



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

MEPA NEPA Checklist

MISSION. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, through its employees and citizen commission, provides for the stewardship of the fish, wildlife, parks and recreational resources of Montana, while contributing to the quality of life for present and future generations

All Montanans have the right to live in a clean and healthful environment. This environmental analysis is intended to provide an evaluation of the likely impacts to the human environment from proposed actions of the project cited below. This analysis will help Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks to fulfill its oversight obligations and satisfy rules and regulations of both the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of proposed action.

- Development _____
- Renovation _____
- Maintenance _____
- Land Acquisition _____
- Equipment Acquisition _____
- Other (Describe) X

Establish a campsite reservation program at up to 21 of Montana’s 54 State Parks. The proposed action would provide the public with the choice and opportunity to plan ahead and make advanced reservations at up to 75% of the available campsites within 21 parks statewide. The remaining campsites would not be reservable, as they have historically been on a “first-come, first served” basis.

2. If appropriate, agency responsible for the proposed action: Montana State Parks, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

3. Name, address phone number and E-mail address of project sponsor.

Montana State Parks
PO Box 200701

Helena, MT 59620-0701
 406-444-3750
CampReservations@mt.gov

4. Name of project. Campsite Reservation Program

5. If applicable:

Estimated construction/commencement date: Spring 2010

Estimated completion date: January 2011

Current status of project design (% complete): N/A

6. Location affected by proposed action (county, range and township).

Statewide; at up to 21 Montana State Parks:

Table 1. State Parks proposed to be included in the reservation program.	
Northwest Montana	
	Big Arm
	Finley Point
	Lake Mary Ronan
	Logan
	Thompson Falls
	Wayfarers
	West Shore
	Whitefish Lake
West Central Montana	
	Beavertail Hill
	Placid Lake
	Salmon Lake
Southwest Montana	
	Bannack
	Black Sandy
	Lewis and Clark Caverns
	Missouri Headwaters
Southeast Montana	
	Cooney
	Yellowstone River
Eastern Montana	
	Brush Lake
	Hell Creek
	Makoshika
	Tongue River Reservoir

7. Project size: estimate the numbers of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

- (a) Developed:
 - residential..... __ acres
 - industrial__ acres
 - park campsites.....approx. 250 acres
 - (21) state parks.....approx. 18,000 acres

- (b) Open Space/Woodlands/
Recreation..... __ acres

- (c) Wetlands/Riparian
Areas __ acres

- (d) Floodplain..... __ acres

- (e) Productive:
 - irrigated cropland 0 acres
 - dry cropland..... 0 acres
 - forestry 0 acres
 - rangeland 0 acres

8. Map/site plan: See Appendix B.

9. Narrative summary of the proposed action or project including the benefits and purpose of the proposed action.

Montana State Parks proposes to establish a centralized campsite reservation program at up to 21 state park sites that would provide visitors with the choice and opportunity to utilize a simple and user-friendly means of reserving campsites throughout Montana via telephone and computer. This program is proposed to improve customer service, reduce visitor costs, and enhance the public’s use of the parks while reducing conflicts. At those parks where the reservation program would be available, a range of up to 75% of the campsites would be reserveable to accommodate those visitors who choose or desire to plan ahead prior to making their visit to the park. The remaining campsites within each of the respective state parks would remain available as they have historically been, on a “first come, first served” basis. Depending on implementation factors and how the program is utilized, this percentage may be adjusted in the future.

The following are some specific background points directly related to the campsite reservation program proposal, as well as a discussion of the proposed action:

- For years the public has inquired about a campsite reservation program and the desire to have this option prior to visiting a state park. There are situations of family members and friends trying to coordinate campsites adjacent to each other at individual parks throughout Montana. Under the current system, each family must

take their chances in getting a camp site at a given state park. If they are lucky and everyone can secure a site, the sites are typically not together. Additionally, people travel to a park with the intention camping overnight only to find once they arrive that no camp sites are available. This creates an inconvenience when planning a weekend stay or a vacation after a long drive from a distant location. This is especially the case on busy holiday weekends at those parks where camping is very popular. Examples include: Flathead Lake, Placid Lake, Tongue River Reservoir, and Black Sandy State Parks.

- The 2002 Economic Impact Survey conducted by the University of Montana reported that visitors to Montana's State Parks expended over \$179.5 million statewide. Of this amount, the study yielded that over \$116 million was spent in the towns and counties surrounding the state parks, as well as in the parks themselves. At the time of the study, it was documented that Montana's State Parks system generated an economic impact to Montana's economy of 1,170 full and part-time jobs statewide. The proposed action may increase the economic benefits to local communities if stay lengths and public use levels increase in association with improved visitor convenience.
- In 2009, Montana State Parks hosted over 2 million visits, a 12% increase over 2008. Of the 2009 visits, it is estimated that 14% (or approximately 270,000 visits) were overnight stays in the state parks. For the 2009 season visitation, 83% were residents and 17% non-residents.
- It is not unusual for Montana residents to work through a long week and then travel with their family to a state park campground only to find vacationing non-resident guests occupying sites. While this is totally appropriate, the ability to make an advance reservation gives the Montana resident piece-of-mind that they will have a campsite and also reduces the uncertainty associated with not having a reservation program in-place.
- The single most common public inquiry relating to the state park system staff and the Regional FWP offices is the request to plan summer vacations and trips. These calls from in-state and out-of-state visitors are made in an attempts to pre-plan family activities throughout Montana (Deb McRae – personal communication).
- Reservations are currently being taken in specific state parks for the overnight use of yurts, cabins, and teepees, and for some special events. Expansion of a reservation program to include campsites is an area of significant demand by the public, but the program would be limited by available and current staffing levels.
- Currently, a common situation Montana State Parks staff deals with in the campgrounds is visitors arriving up to 2-3 days early, leaving a boat or empty camper in a camp site, and paying for the site for the days they are not there. This is done to insure they have the campsite for the desired weekend days. The practice results in camp sites unavailable for other campers arriving at the park, frustrated that the park is at full occupancy but not occupied by visitors. Dealing with these issues takes a

significant amount of staff time and is a violation of park rules in that currently a campsite may not be unoccupied for more than 24 hours. This also result in customer dissatisfaction on the part of the park visitors who pre-pay for a camp site and not occupy it for a few days, or the visitor who arrives and does not have a site.

- The practice of visitors paying the camping fee for nights they are not actually at the park can easily result in extra fees of \$30-\$45 per visit, depending on the number of nights the site is paid for. A simple up-front camp site reservation fee would be less than the cost of one night's camp fee, and thus, an overall cost savings to the visitor in relation to the current practice.
- The proposed reservation system would provide park visitors with both the option and ability to plan a vacation to one or more state parks. This could be for a ten-day family vacation trip through western Montana or a family reunion on Flathead Lake involving relatives or siblings who now live in different parts of the state or have moved out-of-state.
- Under the proposal being presented, a camp site reservation program would provide visitors with the option to make campsite reservations weeks or months prior to their planned visit via the Internet or by a telephone call-center in up to 21 state parks.
- This proposal would not apply to camping opportunities in any fishing access site (FAS) in Montana.
- Nationwide, 48 of the 50 state parks systems in the United States have campsite reservations programs in-place. The states which do not have reservation programs are Alaska and Montana. The Provincial Parks of Canada, the United States Forest Service (USFS) sites, and the National Park system throughout the U.S. also provide the means for a visitor to make campsite reservations as a public and visitor convenience.
- While some state parks systems or other governmental entities manage their own campsite reservation programs internally, the majority do not. It has typically proven more cost effective and efficient to contract with a private company specializing in reservation programs. These private vendors not only have the staffing and expertise to develop and manage these systems, but they also have state-of-the art technology and experience in dealing with reservation programs via interaction with other governmental customers.
- In the early 1990s Montana State Parks did in fact initiate a campsite reservation program for the state parks in the Kalispell/Flathead Lake area. The program was a phone-in system only and very limited, only involving up to five or six individual camp sites per park. Since it was via phone only and all the records were paper, all of the reservations were required to be made 14 days in advance of the scheduled visit date. That early camp site reservation program was very popular with the public, but it also required a significant amount of staff time to manage and coordinate (Sue McDonald – personal communication).

- Montana State Parks has approximately 640 defined camp sites. In comparison to other state or federal campgrounds, this is a relatively small number. For a private reservation company to contract direct with Montana State Parks to develop an independent, stand-alone system, it is recognized that the costs would be significant when reduced to a “per-reservation” fee for the public. Thus, other options have been investigated to lower the individual per-reservation costs.
- Idaho State Parks and Recreation currently has a very successful, proven, and efficient reservation program for the parks throughout their state. The proposal is for Montana State Parks to enter into a state-to-state agreement with Idaho State Parks for implementation of the same program at 21 Montana State Parks. This would be a pilot program for a fixed length of time. Reservation fees for those visitor’s who choose to utilize the new program would be the same as Idaho’s at \$10 per reservation (per Idaho’s private vendor contract). Of this amount, \$9 would be retained by the private reservation company and \$1 by Idaho State Parks for coordinating the program. No direct costs to Montana’s State Park program are anticipated.

10. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives.

- a.) **Alternative 1 – Preferred Alternative.** Initiate a campsite reservation program at up to 21 Montana State Parks as described above via a state-to-state agreement with Idaho State Parks. The system is proposed to be managed in cooperation with and under the contract Idaho has with ‘ReserveAmerica,’ as discussed above. ‘ReserveAmerica’ currently manages the campsite reservations for 19 state park systems throughout the United States, as well as for the federal National Park Service, the United States Forest Service (USFS) campsite/cabin system, and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers 101,000 campsite program nationwide. ‘ReserveAmerica’ also contracts with private entities for their campground reservation programs, the most familiar being the KOA’s nationwide. This alternative is expected to be of very limited cost to the agency because the primary contract risk is held by Idaho State Parks and the private contractor, ‘ReserveAmerica.’ Additionally, staff would have to learn and familiarize themselves with a new system to meet the public demands, but no staffing increase is anticipated as existing staff will now spend less time dealing with the current situation of visitors “saving campsites.” It is also anticipated that the reservation program will alleviate the user conflicts and unintended regulation violations from park visitors leaving their camping equipment within individual campsites as a means of trying to enjoy a stay in a state park campsite.
- b) **Alternative 2 – No Action alternative.** Continue to manage all campsites within Montana State Parks on a “first-come, first-served” basis. This alternative would not meet public demands or improve service to Montanan’s and their guests as illustrated in the points of consideration above.

- c) **Alternative 3 – Establish a Campsite Reservation Program on an Individual Park Basis.** This alternative was deleted from further consideration due to the limited levels of staffing available that would have to take on the responsibility within the individual park sites.

11. Listing of each local, state or federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

(a) Permits		
Agency Name: N/A	Permit:	Date Filed:

(b) Funding	
Agency Name: N/A	Funding Amount:

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities	
Agency Name: N/A	Type of Responsibility:

12. List of agencies consulted during preparation of this Environmental Checklist:

Bureau of Land Management
National Park Service
USDA Forest Service
Colorado State Parks, Colorado Department of Natural Resources
Idaho State Parks and Recreation
Iowa Department of Natural Resources
North Dakota Parks and Recreation
Oregon Parks and Recreation
South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks
Utah State Parks, Utah Department of Natural Resources
Washington State Parks
Wyoming State Parks, Historic Sites and Trails
Montana Department of Administration
Montana Department of Commerce

13. Name of Preparer(s) of this Environmental Checklist:

Tom Reilly
Montana State Parks
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

14. Date submitted.

April 26, 2010

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST

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

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT.

2. AIR Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (also see 13 (c))		X				
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. Any discharge that will conflict with federal or state air quality regs?		X				
f. Other						

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT.

3. WATER	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
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				
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. Effects to a designated floodplain?		X				
m. Any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations?		X				
n. Other:						

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT.

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

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT.

5. FISH/WILDLIFE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
h. Adverse effects to threatened/endangered species or their habitat?		X				
i. Introduction or exportation of any species not presently or historically occurring in the affected location?		X				
j. Other:						

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				
b. Exposure of people to severe or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other:						

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT.

7. LAND USE	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. A conflict with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. A 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. Compliance with existing land policies for land use, transportation, and open space?		X				
f. Increased traffic hazards, traffic volume, or speed limits or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				
g. Other:						

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT.

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS	IMPACT					
Will the proposed action result in:	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. Effects on existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				
d. Disturbance to any sites with known or potential deposits of hazardous materials?		X				
e. The use of any chemical toxicants?		X				
f. Other:						

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
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:						

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT.

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. 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 so, specify:		X				
b. Effects on the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. 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. Increased use of any energy source?		X				
e. Other.						
Additional information requested:						
f. Define projected revenue sources.						
g. Define projected maintenance costs.						

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT.

11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report)			X			
d. Adverse effects to any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas?		X				
e. Other:						

11.c. May enhance local tourism and recreational quality due to improved service in planning family vacations and camping-related activities.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT.

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				
b. Physical changes that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. Adverse effects to historic or cultural resources?		X				
e. Other:						

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT.

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

13e. Some park users may be concerned that all sites within Montana’s State Park system will be under the reservation program and that campsites will not be available for spontaneous visits or decisions to camp at a state park as they traditionally have been. The proposal however, is to provide the opportunity for reservations to occur at up to 75% of the campsites at any state park, thus leaving an adequate number of sites for campers who choose not to utilize the reservation program. Additionally, under the proposed action, campsites that are not reserved for a night via the reservation program may be occupied for use by visitors who arrive at a park so no loss of opportunity would be experienced by members of the public or visitors to Montana.

This proposal has previously been discussed with private sector campground interests (the Campground Owners Association of Montana – COAM) and the State Parks camp site reservation has been generally favored and supported based upon the concept of improved customer service that would result from the proposed action. The goal of the proposed campsite reservation program is to provide visitors to Montana’s State Parks with a choice with how they plan their camping visits, should they decide to utilize the system.

PART III. ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST CONCLUSION SECTION

1. Discuss the cumulative and secondary effects of this project as a whole. These are impacts to the human environment that, individually, may be minor for a specific project, but, when considered in combination to other actions, may result in significant impacts.

There are no known cumulative or secondary effects of a proposed campground reservation program. The proposed action is a refinement of how the existing public camping opportunities are managed internally. The proposed reservation program will provide the public with a choice of how they plan camping visits to Montana State Parks.

2. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this Environmental Checklist (Part II), is an EIS required?

YES _____

NO X

3. **Public Comment Process.**

This EA will be distributed for a minimum of 21 days for public comment. The EA will be available via the FWP website and noticed to the public through statewide press releases.

4. **Public Input Summary.**

At the conclusion of the public comment period, all public comments will be summarized. Upon review, Montana State Parks will issue a Decision Notice on the proposed action.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Public Involvement:

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

- Public notices in these papers:
 - Helena Independent Record (Helena)
 - Missoulian (Missoula)
 - The Montana Standard (Butte)
 - Bozeman Daily Chronicle (Bozeman)
 - Billings Gazette (Billings)
 - Great Falls Tribune (Great Falls)
 - The Daily Inter Lake (Kalispell)
 - Miles City Star (Miles City)
- One statewide press releases
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: <http://fwp.mt.gov>
- Copies of this environmental assessment will be distributed to 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. Comment Period:

The public comment period will extend for approximately 21 days. Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m. on May 18, 2010 and can be mailed to the address below:

Montana State Parks
Campsite Reservation Program
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701

Or submit email comments to:

CampReservations@mt.gov

Appendices

- A. Tourism Report – Department of Commerce
- B. Map

Appendix A

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:

Betsy Baumgart, Administrator
Montana Office of Tourism-Department of Commerce
301 S. Park Ave.
Helena, MT 59601

Project Name: Campsite Reservation Program – (21) Montana State Park Locations

Project Description: The proposed project will establish a campsite reservation program at up to 21 of Montana’s 54 state parks. This is a recognized public service convenience in both public and private campsites nationwide. The proposed action would provide camping visitors to the state parks with the choice and opportunity to plan ahead and make advanced reservations at up to 75% of the available campsites within up to 21 state parks. The remaining campsites would not be reservable, as they have historically been on a “first come, first served” basis.

The program would utilize an established private vendor for the reservations. The private vendor is the same one who very successfully operates and manages the campsite reservation program for neighboring Idaho State Parks.

1. Would this project have an impact on the tourism economy?

NO

YES

If YES, briefly describe:

The project, as described, has the potential to provide positive impacts on Montana’s tourism and recreation economy. This is a good move toward improving customer service and convenience at the 21 identified parks. We encourage the Parks Division to set and adjust, as needed, the percentage of campsites left open to “first come, first serve” traffic to the level that best serves the needs of Montanans and our non-resident visitors. This percentage may need to be different among the 21 parks involved based on their traditional and future use patterns. This will require ongoing monitoring, evaluation and soliciting customer feedback.

2. Does this impending improvement alter the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings?

NO

YES

If YES, briefly describe:

The project, as described, has the potential to improve the quality of the visitor experience at the 21 State Parks involved in the reservation system. As mentioned in the environmental assessment, customer demand has indicated a desire for this type of service in a number of the Park Division regions. As stated above, we encourage the Parks Division to set and adjust, as needed, the percentage of campsites left open to "first come, first serve" traffic to the level that best serves the needs of Montanans and our non-resident visitors. Adjusting the percentage as needed to best serve customers at the individual parks -- Montanans and non-residents -- will be important for the success of the program.

Signature Betsy Baumgart, Administrator, MTOT Date 3/15/10

Appendix B

Montana State Parks - Proposed Camp Site Reservation Program

