

Environmental Assessment

**WOLF CREEK BRIDGE
FISHING ACCESS SITE
PROPOSED IMPROVEMENT PROJECT**



MARCH 2015



***Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks***

**Wolf Creek Bridge Fishing Access Site
Proposed Improvements Project
Draft Environmental Assessment
MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST**

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of proposed state action:

The 2-acre Wolf Creek Bridge Fishing Access Site (FAS) has been a popular recreational site along the Missouri River since Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks initially leased the property for recreational purposes in 1970 from Montana Department of Transportation and provides quality recreational opportunities for fishing, boating, floating, camping, picnicking, and wildlife viewing. In an effort to accommodate increasingly heavy public use and improve recreational facilities at the FAS, FWP proposes to improve parking and camping facilities at Wolf Creek Bridge FAS. The proposed improvements include developing a designated, paved parking area, relocating and improving the campsites, constructing a storm water detention area, installing an additional latrine and installing two picnic shelters with tables.

2. Agency authority for the proposed action:

The 1977 Montana Legislature enacted Section 87-1-605, Montana Code Annotated (MCA), which directs FWP to acquire, develop and operate a system of fishing accesses. The legislature earmarked a funding account to ensure that the fishing access site program would be implemented. Section 87-1-303, MCA, authorizes the collection of fees and charges for the use of fishing access sites, and contains rule-making authority for their use, occupancy, and protection. Furthermore, Section 23-1-110, MCA, and Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) 12.2.433 guide public involvement and comment for improvements at state parks and fishing access sites, which this document provides.

ARM 12.8.602 requires the Department to consider the wishes of 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 will illuminate the facets of the Proposed Action in relation to this rule. See *Appendix A* for HB 495 qualification.

3. Name of project:

Wolf Creek Bridge Fishing Access Site Proposed Improvement Project

4. Project sponsor:

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Region 4, (406) 454-5850
4600 Giant Springs Road, Great Falls, MT 59405

5. Anticipated Schedule:

Estimated Comment Period: March 2016
Estimated Decision Notice: March 2016
Estimated Commencement Date: Spring 2016
Estimated Completion Date: Summer 2016

Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 35%

6. Location:

Wolf Creek Bridge Fishing Access Site is located on the Missouri River three miles east of Wolf Creek, Montana along the Craig Frontage Road in Lewis and Clark County, Section 32, Township 15 North, Range 3 West (Figure 1 and 2).

Figure 1. General Location of Wolf Creek Bridge FAS

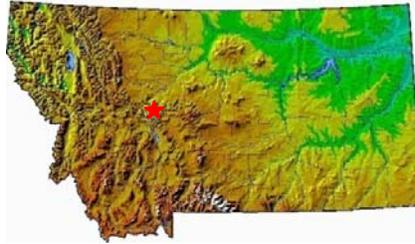


Figure 2. Highway Location of Wolf Creek Bridge FAS

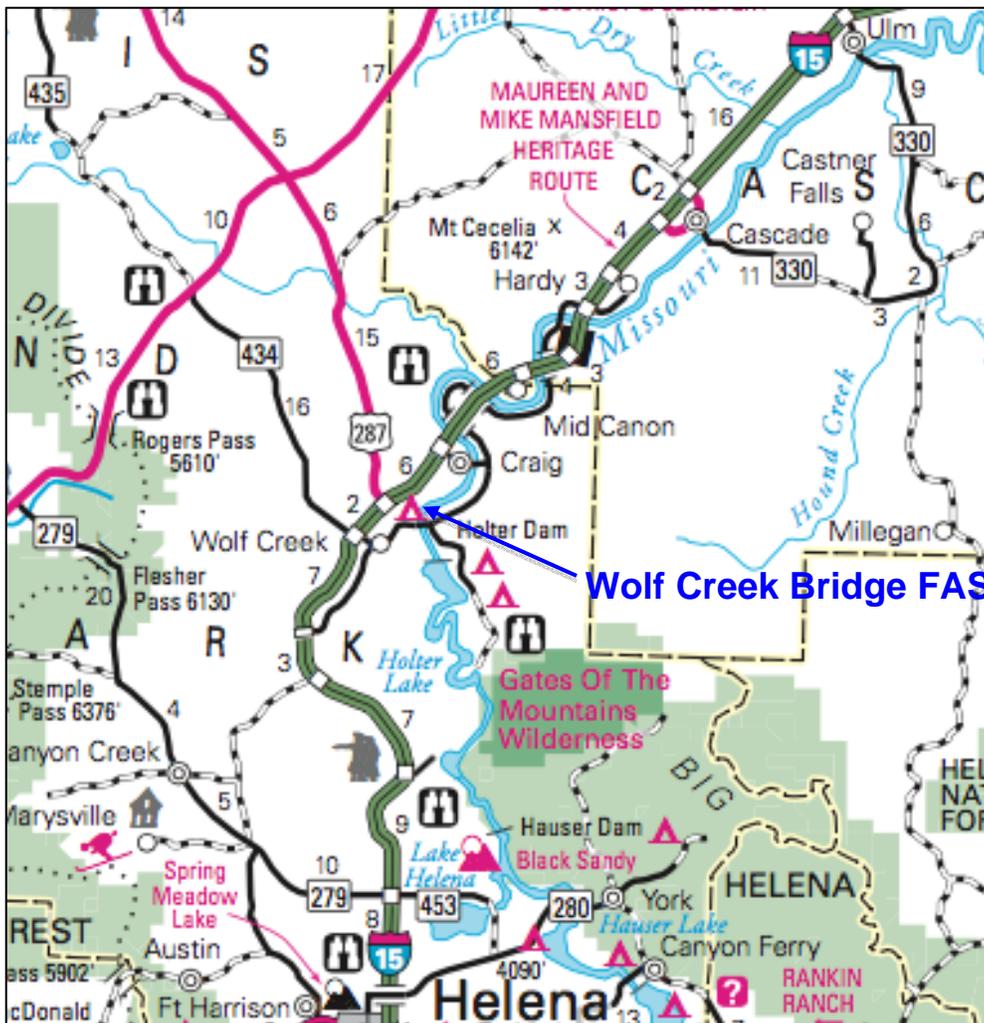
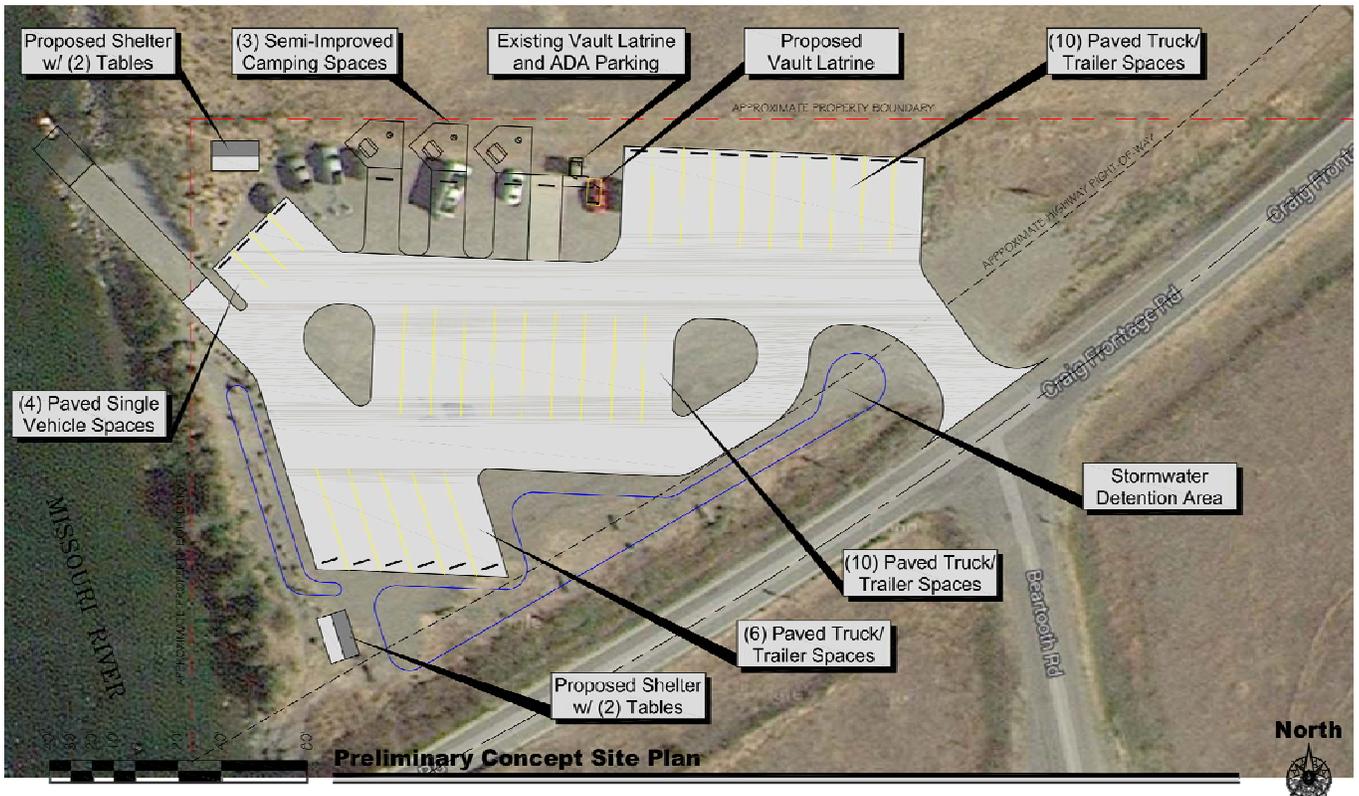


Figure 3. Aerial View of Wolf Creek Bridge FAS



Photo 1. Current Parking and Camping Facilities at Wolf Creek Bridge FAS





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

	<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/	<u>2</u>	Irrigated cropland	<u>0</u>
Woodlands/Recreation		Dry cropland	<u>0</u>
(c) Wetlands/Riparian	<u>0</u>	Forestry	<u>0</u>
Areas		Rangeland	<u>0</u>
		Other	<u>0</u>

8. Local, State or Federal agencies with 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>
Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks (FWP)	124 MT Stream Protection Act
Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality (DEQ)	318 Short Term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity
US Army Corps of Engineers	404 Federal Clean Water Act
Lewis and Clark County	Floodplain Permit

(b) Funding:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
Montana Trout Unlimited	\$ 4,000
Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks Site Protection Fund	\$ 41,500
Federal Wallop Breaux	<u>\$124,500</u>

Total

\$170,000

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Type of Responsibility</u>
Natural Heritage Program	Species of Concern (<i>Appendix B</i>)
State Historic Preservation Office	Cultural Clearance (<i>Appendix E</i>)

9. Narrative summary of the proposed action:

The Missouri River is the longest river in North America and an important and historic waterway of the United States. Though the Missouri River drainage rises from the Rocky Mountains of western Montana and Wyoming, the river officially begins near the town of Three Forks, Montana at the confluence of the Jefferson and Madison Rivers. The Missouri River is joined by the Gallatin River one mile downstream, and flows over 2,300 miles, 726 of which flow through Montana, before entering the Mississippi River near St. Louis, Missouri. From its beginning, the river flows wide and deep and for over 12,000 years people have depended upon the Missouri River and its tributaries as a source of sustenance and transportation. Today the river is also important for recreational use along its entire length through Montana and is heavily used for boating, floating, fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing, hiking, and picnicking.

Wolf Creek Bridge FAS is located on the Missouri River 110 miles downstream of its headwaters at the confluence of the Jefferson and Madison Rivers. The Missouri River, one of the most popular trout streams in the United States, is open to angling year-round along its entire length in Montana, and use by anglers upstream of Great Falls is heavy. According to recent surveys by FWP, the average angler days per year from 2005 to 2013 on the 35-mile stretch from Cascade Bridge (river mile 2,167) to Holter Dam (river mile 2,202) was 111,056, with a low of 78,468 in 2007 and a high of 170,850 in 2013. This stretch of river was the most fished body of water in the region during 2007-2013 and averaged the 3rd most fished body of water in Montana during this same period out of more than 1,400 stream reaches, lakes, or reservoirs that were surveyed within the state. Wolf Creek Bridge FAS is the only FAS with boat launching facilities on the 8-mile stretch between Holter Dam Recreation Site (managed by Bureau of Land Management) (river mile 2202) and Craig FAS (river mile 2194) and is frequently used as a launch site for floaters and boaters.

Native Ecological Systems, as defined by the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP), are absent on Wolf Creek Bridge FAS, with herbaceous, native and non-native plant species dominating undeveloped portions of the FAS. The areas surrounding the parking and camping areas support native grass and forb species, including green needlegrass, needle-and-thread, basin wildrye, foxtail barley, and broom snakeweed along with numerous non-native and weedy grass and forb species, including cheatgrass, crested wheatgrass, smooth brome, intermediate wheatgrass, spotted knapweed, hoary alyssum and mustard sp. The Missouri River shore also supports native species, including Wood's rose, snowberry, golden currant, black gooseberry, chokecherry, yellow evening primrose, Canada goldenrod, and basin wildrye, though these areas also support numerous non-native and weedy species, including common mullein, spotted knapweed, bull thistle, Canada thistle, curly dock, houndstongue, kochia, mustard, cheatgrass, bittersweet nightshade, common tansy, sowthistle, and field mint. According to the MNHP, no Montana plant Species of Concern have been observed within the vicinity of Wolf Creek Bridge FAS.

Wildlife species found in the vicinity of Wolf Creek Bridge FAS include white-tailed and mule deer, elk, moose, black bear, muskrat, beaver, northern river otter, American mink, and a variety of small mammals. A wide variety of resident and migratory bird species use or travel through the area on a seasonal basis, including bald eagle, golden eagle, osprey, Canada geese, American white pelican, great horned owl, great blue heron, and a variety of other raptors, waterfowl, and songbirds. According to the MNHP, no species listed as Threatened or Endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), have been observed in the vicinity of Wolf Creek Bridge FAS. Bald eagle, golden Eagle, great blue heron, black-tailed prairie dog, little brown myotis, Great Plains toad, and westslope cutthroat trout, Montana Animal Species of Concern, have been observed in the vicinity of Wolf Creek Bridge FAS (*Appendix B*). Game fish found in this stretch of the Missouri River include brown trout, rainbow trout, burbot, mountain whitefish, and walleye. Other fish species found in this reach include white sucker, longnose sucker, and mottled sculpin.

The 2-acre Wolf Creek Bridge FAS has been a very popular and heavily used recreational site since FWP first leased the property in 1970. Existing facilities at the FAS include: an unimproved parking area consisting of gravel and broken asphalt; a single-wide, concrete boat ramp; a concrete vault latrine; an ADA handicap-accessible concrete parking pad; five primitive campsites with tables and fire rings; perimeter fencing; two benches along the river; and directional, informational, interpretive, and regulatory signs.

Both resident and non-resident visitor use of Wolf Creek Bridge FAS is heavy year round for boat launching and take-out and angler use of this stretch of the Missouri River averages the 3rd most heavily used stretch in Montana. Conditions at Wolf Creek Bridge FAS reflect decades of continuous heavy and uncontrolled use. Random vehicle parking in the undesignated parking area often results in vehicles blocking other vehicles. Erosion of and around the undefined parking area creates dust and sedimentation of the river. In addition, the existing primitive campsites are located in an unappealing, hazardous location, within 40 feet of Craig Frontage Road. FWP proposes to improve the parking and camping facilities at Wolf Creek Bridge FAS, including: 1) paving and improving the parking area and defining four designated single and 26 truck/trailer parking spaces; 2) constructing a storm water detention area to control run-off; 3) establishing three designated campsites with fire rings and tables on the other side of the FAS and away from Craig Frontage Road; 4) installing an additional concrete vault latrine; 5) installing two picnic shelters with two picnic tables in each and 6) installing barrier rocks to control vehicle access.

The property would continue to be managed under existing FWP public use regulations. Management of the FAS includes routine maintenance, control of vehicles, regulation of camping, and other accepted FWP recreation area management policies. Protection of the natural resources, the health and safety of visitors, and consideration of neighboring properties are being considered and incorporated into improvement plans for this site. Primitive camping is currently allowed but the use of ATV's, hunting, and the discharge of weapons are not allowed on Wolf Creek Bridge FAS. The proposed project would improve recreational opportunities for fishing, boating, floating, camping, picnicking, and wildlife viewing; would preserve this stretch of riparian and open-space habitat; and fill a need for recreation opportunities on the very popular and historic Missouri River.

10. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action

If no action was taken and the proposed modifications were not made, vehicle parking would continue to be inconvenient and insufficient, with vehicles often blocking other

vehicles and creating vehicle congestion. Camping facilities would continue to be located in an unappealing and hazardous location. Sanitation facilities would continue to be insufficient to meet the increasing recreational use of the site. Resource degradation would continue to be an issue with continued erosion of the parking area surface, sedimentation of the river, and degradation of native riparian vegetation. FWP would continue to provide general maintenance to the site and would continue to implement the FWP Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan to control noxious weeds on the property.

Preferred Alternative B: Proposed Action

In an effort to accommodate increasingly heavy public use, to improve recreational facilities, and reduce resource degradation at Wolf Creek Bridge FAS, FWP proposes to improve parking, camping, and storm water drainage facilities at the site. Proposed improvements include designating and paving the parking area, relocating and improving the campsites, controlling storm water drainage, and installing an additional latrine and two picnic shelters.

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

FWP would employ Best Management Practices (BMP), which are designed to reduce sediment delivery to waterways during construction. FWP would develop the final design and specifications for the Proposed Action. All county, state and federal permits listed in Part I 8(a) above would be obtained by FWP as required. A private contractor selected through the State’s contracting processes would complete the construction.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

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				1a.
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				1c.
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. The Proposed Action would not affect existing soil patterns, structures, productivity, or fertility. Soil stability would be improved as a result of paving the parking area. Soil and geologic substructure would remain stable during and after the proposed work.
- 1b. During construction, some minor modifications to the existing soil features would be required for the improvement and paving of the parking area, relocation of the camping area, and construction of the storm water detention area. Disturbed areas would be reseeded with a native seed mix to minimize erosion, sediment delivery to the Missouri River, and the spread of noxious weeds. The FAS is managed for recreation and wildlife habitat and is not under commercial agricultural production so the Proposed Action would not affect agricultural production, soil productivity, or soil fertility. FWP Best Management Practices (BMP) would be followed during all phases of construction to minimize erosion.
- 1c. No unique geologic or physical features would be altered by the Proposed Action.
- 1d. Erosion of the eroded, unimproved parking area and campsites are causing sediment delivery to the Missouri River in the vicinity of the FAS. The proposed development of a designated, paved parking area, relocated and improved campsites, and a storm water detention area would reduce erosion of those surfaces and reduce sedimentation of the river. Minor amounts of sediment may enter the river during improvement and paving of the parking area, relocation of the campsites, and development of the storm water detention area. However, upon completion, erosion and sedimentation to the river would be reduced.

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		Yes	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. <u>For P-R/D-J projects</u> , will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a.)		X				2e.

- 2a. Dust may be temporarily generated during construction of the designated, paved parking area, designated campsites, and storm water detention area. If additional materials were needed off-site, loading at the source site would generate minor amounts of dust. FWP would follow FWP BMP during all phases of construction to minimize risks and reduce dust. See *Appendix D* for the BMP. There would be a temporary increase in diesel exhaust from equipment used during construction. If the Proposed Action were implemented, odors from diesel exhaust would dissipate rapidly. These impacts would be short term and minor since they would occur only during the construction period.

- 2b. The latrines would continue to be regularly maintained to minimize objectionable odors.
- 2e. The proposed project would have no impact on air quality in the vicinity of Wolf Creek Bridge FAS and would not result in any discharge that could conflict with federal or state air quality regulations.

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		Yes	3a
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?			X		Yes Positive	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		Yes	3d.
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.)			X		Yes	3l.
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		Yes Positive	3m.

- 3a. Construction of the designated, paved parking area, designated campsites, and storm water detention area may cause a temporary, localized increase in turbidity in the Missouri River. FWP would obtain a Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) 318 Authorization Permit for Short Term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity. FWP BMP's would be followed during all phases of construction (*Appendix D*).
- 3b. Development of a designated, paved parking area, designated campsites, and storm water detention area would reduce erosion from those surfaces and reduce sedimentation of the

river. The Proposed Action would be designed to minimize any effect on surface water, surface runoff, and drainage patterns. FWP BMP would be followed (*Appendix D*).

- 3d. There may be a temporary, minor increase of runoff during construction. FWP BMP would be followed (*Appendix D*).
- 3h. The use of heavy equipment during construction may result in a slight risk of contamination from petroleum products and a temporary increase in sediment delivery to the Missouri River. FWP BMP's would be followed during all phases of construction to minimize these risks (*Appendix D*).
- 3l. According to the Lewis and Clark County Floodplain Administrator, no portion of the proposed project site on Wolf Creek Bridge FAS is located within the Missouri River floodway or within the 100-year floodplain, as shown on the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Map Panel # 30049C1400E, effective date September 19, 2012. Permits from FWP, DEQ, the US Army Corps of Engineers, and Lewis and Clark County would be obtained to insure that the proposed project would be in compliance with federal, state, and county floodplain and water quality regulations.
- 3m. All impacts to water quality would be temporary resulting from construction. Water quality of the Missouri River could improve as a result of the proposed project by reducing sedimentation into the river from surface and riverbank erosion.

4. VEGETATION	IMPACT *						
	Will the proposed action result in?	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		Yes	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				4d.
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				4f.

- 4a. The Proposed Action would have no impact on the plant diversity, productivity, or abundance of the FAS. Because the project area would not affect undisturbed ground, impacts from construction would be minor. Any area disturbed during construction would be reseeded with a native seed mix and the existing unimproved campsites would be rehabilitated and seeded with a native reclamation seed mix. Improvement and paving of the parking area and construction of new campsites would not disturb undeveloped areas

- 4b. Native Ecological Systems, as defined by the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP), are absent on Wolf Creek Bridge FAS, with herbaceous, native and non-native plant species dominating undeveloped portions of the FAS. The areas surrounding the parking and camping areas support native grass and forb species, including green needlegrass, needle-and-thread, basin wildrye, foxtail barley, and broom snakeweed along with numerous non-native and weedy grass and forb species, including cheatgrass, crested wheatgrass, smooth brome, intermediate wheatgrass, spotted knapweed, hoary alyssum and mustard sp. The Missouri River shore also supports native species, including Wood's rose, snowberry, golden currant, black gooseberry, chokecherry, yellow evening primrose, Canada goldenrod, and basin wildrye, though these areas support numerous non-native and weedy species, including common mullein, spotted knapweed, bull thistle, Canada thistle, curly dock, houndstongue, kochia, mustard, cheatgrass, bittersweet nightshade, common tansy, sowthistle, and field mint. According to the MNHP, no Montana plant Species of Concern have been observed within the vicinity of Wolf Creek Bridge FAS.
- 4c. A search of the MNHP Montana Species of Concern database found that no Montana plant Species of Concern have been observed within the vicinity of Wolf Creek Bridge FAS.
- 4d. No portion of Wolf Creek Bridge FAS is under agricultural production.
- 4e. Canada thistle, houndstongue, and spotted knapweed are the most common noxious weeds found on Wolf Creek Bridge FAS. Cheatgrass, classified as Regulated by the Montana Department of Agriculture, is also common on the FAS. Soils disturbed during construction could colonize with weeds. Disturbed areas would be reseeded with a native reclamation seed mix where necessary to reduce the establishment of weeds. In conjunction with the Lewis and Clark County Weed District, FWP would continue implementing the Statewide Integrated Weed Management Plan using chemical, biological, and mechanical methods to control weeds on the property. Weed management would include the establishment of native vegetation to prevent the spread of weeds. Vehicles would be restricted to the parking areas and access roads, which would be maintained as weed-free, and vehicles would not be allowed on undisturbed areas of the site to minimize the spread of noxious weeds. Weed control costs for Wolf Creek Bridge FAS in 2015 was approximately \$100. FWP estimates that weed control will continue to cost approximately \$100 during fiscal year 2016.
- 4f. According to a search of the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Web Soil Survey on January 20, 2016, all two acres of Wolf Creek Bridge FAS is classified as Prime Farmland. However, the site has not been under agricultural production since FWP acquired the property in 1970.

A search of the MNHP wetland-mapping program on January 20, 2016 found that no wetlands are found on Wolf Creek Bridge FAS. The search found that the shore of the Missouri River along Wolf Creek Bridge FAS is classified as unconsolidated, based upon historic wetland mapping conducted by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). This means that the shoreline has less than 75% areal cover of stones, boulders, or bedrock and less than 30% vegetation cover and that the area is also irregularly exposed due to seasonal or irregular flooding and subsequent drying.

** 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				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				
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				5h.
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				5i.

5a. This stretch of the Missouri River and the vicinity of Wolf Creek Bridge FAS are not considered critical habitat for any fish or wildlife species, so the Proposed Action would have no discernible impact on any critical fish or wildlife habitat. The proposed improvements are designed to minimize impacts to wildlife habitat.

5b/5c. Wildlife species found in the vicinity of Wolf Creek Bridge FAS include white-tailed and mule deer, elk, moose, black bear, red fox, coyote, muskrat, beaver, northern river otter, American mink, and a variety of small mammals. A wide variety of resident and migratory bird species use or travel through the area on a seasonal basis, including Canada geese, bald eagle, golden eagle, osprey, American white pelican, great horned owl, great blue heron, and a variety of other raptors, waterfowl, and songbirds. According to Cory Loecker, FWP Region Wildlife Biologist, the effects to fish and wildlife resulting from the proposed FAS improvements would be minimal. The area is already part of an existing developed area and close to an existing road network, so the proposed changes will not contribute to additional disturbance of the area. Additionally, because the area proposed for improvement is already heavily used, it is unlikely that there would be any changes or detrimental effect to seasonal wildlife habitat.

Game fish found in this stretch of the Missouri River include brown trout, rainbow trout, mountain whitefish, walleye, and yellow perch. Other fish species found in this reach include white sucker, longnose sucker, and mottled sculpin. According to Jason Mullen, FWP Region 4 Fisheries Biologist, the proposed project would reduce sediment in the river and improve fish habitat.

- 5f. A search of the MNHP element occurrence database indicates no occurrences of species listed as Threatened or Endangered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) within the vicinity of Wolf Creek Bridge FAS. Golden Eagle, bald eagle, great blue heron, Great Plains toad, westslope cutthroat trout, little brown myotis, and black-tailed prairie dog, Montana Animal Species of Concern, have been observed in the vicinity of Wolf Creek Bridge FAS (*Appendix B*). According to Cory Loecker, it is unlikely that the proposed project would negatively impact any Montana Animal Species of Concern.

According to Jason Mullen, FWP Region 4 Fisheries Biologist, westslope cutthroat trout, a Montana Animal Species of Concern, is only rarely found in the vicinity of Wolf Creek Bridge so the proposed project would have no negative impact on westslope cutthroat trout. In fact, the proposed parking lot improvements and paving could improve westslope cutthroat trout habitat by reducing sediment in the river.

- 5h. A search of the MNHP element occurrence database indicates no occurrences of species listed as Threatened or Endangered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) within the vicinity of Wolf Creek Bridge FAS. Golden Eagle, bald eagle, great blue heron, Great Plains toad, westslope cutthroat trout, little brown myotis, and black-tailed prairie dog, Montana Animal Species of Concern, have been observed in the vicinity of Wolf Creek Bridge FAS (*Appendix B*). According to Cory Loecker, it is unlikely that the proposed project would negatively impact any Montana Animal Species of Concern.
- 5i. No wildlife species would be imported or exported to the area as a result of the proposed development. This project only involves the improvement of the FAS and will not promote the introduction or spread of invasive species.

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u>	IMPACT *						
	Will the proposed action result in:	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
a. Increases in existing noise levels?				X		Yes	6a
b. Exposure of people to severe or nuisance noise levels?				X		Yes	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, minor increase in noise levels at the project site. Any increase in noise level at the construction site would be short term and minor.

- 6b. Wolf Creek Bridge FAS is located within ½ mile of three residences and approximately three miles east of the town of Wolf Creek. The minor increase of noise levels during construction may disturb nearby neighbors and visitors. FWP would follow the guidelines of the good neighbor policy, which would mitigate increased noise levels and would attempt to limit construction to periods of low visitation to minimize disturbance to others. It is possible that there could be a minor increase in visitor use as a result of the improved parking and camping facilities, which could increase noise levels and disturb nearby residences. The FAS would be managed and regulated to minimize noise disturbance to neighbors.

7. <u>LAND USE</u>	IMPACT *						
	Will the proposed action result in:	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				7a.
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				7d.

- 7a. Because Wolf Creek Bridge FAS is not under agricultural production, the proposed project would have no impact on the productivity or profitability of the FAS.
- 7d. The proposed project would have no affect on the land use of nearby private properties.

8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u>	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		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		Yes Positive	8c.
d. For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)				X		Yes	8d.

- 8a. Physical disturbance of the soil during construction would encourage the establishment of additional noxious weeds on the site. In conjunction with the Lewis and Clark County Weed

District, FWP would continue implementing an integrated approach to control noxious weeds, as outlined in the FWP Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan. The integrated plan uses a combination of biological, mechanical, and herbicidal treatments to control noxious weeds. The use of herbicides would be in compliance with application guidelines to minimize the risk of chemical spills or water contamination and would be applied by people trained in safe handling techniques.

There is a minor and temporary risk of fuel or oil from heavy equipment accidentally releasing into the river during construction. Contractors would have absorbent materials on site 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 BMP's would be followed during all phases of construction to minimize risks (*Appendix D*).

- 8c. The proposed project would improve public safety by providing adequate, designated, paved parking facilities and improving traffic flow, thereby minimizing vehicle conflicts.
- 8d. The use of herbicides to control noxious weeds could result in temporary water contamination from an inadvertent spill. The use of herbicides would be in compliance with application guidelines, outlined in the FWP Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan, to minimize this risk and would be applied by people trained in safe handling techniques.

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				9c.
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				9d.
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?			X		Yes Positive	9e.

- 9c. The Proposed Action may improve recreational use of the area by providing improved parking and camping facilities. This would benefit local retail and service businesses (*Appendix C - Tourism Report*).
- 9d. There would be no change in commercial use of the site.
- 9e. There is the potential for a minor increase in traffic along Craig Frontage Road. However, the proposed improvements to the parking area would improve traffic flow and help alleviate vehicle congestion at the FAS.

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				10a.
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				10e.
f. Define projected maintenance costs.		X				10f.

- 10a. The Proposed Action would have no impact on public services or utilities. The proposed improvements would require periodic maintenance by FWP and the site would continue to be patrolled by FWP.
- 10b. The Proposed Action would have no effect on the local and state tax base and revenue.
- 10e. Overnight camping fees of \$7 per night with a fishing license and \$12 per night without a fishing license would continue to be charged at the FAS. Revenue from camping fees totaled approximately \$1,866 for 2015 and is estimated to be \$2,100 per year after campground improvements are completed.
- 10f. The annual operations and maintenance budget for fiscal year 2015 was approximately \$4,500, which included campground maintenance. The anticipated operations and maintenance budget for 2016 is \$4,800.

** 11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION	IMPACT *					
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?			X		Yes Positive	11a.
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		Yes Positive	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				11d.

- 11a/b. The Proposed Action would not affect the aesthetic values of the FAS. The parking and camping areas are visible from the Missouri River, Craig Frontage Road, and the nearby residences. Improving the parking and camping areas would improve the aesthetic value of the FAS.
- 11b. The site is already developed and the proposed improvements would have no effect on the aesthetic character of the neighborhood or community.
- 11c. The Proposed Action may improve recreational use of the area by increasing and improving parking and camping facilities. This could benefit local retail and service businesses (*Appendix C - Tourism Report*).
- 11d. No designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails, or wilderness areas would be impacted by the proposed improvements.

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES	IMPACT *					
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. **Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				12a.
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.
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12a/d. A file search was completed on the cultural resources at Wolf Creek Bridge FAS in October 2015. FWP concluded that there is a low likelihood of adverse impacts to cultural resources should the project proceed as proposed. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has been consulted and concurred with FWP recommendations for the project (*Appendix E*). If cultural materials are discovered during construction, work would cease and SHPO would be contacted for a more in-depth investigation.

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				13f.
g. For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		X				13g.

During construction of the proposed project, there may be minor and temporary impacts to the physical environment, but the impacts would be short-term and the improvements would benefit the community and recreational opportunities over the long-term. The Proposed Action would have no negative cumulative effects on the biological, physical, and human environments. When considered over the long-term, the Proposed Action positively impacts the public's recreational use of the Missouri River, an important, popular, and heavily used recreational river.

- 13f. Wolf Creek Bridge FAS is a very popular and heavily used FAS. The proposed project is designed to improve recreational facilities on the site and is not expected to generate organized opposition or substantial public controversy.
- 13g. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineer 404 Federal Clean Water Act is the only federal permit required for the proposed development. The Montana DEQ 318 Short Term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity and the FWP 124 Montana Stream Protection Act are the only state permits required for the proposed development. In addition, a Lewis and Clark County Floodplain Permit would also be required.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

During construction of the proposed project, there may be minor and temporary impacts to the physical environment, but the impacts would be short-term and the improvements would benefit the community and recreational opportunities over the long-term. The Proposed Action would have no negative cumulative effects on the biological, physical, and human environments. When considered over the long-term, the Proposed Action positively impacts the public's recreational use of the Missouri River, an important, popular, and heavily used recreational river.

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 transient and permanent wildlife species and would continue to be open to the public for access to the river for fishing, floating, boating, wildlife viewing and camping.

The Proposed Action would not impact the local wildlife species that frequent the property and the project would be designed to avoid conditions that stress wildlife populations. Though golden eagle, bald eagle, great blue heron, Great Plains toad, westslope cutthroat trout, little brown myotis, and black-tailed prairie dog, Montana Species of Concern, have been observed in the vicinity of the proposed project site, the proposed project is unlikely to impact these species. None of these species are known to nest in the vicinity of the proposed project and Wolf Creek Bridge FAS does not provide preferred habitat for any of these species. In addition, these species are likely accustomed to disturbances from recreation, agriculture, and residential development that have occurred in the area for years

Soils disturbed during construction could colonize with weeds. Disturbed areas would be reseeded with a native reclamation seed mix where necessary to reduce the establishment of weeds. In conjunction with Lewis and Clark County Weed Control District, FWP would continue implementing the Statewide Integrated Weed Management Plan using chemical, biological and mechanical methods to control weeds on the property.

The proposed improvements of Wolf Creek Bridge FAS would improve recreational opportunities by improving and expanding camping and parking facilities. The proposed project would also reduce resource degradation by reducing erosion from the unimproved parking and camping facilities. The proposed improvements would improve recreational opportunities for fishing, picnicking, and wildlife viewing on the very popular and scenic Missouri River.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Public Involvement:

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on the Wolf Creek Bridge FAS Proposed Improvement Project, the Proposed Action and alternatives:

- Two public notices in each of these papers: the *Great Falls Tribune* and the *Helena Independent Record*
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: <http://fwp.mt.gov>.
- Draft EA's will be available at the Region 4 headquarters in Great Falls and the State Headquarters in Helena.
- A news release will be prepared and distributed to a standard list of media outlets interested in FWP Region 4 issues.

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having limited impacts, many of which can be mitigated.

If requested within the comment period, FWP will schedule and conduct a public meeting on this Proposed Action.

2. Duration of comment period.

The public comment period will extend for (30) thirty days. Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., _____ date, 2016 and can be e-mailed to vrobinson@mt.gov or mailed to the address below:

Wolf Creek Bridge FAS Proposed Improvement Project
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Region 4
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, MT 59405

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 on an evaluation of impacts to the physical and human environment under MEPA, this environmental review revealed no significant negative impacts from the proposed action: therefore, an EIS is not necessary and an environmental assessment is the appropriate level of analysis. In determining the significance of the impacts, Fish, Wildlife and Parks assessed the severity, duration, geographic extent, and frequency of the impact, the probability that the impact would occur or reasonable assurance that the impact would not occur. FWP assessed the growth-inducing or growth-inhibiting aspects of the impact, the importance to the state and to society of the environmental resource or value affected, any precedent that would be set as a result of an impact of the proposed action that would commit FWP to future actions; and potential conflicts with local, federal, or state laws. As this EA revealed no significant impacts from the proposed actions, an EA is the appropriate level of review and an EIS is not required.

2. Persons responsible for preparing the EA:

Vicki Robinson

Andrea Darling

Region 4 Fishing Access Site Manager
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, MT 59405
vrobinson@mt.gov
(406) 454-5840

FWP EA Contractor
39 Big Dipper Drive
Montana City, MT 59634
apdarling@gmail.com

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

Montana Department of Commerce – Tourism

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Design and Construction

Lands Unit

Legal Unit

Fisheries Division

Wildlife Division

Montana Natural Heritage Program – Natural Resources Information System (NRIS)

Montana Historic Preservation Office

APPENDICES

- A. MCA 23-1-110 Qualification Checklist
- B. Native Species Report - Montana Natural Heritage Program
- C. Tourism Report – Department of Commerce
- D. Fish, Wildlife and Parks Best Management Practices
- E. State Historic Preservation Office – Concurrence Letter

APPENDIX A

23-1-110 MCA PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

Date: December 1, 2015

Person Reviewing: Andrea Darling

Project Location: Wolf Creek Bridge Fishing Access Site is located on the Missouri River three miles east of Wolf Creek, Montana along the Craig Frontage Road in Lewis and Clark County, Section 32, Township 15 North, Range 3 West.

Description of Proposed Work: The 2-acre Wolf Creek Bridge Fishing Access Site (FAS) has been a popular recreational site along the Missouri River since the property was leased by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) in 1970 and provides quality recreational opportunities for fishing, boating, floating, camping, picnicking, and wildlife viewing. In an effort to accommodate increasingly heavy public use and improve recreational facilities at the FAS, FWP proposes to improve parking and camping facilities at Wolf Creek Bridge FAS. Proposed improvements include developing a designated, paved parking area, relocating and improving the campsites, and installing an additional concrete vault latrine and two picnic shelters with tables.

The following checklist is intended to be a guide for determining whether a proposed action 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: No construction over undisturbed land.
- B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?**
Comments: No building construction.
- C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?**
Comments: Yes, for the designated, paved parking area and relocated campsites.
- D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?**
Comments: No, the existing parking area would not be expanded.
- E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a doublewide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?**
Comments: No.
- F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?**
Comments: No.
- G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?**
Comments: SHPO concurrence has been obtained.
- 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: Yes, the number of campsites would be reduced from five to three.
- J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern, including effects of a series of individual projects?**
Comments: No. The proposed project would not affect existing features or use patterns.

APPENDIX B

NATIVE SPECIES REPORT – MONTANA NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM Sensitive Plants and Animals in the Vicinity of Wolf Creek Bridge Fishing Access Site

Species of Concern Terms and Definitions

A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) element occurrence database (<http://nris.mt.gov>) indicates occurrences of bald eagle, listed as DM by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, within one mile of the Proposed Action site. No other occurrences of Threatened, Endangered, or other species federally ranked by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) have been found in the vicinity of Wolf Creek Bridge FAS. The search indicates that golden eagle, great blue heron, Great Plains toad, westslope cutthroat trout, little brown myotis, and black-tailed prairie dog, Montana Animal Species of Concern, have been observed on or near Wolf Creek Bridge FAS. More information on these species is included below.

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).

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Endangered Species Act)- Terms and Definitions

LE. Listed endangered: Any species in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

LT. Listed threatened: Any species likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

C. Candidate: Those taxa for which sufficient information on biological status and threats exists to propose to list them as threatened or endangered.

DM. Recovered, delisted, and being monitored - Any previously listed species that is now recovered, has been delisted, and is being monitored.

BGEPA. The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940 (BGEPA) prohibits anyone, without a permit issued by the Secretary of the Interior, from taking bald or golden eagles, including their parts, nests, or eggs. The BGEPA provides criminal and civil penalties for persons who take, possess, sell, purchase, barter, offer to sell, purchase or

barter, transport, export or import, at any time or any manner, any bald eagle ... [or any golden eagle], alive or dead, or any part, nest, or egg thereof.

MBTA. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) implements four treaties that provide for international protection of migratory birds. The statute's language is clear that actions resulting in a "taking" or possession (permanent or temporary) of a protected species is a violation of the MBTA.

BCC. Birds of Conservation Concern 2008. The 1988 amendment to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act mandates the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to identify species, subspecies, and populations of all migratory nongame birds that, without additional conservation actions, are likely to become candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act

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.

FWP 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 WOLF CREEK BRIDGE FISHING ACCESS SITE

1. *Anaxyrus cognatus* (Great Plains Toad)

Vertebrate animal- Amphibian

Habitat: Wetlands, floodplain pools

Natural Heritage Ranks

Federal Agency Status:

State: **S2**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:

Global: **G5**

U.S. Forest Service: **Sensitive**

U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier: **2**

Element Occurrence data was reported of Great Plains toad within one mile of the project area. Last recorded observation date was 2004.

2. *Ardea Herodias* (Great Blue Heron)

Vertebrate animal- Bird

Habitat- Riparian Forests

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**

Element Occurrence data was reported of great blue heron within the project area. Last recorded observation date was 1988.

3. *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* (Bald Eagle)

Vertebrate animal- Bird

Habitat: Riparian forest

Natural Heritage Ranks

Federal Agency Status:

State: **S4**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: **DM; BGEPA; MBTA; BCC**

Global: **G5**

U.S. Forest Service: **Sensitive**

U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier: **1**

Element Occurrence data was reported of bald eagle within one mile of the project area. Last recorded observation date was 2011.

4. *Aquila chrysaetos* (Golden Eagle)

Vertebrate animal- Bird

Habitat- Grasslands

Natural Heritage Ranks

Federal Agency Status:

State: **S3**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: **BGEPA; MBTA; BCC**

Global: **G5**

U.S. Forest Service:

U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier: **2**

Element Occurrence data was reported of golden eagle within the project area. Last recorded observation date was 2012.

5. *Oncorhynchus clarkii lewisi* (Westslope Cutthroat Trout)

Vertebrate animal- Fish

Habitat: Mountain streams, rivers, and lakes

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**

Element Occurrence data was reported of westslope cutthroat trout within the project area. No observation date was recorded.

6. Myotis lucifugus (Little Brown Myotis)

Vertebrate animal- Mammal

Habitat: Generalist

Natural Heritage Ranks

Federal Agency Status:

State: **S3**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:

Global: **G3**

U.S. Forest Service:

U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

FWP CFWCS Tier: **3**

Element Occurrence data was reported of little brown myotis within two miles of the project area. Last recorded observation date was 2004.

7. Cynomys ludovicianus (Black-tailed Prairie Dog)

Vertebrate animal- Mammal

Habitat: Grassland

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: **1**

Element Occurrence data was reported of black-tailed prairie dog within the project area. No observation date was recorded.

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:

Jeri Duran, Director of Sales and Constituent Services
Montana Office of Tourism
301 S. Park Ave.
Helena, MT 59601

Project Name: Wolf Creek Bridge Fishing Access Site Proposed Improvement Project

Project Description: The 2-acre Wolf Creek Bridge Fishing Access Site (FAS) has been a popular recreational site along the Missouri River since the property was leased by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) in 1970 and provides quality recreational opportunities for fishing, boating, floating, camping, picnicking, and wildlife viewing. In an effort to accommodate

heavy public use and improve recreational facilities at the FAS, FWP proposes to improve parking and camping facilities at Wolf Creek Bridge FAS. Proposed improvements include developing a designated, paved parking area, relocating and improving the campsites, and installing an additional concrete, vault latrine and two shelters with tables.

1. Would this site development project have an impact on the tourism economy?
NO YES If YES, briefly describe:

Yes, as described, this 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: Jeri Duran, Bureau Chief Date: December 15, 2015

APPENDIX D MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

10-02-02
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
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
CONCURRENCE LETTER

From: Murdo, Damon □
Sent: Tuesday, October 27, 2015 12:40 PM □ **To:** Mangum, Bardell □
Subject: FWP FY 15-16 FISHING ACCESS SITE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

October 27, 2015

Bardell Mangum
MT FWP
PO Box 200701
Helena MT 59620-0701

RE: FWP FY 15-16 FISHING ACCESS SITE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS. SHPO Project #: [2015102603](#)

Dear Mr. Mangum:

Thank you for your letter regarding the above-cited projects. We agree that for the majority of the projects there is a low likelihood cultural properties will be impacted and, therefore, feel that a recommendation for a cultural resource inventory is unwarranted at this time. These projects include #'s 294B.1, 465.4, 289.2, **789.3 {Wolf Creek Bridge FAS}**, 399B.2, 610A.1, 940.4, 521A.1, 570.3, 1018.5, 780.1. However, keep in mind that it is SHPO's position that any structure over fifty years of age is considered historic and is potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. If any structures are to be altered and are over fifty years old we would recommend that they be recorded and a determination of their eligibility be made prior to any disturbance taking place

We also agree with your findings that project #'s 625.1, 80.2, and 115.3 may have the potential to impact cultural resources. Therefore we would ask that you submit a formal file search request to our office

for these three projects along with any further project documentation that you have. We will then be able to comment on what we feel may, or may not be necessary with these three projects.

If you have any further questions or comments you may contact me at [\(406\) 444-7767](tel:(406)444-7767) or by e-mail at dmurdo@mt.gov. Thank you for consulting with us.

Sincerely,

Damon Murdo
Cultural Records Manager
State Historic Preservation Office

File: FWP/FISH/2015