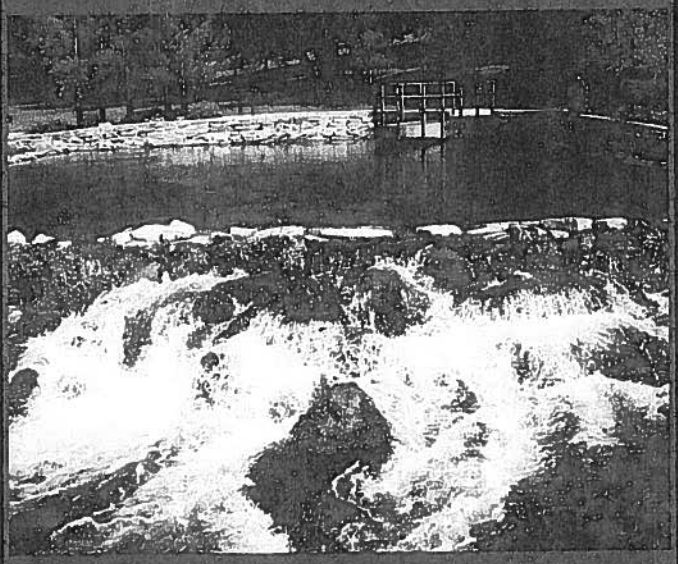
GIANT SPRINGS STATE PARK



Final
January 2004

Park Area Management Plan

Montana
Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Prepared By:
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for:

MONTANA
STATE PARKS

Parks Division
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GIANT SPRINGS STATE PARK AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

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ACRONYMS AND TERMS

BLM	U.S. Bureau of Land Management
FERC	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
FWP	Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks also used as general reference to staff of Giant Springs State Park
Giant Springs Heritage State Park Commission	A volunteer, non-profit support group for the Park
Heritage State Park Commission	Giant Springs Heritage State Park Commission
LCHG	Lewis and Clark Heritage Greenway Conservation Easement
Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center	Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center
Long Term Trust Fund	A trust fund established under the FERC license to operate the dams in the planning area
LWCF	Land and Water Conservation Fund
Management Plan Work Group	The individuals and organizations that developed the draft plan (see listing in Chapter 1, Planning Process)
Malmstrom AFB	Malmstrom Air Force Base
MPC	Montana Power Company. Note: PPL Montana acquired MPC holdings in the planning area in the year 2000.
Park	Giant Springs Heritage State Park
PPL Montana	PPL (Pennsylvania Power & Light) Montana, LLC The power company that operates the dams in the planning area
Recreation Technical Work Group	A team of local, state, and federal agencies that PPL Montana is required to work with as part of its FERC license; this group makes recommendations for expenditures from the Long Term Trust Fund
River's Edge Trail	Trail being developed on both sides of the Missouri River in and around the City of Great Falls
RTI	Recreational Trails, Inc.—the non-profit fundraising arm of the River's Edge Trail
USFS	United States Forest Service also used as general reference to staff of the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, which is managed by the USFS

PREFACE

This plan began as a management plan for Giant Springs State Park and grew to become a coordinated approach for land management among a variety of organizations with interests along the Missouri River between Black Eagle Island and Sulfur Springs. At the outset, Giant Springs State Park invited the participation of these other organizations to help plan for the areas managed by the Park. Before long, however, these other organizations were making suggestions for a much broader area, which included their own lands, and which would provide a comprehensive approach to dealing with environmental, historical, and other issues on these publicly managed lands.

The result is a plan that will provide management direction for Giant Springs State Park specifically and will also guide the actions of the other participating organizations and their lands associated with the Park. These organizations have their own separate plans and operating guidelines, prepared under separate processes. Each organization has agreed to participate in the goals and action strategies as indicated in this plan, as long as these do not conflict with their own separate plans and policies. The organizations' commitment to the action strategies and policies will be recorded in a Memorandum of Agreement once the Management Plan is finalized. This plan does not extend to actions on lands owned or managed by other individuals, organizations or groups, unless they voluntarily wish to participate.

This plan, which extends beyond the state park boundaries and includes other organizations as active participants in plan implementation, is the first of its type for any state park in Montana.

Participating organizations include:

- Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), including:
  - Giant Springs State Park (properties on both north and south shores)
  - Region 4 Headquarters at Giant Springs State Park
  - Giant Springs State Fish Hatchery

- Bureau of Land Management
- Cascade County
- City of Great Falls
- Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce
- PPL Montana
- Recreational Trails, Incorporated
- USFS—Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center
- Cascade County Conservation District

CHANGES BETWEEN DRAFT AND FINAL

The Draft Plan was released in June 2002. A total of 84 written comments were submitted by the August 7, 2002 deadline as well as comments received at the public meeting held in July. The Management Plan Work Group met in September to review and discuss public comment and to make changes to the document. Several changes were made to the document and are noted.

I. Introduction

Planning Process. Added text on the public comment and more detailed discussion about how the plan is finalized.

Plan Implementation. Clarified that the Management Plan Work Group will review the plan annually to update priorities and timeline.

Planning Area—South Shore. Updated to indicate that the USFS purchased the land for the Lewis and Clark National Trail Interpretive Center in Summer 2002.

II. Giant Springs State Park: Context, Analysis, and History.

No changes to this section.

III. Giant Springs State Park Area Management Direction.

Goals and strategies were numbered so that they would be easier to identify when tracking progress over the 10-year implementation of the plan. The first year priorities were also added as a new section at the end of this part of the Plan.

Issue: South Shore Roads and Parking.
Added information about the need for better information on the type and frequency of problems related to Giant Springs Road and added two strategies on this topic under Goal 1.

Deleted goal 2 that stated, "Reduce the number of park entrances where appropriate to improve site administration" and the related strategy that talked about working to convert Giant Springs Road into a non-through road.

Added a new goal 2 that states, "Continue use of Giant Springs Road for the basic purpose of scenic and recreational use." Added two associated strategies—one to identify options when issues arise that jeopardize scenic and recreational use of Giant Springs Road, and another that states that FWP should work to balance the public's desire to use Giant Springs Road as they have historically with FWP's need to manage access as part of an overall recreation management program, recognizing local government authority and responsibility for Giant Springs Road.

Issue: Trails. In the first strategy for this issue, clarified the River's Edge Trail and North Shore Trail should be fully implemented along with the River's Edge Trail Interpretive Master Plan.

Issue: Group Use. Revised the second goal for this strategy to make it clearer that the purpose is to bring more visitors to the Heritage Unit of the Park. The related strategy for this goal was also reworded slightly to make its meaning clearer.

Issue: Morony Townsite Development. The goal for this strategy was revised to make it clear that interpretation and education should be included in plans for future renovation of the apartment building.

Issue: Water Quality and Quantity at the Springs. A whole new section was added to address the need to maintain the free-flowing nature of the Springs, to develop baseline data, and to monitor change.

Issue: Historic Preservation. A new paragraph was added to this section to clarify the work that has already been done to inventory sites.

Issue: Viewsheds and Soundsheds. A new goal was added to recommend establishment of a no-wake restriction on Rainbow Reservoir. (FWP Commission would establish the no-wake restriction.)

Issue: Interpretive and Educational Services. The Cascade County Conservation District was added to the participating agencies that will work on the Goal for this issue. Two new strategies were also added. One strategy addresses information that identifies key points of interest, clarifying public land boundaries, and notifying visitors of their responsibilities with respect to private property. The other strategy addresses the need for information on visitors' responsibilities, including litter, rules for trail use, etc.

Issue: Commercial Use. A new strategy was added on commercial filming.

Issue: Public Health and Safety. A new strategy was added to address hazardous contaminants in the Park.

Issue: Operations, Maintenance, and Resources. A new strategy was added to monitor and identify patterns of visitor use, fee compliance, and staff availability, so that needs can be identified and problems addressed.

Issue: Law Enforcement. The seventh strategy for this topic was amended to include private security and Malmstrom Air Force Base Security. The ninth strategy was amended to add information on type of incident, time and date of occurrence, type of damage, and cost to repair.

Appendices.
Added the "Summary of Public Comment on the May 2002 Draft Plan and Response" as an Appendix.

Finalizing the Plan

The revised plan is submitted to the Regional Supervisor and the Parks Division Administrator. Once they sign off on the plan, it goes to the FWP Director. The FWP Commission is briefed on the Director's decision. Unless an appeal is filed, the purpose of the briefing is to inform Commission members, not to involve them in any additional decision-making.

The public has two opportunities to appeal specific components of a state park management plan. The appeal must identify what specific items are objectionable. A decision must first be appealed to the FWP Director. If the Director upholds the original decision, an appeal can be made to the FWP Commission. The Commission may uphold the original decision, request specific changes, or ask that staff take a fresh look at particular issues.

I. Introduction

This management plan serves to establish the following:

- Provide the 10 year management plan for Giant Springs State Park,
- Provide the Master Site Plan for the Giant Springs State Park-South Shore fee area,
- Provide an overall approach for a number of issues being addressed by a variety of entities in the planning area, and
- Help ensure visitors encounter similar looks, rules, and expectations at the diverse recreational sites in the planning area.

Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) and Giant Springs State Park managers decided to develop a management plan because of many major changes in and around the Park over the past eight years. These include:

a. Growth of the Park. In 1999 the Park grew from 393 acres on the south shore of the Missouri River to a total of 3,238 acres of land owned or managed by the State Park system on both the north and south shores. The Park system acquired the 2,415 acre Lewis and Clark Heritage Greenway Conservation Easement, and 430 acres of fee title land. In one year, FWP became responsible for approximately 14 miles of shoreline along the Missouri River, and the owner of historic Sulfur Springs and a former town site near Morony Dam.
b. Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center. The USFS opened the doors to the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center in May, 1998. The USFS purchased 27.29 acres for the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center from FWP in 2002. The National Forest parcel is essentially surrounded by Giant Springs State Park and the Missouri River.
c. FERC Mitigation and Related Power Company changes. In December 1999, PPL Montana acquired Montana Power Company's generating facilities, including the five hydroelectric facilities in the Great Falls area. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) has required a number of recreation projects in this area as conditions for the license.
d. The River's Edge Trail. The River's Edge Trail, initiated in the early 1990s, runs through Giant Springs State Park on the south shore, and is planned to extend along the north shore with a fork to Morony and another back to Great Falls. The City of Great Falls acquired 320 acres near Crooked Falls in part to further the south shore trail system.
e. Lewis and Clark Bicentennial. Commemoration of the 1803-1806 expedition of Lewis and Clark is expected to result in millions of visitors to the expedition route. Between 1996 and 2001, average annual number of visitors at Giant Springs State Park was approximately 98,000. This figure may double by 2005.

This is the first management plan for Giant Springs State Park, and is intended to be a working document to guide day-to-day decisions and actions. This plan also includes

the Master Site Plan for the Giant Springs/Heritage area, the traditional core of Giant Springs State Park that includes the namesake springs, recorded in the journals of Lewis and Clark. Visitation to this Park was estimated at 85,000 for calendar year 2000, making it among the most heavily visited in the Montana State Park system, which includes 41 parks across the state.

Although initially the management planning effort focused only on Giant Springs State Park, it became clear that the complex public land ownership and overlapping management in and around the Park required a coordinated approach among a variety of public entities. From the start, the Management Plan Work Group included representatives from various entities, including Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP) Region 4 Headquarters, FWP Fish Hatchery, Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center (referred to in this document as Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center), PPL Montana, LLC (PPL Montana), City of Great Falls, U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Recreational Trails, Inc. (RTI), Cascade County, Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce, and Cascade County Conservation District. These representatives decided that it made most sense to extend the planning area beyond the boundaries of Giant Springs State Park so that the area managed by the different entities could provide a "seamless" experience for visitors. In fact, these organizations have been working with each other and Giant Springs State Park for years in a number of ways—formally and informally, with formal written agreements, and via participation in a number of work groups.

For some of these organizations, existing plans define management activities within and surrounding Giant Springs State Park lands on the north and south shores of the Missouri River. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) license issued to PPL Montana in September 2000 had considerable background planning that provides the basis for license conditions related to a number of recreational facilities within the planning area. The River's Edge Interpretive Master Plan and City of Great Falls Park and Recreation Master Plan identify conceptual and developed trails that will extend for miles along the Missouri River in and around the City of Great Falls. The USFS is currently preparing an environmental analysis to develop a foot trail to Sulfur Springs. Two environmental analyses permitting development of the Interpretive Center were completed in the early 1990s. The Giant Springs State Park Area Management Plan is intended to supplement and coordinate with existing plans of the individual participating agencies; it does not take the place of those plans.

How this document is organized:

I. Introduction. This section describes the planning process, the planning area, and mission and vision statements related to FWP and Giant Springs State Park.

II. Giant Springs State Park: Context, Analysis, and History. This section provides general background on the Park.

III. Management Direction. This section describes issues in the planning area and sets management goals and strategies. After each strategy statement is a listing of the entities that will take a role in implementing the strategy.

Appendices. Appendices are compiled in a separate document. The appendices contain the Giant Springs South Shore Fee Area Master Site Plan and other information referenced in this Management Plan. See the Table of Contents for a complete listing of Appendices.

Planning Process

The Giant Springs Management Plan began in 1999. A number of internal and public scoping sessions (as well as public open houses) were held during the process to help identify key issues to be addressed in the Plan (see Appendix D for summary of scoping issues). Sessions included the following:

- Scoping meeting for affected interests, North Shore (4/1999)
- Public scoping meeting, entire park (6/1999)
- Public open house to explain Giant Springs Master Site Plan/capital improvements (2/2000)
- Public scoping meeting, Morony property (9/2000)
- Management Plan Work Group scoping, North Shore (6/2001)

A Management Plan Work Group, established for the purpose of developing the plan, met for the first time in June 1999. Persons attending public meetings were invited to participate in the Management Plan Work Group.

Members of the Management Plan Work Group involved in some or all of the process include the following:

- Sidney Abernathy, Giant Springs Heritage State Park Commission
- Tom Alfrey, Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce
- Bruce Chaney, Giant Springs Fish Hatchery Manager, FWP
- Kristi DuBois, Wildlife Biologist, Region 4, FWP
- Jeff Erickson, State Park Program Planner, FWP
- Elvin "Speed" Fitzhugh and Nancy Johnson, American Public Land Exchange (representing PPL Montana)
- Harvey Hergett, USFS
- Terry Hill, Warden Captain, Region 4, FWP
- Richard Hopkins, BLM
- Mike Horn, Design and Construction Bureau Landscape Architect, FWP
- Jenny Johnston, Giant Springs Heritage State Park Commission
- Bardell Mangum, Design and Construction Bureau Landscape Architect, FWP
- John Nerud, Cascade County Planning Department

- Ben Rangel, Senior Planner, Great Falls City-County Planning Board
- Dale Schaeffer, USFS
- Kelly Shaffer, Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce
- Dan Smith, Giant Springs State Park Manager, FWP
- Graham Taylor, Wildlife Biologist, Region 4, FWP
- Dave Todd, Regional Parks Manager, Region 4, FWP
- Elsie Tuss, Audubon Society and as individual of the general public
- Jane Schmoyer-Weber, Director, Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, USFS
- Chas VanGenderen, State Parks, FWP
- Doug Wicks, Recreational Trails, Incorporated

Cossitt Consulting was hired to help facilitate the planning process, and met with the Management Plan Work Group for the first time in June, 2001.

The Draft Plan was released in June 2002. A public meeting was held July 17, 2002 in Great Falls. A total of 84 written comments were submitted by the August 7, 2002 deadline. The Management Plan Work Group met in September 2002 to review and discuss public comment and to make changes to the document.

The revised plan is submitted to the Regional Supervisor and the Parks Division Administrator. Following their review and approval of the plan, it goes to the FWP Director. The FWP Commission is briefed on the Director's decision. Unless an appeal is filed, the purpose of the briefing is to inform Commission members, not to involve them in any additional decision-making.

The public has two opportunities to appeal specific components of a state park management plan. The appeal must identify what specific items are objectionable. A decision must first be appealed to the FWP Director. If the Director upholds the original decision, an appeal can be made to the FWP Commission. The Commission may uphold the original decision, request specific changes, or ask that staff take a fresh look at particular issues.

Plan Implementation and Amendment

This plan is the 10 year planning document for Giant Springs State Park, and it is unique among state park plans in Montana because the planning area extends beyond Park boundaries into lands owned or managed by other agencies and organizations. As such, implementation for this plan will also be unique. Immediately following each action strategy in this plan is a list of the entities participating in the action's implementation. Most strategies have more than one participating organization, but FWP is always included. Participating organizations will prepare a Memorandum of Understanding, to be attached to this document as Appendix A, to formalize their commitment to this effort. The Memorandum of Understanding will be a written agreement to coordinate and

cooperate but will not require or commit a participating organization to obligate funds or actions that exceed their management authorities or responsibilities.

The participating organizations will review this plan annually after its adoption. The review will include an assessment of progress and need for revisions. Progress will be measured against the priorities and timeline for the year, and a new timeline and list of priorities will be identified for the subsequent year. The timeline and priorities for the first year of the plan are included at the end of Section III of this report.

In order to revise or delete an existing strategy, all organizations listed as implementing participants will need to formally agree and document the revision. New strategies should be reviewed and approved by all organizations that will sign the Memorandum of Understanding to be included in Appendix A. Once approved, new strategies should be attached to this plan as a separate, dated addendum that includes signatures of representatives of the participating organizations in the Memorandum of Understanding.

Planning Area

The planning area includes land owned or managed by FWP for Giant Springs State Park, USFS for the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center and the Sulfur Springs Trail, PPL Montana, City of Great Falls, and BLM in the area from Black Eagle Dam to Sulfur Springs as shown on Map 1 attached at the end of the plan. Participation by other landowners in the actions set forth in this document would be strictly on a voluntary basis.

South Shore

On the south shore, publicly owned and managed lands extend from Black Eagle Memorial Island to Cochrane Dam. Giant Springs State Park extends from Black Eagle Dam to Rainbow Dam. The River's Edge Trail follows the river to Cochrane Dam, where a public walkway to the north shore has been recently constructed.

Giant Springs State Park-South Shore

On the south shore, Giant Springs State Park, designated as a state park in 1972, extends east from Black Eagle Dam to 57th Street (Map 2 attached at end of the plan). The Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, the Giant Springs Fish Hatchery, and FWP Region 4 Headquarters, a privately owned parcel near the Springs, and the River's Edge Trail right-of-way, are all located within Park boundaries but are not part of the land base or management jurisdiction of Giant Springs State Park. On the south shore, Giant Springs State Park includes the Giant Springs/Heritage fee area and two non-fee areas.

The Giant Springs/Heritage fee area is about 15 acres in size, and is the most highly developed part of the Park. Giant Springs Road bisects the fee area, and separates it into the Giant Springs and Heritage Units. No management differences exist between these two units, although substantial differences exist between their physical characteristics.

Fences or natural barriers enclose most of the fee zone, but there are several areas, including four vehicular and four trail entrances, where persons can access the fee zone without passing a staffed fee station.

The Giant Springs area north of Giant Springs Road slopes fairly steeply to the Springs and the Missouri River. The area includes well-established shade trees, many of which were planted in the 1930s. Most of the Giant Springs cultural resources are related to the development of the Park and hatchery. The area has several notable cultural features such as the bridges, stone stairway, and stone walls surrounding Giant Springs, which were constructed as part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) efforts, beginning in the 1930s.

The Heritage Unit (the picnicking area south of Giant Spring Road) is flat to gently sloping with younger trees, historic/cultural resources (e.g., the old silver smelter), and newer park facilities (e.g., picnic shelters).

The non-fee areas, flanking the east and west sides of the Giant Springs/Heritage fee areas, are both traversed or bordered by Giant Springs Road and the River's Edge Trail, and both units are semi-primitive in nature. Visitors can walk or bike on the trails and enjoy a relatively natural environment.

Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center

The Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center (referred in this document simply as the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center), owned and managed by the USFS, is wholly surrounded by the State Park and Missouri river. Federal Legislation (PL100-552, October 28, 1988) established the Interpretive Center and specified that up to 50 acres of state land within Giant Springs State Park would be donated to the USFS for the development of the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center. The Montana State Constitution prohibits the donation of state properties; therefore Giant Springs State Park and the USFS signed a 10 year renewable lease that allowed the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center to be built and operated until an equitable purchase could be negotiated. The purchase was completed in 2002. This purchase will enable FWP to acquire land for a new shooting range in the Great Falls area, a facility that would not be part of the Park nor a component of this planning process. The Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center opened May 5, 1998, and nearly 90,000 people visit the facility annually.

Giant Springs State Fish Hatchery

The Giant Springs State Fish Hatchery is located on the bank of the Missouri River in Giant Springs State Park. Operated under the Fisheries Division of FWP, it is not managed by Giant Springs State Park. The hatchery was first operated on a limited capacity during the summer of 1923. It produces approximately 1.3 million trout and

salmon on an annual basis. The hatchery is located just downstream from Giant Springs, which is the water source for the hatchery.

FWP Region 4 Headquarters

The FWP Region 4 Headquarters Building is also located within the boundaries of Giant Springs State Park. The Giant Springs State Park Manager's office is located in the Region 4 Headquarters Building. In addition to offices for Region 4 staff, the building includes an interpretive area and a large conference room, which is used from time-to-time for Giant Springs State Park activities.

Source Giant Springs, Inc.

Source Giant Springs, Inc. owns 9.1 acres of fee title land within the Giant Springs State Park Boundary and water rights to a portion of the flow from Giant Springs. As of February 2003, negotiations were continuing between the landowner and FWP to transfer title to the land to FWP in exchange for an easement to pipe water from Giant Springs to the bottling plant.

PPL Montana

PPL Montana operates Black Eagle, Rainbow, Cochrane, Ryan, and Morony Dams and their associated reservoirs under a license issued by FERC for the Missouri-Madison Hydroelectric Project. On the south shore, PPL Montana owns land directly east of Giant Springs Road. Under a cooperative agreement, FWP manages this area, which includes two parking lots for the Rainbow, Lewis and Clark, and Crooked Falls overlooks, and the interconnecting section of the River's Edge Trail. This area appears to be part of the Park, and many people assume that it is.

City of Great Falls

East of the current park boundary and the Crooked Falls overlook is a 300-acre parcel, owned by the City of Great Falls, and currently managed by the City for open space. While not part of Giant Springs State Park, this land visually appears to be part of the Park, and many people assume that it is.

River's Edge Trail

The River's Edge Trail along the south shore of the Missouri River extends from Oddfellows Park, through Giant Springs State Park, to the Cochrane Dam crossing, approximately 5.5 miles to the east of the Park fee area. Within the planning area, the trail is paved from Black Eagle Dam to Crooked Falls. The trail is unpaved from Crooked Falls to the Cochrane Dam crossing, where it crosses the top of the dam to the north shore of the Missouri River. Recreational Trails Incorporated (RTI), the primary non-profit partner in developing the River's Edge Trail, proposes to extend the trail on

the south shore from Cochrane Dam to Ryan Dam and then to Box Elder Creek, with the cooperation of private landowners.

North Shore

The Lewis and Clark Heritage Greenway Conservation Easement (LCHG), owned by PPL Montana and managed by FWP under a conservation and trail easement, is the predominate land area on the north shore. FWP also owns land at the northeastern end of the planning area, a portion of which is managed by the USFS under a conservation easement. Lands between Black Eagle Dam and LCHG are privately owned. In the planning area, RTI and PPL Montana propose to extend the River's Edge Trail from Black Eagle Dam to Morony, where it would connect with the USFS Sulfur Springs Trail.

Black Eagle Dam to Lewis and Clark Heritage Greenway

Lands on the north shore from Black Eagle Memorial Island to the Lewis and Clark Heritage Greenway are privately owned. These lands include ARCO property that is essentially undeveloped; 40 acres developed by the Electric City Dirt Bike Riders as a competition motocross track; 20 acres of undeveloped property; and approximately 27 acres of privately owned property that currently has one residence. These properties are across the Missouri River, opposite the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center and Giant Springs State Park fee area.

Lewis and Clark Heritage Greenway

The Lewis and Clark Heritage Greenway is a 2,415 acre conservation easement, owned by PPL Montana, and managed by FWP.

The conservation easement (included in Appendix F), established in 1999, is the basis for an existing greenway management plan. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) license requires that the area be managed as a "natural area." The conservation easement prohibits outfitting, grazing, off-road vehicle use, and industrial and residential development. A cooperative management strategy between PPL Montana and FWP, included in Appendix G, sets the guidelines for recreational hunting in the area. PPL Montana retains rights for developing and operating the hydro-electric generation facilities.

With the exception of hunting as provided in the North Shore Hunter Management Plan, a dedicated trail easement, also held and managed by FWP, is the only public access guaranteed through the Lewis and Clark Heritage Greenway.

The Missouri Rivers Shooters Association and the Cascade County Conservation District have annual permits with PPL Montana to continue their longstanding operations within the LCHG.

Giant Springs State Park-North Shore

In 1999, FWP acquired several parcels totaling 430 acres east of LCHG from the Richard King Mellon Foundation. The parcels are not contiguous and include the old Morony townsite and Sulfur Springs. Water from Sulfur Springs was noted in the Lewis and Clark journals as having cured an illness suffered by Sacagawea. The Morony townsite consists of an historic four-unit apartment building and shed, the foundations of housing (once used to house dam staff), remains of a swimming pool (now filled with dirt), a central courtyard area with remnants of a water fountain, and large trees and shrubs.

USFS Conservation Easement

The USFS holds a 181-acre conservation easement on portions of Giant Springs State Park-North Shore. This conservation easement, established prior to FWP ownership of the land, provides for the identification, preservation, and protection of Sulfur Springs. Allowable activities under the terms of the easement include archaeological and historical research, historic restoration of Sulfur Springs, and construction of pedestrian trails to the Springs.

PPL Montana

PPL Montana operates Black Eagle, Rainbow, Cochrane, Ryan, and Morony Dams and their associated reservoirs. On the north shore, PPL Montana owns land around Black Eagle Dam, including Black Eagle Memorial Island. PPL Montana also owns the areas proposed for the Rainbow Reservoir Boat Launch, Rainbow Road Trailhead, Ryan Dam Trailhead, and the boat launch area downstream of Morony dam, which is included in a donut-shaped PPL Montana-owned parcel that surrounds the FWP-owned Morony townsite.

BLM

One tract of federal property managed by the BLM is bordered on the east and west by lands owned by FWP and managed for Giant Springs-North Shore. A second irregular "L" shaped parcel managed by BLM is adjacent to the northwest corner of the FWP-owned property that includes Sulfur Springs.

Northeast of Sulfur Springs

A private parcel north of the FWP deeded land at Sulfur Springs is used currently as a recreational campsite and accessed by a two-track road across Giant Springs State Park-North Shore deeded land.

River's Edge Trail

RTI and PPL Montana propose to extend the River's Edge Trail from Black Eagle Dam to the Morony townsite, where it would connect with the USFS trail to Sulfur Springs. Across LCHG, the dedicated trail easement follows the old service road between Rainbow and Ryan Dams and provides for a new primitive trail between Ryan and Morony Dams.

Multi-Agency Coordination

The landowners and managers in the area include Giant Springs State Park, the City of Great Falls, Cascade County, BLM, USFS, State Fish Hatchery, FWP, PPL Montana, and RTI. These organizations have been working with each other for years. They coordinate through formal written agreements and informal communication. Written agreements and other management documents are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Coordination among Various Entities in the Planning Area

Participating Entities	Formal Coordinating Mechanism
FWP, RTI, City of Great Falls	Memorandum of Understanding: River's Edge Trail Crossing of Giant Springs State Park (1993)
FWP, PPL Montana	PPL Montana/MFWP: North Shore Conservation Easement; North Shore Hunter Management Plan (updated annually); Cooperative Management Agreement
FWP, PPL Montana, USFS, BLM, Bureau of Reclamation, Cascade County (and five other counties in Montana)	Missouri-Madison Comprehensive Recreation Management Plan: Amended and Restated Memorandum of Understanding (1999)
USFS, FWP	Reciprocal Collection of Funds Agreement; FWP owns land including and surrounding Sulfur Springs that is managed under a conservation easement held by the USFS..

Source: Giant Springs State Park Manager, 2001

Related Planning Efforts

A number of plans have been or are being developed for the planning area over the past decade. They include the following:

- Comprehensive Park and Recreation Master Plan (City of Great Falls, 1995)
- Missouri River Corridor Master Plan (City-County Planning Board, current)
- Analysis for the Sulfur Springs Trail (USFS—current, will follow National Environmental Policy Act guidelines. Anticipated completion February 2003.)
- Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Relicensing Process (license issued in September 2000 to PPL Montana) and Missouri-Madison Comprehensive Recreation Management Plan
- River's Edge Trail Interpretive Master Plan
- Cascade County Conservation District
- Great Falls Bikeway Facilities Plan (City-County Planning Department 1996)
- Transportation Plan (City-County Planning Board, current)

More information on these plans is included in Appendix C.

Mission Statements and Management Goals for Giant Springs State Park

The mission statement describes in broad terms the purpose of Giant Springs State Park, with all its diversity and various components. The mission statement serves to provide direction for identifying issues, management goals, and objectives. The Park mission should relate directly to the mission statements of both the Parks Division and FWP as a whole.

FWP's mission statement is as follows:

> *Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, through its employees and citizen commission, provides for the stewardship of the fish, wildlife, parks and recreational resources of Montana, while contributing to the quality of life for present and future generations.*

The Parks Division mission statement, developed through the 1998 State Parks 2020 Vision process, is:

> *The mission of the Montana State Park system is to preserve, enhance and interpret a diverse representation of Montana's most outstanding natural, cultural/historic, and recreational resources, for the personal, social, and economic benefit of present and future generations.*

The Giant Springs State Park mission statement, developed in 2000 to capture ideas raised in public scoping and from the Management Plan Work Group, is:

> *Giant Springs State Park protects and enhances the recreational, cultural, and natural resources of the area near Giant Springs, manages recreational use consistent with the Park resources, and through the Park's interpretive and educational programs provides visitors opportunities to learn about the Park's unique historic and natural resources. Giant Springs State Park staff work together with local partners to increase and maintain a strong community involvement.*

Giant Springs State Park management goals are as follows:

- *To conserve the Park's unique cultural and natural resources while maintaining the desired open space character of the Park.*
- *To provide a high quality educational experience for park visitors, which highlights the Park's natural and cultural resources.*
- *To provide a wide range of quality recreational experiences.*
- *Work with the local and state governments to enhance the Park's significance as a destination tourist attraction.*

Giant Springs State Park Significance Statements

Significance statements help define the Park mission by describing the importance and unique resources of the Park. The significance statements essentially set the stage for the identification of the management issues as they relate to these assets, and provide a focus for future interpretation of the Park's resources.

Giant Springs State Park provides:

- *One of the largest freshwater springs in the United States, with a daily discharge of between 135,000,000 and 192,000,000 gallons per day (depending on the estimation methods)*
- *Nationally significant historic sites, including Giant Springs and Sulfur Springs*
- *One of the first sites chosen for industrial development by the early developers of the Great Falls area*
- *An officially recognized site on the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail*
- *Sites which have been and continue to be used by many native peoples*
- *A designated watchable wildlife site, and selected hunting and fishing opportunities*
- *The Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center*
- *The Giant Springs State Fish Hatchery*

- *Portions of the award-winning River's Edge Trail and part of the city's open space and urban trail system*
- *Native prairies that still thrive despite industrial, agricultural, and recreational developments*
- *Approximately 14.5 miles of Missouri River frontage*
- *A core of destination tourism opportunities for the Great Falls area when combined with the C.M. Russell Museum of Art, the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, and the Ulm Pishkun State Park*
- *Lewis and Clark Heritage Greenway Conservation and Trail Easement*
- *Old Morony Townsite*
- *Access to historic Sulfur Spring, listed as part of the Great Falls Portage National Historic Landmark Site*
- *Scenic overlooks and interpretation of Black Eagle and Rainbow Falls and the two dams constructed on top them and their associated powerhouses*
- *Scenic overlook of Crooked Falls (Horseshoe Falls), the only undammed falls left on the Missouri River*
- *Whitewater floating just downstream of Black Eagle Memorial Island and other recreational floating between Black Eagle and Rainbow Dams*
- *Wildlife habitat that supports more than 175 species of birds, 25 species of mammals, 5 species of reptiles, and 3 species of amphibians*

Ten Year Vision for Giant Springs State Park

What do we want Giant Springs State Park to look like in ten years, and what would we like visitors to experience? This question was examined by the Management Plan Work Group, and answered in broad terms by the following statements, summarizing Work Group and public scoping comments.

In ten years, Giant Springs will provide for a greater diversity of visitor experiences—from developed to semi-primitive--commensurate with the variety of resources available within a site that sits on the interface between urban and rural landscapes.

In ten years Giant Springs will provide a higher quality and wider range of recreational opportunities than it does now, including but not limited to the following: walking and biking trails; fishing; limited hunting; wildlife watching; excellent special events and educational programming; interpretation; sightseeing; picnicking; and group use. The Park will contain key segments of the Great Falls trail system, with a range of non-motorized opportunities for different interests and abilities.

The less developed portions of the Park on both sides of the Missouri River will provide a vital, unbroken open space corridor, with intact natural systems that allow visitors to

experience the native prairies and vistas the area offered prior to European settlement. The more primitive zones of the Park will be rehabilitated where they have been adversely affected by recreational activities, agriculture, grazing, weed invasion, and earlier industrial development. Park management practices will be designed to conserve the rich array of natural, cultural, and recreational resources found at Giant Springs. The more developed portions of the Park on the South Shore will continue to serve the visitor needs they have in the past, albeit in a more coordinated and cohesive fashion.

FWP will continue to promote a positive working relationship with various groups and individuals interested in the Park. This includes local businesses and landowners, native peoples, tribal governments, school and conservation districts, service organizations, state and federal agencies, city and county governments, and interested individuals. The Park will be a model of outstanding collaboration and cooperation between various partners. In spite of the various management partners involved in and around Giant Springs, visitors will be presented with a "seamless" experience while traversing the various units of the Park, so that differences in agency involvement are unnoticed.

Because of the increased array of opportunities and landscapes, Giant Springs will be a more important destination for Great Falls residents, Montanans, and non-residents, encouraging visitors to stay longer at the Park as well as visit other related sites in the area.

II. GIANT SPRINGS STATE PARK: CONTEXT, ANALYSIS, AND HISTORY

Overview of Giant Springs State Park History

In June 1805, the Lewis and Clark expedition members were the first non-natives to record the location of the namesake springs in Giant Springs State Park. The site was known to subsequent settlers and in 1895, Paris Gibson, founder of Great Falls, led efforts for a wooden walkway to view the Springs. In 1922, Montana Power Company donated land near the Springs for the fish hatchery. In 1923, Montana Power Company deeded land around the Springs to the City of Great Falls, and it remained a city park until 1972, when it was designated a state park. Several acquisitions have enlarged the area managed for Giant Springs State Park since 1972. In the late 1970s, nearly 70 acres were added to the Park. In 1988, the Park grew by 100 acres of riverfront acres upstream from Giant Springs, and 30 acres downstream. By 1998 the Park had grown to 450 acres. In 1987 the FWP Regional Headquarters building was constructed in the Park. In 1998, the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center, managed by the USFS, was opened to the public. In 1999, Montana Power Company donated 2,415 acres in conservation easement on the north shore of the Missouri River to the Park. MPC and the Conservation Fund also donated to the Park 435 acres of land at the old Morony townsite and Sulfur Springs on the North Shore. In 2002, 27.29 acres of FWP property within Giant Springs State Park was purchased by the USFS for the Interpretive Center.

A more detailed chronological history is included in Appendix J.

Overview of Park Resources and Recreation Opportunities

Giant Springs State Park offers a variety of recreational opportunities. The park provides picnicking, hiking, biking, hunting, fishing, a playground, nature appreciation, group use activities, access to the popular Giant Springs Fish Hatchery, and observation of the dams, waterfalls, wildlife. Giant Springs has many cultural resources on both the north and south shores, including the historic Giant Springs on the south shore, Sulfur Springs, and Morony townsite on the north shore.

A portion of Giant Springs State Park is in city limits and much of the Park, especially on the south shore, is within the city's urban fringe. This provides park managers with the opportunity to provide an important interface between the urban and rural environment. The Giant Springs, LCHG and Morony townsite complex provides a full range of non-motorized recreational opportunities. The complex provides indoor year-round

opportunities at the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center and the FWP Region 4 Headquarters. A range of hiking and biking opportunities is available on the north and south shores. This diversity of experiences, so close to a major metropolitan area, is unique in the Montana State Park System, and is what makes Giant Springs State Park a special place.

Area Land Use and Economic Trends

Great Falls covers an area of 21.57 square miles, with a population of approximately 56,400 residents. The city is slowly growing at a population growth rate of between 0.5 and 1.0 percent annually.

Cascade County and City of Great Falls have many economic contributors, including agriculture, medical, industry, and commerce. A relatively new industry is heritage tourism centered on the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, the CM Russell Museum, High Plains Heritage Center, and both Ulm Pishkun and Giant Springs State Parks. This economy represents a change from 30 years ago when large-scale industrial development and hydro-electrical generation played a more dominant role. While agriculture is still the largest industry, it has been heavily impacted by low prices and drought.

Malmstrom Air Force Base (AFB) continues to be a driving economic force in Great Falls. Periodic personnel and physical changes occur at Malmstrom AFB that either add or subtract from the Great Falls economy as the base expands or contracts. Malmstrom AFB is located less than one mile from Giant Springs State Park.

Park Visitation

Giant Springs State Park came into being in 1972. Since that time Giant Springs has attracted millions of visitors to the Great Falls Area. Formal visitation studies began in 1989 with a survey conducted through the University of Montana (McCool, et al., 1989). In this survey, visitation was established at just over 250,000 visits annually. Managers now believe this figure to be inflated, based on today's visitor use counts and car count data.

Since 1996, car counts and visitor tallies have been used to estimate actual use of Giant Springs. Table 2 displays visitation statistics for the period 1996-2001.

Visitation at Giant Springs has fluctuated since reliable visitation collection methods were established in 1996, ranging from a high of 125,616 in 1997 to a low of 85,058 in 2000. Most of the overall decline has been in the non-resident category. Additional study is necessary before any firm conclusions can be made about the decline in non-resident visitors. It is possible that the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center has diverted non-resident visitors who might have otherwise visited Giant Springs State Park.

Table 2: Giant Springs State Park Visitation, 1996-2001					
Year	Total Vehicles	Walk-in/Bikes	Total Visits	Est.% Residents	Est. % Non-Residents
1996	28,547	9,386	103,758	59%	41%
1997	36,589	11,414	125,616	66%	34%
1998	32,974	9,658	106,257	68%	32%
1999	27,409	8,290	91,229	69%	31%
2000	26,262	7,960	85,058	71%	29%
2001	38,212	9,589	107,049	69%	31%
6 Year Ave	**31,666**	**9,383**	**103,161**	**67%**	**33%**

Source: Giant Springs State Park Manager, 2002

Road counts have been made on Giant Springs Road at two locations over the last 26 years. Between 1991 and 1999, the count ranged from 419 to 517 at the Rainbow Dam overlook area, and between 800 and 1,593 at the junction of Giant Springs Road and River Drive. The table of daily-adjusted traffic counts is in Appendix I.

Hours and Season of Operation

Giant Springs currently operates from 8:00 a.m. to dark and is open only for day use activities, although special consideration is given to those seeking an after dark experience like star gazing functions, etc., with prior arrangement.

Currently Giant Springs State Park is open year round with no closed days. Recreational use of Giant Springs is primarily regulated by weather with visitation varying from month-to-month with few discernible patterns. July is the most visited month of the year.

Fee Collections

There is a general relationship between park revenues and actual park visits but this relationship can be somewhat tenuous. Generally, revenues are higher in years with high visitation, but this is not always the case. Table 3 displays total park revenues between 1993 and 2000 at Giant Springs State Park.

The lowest fee collections at Giant Springs occurred during the first few years the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center was open, beginning with its inaugural opening in May 1998. It may be that some visitors, especially non-resident visitors, choose to visit the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center rather than Giant Springs State Park, or they have run out of time or energy after their visit to the Center. Likewise some visitors who have the Interpretive Center their destination visit the Park as part of their travels. Further

study is needed to determine the extent to which the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center is affecting Park visitation.

Table 3: Giant Springs State Park Fee Revenue, 1993-2001	
1993	$39,717.97
1994	$43,774.12
1995	$45,052.16
1996	$40,364.82
1997	$37,660.84
1998	$33,777.18
1999	$35,434.94
2000	$34,191.11
2001	$39,118.04
Ave.Annual Park Income=$38,788	

Note: Entrance fee changed from $3 per car to $1 per person in December, 1999.
Source: Giant Springs State Park Manager, 2001

Park Operations and Budgets

Giant Springs State Park has several funding sources including bed tax, coal severance tax interest, state park earned revenue, and funds from PPL Montana for FWP management of PPL Montana properties. The Giant Springs State Park budget is separate from the budget for the Fish Hatchery and Region 4 Headquarters. The total budget in 1999 for Giant Springs State Park was $98,230. The majority of park funds are dedicated to personnel, and the remainder primarily for maintenance. Giant Springs State Park had only $5,000 in general operations funding in 1999.

Total Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff for Giant Springs was 2.61 FTE, approximately one full time employee for every 37,733 visitors. Giant Springs State Park was allocated 1.01 permanent full-time equivalent (FTE) and 1.24 seasonal FTE from state park funding sources. In addition, FWP received funding for .36 seasonal FTE from PPL Montana for operating and maintaining the Rainbow, Lewis and Clark, and Crooked Falls Overlooks.

Other maintenance FTE includes the time of the maintenance supervisor, funded by the bed tax. This is a flexible FTE, providing for park maintenance requirements region-wide, including Giant Springs as needed.

III. GIANT SPRINGS STATE PARK AREA MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

This section describes the management direction for the planning area. For each topic, information is provided on the relevant issues, and the goals and strategies to address the issues. After each strategy statement is a listing of the entities that will take a role in implementing the strategy. In this listing, "FWP" includes Giant Springs State Park, Region 4 Headquarters, and Giant Springs Fish Hatchery as appropriate.

Infrastructure and Recreational Development

This section addresses roads, parking, trails, Giant Springs State Park group use facilities, campgrounds, development at Morony townsite, and accessibility issues.[1]

Issue: South Shore Roads and Parking

Giant Springs Road is both a city and county maintained road. It is the primary road issue on the south shore. East of the PPL Montana lands managed by FWP, there are no public access roads or parking lots in the planning area. To the west, River Drive, a state owned and maintained road, runs along the south boundary of Giant Springs State Park.

Giant Springs Road divides Giant Springs State Park in half and links 11 existing parking lots within the Park boundaries. Giant Springs Road is both a city and county through-road, and there is no way for the Park to limit access. Visitors can access the Park through any number of parking lots and via the River's Edge Trail. The only staffed kiosk to collect fees is located at the entrance to the parking lot closest to the Springs. There are also five "self-pay" stations—at Heritage main entrance, River's Edge Trail entrance to Heritage, Horseshoe Parking Lot, West Parking Lot, and Lewis and Clark Natural History Walk (a trail between the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center and Giant Springs).

In 1998 a meeting was held to discuss the possibility of abandonment of Giant Springs Road to the state park system. The public, USFS, and several Cascade County Commissioners expressed their dissatisfaction with the idea. The City of Great Falls, Cascade County, and the USFS recognize the difficulties Giant Springs Road presents to FWP.

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1 Although state and federal government are generally exempt from county and municipal land use regulations, all private and public entities are subject to floodplain regulations and requirements and may need to consider local zoning, subdivision, or other local regulations. Even with exemption from local land regulations, a public hearing may be required. State and federal land managers proposing new construction or activities that may require permits and/or public hearings should contact city and county land use regulators.

In 2001, work was begun to close the county road that serves the East Base of Malmstrom Air Force Base. This road is part of the 57th Street-Giant Springs Road connection, and while it will result in temporary closure in the eastern portion of the Giant Springs Road through the Park, federal funding has been approved to construct a parallel road route that will provide continued access through the Park.

Managing access is important for park administration, cost of operations, and resource and visitor protection. Access to the fee area from four parking lots and from River's Edge Trail increases park operation costs because of the additional gates, signs, and fee collection structures necessary to service each park entrance. The Giant Springs Road makes both visitor and resource protection difficult as vandalism and other undesirable behaviors are more difficult to control.

Documenting the frequency and type of problem activities related to Giant Springs Road has not been well-documented in the past, in part because of the difficulty of coordinating records among city, county, and FWP. By collecting data, park managers could be able to track and evaluate the extent and type of problem, more effectively estimate costs to visitors and/or to resources, and assess the need for more enforcement or other management actions. (See discussion of vandalism under "Issue: Law Enforcement.")

Goal 1: Utilize roads and parking areas as a tool to maintain adequate site control, while meeting park and community access needs. (FWP, City of Great Falls, Cascade County, RTI)

Strategy 1a: Continue to work with RTI, USFS, the city, and county to provide adequate parking in appropriate places within the Park boundaries, without over-development. (FWP, RTI, USFS, City of Great Falls, Cascade County)

Strategy 1b: Work with Cascade County to develop the Colter Falls pull-out on Giant Springs Road near the railroad trestle to improve the aesthetics and safety of that site. (FWP, Cascade County)

Strategy 1c: Remove West and Horseshoe parking lots, two of the four parking lots within the fee area. (FWP)

Strategy 1d: Monitor volume, time, and type (e.g., commuter, park-use, scenic drive, other) of traffic on Giant Springs Road to better understand activity and transportation patterns.

Strategy 1e: Monitor speed, accidents, and other violations on Giant Springs Road, and conduct visitor surveys to identify if traffic through the park is compromising safety of visitors or the recreational experience.

Goal 2: Continue use of Giant Springs Road for the basic purpose of scenic and recreational use.

Strategy 2a: Work with involved parties to identify options when issues arise that jeopardize scenic and recreational use of Giant Springs Road. (FWP, PPL Montana, USFS, RTI, City of Great Falls, Cascade County)

Strategy 2b: Work to balance the public's desire to use Giant Springs Road as they have historically and FWP's need to manage access as part of an overall recreation management program, recognizing local government authority and responsibility for the road. (FWP)

Issue: North Shore Roads

Road issues for the north shore include width and condition of county roads. In addition, road travel between the south shore and north shore can take 20 to 30 minutes or more and can be confusing to out-of-town travelers or others unfamiliar with access roads to north shore sites. To reach the Morony townsite and proposed Sulfur Springs Trailhead, visitors must travel on a variety of city and county roads, a trip that can take more than thirty minutes from the south shore fee area of Giant Springs State Park or the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center. With the upcoming Lewis and Clark bicentennial, the number of persons wanting to see Sulfur Springs is expected to increase significantly.

Parking is not currently a major issue on the north shore. FWP, PPL Montana, and RTI are working to plan and develop parking at Black Eagle Memorial Island, and proposed Rainbow, Ryan, and Sulfur Springs trailheads. Public access and parking are currently available at the Rainbow Boat Launch.

Access to the north shore planning area from the south shore is via River Drive west to the 15th Street Bridge and north across the river on Highway 87 (15th Street NE). Access to Black Eagle Dam is via North River Road. Access to Rainbow Dam and Rainbow Trailhead is via Highway 87 to 25th Avenue NE, to Wire Mill Road, to Rainbow Dam Road. Access to Morony Dam, Morony old town site, and Sulfur Springs Trailhead is via Highway 87 to Morony Dam Road. Access to Ryan Dam Road is also via Morony Dam Road.

The Morony Dam Road is a county road to the end of the pavement at Morony townsite. Beyond that point, PPL Montana owns and maintains the road. The Morony Dam Road from Highway 87 to Morony town site is 11.75 miles of paved road, with an average width of 21 feet, most of which has little or no shoulder. There is some question as to whether the road is adequate for large RV traffic. The road is now and has historically been used for heavy agricultural equipment. It is somewhat rough and narrow, with some

90 degree angle turns, and consequently drivers must use caution and watch speeds. The county made considerable improvements to the pavement on the Morony Road in 2001.

Goal 3: Facilitate use of north shore for persons unfamiliar with existing access road system, and work to reduce visitor-related accidents on north shore access roads. (FWP, USFS, RTI, City of Great Falls, Cascade County)

Strategy 3a: Prepare a brochure and map for visitors describing north shore facilities, clearly indicating driving routes, road conditions, road speeds, and estimated drive time from the south shore to north shore sites. (FWP, USFS, RTI)

Strategy 3b: Work with City of Great Falls, Cascade County, and other transportation departments as necessary (such as Montana Department of Transportation) to post signs marking the way to north shore facilities. Sign development should be coordinated with the design guidelines discussed under the goals for Interpretation and Public Education/Information. (FWP, PPL Montana, USFS, RTI, City of Great Falls, Cascade County)

Strategy 3c: Work with Cascade County to monitor traffic counts and accidents on roads used to access north shore facilities. Identify problem areas and work toward reducing problems. (FWP, Cascade County)

Issue: Trails

Trail issues, for the purpose of this document, are primarily issues related to the safety and environmental impact of "user-developed" trails, the unplanned trails that are created as people depart established trails and take off cross-country. "User-developed" trails can be an issue anywhere, but they are especially prolific as a means to access the river or vista points. In some cases, such trails lead to or pass by dangerous precipices or other safety hazards. Cumulatively, "user-developed" trails create considerable environmental impact as plants are destroyed and bare earth and rock are exposed.

The River's Edge Trail is the primary planned trail, and because it is still not fully developed within the planning area, its completion is another issue. The Sulfur Springs Trail (from the Sulfur Springs Trailhead to Sulfur Springs) will be developed by the USFS under their management of the conservation easement on the property.

For purposes of this planning document, trail issues are focused on only those lands owned or managed by FWP, USFS, BLM, PPL Montana, and the City of Great Falls.

The River's Edge Trail runs through the planning area in various stages of conceptualization, development, and completion. The alignment of the trail through the

planning area is described in the River's Edge Trail Interpretive Master Plan and Park and Recreation Plan and summarized in the River's Edge Trail, Summer 2002 insert to the *Great Falls Tribune*.

Goal 4: Provide a reasonable range of trail opportunities, from primitive to highly developed, for bicyclists and pedestrians, with sensitivity to environmental impacts. (FWP, PPL Montana, RTI, USFS)

Strategy 4a: Fully implement the River's Edge Trail, North Shore Trail, and the River's Edge Trail Interpretive Master Plan. (RTI—lead organization. City of Great Falls, FWP, Cascade County, PPL Montana coordinating and contributing as necessary for compliance with FERC license conditions)

Strategy 4b: On the south shore, improve parking and orientation areas on the west end of Giant Springs State Park to meet the needs of trail users and other park visitors. (FWP, RTI, City of Great Falls, Cascade County)

Strategy 4c: Inventory and annually monitor trails and develop appropriate mechanisms to limit environmental damage and public safety hazards. (FWP, PPL Montana, USFS, BLM, City of Great Falls, RTI--each organization for lands it owns or manages—in coordination with RTI, as appropriate)

Issue: Trailheads on the North Shore

Currently there are no developed trailheads on the north shore, but three trailheads are scheduled for development under the Missouri-Madison Comprehensive Recreation Management Plan. The Missouri-Madison Comprehensive Recreation Management Plan was completed as part of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) relicensing process for hydroelectric operations.

Under the FERC license, PPL Montana, in cooperation with FWP and RTI, is responsible for constructing the north shore trail and the Rainbow and Ryan trailheads that will serve the trail. PPL Montana also is responsible for making a contribution toward completion of the Sulfur Springs trailhead. PPL Montana has sufficient funding dedicated under the Recreation Management Plan to develop these trailheads.

On the north shore, from the LCHG to the eastern boundaries of the planning area, there are currently no permanent public restroom facilities. With anticipated increased use of the area once trails are developed, such facilities will become necessary. Currently there is no trail or other visitor information on the north shore in this area. Trailheads provide important opportunities to provide such information.

Although there is some potential for an information or visitor center and public restroom at the Morony apartment building, within a short walking distance from the proposed Sulfur Springs trailhead, it is anticipated that these facilities are likely to be seasonal for many years to come.

PPL Montana and FWP anticipate extending their existing cooperative agreement, whereby FWP manages PPL Montana lands for public access, including the Rainbow and Ryan trailheads and the FWP Sulfur Springs trailhead. Long-term maintenance of the trailheads is a potential issue. If FWP continues to operate and provide routine maintenance for these sites, ensuring that they do not become a drain on the public's FWP resources is important. PPL Montana has set aside $55,000 annually, in 1992 dollars, that will be adjusted for inflation, to cover routine maintenance under the Missouri-Madison Comprehensive Recreation Management Plan. This set-aside amount is intended for a number of sites on both the north and south shores, not just the three trailheads on the north shore. Long-term replacement or major repairs of trailhead facilities cannot be covered with the annual stipend from PPL Montana, but such revenues could be available from the Missouri River Madison Revolving Trust Fund, available after 2005.

Coordinating trailheads with proposed trails could be another potential issue. RTI, PPL Montana, FWP, and USFS have a history of working together to address common or related projects, such as trails and trailheads.

Goal 5: Phase development of trailheads on the north shore to adequately meet user demand, provide visitor information, and avoid "overbuilding" facilities. (FWP, PPL Montana, RTI, USFS, BLM)

Strategy 5a: Develop Rainbow and Ryan trailheads with level graveled parking areas, sealed vault toilets, and information kiosks. (PPL Montana, FWP, RTI)

Strategy 5b: Develop the Sulfur Springs trailhead with vault latrine, level graveled parking area, and information kiosk. (PPL Montana, FWP, RTI, USFS, BLM)

Strategy 5c: Monitor visitor use and needs at trailheads to determine if additional facilities, upgrades, replacement or major repair are needed. (PPL Montana, FWP, RTI, USFS, BLM)

Issue: Universal Accessibility

Although there are a number of existing facilities that meet ADA standards, there are some areas that could be improved and some areas where ADA facilities could be provided in the future where none exist currently.

The south shore unit of the Park is the most visited portion of the Park and includes a number of facilities designed to meet standards for persons with disabilities. The Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center indoor facilities and all associated trails meet ADA requirements, as does the River's Edge Trail within the Park. Giant Springs State Park maintains a variety of ADA accessible facilities including Heritage group use shelter, Lewis and Clark Natural History Walk, restrooms, and overlooks for Lewis and Clark, Rainbow, and Crooked Falls.

Although much of the Park on the south shore is accessible, the system could be improved to provide better access to more areas. There are several older main walkways that exceed ADA slope standards and places where the concrete has been buckled by tree roots and frost action to make passage difficult for wheelchairs. Two of three group use areas are not wheelchair accessible.

The north shore is intended to be a more primitive area than the Giant Springs State Park developed area on the south shore. There are currently no facilities designed to meet ADA standards on the north shore, but there is some potential to provide ADA accessible features and retain the more generally primitive character of the north shore. The Morony townsite area, for example, has several spots that could provide accessible overlooks of the Missouri River and the route that Lewis and Clark took to portage around the falls. There is also potential for a wheelchair accessible trail from Ryan Trailhead to a historic sandstone building known as the "powder shack" or "dynamite shed." The trail to this area would also provide good views of river sandstone outcrops. New development on the north shore needs to be examined for its potential to provide access for those with disabilities, balanced with considerations for impacts to the environment.

Goal 6: Provide a wide range of accessible activities. (FWP, PPL Montana, USFS, RTI)

Strategy 6a: Improve the entrance to the Giant Springs area with a plaza allowing Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility to the playground, springs area, and sidewalk system. (FWP)

Strategy 6b: Improve the sidewalk system in the developed area at Giant Springs to include access to all facilities including restrooms, group use areas, and both of the trails systems (both the upper River's Edge Trail and the lower Lewis and Clark Natural History Walk). (FWP)

Strategy 6c: If the Morony apartment building is developed as a visitor center, provide ADA access to it. (FWP)

Strategy 6d: Investigate the potential for ADA accessibility on future developments on north shore trailhead areas, so that persons with ADA limitations can have similar experiences to those not physically challenged. (FWP, PPL Montana, USFS, RTI)

Issue: Group Use

The existing group day use facilities at Giant Springs State Park do not provide adequate shelter for shade or inclement weather. Group day use has been slowly declining over the past decade. In 1993, 39 different groups used the site; in 1996 only 26 groups used it. No research has been conducted to determine why group use has declined. Giant Springs State Park charges $60 to reserve space for groups under 30 persons. The fee increases with the number of persons in the group, ranging from $90 for groups from 30 to 50 persons, to $250 for groups up to 200 persons, and for each additional 100 persons, there is an additional $100 charge. Groups that pay the group fee are not also required to pay the regular fee entrance fee of $1 per person.

Goal 7: Improve group use facilities in the Park area to entice increased group use. (FWP)

Strategy 7a: Market existing and future group facilities to maximize use. (Chamber, FWP)

Goal 8: Create better use for the Heritage Unit of Giant Springs State Park to entice more visitors to this part of the Park (FWP)

Strategy 8a: Develop a long-term master site plan for the Heritage Unit, including potential for a mix of campground and group day use facilities, using detailed campground analysis (see "Issue: Campgrounds" below). (FWP)

Issue: Campgrounds

There are no campgrounds in the planning area. Anecdotal information suggests that campers who use public campgrounds prefer sites with recreational resources nearby, such as rivers, lakes, and streams. Currently the only campground sites within a 30 minute drive of Great Falls that have water resources are FWP fishing access sites along the Missouri River. Anecdotal information from the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center and Giant Springs indicate that many visitors would like to camp near Giant Springs. Demand is likely to grow in the next few years with the Lewis and Clark bicentennial commemoration. There is potential to develop campgrounds within the planning area.

A survey of public and private campgrounds was conducted in Fall 2001 for purposes of this planning document, to get a general indication of potential demand for additional camping in the Great Falls area. Based on this initial survey, which consisted of telephone calls to public and private campground operators and managers, there appears to be demand for additional campground facilities in the Great Falls area. During the summer season, campers are turned away at times from the four private campgrounds in the Great Falls area (a combined total of 377 campsites) because they are fully occupied. There are 15 public campgrounds (including Fishing Access Sites with camping options)

within an approximate 1.5 to 2 hour driving radius of Great Falls. These public campgrounds, with a total of 306 campsites, are typically full on holidays and on many weekends during the summer season.

The land around the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, which is managed by the USFS, is not adequate for camping. FWP is interested in providing a variety of recreational experiences for visitors throughout the state park system, but is cautious about new developments that require considerable capital investment, such as campgrounds, because of extremely limited statewide funding. For the 2002-2003 biennium, the total statewide capital projects budget for state parks is estimated at $300,000 per year. FWP would need to analyze projected demand and revenues as well as costs of development, operations, and maintenance on any proposed campground before making a decision to build.

The initial survey conducted in Fall 2001 does not provide enough information to determine if a campground were to be built, what type of campground it should be. The survey did not assess potential impact of a new campground on other lodging, such as hotels and motels, in the Great Falls area. More analysis would need to be conducted to determine demand for type of camping, ranging from rustic (with no or few amenities) to developed camping facilities.

The Management Plan Work Group initially identified six potential alternative campground locations in the planning area.

1. **West Giant Springs**. Across Giant Springs Road from the main entrance sign.
2. **Old Smelter**. Adjacent to the existing Heritage unit of the Park.
3. **Tunnel Coulee**. Located by the tunnel where River's Edge Trail passes under the railroad.
4. **Heritage**. Developed day use area of Heritage unit.
5. **Horse Pasture**. On the north shore, west of the Morony townsite on the Morony Dam Road, previously used as a horse pasture.
6. **Morony Town site**. On the north shore.

After an initial analysis, the Management Plan Work Group eliminated the West Giant Springs, Old Smelter, and Tunnel Coulee sites from further detailed consideration because of effects to viewsheds, open space, and safety concerns.

The Management Plan Work Group examined three sites in detail--Heritage site on the south shore, and Horse Pasture and Morony Townsite on the north shore. The Work Group considered initial cost estimates developed by the FWP Landscape Architect, opportunities and challenges for long-term maintenance, and information from the survey of privately owned campgrounds that indicated that half of the campers in the Great Falls area desire to be close to town amenities, such as restaurants. Cost estimates were based on campgrounds with 20 sites and do not include costs associated with local subdivision review, which would be required if the campground is proposed to be developed by FWP (or by any private landowner).

In general, the north shore sites pose the greatest challenge for operations and maintenance. Water supply is potentially the biggest issue because all water must be hauled to the site. Because of water supply limitations, restrooms with running water would be impractical. In addition, these campground sites are approximately 20 to 30 minutes from the main visitor attractions and park staff headquarters on the south shore and from fire, ambulance, and law enforcement services in Great Falls.

1. **Heritage.** This approximate 15 acre area presently consists of a large picnic/day use area, a group use area, and a special event area. Heritage is irrigated, has paved roads and parking facilities and has several picnic shelters with tables. Many trees have been planted and are beginning to provide substantial shade. A loop road serves most of the potential campground areas with a smaller loop around the group use area. Heritage is currently underutilized by the public.

   Estimated cost: $213,000 (with vault latrines only)--$333,000 (includes restrooms with running water)

2. **Horse Pasture.** This site on the north shore, is west of the Morony townsite, south of the Morony Dam Road, and north of the Missouri River. It is an area recovering from heavy horse grazing. The site is over 40 acres, relatively level and treeless.

   Estimated cost: $178,000 (with vault latrines only)

3. **Morony Townsite.** The six acre town site on the north shore has a perimeter fence, an access and loop road, a common area within the loop road, and several defined lots. Vegetation is primarily non-native. Electricity and phone service is on site.

   Estimated cost: $158,000 (with vault latrines only)

The Management Plan Work Group identified the following principles to guide future campground development.

- More detailed analysis of demand is needed to determine the type of campground needed and to assess how a public campground would fit a market niche that will complement private sector lodging in the Great Falls area.

- Costs of development, operations, and maintenance must be carefully considered with options for sources of development revenues (including sources outside of FWP) and long-term revenues from campground operations in determining locations and type of campground.

- Proximity to public safety resources and public infrastructure (e.g., well-maintained roads, River's Edge Trail, restaurants, and other facilities) is important.

Based on information to date, the Management Plan Work Group identified the Heritage Unit as the preferred campground location. It provides easy access to well-established visitor destinations, including Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, Giant Springs, River's Edge Trail, the Missouri River, and amenities of Great Falls, on-site water supply, existing loop roads, and established vegetation. Initial build-out would be more costly than the other alternatives, but it appears to be the least costly for long-term operations and maintenance costs of the three sites considered because of proximity to existing staffed operations, visitor destinations, and water supply. It would build on existing infrastructure at a location that is currently underused.

Goal 9: Work to develop a public campground in the planning area, assuming adequate demand and compatibility with local private sector lodging, focusing on Heritage Unit as the primary preferred location, and Morony townsite as a secondary location. (FWP, lead)

Strategy 9a: Refine demand analysis to determine type of public campground desired by visitors that complements local private sector lodging. (FWP, Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce)

Strategy 9b: Identify capital development resources and operations and maintenance costs and revenues prior to site development. (FWP, lead)

Issue: Morony Operator Camp Development

FWP acquired the six acre tract that includes the Morony Operator Camp as part of the property deeded to FWP from the Montana Power Company (MPC) in October 1999. The Morony Operator Camp was established in 1932 to provide housing for operators of the Morony Dam. MPC decided to close the Operator Camp in the 1990s, primarily because of the cost of providing treated water to the site. There is no well. Water wells in this vicinity are extremely deep and expensive to drill. MPC provided water from a nearby spring, but costs of treating the water to meet federal standards became prohibitively expensive. By the late 1990s, MPC had negotiated with all homeowners and had moved and/or razed all residential structures from the townsite with the exception of the four-unit apartment building, owned by MPC.

Today the townsite consists of the four-unit apartment building, one shed, and a garage, foundations of the old residences, remnants of a swimming pool (now filled with dirt), and a central courtyard area with remnants of a water fountain. Large, established trees and other shrubs remain on site, requiring some water and maintenance.

Potentially eligible for listing with the National Register of Historic Places, the apartment building currently poses several unique opportunities and challenges. There has been no inventory or evaluation of the Operator Camp for its historic significance or eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places.

Currently, the building is not in use. Since FWP acquired the apartment in 1999, it has been the target of repeated vandalism. Now boarded, it is still vandalized from time to time, resulting in damage to the structure and additional costs. The area is remote and without resident staff.

Persons attending a public scoping meeting in September 2000 indicated preference for use of the building as a combination interpretive center, volunteer residence, and concession.

The apartment building is adjacent to the proposed trailhead to Sulfur Springs. With the upcoming bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark expedition, anticipated use of the trail is expected to increase.

The building is a stately structure with a wide shaded porch. It is fundamentally in sound condition, but will begin to deteriorate unless it is brought into use or sufficiently stabilized and prepared for a longer period of vacancy. The priority structural issues (other than vandalism protection measures) are the sagging front porch and need to weatherize the building.

The Management Plan Work Group examined in detail several alternative approaches for the Morony apartment as described below. The Management Plan Work Group did not examine the "No Action" alternative in detail. The "No Action" alternative would mean that no new actions would be taken on the building, including actions to stabilize it or provide additional vandalism protection measures. The Work Group did not consider this a viable alternative, given public concern for the building, and the limited extent of vandalism. Another alternative, to lease or sell the building but leave it on-site, was also not considered in detail. The Work Group determined that individual private ownership of the building could potentially pose complications with other goals and strategies of this plan and FWP ownership of nearby properties. The option to lease at least a portion of the building would remain a possibility under the "Upgrade the Apartment" alternative.

Costs to develop and maintain the building are a concern to FWP. The following includes estimates for capital outlays, but does not include estimates of annual operating costs for each alternative. Cost estimates for stabilizing the apartment were based on notes from the Giant Springs State Park manager; costs for upgrading the apartment and demolition were based on independent professional quotes; and estimated costs for selling and removing the apartment were based on MPC's experience in selling and relocating the other houses in the townsite.

1. **Stabilize the Apartment.** This option would require installation of a security alarm system, shoring up the front porch, and weatherization. Historic values of the apartment and grounds would be protected. Some vandalism may still occur even with the alarm system, but it is anticipated that the number and severity of incidents will decrease with the security system.

   Estimated Cost Range: $1,800-$6,000

2. **Upgrade the Apartment.** Under this alternative, the apartment would be upgraded to include a visitor center and caretaker residence on the main floor. The second floor would remain "as is," to be remodeled at a later date, based on need and opportunity. Work would include installing an ADA public restroom in the visitor center, installing a new septic system, and upgrading or installing a new waterline from the water storage tank to the apartment. FWP anticipates that water would have to be hauled to the storage tank. Based on initial inspections, asbestos and lead paint do not appear to be issues requiring significant expenditures for remodeling.

   Estimated Cost Range: $223,000-$283,000

3. **Demolition.** Under this option, the apartment building would be demolished. This alternative would include the removal of hazardous waste material.

   Estimated Cost Range: $70,000-$130,000

4. **Sell and Remove the Apartment.** Under this option, the apartment would be sold to the highest bidder and the purchaser would be responsible for moving the apartment off-site.

   Estimated Net Revenues: Revenues are not likely to exceed costs of advertising and legal consultation.

The Management Plan Work Group identified the following principles to guide future actions on the Morony townsite:

- The apartment building should be retained on site.
- Determining the extent of renovation and potential projected uses should include an analysis of operations and maintenance costs and resources to cover costs.
- Historical and natural resource interpretation should be incorporated into any potential future use of the building use and/or surrounding grounds.
- The historical importance of the apartment building and grounds should be considered in decisions about potential future use. (Refer also to "Issue: Historic Preservation" and "Issue: Interpretive and Educational Services" in this document.)

Goal 10: Provide opportunities for future renovation of the apartment building to include interpretation/education, among other uses, as part of the facility. Retain the overall site's character and history, and protect the characteristics and qualities that make the site potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. (FWP, lead)

Strategy 10a: Stabilize the building and front porch in the short term to prevent additional deterioration. Continue maintenance of existing trees and shrubs. (FWP, PPL Montana)

Strategy 10b: Seek funding sources and other resources to renovate, maintain, and operate the apartment building so that it can include an interpretive visitor center and accommodate other potential uses. Explore options for future maintenance of the grounds including alternative water sources and methods. (FWP, PPL Montana)

Strategy 10c: Until the apartment is renovated for interior use, utilize the apartment's front porch for temporary interpretive exhibits and explore other potential uses related to park uses or visitor services. Explore need and opportunity to continue such uses after the apartment is renovated. (FWP, PPL Montana)

Strategy 10d: Conduct a National Register of Historic Places inventory and evaluation and develop a detailed site master plan for the Operator Camp area.

Resource Management

Water

Issue: Water Management

Water resources within and adjacent to Park lands provide a valued amenity that enhances use of Park lands. Giant Springs is a unique and highly valued water resource within the Park. Project reservoirs contribute to the setting of the river corridor. Both the quantity and quality of these water resources should be protected.

There is potential for land use and land management activities both within and outside the Giant Springs management area to impact Giant Springs, the reservoirs, and the quality of Park lands. On-going erosion could lead to damage of park lands and facilities and degrade recreation sites within the Park. Stormwater run-off from developed lands adjacent to the Park could contribute to increased erosion of Park lands.

Goal 11: Preserve and enhance the water resources within and adjacent to the Park.

Strategy 11a: Ensure that land-disturbing activities within the Park incorporate best management practices in order to minimize potential impacts to Park lands and adjacent water resources. Obtain all necessary permits for regulated land-disturbing activities. (FWP and other land managers)

Strategy 11b: Continue monitoring of water quality in reservoirs adjacent to Park lands for compliance with State water quality standards (PPL Montana).

Strategy 11c: Monitor the effects of off-site development on Park lands and encourage adjacent landowners, land managers and land developers to incorporate strategies/designs/practices into their land use activities and land development plans that minimize erosion and help protect water quality. (FWP and other land managers)

Strategy 11d: Explore options to monitor and protect Giant Springs by: 1) reviewing draft plans for source water protection at Giant Springs; and 2) forming a watershed council for participation in TMDL plan preparation in 2007. (FWP)

Strategy 11e: Work with the Montana Department of Environmental Quality and other appropriate agencies to develop a monitoring and data collection system to establish baseline data and monitor change over time at Giant Springs. (FWP)

Wildlife Management

The habitats in the planning area support healthy wildlife populations, which in turn provide excellent wildlife viewing and hunting opportunities. However, some species such as Canada geese and beaver, are impacting the park environment. Management challenges include managing wildlife-related recreation to reduce conflicts between users, and managing wildlife habitat and wildlife populations within Park boundaries.

Wildlife Habitat Management

Giant Springs State Park has unique and valuable habitats for wildlife, including native prairie, riparian areas, wetlands, shrubby draws, islands, and cliffs. Development of necessary facilities such as roads, parking areas, trails, and buildings have decreased the amount of natural habitat available to wildlife over the years. Properly managed development and recreational use of the Park can protect and enhance valuable native habitats, while providing park visitors with outstanding wildlife viewing opportunities.

Habitat has been considerably improved in the planning area over the past decade. Exclusion of illegal off-road vehicle use has reduced erosion and enhanced grassland habitats in the Park. Riverbanks and coulees have been cleared of debris with the help of hundreds of hours of volunteer time from a variety of organizations including RTI; thousands of court-directed community service hours; and trucks and disposal provided by City of Great Falls Park and Recreation Department, FWP, Malmstrom Air Force Base, Great Falls Street Department, Cascade County Solid Waste District, and Montana Waste Systems High Plains Landfill. In the summer of 2000 alone, more than 222 tons of downed trees, dead brush and other debris were removed from Smelter Hill, Black Eagle Memorial Island and the north shore of Black Eagle Reservoir.

Issue: Riparian Habitat

Riparian areas are one of the most important types of wildlife habitat, yet they cover less than three percent of the landscape in Montana. Riparian habitat supports more bird, mammal, and amphibian species than any other habitat in the West. It is estimated that over half of Montana's bird species are either totally dependent on riparian habitat, or more abundant in riparian areas than in the other habitats where they are found. Riparian habitat supports songbird densities two to five times greater than the other forested habitats in Montana. Riparian habitat is also an important component for fish by providing shade, contributing woody debris to the streams, and buffering the effects of urban and agricultural runoff.

Riparian habitat throughout the West has been degraded by hydrologic modification from dams, wood cutting, grazing, subdivision, conversion to farming, industrial activities, and invasion by nonnative plants. The remnant riparian habitat in the Park is no exception. Hydrologic modification from the operation of dams, past industrial activities, invasion by Russian olive, and more recently, high beaver populations, have acted in combination to degrade the quantity and quality of riparian habitat in the Park. Impacts to riparian habitat would have been even greater over the past ten years if not for work done to clean up coulees and riverbanks and revegetate disturbance areas.

Goal 12: Protect and restore riparian habitat along the Missouri River. (FWP, RTI, PPL Montana, USFS, City of Great Falls)

Strategy 12a: Protect riparian habitat and shrubby draws by keeping future trails and facilities out of these areas, when possible. Minimize impacts and seek restoration alternatives whenever such development is considered in riparian areas or shrubby draws. (RTI, FWP, PPL Montana, USFS)

Strategy 12b: Restore additional riparian habitat by soliciting partners in the community to help with native tree and shrub acquisition, planting, and protection. (FWP, RTI, City of Great Falls, USFS, PPL Montana)

Strategy 12c: Discourage further invasion by Russian olive by avoiding the planting of additional Russian olive, leaving existing Russian olive trees vulnerable to beaver damage, and removal of young Russian olive seedlings, when appropriate. (FWP, PPL Montana, RTI, City of Great Falls, USFS)

Issue: Impacts to Habitat from Wildlife

The Missouri River currently supports a rapidly expanding resident population of Canada geese. They nest on islands in the river, and bring their broods to shore for foraging. Geese use the turf areas for grazing ground, which has damaged the grass and resulted in goose excrement covering sidewalks and lawns in the area around Giant Springs on the south shore. This natural consequence of high goose populations can severely affect normal visitor activities, such as picnics and games.

Another significant wildlife issue is the damage done to riparian area vegetation by beaver activity. Narrowleaf Cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia*) is in danger of being extirpated in the area where Lewis and Clark first described the species. Beaver populations are at historically high levels in the Great Falls area, due to decreased trapping harvest and absence of natural predators.

An integrated approach that includes both population control and habitat protection is the most cost-effective way to minimize damage. Healthy riparian habitat is more resistant to beaver damage. Non-lethal methods such as tree trunk protection, repellants, and other barriers can be used to maintain and protect healthy riparian areas. Live-trapping and relocation is extremely costly and shifts potential problems to other locations. In the Giant Springs Park area, goose hunting and beaver trapping have historically been the most effective methods to control these wildlife populations and their related damage to habitat. Hunting and trapping are regulated by the state of Montana, and Giant Springs State Park has been developing additional policies for trapping to ensure effective, humane methods.

Habitat damage can be caused by other species as well, although at the time this document was written, beaver and geese were the species of concern for this issue.

Goal 13: Manage wildlife populations to keep them at appropriate levels for wildlife viewing and for maintaining wildlife and habitat health (keep wildlife populations below the carrying capacity), to prevent wildlife damage to park habitats and adjacent private property. (FWP)

Strategy 13a: Protect new willow and tree plantings (and the largest remnant native trees) from damage by using barriers such as culverts and wire. (FWP, RTI, PPL Montana, USFS, City of Great Falls)

Strategy 13b: Use non-lethal methods such as employment of mechanical barriers, protection of tree trunks, and use of repellents to protect important habitat

areas. Live-trapping and relocation will only be used to alleviate short-term problems. (FWP)

Strategy 13c: Continue to use recreational hunting and trapping to control populations of species that are causing problems, such as Canada geese and beaver. (FWP)

Strategy 13d: Continue, through education and information, to discourage the feeding of wildlife by park visitors, since artificial feeding contributes to overpopulation in species such as Canada geese. (FWP, USFS, PPL Montana, City of Great Falls, Cascade County, RTI)

Issue: Dead Trees and Snags

Dead trees and snags provide nesting and roosting habitat, but can be dangerous for humans.

Goal 14: Protect snags and dead trees that are large enough for cavity-nesting birds, in areas where they do not threaten visitor safety. (FWP, PPL Montana, City of Great Falls)

Strategy 14a: Leave large sick and dying trees standing in undeveloped riparian zones where they do not present a significant safety problem for visitors. Remove or trim trees in areas of high visitor use (such as the developed area around Giant Springs). (FWP, PPL Montana, City of Great Falls)

Strategy 14b: Install and maintain bird nesting and bat roosting boxes in the developed Park areas, to replace natural snags that are removed for safety reasons. (FWP)

Strategy 14c: Solicit volunteer assistance from local conservation clubs to help build, install, and maintain nest boxes. (FWP)

Issue: Watchable Wildlife

The planning area provides a tremendous opportunity for wildlife viewing. The FWP Regional Headquarters provides detailed information about wildlife, but not all visitors stop at this location.

Goal 15: Preserve and provide watchable wildlife opportunities in Giant Springs State Park, LCHG, and PPL Montana south shore lands managed by the Park. (FWP—lead, PPL Montana, USFS, BLM, RTI)

Strategy 15a: Encourage local wildlife groups (Audubon, Ducks Unlimited, etc.) to sponsor watchable wildlife events in the Park. (FWP—lead, USFS, BLM, PPL Montana, City of Great Falls, RTI)

Strategy 15b: Promote ethical wildlife viewing behavior on the part of visitors (e.g., don't get too close to animals, etc.) (FWP—lead, USFS, BLM, PPL Montana, City of Great Falls, RTI)

Strategy 15c: Provide additional wildlife interpretive efforts and programs. (FWP—lead, USFS, BLM, PPL Montana, City of Great Falls, RTI)

Issue: Hunting and Trapping

Hunting is allowed in portions of the planning area. Hunting on the south shore is generally limited to waterfowl hunting in the reservoirs. Hunting on the north shore is allowed in specific areas as listed in Appendix G. North shore game species include waterfowl, sharp-tailed grouse, ring-necked pheasant, Hungarian partridge, mule deer, and white-tailed deer.

Hunting and recreational trapping are allowed in specific areas of the planning area as noted in Table 4.

Hunting and trapping are historic recreational activities along the Missouri River. Current state park policy allows for the continuation of hunting in state parks in areas where it is a historic and appropriate use, as long as no conflicts or significant safety problems are identified.

Public safety is the primary issue related to hunting in the planning area. There are a number of potential safety issues that can be anticipated as non-hunter recreational use increases. On the river, for example, as recreational use of the river increases, the potential for conflict between hunters and other recreationists may also increase.

Table 4: Hunting and Trapping Guidelines in the Planning Area	
Location	**Guidelines**
Missouri River	Waterfowl hunting and trapping are allowed below the high water mark (and technically outside the jurisdiction of riverbank landowners)
South Shore	
City of Great Falls	No discharge of firearms within city limits. (Note: city limits extend only to high water mark.)
Giant Springs State Park (areas outside of city limits)	No hunting; trapping below the high water mark only with Park permission
PPL Lands managed by Giant Springs State Park (South Shore East Unit--east of Rainbow Dam)	No hunting; trapping allowed at discretion of landowner
City-owned land from South Shore East Unit to Cochrane Dam	No hunting; trapping allowed at discretion of landowner
South Shore Lands from Cochrane Dam to Ryan Dam	Hunting and trapping at discretion of landowner
North Shore	
Privately owned land on North Shore	Hunting and trapping at discretion of landowner
LCHG	Under specific guidelines of Hunter Management Plan (Appendix G), including safety zones where no shooting is allowed; trapping allowed at discretion of landowner
Giant Springs State Park land east of LCHC (Morony Area Lands)	Area included in Hunter Management Plan (Appendix G); trapping allowed at discretion of landowner
BLM land at east end of planning area	Hunting and trapping allowed according to state rules and regulations.

Source: Individual organizations

Goal 16: Manage hunting and trapping in the portions of the planning area where it has been a historic recreational activity and/or is desired by private landowners and meets legal requirements, meets resource management goals, and where it is safe for other visitors, their property, and facilities. (FWP, lead)

Strategy 16a: Annually review hunting season statistics for the planning area to monitor and assess effectiveness of game management and public safety policies. Modify Hunter Management Plan and other FWP guidelines as necessary to address issues identified in annual review. (FWP, PPL Montana)

Strategy 16b: Allow hunting and trapping to continue on Missouri River in the planning area where it has been an historic recreational activity, and where it results in no significant safety problems for other park visitors, their property, or facilities. (FWP, PPL Montana)

Strategy 16c: Continue the use of Park facilities to promote ethical hunting and hunter safety through hunter education classes, lectures, and other events. (FWP)

Strategy 16d: Educate Park visitors and River's Edge Trail users about the role of hunting and trapping in wildlife management and conservation, through lectures, literature, special events, and individual contacts. (FWP)

Strategy 16e: Provide information on hunting and public safety. (PPL Montana, FWP, RTI, BLM, USFS, Cascade County, City of Great Falls)

Native Vegetation and Weed Control

Retaining and restoring native prairie and reducing encroachment of non-native species and weeds are issues for the planning area.

Issue: Native Prairie

Prairie preservation and restoration work has been underway for some time in the planning area. The Cascade County Conservation District has been managing the 100-acre Crooked Falls Managed Natural Area for 30 years. The area is on the north shore, within the LCHG. The Conservation District has inventoried the plant species and preserves this area of native prairie for educational purposes. All of the landscaping around the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center was done with native plant species.

With anticipated increased public use, areas that have previously had only minimal impact from recreational visitors will now have potential for greater impact and potential reduction in native prairie.

Goal 17: Maintain and restore prairie communities where appropriate. (FWP, City of Great Falls, RTI, USFS, PPL Montana, and Cascade County)

Strategy 17a: Inventory native plant communities and identify priority areas for maintenance and restoration. (FWP, City of Great Falls, RTI, USFS, PPL Montana, and Cascade County --each organization for lands it owns or manages and/or working jointly to determine planning area priority areas)

Strategy 17b: Maintain and restore native prairie species in priority areas (identified as noted in strategy above). (FWP, City of Great Falls, RTI, USFS, PPL Montana, and Cascade County --each organization for lands it owns or manages and working jointly to pool resources as appropriate)

Strategy 17c: Interpret native prairie restoration efforts for the public, coordinating with efforts of the Cascade County Conservation District. (FWP)

Strategy 17d: Develop guidelines for fire as a tool for prairie restoration and fuel management. (FWP for lands it owns/manages)

Issue: Weed Control

Visitors can unwittingly carry weed seeds on their clothes, bikes, and vehicles. As weed infestations spread, maintenance work and related costs to control them also increase. FWP has an active weed management plan for the Region. (The Region 4 Weed Management Plan is available for review at the Region 4 Headquarters office.)

Goal 18: Reduce, eradicate and prevent the spread of noxious weeds in an environmentally sound manner. (FWP, RTI, PPL Montana, City of Great Falls, USFS)

Strategy 18a: Continue to use the Region 4 Weed Management Plan strategies to help control weeds within the Park. (FWP for lands it owns/manages)

Strategy 18b: Work with Cascade County Weed Control District and Cascade County Conservation District to educate the public on weed control issues and distribute biological control agents. (FWP, RTI, PPL Montana, City of Great Falls, USFS)

Historic and Cultural Resources

Issue: Historic Preservation

There has been no complete, systematic inventory of cultural, historic, or prehistoric sites within the planning area. Existing information is primarily limited to what has been required for ground disturbing activities, such as construction (including roads and trails). No comprehensive plan has been developed to identify sites or to prioritize them for preservation.

Substantial work has, however, already been made toward this effort. As part of the licensing under the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, inventories were completed for areas under the jurisdiction of FERC. The USFS has been conducting inventories near Sulfur Springs for approximately three years. Federal and state agencies are required to conduct cultural and historic inventories for specific ground-disturbing activities, such as trails or construction.

The State Historic Preservation Office conducted a records search for the planning area in January 2002. This search indicated that a portion of the planning area falls within the Great Falls Portage National Historic Landmark Site. Sulfur Springs is listed as part of the National Historic Landmark Site, but it is not clear if Giant Springs is clearly not. There is no separate national historic listing for Giant Springs or any other site in the planning area.

Goal 19: Identify and record cultural and historic sites, encourage the prioritization and preservation of important sites within the planning area, and coordinate information-sharing among the various landowners and land managers in the planning area. (FWP—lead, USFS, PPL Montana, RTI, BLM, Cascade County, City of Great Falls)

Strategy 19a: Identify sites on public lands eligible for listing on the national historic register and nominate eligible sites for national listing. (FWP, USFS, BLM)

Strategy 19b: Continue to inventory sites prior to ground disturbing activities and follow appropriate state and federal mandates as required. (FWP, USFS, PPL Montana, RTI, BLM)

Strategy 19c: Develop mechanisms for sharing information about planning area sites among FWP, USFS, PPL Montana, RTI, City of Great Falls, Cascade County, and others. Identify a location to be used as a single repository for shared information. Maintain cultural site confidentiality rules of each organization. (FWP—lead, USFS, PPL Montana, RTI, BLM, Cascade County, City of Great Falls)

Strategy 19d: Identify priority sites and encourage their preservation. Each organization identifies priority sites for their property and/or area of land management and shares information with others to promote the seamless visitor experience and coordinated interpretive approach. (FWP, USFS, PPL Montana, RTI, BLM, City of Great Falls, Cascade County)

Issue: Viewsheds and Soundsheds

The views seen and sounds heard from the Missouri River and from the riverbanks play a critical role in the historic and cultural integrity of the planning area. As times change, use of lands along the river also changes and can potentially conflict with the area's historical and scenic integrity and recreational opportunities. Developments over time have altered the native landscapes seen over 200 years ago by Indians and the Lewis and Clark explorers.

High-speed motorized watercraft can disturb wildlife and waterfowl as well as disturb the quality of experience for many visitors.

Currently there is no consistent approach among landowners for viewshed and soundshed management in the planning area.

Goal 20: Work cooperatively with public and private landowners on a voluntary basis to protect viewsheds and soundsheds. (FWP, USFS, PPL Montana, RTI, BLM, City of Great Falls, Cascade County)

Strategy 20a: Work with private landowners in priority areas to protect viewsheds and soundsheds with voluntary measures that could include:

- Transfer or purchase of fee title based on a willing buyer/willing seller basis at appraised value
- Donation or purchase of conservation easements from willing sellers
- Voluntary guidelines for types of development, if development is unavoidable

(As appropriate and as a willing purchaser, potential owner, conservation easement holder—FWP, USFS, PPL Montana, RTI, BLM, City of Great Falls)

Strategy 20b: Work to identify and prioritize areas for sound and view protection. (FWP, USFS, PPL Montana, RTI, BLM, City of Great Falls, Cascade County)

Strategy 20c: Work jointly to identify cooperative, consistent, voluntary guidelines for soundshed and viewshed effects of proposed new development. (FWP, USFS, PPL Montana, RTI, BLM, City of Great Falls, Cascade County, and others as appropriate)

Goal 21: Recommend the FWP Commission establish a no-wake restriction on Rainbow Reservoir. (FWP, USFS, PPL Montana, RTI, BLM, City of Great Falls, Cascade County)

Visitor Services

Issue: Interpretive and Educational Services

There is no comprehensive plan for interpreting cultural, historic, prehistoric, and natural resources, or for providing information and education related to public safety, trail etiquette, maps/location, or other logistics. Giant Springs State Park, Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, PPL Montana, RTI, and the City of Great Falls are providing and/or developing interpretive signs and programs in the planning area. Although there is already some coordination among these efforts, representatives from these entities believe that there is a need to better organize efforts and prioritize interpretive themes.

Interpretation

"Interpretation," for purposes of this planning document, is defined as interpreting, or "telling the story about," the cultural, historic, prehistoric, and natural resources in the planning area. Interpretation of cultural, historic, prehistoric, and natural resources can be done in any number of ways including reading material (such as brochures), guided tours, self-guided tours (with brochures, maps, or cassette tapes or compact disks), workshops, hands-on demonstrations, interpretive programs, special activities, and videos. In fact, the potential varieties of ways to interpret the cultural, historic, prehistoric, and natural resources of the planning area can extend as far as the imagination.

The Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center focuses on the history of the Lewis and Clark expedition and their interaction with native people of the West.

The FWP Headquarters has interpretive displays and information on the regional flora and fauna and departmental roles in managing these resources.

Giant Springs State Park and the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center provide a variety of interpretive programs, working collaboratively where possible. Giant Springs State Park provides tours for over 1600 school children annually and hosts a weekly summer presentation. Giant Springs State Park provides interpretive tours of the Springs, Fish Hatchery, and general area including historic resources such as the old silver smelter. The Park is unable to provide all the interpretive programming that is requested, in part because of reliance on volunteers who are not always available. The Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center also provides school and other tours, averaging 6000 schoolchildren annually. Outdoor interpretive programs at the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center

include nature walks and daily outdoor demonstrations. The Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center has been able to keep up with requests for on-site interpretive programs, but generally declines requests for off-site programs.

Existing outdoor interpretive signage is relatively limited. PPL Montana is developing an Information and Education Plan that, in part, will address the planning area and includes interpretive signage on the history of energy production and on Lewis and Clark. As the trail to Sulfur Springs is developed, the USFS will identify interpretive opportunities and techniques.

It is possible that the existing interpretive programs may be inadequate for the anticipated demand of Lewis and Clark bicentennial visitors.

Public Information/Education

For purposes of this planning document, "Public Information/Education" is the information and education needed to explain about public safety, rules and regulations, locations of trails and facilities, and other logistical information about the planning area.

There is a need for more public information and public safety education in the planning area. Information on key points of interest, such as Morony Townsite, Sulfur Springs trail, River's Edge Trail, Crooked Falls Managed Natural Area, and others should be included in visitor maps and guides. This includes information about the trails—trail distance, degree of difficulty, trail etiquette and rules, paper maps, and on-site trail maps (that show "you are here" type information). Information of this type exists already along portions of the River's Edge Trail, but needs to be expanded as the trail becomes developed to the east (on both the north and south shores) in the planning area. As part of its Information and Education Plan, PPL Montana will develop informational and educational signs on public safety and other hydroelectric operation issues. The public needs to be informed of various dangers in the area, including the steep slopes, cliffs, rattlesnakes, water hazards, etc. (for more information on this topic, see the "Public Safety" section of this document). Information also needs to be provided that explains the need to stay on designated trails and the harm caused to the environment and potential safety danger to humans when people create their own trails. The public needs to be informed about the differences between public and private lands in the area.

Issues and Guiding Principles for Interpretation, Other Information, and Signage

The issue facing the organizations working on interpretation, public safety information, trail or logistical information, and signage in the planning area is: "How will it all fit together?" Currently, there is no mechanism to ensure that the various efforts for interpretation, public information/education, and signage will create a seamless experience for the visitor.

The Management Plan Work Group identified the following principles to guide future interpretation, public information/education, and signage:

- Interpretation, public information/education, and signage should be coordinated among the various organizations to guide management decisions and create a "seamless experience" for the visitor
- Interpretation should be designed to coordinate with the setting (for example, less intrusive signage in more primitive areas)
- The cost of sign replacement and repair in response to vandalism and weather should be considered in sign fabrication and materials

Goal 22: Expand interpretation and public information/education in the planning area with a cohesive, integrated approach for a seamless visitor experience. (FWP-lead, USFS, PPL Montana, BLM, RTI, City of Great Falls, Cascade County, Cascade County Conservation District)

Strategy 22a: Develop an interagency team to develop a comprehensive interpretive plan for the planning area and guidelines for public education/information, including design and compatibility of signs. (FWP, lead. USFS, PPL Montana, BLM, RTI, City of Great Falls, Cascade County, Cascade County Conservation District)

Strategy 22b: Provide information (e.g., maps, brochures, and signs) to visitors indicating key features and points of interest, clarifying lands available for public access, and providing notice of visitors' responsibilities with respect to private property.

Strategy 22c: Develop and distribute information on visitors' responsibilities in the Park, addressing such items as litter, rules for trail use, park regulations, etc.

Strategy 22d: As part of Park's interpretive mission, information on other opportunities in the vicinity will be provided to visitors, so they can see Giant Springs in a larger regional context of recreational opportunities, and plan to stay in the state and local area longer. (FWP)

Strategy 22e: Giant Springs State Park and Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center will continue working to coordinate interpretive programs and will investigate and develop cost-sharing programs where possible. (FWP, USFS)

Strategy 22f: Seek additional paid staff for interpretive programs to meet existing and anticipated demand. (FWP)

Strategy 22g: Provide staff training on interpretive methods and techniques. (FWP, USFS, BLM)

Issue: Special Events

Special events at Giant Springs State Park are popular and well-attended. They can put a considerable drain on the staff resources, but are anticipated to increase with the Lewis and Clark bicentennial.

Goal 23: Foster special events that are appropriate for the Park and its mission through partnering with a variety of groups. (FWP)

Strategy 23a: Secure adequate funding and staffing so that special events can be expanded and improved, where there is likely to be demand and interest. (FWP)

Strategy 23b: Coordinate special events. (FWP, USFS, PPL Montana, BLM, RTI, City of Great Falls, Cascade County)

Strategy 23c: The Park will participate fully and effectively in the commemoration of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial by partnering with the USFS, BLM, and local groups to tell the story of the Expedition. Special events, lectures, hikes and walks will all be part of the commemoration of the Expedition's passage through this area – where the Expedition spent the most time at one location in the State of Montana. (FWP)

Strategy 23d: Market the Park as a location for filming and special events through cooperation with Travel Montana and the Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce. (FWP, Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce, PPL Montana)

Issue: Commercial Use

Private interests are inquiring about using the Park for commercial uses. Examples of potential commercial uses include guided tours, catered picnics, and specialized programs for which private businesses are charging fees and collecting revenues. Currently FWP cannot allow such commercial uses without a concession contract. Policies on what commercial activities should be allowed in the Park could benefit from further clarification, and a streamlined concession contract or special use permit needs to be developed.

The boat launch at Morony as well as some of the other PPL Montana locations are, or will be managed under the FWP-PPL Montana Cooperative Management Agreement. Some outfitters are already using the Morony boat launch for commercial operations.

Goal 24: There will be no commercial use of Giant Springs State Park without written consent and a concession agreement from FWP. Streamlining this process is necessary to allow appropriate commercial uses, while enhancing visitor experiences. (FWP, USFS)

Strategy 24a: Where warranted, work with private concessionaires to provide services. Examples might include food services, interpretive services, guided tours, bus service, etc. (FWP, USFS)

Strategy 24b: Work with existing fishing and floating outfitters at the Morony boat launch to ensure that proper permits are in place and that all commercial use requirements are understood and adhered to. (FWP)

Strategy 24c: Commercial film requests will follow state and federal guidelines to ensure filming does not inconvenience visitors or cause resource damage to the public lands.

Issue: Monitoring Visitor Satisfaction/Data Collection

Giant Springs State Park presents significant challenges for accurate data collection about visitors, in part because of the multiple entrances. Accurate monitoring of visitation trends as well as park user attitudes is essential information for Park managers, as well as for FWP Parks Division staff in Helena who are trying to monitor statewide trends. PPL Montana conducts extensive visitor surveys of the Great Falls area every four years as part of its FERC license.

Goal 25: Visitor satisfaction will be monitored to assure a quality visitor experience. Additionally, the Park will closely monitor visitation, and evaluate daily operations and staff scheduling to accommodate changing demands. (FWP)

Strategy 25a: Park managers will work closely with staff in the Helena Parks Division and Responsive Management Offices to design and implement visitor data collection processes. (FWP)

Strategy 25b: Develop mechanism(s) to share planning area visitor information among planning area agencies and organizations. Coordinate individual agency data collection to avoid duplication (such as road traffic counts) and to expand data collection where possible. (FWP, USFS, PPL Montana, BLM, Cascade County, City of Great Falls, Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce)

Public Health and Safety

Public safety is a primary goal of Giant Springs State Park. There is a need to address public health and safety issues in a planning area that is approximately 14 miles long, in areas that can take up to 30 minutes or more to access by vehicle, and where visitor use is expected to increase as trails are developed and with the Lewis and Clark bicentennial. Distance from emergency responders, such as law enforcement, fire departments, and first aid and ambulance service, is particularly an issue for the north shore.

Water-related hazards and accidents are a potential on any body of water, but with dams and reservoirs there are additional concerns. Once PPL Montana begins operating for "load following" or "peaking" to meet electrical demand, Cochrane reservoir will have the potential to fluctuate up to 10 feet on a daily basis, and Morony reservoir up to seven feet. The FERC license requires PPL Montana to pursue closing Cochrane, Ryan, and Morony reservoirs to boating, floating, swimming, and sailing in response to safety concerns of reservoir fluctuations.[2] For other visitors, such as wading fisherman, there may be increased potential to get trapped on islands as water rises and people find their route back to shore inundated. In cases where persons are trapped, existing protocol is to dial 911 and to ensure that the dam operators are notified so that dam operations do not exacerbate the situation. (Note that dam operators are notified by calling Rainbow Dispatch at 761-1101.)

The Cochrane Dam crossing is another potential safety hazard. It can be icy and slick during winter months.

Other safety hazards in the planning area include steep banks and cliffs. Proposed trails on the north and south shores will be developed to avoid hazards, and visitors will be asked to stay on the trail, but inevitably there will be those who wander off-trail. In the future, there may be more incidents of injury simply from increased number of users, and from potential hazards caused by shared use of the trail by maintenance vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians.

Fire is another safety hazard in the planning area. Currently FWP has a policy of suppressing all wildfires, but staff is not consistently trained in wildfire suppression techniques.

Contaminants in the soil can also be another potential safety hazard. Previous industrial uses in the area included a smelter. The Montana Department of Environmental Quality completed an initial study of hazardous contamination in the Park in 2002. As a result of that initial study, the smelter site was referred to the Montana Abandoned Mines Reclamation Program for full reclamation. The reclamation consists of additional study followed by clean-up alternative development and analysis. Once all alternatives are

[2] PPL Montana is pursuing acquisition and/or upgrading of four river access sites between Cascade and Fort Benton to offset the potential closure of these areas.

analyzed full clean-up efforts will be initiated. Total reclamation of the site is anticipated to occur in 2003-04.

Goal 26: Provide for the safety of visitors and staff through planning, staff training, and coordination among government agencies and PPL Montana. (FWP, BLM, USFS, PPL Montana, City of Great Falls)

Strategy 26a: In coordination with city and county law enforcement, fire departments, and other emergency response providers, develop an Emergency Response Plan for the planning area. The plan would address issues such as protocol for response to injury, wildfire, lost persons, persons stranded by water fluctuations, etc. (FWP-lead, USFS, PPL Montana, City of Great Falls, Cascade County, BLM, RTI)

Strategy 26b: Train all appropriate staff and volunteers in Emergency Response Plan Protocol. (FWP, USFS, PPL Montana, BLM, RTI)

Strategy 26c: Continue the existing practice of First Aid and Basic CPR training for all Giant Springs State Park staff. (FWP)

Strategy 26d: Open the trail crossing at Cochrane Dam except 1) between November 15 and April 15 2) whenever there is a potential for ice to make the crossing hazardous, and 3) in response to security alerts issued by government agencies. (PPL Montana)

Strategy 26e: Coordinate with the interagency team on interpretation and public information/education to incorporate public safety information into brochures, signs, and other materials. Have existing PPL Montana public safety brochures available for visitors. (FWP, PPL Montana, USFS, RTI, City of Great Falls, BLM)

Strategy 26f: Identify cell phone coverage within the planning area and clearly identify "gaps" in coverage. Include this information in public information/education. Prioritize locations for public telephones, such as at trailheads. (FWP, PPL Montana)

Strategy 26g: FWP will continue its policy of suppressing all wildfires on land it owns and manages. (FWP)

Strategy 26h: When possible, FWP and Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center will cooperate on wildfire suppression training. (FWP, USFS)

Strategy 26i: Utilize DEQ studies and recommendations to address hazardous contaminants within the Park.

Operations and Maintenance

Issue: Operations, Maintenance, and Resources

Giant Springs state park is one of 42 units of the state park system. As one of those units, the park is managed on behalf of all Montana citizens for a variety of benefits including tourism. Additionally, Giant Springs is part of the FWP Region 4 park system which also includes Ulm Pishkun, Sluice Boxes, the Smith River, and Ackley Lake.

Giant Springs is also part of the Great Falls community and a system of interconnected recreational resources (i.e. city parks, River's Edge Trail and Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center) that help create the vision for the park, serve local residents and help define Great Falls as a tourism destination. In essence, Giant Springs is part of two distinct systems or communities.

Being part of two distinct communities creates a challenge for the park as well as local residents and other partners. Probably the best example of that challenge is use fees. As a unit of the Montana State Park system, Giant Springs must contribute to the health of the system through equitable user fees. This has been evaluated at all levels of state government over time. Though locally controversial, user fees are vital to the health of the system as Montana State Parks receives only very limited general tax dollar support. Use fees help offset operating costs at the park, the region and statewide system, and are used for capital development such as the completion of the visitor center at Ulm Pishkun.

Managers and citizens in the area have traditionally turned challenges into opportunities. Other partners in the area are funding their operations independently through fees and have their own funding challenges. The above challenge was recently addressed by entering into an agreement with the Charlie Russell museum where visitors who pay a daily use fee at one location are welcomed at the other location. This includes Ulm Pishkun and Giant Springs.

Consistent with the park vision, park managers will strive to create a seamless visitor experience through the following goal and strategies:

Goal 27: To manage recreation and resources in a way so as to work collaboratively with all partners to the benefit of statewide and local needs. (FWP, USFS, BLM, PPL Montana, RTI, City of Great Falls, Cascade County)

Strategy 27a: Continue to pursue management agreements to make agency and administrative boundaries less visible. (FWP, USFS, BLM, PPL Montana, RTI, City of Great Falls, Cascade County)

Strategy 27b: Pursue joint use fees where services overlap or customer types and needs are similar and individual agency policies allow. (FWP, USFS, BLM, RTI, City of Great Falls, Cascade County)

Strategy 27c: Look for ways to share resources and streamline service to reduce costs and improve public service. (FWP, USFS, BLM, PPL Montana, RTI, City of Great Falls, Cascade County)

Strategy 27d: Monitor and identify patterns of visitor use, fee compliance, and staff availability, so that needs can be identified and problems addressed. (FWP)

Issue: Law Enforcement.

Law enforcement is an integral part of protecting unique resources and visitors at the Giant Springs Parks complex. Enforcement needs range from fee compliance to resource protection. Resource protection needs include wildlife, developed parks features, fisheries, cultural features, and historic structures.

Vandalism is a major law enforcement issue in the Park complex, with a total of more than $5,000 in damages in 2001 between Giant Springs State Park, RTI, and the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center. Between December 2000 and December 2001, there were seven vandalism incidents in Giant Springs State Park, including two cases of theft, and one case of arson. Total cost to FWP of damages for all seven incidents was $2,850. RTI reported damage from graffiti in two tunnels, stolen signs, and information torn from kiosks with total damage estimated at $720. The Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center had one vandalism incident in 2001, damage to the lettering on their main entrance sign, resulting in an estimated $1,765 in damages.

Cooperation among the various agencies responsible for law enforcement can and does take place within the planning area. Within the Park boundaries, FWP, Cascade County Sheriff Department, Great Falls City Police, USFS, and Montana Highway Patrol each have separate law enforcement responsibilities but cooperate with each other to provide public safety. There is however, no established mechanism for this cooperation, which means that at times, an agency responds to a law enforcement incident that others, including landowners and land managers, may know nothing about as records are not always or consistently shared. More formal coordination may be desirable.

Park visitors are not always aware of applicable rules and regulations and consequently can be in violation without even realizing it. More effective methods of providing law enforcement information to visitors are needed.

The goal of the FWP law enforcement division is to provide quality service to the area and the people who utilize the complex. Park law enforcement is handled by a limited number of warden staff with region-wide responsibilities. In addition, "ex-officio" law enforcement status is extended, with training, to managers and maintenance staff. Even with training, however, the different levels of law enforcement experience can result in inconsistent approaches.

In 2001, FWP held a series of policy meetings to address how to effectively manage parks law enforcement. FWP released a policy statement in January 2002 delineating parks enforcement changes. This plan reflects those changes.

Goal 28: Increase park law enforcement effectiveness. (FWP)

Strategy 28a: Work with FWP Warden Captain and warden staff to modify annual warden work plans to include a more effective park enforcement program. (FWP)

Strategy 28b: Create a protocol for law enforcement actions and reporting so that accurate records can be maintained and proper processes are followed by all law enforcement agencies working within the planning area. (FWP, City of Great Falls, Cascade County, Montana Highway Patrol, USFS)

Strategy 28c: Increase ex-officio program training and requirements so that already appointed ex-officio officers are more effective in their law enforcement duties. (FWP)

Strategy 28d: Increase, or provide if needed, training to all Fish, Wildlife and Parks law enforcement personnel on Park related law enforcement issues and tactics. Work with Parks Law enforcement coordinator to develop a training program specific to parks needs. Incorporate Parks law enforcement into the existing Field Training Officer (FTO) program and assign FTOs to work with both field wardens and ex-officio officers within the parks for parks related training. (FWP)

Strategy 28e: As necessary, identify funding from the PPL Montana-FWP Cooperative Management Agreement for staffing to augment warden enforcement efforts and increase overall regional enforcement staff and efficiency. (FWP, PPL Montana)

Strategy 28f: Invest in new technology to increase surveillance capabilities at sites with high potential for vandalism or other crimes. Effectively train Warden FTOs to use this surveillance equipment. Provide adequate operations, equipment and personal services in order to effectively use this equipment. (FWP)

Strategy 28g: Work with County Sheriffs Department, City Police Department, and others, including private security, and Malmstrom AFB security, to increase site patrols at Giant Springs State Park. (FWP, City of Great Falls, Cascade County)

Strategy 28h: Increase ability of FWP personnel to enforce both moving and parking road violations on Giant Springs Road. (FWP, City of Great Falls, Cascade County)

Strategy 28i: Monitor vandalism, criminal behavior, and other threats to public safety and damage to park facilities through incident reporting and annual reports of incident statistics. Include information on type of incident, time and date of occurrence, type of damage, and cost to repair. (FWP)

Strategy 28j: Include information on laws and regulations, including a discussion of the issues behind the need for such controls, in the public education and information program. (See goals and strategies under "Issue: Interpretive and Educational Services.) (FWP)

Issue: Land Acquisition and Disposition

At some point in the future it may be possible to work with private landowners to acquire conservation easements, right-of-way easements, or land ownership deeds for the purpose of extending trails, protecting viewsheds or soundsheds, or for other purposes. Any acquisition or disposition would need to meet appropriate agency guidelines and a willing buyer/seller arrangement. Currently there is no mechanism for identifying priority properties for acquisition or disposition among the public entities within the planning area. Beyond requirements set by state or federal law to conduct environmental impact statements on significant actions, there is no formal policy to coordinate land acquisitions or dispositions among public landowners and public land managers in the planning area.

Goal 29: Work with willing private landowners on a voluntary basis to provide planned trail access, viewshed, and soundshed management, and compatibility with other recreational uses within the planning area. (FWP, PPL Montana, USFS, BLM, RTI, City of Great Falls, Cascade County)

Strategy 29a: Work with the Recreation Technical Work Group to identify priority properties. On a case-by-case basis work cooperatively with willing landowners and identify organizations willing to acquire and/or manage property as appropriate. Make recommendations to the Missouri-Madison River Revolving Trust Fund Board for use of the board's funds for projects. (FWP, PPL Montana, USFS, BLM, RTI, City of Great Falls, Cascade County)

Strategy 29b: Prior to accepting responsibility of landownership, conservation easement, or other land manager responsibilities for new properties, FWP will analyze short- and long-term costs and funding sources. (FWP)

Year One Priorities

The ten year plan includes over 30 goals and more than 60 strategies. In order to accomplish these tasks, the Management Plan Work Group will identify priorities on an annual basis. The priorities for the first year are outlined below.

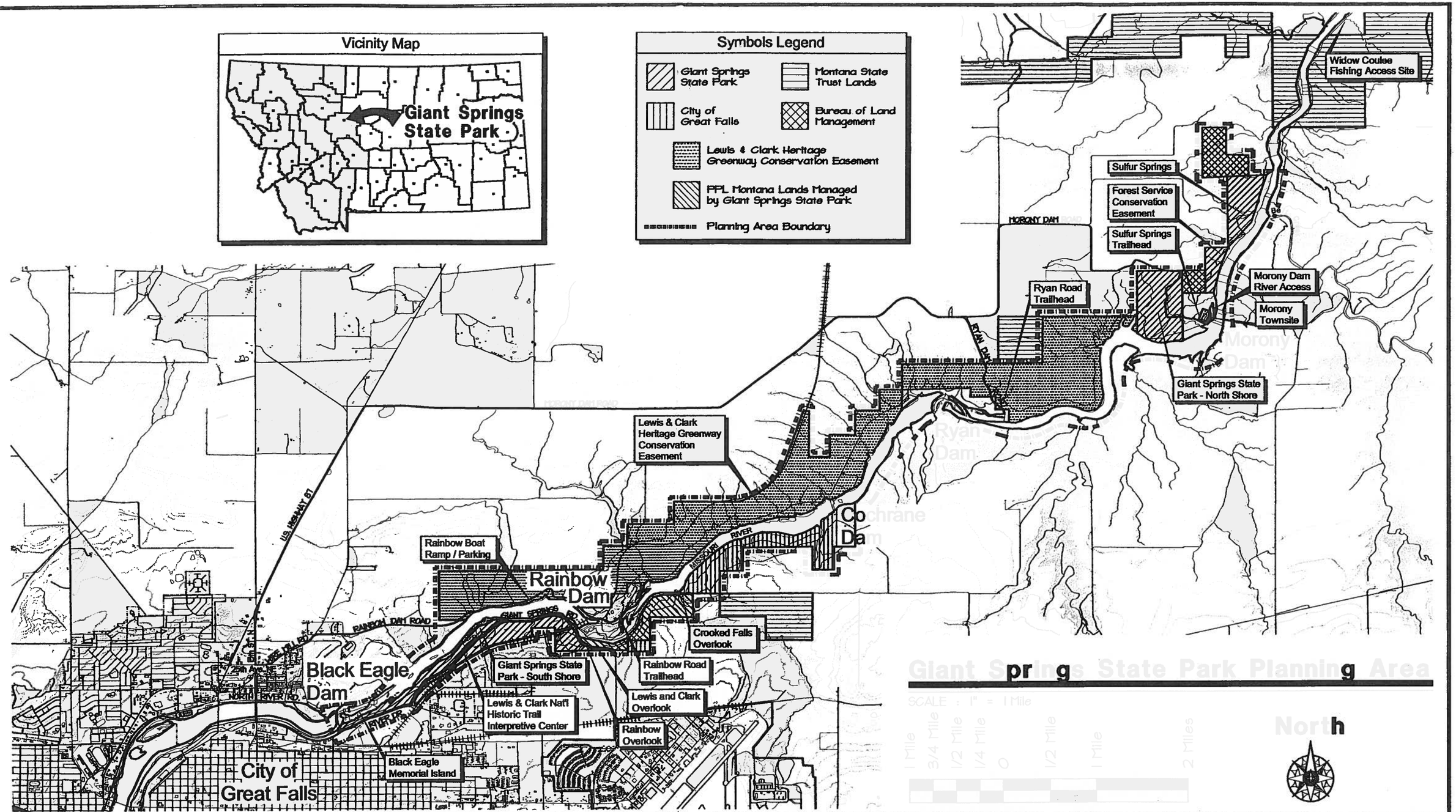
Giant Springs Area Management Plan YEAR ONE PRIORITIES			
Goal/Strategy/Task	**Responsible Organization(s)**	**Outcome**	**Needed Resources**
Memorandum of Understanding among Participating Organizations	FWP (lead), FWP, RTI, USFS, BLM, Cascade County, City of Great Falls, Cascade County Conservation District, RTI, Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce, FWP Regional Headquarters, Giant Springs State Fish Hatchery	Written documents solidifying the agreement to work on the various strategies and tasks described in the plan	Staff time
Complete Sulfur Springs Trailhead	PPL Montana (lead), FWP, RTI, USFS, BLM	Level graded parking lot, informational kiosk, vault latrines	Funding, staff time
Complete Ryan and Rainbow Trailheads	PPL Montana (lead), FWP, RTI	Level graveled parking area, vault latrines, and informational kiosks	Funding, staff time
Conduct the feasibility study for a campground	FWP (lead), Great Falls Area chamber of Commerce	Document and recommendations for a campground at Heritage that addresses type of campground facility needed, how it would complement private sector lodging, and analysis of costs and funding sources for development, operations, and long-term maintenance	Funding, staff time
Determine extent of hazardous contaminants within the Park and develop a plan to address	FWP (lead)	Maps and text documenting the location and type of contamination and a plan and timeline for addressing	Funding, staff time

Goal/Strategy/Task	Responsible Organization(s)	Outcome	Needed Resources
Seek funding sources and other resources to renovate, maintain, and operate the Morony apartment building	FWP (lead)	Grant applications submitted (and as appropriate, assessment of costs for renovation as well as ongoing long-term operations and maintenance)	Staff time
Recommend a no-wake restriction on Rainbow Reservoir	FWP (lead), USFS, PPL Montana, RTI, BLM, City of Great Falls, Cascade County	Restriction established by FWP Commission	Staff time

Vicinity Map

Symbols Legend

- Giant Springs State Park
- Montana State Trust Lands
- City of Great Falls
- Bureau of Land Management
- Lewis & Clark Heritage Greenway Conservation Easement
- PPL Montana Lands Managed by Giant Springs State Park
- Planning Area Boundary



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Giant Springs State Park

Great Falls , Mn

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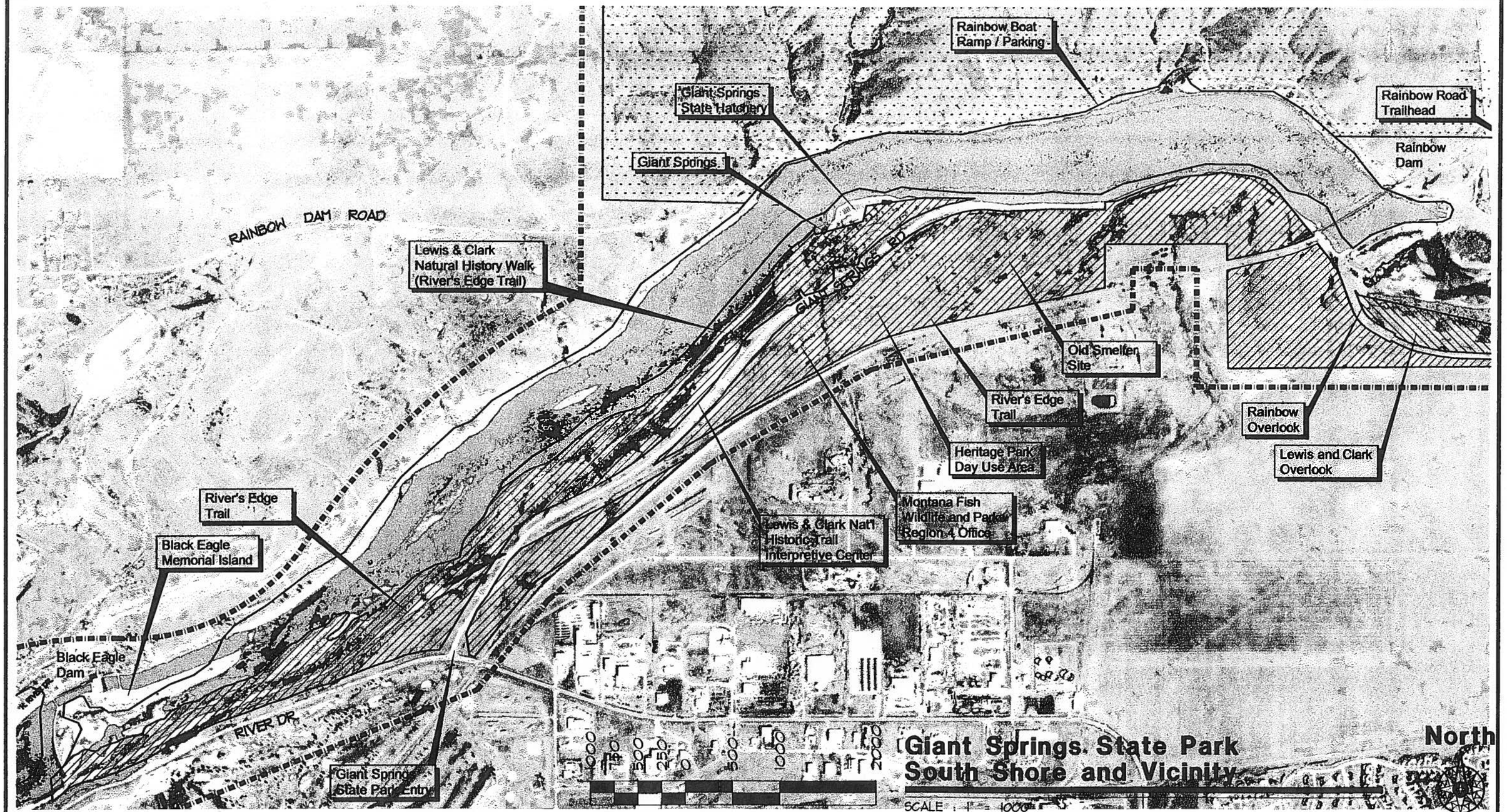

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Giant Springs State Park

Great Falls , Montana

MONTANA STATE PARKS

SHEET: 2 of 2