Environmental Assessment

Stipek Fishing Access Site Improvements

May 2012

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Environmental Assessment
Stipek Fishing Access Site Improvements
Montana Environmental Policy Act and
MCA 23-1-110 Checklist

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of Proposed Action: Site Improvement
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks proposes to improve a small portion of the 110-acre Stipek Fishing Access Site (FAS) on the Yellowstone River, which would include rerouting, grading and gravelling of the entrance road, construction of a single-lane boat ramp, gravel parking area for vehicles with trailers, and sealed vault latrine, and erection of fencing and signs.

2. Agency authority for the proposed action: The 1977 Montana Legislature enacted statute 87-1-605, Montana Code Annotated (MCA), which directs FWP to acquire, develop and operate a system of fishing accesses.

Furthermore, ARM 12.2.433 guides public involvement and comment for the improvements at fishing access sites, which this document and process provides. ARM 21.8.602 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. This document will illuminate the facets of the proposed project in relation to this rule. See Appendix A for the 23-1-110 (HB495) qualification checklist.

3. Name of Project: Stipek Fishing Access Site Improvements

4. Project Sponsor:
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Region 7
Industrial Site West
PO Box 1630
Miles City, MT 59301
(406) 234-0900

5. Anticipated Timeline:

Public Comment Period:	May to June 2012
Decision Notice:	Summer 2012
Construction:	Fall 2012

6. Location: The property is located in Dawson County, Montana, 7.3 miles north of the Interstate 94 bridge over Highway 16 near Glendive, and on the west side of the Yellowstone River. The proposed improvements would impact about 15 acres within the FAS including road improvements. The entire FAS includes the following tracts for a total of about 110 acres. See Figures below.

Township 17 North, Range 55 East

Section 26: A tract east of the right-of-way line of the railroad including approximately 41.8 acres (E1/2NE1/4)

Section 25: Tract 1 of the Lordemann Hagenston Minor Subdivision consisting of approximately 31 acres;

Tract 2 of the Lordemann Hagenston Minor Subdivision including approximately 34.6 acres (NW1/4NW1/4)

Section 24: A tract consisting of a deeded road containing approximately 1.3 acres (SW1/4SW1/4)

Section 23: A tract consisting of a deeded road containing approximately 1.1 acres (SE1/4)

Figure 1. Location Map: Montana Highway Map Showing proximity of Stipek Fishing Access Site to Glendive (Montana Highway Map).

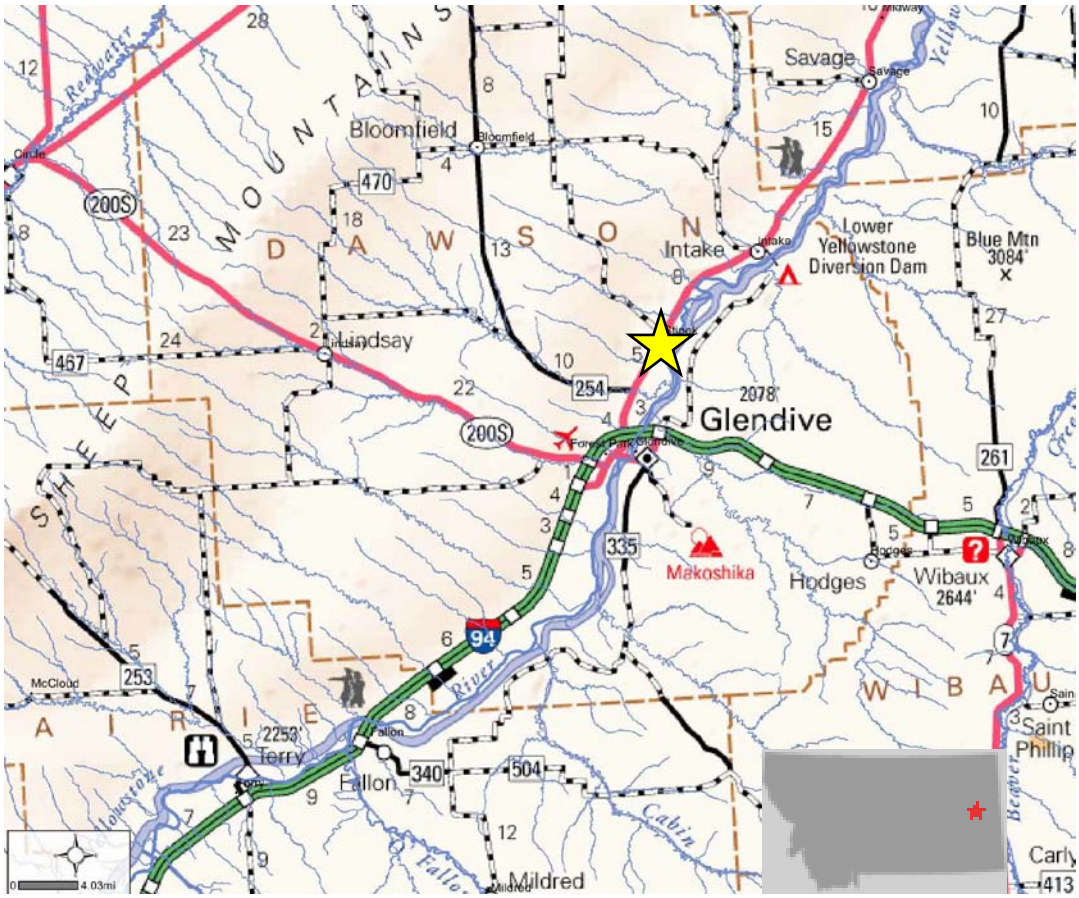


Figure 2: Topographic Map: Stipek Fishing Access Site and approximate property boundaries (USGS Stipek Quadrangle).

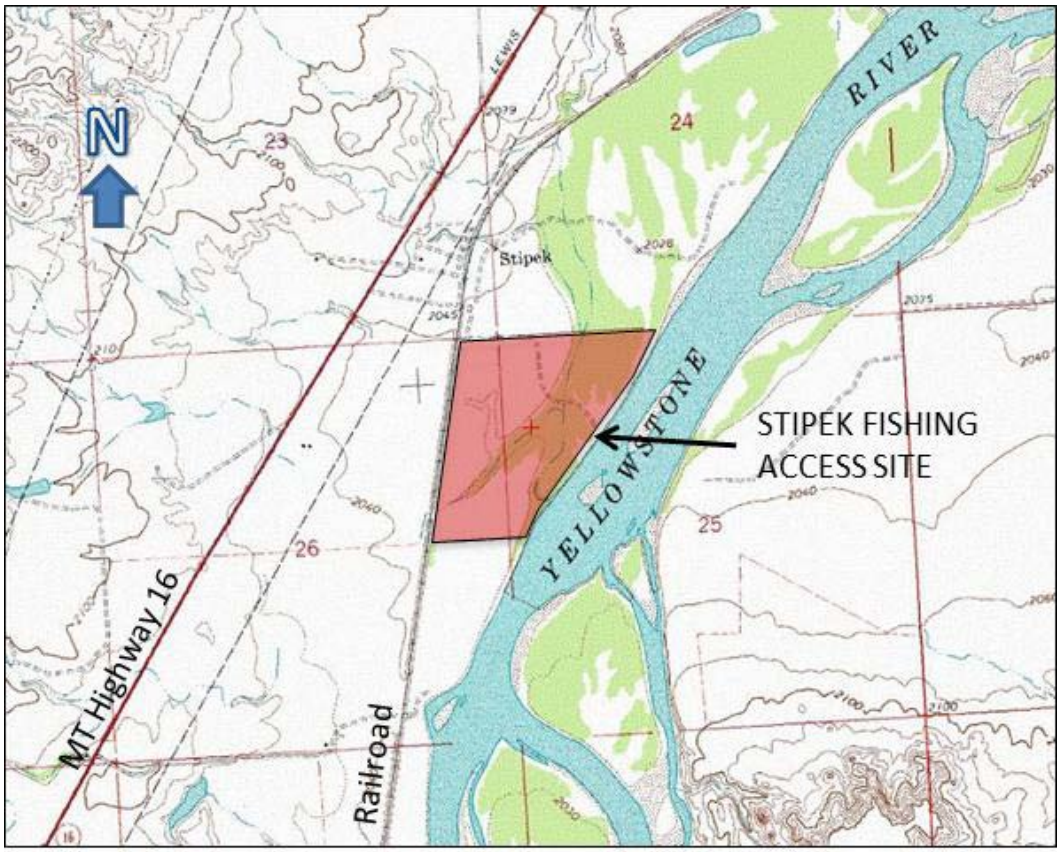


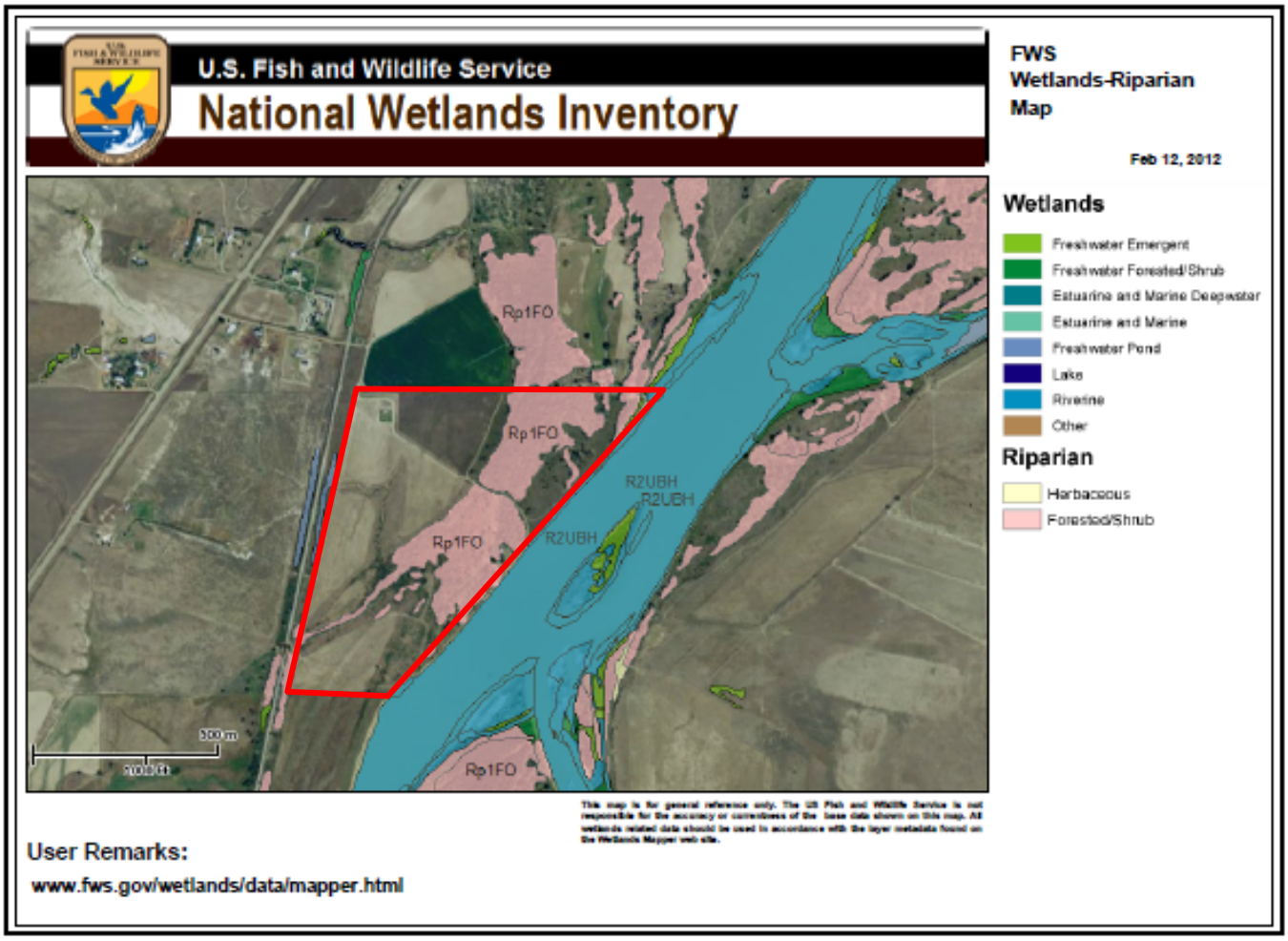
Figure 3. Aerial Photograph: Stipek Fishing Access Site and approximate property boundaries (NRIS 2005).

7. Project Size:

The table below shows the classifications of the approximately 15 acres affected by the proposed project within the entire 110 acre tract. The entire property is in the 100-year floodplain.

	(Affected) **Acres**		(Affected) **Acres**
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain/Riparian	15
Residential	0		
Industrial	0	(e) Productive:	
		Irrigated cropland	
(b) Open Space/Woodlands/Recreation	15	Dry cropland	2 (road)
		Forestry	0
(c) Riparian Wetlands Areas	0	Rangeland	6 (parking)
		Other	0

Figure 4. National Wetlands Inventory map within approximate boundaries of Stipek Fishing Access Site showing Riparian Forested/Shrub zone (Rp1FO) and Freshwater Emergent Wetlands (R2UBH) (US Fish & Wildlife Service).



8. Local, State or Federal agencies with overlapping or additional jurisdiction:

(a) Permits:

(all permits would be acquired by FWP or the Contractor prior to construction)

Agency Name	Permit
Dawson County Sanitarian	Sanitation Permit
	Floodplain Permit
Fish Wildlife & Parks	124 Stream Bank Protection Permit
US Army Corps of Engineers	404 Permit (stream bank alteration)
Department of Environmental Quality	3A Permit (turbidity exemption)

(b) Funding:

Wallup Breaux	$56,250
FWP Fishing Access Site (match)	$18,750
Total Funding:	$75,000

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities

Agency Name:	Type of Responsibility
State Historic Preservation Office	cultural resources

9. Narrative summary of the proposed action:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to improve public access to the Stipek FAS by developing a gravel parking area for vehicles with (boat) trailers, constructing a boat ramp and installing a sealed, concrete vault latrine. Both sides of the entrance road and parking areas would be fenced; and small parking spaces and fence pass-through openings along the entrance road would be included to facilitate walk-in access to adjacent fields. Approach signs would be posted along Montana Highway 16; regulatory, directional and educational signs would be posted within the site. Additionally the Department would improve safety at the Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad crossing by installing advance warning signs, stop signs and cross bucks. The road grades approaching the railroad tracks would also be improved, making it safer for vehicles with trailers crossing the tracks.

Currently, the access road acts as a boundary between the FAS and private land. During the planning process the Department will evaluate the necessity of rerouting the existing public access road to the south, putting it wholly within the parcel owned by FWP to mitigate potential trespass by visitors to the site. The estimated cost of constructing a new road is $28,000.

The site was wholly acquired in 2010, and a small parking area was fenced and signed to provide temporary public access as well as limit vehicle impacts on surrounding habitat. The property was purchased to ensure the natural environment of the parcel would be preserved and the public's access to the property and river would be maintained in perpetuity. Installing a boat ramp

would provide a safe and reliable means for the public to access the Yellowstone River, the Three Mile Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and other publicly owned river islands during most times of the year. The nearest fishing access sites along the river are Black Bridge FAS, about ten miles upstream in Glendive, and Intake FAS, about twelve miles downstream.

The dam at Intake is an impediment for fish species and most boats, motorized and non-motorized. Access at Stipek would reduce pressure at Black Bridge and reduce travel time for people accessing other public lands in the vicinity.

According to the 2009 FWP Statewide Angling Pressure Estimates, this reach of the Yellowstone River receives approximately 25,650 angler days (+/- 3006) annually in about 547 trips. These estimates indicate that this river reach receives the second highest angler use in FWP Region 7 and ranks 33rd statewide. About 85% of the use is by Montana Residents. (This reach of the river includes river stretches in Dawson, Richland and Prairie Counties from the North Dakota border to the mouth of the Powder River.)

A federally proposed fish by-pass project at the Intake FAS may reduce barriers for fish movement upstream. Should that project proceed, certain fish populations, such as paddlefish, may increase upstream, resulting in increased demand for additional public access along this portion of the Yellowstone River.

Improved access, particularly a boat ramp addition, would likely increase the amount of use in this reach of the Yellowstone River. According to the Region 7 site managers, an estimated 4,500 annual visits would occur at this site after improvements.

Vehicles accessing Stipek must cross the BNSF low-speed (25 mph) railroad. FWP is working with BNSF to erect advance warning signs, stop signs and cross-buck signs to improve public safety. The two agencies are in the process of completing an agreement for BNSF to improve the approach grade and crossing surface.

Improvements at this site would broaden opportunities for the general public to access the river and other public lands in the vicinity, while helping to minimize recreational conflicts in the future. Fishing, floating, hunting, birding, trapping, and other river activities are common in this area. The riparian and wetland habitats on this property, and along the river corridor, also provide excellent opportunities for viewing wildlife, berry and agate picking, hiking, photography, and nature study.

Resource Values

There are over 35 species of fish present in this reach of the lower Yellowstone River. The most commonly encountered game species include sauger, channel catfish, and shovelnose sturgeon.

The property provides year-round habitat for a variety of native migratory bird species, songbirds, waterfowl, and upland game birds (pheasant and turkeys). Mourning Doves are seasonal and available to hunters early in the fall season. Various small mammals may be found throughout the site, such as cottontail rabbit and raccoon. The site shows frequent use by whitetail deer and numerous deer travel corridors are established. The site may also support travel corridors for coyotes and bobcats, and provides habitat for badgers, squirrels and other small mammals. American kestrels, northern harriers, red-tailed hawks, and Swainson's hawks are common in this area. Belted kingfishers, American white pelicans and great blue herons are also found along the Yellowstone River. Two active bald eagle nests are located along the river within five miles of the property and winter sightings are common.

The pallid sturgeon and least tern, both federally listed threatened species, have been observed, along with six other Species of Concern listed as Tier 1 species in greatest need of conservation in the Comprehensive Fish & Wildlife Management Strategy (CFWCS, FWP 2005). In Montana, riparian habitats provide breeding and nesting areas for at least 134 (55%) of Montana's 245 species of breeding birds, as well as much-needed food and resting areas for migrating birds and waterfowl (J. Ellis, Montana Audubon, 2008).

About a third of the property consists of high-quality riparian habitat along the Yellowstone River, and thrives as an intact, functioning cottonwood riparian system. About two-thirds of the property has been used alternately for rangeland or dry-land alfalfa cropland. The ability to manage these acres to maximize high quality food production and/or nesting cover is important to the habitat diversity of this property. A small wetlands area has been mapped at the northeast edge of the property along the river, farthest from the concentrated public activity.

The lower Yellowstone River and its associated wetland/riparian and rangeland are highly diverse and productive wildlife habitats with documented use by at least 127 vertebrate species. Riparian and wetland communities support the highest concentration of plants and animals in Montana. This importance is highlighted in the identification of riparian areas as a Community Type of Greatest Conservation Need in the CFWCS and as a priority in the five-year Implementation Plan. Protection and enhancement of riparian habitats is also the highest priority in FWP Region 7.

Improvements

There are no permanent structures on the property. The property has a gravel access road that is considered a public roadway. Slightly rerouting the road within the site would help mitigate the neighbor's concerns of trespassing and poaching occurring as a result of allowing public access and would be evaluated during the design phase of the project. To further reduce trespass concerns, other public attributes (including the parking area and boat ramp) would be located approximately in the middle of the site, allowing buffers from either property boundary. The site is fenced on the north and south with metal post

barbwire. The east boundary is defined by the Yellowstone River and the west boundary borders the railroad right-of-way.

There is a well on the property, but its condition or potential for providing potable water is unknown. The department does not plan to develop the well nor provide potable water for people visiting the FAS.

10. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, no improvements would occur on the property. Land-based recreation and bank fishing could continue, but boat access to the river would be limited to hand launching. Due to the proximity to Glendive and the demand for public access, sanitation may become a concern without a latrine on site. A neighboring landowner has expressed concerns about increased traffic and poaching from the access road adjacent to private property; the No Action Alternative would not address this concern.

Preferred Alternative B: Proposed Action

Through the Proposed Action, FWP would provide a boat ramp to the Yellowstone River at Stipek FAS. This boat ramp is in close proximity to several publically owned islands and mainland tracts. Rerouting the current access road will be evaluated, and the parking area graded and graveled to provide better access in all weather conditions. Fencing and signing would delineate parking, public routes and lands, thus, limiting vehicular impacts to the surrounding habitat. A sealed vault latrine would be installed, which would help alleviate health concerns from increased human activity.

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

Biological Resources: Fencing proposed with this project would help restrict vehicular traffic to established and hardened routes; thus, helping to secure animal and plant species biodiversity and wildlife habitat on these lands.

Weed Management Plan and Aquatic Nuisance Species Management: FWP has integrated this property into the Regional and Statewide Integrated Weed Management Plan, which manages weeds using mechanical, biological and chemical methods of control. The Region has funding dedicated to weed control. Initial construction and increased use at the site may result in some additional weed infestations; however, the implementation of the weed management program would mitigate this risk. Vehicle use would be restricted to established roads and parking areas, which would largely confine the potential introduction of weeds to an area that is developed and actively managed by FWP personnel. State pesticide use laws and regulations would be followed. Application records

would be submitted to the Montana Department of Agriculture as required, and would be available upon request.

Signs and information would be posted on site to educate the public about aquatic nuisance species and preventing their spread.

Water Quality and Turbidity: FWP and the contractor would adhere to all permitting to ensure minimal impacts to the Yellowstone River water quality. Construction would occur in the fall when water levels are low, and most construction would occur out of the water. FWP Design and Construction Bureau would oversee the application of Best Management Practices as directed in contracting documents.

Species of Concern: Fall construction would avoid impacts to Bald Eagles (spring) nesting in the vicinity. Least terns and other species are in the area, but due to the temporary nature of construction and time of year, the project would have few impacts.

Riparian, Wetlands and Floodplains: Construction would largely occur on land previously disturbed, thus minimizing impacts to riparian habitat. The new section of road, if developed, would cross ground used for dryland farming and/or grazing, which is a resource found in abundance on the property. The proposed project would be far from the small wetlands tract mapped at the downstream corner of the property. The impact on the floodplain from the proposed project would be low due to the low profile and sealed vault latrine design.

Prime Farmland: A portion of the new entrance road route is proposed across agricultural land not previously irrigated. The net loss of this “farmland of statewide importance” and “prime farmland if irrigated” would be negligible due to the abandonment and reclamation of existing roads with those same soil types.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

The analysis of the physical and human environments discussed on the following pages is limited to Alternative B, the Preferred Alternative.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. **Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?			X		Yes	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	1d.
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				

1a. The Yellowstone River bank material is gravelly and erodes easily. Currently, there is about a fifteen foot drop (depending on water levels) from the parking elevation to access the water. It is proposed to create a relatively long and gradual boat ramp, and slope the bank on either side of the ramp to reduce the potential for erosion. This would help stabilize the bank soils.

1b. Most areas proposed for construction have been disturbed in the past with two track roads, grazing, farming, or other use. Construction of the boat ramp, grading and gravelling of the road, and latrine installation would cause minor disruption, compaction and over-covering of soil, but very minor changes in productivity due to previous disturbance.

1c. No known unique geological or physical features are present in the area proposed for construction.

1d. During boat ramp construction, temporary changes in siltation and erosion would occur to the river bank and bed. The impacts would be mitigated by scheduling construction in the Fall when water levels tend to be lower. Construction would occur outside the water as much as possible. In addition, Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be used during construction and are subject to other permitting requirements recommended by the corresponding oversight agencies. The proposed boat ramp could cause minor changes in deposition and erosion patterns. Reducing the river bank slope as

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** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).
*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

mentioned above would reduce erosion near the boat ramp area. The river is a dynamic environment; the bed and bank is subject to change naturally, depending on various water flows.

2. AIR **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT ***				**Can Impact Be Mitigated ***	**Comment Index**
	Unknown *	**None**	**Minor ***	**Potentially Significant**		
a. **Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)			X			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.)		X				2e.

2a. The Proposed Action would temporarily create minor dust during construction. Other air pollutants are not anticipated.

2e. The project is not anticipated to conflict with Federal or State air quality regulations.

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3. WATER Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
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				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?			X		Yes	3c.
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?			X		Yes	3e.
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?			X		Yes	3h.
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)			X			See 3c.
m. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)			X			3m.

3a. Minor and temporary increases in turbidity would occur during construction of the boat ramp. Gravelly river bank slopes would be reduced or beveled to minimize erosion and impacts from future flooding events. Impacts during construction would be limited due to fall construction during low flows. Disturbed areas with appropriate soils would be seeded with a local grass mix after construction to speed restoration and reduce erosion.

3c. The proposed project would have limited impact on the floodplain due to the low profile of the project and sealed vault latrine design. Beveling the banks on either side of the boat ramp would also limit the erosion caused by high waters.

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3e. The entire property is within the 100-year floodplain (US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Flood Hazard Boundary Map, Panel 3001400011A, April 11, 1978). Though people using the FAS would be potentially exposed to Yellowstone River flooding, the improved roads would create safer, all-weather access to and from the site. The proposed boat ramp would provide safer access to and from the water for motorized boats, as well as providing another site for people to exit the water in case of emergency.

3h. Boats and vehicles accessing the river present a very low risk of contamination from spilled petroleum products. Locating and restricting the parking area away from the river, along with regular management oversight, would help minimize the risk to surface or groundwater quality.

3m. Best Management Practices outlined in the construction contract and oversight by the FWP Design and Construction staff would limit impacts to water quality. Some minor turbidity and sedimentation may occur due to the nature of construction of a boat ramp on the bank of an active river. Please refer to the Permit section in Part I above, noting that the Department of Environmental Quality (3A permit) and FWP (124 Permit) would be consulted during the permitting process to help ensure adequate construction techniques and mitigation procedures. Overall, the natural turbidity of the Yellowstone River is high in this reach; therefore, the minor and temporary increases possible during construction are not likely to be a concern to the human or physical environment.

4. VEGETATION **Will the proposed action result in?**	**IMPACT ***				**Can Impact Be Mitigated***	**Comment Index**
	Unknown *	**None**	***Minor ****	**Potentially Significant**		
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		Yes	See 4a.
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				4c.
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?			X		Yes	4d.
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?		X			Positive	4e.
f. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?			X		Yes	See 4d & 4f.

4a/b. Construction of the boat ramp, rerouting of the entrance road and improving the existing roads and parking area would slightly alter the plant community. The proposed road route would primarily use existing two-track routes that have been previously disturbed. Newly disturbed areas would be reseeded with a local grass mix as soils allow to minimize the net loss. Old routes on FWP property would likely be abandoned, scarified and reseeded to encourage fast growth of local grasses.

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Construction would be designed to use currently disturbed areas and minimize impacts to large woody vegetation. Grasses that may be impacted include smooth brome and crested wheatgrass. The proposed improvements would limit degradation sometimes attributed to additional public use by confining vehicles to designated routes.

4c. A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program's (MNHP) species of concern database found no vascular or non-vascular plants of significance within the boundaries of the property.

4d. Approximately half an acre of farmland "of statewide importance" or "prime farmland if irrigated" would be converted to a gravel entrance road at the northwest corner of the tract in an effort to route traffic away from the adjacent private property. The net loss would be negligible due to the abandonment and reclamation of existing road with those same soil types.

4e. The tract has been reviewed by FWP Regional Weed Coordinator and the Dawson County Weed Supervisor (2009). Infestations of leafy spurge and Canada thistle are present on the property. The ground disturbance during construction of the proposed project could cause a slight, short term increase in noxious weeds. Because disturbed areas are typically seeded with local grass mix and the site would be closely monitored by FWP staff, noxious weeds are not expected to spread. FWP has funds dedicated to weed management at this site and has implemented the Statewide and R-7 Weed Management Plans using an integrated approach to control the noxious weeds with chemical, biological and mechanical methods. Weeds were likely historically introduced through past flood events and grazing practices. The implementation of an aggressive weed management program would facilitate the restoration of native vegetation. Motorized vehicles would be restricted to designated roads, which would help prevent the spread of noxious weeds.

FWP has a strong Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) program and works cooperatively with several agencies to educate and prevent their spread. No ponds in Region 7 are known to have Eurasian Water Milfoil. Fort Peck does have Eurasian Water Milfoil, but much of the boat traffic along the Yellowstone River is thought to be local use. Other ANS are not known to inhabit Eastern Montana waters. Materials with the "Inspect, Clean, Dry" message would be posted at the new boat ramp area to educate the public.

4f. According to the US Fish and Wildlife Wetlands Inventory System, wetlands have not been identified in the construction area (see Figure 4 above), though freshwater emergent wetlands are mapped at the far northwest corner of the tract along the river's edge.

The existing road and short section of the proposed new access road would cross the northeast corner considered "prime farmland if irrigated" (see Figure 5 below). This tract has not been irrigated in many years. Much of the property is considered "farmland of statewide importance" according to the Natural Resources and Conservation Service soil map. The farmland would not be taken out of production and could be leased for grazing or other farming production if needed, though current management would emphasize wildlife habitat. Impacts would be minimal due to the use of existing roads

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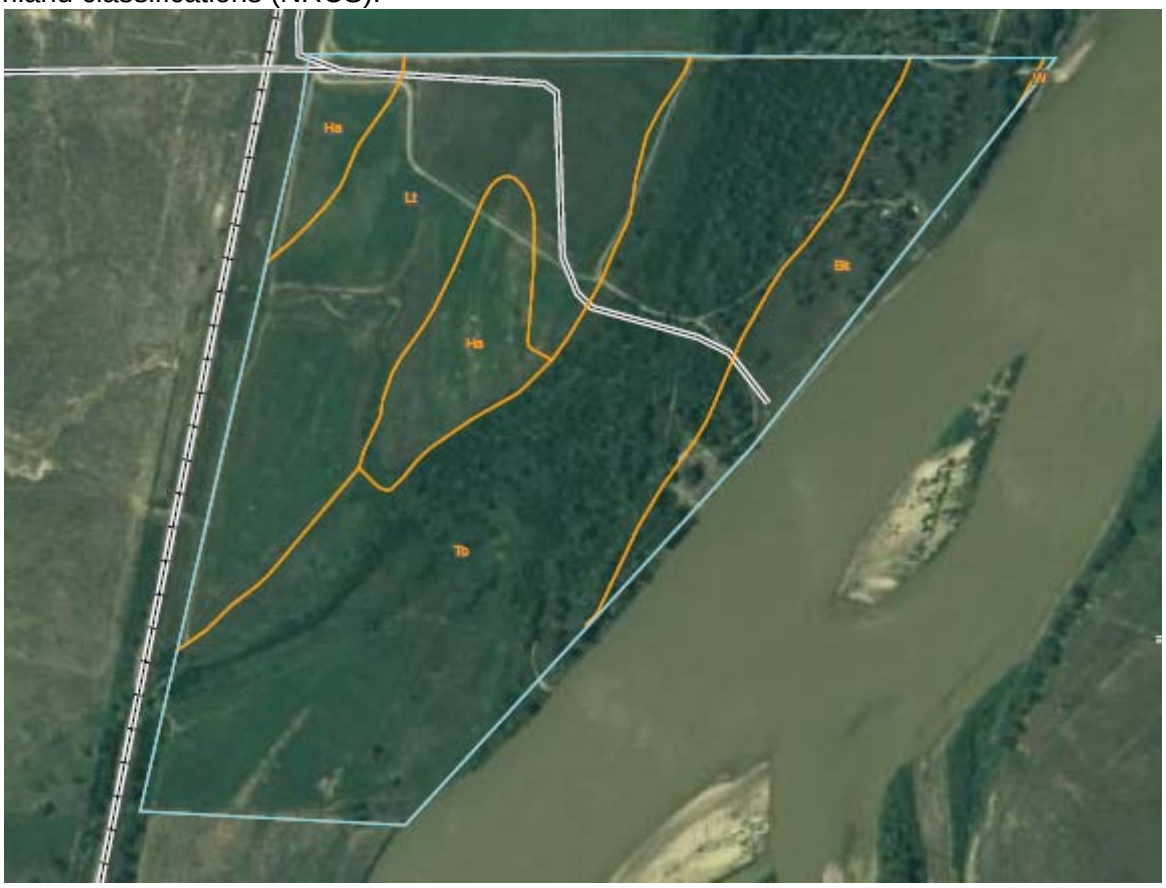
and limited use in the past. Reclamation of the old roads would result in no net loss of farmland.

Figure 5. Soil map of Stipek Fishing Access Site approximate boundaries and associated farmland classifications (NRCS).



Prime and other Important Farmlands– Dawson County, Montana		
Map Symbol	**Map Unit Name**	**Farmland Classification**
Bk	Hanly soils, 0 to 4 percent slopes, occasionally flooded	Not prime farmland
Ha	Havre silt loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes	Prime farmland if irrigated
Lt	Wolf Point silty clay loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes, occasionally flooded	Farmland of statewide importance
To	Glendive loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes, occasionally flooded	Farmland of statewide importance
W	Water	Not prime farmland

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** 5. FISH/WILDLIFE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?			X		Yes	5c.
d. Introduction of new species into an area?			X		Yes	5d.
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				5f.
h. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)		X				5f
i. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		X				5f.

The proposed project is anticipated to cause few minor impacts and no significant impacts to fish and wildlife species as per discussion below provided by Scott Denson, R7 Wildlife Manager (1/26/12 personal communication with Sue Dalbey), Mike Backes, R7 Fisheries Manager (1/27/12 personal communication with Sue Dalbey), and Jason Rhoten, Glendive area Fisheries Biologist (2/6/12 personal communication with Sue Dalbey).The proposed property is not considered critical habitat for game or nongame species, according to FWP former Glendive area Wildlife Biologist Howard Burt and former Region 7 Wildlife Manager John Ensign (Draft Environmental Assessment Stipek Fishing Access Site: Proposed 777 Property Addition Acquisition, 2009).

The nearest Bald Eagle nest is approximately 3 linear miles downstream. The nearest Great Blue Heron rookery is more than 10 miles downstream. Construction activities would not affect these species due to their distance from the site. Added river boat traffic would have limited minimal affects. Two Endangered species are listed in the area by the Natural Heritage Program: the Least Tern and the Pallid Sturgeon. Least Tern are not prevalent in the area thus would experience minimal displacement from added boat traffic. Pallid Sturgeon thrive in warm, turbid water, thus potential increased sedimentation from the proposed construction would be negligible. Stocked juvenile pallids have been found upstream of Stipek. Impacts to other aquatic species are not anticipated.

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

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

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

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

5c. Construction and additional human use of the site may slightly displace nongame species, but restricting use to existing designated roads would help conserve surrounding habitat.

5d. There is very low risk of new species introduction due to increased public use. On-site education materials and signs about ANS and "bucket biology," as well as enforcement and FAS management would also help limit risk.

5f. Neither Bald Eagle nests nor a Great Blue Heron rookery have been identified on this parcel and impacts due to development are not anticipated.

A search of the Montana Natural Heritage database revealed Least Tern, Pallid Sturgeon, Paddlefish, Sturgeon Chub, Blue Sucker, Sauger, Meadow Jumping Mouse, and the Spiny Softshell in the vicinity of this area (see Appendix B). The Least Tern and Pallid Sturgeon are listed as "Endangered" and the remaining species are classified as "sensitive". All these species may pass through this parcel or occur in this reach of river, but the tract does not provide critical habitat for these species.

According to John Ensign, Regional Wildlife Manager, the purchase of this property had little or no impact on these species. Least terns can be found in the general area of the property, but terns typically prefer to roost, forage and nest on and along gravel islands and bars located in the Yellowstone River. At present there is no such habitat within several miles of this parcel. Meadow jumping mice could potentially occur on the property associated with the riparian bottomlands. Plans are to maintain this habitat type, resulting in little to no impact to meadow jumping mice. Ryan Rauscher, Native Species Biologist, concurs that while there is no data that the meadow jumping mouse resides on this property, there is potential, and as long as the meadow habitat is retained, this species would not be impacted. (Draft Environmental Assessment Stipek Fishing Access Site: Proposed 777 Property Addition Acquisition, 2009).

Proposed improvements would primarily use ground previously disturbed; therefore the meadow jumping mouse is not expected to be impacted. Increased motor boat traffic in this river reach may slightly disrupt least tern activity, but is not expected to alter populations (Scott Denson).

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B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

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

6a. The homes nearest to this parcel are located on the opposite side of the railroad tracks. The site design, including the potential rerouting of the road, parking area and boat ramp have been located near the center of the property and near the river to allow the largest possible buffer from neighboring residents. Neighbors would be unlikely to hear noises generated by people using the fishing access site for bank fishing and floating activities. Noise would increase slightly and temporarily due to truck traffic and heavy equipment operation during construction of the proposed improvements, which is currently anticipated to occur over a period of one to two months in the fall of 2012. Construction and public use of the site would occur primarily during daylight hours.

The proposed project would have no change in electrical levels and would not interfere with radio or television reception or operation.

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7. LAND USE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
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 Positive			7b.
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				

7b. This site was acquired and designated as a fishing access site in 2010. The proposed improvements are typical of and important to public use at FAS. The proposed features offer an improved road surface providing safer travel in poor weather conditions and a hardened boat launch surface to access the Yellowstone River, which would provide year-round access. The vault latrine would significantly reduce sanitation problems that occur at high public use areas in remote areas without public sanitation facilities. Farmland and riparian areas would be affected very little.

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
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	8c.
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)			X		Yes	8a.

8a. FWP would manage the noxious weeds on the property in accordance with the Statewide and R-7 Weed Management Plans. The plans call for an integrated method of managing weeds, including the use of herbicides. Application would be in compliance with established guidelines and conducted by trained applicators. Weeds would also be controlled using mechanical or biological means in certain areas to reduce the risk of chemical spills or water contamination. The risk of oil or gas spills due to vehicle and

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boat access is very low. Restricting vehicles to designated and hardened areas would also limit spills to a small portion of the property.

8c. Chemical spraying is part of FWP's integrated weed management program to manage noxious weeds. If acquired (preferred Alternative B), certified professionals would utilize permitted chemicals in accordance with product labels and as provided for under law. Spraying would occur at times of low visitation, when feasible.

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

9e. Road and parking improvements would direct traffic more clearly and safely than the current two-track roads. Graveled surfaces would provide improved traction in all weather conditions. The addition of this boat ramp to the 22 mile stretch of river below Glendive would reduce river traffic congestion in the immediate Glendive vicinity. This new access also provides an alternative way for boaters to exit the river in an emergency; or for search and rescue boats to more quickly access a boater in trouble.

Low-speed (25 mph) railroad crossings present minimal hazards; however, FWP is working closely with BNSF Railroad to complete improvements that provide a safer at-grade crossing. FWP is working to install new signs between the highway and the FAS tract to improve safety and meet BNSF safety requirements for public crossings.

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

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
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		Yes	10a.
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?		X				
e. **Define projected revenue sources						10e.
f. **Define projected maintenance costs.						10f.

10a. Region 7 Fishing Access Site staff currently maintains the site; slightly more time and funding would be needed to clean and stock (with toilet paper) the latrine, pump the vault (perhaps once annually), ensure the boat ramp is clean and clear, and periodically grade the road. Some mowing may be done along roadways to reduce fire hazards and present a professional facility. Trash receptacles would not be provided on-site, as the "Pack In/Pack Out" practice is encouraged; however, litter pick-up would be needed. This funding is in place through the Region 7 FAS budget, and staff that oversees other Yellowstone River FAS in the vicinity would incorporate this site into management and maintenance responsibilities.

10e. Stipek FAS would continue as a day use facility with no fees charged, nor revenue collected.

10f. Maintenance costs for this property would total approximately $5,000 annually for weed control, vault latrine pumping, toilet paper and cleaning supplies, litter pick up, mowing, fence repair, periodic road grading and periodic boat ramp clearing. These costs would be covered by the Region 7 FAS operations and maintenance budget.

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** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).
*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

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

11a. The road, parking and boat ramp improvements are low profile among a mature cottonwood forest, and would have minimal impact on the scenic vistas. The single latrine would be more apparent, but the typical structure has a natural aggregate finish which blends nicely with the proposed surroundings and would be obscured by native vegetation.

11c. The proposed improvements would allow increased public access to this stretch of the Yellowstone River, thus increasing the recreational opportunities in the Glendive area. It is anticipated that the Stipek FAS would become a destination for hiking, wildlife viewing, floating and fishing, which would alleviate public pressure from nearby Fishing Access Sites. Waterfowl hunters, deer archery hunters and trappers may also be allowed to use the property. See Appendix C for the Department of Commerce Tourism Report.

11d. No wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas are designated in this area.

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*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

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

12a. The project is not anticipated to alter cultural resources. The State Historic Preservation Office would be consulted prior to any ground disturbing activities.

The site is about a half mile from the historical Northern Pacific Railway establishment called Stipek, a town named after J. J. Stipek of Glendive, proprietor of the Bee Hive cash store.

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** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).
*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
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				13e
f. ***For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)		X				See 13e.
g. ****For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.			X			See permits list, Part 1

The proposed acquisition is expected to have no significant negative cumulative effects on the physical or human environments. When considered over the long-term, the proposed improvements offer positive effects to recreational opportunities in this reach of the river and reduce current impacts and conflicts.

The minor impacts that were identified in the previous section are small in scale and would not influence the overall environment of the immediate area. The natural environment would continue to provide habitat to transient and permanent wildlife species and would be open to the public for river and land access.

13e. The concern most often heard by FWP staff was the potential deer poaching on adjacent private land. Potential rerouting of the access road, fencing and signing is expected to help reduce the potential for that illegal activity and mitigate concerns.

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** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).
*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

Upon evaluation of both the physical and human environments, the proposed project as described in this document at the Stipek FAS along the Yellowstone River north of Glendive, appears to have only minor impacts, most of which can be mitigated. The proposal provides better public access to area anglers, in addition to increasing other general public recreational opportunities, such as bank and wade fishing, floating, waterfowl and deer hunting, trapping, hiking, wildlife viewing, picnicking, and bird watching. Adding a boat launch with a manageable grade and surface would reduce pressure at adjacent sites along the river at Intake FAS and Black Bridge FAS.

When considered over the long-term, this action poses important positive effects for the public's continued access to a scenic recreation area of the Yellowstone River while decreasing conflicts that exist with those accessing the river under current conditions. The natural environment would continue to provide habitat to transient and permanent wildlife species.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. **Public Involvement**:

The public would be notified in the following manner about the proposed action and alternatives and how to comment on this current EA:

- Two Public Notices in each of these papers: *Glendive Ranger Review, Billings Gazette,* and *Helena Independent Record*;
- One statewide press release;
- Direct mailing to adjacent landowners and interested parties;
- Public notice on the FWP web page: http://fwp.mt.gov.
- Copies will be available for public review at FWP Region 7 Headquarters.

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope, having minimal physical and human impacts.
If requested within the comment period, the department may arrange a public meeting.

2. **Duration of comment period**

The public comment period will extend for (30) thirty days following publication in area newspapers. Comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., June 29, 2012 and can be sent to the Region 7 Fishing Access Site Coordinator:

Stipek FAS Improvements
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, R7 Headquarters
PO Box 1630, Industrial Site West
Miles City, MT 59301

Or email comments to: cstewart@mt.gov

PART V. EA PREPARATION

1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? NO.
If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.

No, an EIS is not required. Based on an evaluation of the primary, secondary, and cumulative impacts to the physical and human environment, this environmental review found no significant negative impacts from the proposed action at the Stipek FAS. In determining the significance of the impacts of the proposed project, 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 impacts from the proposed actions, an EA is the appropriate level of review and an EIS is not required.

2. Persons responsible for preparing this EA:
Cathy Stewart, Region 7 Fishing Access Site Coordinator, cstewart@mt.gov
Sue Dalbey, Consultant

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

- Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
  - Fisheries Bureau
  - Legal Unit
  - Wildlife Bureau
  - Design & Construction Bureau
- Montana Department of Commerce – Tourism
- Montana Natural Heritage Program – Natural Resources Information System (NRIS)
- US Department of Housing and Urban Development – Federal Insurance Administration, Flood Hazard Boundary Map
- Natural Resources and Conservation Service – Soil Survey Geographic Database (SSURGO)
- US Fish and Wildlife Service – National Wetlands Inventory: riparian and wetland mapping database

4. Literature cited:

Draft Environmental Assessment Stipek Fishing Access Site: Proposed 777 Property Addition Acquisition, October 2009. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 1420 East Sixth Avenue, Helena, MT 59620.

Draft Environmental Assessment Stipek Fishing Access Site Proposed Acquisition, December 2008. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 1420 East Sixth Avenue, Helena, MT 59620.

Montana's Comprehensive Fish and Wildlife Conservation Strategy, Executive Summary, 2005. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 1420 East Sixth Avenue, Helena, MT 59620.

US Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Conservation Service, Web Soil Survey, http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov , Dawson County, Montana; Survey Area Data Version 13, January 3, 2012.

US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Federal Insurance Administration, Flood Hazard Boundary Map; Dawson County, Montana; Unincorporated Area Page 11 of 19, Community Panel No. 300140 0011 A; Effective Date April 11, 1978.

US Fish and Wildlife Service National Wetlands Inventory, www.fws.gov/wetlands/data/mapper.html, February 12, 2012.

APPENDICES

A. MCA 23-1-110 Project Qualification Checklist
B. Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) Native Species Report
C. Tourism Report – Department of Commerce

APPENDIX A

MCA 23-1-110

PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

Date January 28, 2012 **Person Reviewing** Sue Dalbey, Consultant

Project Location: Stipek Fishing Access Site: T17N, R55E, sections 23 through 26 in Dawson County; about 8 miles north of Glendive on the west side of the Yellowstone River.

Description of Proposed Work: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks proposes to improve the site by rerouting the gravel entrance road; adding parking, directional and regulation signs; constructing a boat ramp; and installing a sealed vault latrine.

(The following checklist is intended to be a guide for determining whether a proposed development or improvement is of enough significance to fall under HB 495 rules. (Please check all that apply and comment as necessary.)

[ ]A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?
Comments: Roadways would be improved with road base and gravel. Areas have been disturbed in the past for farming or recreational use.

[ ] B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?
Comments: Only a new sealed vault latrine would be constructed.

[X] C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?
Comments: Some excavation would occur to install the latrine vault and boat ramp.

[ ]D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?
Comments: Parking lots would become formally designated with the proposed project. Total parking space would be less than the dispersed parking previously available.

[ ]E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a doublewide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?
Comments: No. The proposed boat ramp would be a single-lane ramp.

[X] F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?
Comments: The proposed boat ramp would extend into the Yellowstone River bed.

[ ]G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?
Comments: FWP will consult with SHPO prior to ground disturbance.

[ ]H. Any new above ground utility lines?
Comments: No new utility lines would be constructed.

[ ]I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?
Comments: No camping is proposed.

[X] J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern; including effects of a series of individual projects?
Comments: The proposed improvements in combination with the site acquisitions that occurred in 2009 have improved public access to this reach of the Yellowstone River.

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

Sensitive Plants and Animals in the area of Stipek Fishing Access Site (2009)

Species of Concern Terms and Definitions

A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) element occurrence database (http://nris.mt.gov) indicates no known occurrences of federally listed threatened, endangered, or proposed threatened or endangered plant species in the proposed project site. The search did indicate the project area is within habitat for the Least Tern, Pallid Sturgeon, Paddlefish, Sturgeon Chub, Blue Sucker, Sauger, Meadow Jumping Mouse, and the Spiny Softshell. Please see the next page for more information on these species.

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.

Sensitive Plants and Animals in the vicinity of Stipek Fishing Access Site

1. Sterna antillarum (Least Tern)

Natural Heritage Ranks:	Federal Agency Status:
State: **S1B**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: **LE**
Global: **G4**	U.S. Forest Service: **Endangered**
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Special Status**

FWP CFWCS Tier: 1

No Element Occurrence of the Least Tern were reported in the boundaries of this parcel.

2. Scaphirhynchus albus (Pallid Sturgeon)

Natural Heritage Ranks:	Federal Agency Status:
State: **S1**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: **LE**
Global: **G2**	U.S. Forest Service: **Endangered**
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Special Status**

FWP CFWCS Tier: 1

No Element Occurrence data reported of Pallid Sturgeon reported in this stretch of the Yellowstone.

3. Polyodon spathula (Paddlefish)

Natural Heritage Ranks:	Federal Agency Status:
State: **S1S2**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
Global: **G4**	U.S. Forest Service:
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier: 1

No Element Occurrence data reported of Paddlefish reported in this stretch of the Yellowstone River.

4. Macrhybopsis gelida (Sturgeon Chub)

Natural Heritage Ranks:	Federal Agency Status:
State: **S2S3**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
Global: **G3**	U.S. Forest Service: **Sensitive**
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier: 1

No Element Occurrence data reported of Sturgeon Chub reported in this stretch of the Yellowstone.

5. Cycleptus elongatus (Blue Sucker)

Natural Heritage Ranks:	Federal Agency Status:
State: **S2S3**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
Global: **G3G4**	U.S. Forest Service:
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier: 1

No Element Occurrence data reported of Sturgeon Chub reported in this stretch of the Yellowstone.

Sensitive Plants and Animals in the vicinity of Stipek Fishing Access Site (continued)

6. Sander caadensis (Sauger)

Natural Heritage Ranks:	Federal Agency Status:
State: **S2**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
Global: **G5**	U.S. Forest Service:
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier: 1

No Element Occurrence data reported of Sauger reported in this stretch of the Yellowstone River.

7. Zapus hudsonius (Meadow Jumping Mouse)

Natural Heritage Ranks:	Federal Agency Status:
State: **S2**	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
Global: **G5**	U.S. Forest Service:
	U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier: 1

Two Element Occurrence data reported of the Meadow Jumping Mouse reported in this proximate area of this parcel in 1947.

8. Apalone spinifera (Spiny Softshell)

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: 1

Two Element Occurrence data reported of Spiny Softshell turtles reported north of this parcel in 1806 and again in 2006.

Information courtesy of Montana Natural Heritage Program.

APPENDIX C
Department of Commerce 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: Stipek Fishing Access Site Improvements

Project Description: FWP proposes to complete certain improvements at the Stipek Fishing Access Site (FAS) located about 8 miles north of Glendive along the west side of the Yellowstone River and totaling about 110 acres in size. The project would reroute the gravel entrance road to create a larger buffer from adjacent neighbors; install a sealed vault latrine and construct a single-lane boat ramp along the river bank. The nearest FAS are about 11 miles up and down stream of Stipek FAS. The improvements are expected to relieve pressure at existing sites and improve access to the river and other public lands in the vicinity, including public islands.

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.

Signature Carol Crockett, Visitor Services Manager Date February 28, 2012

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