

Environmental Assessment

Medicine Rocks Camp Host Pad

June 30, 2012



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

**Medicine Rocks Camp Host Pad
Draft Environmental Assessment
MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST**

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of Proposed Action:

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

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP) proposes to construct a camp host pad at Medicine Rocks State Park with the intent of making an agreeable site to attract potential campground hosts for the purpose of having a semi-official presence on site to better protect and help interpret the rich resources, and increase site safety and security.

Agency authority for the proposed action:

Sections 12-8-213, 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.

Section 23-1-110 MCA, or House Bill 495, and the guidelines established in 12.8.604 (ARM) (1) relate to changes in state park and fishing access site features or use patterns. The proposed acquisition will not change site features or historical use; therefore, Section 23-1-110 MCA is not initiated.

2. Name of Project

Medicine Rocks Host Pad

3. Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor

John Little, Region 7 Parks Manager
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
PO Box 1630
Miles City, MT 59301
406-234-0923

Ryan Sokoloski, Park Manager
Medicine Rocks State Park
PO Box 1242
Glendive, MT 59330
406-377-6256

4. **If Applicable:**
 Estimated Construction/Commencement Date: Fall, 2012
 Estimated Completion Date: Spring, 2013
 Current Status of Project Design (percentage complete): 0

5. **Location Affected by Proposed Action (county, range, and township)**
 Medicine Rocks State Park is located in sections 1 and 2, Township 3 North, Range 58 East, Carter County, Montana. Ekalaka, the county seat, located 14 miles south on highway 7 is the closest community to Medicine Rocks State Parks.

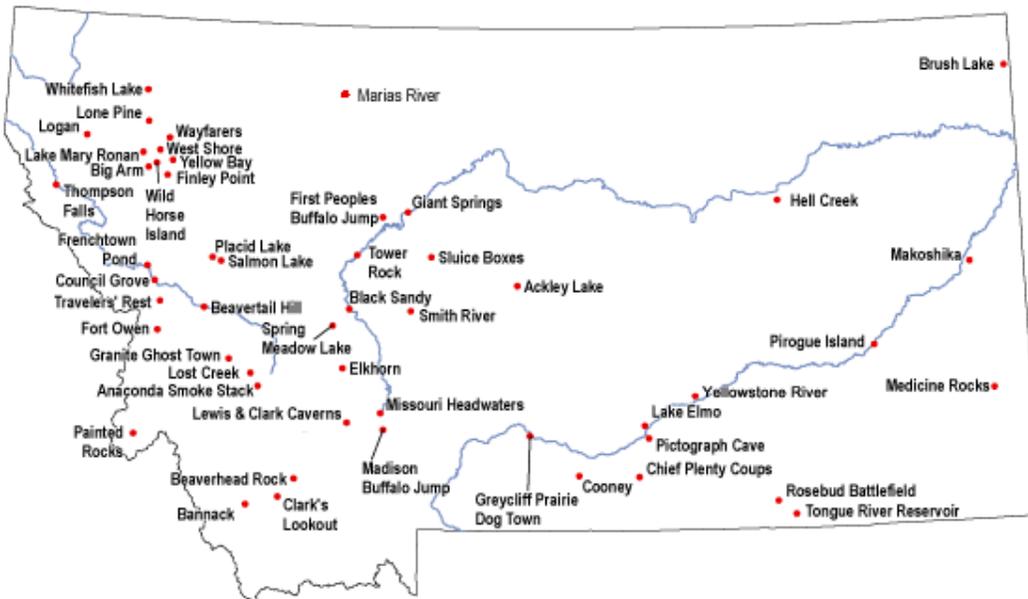
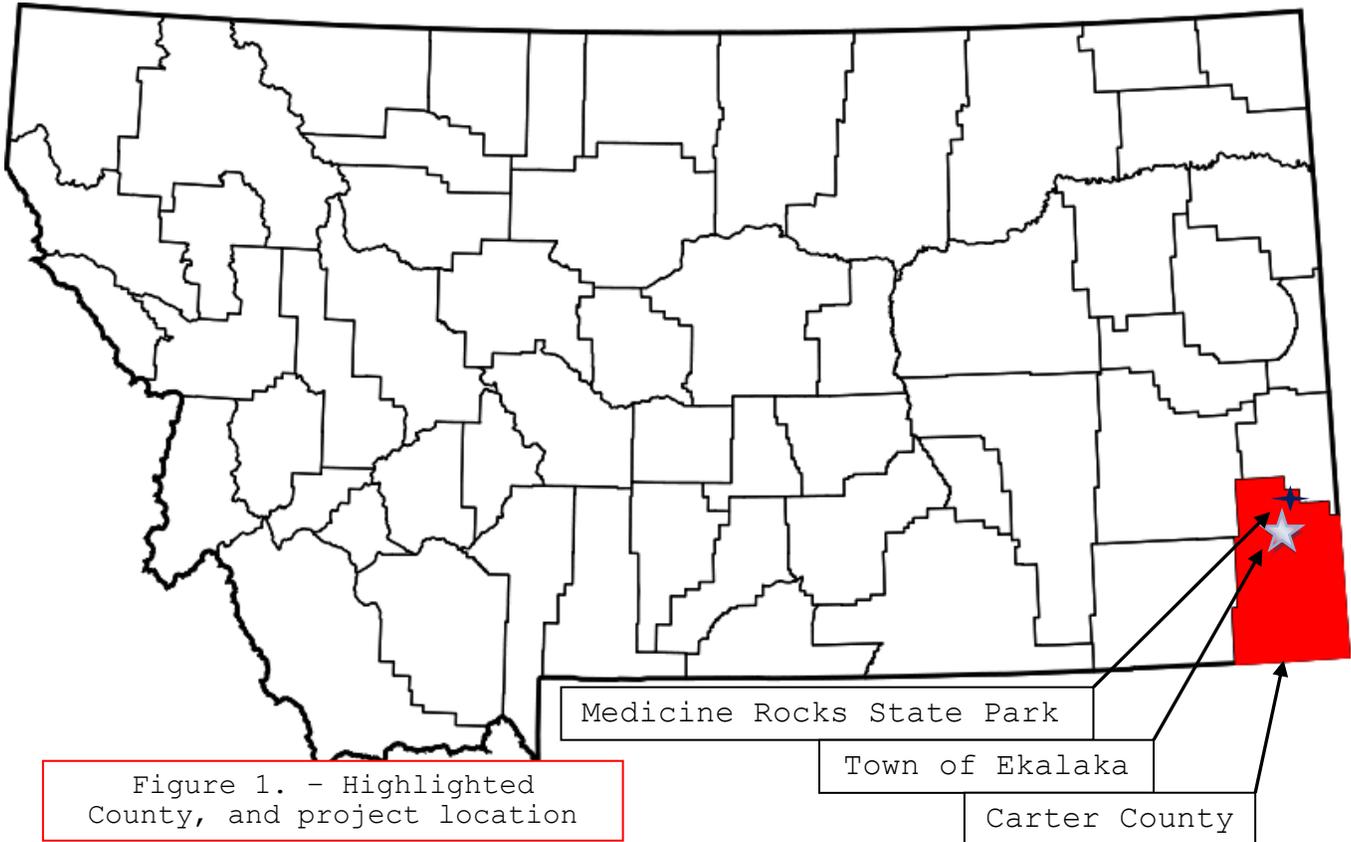


Figure 2. - Map depicting location of all state parks throughout Montana

6. Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

- | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|---|-------|
| (a) Developed: | (d) Floodplain | 0 | acres |
| Residential..... | (e) Productive: | | |
| Industrial | Irrigated cropland..... | 0 | acres |
| (b) Open Space/Woodlands/
Recreation | Dry cropland | 0 | acres |
| >1/8 acres | Forestry..... | 0 | acres |
| (c) Wetlands/Riparian
Areas | Rangeland | 0 | acres |
| 0 acres | Other | 0 | acres |

7. Map/site plan: attach an original 8 1/2" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map showing the location and boundaries of the area that would be affected by the proposed action. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.



taxed and could suffer irreparable damage. Having a campground host on-site will provide monitoring and a visual deterrent for illegal activities, better security for dangerous or hazardous conditions such as fire or falling trees, and user enjoyment by acting as a liaison for park resources and an agency conduit.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

- 1. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a comparison of the alternatives with the proposed action/preferred alternative:**

Alternative A: No Action

Construction of the host pad is a priority for continued successful management of Medicine Rocks State Parks. If the proposed project is not completed by MFWP, there will continue to be an unsustainable tax on the parks resources. Priceless park resources could suffer irreparable damage or loss.

Alternative B: Construction of Host Pad - Option 1

Construct a host pad with water, electrical, and sewer hookups at the location adjacent to the park entrance and fee station. This site is also situated approximately 100' from highway 7 and not near any current park developed resources. This site would likely be less appealing for a potential camp host, and would be logistically more difficult to manage the public and the parks resources.

Alternative C: Construction of Host Pad – Option 2

Construct a host pad with water, electrical, and sewer hookups at the location situated almost $\frac{3}{4}$ mile within the park entrance on the park access road. This site would likely be far more appealing for a potential camp host. Because of its proximity to park resources and developments, this option would logistically be easier to manage park users and park resources which in-turn will enhance park user safety.

- 2. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:**
Not applicable

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

This analysis did not reveal any significant impacts to the human or physical environment.

The proposed project consists only of developing a designated camphost pad in a site that is currently disturbed and used by R.V. and tent camping. The additional installation and placement of electrical, water and sewage hookups will take place underground within the existing footprint of the roadway, minimizing new surface disturbance.

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 ways to comment on the EA of the proposed Medicine Rocks Host Pad construction:

1. Legal notices will be published in the Helena *Independent Record*, the *Billings Gazette*, *Glendive Ranger Review*, *Fallon County Times*, and the *Ekalaka Eagle*.
2. Legal notice and the draft EA will be posted on the MFWP web page: <http://fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices>

This level of public involvement is appropriate for a project of this small scale.

- 2. Duration of comment period, if any.**

Public comment will be accepted until Friday, July 20th. Comments may be emailed to jlittle@mt.gov, or written comments may be submitted to the following address:

John Little, Region 7 Parks Manager
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
PO Box 1630
Miles City, MT 59301

PART V. EA PREPARATION

- 1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required?**

No.

If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.

Based on an evaluation of impacts to the physical and human environment under MEPA, this environmental review revealed no significant negative impacts from the proposed action: therefore, an EIS is not necessary and an environmental assessment is the appropriate level of analysis.

- 2. Name, title, address, and phone number of the person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:**

John Little, R7 Park Manager Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks 352 I-94 Business Loop P.O. Box 1630 Miles City, MT. 59301 (406) 234 – 0923	Ryan Sokoloski, Park Manager Makoshika State Park Medicine Rocks State Park 1301 Snyder Ave. P.O. Box 1242 Glendive, MT. 59330 (406) 377 – 6256
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3. List of agencies consulted during preparation of the EA:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Parks Division, Region 7
Wildlife Division, Region 7
Heritage Resource Program
Design & Construction

PART VI. MEPA CHECKLIST

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

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
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				
c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- 1a. The proposed project will be confined to the existing roadway. All burying of services will take place within the existing roadway

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

2. <u>AIR</u> 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
b. Creation of objectionable odors?			X			2a,b
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				
f. Other		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

2a,b: Some dust from trenching and hauling necessary materials will occur, as will some odors from the exhaust of equipment used. Both the dust and odors will be temporary, occurring only during the construction phase. Any effects would be further mitigated by the prevailing wind patterns blowing dust and odors away from any heavily used areas of the park and not near any public habitations.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

3. <u>WATER</u> 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				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of flood water or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?	X					3g
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?	X					3i
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					3k
l. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c)		X				
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				
n. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- 3g The proposed project would direct potable drinking water from the existing park well to the camp hosts during their tenure. This water will be for the exclusive use of the camp hosts, therefore water usage should be nominal and will likely have no noticeable impact on the quantity of groundwater.
- 3i Water rights for the well currently exist. The proposed project will not require modifications to legal water rights.
- 3k The project will bring potable drinking water from the existing well on park property. However, camp hosts will be using this water for basic water and sanitation needs therefore water usage will be kept to a minimum. No noticeable impact is expected.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

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

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- 4e. Park staff will continue noxious weed control efforts to ensure the soil disturbances and work area receive re-seeding with an approved blend of native plant seeds. It is anticipated that the long term impacts will be a decrease in noxious weeds, due in part to having camp hosts on-site aiding in noxious weed control efforts.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

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

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u> 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			6a
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

6a Noise levels will rise only temporarily during construction phase from equipment operation, however no people or residence are in close proximity to the park and construction area. Noise levels will return to pre existing levels following construction.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

7. <u>LAND USE</u> 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. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other: _____		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

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

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u> 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				
f. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u> 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				
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 used of any energy source?			X			10d
e. Define projected revenue sources	X					10e
f. Define projected maintenance costs.			X			10f
g. Other: _____						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- 10d Camp hosts will have hookups for electricity. Usage is expected to be negligible as is the norm with typical R.V. units that will be used. Further, usage will be restricted to seasonal use and occupancy.
- 10e Duties of the residing camp hosts will include collecting applicable fees. As stipulated in MCA 23-1-116 "...a Montana resident is not required to pay a user fee for the use of any primitive park..." (2) A nonresident who wishes to use a primitive park is required to pay the state park user fees chargeable under 23-1-105 MCA. As there have been no means to accurately quantify nonresident use in years past, the actual amount that is collected cannot be known at this time. It is anticipated that this project will result in an increase in fee compliance and therefore an increase in park revenue.
- 10f Maintenance costs are anticipated to increase only slightly as the services offered will remain the same. The increases are anticipated to be towards general cleaning supplies such as latrine sanitizers and cleaners, because someone will be on-site to clean them more often. The annual winterization of the water supply line will be incorporated into regular annual park maintenance staff duties.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

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

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u> 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				yes	12a.
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a)		X				
e. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- 12a. In accordance with the Montana Antiquities Act (22-3-421 to 22-3-442) and with FWPs ARM rules (12.8.501 to 12.8.10), a heritage resource survey will be conducted prior to project development to identify possible historic and archaeological sites. Impacts to these sites, if identified, will be taken into consideration as part of project planning and will be avoided, if possible. If sites are identified and cannot be avoided in accordance with MCA 22-3-430, Parks Heritage Resource Program Manager will be consulted and mitigation measures developed.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

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

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

**APPENDIX C
TOURISM REPORT
MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA)/HB495**

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks have initiated the review process as mandated by HB495 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 Service Manager
Montana Office of Tourism-Department of Commerce
PO Box 200533
301 S Park
Helena, MT 59620-0533

Project Name: Medicine Rocks State Park Campground Host Site Development

Project Location: Medicine Rocks State Park, Carter County, Montana. Section 1, Township 3 North, Range 58 East

Project Description: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to construct a campground host site at Medicine Rocks State Park. The site will be used by a volunteer campground host. It is expected that the host will assist park visitors, provide information about the park and the surrounding area; relate park rules and regulations; improve customer service; and be the main point of contact for any emergency response.

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?

3.
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 June 29, 2012

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