecker, brown creeper, Pacific wren, Brewer's sparrow, grasshopper sparrow, Cassin's finch, fisher, wolverine, and Canada lynx (classified threatened federally). The FWP R2 Wildlife Biologist, Jay Kolbe has no concerns with the project impacting wildlife in the area. FWP Non-game Wildlife Biologist, Kristi DuBois has no concerns with the proposed improvements, noting River Junction FAS is fairly well timbered, and does not provide any suitable habitat for long-billed curlews, Brewer's sparrows, or grasshopper sparrows. The small area of grasslands is too small to support any of these species. The habitat there is pretty marginal for nesting brown creepers and Pacific wrens, though there is a slim chance that some may pass through during migration.

The FWP Furbearer Coordinator Brian Giddings notes it is unlikely that the fisher, wolverine (both classified sensitive) and Canada lynx (classified threatened) pass through this parcel, as it is not likely habitat.

FWP Wolf Management Specialist Liz Bradley identified three wolf packs in the Blackfoot valley in the general vicinity, though she notes wolves from these packs have never been located on River Junction FAS. The Belmont pack (10 wolves estimated) located around the Belmont Creek area, south of Placid Lake. The Elevation Mountain pack (two adults and three pups), have a territory that extends from the Hoodoos south of Helmville over into the foothills west of Helmville and the Chamberlain Creek areas. The Ovando Mountain pack (three adults and four pups) have a territory on and around the Ovando Mountain area north of Ovando including the north fork of the Blackfoot and Monture Creek drainages. Dispersing single wolves are a common occurrence on the Montana landscape and can show up anytime/any place. The gray wolf may use this parcel as a travel corridor but it is unlikely they reside on the property and the proposed work should not impact the wolves.

Native species of the Blackfoot watershed along this area are bull trout (federally threatened species), westslope cutthroat trout, mountain whitefish, pigmy whitefish, longnose sucker, largescale sucker, northern pikeminnow, peamouth, redside shiner, longnose dace, slimy sculpin and mottled sculpin. Non-native species include rainbow trout, brown trout, brook trout, and white sucker. There may be minor short-term impact to the fish during the ramp construction, but would be minor and temporary, and once completed should not impact the fishery.

Please see Appendix B Montana Natural History Program (MNHP) Native Species Report for more information on these species.

5g. The land is currently used by the public for camping, as well as fishing and floating and boating. Only non-motorized boats are permitted on this river. The proposed work should not increase negative conditions that stress wildlife populations and should have a neutral impact on the fishery.

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B. 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			6b.
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				

6a. Construction equipment would cause a temporary increase in noise levels at this site for Alternative B.

6b. If construction noise levels exceed a level deemed unsafe over a workday time frame, all workers would be required to wear proper ear protection. FWP would follow the Best Management Practices during all phases of construction to minimize risks. See Appendix D for BMPs.

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				

For Alternative B the proposed improvements would not alter or interfere with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use and is intended to prevent further erosion to the bank. There may be a temporary inconvenience during the proposed improvements adding designated parking. The land is in a floodplain and wetland riparian area that serves as important habitat for a variety of mammal, bird and fish species. See also 5f and 5g Fish/Wildlife comments in previous section.

* 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.

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

8a. FWP already manages for noxious weeds on the property following the Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan utilizing a combined method of managing weeds. The use of herbicides would be in compliance with application guidelines and applied by people trained in safe handling techniques. Weeds would also be controlled using mechanical or biological means in certain areas to reduce the risk of chemical spills or water contamination. FWP works with Powell County Weed District for approval of the Weed Management Plan. The proposed project includes revegetation to reduce the spreading of noxious weeds. Weed management would continue for both Alternatives A and B, but if no action is taken, the indiscriminate parking increases the spread of the noxious weeds, requiring more weed management than the Preferred Alternative B.

Operation of heavy equipment proximal to a surface water body presents a temporary potential risk of fuel or lubricating oil release into the surface water for both Alternative B. Contractors would have on site absorbent materials to minimize any hydrocarbon releases, as well as conduct startup inspection of all hydraulic lines and cylinder seals daily to reduce the potential for a release. FWP would follow the Best Management Practices during all phases of construction to minimize risks. See Appendix D for BMPs.

8c. The proposed work would have a positive impact resulting in less of a risk of a potential hazard by improving the access road, provide designated parking and improve the boat ramp and campsites.

* 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.

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		YES Positive	9e.

Alternative B proposed work would have a positive impact by improving and preserving the entrance road and campsites along the Blackfoot River at River Junction FAS and providing better separation of overnight and day-use areas developing designated parking to improve traffic hazards and the safety of motorists and recreationists visiting the site.

9e. The new boat ramp would be safer than the eroded pioneered boat ramp currently in use. Increased parking should positively improve the visitor experiences by providing designated parking improving traffic flow and safety of vehicles coming in and out of the FAS and the visitors using the site.

* 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. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES 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				10b.
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?		X				
e. **Define projected revenue sources		X				
f. **Define projected maintenance costs.						10f.

10b. No change in tax base as FWP pays property taxes in an amount equal to that of a private individual.

Preferred Alternative B would add designated parking areas and improve the pioneered boat ramp at River Junction FAS as well as a couple of campground spaces. The daily campsite fees are currently $12 without a fishing license, $7 with a fishing license, and ½ price for Montana residents over age 62 or disabled. In the preferred alternative B, campsite #1 would be eliminated to improve vegetation along the bank and add a day use area, but a couple of new campsites would be added near the parking area, resulting in a slight increase in number of campsites. Camping revenue collected in 2009 was $1835 from 258 camping fee envelopes. Also estimated from vehicle license plates listed on the fee envelopes 74% of campers were residents, 26% were non-residents. Day use is estimated at 3,333 visits of which 79% are resident and 21% non-resident. Day use is estimated to be 87% of overall use at this site.

10f. The maintenance costs for this property involve a weed management estimation of $1300 for 2012 from the FWP Region 2 maintenance budget. No additional costs are budgeted at this time for on-going maintenance and maintenance costs may be reduced over time once improved with designated parking 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.

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

11a. For the preferred alternative B, the proposed work would have limited public view other than users of the site at that time. The proposed parking areas are away from the river, in a currently undeveloped upland area.

11c. The property would continue to be a destination for camping, floating, boating and fishing. See Appendix C for the Department of Commerce Tourism Report.

During construction, there would be a temporary inconvenience to the general public using the site and the boat ramp. Furthermore, after the work is completed, the users of the site are expected to benefit from the better separation of the camping area from the day-use area and parking 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.

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				
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.)		NA				

Cultural resource inventories have identified no areas of cultural significance in the project vicinity. If cultural materials are discovered during the project, work would cease and SHPO would be contacted for a more in depth investigation. SHPO letter of clearance would be obtained prior to beginning the work.

* 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					13a.
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. ***For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)		NA				
g. ****For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		NA				

13a. Preferred Alternative B would improve accessibility with designated parking and better separation of day-use and camping, as well as an improved gravel ramp.

The cumulative effects are unclear. The proposed work should have a neutral effect on the fishery. The public would have access regardless of this project, but the access road and some campsites may be in jeopardy if no action is taken. This project, on balance, does not improve aquatic habitat, but would improve the riparian habitat. Riparian habitat provides critical habitat for many species of songbirds and any improvement in riparian habitat would positively impact non-game species.

* 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.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The proposed work would have no negative cumulative effects on the physical and human environments. When considered over the long-term, the proposed improvements pose positive effects toward the public's continued access of a scenic recreation area of the Blackfoot River. The benefits of the proposed work in Alternative B best meet the objectives of FWP managing these important resources to assure the safety of visitors, as well as resource protection, enhancement, and maintenance.

The minor impacts that were identified in the previous section are small in scale and would not influence the overall environment of the immediate area. The natural environment would continue to exist to provide habitat to migratory and permanent wildlife species and would continue to be open to the public for access to the river for bank fishing, floating and boating activities, and camping. The design of the improvements in Alternative B provides better separation of the day-use and camping at the site to reduce potential conflicts between visitors and develops designated parking to better meet the current use, without necessarily increasing capacity and should ease congestion, reduce dust and eliminate indiscriminate haphazard parking along the road and the degradation of native vegetation and should improve the habitat for species in the area.

A search of the Natural Resources Information System (See Appendix B) provided by the Montana Natural Heritage Program showed that no endangered species are in the vicinity of the property. However, the property is potential habitat for bull trout (federally classified as threatened) and westslope cutthroat trout, bald eagle, northern goshawk, long-billed curlew, black-backed woodpecker, brown creeper, Pacific wren, Brewer's sparrow, grasshopper sparrow, Cassin's finch, fisher, wolverine, and Canada lynx (classified threatened federally).

It is unlikely that the fisher, wolverine and Canada Lynx pass through this parcel; it is not likely habitat. There are three wolf packs that use the area around River Junction FAS but none of these packs have ever been located on the FAS and no known den or rendezvous sites are in the vicinity. The gray wolf may use this parcel as a travel corridor, but it is unlikely they reside on the property. River Junction FAS is fairly well timbered, and does not provide any suitable habitat for long-billed curlews, Brewer's sparrows, or grasshopper sparrows. The small area of grasslands is too small to support any of these species. The habitat there is pretty marginal for nesting brown creepers and Pacific wrens, though there is a slim chance that some may pass through during migration.

The Blackfoot River supports several species of fish: bull trout (federally threatened species), westslope cutthroat trout, mountain whitefish, pigmy whitefish, northern pikeminnow, peamouth, redside shiner, and longnose dace. Non-native species include rainbow trout, brown trout, brook trout, and white sucker. There may be minor short-term impacts to the fish, but would be minor and temporary. Once construction is completed, the ramp should have a neutral impact on the fishery.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Public Involvement:

The public would be notified by way of legal notices in the *Independent Record* (Helena), *Missoulian, Seeley Swan Pathfinder,* and *Silver State Post* (Deer Lodge) newspapers, in addition to a statewide press release. The Public Notice and the EA would also be posted on FWP's web page: http://fwp.mt.gov/news/publicNotices/. A direct mailing would be sent to adjacent landowners and interested parties. Additionally, copies would be available at FWP Region 2 Headquarters. This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having few minor impacts.

If requested within the comment period, the department may arrange a public meeting.

2. Duration of comment period.

A 30-day comment period is proposed as appropriate for the scale of this project. The comment period would extend for 30 days following publication of the second legal notice in the local newspaper. Comments must be received not later than 5 p.m. on July 6, 2012. Comments should be:

Mailed to: River Junction FAS Improvement Project
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula MT 59804

Emailed to: Chet Crowser at ccrowser@mt.gov

Phoned to: 406-542-5562 (Chet Crowser)

PART V. 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 upon the above assessment, which has identified a **small** number of minor impacts from the proposed action and no significant negative impacts from the proposed action, an EIS is not required and an environmental assessment is the appropriate level of review. We conclude from this review that the proposed activities would have a positive impact on the physical and human environment. Positive impacts in this resulting from the work proposed in Alternative B would include:

- Designated parking to ease congestion, reduce dust and eliminate indiscriminate haphazard parking along the road and the degradation of native vegetation.
- Separation of day-use and camping areas to reduce the potential for conflicts between visitors.
- Protection of the access road and campsites along the bank at River Junction FAS.

2. Person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:

Chet Crowser
FWP Region 2 FAS Coordinator
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804
ccrowser@mt.gov
406-542-5562

Pam Boggs
FWP EA Coordinator
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
pboggs@mt.gov

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

Blackfoot Challenge
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- Parks Division
- Fish & Wildlife Division
  - Design and Construction Unit
  - Fisheries Bureau
  - Wildlife Bureau
- Lands Unit
- Legal Unit

Montana Department of Commerce – Tourism
Montana Natural Heritage Program – Natural Resources Information System (NRIS)
Powell County Weed District
State Historical Preservation Office

Appendices

A. HB 495 Project Qualification Checklist (FWP)

B. Sensitive Plants and Animals in the River Junction FAS Area (Montana Natural Heritage Program [MNHP] Native Species Report)

C. Tourism Report (Montana Department of Commerce)

D. Best Management Practices for Fishing Access Sites (FWP)

E. Draft FWP Preliminary Concept Plan for River Junction FAS (Preferred Alternative B)

Appendix A:

HB495

PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

Date June 29, 2011 **Person Reviewing** Pam Boggs

Project Location: River Junction FAS is along the Blackfoot River 36 miles east of Bonner on Highway 200. It is located within Township 15 North, Range 14 West, Sections 8 and 9 in Powell County.

Description of Proposed Work: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks proposes to add a parking lot and gravel boat ramp, reclaiming the pioneered ramp providing better separation of day use and camping and to stabilize a section of eroding riverbank on the Blackfoot River at River Junction FAS.

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.)

[Y] A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?
Comments: No new roadways or trails for preferred Alternative B.

[ ] B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?
Comments: No new buildings.

[Y] C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?
Comments: Some excavation during creation of new parking area.

[Y] D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?
Comments: There are only four parking spaces at the FAS, although, visitors park along the road way and around the trees, damaging vegetation, so a designated parking lot will be developed to accommodate up to 8-12 parking spaces.

[Y] E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a doublewide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?
Comments: Improve pioneered ramp with a new gravel ramp.

[Y] F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?
Comments: Proposed improvements to pioneered boat ramp into the Blackfoot River bank.

[ ] G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?
Comments: SHPO concurrence letter will be obtained prior to the work beginning. If artifacts are discovered in areas excavated, work will cease and SHPO will be contacted.

[ ] H. Any new above ground utility lines?
Comments: No new utility lines.

[ ] I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?
Comments: Currently there are seven campsites and one will be moved and several will be added up to a maximum of 10 campsites total.

[Y] J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern; including effects of a series of individual projects?
Comments: The proposed work will provide a better separation of day use and campsites and the new parking lot will eliminate the haphazard indiscriminate parking at the site.

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:
SENSITIVE PLANTS AND ANIMALS IN THE RIVER JUNCTION FAS AREA

Species of Concern Terms and Definitions

A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) element occurrence database (http://nris.mt.gov) indicates no known occurrences of federally listed threatened, endangered, or proposed threatened or endangered plant species in the proposed project site although Howell's Gumweed was identified near this area. The search did indicate the project area is within habitat for Bald Eagle, Northern Goshawk, Long-billed Curlew, Black-backed Woodpecker, Brown Creeper, Pacific Wren, Brewer's Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Cassin's Finch, Westslope Cutthroat Trout, Bull Trout, Fisher, Wolverine and Canada Lynx. Please see the next page for more information on these species.

Montana Species of Concern. The term **"Species of Concern"** includes taxa that are at-risk or potentially at-risk due to rarity, restricted distribution, habitat loss, and/or other factors. The term also encompasses species that have a special designation by organizations or land management agencies in Montana, including: Bureau of Land Management Special Status and Watch species; U.S. Forest Service Sensitive and Watch species; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Threatened, Endangered and Candidate species.

Status Ranks (Global and State)

The international network of Natural Heritage Programs employs a standardized ranking system to denote global (**G** -- range-wide) and state status (**S**) (Nature Serve 2003). Species are assigned numeric ranks ranging from 1 (critically imperiled) to 5 (demonstrably secure), reflecting the relative degree to which they are "at-risk". Rank definitions are given below. A number of factors are considered in assigning ranks -- the number, size and distribution of known "occurrences" or populations, population trends (if known), habitat sensitivity, and threat. Factors in a species' life history that make it especially vulnerable are also considered (e.g., dependence on a specific pollinator).

Status Ranks	
Code	**Definition**
G1 **S1**	At high risk because of extremely limited and/or rapidly declining numbers, range, and/or habitat, making it highly vulnerable to global extinction or extirpation in the state.
G2 **S2**	At risk because of very limited and/or declining numbers, range, and/or habitat, making it vulnerable to global extinction or extirpation in the state.
G3 **S3**	Potentially at risk because of limited and/or declining numbers, range, and/or habitat, even though it may be abundant in some areas.
G4 **S4**	Uncommon but not rare (although it may be rare in parts of its range), and usually widespread. Apparently not vulnerable in most of its range, but possibly cause for long-term concern.
G5 **S5**	Common, widespread, and abundant (although it may be rare in parts of its range). Not vulnerable in most of its range.

MFWP Conservation Need. Under Montana's Comprehensive Fish and Wildlife Conservation Strategy of 2005, individual animal species are assigned levels of conservation need as follows:

Tier I. Greatest conservation need. Montana FWP has a clear obligation to use its resources to implement conservation actions that provide direct benefit to these species, communities and focus areas.

Tier II. Moderate conservation need. Montana FWP could use its resources to implement conservation actions that provide direct benefit to these species communities and focus areas.

Tier III. Lower conservation need. Although important to Montana's wildlife diversity, these species, communities and focus areas are either abundant or widespread or are believed to have adequate conservation already in place.

Tier IV. Species that are non-native, incidental or on the periphery of their range and are either expanding or very common in adjacent states.

Sensitive Plants and Animals in the vicinity of River Junction FAS along the Blackfoot River

1. Haliaeetus leucocephalus (Bald Eagle)

Natural Heritage Ranks:	Federal Agency Status:
State: **S3**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: **DM**
Global: **G5**	U.S. Forest Service: **Threatened**
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier: 1

Five Element Occurrence data reported of bald eagle in the proximate area of this parcel. Last observation date was 2005.

2. Accipiter gentilis (Northern Goshawk)

Natural Heritage Ranks:	Federal Agency Status:
State: **S3**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
Global: **G5**	U.S. Forest Service:
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier: 2

One Element Occurrence of the northern goshawk was reported in the proximate area, south of this parcel in 1981.

3. Numenius americanus (Long-billed Curlew)

Natural Heritage Ranks:	Federal Agency Status:
State: **S3B**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
Global: **G5**	U.S. Forest Service:
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier: 2

One Element Occurrence data reported of long-billed curlew in 2006 in the proximate area, north of this parcel, preferring grassland habitat.

4. Picoides arcticus (Black-backed Woodpecker)

Natural Heritage Ranks:	Federal Agency Status:
State: **S3**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
Global: **G5**	U.S. Forest Service: **Sensitive**
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier: 1

One Element Occurrence data reported in 1996 of black-backed woodpecker in the proximate area, northwest of this parcel.

5. Certhia americana (Brown Creeper)

Natural Heritage Ranks:	Federal Agency Status:
State: **S3**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
Global: **G5**	U.S. Forest Service:
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

FWP CFWCS Tier: 2

One Element Occurrence data reported of brown creeper in 2006 in the proximate area, southwest of this parcel.

6. Troglodytes pacificus (Pacific Wren)

Natural Heritage Ranks:	Federal Agency Status:
State: **S3**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
Global: **G5**	U.S. Forest Service:
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

FWP CFWCS Tier: 2

One Element Occurrence data reported of Pacific wren in 2000 in the proximate area, southwest of this parcel.

7. Spizella breweri (Brewer's Sparrow)

Natural Heritage Ranks:	Federal Agency Status:
State: **S3B**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
Global: **G5**	U.S. Forest Service:
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

FWP CFWCS Tier: 2

One Element Occurrence data reported of Brewer's sparrow in 1993 in the proximate area, southeast of this parcel, preferring sagebrush habitat.

8. Ammodramus savannarum (Grasshopper Sparrow)

Natural Heritage Ranks:	Federal Agency Status:
State: **S3B**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
Global: **G5**	U.S. Forest Service:
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

FWP CFWCS Tier: 2

One Element Occurrence data reported of grasshopper sparrow in 1996 in the proximate area, west of this parcel, preferring grasslands habitat.

9. Carpodacus cassinii (Cassin's Finch)

Natural Heritage Ranks:	Federal Agency Status:
State: **S3**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
Global: **G5**	U.S. Forest Service:
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

FWP CFWCS Tier: 3

One Element Occurrence data reported of Cassin's finch in 2000 in the proximate area, west of parcel.

10. Oncorhynchus clarkii lewisi (Westslope Cutthroat Trout)

Natural Heritage Ranks:	Federal Agency Status:
State: **S2**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
Global: **G4T3**	U.S. Forest Service: **Sensitive**
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier: 1

Three Element Occurrence data reported of westslope cutthroat trout in the proximate area of this parcel.

11. Salvelinus confluentus (Bull Trout)

Natural Heritage Ranks:	Federal Agency Status:
State: **S2**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: **LT**
Global: **G3**	U.S. Forest Service: **Threatened**
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Special Status**

FWP CFWCS Tier: 1

Three Element Occurrence data reported of bull trout in the proximate area of this parcel.

12. Martes pennanti (Fisher)

Natural Heritage Ranks:	Federal Agency Status:
State: **S3**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
Global: **G5**	U.S. Forest Service: **Sensitive**
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier: 2

The Swan and Garnet Mountain Ranges have relatively continuous habitat for this species. One Element Occurrence data reported in 2007 for the fisher in the proximate area of this parcel.

10. Gulo gulo (Wolverine)

Natural Heritage Ranks:	Federal Agency Status:
State: **S3**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
Global: **G4**	U.S. Forest Service: **Sensitive**
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier: 2

The Swan and Garnet Mountain Ranges have relatively continuous habitat for this species, preferring boreal and alpine habitats. One Element Occurrence data recorded for 2007 for the wolverine southwest of this parcel.

11. Lynx canadensis (Canada Lynx)

Natural Heritage Ranks:	Federal Agency Status:
State: **S3**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: **LT**
Global: **G5**	U.S. Forest Service: **Threatened**
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Special Status**

FWP CFWCS Tier: 1

The Swan and Garnet mountain ranges have relatively continuous habitat for this species, preferring subalpine conifer forest habitat. The Element Occurrence shows one observation for 2006 of Canada lynx northeast of this parcel.

12. Grindelia howellii (Howell's Gumweed)

Natural Heritage Ranks:	Federal Agency Status:
State: **S2S3**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
Global: **G3**	U.S. Forest Service: **Sensitive**
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier:

Vascular plant in the Ovando valley. Last observation date 1986, but not on this parcel. Howell's gumweed general habitat is vernally moist sites in open low-elevation. This plant is a species of concern in Montana but is not listed as a threatened species.

Species of Concern are native taxa that are at-risk due to declining population trends, threats to their habitats, restricted distribution, and/or other factors. Designation as a Montana Species of Concern or Potential Species of Concern is based on the Montana Status Rank, and is not a statutory or regulatory classification. Rather, these designations provide information that helps resource managers make proactive decisions regarding species conservation and data collection priorities.

Information courtesy of Montana Natural Heritage Program.

NOTE: This appendix is information provided by the Montana Natural Heritage Program from their database of the Natural Resources Information System. FWP Biologists have addressed the species identified in this appendix in this EA in PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST in section 5. Fish/Wildlife. The proposed work should improve the habitat for species in the area. FWP R2 Biologists have no concerns with the project impacting wildlife in the area. The FWP Biologists note it is unlikely that most of these species pass through this parcel with the proximity of the proximity to the Blackfoot Clearwater Wildlife Management Area near the FAS, so it is not likely habitat. This stretch of the Blackfoot is not considered critical fish habitat and the fish species identified in this appendix above may pass through this reach of river.

Appendix C:

TOURISM REPORT

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

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has initiated the review process as mandated by MCA 23-1-110 and the Montana Environmental Policy Act in its consideration of the project described below. As part of the review process, input and comments are being solicited. Please complete the project name and project description portions and submit this form to:

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

Project Name: River Junction Fishing Access Site Development

Project Description: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks proposes improvements at the River Junction FAS including improving the 9-mile gravel access road, adding a designated parking area, and a new gravel boat ramp. This site is a 224-acre parcel along the Blackfoot River in Powell County just off Highway 200 and 9 miles on a gravel road. The FAS has 7 primitive campsites, a pioneered boat ramp, a vault latrine and no designated parking area. The existing pioneered boat ramp will be improved as a gravel boat ramp. A couple of campsites may be relocated during the work and if feasible, a couple of more campsites will be added after the parking area has been established. The proposed work will provide better separation for day use and the designated camping area as well as accommodate the numbers of users of the site.

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 July 14, 2011

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Appendix D:

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS
BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR FISHING ACCESS SITES

Updated May 1, 2008

I. ROADS

A. Road Planning and location

1. Minimize the number of roads constructed at the FAS through comprehensive road planning, recognizing foreseeable future uses.
   a. Use existing roads, unless use of such roads would cause or aggravate an erosion problem.
2. Fit the road to the topography by locating roads on natural benches and following natural contours. Avoid long, steep road grades and narrow canyons.
3. Locate roads on stable geology, including well-drained soils and rock formations that tend to dip into the slope. Avoid slumps and slide-prone areas characterized by steep slopes, highly weathered bedrock, clay beds, concave slopes, hummocky topography, and rock layers that dip parallel to the slope. Avoid wet areas, including seeps, wetlands, wet meadows, and natural drainage channels.
4. Minimize the number of stream crossings.
   a. Choose stable stream crossing sites. "Stable" refers to streambanks with erosion-resistant materials and in hydrologically safe spots.

B. Road Design

1. Design roads to the minimum standard necessary to accommodate anticipated use and equipment. The need for higher engineering standards can be alleviated through proper road-use management. "Standard" refers to road width.
2. Design roads to minimize disruption of natural drainage patterns. Vary road grades to reduce concentrated flow in road drainage ditches, culverts, and on fill slopes and road surfaces.

C. Drainage from Road Surface

1. Provide adequate drainage from the surface of all permanent and temporary roads. Use outsloped, insloped or crowned roads, installing proper drainage features. Space road drainage features so peak flow on road surface or in ditches will not exceed their capacity.
   a. Outsloped roads provide means of dispersing water in a low-energy flow from the road surface. Outsloped roads are appropriate when fill slopes are stable, drainage will not flow directly into stream channels, and transportation safety can be met.
   b. For insloped roads, plan ditch gradients steep enough, generally greater than 2%, but less than 8%, to prevent sediment deposition and ditch erosion. The steeper gradients may be suitable for more stable soils; use the lower gradients for less stable soils.
   c. Design and install road surface drainage features at adequate spacing to control erosion; steeper gradients require more frequent drainage features. Properly constructed drain dips can be an economical method of road surface drainage. Construct drain dips deep enough into the sub-grade so that traffic will not obliterate them.
2. For ditch relief/culverts, construct stable catch basins at stable angles. Protect the inflow end of cross-drain culverts from plugging and armor if in erodible soil. Skewing ditch relief culverts 20 to 30 degrees toward the inflow from the ditch will improve inlet efficiency.
3. Provide energy dissipators (rock piles, slash, log chunks, etc.) where necessary to reduce erosion at outlet of drainage features. Cross-drains, culverts, water bars, dips, and other drainage structures should not discharge onto erodible soils or fill slopes without outfall protection.

4. Route road drainage through adequate filtration zones, or other sediment-settling structures. Install road drainage features above stream crossings to route discharge into filtration zones before entering a stream.

D. Construction/Reconstruction

1. Stabilize erodible, exposed soils by seeding, compacting, riprapping, benching, mulching, or other suitable means.
2. At the toe of potentially erodible fill slopes, particularly near stream channels, pile slash in a row parallel to the road to trap sediment. When done concurrently with road construction, this is one method to effectively control sediment movement and it also provides an economical way of disposing of roadway slash. Limit the height, width and length of these "slash filter windrows" so not to impede wildlife movement. Sediment fabric fences or other methods may be used if effective.
3. Construct cut and fill slopes at stable angles to prevent sloughing and subsequent erosion.
4. Avoid incorporating potentially unstable woody debris in the fill portion of the road prism. Where possible, leave existing rooted trees or shrubs at the toe of the fill slope to stabilize the fill.
5. Place debris, overburden, and other waste materials associated with construction and maintenance activities in a location to avoid entry into streams. Include these waste areas in soil stabilization planning for the road.
6. When using existing roads, reconstruct only to the extent necessary to provide adequate drainage and safety; avoid disturbing stable road surfaces. Consider abandoning existing roads when their use would aggravate erosion.

E. Road Maintenance

1. Grade road surfaces only as often as necessary to maintain a stable running surface and to retain the original surface drainage.
2. Maintain erosion control features through periodic inspection and maintenance, including cleaning dips and cross-drains, repairing ditches, marking culvert inlets to aid in location, and clearing debris from culverts.
3. Avoid cutting the toe of cut slopes when grading roads, pulling ditches, or plowing snow.
4. Avoid using roads during wet periods if such use would likely damage the road drainage features. Consider gates, barricades or signs to limit use of roads during wet periods.

II. RECREATIONAL FACILITIES (parking areas, campsites, trails, ramps, restrooms)

A. Site Design

1. Design a site that best fits the topography, soil type, and stream character, while minimizing soil disturbance and economically accomplishing recreational objectives. Keep roads and parking lots at least 50 feet from water; if closer, mitigate with vegetative buffers as necessary.
2. Locate foot trails to avoid concentrating runoff and provide breaks in grade as needed. Locate trails and parking areas away from natural drainage systems and divert runoff to stable areas. Limit the grade of trails on unstable, saturated, highly erosive, or easily compacted soils
3. Scale the number of boat ramps, campsites, parking areas, bathroom facilities, etc. to be commensurate with existing and anticipated needs. Facilities should not invite such use that natural features will be degraded.
4. Provide adequate barriers to minimize off-road vehicle use.

B. Maintenance: Soil Disturbance and Drainage

1. Maintenance operations minimize soil disturbance around parking lots, swimming areas and campsites, through proper placement and dispersal of such facilities or by reseeding disturbed ground. Drainage from such facilities should be promoted through proper grading.

2. Maintain adequate drainage for ramps by keeping side drains functional or by maintaining drainage of road surface above ramps or by crowning (on natural surfaces).
3. Maintain adequate drainage for trails. Use mitigating measures, such as water bars, wood chips, and grass seeding, to reduce erosion on trails.
4. When roads are abandoned during reconstruction or to implement site-control, they must be reseeded and provided with adequate drainage so that periodic maintenance is not required.

III. RAMPS AND STREAM CROSSINGS

A. Legal Requirements

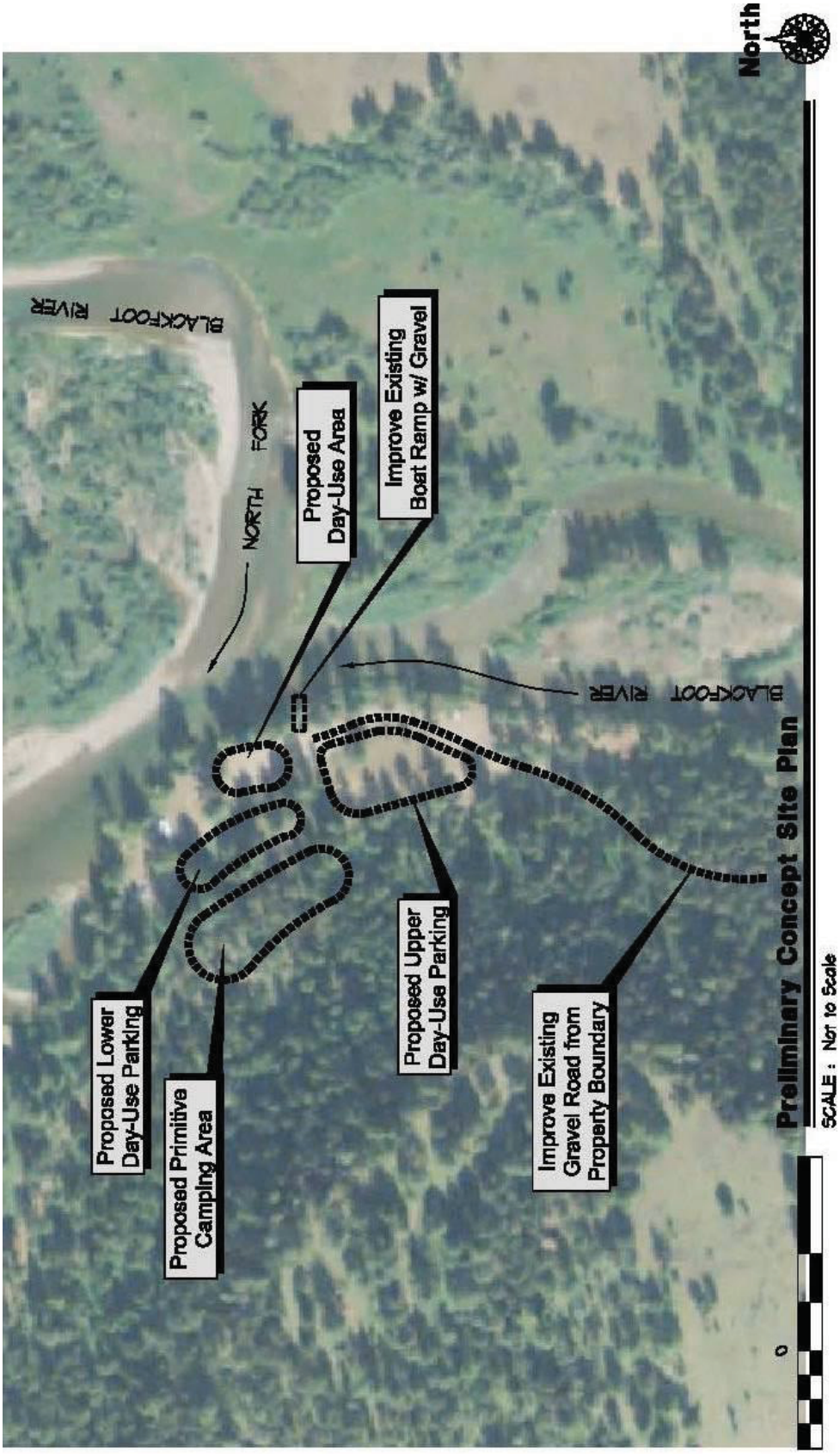
1. Relevant permits must be obtained prior to building bridges across streams or boat ramps. Such permits include the SPA 124 permit, the COE 404 permit, and the DNRC Floodplain Development Permit.

B. Design Considerations

1. Placement of boat ramp should be such that boats can load and unload with out difficulty and the notch in the bank where the ramp was placed does not encourage bank erosion. Extensions of boat ramps beyond the natural bank can also encourage erosion.
2. Adjust the road grade or provide drainage features (e.g. rubber flaps) to reduce the concentration of road drainage to stream crossings and boat ramps. Direct drainage flow through an adequate filtration zone and away from the ramp or crossing through the use of gravel side-drains, crowning (on natural surfaces) or 30-degree angled grooves on concrete ramps.
3. Avoid unimproved stream crossings on permanent streams. On ephemeral streams, when a culvert or bridge is not feasible, locate drive-throughs on a stable, rocky portion of the stream channel.
4. Unimproved (non-concrete) ramps should only be used when the native soils are sufficiently gravelly or rocky to withstand the use at the site and to resist erosion.

C. Installation of Stream Crossings and Ramps

1. Minimize stream channel disturbances and related sediment problems during construction of road and installation of stream crossing structures. Do not place erodible material into stream channels. Remove stockpiled material from high water zones. Locate temporary construction bypass roads in locations where the stream course will have a minimal disturbance. Time the construction activities to protect fisheries and water quality.
2. Where ramps enter the stream channel, they should follow the natural streambed in order to avoid changing stream hydraulics and to optimize use of boat trailers.
3. Use culverts with a minimum diameter of 15 inches for permanent stream crossings and cross drains. Proper sizing of culverts may dictate a larger pipe and should be based on a 50-year flow recurrence interval. Install culverts to conform to the natural streambed and slope on all perennial streams and on intermittent streams that support fish or that provide seasonal fish passage. Place culverts slightly below normal stream grade to avoid culvert outfall barriers. Do not alter stream channels upstream from culverts, unless necessary to protect fill or to prevent culvert blockage. Armor the inlet and/or outlet with rock or other suitable material where needed.
4. Prevent erosion of boat ramps and the affected streambank through proper placement (so as to not catch the stream current) and hardening (riprap or erosion resistant woody vegetation).
5. Maintain a 1-foot minimum cover for culverts 18-36 inches in diameter, and a cover of one-third diameter for larger culverts to prevent crushing by traffic.

Appendix E:

DRAFT FWP PRELIMINARY CONCEPT PLAN FOR RIVER JUNCTION FAS
(PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE B)