



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

2300 Lake Elmo

Drive
Billings MT 59105
September 27, 2007

TO: Environmental Quality Council
Director's Office, Dept. of Environmental Quality
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks*

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Director's Office | Lands Section |
| Parks Division | Design & Construction |
| Fisheries Division | Legal Unit |
| Wildlife Division | Regional Supervisors |

Mike Volesky, Governor's Office *
Sarah Elliott, Press Agent, Governor's Office*
Maureen Theisen, Governor's Office*
Montana Historical Society, State Preservation Office
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council
Montana Wildlife Federation
Montana State Library
George Ochenski
Montana Environmental Information Center
Wayne Hirst, Montana State Parks Foundation
FWP Commissioner Shane Colton*
Bob Raney (Parks EA's only)
DNRC Area Manager, Southern Land Office
Pictograph Cave Advisory Council
* (Sent electronically)

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The enclosed draft Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared for Cooney State Park, and is submitted for your consideration. Improvements will include paving a portion of the access road and the boat ramp parking areas within Marshall Cove; defining and graveling the primitive trail between Marshall Cove and Cottonwood Campground; and installing camp-side electrical pedestals and playground equipment at Red Lodge Arm. Questions and comments will be accepted until October 29, 2007.

If you have questions or need additional copies of the draft EA, please contact Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks at 247-2940. Written comments may be sent to: Cooney State Park, Facility Improvements, 2300 Lake Elmo Drive, Billings, MT 59105; or email comments to: jalexander@mt.gov or dhabermann@mt.gov

Thank you for your interest,

Gary Hammond
Regional Supervisor

Preliminary Environmental Assessment

Cooney State Park Facility Improvements



September 2007



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

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. **Type of proposed state action:** Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to improve the facilities at Marshall Cove and Red Lodge Arm within Cooney State Park. Specifically, the proposed work to be completed includes: paving a portion of the access road and the boat ramp parking areas within Marshall Cove, define and gravel the primitive trail between Marshall Cove and Cottonwood Campground, and install camp-side electrical pedestals and playground equipment at Red Lodge Arm.
2. **Agency authority for the proposed action:**
FWP has the authority to develop outdoor recreational resources in the state per 23-2-101 MCA.

Furthermore, state statute 23-1-110 MCA and ARM 12.6.601-606 guides public involvement and comment for the improvements at state parks and fishing access sites, which this document provides.

3. **Name of project:** Cooney State Park Facility Improvements
4. **Name, address and phone number of project sponsor:**
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
2300 Lake Elmo Drive
Billings, MT 59105
406-247-2940

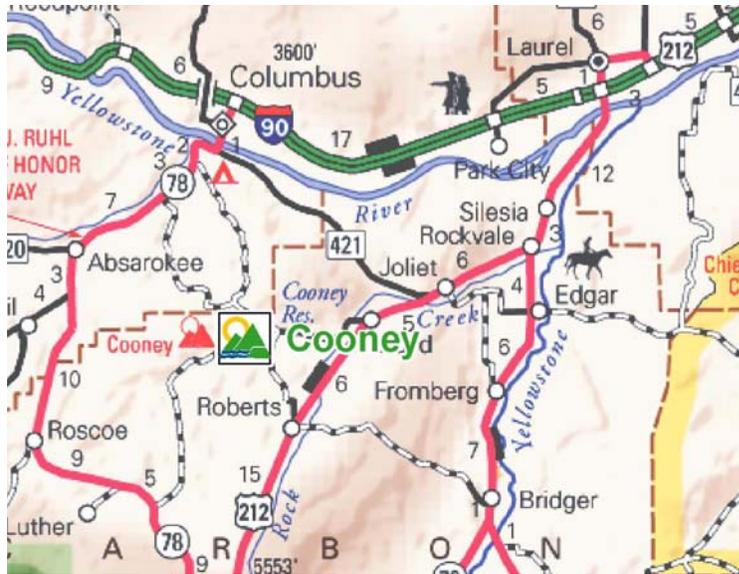
5. **Anticipated Schedule:**
Marshall Cove Paving Anticipated Commencement Date: Spring 2008
Estimated Completion Date: Spring 2008
Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 10%

Marshall Trail Improvements Anticipated Commencement Date: Summer/Fall 2008
Estimated Completion Date: Fall 2009
Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 75%

Red Lodge Arm Electrification Anticipated Commencement Date: Spring 2008
Estimated Completion Date: early Summer 2008
Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 5%

Red Lodge Arm Playground Installation Commencement Date: Spring 2008
Estimated Completion Date: Spring 2008
Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 25%

6. **Location affected by proposed action:**
Yellowstone County: Marshall Cove, T4S, R20E Section 36
Red Lodge Arm, T4S, R20E Section 35



7. Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected:

| | <u>Acres</u> | | <u>Acres</u> |
|---|--------------|--------------------|--------------|
| (a) Developed: | | (d) Floodplain | <u>0</u> |
| Residential | <u>0</u> | | |
| Industrial | <u>0</u> | (e) Productive: | |
| (b) Open Space/ Woodlands/Recreation | <u>.50</u> | Irrigated cropland | <u>0</u> |
| (c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas | <u>0</u> | Dry cropland | <u>0</u> |
| | | Forestry | <u>0</u> |
| | | Rangeland | <u>0</u> |
| | | Other | <u>0</u> |

8. Other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

(a) **Permits:** permits will be filed at least 2 weeks prior to project start.

| <u>Agency Name</u> | <u>Permits</u> |
|--------------------|----------------|
| | |

(b) **Funding:** All Montana Fish, Wildlife & Park

| <u>Agency Name</u> | <u>Funding Amount</u> |
|--|-----------------------|
| Marshall Cove – Paving | \$ 200,000 |
| Cottonwood Campground Trail | \$ 10,000 |
| Red Lodge Arm - Campground Electrification | \$ 80,000 |
| Playground | \$ 25,000 |

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

| <u>Agency Name</u> | <u>Type of Responsibility</u> |
|--|--|
| Montana State Historical Preservation Office | Archeological & Cultural Site Protection |

9. Summary of the proposed action:

Cooney State Park is located on Cooney Reservoir, 22 miles south of Laurel on U.S. Hwy 212. The Park has five main recreation areas providing numerous camping, day use, and boating amenities along the shores of the reservoir. (See *Appendix B* for park map.)

Cooney State Park is one of the few reservoirs suitable for motorboat use in the region and is one of the most heavily used public recreation areas in the state. Over the last four years, Cooney State Park received an average of nearly 155,000 visitors per year. Its close proximity to Billings, Montana's most populous city, contributes to its high visitation statistics.

In 2006, a visitor survey was completed at Cooney State Park. The vast majority of visitors (86.2%) rated their overall experience a six or higher on a ten-point scale. Additionally, 44.2% of respondents noted their experience has become better at the park over the past five years. To ensure FWP and the park meet the needs of visitors in the future, the survey also asked participants what services could be improved. Although many of the suggested services elicited neither important nor unimportant responses, the three of the four proposed enhancements (paving, electrification, and a playground) did receive participant's support as additional services needed for the park.

Marshall Cove

Marshall Cove is located on the southeastern edge of Cooney Reservoir. It is a popular destination for all visitors to the park with a pleasant day-use area, boat ramp, and shaded campground area.

The graveled access road into Marshall Cove enters the site from the Roberts-Cooney Road. Near the shore, the loop below the comfort station and parking areas for the boat ramp are located in a slightly depressed area that is prone to flooding caused by high water in the reservoir and seasonal downpours. The proposed improvements to the loop and parking area would include raising the level of the road and to pave the surfaces with asphalt.

The anticipated benefits of the new road and parking surface is that it will mitigate the seasonal flooding situation in the these areas, eliminate the dust generated from traffic that spreads into the campground area, lessen sediment runoff in times of flooding, reduce the funding spent on regaveling these roads and the parking area, and increase overall visitor satisfaction. This would keep the boat ramp and parking usable even during "full pool" in the reservoir, which can last up to 1½ months during the heavy use season.

As previously mentioned, Marshall Cove is a very popular camping area, in part because of its' shade trees. There are times when campers, unable to stay at Marshall Cove, are redirected to nearby Cottonwood Campground. As Cooney is a primary boating recreation site, campers at Cottonwood often use the boat ramp at Marshall Cove to access the water. For the convenience of campers to Cottonwood Campground, the park's staff maintains a mowed grass trail for those wanting to walk or ride their bicycle the short distance between Marshal Cove and Cottonwood's areas. FWP proposes to improve the trail by graveling over the surface and to

build a bridge over an area occasionally flooded by high water in a cove between the recreation areas. The benefits of improvements are they will provide anglers an additional area to shore fish from without cutting through brush along the shoreline, and they would provide a safe pedestrian and bike route between the recreation areas.



The mowed trail between Marshall Cove and Cottonwood Campground with the riparian area at the left edge.

Red Lodge Arm

Like Marshall Cove, Red Lodge Arm provides a variety of facilities for recreationists such as, a fish cleaning station, campground, boat ramp, and picnic area. This area is located at the southwestern corner of the reservoir. The landscape at Red Lodge recreation area is covered with native grasses, some shoreline willows, and young cottonwood trees.

First of the proposed enhancements to this area is the installation of approximately 12 campsite pedestals to provide electricity for RVs, 5th-wheels, and other camper needs. Feedback from visitors in the park collected in the 2006 Visitor Survey reflected that nearly 46% of the respondents felt the addition of electrical hookups at campsites was an important amenity FWP should offer. Red Lodge Arm's campground was selected as the best venue for the enhancements because of its full-size camping pads that can accommodate RVs and 5th-wheels and to provide an incentive for campers to choose Red Lodge Arm campground over other camping areas in the park.

The construction of a playground at Red Lodge Arm is a second proposed element to be added to the site's facilities. The users of the campground would likely appreciate this enhancement, since many of the campers are families with children. The proposed location of the playground would be within walking distance from the campsites, convenient to the latrines, and with enough open space to provide a safe spot for children to play unhindered by passing vehicles. The design of the playground is expected to be a multiple-component, commercially manufactured unit that would provide slides, climbing surfaces, and swings for youngsters to enjoy. (See *Appendix D* for a sample diagram of the playground design.)

10. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives

Alternative A: No Action

Under this scenario, FWP would maintain the current facilities at Marshall Cove and Red Lodge Arm and would not pursue any enhancements or facility upgrades at either recreation area at Cooney State Park.

The access road loop and boat ramp parking areas at Marshall Cove would continue to be prone to seasonal flooding in depressed areas. The grass trail between the Cove's recreation area and Cottonwood Campground would continue to be mowed. However, the riparian area

that transects the trail would remain unusable when there is high water in the reservoir and the area is submerged.

The visitor requests for camp-side pedestals (electricity) and a playground area at Red Lodge Arm campground is expected to continue.

Alternative B: Improve the facilities at Marshall Cove and Red Lodge Arm within Cooney State Park (Preferred Alternative)

FWP proposes to complete the following improvements at Marshall Cove and Red Lodge Arm within the next eighteen months. Enhancements at Marshall Cove would include the asphalt paving of a portion of the interior access road and boat ramp parking area with the potential for additional areas to be paved if funding is approved and allocated. Additionally, the application of gravel to the pedestrian path between Marshall Cove and Cottonwood Campground would be completed. In addition to the surface improvement to the path, the upgrading is expected to include a small bridge over a riparian area for the added convenience of pedestrians.

The enhancements at Red Lodge Arm would include the addition of a playground to the amenities at the campground and the electrification of approximately twelve campsites. The proposed location of playground equipment would be on the open space below the fish cleaning station and across the road from the camp host pad, which provides ample space for youngsters to recreate and easy access to a latrine without crossing an access road. As for the electrification project, the preferred campsites selected for electrical pedestals are those along the south side of the existing campground loop.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

The analysis of the physical and human environments discussed on the following pages is limited to Alternative B, the preferred action. This is because under Alternative A, FWP would not pursue any of the proposed improvements at Marshall Cove and Red Lodge Arm recreation areas. The park staff would continue to maintain the current facilities, which include the graveling and grating of the road and parking areas at Marshall Cove, and mowing the trail between Marshall Cove and Cottonwood Campground.

3. Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

| 1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|--|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. **Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure? | | X | | | | |
| b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility? | | X | | | yes | 1b |
| c. **Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features? | | X | | | | |
| d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake? | | | X | | yes | 1d |
| e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard? | | X | | | | |
| f. Other: | | X | | | | |

1b. The installation of the electrical conduits between campsites and the power source will require trenching, which will displace a limited amount of soil. Additionally, the preferred location of the playground equipment will require some ground leveling activities (there is a 3% slope) and a small number of holes dug for concrete footings. Best management techniques will be used to limit the possibility of new erosion patterns becoming established in disturbed areas. Additionally, areas where barren earth is exposed will be reseeded with native grasses to assist in the reduction of new erosion patterns.

1d. The raising and paving of the Marshall Cove access road and boat ramp parking area is expected to decrease the sedimentary runoff into the reservoir during high water periods or season downpours.

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

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

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

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

| 2. <u>AIR</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|--|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. **Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).) | | | X | | | 2a |
| b. Creation of objectionable odors? | | | X | | | 2b |
| c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally? | | X | | | | |
| d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants? | | X | | | | |
| e. ***For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a.) | | X | | | | |
| f. Other: | | X | | | | |

2 a/b. Minor and temporary dust and vehicle emissions would be created by construction equipment during the grading and paving of the road and parking areas at Marshall Cove, and the trenching for the electrical installations at Red Lodge Arm campground. These activities are expected to contribute to the deterioration of normal air quality levels for a very limited time at the recreation 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.

| 3. <u>WATER</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|--|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. *Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity? | | X | | | | |
| b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff? | | | X | | yes | 3b |
| c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows? | | X | | | | |
| d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body? | | X | | | | |
| e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding? | | X | | | | |
| f. Changes in the quality of groundwater? | | X | | | | |
| g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater? | | X | | | | |
| h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater? | | X | | | | |
| i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation? | | X | | | | |
| j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality? | | X | | | | |
| k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity? | | X | | | | |
| l. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.) | | X | | | | |
| m. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.) | | X | | | | |
| n. Other: | | X | | | | |

3b. The paving of the access road and boat ramp parking area at Marshall Cove is expected to lessen the amount of sediment runoff into the reservoir. This will lessen the amount of sediment added to the reservoir.

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

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

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

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

| 4. <u>VEGETATION</u> Will the proposed action result in? | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|--|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)? | | X | | | | 4a |
| b. Alteration of a plant community? | | X | | | | |
| 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? | | X | | | | |
| g. Other: | | X | | | | |

- 4a. Although most of the proposed enhancements (i.e. trail, playground, and electrical hook-ups) will require some disturbances to localized vegetation, each project will not impact the overall diversity or abundance of plant species in the area.
- 4c. A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program's (MNHP) species of concern database found no vascular or non-vascular plants of significance in Cooney State Park where the proposed projects are to take place.
- 4e. Construction at the site will likely increase the possibility of noxious weeds becoming established. There is a small infestation of knapweed in the area of the proposed playground and campground area at Red Lodge Arm. Reseeding disrupted soils after construction will limit the potential for additional weed infestation by providing competition from a mix of local grasses. Control efforts will follow the guidelines presented in the FWP Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan (scheduled to be completed in December 2007) and will continue to be contracted by the Park Manager to Carbon County.

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

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

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

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

| ** 5. <u>FISH/WILDLIFE</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|--|-----------------|-------------|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat? | | X | | | | |
| b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species? | | X | | | | |
| 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.) | | X | | | | |
| i. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.) | | X | | | | |
| j. Other: | | X | | | | |

A search of the Montana Natural Heritage database revealed one sensitive species in the vicinity of Cooney State Park, the Lark Bunting. However, there have been no reported observations of it within the park's boundaries.

Some resident wildlife (i.e. coyote, mule deer, and white-tailed deer) may relocate while the proposed projects are being completed at Marshall Cove and Red Lodge Arm. However, the proposed projects will not have any long term, negative impacts on the species and it is expected wildlife will return to their normal habits when the work is completed. Shawn Stewart, FWP Wildlife Biologist, and Allison Begley, FWP Native Species Biologist made this assessment.

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

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

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

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

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

| 6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|--|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Increases in existing noise levels? | | | X | | | 6a |
| b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels? | | | X | | | 6b |
| c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property? | | X | | | | |
| d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation? | | X | | | | |
| e. Other: | | X | | | | |

6 a/b. There would be a temporary increase in noise levels at both Marshall Cove and Red Lodge Arm due to the addition of the construction equipment and contracting staff working at the project sites. Planning the work during the off-season and closing the areas affected for a limited amount of time will mitigate inconvenience to visitors at each site.

When the installation of the electrical pedestals is completed at Red Lodge Arm, it will likely reduce the reliance on generators by some campers and decrease the amount of ambient noise and at night during the peak summer season.

| 7. <u>LAND USE</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|--|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area? | | X | | | | |
| 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: | | X | | | | |

The proposed enhancements at Cooney State Park will not interfere with the current use of the site by the general public for camping, fishing, and boating.

* 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. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|---|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption? | | X | | | | |
| 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) | | | X | | yes | 8d |
| e. Other: | | X | | | | |

8c. To ensure the safety of those using the playground equipment, park staff and camp hosts will inspect the equipment in compliance with the FWP Playground Policy. Additionally, FWP's certified playground equipment inspector will inspect the equipment on an annual basis.

8d. Chemical spraying will be used to deter the establishment and growth of noxious weeds in the proposed disturbed areas. Weed treatment would be conducted only by a trained professional licensed in the State of Montana under the guidelines of the FWP Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan (scheduled to be completed in December 2007).

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

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

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

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

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

| 10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u> Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|---|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify: | | X | | | | |
| b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues? | | X | | | | |
| c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications? | | | X | | | 10c |
| d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source? | | | X | | | 10d |
| e. **Define projected revenue sources | | | | | | 10e |
| f. **Define projected maintenance costs. | | | | | | 10f |
| g. Other: | | X | | | | |

10c. Electricity already exists at Red Lodge Arm at the fish cleaning station and within the campground at the host pad and ADA accessible campsite. The addition of electrical hook-ups (pedestals) at some of the other campsites will require the installation of belowground electrical lines between approximately twelve the chosen sites.

10d. Park staff expects an increase in electricity use at Red Lodge Arm with the installation of electrical hook-ups, which will reduce the amount of generator use by campers.

10e. Funding for the proposed enhancements is from FWP's capital fund, Wallup-Breaux federal assistance (paving project), and FWP's parks maintenance fund. As defined in the 2007 Biennial Fee Rule for State Parks, use of the electrified campsites at Red Lodge Arm campground will cost \$18 instead of \$15 per night. The \$3 fee increase is expected to cover the additional costs for the electricity use at those sites.

10f. Maintenance costs at Marshall Cove are expected to decrease a small amount because the need for constant grading of the old gravel surfaces will be eliminated. The costs associated with the improvements to the trail are likely minimal since the wear of the surface will be only from pedestrian and cycling traffic and such, application of additional gravel will be limited. Additionally, the control of noxious weeds along its pathway is already occurring, so no additional expenditures are expected.

At Red Lodge Arm, both the underground electrical system/camp-side pedestals and playground equipment will require minimal maintenance. Periodic inspection of the electrical equipment will be required. The playground equipment will be inspected annually by a certified playground safety inspector as part of the implementation of FWP's new Playground Safety Policy.

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

11b. The addition of playground equipment at Red Lodge Arm recreation area will enhance the facilities available to visitors and not alter the aesthetic character of the already significantly developed area.

11c. The proposed enhancements will provide a positive impact on tourism opportunities at the site. See *Appendix E* for the Tourism Report.

| 12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|-------------|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. **Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance? | | X | | | | |
| b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values? | | X | | | | |
| c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area? | | X | | | | |
| d. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.) | | X | | | | 12d |
| e. Other: | | X | | | | |

12 d. A cultural assessment of the site was completed by the State Historical Preservation Office, which found that no historically or culturally sensitive areas existed at the site would be affected. See *Appendix F* for the recent SHPO concurrence letter.

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

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

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

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

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

| 13. <u>SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE</u> Will the proposed action, considered as a whole: | IMPACT * | | | | | |
|---|----------|------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | None | Minor | Potentially Significant | Can Impact Be Mitigated | Comment Index |
| a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.) | | X | | | | |
| b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur? | | X | | | | |
| c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan? | | X | | | | |
| d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed? | | X | | | | |
| e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created? | | X | | | | |
| f. ***For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.) | | X | | | | |
| g. ****For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required. | | X | | | | |

* 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. Other control measures, mitigation, stipulations enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

Final plans and specifications for the project will be developed by a private engineering consultant in conjunction with FWP engineering staff. FWP engineers will design other portions of the project. All state and federal permits will be obtained by FWP. A private contractor selected through the State's competitive bid process will complete construction.

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

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The enhancements to the facilities at Marshall Cove and Red Lodge Arm within Cooney State Park will improve visitors' experiences to those recreation areas and will decrease some annual maintenance costs. All the improvements are in areas that are being used by the public and to varying degrees, being maintained by the park staff.

Because of the scope of the proposed improvements, some impact to the human and physical environment is expected. However, the majority of those influences, which were previously noted, are expected to be only for the relatively short duration of the construction period with no lasting negative effects on the local environment. For those actions requiring minor mitigation, such as the trenching of the electrical system for the hook-ups, paving of the new parking area, and anticipated leveling of the area for the playground equipment, efforts will be taken to reseed disturbed and reclaimed areas. The reseeded areas at those disturbed sites will decrease the chance of noxious weeds being established and will limit erosion.

The improvements to the Cooney State Park recreation areas are expected to improve tourist satisfaction to ensure returning visitors.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Description of the level of public involvement:

The public will be notified in the following manners and informed of the opportunity to comment on this draft EA, the proposed action and alternatives:

- Two public notices in each of these papers: *Helena Independent Record*, *Billings Gazette*, *Stillwater County News*, and *Carbon County News*;
- One statewide press release;
- A direct mailing to interested parties;
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: <http://fwp.mt.gov>.

Copies of this Environmental Assessment will be distributed to the neighboring landowners and interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project.

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope, having limited impacts.

2. Duration of comment period.

The public comment period will extend for (30) thirty days following the publication of the second legal notice in area newspapers. Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., October 29, 2007 and can be mailed to the address below:

Cooney State Park, Facility Improvements
2300 Lake Elmo Drive
Billings, MT 59105
406-247-2940

Or email comments to: jalexander@mt.gov or dhabermann@mt.gov

PART V. EA PREPARATION

1. Explanation of why or why not an EIS is required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.

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

2. Individuals responsible for the preparation of this document:

Doug Habermann
Region 5 Parks Manager
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
2300 Lake Elmo Drive
Billings, MT 59105
406-247-2940

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

Jennifer Alexander, Manager
Cooney State Park
PO Box 254
Joliet, MT 59041
406-445-2326

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

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Parks Division
Wildlife Division
Design & Construction Bureau
Legal Bureau
Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
Montana Department of Commerce – Tourism
Montana Natural Heritage Program – Natural Resources Information System (NRIS)
U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service

APPENDICES

- A. MCA 23-1-110 Qualification Checklist
- B. Cooney State Park Map
- C. Concept Map of Improvements at Marshall Cove
- D. Concept Map of Improvements at Red Lodge Arm and Playground Configuration
- E. Tourism Report – Department of Commerce
- F. Clearance Letter – State Historic Preservation Office

APPENDIX A
23-1-110 MCA
PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

Date: August 20, 2007

Person Reviewing: Rebecca Cooper

Project Location: Cooney State Park Facility Improvements, Carbon County

Description of Proposed Work: See improvements described on pages 3-5.

The following checklist is intended to be a guide for determining whether a proposed development or improvement is of enough significance to fall under 23-1-110 rules. (Please check ✓ all that apply and comment as necessary.)

- A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?
Comments: *The proposed paving of the road and parking areas at the Marshall Cove boat ramp will be completed over the existing roadbed and established parking areas.*
- B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?
Comments: *N/A*
- C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?
Comments: *Some excavation activity will be required for the installation of the underground electrical system for the pedestals and leveling of the slope where the proposed playground is to be located but it is expected those projects will disturb much less than 20 cubic yards of earth.*
- D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?
Comments: *N/A*
- E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a doublewide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?
Comments: *N/A*
- F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?
Comments: *N/A*
- G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?
Comments: *No- SHPO concurrence obtained.*

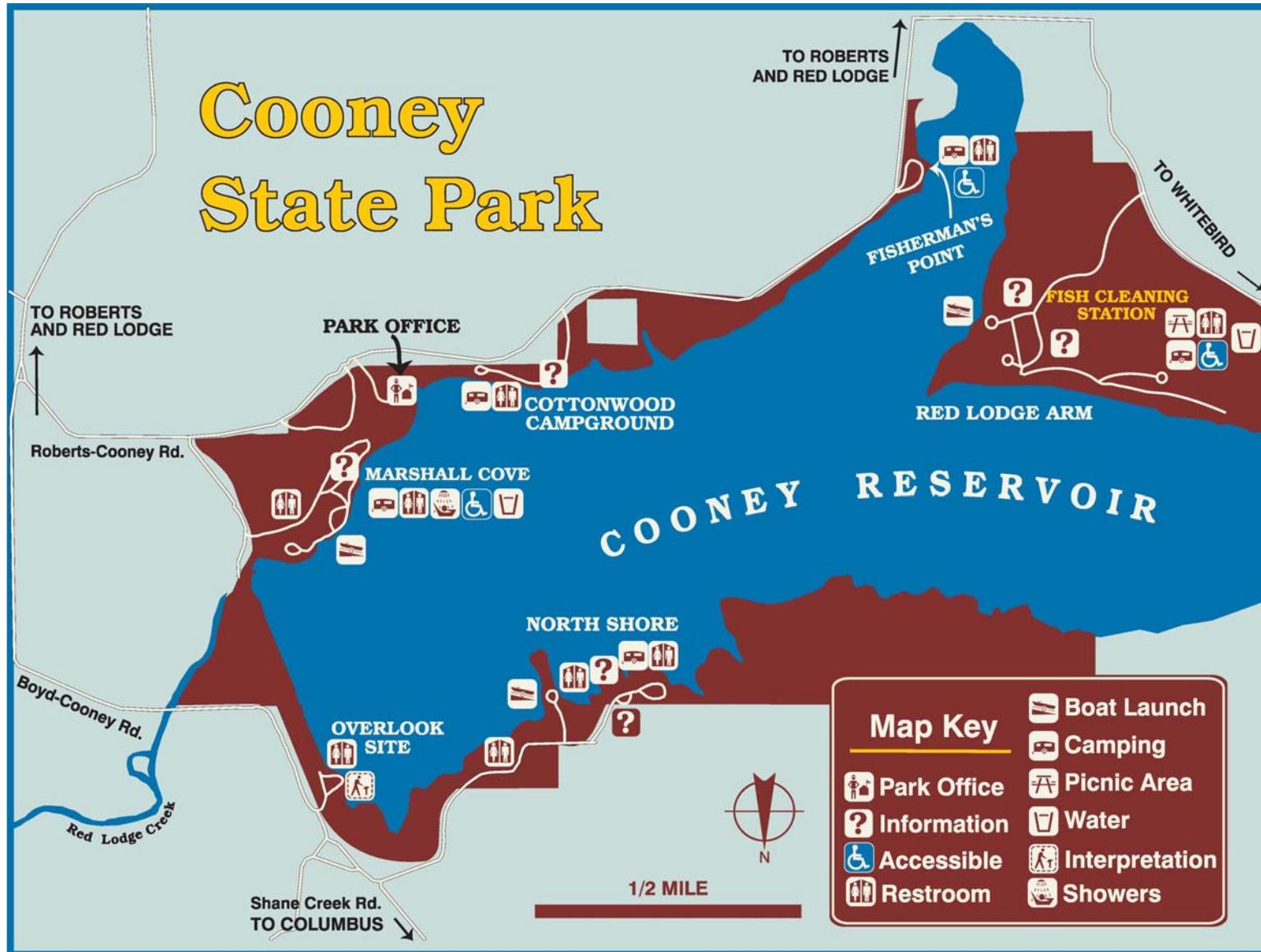
- H. Any new above ground utility lines?
Comments: *N/A*

- I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?
Comments: *N/A*

- J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern; including effects of a series of individual projects?
Comments: *N/A*

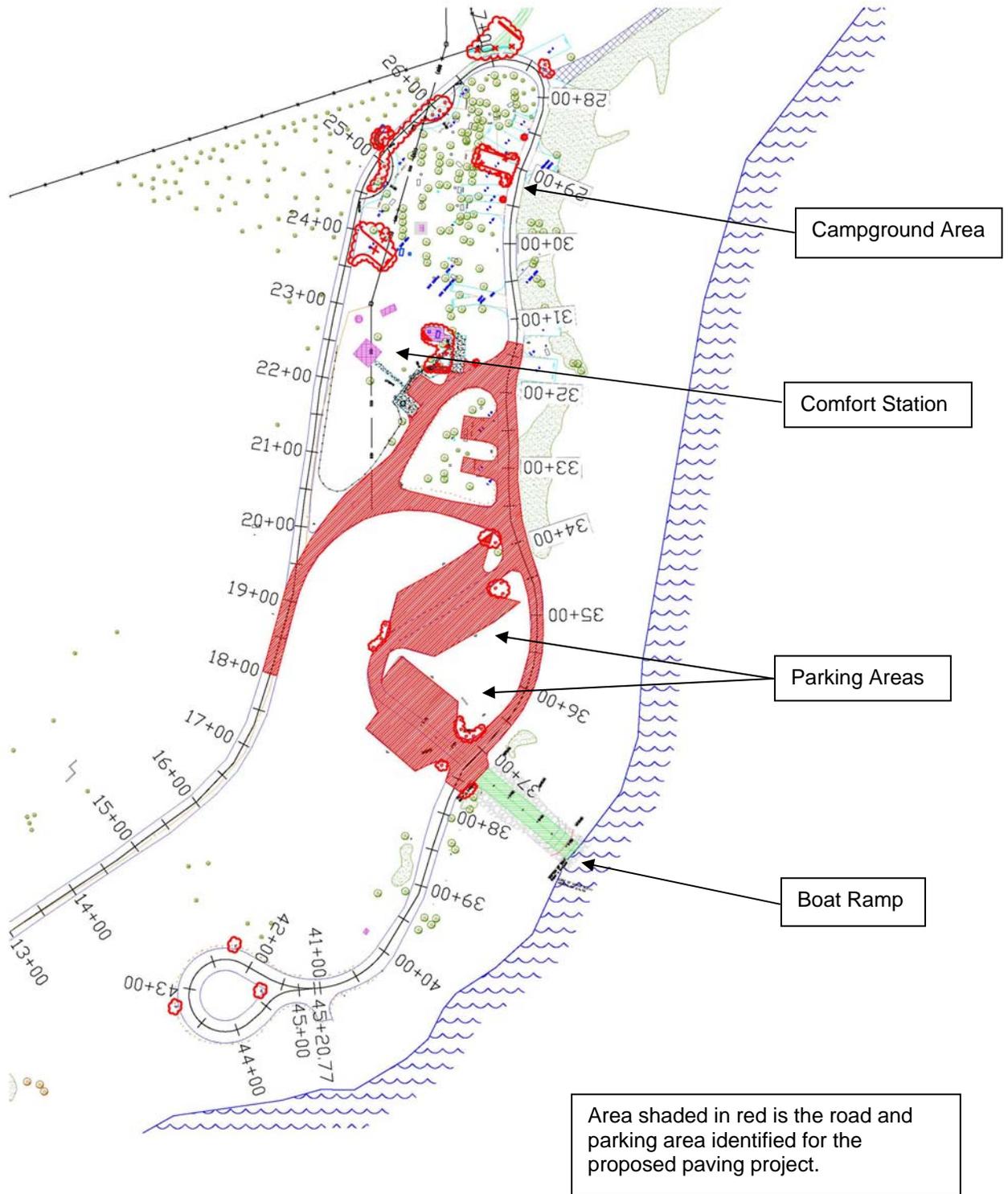
If any of the above are checked, 23-1-110 MCA rules apply to this proposed work and should be documented on the MEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST. Refer to MEPA/HB495 Cross Reference Summary for further assistance.

APPENDIX B



APPENDIX C

Marshall Cove Recreation Area



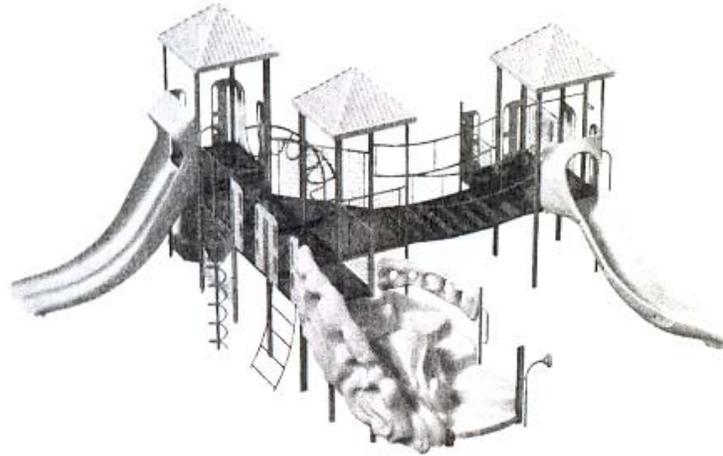
APPENDIX D

Concept Map of Enhancements at Red Lodge Arm



APPENDIX D continued

Sample Plan of Playground Configuration for the
Proposed Playground at Red Lodge Arm



APPENDIX E

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

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

Carol Crockett, Tourism Development Specialist
Travel Montana-Department of Commerce
301 S. Park Ave.
Helena, MT 59601

Project Name: Cooney State Park Facility Improvements

Project Description:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks proposes to improve the facilities at Marshall Cove and Red Lodge Arm within Cooney State Park. Specifically, the proposed work to be completed includes: paving the access road and parking areas within Marshall Cove, define and gravel the primitive trail between Marshall Cove and Cottonwood Campground, and install camp-side electrical pedestals and playground equipment at Red Lodge Arm.

The paving project will eliminate the flooding of the parking areas and loop road and will decrease sediment runoff into the reservoir. The other projects will enhance visitor experience to the recreation areas and is expected to increase visitor satisfaction.

1. Would this site development project have an impact on the tourism economy?
NO YES If YES, briefly describe:
As described, the project has the potential to positively impact the tourism & recreation industry economy.
2. Does this impending improvement alter the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings?
NO YES If YES, briefly describe:
As described, the project would improve the quality and quantity of the tourism and recreational opportunities.

Signature _____



Date 9-9-07

APPENDIX F



MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

250 *AKG*



MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

RECEIVED

MAR 27 2007

DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION
DEPT. OF FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

March 26, 2007

Paul Valle
FWP
PO Box 200701
Helena MT 59620-0701

RE: MARSHALL COVE IMPROVEMENTS, COONEY STATE PARK. SHPO Project
#: 2007032604

Dear Mr. Valle:

I have conducted a cultural resource file search for the above-cited project located in Section 36, T4S R20E. According to our records there have been a few previously recorded sites within the designated search locale. In addition to the sites there have been a few previously conducted cultural resource inventories done in the areas. If you would like any further information regarding these sites or reports you may contact me at the number listed below.

As long as there will be no disturbance of previously undisturbed ground and the improvements stay contained to the existing road profile we feel that there is a low likelihood cultural properties will be impacted. We, therefore, feel that a recommendation for a cultural resource inventory is unwarranted at this time. However, should cultural materials be inadvertently discovered during this project we would ask that our office be contacted and the site investigated. Thank you for consulting with us.

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

Sincerely,

Damon Murdo
Cultural Records Manager

File: FWP/PARKS/2007

