Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

1400 South 19th Avenue
Bozeman, MT 59718

December 8, 2014

To: Governor's Office, Tim Baker, State Capitol, Room 204, P.O. Box 200801, Helena, MT 59620
Environmental Quality Council, State Capitol, Room 106, P.O. Box 201704, Helena, MT 59620
Dept. of Environmental Quality, Metcalf Building, P.O. Box 200901, Helena, MT 59620-0901
Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation, P.O. Box 201601, Helena, MT 59620-1601
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:

Director's Office	Parks Division	Lands Section	FWP Commissioners
Fisheries Division	Legal Unit	Wildlife Division	Design & Construction

MT Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, P.O. Box 201202, Helena, MT 59620
MT State Parks Association, P.O. Box 699, Billings, MT 59103
MT State Library, 1515 E. Sixth Ave., P.O. Box 201800, Helena, MT 59620
James Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, P.O. Box 1184, Helena, MT 59624
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624
George Ochenski, P.O. Box 689, Helena, MT 59624
Jerry DiMarco, P.O. Box 1571, Bozeman, MT 59771
Montana Wildlife Federation, P.O. Box 1175, Helena, MT 59624
Wayne Hurst, P.O. Box 728, Libby, MT 59923
Jack Jones, 3014 Irene St., Butte, MT 59701
Jack Atcheson, 2309 Hancock Avenue, Butte MT 59701
Beaverhead Conservation District, 420 Barrett Street, Dillon, MT 59725
U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, 1520 E 6th Avenue, Helena, MT 59601
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 585 Shepard Way, Suite 1, Helena, MT 59601
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 420 Barrett Street, Dillon, MT 59725
Big Hole Watershed Committee, Box 21, Divide, MT 59727
Montana Trout Unlimited, P.O. Box 7186, Missoula, MT 59807
Dan Vermillion, FWP Commissioner, 13 Kindsfather Dr., Livingston MT 59047
Earnest and Colleen Bacon, 2215 Fishtrap Creek Road, Wisdom, MT 59761
Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation, 730 N. Montana Street, Dillon, MT 59725-9424
George Grant Chapter of Trout Unlimited, P.O. Box 563, Butte, MT 59703
Skyline Sportsmen, P.O. Box 173, Butte, MT 59703
Anaconda Sportsmen, 2 Cherry, Anaconda, MT 59711
James Patrick Warfield, 3323 Twin Oaks Dr., Napa, CA 94558-5321
PGP Revocable Trust, Pam Durcell Trustee, Denver, CO 80220-6332
Paradise Valley Community Church, 1755 E. River Rd., Livingston, MT 59047-8715
Richard M. & Marianne K. Morgan, 1374 Clubview Blvd. S., Columbus, OH 43235-1643

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The enclosed draft Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared for the proposed closure of Sheds Bridge Fishing Access Site (FAS. The FAS is located along the Gallatin River 7 miles west of Bozeman, Montana.

Affected by extensive erosion, FWP proposes to close the Sheds Bridge FAS until such time as an action plan for the river in this area can be implemented to ensure the safety of visitors.

The comment period for this EA runs from December 12, 2014 through January 12, 2015. Written comments can be mailed, emailed or delivered in person to the address below, and must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. on January 12, 2015. Please include your name and address with any comment.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks – Region 3
Attn: Sheds Bridge Fishing Access Site Proposed Closure
1400 S. 19th Avenue
Bozeman, MT 59718

Email: rheagney@mt.gov

If you have any questions about the proposal, please call Ray Heagney at (406) 994-4042.

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

Sam B. Sheppard
Region Three Supervisor

Attachment

Draft
Environmental Assessment
SHED'S BRIDGE FISHING ACCESS SITE CLOSURE

December 2014

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Shed's Bridge Fishing Access Site
Site Closure

Draft Environmental Assessment
MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of proposed state action: Fishing Access Site Closure
In 1985, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) acquired 8.14 acres of land in Gallatin County, Montana along the Gallatin River for the purpose of establishing a fishing access site (FAS). FWP proposes to close this site due to continual unstable river bank conditions which pose a public safety issue. Any future action would be considered in cooperation with adjacent landowners.

2. Agency authority for the proposed action: MCA 87-1-303. Rules for use of lands and waters, as it relates to the interest of public health, public safety.

3. Name of project: Shed's Bridge FAS Closure

4. Name, address and phone number of project sponsor (if other than the agency):
Montana FWP, Region 3
1400 South 19th
Bozeman, MT 59718
406-994-6987

5. Potential timeline of events:
Closure of the FAS: Winter 2014

6. Location affected by proposed action (county, range and township):
Gallatin County, MT
S10, T02 S, R04 E, TRACT 1 & 2 IN SE1/4SE1/4 10 2S 4E 8.110AC COS 1893
7 miles west of Bozeman on Hwy 84.
(Lat 45.674, Lng -111.209)

Figure 1. Location Maps for Shed's Bridge FAS.

7. Project size -- estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

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

8. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

(a) Permits: None

(b) Funding: None

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities: None

9. Narrative summary of the proposed action:

The Shed's Bridge Fishing Access Site (FAS) is located in Gallatin County, along the Gallatin River, seven miles west of Bozeman on Montana Highway 84. Beginning in the spring of 2011 the river bank at this site has continued to experienced severe erosion leaving a steep slope and near vertical 14-foot terrace. The terrace extends along the river's edge onto private property from approximately 100 feet upstream from the FAS to a point 150 feet downstream from the site. Routine inspections find the river bank to be unstable and any attempt to restore or stabilize it for safe public use may have detrimental impacts to the private landowners upstream and downstream of the FAS.

The proposal is to permanently close the site until an action plan can be developed to address the unstable conditions of the river bank. The Fish and Wildlife Commission has approved a formal environment review process, allowing for public comment on the proposed permanent closure of Shed's Bridge FAS.

Public use of Shed's Bridge FAS is very low. River access can be gained upstream just off secondary Hwy 84 onto River Road, a county maintained road, that parallels the Gallatin River. The county road provides adequate river access and suitable parking for anglers.

The site is currently posted as closed with cautionary signs warning of the unstable river bank. At the conclusion of the environmental review process the FWP commission will have a final vote on the closure.

Figure 2. Affected area of Shed's Bridge FAS.

10. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:

Alternative A, No Action: If the site is permitted to stay open for public recreation, the existing and future erosion of the bank would continue to be a public safety hazard to those attempting to reach the river at that location.

Preferred Alternative B: Shed's Bridge FAS would remain closed until such time as an action plan for the river in this area can be implemented to ensure the safety of visitors.

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

FWP would continue to have a presence at the location to monitor the bank condition, enforce the site's closure, and conduct noxious weed control.

PART VI. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

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

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT**				**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**		
a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?		X				
c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				1d
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other:		X				

1d: FWP would continue to monitor the condition of the river bank, working cooperatively with adjacent landowners to determine future actions.

2. AIR **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT**				**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**		
a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)		X				
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regulations? (Also see 2a.)		N/A				
f. Other:		X				

3. WATER Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		X				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)		N/A				
m. For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)		N/A				
n. Other:		X				

4. VEGETATION Will the proposed action result in?	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?		X				
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?		X				
f. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		N/A				
g. Other: Ongoing noxious weed management		X				4g

4g: FWP will continue to monitor weed infestations at this site and conduct routine weed control activities.

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

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

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

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

7e: The FAS would be closed to public use; however a viable alternative for river access is available upstream off Hwy 84 onto River Road, a county road parallel to the Gallatin River which provides adequate and suitable parking for anglers.

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?		X				
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?				X		8c
d. For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		N/A				
e. Other: None		X				

8c: Current stream bank conditions at this site pose a public safety issue. Mitigative measures are not available at this time beyond posting signage at the FAS to warn visitors of the hazard and placing jackleg fencing at the terrace boundary to deter visitor use.

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

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT**				**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**		
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?		X				
e. Define projected revenue sources		X				
f. Define projected maintenance costs.		X				
g. Other: None		X				

11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT**				**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**		
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.)			X			11C.
d. For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		N/A				
e. Other: None		X				

11C: Closure of the site would eliminate access and caution the public of the potential hazards and risks. In addition, there are no foreseeable impacts to tourism, due to the fact that this site is rarely used and that a viable alternative for river access is found upstream just off Hwy 83 onto River Road, a county maintained road that parallels the Gallatin River.

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

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

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

No secondary or cumulative impacts are anticipated if Shed's Bridge FAS were closed for the foreseeable future.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The dangers that this site presents to anglers and the general public were brought to light when the steep river bank wall collapsed under a small child who was visiting the site with his parents. Fortunately the father was able to grab the child before he fell into the river.

Any efforts to mitigate the bank erosion or channel migration in the future by FWP would require a feasibility analysis to determine what can be done to stabilize the stream bank in both the short and long term. An environmental assessment would be conducted to investigate impacts to the human environment of any bank stabilization work, including the impacts of stabilization on neighboring land owners. Given the low use of the site by the angling public, an analysis of the cost and subsequent benefit of a bank stabilization project be a fundamental component in determining any future actions.

The Shed's Bridge FAS is a relatively small site with historically little use by anglers. With an alternative river access found upstream, closure of Shed's Bridge FAS would not limit the ability of the public to fish or recreate on the Gallatin River.

After the final decision by the F&W Commission, FWP would post the site as closed and would continue to monitor the site for hazards and weed control.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Public involvement:

The public will be notified by way of legal notices in the *Bozeman Daily Chronicle,* and the *Helena Independent Record* in addition to a statewide press release. A public notice will also be posted on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: http://fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices. A direct mailing will be sent to adjacent landowners and interested parties. Additionally, copies will be available for public review at FWP Region 3 Headquarters, Bozeman office. This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having few minor impacts.

Public meetings to address questions for this EA can be arranged upon request within the comment period.

2. Comment period:

A 30-day comment period is proposed as appropriate for the scale of this project. The comment period will extend for 30 days following publication in area newspapers. Comments will be accepted until 5pm January 12, 2015. Comments should be sent to Region 3 Fishing Access Site Program Manager, Ray Heagney:

Mailed to: Shed's Bridge FAS Proposed Closure
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1400 South 19th
Bozeman, MT 59718

PART V. EA PREPARATION

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

Based on an evaluation of impacts to the physical and human environment under MEPA, this environmental review revealed no significant impacts from the proposed action. Therefore, an EIS is not necessary and an environmental assessment is the appropriate level of analysis. In determining the significance of the impacts, FWP assessed the severity, duration, geographic extent, and frequency of the impact, the probability that the impact would occur or reasonable assurance that the impact would not occur. FWP assessed the growth-inducing or growth-inhibiting aspects of the impact, the importance to the state and to society of the environmental resource or value affected, any precedent that would be set as a result of an impact of the proposed action that would commit FWP to future actions, and potential conflicts with local, federal, or state laws. As this EA revealed no significant impacts from the proposed actions, an EA is the appropriate level of review and an EIS is not required.

2. Person responsible for preparing the EA:

FWP
Ray Heagney
Regional Fishing Access Site Manager
1400 S. 19th Ave.
Bozeman, MT 59718
406-994-6987
rheagney@mt.gov

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

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- Fisheries Division
- Design & Construction Bureau
- Lands Division