DRAFT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

PINE GROVE POND FISHING ACCESS SITE
PROPOSED SOUTH ACQUISITION

OCTOBER 2014

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Pine Grove Pond Fishing Access Site
Proposed South Acquisition
Draft Environmental Assessment
MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of proposed state action:

Since acquisition in 2011 by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), the 13-acre Pine Grove Pond Fishing Access Site (FAS) three miles northeast of Kalispell, Montana, has been a very popular and heavily used site, receiving as many as 20,000 visitor days per year. In 2013, FWP acquired an additional 5.39 acres for the purpose of providing access to the Whitefish River and for site control and protection.

FWP proposes to acquire two additional parcels of land totaling 4.26 acres between the Whitefish River and Pine Grove Pond FAS for the purpose of providing additional access to the Whitefish River and providing a buffer between the busy FAS and neighboring private land. The proposed addition would access nearly 750 feet of river shore. FWP also proposes to accept the donation of .33 acres of land adjacent to the existing parking area and construct a parking area to provide additional parking and to reduce vehicle congestion along the access road.

2. Agency authority for the proposed action:

The 1977 Montana Legislature enacted Section 87-1-605, Montana Code Annotated (MCA), which directs Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks (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. Sections 23-1-105, 23-1-106, 15-1-122, 61-3-321, and 87-1-303, MCA, authorize the collection fees and charges for the use of state park system units and fishing access sites, and contain rule-making authority for their use, occupancy, and protection. Furthermore, Section 23-1-110, MCA, and Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) 12.2.433 guides public involvement and comment for the improvements at state parks and fishing access sites, which this document provides.

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

3. Name of project:

Pine Grove Pond Fishing Access Site Proposed South Acquisition

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: October 2014
Estimated Decision Notice: October 2014
FWP Commission and Land Board Consideration: November 2014

6. Location:

Pine Grove Pond FAS is located approximately three miles northeast of Kalispell, Montana, near the Whitefish River, two miles east of Highway 93 and ½ mile west of Highway 2 in Flathead County. The land is located in Section 29, Township 29 North, Range 21 West (Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1. General Location of Pine Grove Pond FAS Proposed South Acquisition

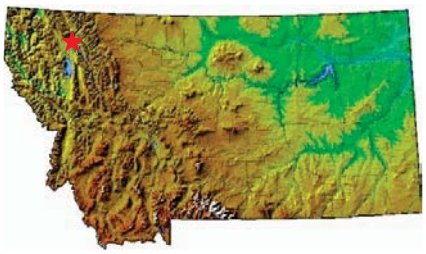
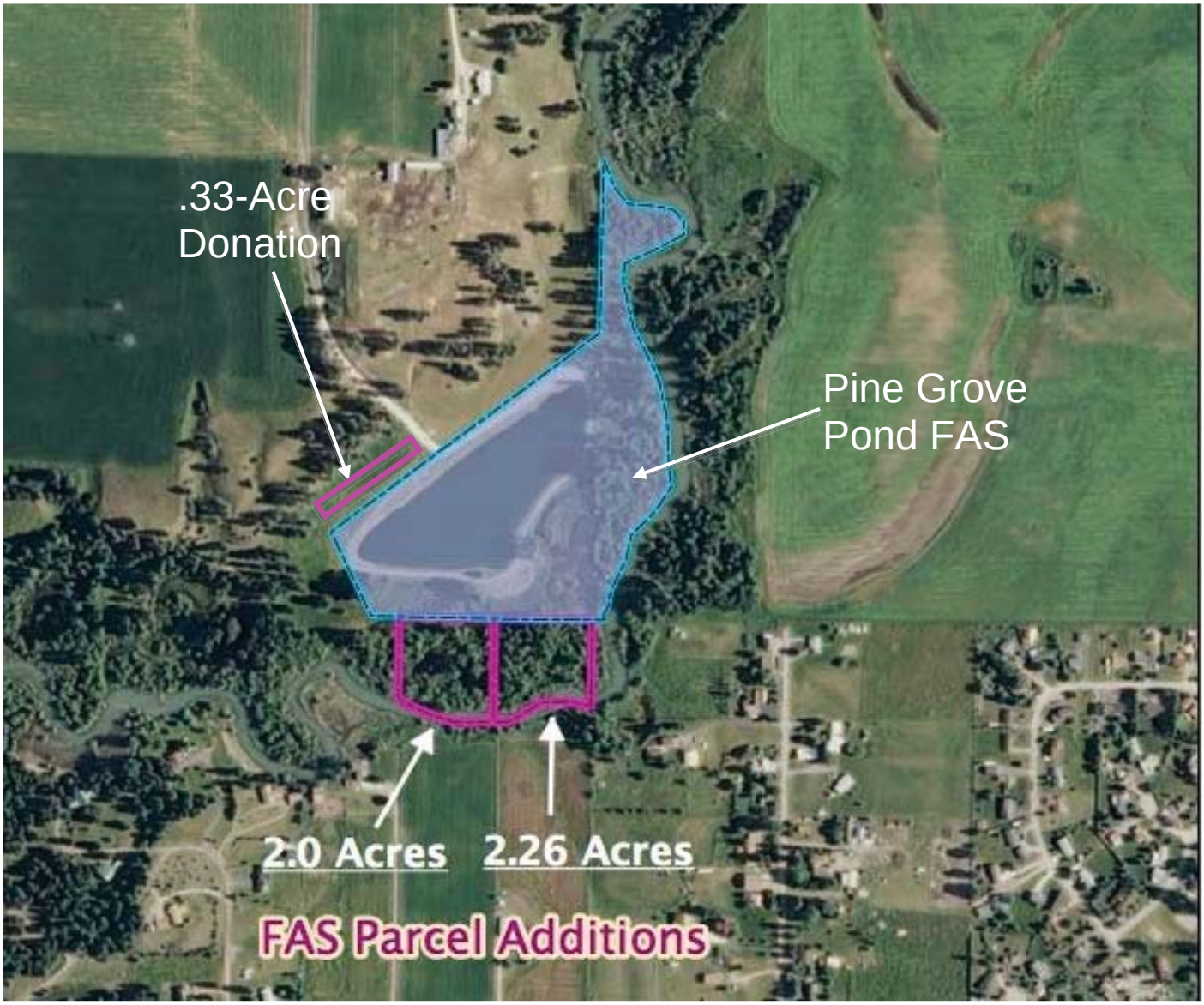


Figure 2. Highway Location of Pine Grove Pond FAS Proposed South Acquisition

Figure 3. Pine Grove Pond FAS Proposed South Acquisition



7. Project size:

	Acres		Acres
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	0
Residential	0		
Industrial	0	(e) Productive:	
		Irrigated cropland	0
(b) Open Space/ Woodlands/Recreation	.33*	Dry cropland	0
		Forestry	0
(c) Riparian/Wetland Areas	4.26*	Rangeland	0
		Other	0

* Approximate acreages.

Figure 4. Parking Congestion at Pine Grove Pond FAS

8. Local, state or federal agencies with overlapping or additional jurisdiction:

(a) Permits: No permits required.

(b) Funding:

Agency Name	Funding Amount
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Acquisition Fund	$42,700

(c) Other overlapping or additional jurisdictional responsibilities:

Agency Name	Type of Responsibility
Natural Heritage Program	Species of Concern (Appendix B)
Flathead County Weed Department	Weed Management Coordination

Section 7-22-2154 (2), MCA requires a weed inspection by the county weed district before acquiring new land. The weed inspection has been completed by Flathead County Weed District (Appendix D - Weed Inventory).

9. Narrative summary of the proposed action:

The proposed Pine Grove Pond FAS South Acquisition is located on 4.26 acres between Pine Grove Pond FAS and the Whitefish River and three miles northeast of Kalispell. The

proposed .33-acre donation is located adjacent to the existing access road to provide additional parking (Figure 3).

The vegetation found on Pine Grove Pond FAS and the proposed acquisitions consists of upland grassland, and riparian shrub and woodland. Upland grasses consist of smooth brome, Kentucky bluegrass, cheatgrass, and Japanese brome. Riparian shrub and woodland vegetation consists of snowberry, chokecherry, hawthorn, black cottonwood, Douglas fir, ponderosa pine, and Rocky Mountain juniper. Common introduced species found on the property include smooth brome, Kentucky bluegrass, orchardgrass, cheatgrass, Japanese brome, alfalfa, and mustard. The most common noxious weeds found on the property include Canada thistle, yellow toadflax, houndstongue, and leafy spurge.

Wildlife species whose habitat distribution overlaps the proposed acquisition area include white-tailed deer, mountain lion, moose, black bear, beaver, river otter, muskrats, small mammals, bald eagles, osprey, pheasant, Hungarian partridge, raptors, waterfowl, and migratory and neotropical song birds.

Four FWP fishing access sites on the Flathead River are located near Pine Grove Pond FAS, including Old Steel Bridge/Shady Lane FAS, downstream 3.3 miles; Pressentine FAS, upstream 4.2 miles; Kokanee Bend FAS, upstream 7.6 miles; and Teakettle FAS, upstream 9.6 miles. Pine Grove Pond FAS provides a close, accessible, and much needed recreational site for children and families near Kalispell.

Since its acquisition by FWP in 2011, Pine Grove Pond FAS has been a very popular and heavily used site, receiving as many as 20,000 visitor days per year. As a result, parking is often inadequate, causing visitors to randomly park on the grassy area adjacent to and along the access road (Figure 4). Also, visitors often trespass across private land between the FAS and the Whitefish River in order to reach the river. FWP proposes to acquire two parcels of land totaling 4.26 acres between the FAS and the Whitefish River and to accept the donation of .33 acres adjacent to the existing parking area (Figure 3). FWP also proposes to construct a parking area on the .33-acre donated parcel and to fence the property boundaries where necessary.

The acquisition of the three parcels totaling 4.6 acres would allow FWP to provide public access for fishing, wildlife viewing, and picnicking for families adjacent to the very popular Pine Grove Pond FAS, and to the Whitefish River for canoeing, rafting, and kayaking. The land, if acquired, would be open to the general public for nonmotorized use. Under the terms of the proposed donation, site improvements or development, other than placing a few picnic tables, would be prohibited. The FAS would be for day use only and no camping would be allowed. Noxious weeds would be controlled using the Statewide Integrated Management Plan. If acquired, regulation and informational signs would be installed.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

1. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action

If no action were taken, FWP would decline the opportunity to accept the donated parcel and purchase the other two parcels, and the landowners could retain or dispose of the property at their discretion. Parking would remain inadequate and vehicle congestion on the access road would continue. Visitors would continue to trespass on private land to reach the Whitefish River. FWP would continue to manage the adjacent FAS for the benefit of the public and existing resources.

Alternative B: Proposed Action

FWP would acquire a total of 4.6 acres in three parcels in order provide public access to the Whitefish River for family fishing, wildlife viewing, and picnicking. Acquisition of the south parcels would also provide a buffer between the FAS and neighboring private land and would eliminate trespass on private land. Acquisition of the donated parcel adjacent to the access road and construction of a parking area would provide much needed additional parking and relieve vehicle congestion on the access road. FWP also proposes to fence the property boundary where necessary.

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

The proposed donation comes with deed restrictions stipulating the public would be restricted to nonmotorized uses and no structures would be constructed on the parcel. These restrictions are consistent with existing and planned use of the site.

PART III. 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. 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				1d.
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X			.	

1a. The proposed acquisition would have no effect on existing soil patterns, structures, productivity, fertility, or instability because no additional soil-disturbing activities are planned for the properties by FWP. Soil and geologic substructure would remain stable during and after construction of the parking area.

1b. During construction, some minor modifications to the existing soil features would be required for the construction of the parking area. Any disturbed areas would be seeded with a native seed mix to minimize erosion, sediment delivery to Pine Grove Pond, and the spread of noxious weeds. The FAS is managed for recreation and wildlife habitat and is not under commercial agricultural production. 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. Minor amounts of sediment may enter the pond during construction of the parking area. However, upon completion, erosion and sedimentation to the river would be reduced.

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

2a. Dust may be temporarily generated during construction of the parking 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 E 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.

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	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				

The proposed acquisitions would have no effect on surface water, drainage patterns, or groundwater and would not affect flood potential.

3a. FWP BMP would be followed during construction of the parking area (Appendix E).

3b. The parking area would be designed to minimize any effect on surface water, surface runoff, and drainage patterns. FWP BMP would be followed (Appendix E).

3d. There may be a minor, temporary increase of runoff during construction of the parking area. FWP BMP would be followed (Appendix E).

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 pond. FWP BMP would be followed during all phases of construction to minimize these risks (Appendix E).

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	4a.
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				4b.
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				4c.
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?		X				4e.
f. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		NA				

4a. The proposed acquisitions would have no negative impact on the vegetation found on the FAS and could positively impact the site by reducing the incidence of noxious weeds through the implementation of the Statewide Integrated Weed Management Plan. No trees or shrubs would be removed during construction of the parking area. Because the construction area is small, impacts from construction would be minor. Any area disturbed during construction would be reseeded with a native seed mix. Construction of the parking area would disturb a small area adjacent to the existing loop road that has likely been disturbed in the past by public use of the site.

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 the proposed acquisitions.

4e. The primary noxious weeds found on the property include Canada thistle, yellow toadflax, houndstongue, and leafy spurge. If the acquisition were approved, FWP would initiate the Statewide Integrated Weed Management Plan using chemical, biological, and mechanical methods. Weed management would facilitate the restoration of native vegetation and prevent the spread of weeds. Vehicles would be restricted to the parking areas and roadway of the adjacent FAS, which would be maintained as weed-free, and vehicles would not be allowed on undisturbed areas of the site other than for administrative uses.

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				5a.
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				5b.
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				5c.
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				5f.
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest, or other human activity)?		X				5g.
h. For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)		NA				
i. For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		NA				

5a. The proposed improvements are designed to minimize impacts to wildlife habitat. No trees or shrubs would be removed for construction of the parking area. Pine Grove Pond FAS and this stretch of the Whitefish River are not considered critical habitat for any fish or wildlife species.

5b/5c. According to FWP game and nongame wildlife biologists, John Vore, Kent Laudon, and Chris Hammond, and a search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) database, wildlife species whose habitat distribution overlaps the proposed acquisition area include white-tailed deer, mountain lion, moose, black bear, beaver, river otter, muskrats, small mammals (voles, shrews and mice), bald eagles, ospreys, kingfishers, pheasant, Hungarian partridge, raptors, waterfowl, and migratory and neotropical song birds. According to FWP nongame wildlife biologist, Chris Hammond, the acquisition of the 4.26 acres along the Whitefish River three miles northeast of Kalispell would have no negative impact on wildlife or wildlife habitat.

Common game fish species found in the Whitefish River, which borders approximately 750 feet of the acquisition properties, include rainbow trout and mountain whitefish. Species present, but in low numbers, include brook trout, bull trout, westslope cutthroat trout, largescale sucker, longnose sucker, peamouth, northern pike- minnow, redside shiner, and slimy sculpin. Northern pike are found in the lower river. According to recent surveys by FWP, the number of angler days per year in the Whitefish River between 1999 and 2011 averaged 1,509, with a low of 582 in 2005 and a high of 3,342 in 1999. The state ranking for this stretch of river ranged from 143 to 365 during this same period. The proposed acquisitions are not expected to have any impact on the aquatic habitat or species of the Whitefish River. The site would be left in an undeveloped state. Therefore, the acquisitions should have no impact on the fish or aquatic habitat of the Whitefish River.

5f. A search of the MNHP showed that bull trout, a federally threatened species, westslope cutthroat trout, and lake trout, Montana Species of Concern, are occasionally found in the Stillwater River.

Bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout are rare in the stretch of the Whitefish River that is adjacent to the acquisition properties. According to the MNHP, lake trout have not been observed in the Whitefish River. The acquisitions should have no impact on their distribution or movement. (Appendix B – Native Species Report).

A search of the MNHP database also showed that great blue heron, a Montana Species of Concern, has been observed within or near the proposed acquisitions, though no heron rookery is located within the vicinity of the FAS. The proposed acquisitions should have no impact on great blue heron distribution or movement, as there is no rookery nearby and they have been accustomed to disturbance from agricultural, residential, and recreational use for years. Hoary bat, a Montana Species of Concern, was observed within two miles of the FAS as recently as 2010. The proposed acquisitions should also have no impact on hoary bat.

According to Chris Hammond, FWP nongame wildlife biologist, and a search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program database, bald eagles, have been observed within two miles of Pine Grove Pond FAS. Even though bald eagles were delisted under the Endangered Species Act in 2007, they are now known as a Special Status Species. Special Status Species are species that have some legal protections in place, but are otherwise not recognized as federally listed under the Endangered Species Act and are not Montana Species of Concern. Bald Eagles are a Special Status Species because, although they are no longer protected under the Endangered Species Act and are also no longer a Montana Species of Concern, they are still protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940 (16 U.S.C. 668-668c). The Montana Bald Eagle Management Guidelines (2010) recommends a buffer of at least ½ mile for construction of access sites. According to Chris Hammond, FWP nongame wildlife biologist, the proposed acquisition property falls outside of these recommended buffers for all bald eagle nests in the area and therefore is not likely to have a negative impact. In fact, the pond may provide additional habitat for bald eagles. Bald eagles use the Whitefish River as a corridor for feeding and, judging from the use of nearby Shady Lane Pond, they may use Pine Grove Pond for an additional food source.

Congress ordered the US Fish and Wildlife Service to delist wolves in 2011, and wolves became a species in need of management under state law. According to Kent Laudon, FWP wolf specialist, and Chris Hammond, FWP nongame wildlife biologist, the proposed acquisition properties occur within the known distribution of gray wolves, but there are no known wolf packs in the area or the immediate surrounding area. Ashley is the closest known pack, with its eastern territory edge about 13 miles to the east. Gray wolves are highly mobile, with large home ranges and extensive dispersal capabilities. Because Montana's wolf population is healthy, dispersing wolves could pass through just about anywhere and any activity of gray wolves in the project area would be transient in nature. Therefore, the proposed acquisitions would not significantly impact gray wolves or pose a human safety concern (Appendix B - Native Species Report).

5g. The proposed acquisitions are unlikely to stress or impact fish or wildlife populations in the future since the project is small in scope and is not near critical wildlife habitat for any species.

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. Any increase in noise level during construction of the parking area would be short-term and minor.

6b. Pine Grove Pond FAS is located within 1/4 mile of approximately 14 residences; all but one are located on the south side of the Whitefish River from the FAS. The minor and temporary increase of noise levels during construction of the parking area may disturb nearby neighbors and visitors. FWP would follow the guidelines of the good neighbor policy, all of which would mitigate increased noise levels and would limit construction to periods of low visitation 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				
b. Conflict 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				

The property is currently undeveloped. The property is not currently used for commercial or agricultural purposes. The proposed acquisitions would not take land out of agricultural production and would not alter or interfere with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of the property.

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. If acquired, FWP would address the noxious weeds on the property (Appendix D - Weed Inventory). Also, physical disturbance of the soil during construction of the parking area would encourage the establishment of additional noxious weeds on the site. In conjunction with the Flathead 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 accidently 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 would follow Best Management Practices during all phases of construction to minimize risks (Appendix D).

8c. The added parking area would reduce vehicle congestion, the potential for accidents, and the need for visitors to park along the access road.

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

9c. The proposed project is likely to improve tourism in the area by increasing the number of visitors to the site with the expansion of the parking area, which would benefit local retail and service businesses (Appendix C - Tourism Report).

9e. The proposed project is likely to improve tourism in the area by increasing river access to the Whitefish River, which could benefit local retail and service businesses (Appendix B - Tourism Report).

Acquisition of the south parcels would decrease the incidence of trespass onto the land located between the pond and the Whitefish River by people attempting to access the river who do not realize the parcel is privately owned. Informational and regulatory signs and FWP staff presence and law enforcement patrols would establish where the public has legal access.

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				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				10b.
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?		X				
e. Define projected revenue sources		X				
f. Define projected maintenance costs.		X				10f.

The proposed project would have no impact on public services, taxes, or utilities
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10b. There would be no change in the tax base since FWP would pay property taxes in an amount equal to that of a private individual.

10f. Annual additional maintenance costs for the addition are expected to average over $200 per year including weed control and staff time. Maintenance costs are part of the existing FAS Operations and Maintenance budget.

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

11c. Acquisition of the south parcels would allow for public river access for floating, along with fishing, wildlife viewing, and picnicking, improving recreational opportunities and providing open space for families near the rapidly growing city of Kalispell.

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

No groundbreaking activities that could disturb cultural resources would be initiated as part of the proposed acquisitions. A clearance from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for this property was obtained as part of the earlier gravel removal operation, with no cultural sites identified. An additional clearance from SHPO would be obtained before any additional groundbreaking activity were initiated in the future

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				

The proposed action would have no negative cumulative effects on the biological, physical, and human environments. When considered over the long term, the proposed addition to Pine Grove Pond FAS would positively affect the community by providing open space and much needed recreational opportunities for family fishing, wildlife viewing, and picnicking close to the rapidly growing city of Kalispell.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The proposed action would have no negative cumulative effects on the biological, physical, and human environments. When considered over the long term, the proposed addition to Pine Grove Pond FAS would positively affect the community by providing open space and much needed recreational opportunities for family fishing, wildlife viewing, and picnicking close to the rapidly growing city of Kalispell.

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 permanent wildlife species and would be open to the public for access to the pond and the Whitefish River.

Based upon the weed inventory conducted by the Flathead County Weed Control District, the proposed acquisitions are relatively weed-free, with scattered Canada thistle, yellow toadflax, houndstongue, and leafy spurge on the property. If acquired, FWP would initiate the Statewide Integrated Weed Management Plan using biological, chemical, and physical methods of weed control.

The proposed addition would have no negative impact on the local wildlife species that frequent the property, would not increase negative conditions that stress wildlife populations, and is not considered critical habitat for any species.

While it is possible for wolves to travel through the project area, there are no known wolf packs in the surrounding area, none have been sighted in the area, and any wolf activity in the project area would be transient in nature. Therefore, it is unlikely that the proposed acquisitions would impact gray wolves.

Four FWP Fishing Access Sites on the Flathead River are located near Pine Grove Pond FAS, including Old Steel Bridge/Shady Lane FAS, downstream 3.3 miles; Pressentine FAS, upstream 4.2 miles; Kokanee Bend FAS, upstream 7.6 miles; and Teakettle FAS, upstream 9.6 miles. Pine Grove Pond FAS is the only FWP FAS on the Whitefish River and is the closest fishing access site to the city of Kalispell, providing a close, accessible, and much needed recreational site for children and families near Kalispell.

This environmental analysis focuses on the acquisition of the three parcels and construction of the parking area. FWP has received preliminary approval from the FWP Commission to accept the donation of one parcel and purchase of two parcels. Final approval will be contingent upon public scoping and receiving final FWP Commission approval. Acquisition of the south 4.26-acres would allow FWP to provide additional public river walk-in access to the Whitefish River for floating, fishing, wildlife viewing, and picnicking for families close to the rapidly growing city of Kalispell. Acquisition of the donated .33-acre parcel and construction of a parking area would provide for additional parking and reduce congestion along the access road. The land, if acquired, would be open to the general public for day use only. If acquired, regulation and informational signs would be posted.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Describe the level of public involvement for this project, if any, and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on the Pine Grove Pond FAS Proposed South Acquisition:

- Two public notices in each of these papers: the *Daily Inter Lake, the Whitefish Pilot,* and the *Helena Independent Record*
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: *http://fwp.mt.gov*.
- Direct notice will be given to adjacent landowners.
- Copies of the draft EA 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.
- Notice of this environmental assessment will be distributed to the neighboring landowners and interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project.

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

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

2. Duration of comment period:

The public comment period will extend for (15) fifteen days, from October 2 through October 17, 2014. Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., October 17, 2014, and can be e-mailed to tpowell@mt.gov or mailed to the address below:

Pine Grove Pond FAS Proposed South Acquisition
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Region 1
490 North Meridian Road
Kalispell, MT 59901
(406) 752-5501

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 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 & 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:**

Tony Powell
Region 1 FAS Program Manager
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 consulted during preparation of the EA:**

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

Montana Natural Heritage Program

APPENDICES

A. MCA 23-1-110 Qualification Checklist
B. Native Species Report - Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP)
C. Tourism Report – Department of Commerce
D. Flathead County Weed Inventory
E. Fish, Wildlife & Parks Best Management Practices

APPENDIX A
23-1-110 MCA PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

Date: September 2, 2014 **Person Reviewing:** Andrea Darling

Project Location: Pine Grove Pond FAS is three miles northeast of Kalispell, Montana and two miles east of Highway 93 along the Whitefish River in Section 29 T29N R21W.

Description of Proposed Work: FWP proposes to acquire an additional 4.26 acres of land northeast of Kalispell, Montana, between the Whitefish River and Pine Grove Pond FAS for the purpose of providing additional access to the Whitefish River and providing a buffer between the FAS and neighboring private land. The proposed addition parcel would access nearly 750 feet of river shore. FWP also proposes to accept the donation of .33 acres adjacent to the FAS access road for the purpose of providing additional parking and construct a gravel parking area.

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

[ ] A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?
Comments: No roadways or trails.

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

[ ] C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?
Comments: No excavation.

[X] D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?
Comments: Yes, construction of a parking area on the donated .33-acre parcel

[ ] E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a doublewide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?
Comments: No shoreline alteration.

[ ] F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?
Comments: No new construction.

[ ] G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?
Comments: No construction.

[ ] 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: No camping.

[ ] J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern; including effects of a series of individual projects?
Comments: No.

APPENDIX B

NATIVE SPECIES REPORT – MONTANA NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM

Sensitive Plant and Animal Species in the Vicinity of Pine Grove Pond Fishing Access

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 the federally listed threatened bull trout within two miles of the acquisition site in the Stillwater River. No other occurrences of federally listed endangered or threatened animal or plant species have been found within the vicinity of the proposed acquisition site. The search indicated that the project area is within the habitat for the westslope cutthroat trout, listed as sensitive by the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Bureau of Land Management. MNHP has also recorded occurrences of great blue heron, lake trout, and hoary bat, Montana Species of Concern, within two miles of the proposed acquisition.

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

Status Ranks (Global and State)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SENSITIVE PLANT AND ANIMAL SPECIES IN THE VICINITY OF PINE GROVE POND FAS

1. **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 observation date was 1995.

2. **Oncorhynchus clarkii lewisi (Westslope cutthroat trout)**

Vertebrate animal- Fish	*Habitat- Mountain streams, rivers, lakes*
Natural Heritage Ranks	Federal Agency Status:

State: **S2**
Global: **G4T3**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
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 two miles of the project area on the Stillwater River. No observation dates were recorded and, according to

3. **Salvelinus confluentus (Bull trout)**

Vertebrate animal- Fish

Habitat- Mountain streams, rivers, lakes

Natural Heritage Ranks
State: **S2**
Global: **G4**

Federal Agency Status:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: **LT**
U.S. Forest Service: **Threatened**
U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Special Status**

FWP CFWCS Tier: **1**

Element Occurrence data was reported of bull trout within two miles of the project area on the Stillwater River, approximately two miles west of Pine Grove Pond FAS. No observation dates were recorded and, according to Jim Vashro of FWP, occurrence of bull trout very rarely occur in the Stillwater River.

4. **Salvelinus namaycush (Lake trout)**

Vertebrate animal- Fish

Habitat- Deep mountain lakes

Natural Heritage Ranks
State: **S2**
Global: **G5**

Federal Agency Status:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
U.S. Forest Service:
U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

FWP CFWCS Tier: **1**

Element Occurrence data was reported of lake trout within two miles of the project area on the Stillwater River, approximately two miles west of Pine Grove Pond FAS. No observation dates were recorded.

5. **Lasiuruscinereus (Hoary Bat)**

Vertebrate animal- Mammal

Habitat- Riparian and forests

Natural Heritage Ranks
State: **S3**
Global: **G5**

Federal Agency Status:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
U.S. Forest Service:
U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

FWP CFWCS Tier: **2**

Element Occurrence data was reported of hoary bat within two miles of the project area. The last recorded observation date was 2010.

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

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & 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
Montana Office of Tourism-Department of Commerce
301 S. Park Ave.
Helena, MT 59601

Project Name: Pine Grove Pond FAS Proposed South Acquisition

Project Description: FWP proposes to acquire two additional parcels of land totaling 4.26 acres between the Whitefish River and Pine Grove Pond FAS (FAS) for the purpose of providing additional access to the Whitefish River and providing a buffer between the busy FAS and neighboring private land. The proposed addition would access nearly 750 feet of river shore. FWP also proposes to accept the donation of .33 acres of land adjacent to the access road and construct a parking area to provide additional parking and to reduce vehicle congestion along the access road.

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.

1. Does this impending improvement alter the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings?
NO **YES** If YES, briefly describe:
Yes, as described, the project has the potential to improve quality and quantity of tourism and recreational opportunities if properly maintained. We are assuming the agency has determined it has necessary funding for the on-going operations and maintenance once this project is complete.

Signature Carol Crockett, Visitor Services Manager Date Sept 3, 2014

APPENDIX D
FLATHEAD COUNTY WEED DISTRICT WEED INVENTORY

FWP Land Acquisition – Weed Inspection and Report

COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST FOR SECTION 7-22-2154, MCA

FWP Regional Staff: Please return this form to
FWP Lands Bureau, P.O. Box 200701, Helena, MT 59620

Property Name: Pine Grove Pond Fishing Access Site FWP Region: 1
County: Flathead

Date of Property Inspection with County Weed Management District: 9.5.14

County Representative(s): Steve Robinson

FWP Staff: Tony Powell;

County Weed Management District - Inspection Report (Please attach weed inspection report or use the space below to describe noxious weeds present on the property, including observations of weed distribution and abundance):

Scattered Canada thistle, Yellow Toadflax and Houndstongue. One small patch of Leafy Spurge noted.

Noxious Weed Management Agreement (Please attach applicable weed management agreement or use the space below to indicate how noxious weeds on the property will be managed when the property is under FWP ownership. Indicate if property will be included in an FWP county or regional weed management plan):

County Weed Management District Representative: I have inspected the property, and reviewed the weed situation with a representative of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. I concur with FWP's weed management plan for the property, as presented above and/or described in the attached information.

Signed: [illegible] Date: 9.5.14

APPENDIX E
MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & 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. 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 (nonconcrete) 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.