Region 1
490 N. Meridian Road
Kalispell, MT 59901

Decision Notice
and
Finding of No Significant Impact
for
ISLAND LAKE
FISHING ACCESS SITE
PROPOSED IMPROVEMENT
Environmental Assessment

August 11, 2014

Description of the Proposed Action:
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) is proposing site improvements at Island Lake Fishing Access Site (FAS). FWP proposes to improve Island Lake FAS with an improved gravel access road, a designated parking area to accommodate six to eight vehicles with trailers, gravel boat ramp, four designated campsites, a concrete vault latrine, fencing, fire rings, and informational and directional signs. Camping would be allowed at the FAS in the designated sites only. A nightly camping fee of $7 would be charged as per the FAS Biennial Fee Rule that was adopted by the FWP Commission in 2013.

The FWP-owned 37.7-acre site on Island Lake provides the only public access to the lake and has been a popular destination for fishing, camping, and other recreational activities since its acquisition in 2000. Existing facilities at the FAS include an unimproved access road that crosses neighboring private land and land owned by Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, a pioneered boat launch, a pioneered parking area, and a pioneered camping area. The existing access road crosses private and state-owned property, and the new road would be rerouted to stay on FWP property. There is currently a problem with people from the access trespassing on private property, and FWP would provide signage, fencing, and barrier rocks to prevent trespass.

Public Comment:
FWP accepted public comment on the draft environmental assessment (EA) for a 30-day period, from April 11, 2014, through May 11, 2014. The EA was advertised through media releases and legal notices in the Daily Inter Lake, Helena Independent Record, The Western News, Char-Koosta News, and on the FWP web page. Copies of the EA were available from the Kalispell FWP office, on the FWP web site, at the Montana State Library, and available for viewing at the Flathead County Libraries.

Thirteen written comments were received during the comment period, with ten comments in favor of the proposal and two in opposition to the proposal. One comment was neither in favor or

opposed. Many of the comments in favor of the proposal expressed general support of the proposal, but identified concerns and suggestions regarding specific components of the proposal. We have identified the unique comments, paraphrased them below, and provided a brief response to each comment.

Response to Comments:

1. **Comment -** Three parties who own land bordering or nearby the site commented that they currently have or anticipate having a problem with trespass onto their land from the FAS. They suggested fencing, barrier rocks, and signage to help prevent such trespass. One neighbor expressed concern that the plan does not call for a fence along the eastern boundary of the FAS and that illegal trespassing would occur by campers looking for firewood.

   Response - FWP will provide barrier rocks, fencing, and signage of the property boundary to help prevent trespass onto adjacent property. The development would include a fence along the eastern boundary of the FAS and signs to mark the property boundary. Additionally, FWP would install signage that directs people to the property, which does not exist now. Many visitors unknowingly trespass on adjacent property simply because they do not know where the FAS is located.

2. **Comment -** On page 6 the EA incorrectly states that neighboring private property is open for public use, this is not true.

   Response - FWP apologizes for this mistake and recognizes that this private land is not open for public use. There are currently no signs that identify the site as FWP property or define the property boundary. FWP hopes that new signage will lead to a decrease in trespass on adjacent lands. Also, see the previous response.

3. **Comment -** Three parties suggested that four campsites are not enough to accommodate everyone who wants to camp there, especially on the busy weekend. Two of those parties suggested an overflow camping area because people who make the long drive to the lake to camp will not turn around because the designated sites are full. Some people report having seen as many as fifteen camp trailers or RVs at the site at one time. One person suggested planning the development so that additional campsites could be added in the future.

   Response - In the site layout for the proposal, FWP has attempted to maximize the number of campsites, while minimizing the disturbance to previously undisturbed areas. Space is limited in the desirable camping areas on the lakeshore. FWP is seeking an acceptable compromise between resource protection and providing recreational opportunities. FWP would look into the possibility of making one of the campsites a group site to accommodate larger groups. FWP would also consider expanding camping opportunities in the future as needed.

4. **Comment -** Garbage and waste will be generated by visitors, and FWP should have a plan to deal with it.

Response - FWP would provide a concrete vault latrine on-site to deal with human waste and would provide routine litter pick-up. Littering and dumping is prohibited by regulation, and that regulation would be enforced.

5. **Comment -** Three people commented that the improvements are much needed, and one person said that they are long overdue. Another person supports spending tax dollars on projects that improve recreational opportunities in the area.

   Response - Thank you for the comments.

6. **Comment -** The plan does not address the increased fire hazard as a result of the increased use and new campsites in areas that have fuels on the ground. FWP should clear a safe area around the campsites to reduce the potential for spread of fire.

   Response - FWP would design the campsites to minimize the risk of fires getting out of control. Fires would be allowed only in provided steel fire rings, and the ground surrounding those rings would be cleared of vegetation.

7. **Comment -** Three people commented that the improvement of the boat ramp would open the lake up to larger boats. They expressed concerns about the impacts of the larger boats, including noise, erosion, water quality issues, disturbance to fish and wildlife, and the loss of the peaceful atmosphere on the lake. Some of those people suggested a nonmotorized regulation, a no-wake regulation, or limiting boat motors to 10HP or less on the lake.

   Response - FWP does not anticipate a large increase in the number or size of boats using Island Lake. FWP would install an improved gravel boat ramp, but the launch will remain shallow and difficult for large boats. The road to the site will remain long and rough, and should prevent people from towing larger boats to the site. Placing a limit on the size of boat motors is a possibility, but would have to be adopted through the FWP Commission rule-making process in a separate effort.

8. **Comment -** The development will stand out from the generally primitive surroundings in the area.

   Response - FWP designs its fishing access sites to blend in with the natural surroundings as much as possible. This includes using locally sourced fill materials and gravel, natural color schemes, and landscape design that compliments the natural surroundings.

9. **Comment -** FWP should swap the locations of the day-use area and ramp with the camping area to alleviate problems with campers disturbing the nearby residents, to prevent day-users from having to drive through the camp area, and to minimize fire hazard by placing the camping area farther away from the forested area to the south.

   Response - FWP agrees with this suggestion and will switch the locations of the camping area and day-use area in the final design for the reasons outlined in the comment.

10. **Comment -** The Forest Service supports well-managed recreation, and this site has a lot of opportunity.

    Response - Thank you for the comment.

11. **Comment -** Currently, people access the lake by trespassing on private property, and this site development will help alleviate this problem.

    Response - Thank you for the comment. FWP agrees; please see Nos. 1 and 2.

12. **Comment -** Wardens need to make more of an attempt to patrol Island Lake; fish poaching is a problem there.

    Response - FWP game wardens occasionally patrol the area and would continue to do so. There would also be an increased presence by FAS maintenance personnel and management, which would also be a deterrent to illegal activity including poaching.

13. **Comment -** The construction of the boat ramp will require a storm water permit and a 318 permit.

    Response - FWP would obtain all of the necessary permits prior to starting construction; however, as currently designed, construction impacts stop at the edge of water.

14. **Comment -** Why would the FAS be limited to archery and shotgun hunting? Rifles could safely be used for hunting south of area that is proposed for development. Neighboring state and private lands do not have a restriction on rifle hunting. Does FWP have the authority to make that decision?

    Response - ARM 12.8.202 allows FWP to designate weapons restrictions in recreation areas when there is a hazard to human life or property. FWP would continue to investigate whether rifles could be safely used for hunting at the site.

15. **Comment -** The site should be day-use only to protect the pristine nature of Island Lake, unless FWP can provide an on-site host. Gunfire and partying are currently a problem there, and the proposed improvements would only make the problem worse. Wildlife would be negatively affected by the overnight use.

    Response - FWP hopes that the development will actually alleviate some of the problems that are currently occurring there, including gunfire, loud parties, garbage, and over-crowding. Regulations would be posted on-site, and FWP staff would be visiting the area on a more regular basis. Shooting would be allowed for lawful hunting purposes only. FWP would like to eventually have a host on-site during the summer months, but that would require electricity, phone, and a well, which are not funded at this time.

16. **Comment -** Grizzly bears were not mentioned in the EA. I have heard through a number of sources that grizzly bears have been seen around the lake.

Response - FWP acknowledges that grizzly bears may use the area, but does not anticipate that the proposed development would result in a significant disturbance to the species. Because recreation has been occurring at the site for years, grizzly bears are likely accustomed to human activity at the site.

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI):
Based on the analysis in the environmental assessment (EA), I find Alternative B to be the preferred alternative. I have evaluated the EA and applicable laws, regulations, and policies and have determined that this action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

Alternative B: Proposed Action:
In order to provide improved recreational opportunities, reduce resource degradation, and address private property trespass issues, FWP proposes to develop Island Lake FAS with a developed gravel access road, a designated parking area to accommodate six to eight vehicles with trailers, a gravel boat ramp, four designated campsites, a concrete vault latrine, fencing, fire rings, and informational and directional signs.

The final EA may be viewed at or obtained from Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Region One, 490 N. Meridian Road, Kalispell, MT 59901. Please direct requests and questions to:

Tony Powell
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
490 N Meridian Road
Kalispell, MT 59901
(406)751-5423
tpowell@mt.gov

Alan Wood for

Jim Williams
Regional Supervisor

August 11, 2014

Date

FINAL
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

ISLAND LAKE FISHING ACCESS SITE
PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

August 2014

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Island Lake Fishing Access Site
Proposed Development
Final Environmental Assessment
MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of proposed state action:

In 2000, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) acquired 37.7 acres in fee title along Island Lake for the purpose of providing public access to Island Lake, developing a fishing access site (FAS), and protecting wetlands and associated wildlife values. FWP proposes to develop Island Lake FAS, including a developed access road, a designated parking area, a single-wide concrete boat ramp, three or four designated campsites, a concrete vault latrine, informational and directional signs, fire rings, and fencing.

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 FWP 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 the improvements at state parks and fishing access sites, which this document provides.

ARM 12.8.602 requires the Department to consider the wishes of 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:

Island Lake Fishing Access Site Proposed Development Project

4. Project sponsor:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Region 1
490 North Meridian Road
Kalispell, MT 59901
(406) 752-5501

5. Anticipated schedule:

Estimated public comment period: April/May 2014
Estimated decision notice: June 2014
Commission approval requested to proceed: July 2014
Estimated site development commencement date: fall 2014
Estimated completion date: fall 2014
Current status of project design (% complete): 35%

6. Location:

Island Lake FAS is located on Island Lake, approximately 35 miles west of Kalispell and 30 miles southeast of Libby in Lincoln County, Township 29N, Range 26W, NW ¼ Section 31 (Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1. General location of Island Lake FAS

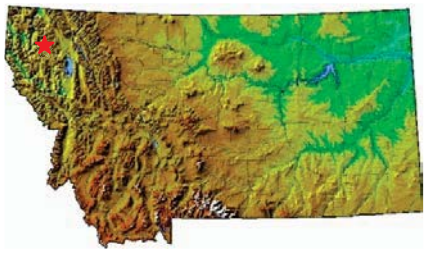


Figure 2. Highway location of Island Lake FAS

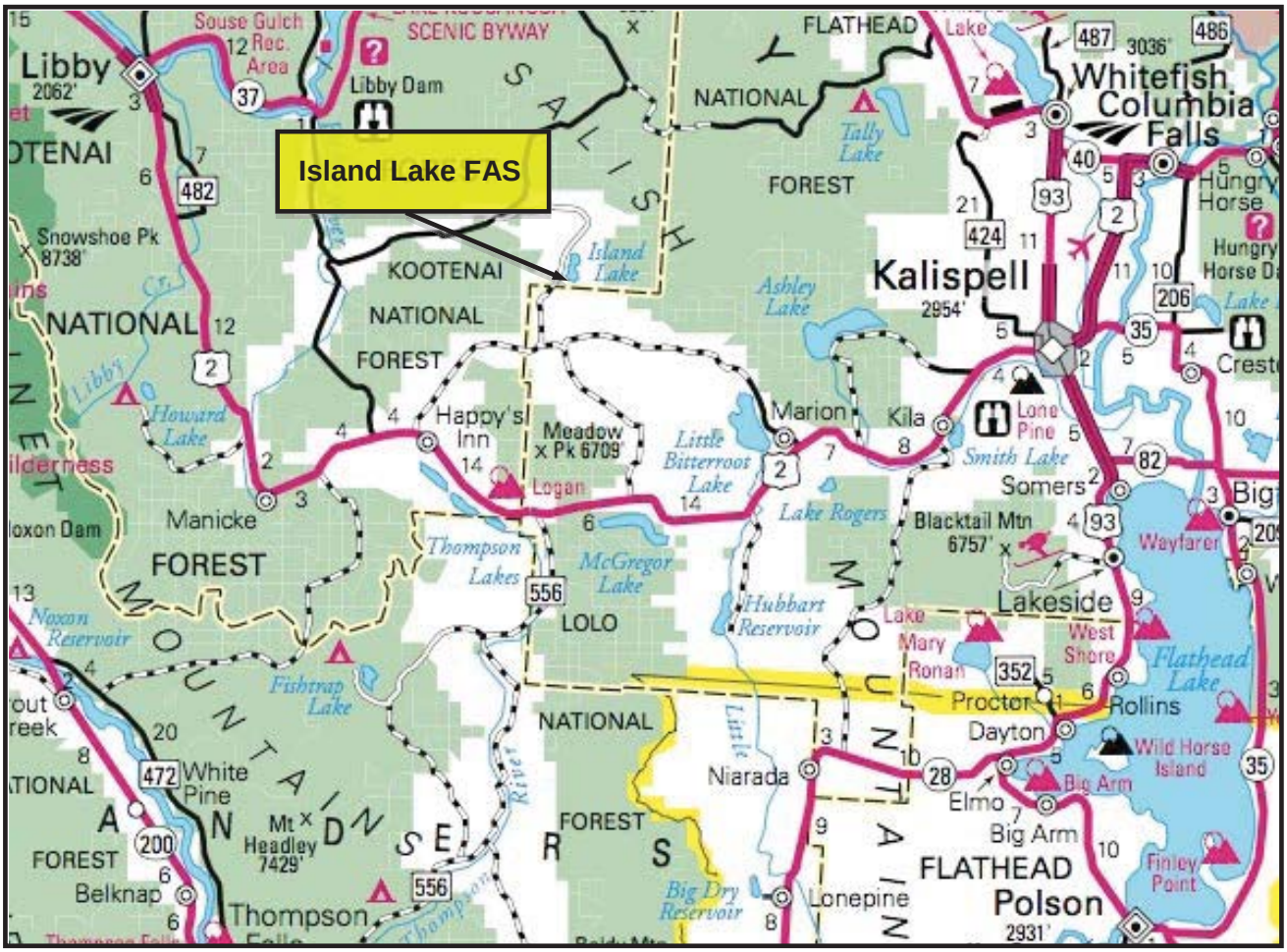


Figure 3. Island Lake FAS Parcel Map

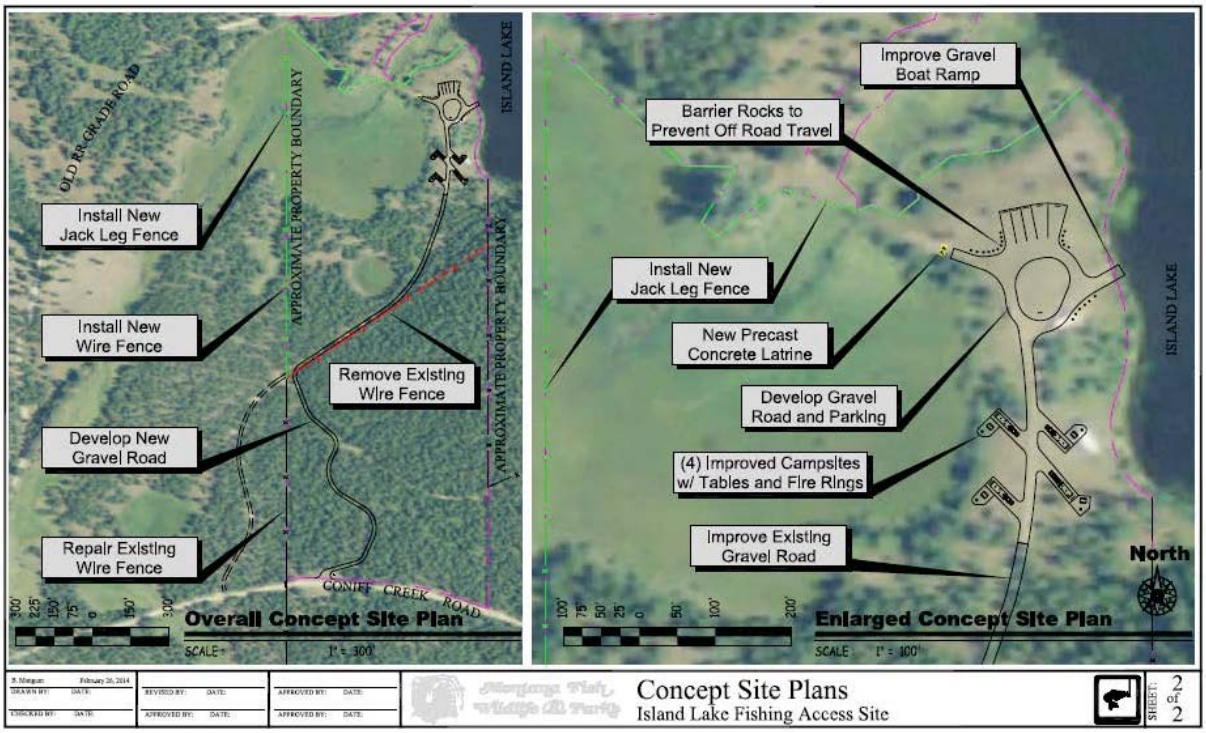
7. Project size:

	Acres		Acres
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	0
Residential	0		
Industrial	0	(e) Productive:	
		Irrigated cropland	0
(b) Open Space/ Woodlands/Recreation	0	Dry cropland	0
		Forestry	0
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas	4.5	Rangeland	0
		Other	0

Photo 1. View of pioneered boat ramp and access road at Island Lake FAS

Photo 2. View of pioneered parking and camping area at Island Lake FAS

Figure 4. Island Lake FAS Preliminary Concept Site Plan



8. Permits, funding & overlapping jurisdiction:

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

Agency Name	Permits
Lincoln County	Lakeshore Construction Permit
Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality	318 Short-term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	124 Montana Stream Protection Act
Lincoln County	Floodplain Permit and Sanitation Permit
US Corps of Engineers	404 Federal Clean Water Act

(b) Funding:

Agency Name	Funding Amount
Boat-in-Lieu Fund	$ 25,000
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks FAS Site Protection Fund	$ 40,000
Total FAS Development	$ 65,000

(c) Other overlapping or additional jurisdictional responsibilities:

Agency Name	Type of Responsibility
Natural Heritage Program	Species of Concern (Appendix B)
FWP Wildlife Mitigation Program	Offset wildlife impacts from Libby Dam
State Historic Preservation Office	Cultural clearance
Lincoln County Weed District	Weed management coordination

9. Narrative summary of the proposed action:

Island Lake is located approximately 35 miles west of Kalispell and 30 miles southwest of Libby (Figures 1 and 2) and is surrounded by land formerly owned by Plum Creek Timber Company. At an elevation of 3,295 feet above sea level, the lake is 1.5 miles long, with a maximum depth of 55 feet. The shores and immediately surrounding uplands are, for the most part, gently sloping. Three intermittent creeks flow into the 211-acre Island Lake. Island Creek is formed at the outlet in the southwest corner of the lake and flows through the FAS.

Island Lake is popular for open-water fishing and ice fishing, as well as for weekend camping on the FAS and on private land along the west shore presently open for public use. Island Lake supports a warmwater fishery, with yellow perch, largemouth bass, and northern pike the primary game species found in the lake. Recent surveys conducted by FWP demonstrate that Island Lake has received significantly higher angler use in recent years. The FWP surveys show that Island Lake supported 267 angler days in 2005, 300 angler days in 2009, and 931 angler days in 2011, indicating a 248% increase in angler use since 2005. The state ranking for Island Lake was the 551st most fished body of water in Montana in 2005, the 553rd in 2009, and the 296th in 2011, indicating a 47% increase in popularity for angling statewide. Island Lake ranked the 133rd most fished body of water in FWP Region 1 in 2005, the 124th in 2009, and the 75th in 2011, indicating a 44% increase in popularity for angling in Region 1.

Vegetation found in the vicinity of Island Lake FAS consists of Rocky Mountain Dry-Mesic Montane Mixed Conifer Forest; Northern Rocky Mountain Lower Montane Riparian Woodland and Shrubland; Alpine Mountain Wet Meadow; and Rocky Mountain Lower Montane, Foothill, and Valley Grassland, as defined by the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP). Douglas-fir, lodgepole pine, western larch, and black cottonwood are the dominant tree species found around the lake. A Semi-Permanently Flooded Freshwater Emergent Wetland and a Seasonally Flooded Freshwater Emergent Wetland, as defined by the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Wetland Inventory, are also located on the northern third of Island Lake FAS. Approximately 8 of the 37.7acres of the FAS are classified as wetlands. The lake also supports emergent wetland communities on the lake fringe around much of the lake perimeter.

Common wildlife species whose habitat distribution overlaps Island Lake FAS, include white-tailed deer, elk, moose, black bear, wolf, mountain lion, beaver, muskrat, American mink, marten, bald eagle, osprey, great blue heron, and waterfowl. A wide variety of resident and migratory bird species use or travel through the area on a seasonal basis, including Canada goose, northern goshawk, and numerous other species of waterfowl, raptors, and songbirds. According to Gael Bissell, FWP Region 1 wildlife biologist, and a search of the MNHP element occurrence database, bald eagle, ranked as Delisted and Monitored (DM) by the USFWS, and wolverine, ranked as a Candidate (C) for listing by the USFWS, have been observed within the vicinity of Island Lake FAS. Though not recorded by MNHP, FWP biologists observed tracks of Canada lynx, listed as threatened by the USFWS, on the FAS within the last ten years. No other occurrences of federally ranked animal or plant species have been found within the vicinity of Island Lake. Great blue heron, common loon, great gray owl, American bittern, northern goshawk, and fisher, species of concern, have been observed on or within one mile of Island Lake FAS (Appendix B).

In 2000, FWP acquired 37.7 acres of land on Island Lake for the purpose of providing public access to Island Lake, developing an FAS (Figure 3), and protecting wildlife habitat associated

with the property's wetlands. The site provides the only public access to Island Lake and is one of the only FASs in the region, with the closest FAS being Thompson Chain-of-Lakes FAS over 15 miles south of Island Lake FAS. The FAS is considered to be in an important location for fishing and boating access and is expected to receive increased use with development. The site also provides recreational opportunities for hunting, wildlife viewing, picnicking, and walking. Existing facilities at the FAS include a pioneered access road that crosses neighboring private land, an unimproved access road that runs from the parking area south and connects with Coniff Road, a pioneered boat launch (Photo 1), a pioneered parking area (Photo 2), and a pioneered camping area.

FWP proposes to develop Island Lake FAS with a developed gravel access road, a designated parking area to accommodate six to eight vehicles with trailers, a concrete single-wide boat ramp, three to four designated campsites, a concrete vault latrine, fencing, fire rings, and informational and directional signs. Camping would be allowed at the FAS in the designated sites only. A nightly camping fee of $7 would be charged as per the FAS Biennial Fee Rule that was adopted by the FWP Commission in 2013. Any waste topsoil would be applied to the pioneered access road before reseeding with a native seed mix. Barrier rocks or fencing would be installed to prevent future use of the pioneered access road. The pioneered boat ramp and parking area would also be recontoured and revegetated.

The property would be managed under existing FWP public use regulations. Management of the FAS would include routine maintenance, control of vehicles and firearms, and other accepted FWP recreation area management policies. Protection of the natural resources, the health and safety of visitors, and consideration of neighboring properties would all be considered and incorporated into development and management plans for this site. The FAS would be open year-round and managed primarily for day use, though overnight camping in three or four designated campsites would be permitted. Archery and shotgun hunting would be allowed. Off-road vehicle use would not be allowed on the site. Development of Island Lake FAS would provide public access for fishing, hunting, and boating, and provide additional recreational opportunities for wildlife viewing, walking, and picnicking on the scenic Island Lake.

10. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action.

If no action is taken and the proposed developments are not constructed, including a developed access road, designated parking area, designated campsites, single-wide concrete boat ramp, vault latrine, fencing, fire rings, and directional and informational signs, recreational opportunities on Island Lake would continue to be limited and difficult. The public would continue to launch boats from the pioneered boat ramp, park in the pioneered parking area, and trespass across the neighboring private land on the pioneered access road. Erosion and sedimentation of Island Lake, degradation of riparian plant communities, and trespass issues would continue with the continued pioneered use of the FAS. Without the proposed fencing, riparian vegetation on the FAS would continue to be overgrazed by neighboring livestock that have access to the property through the Open Range law. With no action, maintaining public safety, resource protection, and trespass would continue to be issues at the FAS. Recreational opportunities for boating, fishing, floating, hunting, picnicking, wildlife viewing, and walking would continue to be limited.

Alternative B: Proposed Action.

FWP proposes to develop the Island Lake FAS, including a developed access road, a designated parking area, designated campsites, a single-wide concrete boat ramp, a concrete vault latrine, fire rings, informational and directional signs, and fencing.

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

FWP would employ *FWP Best Management Practices* (BMP) (Appendix D), which are designed to reduce or eliminate 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.

In the event that increased use of the Island Lake Fishing Access Site threatens to cause conflicts with sensitive wildlife species (e.g., bald eagle, common loon, or American bittern), FWP retains the ability to manage and/or restrict uses of the site to mitigate adverse impacts.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action, including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environments.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES 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, fertility, erosion, compaction, or instability. 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 construction of the parking area, boat ramp, and access road. Disturbed areas, including the pioneered parking area, access road, and boat ramp, would be seeded with a native seed mix to minimize erosion and sediment delivery to Island Lake and the spread of noxious weeds. The property is managed for recreation and wildlife habitat and is not in agricultural production. The Proposed Action would not affect soil productivity or fertility. *FWP Best Management Practices* (BMP) would be followed during all phases of construction to minimize erosion (Appendix D - BMP).

1c. No unique geologic or physical features would be altered by the Proposed Action.

1d. Currently, water drains off the pioneered boat ramp, access road, parking area, and overgrazed areas on the FAS, causing erosion of those areas and sedimentation of the lake. The development of a single-wide concrete boat ramp, developed access road, and gravel parking area would reduce erosion and sedimentation of Island Lake. In addition, fencing would restrict livestock grazing, further reducing erosion and sedimentation. Construction of the boat ramp would have minor impacts on the bank of Island Lake. Minor amounts of sediment could enter the lake during construction of the access road, boat ramp, and parking area. However, upon completion, erosion and sedimentation to the lake would be lessened. FWP would obtain a Lakeshore Construction Permit from Lincoln County prior to construction.

2. AIR 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 13c.)			X		Yes	2a.
b. Creation of objectionable odors?			X		Yes	2b.
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regulations? (Also see 2a.)		NA				

2a. Temporary amounts of dust may be generated during construction of the access road, boat ramp, and parking area. If additional materials were needed off-site, loading at the source site would generate minor amounts of dust. FWP would follow FWP BMPs during all phases of construction to minimize risks and reduce dust (Appendix D - BMP). There would be a temporary increase in diesel exhaust from equipment used during construction. Odors from diesel exhaust would dissipate rapidly, and the impacts would be short-term and minor.

2b. The vault latrine would be regularly maintained to minimize objectionable odors.

3. WATER 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.)		NA				
m. For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)		NA				

3a. Construction of the parking area, boat ramp, and access road may cause a temporary, localized increase in turbidity in Island Lake. FWP would obtain a Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) 318 Authorization Permit for Short-term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity and a Lincoln County Lakeshore Construction Permit. FWP BMPs would also be followed (Appendix D - BMP).

3b. Construction of the parking area, boat ramp, and access road may alter surface runoff. The pioneered parking area, boat ramp, and access road would be recontoured and revegetated to minimize further surface runoff, erosion, and sediment delivery from these areas. Sedimentation of the lake would also be reduced as a result of restricting livestock grazing on the property. The Proposed Action is designed to minimize any effect on surface water, surface runoff, and drainage patterns. FWP BMPs would be followed (Appendix D - BMP).

The pioneered access road currently crosses a Semi-Permanently Flooded Freshwater Emergent Wetland, disturbing the soils, vegetation, and water quality of the wetland. Regular

disturbance to the wetland would be eliminated. Under the Proposed Action, the pioneered access road would be reclaimed, improving the integrity of the wetland.

3d. There may be a minor, temporary increase of runoff during construction. FWP BMPs would be followed (Appendix D - BMP).

3h. The use of heavy equipment during construction may result in a slight risk of contamination from petroleum products and an increase in sediment delivery to the lake. FWP BMPs would be followed during all phases of construction to minimize these risks (Appendix D - BMP).

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

4a. The Proposed Action would positively impact the plant communities and diversity of the FAS. The pioneered boat ramp, access road, and parking area would be reseeded to reduce further erosion, sedimentation, and weed establishment, and to encourage reestablishment of native plant communities. Fencing would limit livestock grazing and encourage the reestablishment of overgrazed native vegetation. Construction of the boat ramp, parking area, and access road, and installation of the latrine, fencing, fire rings, and signs would have a minor impact on the vegetation. A minimal number of trees and shrubs would be removed during construction. Because the construction area is small, impacts from construction would be minor. Any disturbed area would be reseeded with a native seed mix.

Construction of the access road would not impact the wetland, plant communities, or plant diversity since no new soil would be disturbed.

4b. The Proposed Action would not alter the composition of plant communities at the site. Vegetation found on Island Lake FAS is classified as Rocky Mountain Dry Mesic Montane Mixed Conifer Forest on the forested portions of the FAS; Rocky Mountain Lower Montane, Foothill, and Valley Grassland on the northern third of the FAS; and Alpine Montane Wet Meadow on the wetlands and shoreline, as defined by the MNHP. Vegetation on the FAS consists of Northern Rocky Mountain Lower Montane Riparian Woodland and Shrubland. Common plant species found on Island Lake FAS include Douglas-fir, black cottonwood,

western larch, lodgepole pine, paper birch, willow, Douglas hawthorn, rose, red-osier dogwood, common chokecherry, common snowberry, Baltic rush, tufted hairgrass, redtop, bluejoint reedgrass, sedge, cheatgrass, smooth brome, and Kentucky bluegrass.

Common introduced species found on the property include smooth brome, redtop, Kentucky bluegrass, cheatgrass, and common mullein. The most common noxious weeds found on the property include tansy ragwort, spotted knapweed, houndstongue, and Canada thistle.

4c. A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program's (MNHP) Species of Concern database found no vascular or nonvascular plants of significance within the boundaries of Island Lake FAS.

4d. Livestock grazing is not allowed on the FAS. However, because the Open Range law applies to this site, livestock from a neighboring ranch currently graze the site. The proposed fencing of the FAS would restrict grazing and encourage the reestablishment of overgrazed native vegetation.

4e. According to Dan Williams with the Lincoln County Weed District, there were no signs of noxious weeds on Island Lake FAS on April 3, 2013, the date the weed inspection was conducted. At the time of the inspection, all weeds were found in openings where treatment would be easy.

Soils disturbed during construction could colonize with weeds. Disturbed areas would be reseeded with a native reclamation seed mix to reduce the establishment of weeds. In conjunction with Lincoln County Weed Control District, FWP would continue implementing the FWP Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan using chemical, biological, and mechanical methods to control weeds on the property. 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. FWP estimates that weed control on Island Lake FAS will cost $500 during fiscal year 2015 and $500 during fiscal year 2016.

5. FISH/WILDLIFE 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		Yes	5a.
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?			X		Yes	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		Yes	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.)		NA				
i. For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		NA				

5a. The proposed developments are designed to minimize impacts to wildlife and wildlife habitat. Bald eagle, common loon, and American bittern, species of concern, annually nest on Island Lake. Based upon monitoring of nesting activities by FWP wildlife biologists, the timing of construction activities would be adjusted to avoid disturbance to these species during the critical nesting period. Few trees would be removed for construction of the parking area, boat ramp, and access road, and every effort would be made to preserve all large, healthy trees. The Proposed Action would not affect habitat for threatened or endangered species.

5b/5c Common wildlife species whose habitat distribution overlaps Island Lake FAS include white-tailed deer, elk, moose, black bear, wolf, mountain lion, beaver, muskrat, American mink, marten, bald eagle, osprey, great blue heron, and waterfowl. These species are known to occur on or adjacent to the FAS. According to Gael Bissell, FWP Region 1 wildlife biologist, moose, including adult females with calves and bulls, elk, white-tailed deer, and black bears are very common on the shoreline around Island Lake. Waterfowl also nest along the lake shoreline. There could be a minor impact to resident wildlife from increased public use of the FAS. However, there is still excellent habitat in the area, and the impacts will be minor.

Island Lake is primarily a warmwater fishery. According to Jim Vashro, former FWP Region 1 fisheries manager, and a review of Montana Fisheries Information System (MFISH), the primary game fish found in Island Lake are largemouth bass, yellow perch, and northern pike. Nongame species found in Island Lake include northern pike minnow, peamouth,

pumpkinseed, and longnose sucker. Redband trout are native to the Island Creek drainage downstream of Island Lake, but the outflow of Island Lake is too warm to support trout.

Island Lake is open to fishing year-round and is popular for both open-water fishing and ice fishing. Recent surveys conducted by FWP demonstrate that Island Lake has received significantly higher angler use in recent years. The FWP surveys show that Island Lake supported 267 angler days in 2005, 300 angler days in 2009, and 931 angler days in 2011, indicating a 248% increase in angler use since 2005. The state ranking for Island Lake was the 551st most fished body of water in Montana in 2005, the 553rd in 2009, and the 296th in 2011, indicating a 47% increase in popularity for angling statewide. Island Lake ranked the 133rd most fished body of water in FWP Region 1 in 2005, the 124th in 2009, and the 75th in 2011, indicating a 44% increase in popularity for angling in Region 1.

5f. According to Gael Bissell, FWP Region 1 wildlife biologist, and a search of the MNHP element occurrence database, bald eagle, ranked as Delisted and Monitored (DM) by the USFWS, and wolverine, ranked as a Candidate (C) for listing by the USFWS, have been observed within the vicinity of Island Lake FAS. Though not recorded by MNHP, FWP biologists observed tracks of Canada lynx, listed as threatened by the USFWS, on the FAS within the last ten years. No other occurrences of federally ranked animal or plant species have been found within the vicinity of Island Lake. Great blue heron, common loon, great gray owl, American bittern, northern goshawk, and fisher, species of concern, have been observed on or within one mile of Island Lake FAS (Appendix B).

According to Chris Hammond, FWP Region 1 nongame wildlife biologist, there is one pair of bald eagles with one territory and three nests on Island Lake. The nearest of the three bald eagle nests is located almost .5 mile from the FAS across the lake within view of the proposed boat ramp. While bald eagles were officially delisted in 2007, the USFWS has jurisdiction protecting this species under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). The *Management Guidelines* of the Montana Bald Eagle Management Plan recommend seasonal restrictions from February 1 through August 15 for construction and maintenance of roads and trails, among other activities, within direct line of sight of an active nest. In addition, in the absence of a visual buffer, there should be a distance buffer of at least .25 mile from any construction of infrastructure, such as roads and trails. There should also be a .25-mile distance buffer for recreation during the breeding season. Because construction would begin in fall 2014, after the recommended August 15 seasonal restriction date, and that the nest is over .25 mile from the construction site, the Proposed Action would not impact bald eagle nesting. In addition, increased public use of the FAS would have no, or minor, impact on bald eagles as they have been accustomed to human activity, such as logging, recreation, and residential development, in the area for years. FWP would minimize the impacts from increased public use by implementing the recommendations outlined in the *Management Guidelines* of the Montana Bald Eagle Management Plan, including public education, signage, boating restrictions, and monitoring by FWP biologists.

According to Chris Hammond, the common loon is a species of concern; a breeding pair annually nest near the island on Island Lake and rear their young almost .5 mile from the FAS. According to Gael Bissell, although common loons attempt to nest nearly every year, nesting success has been relatively low at Island Lake. Possible reasons include human disturbance, intrusion or disturbance from other loons, and bald eagle predation on eggs and chicks. Based upon monitoring of nesting activities by FWP wildlife biologists, the timing of construction activities would be adjusted to avoid disturbance to common loons

during the critical breeding, nesting, and brood-rearing period. In addition, the recommendations outlined in *Best Management Practices for Common Loon Habitat* of the Conservation Plan for the Common Loon in Montana would be followed during all phases of construction. Increased public use of the FAS would have no, or minor, impact on common loons since they have been accustomed to some level of human activity from recreation, logging, and residential development in the area for years. FWP would minimize the impacts from increased public use by implementing the recommendations outlined in the Conservation Plan for the Common Loon in Montana, including public education, seasonal restrictions, habitat protections, and monitoring by FWP biologists.

According to Chris Hammond, great blue heron feed on marshy areas of the Island Lake shore, though no great blue heron rookery is located on or near Island Lake. As a result, the Proposed Action would not impact great blue heron nesting. According to Gael Bissell, the wetland adjacent to Island Lake FAS supports one nesting pair of American bittern, a species of concern. FWP would discourage pioneered trails to reduce impacts to wetland and shoreline nesting birds. Revegetation of the pioneered road and boat ramp and restriction of livestock grazing would improve habitat for the American bittern. Island Lake FAS provides habitat for great gray owl, though there are no known great gray owl nests on or near Island Lake. Great gray owls nest in March, so even if an unrecorded nest were located near the FAS, the fall construction would prevent impact to great gray owl nesting. Northern goshawk, a species of concern, is known to occur within one mile of Island Lake FAS. Fisher, wolverine, and Canada lynx are transient and only occasionally travel near or through Island Lake FAS. Fisher, wolverine, and Canada lynx avoid human activity and would not be affected by the Proposed Action. The proposed project is unlikely to impact the species of concern found in the vicinity of Island Lake, including great blue heron, great gray owl, American bittern, northern goshawk, fisher, wolverine, and Canada lynx, as these species have become accustomed to some level of disturbance in the area. The area surrounding the FAS has been disturbed by logging, recreational use of the lake, and nearby residential development for years.

According to Kent Laudon, FWP wolf biologist, Island Lake FAS is within the habitat of the gray wolf. Island Lake is within the historic home range of the Wolf Prairie pack, and there is a rendezvous site within a few miles of the FAS. There are also reports of visitors and residents hearing wolves howl in the area. According to Kent Laudon, there would be no direct impact on wolves. Because recreationists have used Island Lake for fishing and boating for years, wolves are likely accustomed to some level of human activity. However, increased visitor use of the area could lead to increased awareness of wolves and local wolf activity patterns, which could lead to an increase in harvest success from wolf hunting and trapping in the area. There is a potential that the increased visitor use could impact the local wolf population through increased hunting success, but is unlikely to impact the greater wolf population in northwest Montana.

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			X		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. Island Lake FAS is located near two residences, with the closest residence located across the lake approximately .5 mile northeast of the FAS. The minor and temporary increase of noise levels during construction may disturb visitors to the FAS and nearby residences. FWP would follow guidelines of the good neighbor policy, all of which would mitigate increased noise levels and would limit construction to periods of low visitation (i.e., late fall) to minimize disturbance to others.

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

7a. The FAS property is subject to the Montana Open Range Law, and livestock from a neighboring ranch graze the FAS. However, livestock grazing is not currently allowed and would not be allowed in the future. The proposed fencing would restrict livestock grazing on the FAS.

7d. The Proposed Action would have no effect on, or relocation of, nearby residences.

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

8a. Physical disturbance of the soil during construction would encourage the establishment of additional noxious weeds on the site. In conjunction with the Lincoln 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 applied by people trained in safe handling techniques.

There is a minor and temporary risk of fuel or oil from heavy equipment accidently releasing into the lake 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 would follow FWP BMPs during all phases of construction to minimize risks (Appendix D).

8c. The proposed project would improve public safety by constructing a safe boat ramp; developing a parking area in a stable, safe location; and improving the access road.

There are currently no sanitation facilities for visitors at the FAS. Installation of a concrete vault latrine would improve public sanitation of the site, protecting both visitors and the natural resources from contaminants.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT 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				9e.

9c. Visitor use of the area may increase by improving recreational facilities at the FAS. 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. The Proposed Action would have little or no impact on traffic in the area. Any impacts to traffic would be minor and concentrated on weekends during the peak season. The Proposed Action would not alter the distribution of population in the area.

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES 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.

10b. The Proposed Action would have no effect on the local and state tax base and revenue because FWP pays property taxes in an amount equal to that of a private individual.

10e. Island Lake FAS would be operated for day use and overnight camping at $7 per night.

10f. Projected annual operating, general maintenance, weed control, and personnel expense for fiscal year 2015 under the Proposed Action is estimated to total approximately $2,000 per year, excluding road maintenance.

Under the Proposed Action, annual maintenance of the approximate 2,245-foot access road would be approximately $1,000.

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

11a/b. The pioneered boat ramp and pioneered parking area are visible from the lake and the residence located across the lake. By removing and revegetating the pioneered parking area and boat ramp, restricting livestock grazing, and reducing degradation of riparian and wetland plant communities, the aesthetic values of the FAS would improve under the Proposed Action.

11c. The recreational and tourism opportunities of the area would improve with the Proposed Action by improving recreational facilities and opportunities on the FAS (Appendix C).

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure, or object of prehistoric, historic, or paleontological importance?			X		Yes	12a/b.
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?			X		Yes	12a/b.
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 12a.)	X					12a/b.

12a/b. A cultural resource inventory was completed in 2000, and heritage sites were identified on the FAS. SHPO would be consulted about options for preserving the heritage sites found on the FAS before any groundbreaking activities or construction would begin. If additional cultural materials are discovered during construction, work would cease and SHPO would be contacted for a more in-depth investigation.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE 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.)		NA				
g. For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		NA				

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 public 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 scenic Island Lake.

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 public 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 scenic Island Lake.

The minor impacts to the environment 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 provide habitat to transient and resident wildlife species and would be open to the public for lake access and recreation.

The Proposed Action would have no, or minor, impact on the local wildlife species that frequent the property, would have no long-term impact on critical fish or wildlife habitat, and is designed to minimize short-term impacts to fish and wildlife habitat. Recommendations outlined in the Bald Eagle Management Plan would be followed to minimize impacts to bald eagles during the critical breeding, nesting, and rearing period and to minimize impacts from any increase in public use of the FAS. Recommendations outlined in the *Best Management Practices for Common Loon Habitat* of the Conservation Plan for the Common Loon in Montana would also be followed to minimize impacts to common loons during the critical breeding, nesting, and rearing period and to minimize impacts from any increase in public use. The proposed project is unlikely to impact the other species of concern found in the vicinity of Island Lake, including great blue heron, American bittern, northern goshawk, great gray owl, fisher, wolverine, and Canada lynx, as these species have become accustomed to some level of disturbance in the area. The area surrounding the FAS has been disturbed by logging, recreational use of the lake, and nearby residential development for years.

Although gray wolves are found in the area surrounding Island Lake, there would be no real direct impact of the Proposed Action on wolves. Because recreationists have used Island Lake for fishing, boating, and hunting for years, wolves are accustomed to some level of human activity. Although it is possible that the increased visitor use could impact the local wolf population through increased hunting success, it is unlikely to impact the greater wolf population in northwest Montana.

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

A cultural resource inventory identified heritage sites on the FAS. The Proposed Action is designed to preserve and protect all heritage sites during all phases of construction. If additional cultural materials are discovered during construction, work would cease and SHPO would be contacted for a more in-depth investigation.

The proposed development of Island Lake FAS would provide the only access to Island Lake for fishing and boating and would improve recreational opportunities for hunting, wildlife viewing, picnicking, and walking of this scenic lake in northwest Montana.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Public involvement:

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on the Island Lake FAS Proposed Development Project, the Proposed Action and alternatives:

- Two public notices in each of these papers: the *Char-Koosta*, the *Daily Inter Lake,* the *Western News,* and the *Helena Independent Record.*
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: *http://fwp.mt.gov*.
- Draft EAs will be available at the FWP Region 1 Headquarters in Kalispell and the FWP State Headquarters in Helena.
- A news release will be prepared and distributed to a standard list of media outlets interested in FWP Region 1 issues.
- Notification of this environmental assessment will be distributed via postcards to neighboring landowners and interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the Proposed Action.

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 days. Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., May 11, 2014, and can be e-mailed to tpowell@mt.gov or mailed to the address below:

Island Lake FAS Proposed Development Project
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Region 1
490 North Meridian Road
Kalispell, MT 59901

PART V. EA PREPARATION

1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? No.

Based on an evaluation of impacts to the physical and human environment under MEPA, this environmental review revealed no significant negative or positive impacts from the Proposed Action; therefore, an EIS is not necessary and an EA is the appropriate level of analysis. In determining the significance of the impacts, FWP 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 negative impacts from the Proposed Action, an EA is the appropriate level of review and an EIS is not required. The minor impacts identified in this EA do not warrant an EIS evaluation. Any negative impacts identified for the Proposed Action can be mitigated below significance (12.2.431 ARM).

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

Tony Powell
Region 1 FAS Coordinator
490 North Meridian Road
Kalispell, MT 59901
tpowell@mt.gov
(406) 751-5423

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

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

Lincoln County Planning Department
Lincoln County Weed District
Montana Department of Commerce – Tourism
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- Design and Construction Bureau
- Lands Unit
- Legal Unit
- Fisheries Division
- Wildlife Division

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

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 & Parks Best Management Practices

APPENDIX A
HB495 PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

Date: May 20, 2013 **Person Reviewing:** Andrea Darling

Project Location: Island Lake FAS is located on Island Lake approximately 30 miles west of Kalispell and 30 miles southeast of Libby in Lincoln County, NW1/4 Section 31, Township 29N Range 26 W.

Description of Proposed Work: FWP proposes to develop Island Lake FAS, including an access road, a designated parking area, a single-wide concrete boat ramp; a concrete vault latrine, informational and directional signs, fire rings, and fencing.

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.)

[X] A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?
Comments: Under Proposed Action only a portion of the access road would be built over undisturbed land.

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

[X] C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?
Comments: Possibly for the boat ramp and parking area.

[X] D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?
Comments: Addition of a parking area to accommodate approximately 10 to 13 vehicles.

[ ] E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a doublewide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?
Comments: No shoreline alteration other than for a single-wide concrete boat ramp.

[X] F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?
Comments: The boat ramp would be built along the bank of Island Lake.

[X] G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?
Comments: Based upon a SHPO inventory, heritage sites were identified on the FAS.

[ ] 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: Specific campsites would be defined, but the total capacity for camping would remain similar to current levels.

[ ] J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern, including effects of a series of individual projects?
Comments: No. The Proposed Action would not affect existing features or use patterns.

If any of the above are checked, HB 495 rules apply to this proposed work and should be documented on the MEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST. Refer to MEPA/HB495 Cross Reference Summary for further assistance.

APPENDIX B
NATIVE SPECIES REPORT
MONTANA NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM

Sensitive Plants and Animals in the Vicinity of Island Lake 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 and wolverine within the vicinity of the Proposed Action site. No other occurrences of federally ranked, or considered for ranking, animal or plant species have been found within the vicinity of the Proposed Action site. The search indicated that great blue heron, common loon, great gray owl, American bittern, northern goshawk, and fisher, Species of Concern, have been observed in or near the Proposed Action site. 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.

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

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

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

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

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

SENSITIVE PLANTS AND ANIMALS IN THE VICINITY OF ISLAND LAKE FISHING ACCESS SITE

1. **Gavia immer (Common Loon)**
   Vertebrate animal- Bird

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

   FWP CFWCS Tier: **1**

   Element Occurrence data was reported of common loon within the project area. Last recorded observation date was 2004.

2. **Ardea herodias (Great Blue Heron)**
   Vertebrate animal- Bird

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 1987.

3. **Haliaeetus leucocephalus (Bald Eagle)**
   Vertebrate animal- Bird

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: **2**

   Element Occurrence data was reported of bald eagle within the project area. Last recorded observation date was 2009.

4. **Strix nebulosa (Great Gray Owl)**
   Vertebrate animal- Bird

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

   FWP CFWCS Tier: **3**

   Element Occurrence data was reported of great gray owl within 2 miles of the project area. Last recorded observation date was 2003.

5. **Accipiter gentilis (Northern Goshawk)**
   Vertebrate animal- Bird

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

FWP CFWCS Tier: **2**

Element Occurrence data was reported of northern goshawk within the project area. No observation date was recorded.

6. **Botaurus lentiginosus (American Bittern)**
   Vertebrate animal- Bird

Natural Heritage Ranks	Federal Agency Status:
State: **S3B**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
Global: **G4**	U.S. Forest Service**:**
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

FWP CFWCS Tier: **2**

Element Occurrence data was reported of American bittern within the project area. No observation date was recorded.

7. **Martes pennanti (Fisher)**
   Vertebrate animal- Mammal

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

FWP CFWCS Tier: **2**

Element Occurrence data was reported of fisher within 3 miles of the project area. Last recorded observation date was 2011.

8. **Gulo gulo (Wolverine)**
   Vertebrate animal- Mammal

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

FWP CFWCS Tier: **2**

Element Occurrence data was reported of wolverine within 3 miles of the project area. Last recorded observation date was 2006.

APPENDIX C
TOURISM REPORT

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

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

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

Project Name: Island Lake Fishing Access Site Proposed Development Project

Project Description: In 2000, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) acquired 37.7 acres in fee title along Island Lake for the purpose of providing public access to Island Lake and developing a fishing access site (FAS). FWP proposes to develop Island Lake FAS, including an access road, a designated parking area, designated campsites, a single-wide concrete boat ramp; a concrete vault latrine, informational and directional signs, fire rings, and fencing.

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

Yes, as described, the project has the potential to positively impact the tourism and recreation industry economy if properly maintained. We are assuming the agency has determined it has necessary funding for the on-going operations and maintenance once this project is complete.

2. Does this impending improvement alter the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings?
   NO **YES** If YES, briefly describe:

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

1. Signature Carol Crockett, Visitor Services Manager Date March 18, 2013

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. <u>Road Design</u>

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. <u>Drainage from Road Surface</u>

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. <u>Road Maintenance</u>

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.