

To: Madison River Working Group

From: Mac Minard

Date: August 23, 2021

Re: Madison River Infrastructure Improvements v1.0

As members of the Madison River working group, we have been tasked with examining ways to improve the quality of the Madison River fishing experience.

Work Group Chairman, Commissioner Walsh, requested that members develop a list of improvements that would address the FAS short comings and have these available for other committee members discussion and review at the initial meeting of the group scheduled for September 8 meeting in Bozeman.

Focusing on FAS improvements initially makes a great deal of practical sense since results from prior Angler Satisfaction Surveys clearly showed a need for improvements to Fishing Access Sites (FAS) having accounted for 70% of the dissatisfaction reported. Addressing FAS infrastructure and traffic management in a thoughtful and effective manner will lead to better traffic flow and therefore address the largest single component of concern. To that end I have met with several exceptionally knowledgeable users of the Madison River and assembled the following suite of recommendations.

Following review by the Committee, it may be wise to invite affected members of the public to provide the weighting necessary to assign a priority ranking.

Possible Upper Madison River FAS Infrastructure Improvements

Raynolds

- Increase parking and create organized parking spaces
- Widen and improve boat ramp
- Suggestion-Allow high water float fishing from Reynolds to Lyons on a date restricted i.e. May 20 to July 10 or flow level restriction i.e. above 1400 cfs at Kirby Ranch. Before and after those dates or until flows drop below 1400 cfs at Kirby, boats would be allowed as transportation only, no fishing from boats. If this high-water use policy is adopted, then Reynold's access would need to be expanded and improved. This extended season would cover salmon fly hatch and would spread people out over the river.

Pine Butte

- Increase parking and create organized parking spaces
- Widen and improve boat ramp
- Remove this as a launch access and allow parking for wading anglers only. NO BOAT LAUNCHING OR TAKE OUT ALLOWED AT PINE BUTTE! Once the date/ high flow float fishing season is over and boats are allowed only as conveyance, the removing of this access would result in watercraft users having to keep moving through Reynolds to Lyons (a 10-mile section) which would diminish the opportunities for boating anglers to "camp" on a favored piece of water and tie up wading opportunities for anglers on foot.

Lyons (HIGH PRIORITY ACCESS)

- Move boat ramps to upper end of access (much easier and faster to walk boat downstream than to pull upstream against the current to moor boat. Remove lower ramps entirely and improve this area for rigging.
- Improve the bank above the new upstream boat ramps to allow boats coming down from Reynolds to pull in upstream of the new boat ramp. We do not want boaters to have to drag their boats upriver to reach the ramp.
- Remove large boulders upstream of the existing boat ramps to allow for easier boat mooring below the new upper ramps.
- Expand current parking in the west parking area.
- Decrease space in boat rigging area to make more space for parking

Windy

- No changes

Palisades

- No changes
- Utilize the unused land between current ramp and current parking area to develop more parking and rigging area.

Ruby

- No changes

MacAtee

- Widen existing ramp or build an additional ramp—remove boulders upstream of current ramp to make mooring easier

Storey

- Build an additional ramp upstream of current ramp
- Small increase in available parking and organize parking spaces
- If land is available, move boat ramp upstream of the irrigation diversion. In the current setup, when boats are coming down to takeout and are also being rowed or dragged upstream through the irrigation channel to depart, it can be a goat show

Varney (HIGH PRIORITY)

- Move current ramp downstream and build an additional ramp (this is the highest priority fix needed at FAS on the Upper Madison)
- Suggest moving ramp upstream to the southern end of the property putting in new double ramp and expanding lower ramp to a double wide.
- Create an expanded boat rigging area
- Organize parking spaces for more efficiency and less wasted space due to parking chaos

8 Mile

- Remove current roundabout at ramp and replace with a boat rigging area and 2 ramps (use current configuration at Windy as a template)—signage of boat rigging area and empty trailer parking will eliminate some of the chaos.
- Expand current ramp to double wide. If land is available, expand the upper parking area and do all rigging and parking in upper parking area. Only use lower double ramp for put ins and take outs. No rigging allowed in the riverside ramp area.
- Increase parking and reorganize parking spaces in upper parking area.

Burnt Tree

- Increase parking and reorganize parking spaces

Ennis (HIGH PRIORITY)

- Increase parking and create organized parking spaces
- Possibly relocate the ramp further upstream with a double ramp
- Improve banks to allow for boat mooring upstream and downstream of the new upstream double wide ramp.

Valley Garden

- No changes
- Suggest adopting a policy for seasonal i.e., May 1-June 25 or high-water flow i.e. flows above 1400 cfs to allow float fishing down to Valley Garden. This should encompass the salmon fly hatch season when this section of the river is very difficult if not impossible to wade and would take some pressure off the Ennis access.
- If high water season policy adopted, improved parking and rigging area would be required.

Universal Signage

Attention Floaters:

Please recreate with others in mind responsibility, courteously, and safely.

Plan ahead and rig boat prior to using boat ramp, limit launch time to 5 minutes or less.

Keep boats in the river well clear of ramps and leave space for others to load/unload

Remain respectful of other floaters and consider helping others while you wait your turn