Draft Environmental Assessment



Eroded sections of the Somers Beach State Park

Somers Beach State Park Beach Erosion Structure Proposal

January 2022



Somers Beach State Park Beach Erosion Structure Draft Environmental Assessment MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST

Executive Summary Somers Beach State Park Beach Erosion Structure Draft Environmental Assessment

In October 2021, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) acquired the 106-acre Somers Beach State Park (SBSP) on the northwest shore of Flathead Lake for inclusion into Montana's state park system.

Lakeshore erosion due to water level fluctuations and wave action is a concern at many locations along the North Shore of Flathead Lake. Similar to the existing erosion control structure at FWP's Osprey View Fisheries Conservation Area a few miles to the east of Somers Beach, the construction of a gravel beach erosion structure is proposed at SBSP. Access for equipment and materials to the western shoreline of the park would be via Burnell Avenue. Access to the eastern shoreline of the park would require the construction of a temporary road from the agricultural field on the north part of the property south to the lakebed.

The public comment period for this draft EA will extend for 15 days beginning January 10, 2022. Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., January 24, 2022, and can be mailed to:

SBSP Erosion Control EA Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks 490 N. Meridian Road Kalispell, MT 59901

or sent by e-mail to: Stevie Burton at Stevie.Burton@mt.gov

Copies of this EA will be available for public review at FWP Region One headquarters in Kalispell; the Montana State Library in Helena; and on the FWP web site (<u>http://fwp.mt.gov</u>) under Public Notices.

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

- 1. Type of proposed state action: FWP is proposing to construct an erosion control structure along the north shore of Flathead Lake at SBSP. The proposed dynamic equilibrium and gravel beach structure is similar to those installed at other eroding sites along the lakeshore. This beach is designed to halt erosion and collect sediments, detritus and coarse woody debris without isolating the adjacent wetlands. It is also intended to minimize impacts to the shoreline from recreational use at the new state park. To complete this project a temporary road constructed of logs and gravel would be built from the agricultural field to the shoreline (Figure 9). Access to the construction site on the west side of the park would be via Burnell Avenue.
- 2. Agency authority for the proposed action: The 1977 Montana Legislature enacted statute 87-1-209, provides authority for FWP to acquire, develop, operate, and maintain lands or waters for state parks and outdoor recreation.
- 3. Name of project: Somers Beach State Park Erosion Control Structure.
- 4. Name, address and phone number of project sponsor (if other than the agency): Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks is the project sponsor.

5. Current Status of Project Design:

The project design and permitting has been completed for the previous owner but no groundwork has begun. Permitting for FWP, as the new owner, is currently being led by Dr. Mark Lorang at Freshwater Map. Project approval and materials preparation is anticipated in February 2022.

6. **Location affected by proposed action (county, range and township):** The proposed project is in Flathead County. Section: 24, 25 Township: T27N Range: R20W





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

	Acres	Acres		
(a)	Developed: Residential	0	(d) Floodplain	25
	Industrial	0	(e) Productive: Irrigated cropland	0
(b)	Open Space/Woodlands/Recreation	49	Dry cropland Forestry	20 0
(c)	Wetlands/Riparian Areas	12	Rangeland Other	0

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

- (a) County Road Approach Permit
- (b) MDEQ Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan Permit to be obtained and administered by Contractor
- (c) Clean Water Act Section 404 Permit from U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- (d) MDEQ 318: Short Term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity Related to Construction Activity
- (e) Flathead County Lake and Lakeshore Major Variance and Floodplain Development Permit

Funding:

Potential Funding Sources FWP \$564,950 (approximate) Amounts

(b) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

Agency Name and Type of Responsibility

US Environmental Protection Agency

• Ongoing site monitoring obligations related to groundwater contamination

Montana Department of Environmental Quality

- Ongoing site monitoring obligations related to groundwater contamination
- Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
 - Oversight of Groundwater Control Area
- Flathead County
 - Oversight of survey and property transfer
 - Weed inspection and management agreement

9. Narrative summary of the proposed action or project including the purpose and benefits of the proposed action:

Lake level regulation has created wetlands bordering seasonal aquatic environments along the North Shore of Flathead Lake (Fig. 1). Historically these shoreline landscapes were inundated during spring run-off by the subsequent lake level rise. Decades of dam operation regulating lake level in Flathead Lake, by maintaining an extended full pool season for months (June to October,) has concentrated wave energy over a narrow range in lake-level elevation (Lorang 1993a, b &c). The result has been a steady loss of fringing wetlands due to wave erosion (Lorang 2017, 2016, 2014, 2007, 2006a, Lorang et al 1993a, b &c).



Figure 1. A July 2014 satellite image of the North Shore of Flathead Lake. The yellow and red lines and arrows show the location of gravel beach systems constructed in Flathead Lake beginning in 2005. The yellow lines indicate sections of shoreline owned by USFWS and MTFWP. The red lines indicate location of beach systems built and permitted by private property owners. The yellow ellipse shows the location of Somers Beach State Park which is the last remaining shoreline that continues to erode at a rate of approximately 1 meter per year.

Building gravel beaches as shore protection structures has been a permittable and accepted approach to the problem of shoreline erosion in Flathead Lake since 1989 when the first perched-gravel beach was built in the lake (Lorang 1991). Approximately 2.5 miles of eroding shoreline composing the North Shore of the lake has been stabilized by building gravel beaches (Fig. 1 and 2). These shorelines are now dynamically stable and undergoing a natural restoration process as new aquatic and riparian vegetation recolonize the area associated with the beaches (Fig. 3). In this sense it is a living shoreline solution to the erosion problem. The Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribes have also adopted this approach to deal with their shoreline erosion problems at Salish Point in Polson and along the Blue Bay campground shoreline (Lorang 2003 and 2006b). Now both projects are popular public recreational beaches that also serve the purpose of providing a natural landscape (beach) transition from the lake environment to the terrestrial or wetland fringing shoreline (Fig. 4 and 5).



Figure 2. A July 2014 satellite image of the North Shore gravel beach system for the east side of the Flathead River mouth. The curved spit feature is built to protect a transition zone in the beach system where the two trending beach lines meet at a sharp angle to each other and the wave approach for common storm paths. Most of the wave energy is dissipated on the spit through breaking with the remaining portion radiating back into the lake. This shoreline of the USFWS Waterfowl Protection Area (WPA) is a popular recreational spot as shown by the many boats in the photograph.



Figure 3. Time-series photographs of a section of eroding marsh shoreline near Bigfork that is now owned by FWP. Photograph (A) was taken in May 2007. Just prior to placement of the gravel shown in Photograph (B). Photograph (C) was taken in September 2007 showing the accumulation of logs deposited during 2007 storm waves that over washed the beach. Photograph (D) was taken in August 2016 showing the accumulation of peat and growth of marsh vegetation over the 9-year period.



Figure 4. A September 2018 photograph looking north over the gravel beach fronting the CSKT campground at Blue Bay (right photo). This beach was constructed in 2007 and has functioned as a shore protection structure for over a decade now. It currently exists in a state of dynamic equilibrium where it adjusts and shifts in profile to summer storm waves while at the same time not washing away. It does this because wave action pushes gravel up the beach face forming a crest rather than washing it offshore (Lorang 2000, 2002). The waterline shows the height to which wave swash runs up the beach face. Before 2007 this shoreline was eroding with the lake level extending all the way to the vegetation line seen here at the top of the gravel beach (left photo).



Figure 5. Before and after photographs showing the old seawall at Salish Point in the City of Polson (left) and the gravel beach that was built at the site after the seawall was removed (right). Salish Point is now a public beach owned and managed by CSKT.

FWP proposes to install a similar dynamic equilibrium gravel beach structure along the eroding shoreline at the recently acquired SBSP. The proposed project has been designed by and would be implemented by Dr. Mark Lorang.

The goal of this project is to 1) stop the loss of existing wetlands due to wave erosion; and 2) provide a natural transition from the aquatic environment along the shoreline to a fringing wetland that maintains the hydrologic connection with the lake. The result would be a shift from a net erosion dominated system to a net depositional system. The landscape would be composed of complex curved shorelines rather than conventional riprap.

The proposed project area extends from the eastern side of the community of Somers to the western boundary of the USFW Waterfowl Production Area (WPA). Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) owns a 15-acre property within this stretch that is bordered on the west, north and east by SBSP. The BNSF property, which lies between Sections 1 and 2 of the proposed project in Figure 6, has been stabilized with riprap and would not be included in the project.

This project proposes to treat five sections of eroding beach shoreline at SBSP (Figure 6). The project would require 3,785 cubic yards of gravel fill, logs with attached root wads, and the construction of an access road to the lake shore. Proposed erosion control treatments for each section are listed below.

Section 1 shoreline forms the western edge of the project next to the end of the access road and backs up to the steep slopes of the community of Somers (Fig. 6). This shoreline has approximately 190 feet of severely undercut bank and would require the placement of 600 cubic yards of a mixture of 6" minus cobble with 3" minus drain rock (Fig. 7). Because the orientation between the shoreline and the dominant range of wave approach forms a steep angle between breaking waves and the beach, gravel in this area would transport northward. To minimize the amount of gravel required and limit the longshore transport, a mix of larger gravel (3" to 6" diameter) and cobble would be used to form this section of beach (Fig. 7 bottom). The material would be placed against the existing shoreline with a spit on the North-east end which would curve out into the lake (Fig. 6). The spit embayment would trap gravel and organic material and keep it from moving along the shoreline, much of which is already covered with riprap.

The gravel beach for **Sections 2 – 5** would be constructed with a screened pit run material resulting in a mixture composed predominately of 2° to $3/4^{\circ}$ diameter gravel and sand (Fig. 8). This material would be placed against and align with the shoreline (Fig. 6).

Section 2 would be constructed with 1,492 cubic yards of 2" minus screened pit run material and would border the BNSF property with a spit forming its western end. Stumps with root wads and attached stems would be placed along the spit end within the embayment of section 2 and at the tip of the depositional horn of section 3 (Fig. 8). Waves would wrap around the spit (a process called refraction) and into the cuspate embayment before breaking on the gravel beach within. These waves would carry wood and other organic debris into the cuspate embayment. The embayment of section 2 behind the spit would collect fine sediment, wood debris, and organic material and begin to fill in. Over time this would allow aquatic and emergent marsh vegetation to colonize the newly

formed beach. This process would continue filling the embayment behind the spit creating a hotspot of biological diversity in an area that is currently a concern for accelerated erosion. Some material would be driven landward until it reaches the depositional horn.

The depositional horn (**Section 3**) is currently being formed by waves. Given that this is the shape that is naturally forming it makes sense to enhance the process. That can be done by bringing in 550 cubic yards of pit run sand and gravel as well as root-wads and logs. The material would be placed so that it extends just above full pool lake levels (Fig. 8). The shape would enhance the circulation patterns and the low elevation would allow spilling breaking waves to form rather than plunging breaking waves. The spilling breakers would carry fine sediments shoreward onto the placed material and deposit that load of sediment as the waves shoal across the depositional horn.

Sections 4 and 5 would be created by placing 750 and 403 cubic yards respectively of screened 2 inch minus pit run material. **Section 5** would be aligned as a parabolic shaped beach (Fig. 6).



Figure 6. Proposed gravel beach types, section lengths, and materials at SBSP.



Figure 7. The top left photograph is of the existing shoreline condition at Section 1 taken from the staging area. The top right photograph is of the beach built in Blue Bay which is similar to the proposed Section 1 beach. The bottom photo is a rendition of a general cross-section for the proposed beach at Section 1.



Figure 8. Cross section profiles for gravel beaches in Sections 2 through 5. These beaches are proposed from the eastern BNSF boundary to the eastern edge of SBSP.

Construction activities would require 3,785 cubic yards of materials that would need to be delivered to the shoreline. Burnell Avenue along the west boundary of the SBSP would be used to access an open area near the lake where materials would be staged for Section 1 along the park's western shoreline. From this placement site, tracked equipment would distribute the materials to the construction site on the lakebed. All transport and construction would be done while the lake is drawn down during the winter and spring. The use of tracked equipment would reduce disturbance to and from and prevent compaction of the lakebed.

Due to the 15-acre BNSF property bisecting the shoreline, access to the eastern project site would require the construction of a temporary road. This road would pass through the agricultural field at the north end of SBSP before dropping into the wetlands on its way to the lake shore. The proposed construction would occur in the winter when the ground is frozen; however, delicate wet or soft spots would likely remain throughout the season. To minimize damage to these areas approximately 200 feet of log corduroy road would be constructed (Figure 9). This section of road would consist of 20 ft logs laid on top of geotextile fabric. Log placement would be perpendicular to the direction of travel. This road will be rehabilitated once all erosion control work is completed, and some or all of the road footprint could be converted to a pedestrian trail at a later date. Disturbed areas would be scarified and reseeded with native species as needed. This road would also extend approximately 20 feet onto the lakebed. This would occur while the lake is drawn down and the lakebed is frozen. The portion of this road laid on top of the wetlands would potentially remain in place until Winter 2023 to facilitate a second phase of erosion control before being removed.



Figure 9. These photos depict a temporary log corduroy haul road that was constructed and removed along a different section of the north shore of Flathead Lake. This road is similar to the proposed access road across the SBSP wetlands.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

1. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action

Under the no action alternative, FWP would not develop an erosion control structure. Under this scenario, wave action would continue to erode SBSP degrading the wetlands adjacent to the lake.

Preferred Alternative B: Proposed Action

In the preferred alternative, FWP would construct gravel beach erosion control structures and a temporary access road as described in this EA.

Alternative C: Rip rap

In this alternative all work proposed in Alternative B would be completed and the Section 1 beach would extend eastward onto BNSF property. Instead of creating a temporary haul road to access the east side of SBSP, the materials would be transported over the lakebed along the BSNF shoreline. This alternative was dismissed because FWP does not own contiguous shoreline to be able to transport materials from the established access to the eastern reaches of the FWP beach, and this option is not part of the previously approved permitting.

Alternative D:

In this alternative oversized angular rock would be used to construct a riprap revetment spanning the beach at SBSP. This alternative would result in a stabilized shoreline but would not provide the ecological or recreational benefits of a gravel beach. Additionally, this approach could concentrate wave and longshore energy onto neighboring properties. This alternative was dismissed due to potential negative impacts, minimal ecological benefits, and low compatibility with recreation.

PART III. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

Evaluation of the impacts of the <u>Proposed Action</u> including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

1. LAND RESOURCES	IMPACT *	_				
Will the proposed action result in:	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated∗	Comment Index
 a. **Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure? 				X (Positive)		1a.
 b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility? 				x	x	1b.
 c. **Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features? 		х				
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 (Positive)		1d.
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		x				
f. Other:		Х				

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

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

- 1a. As described above, this project is intended to halt erosion at SBSP and create conditions where sediments and organic material can accumulate to rebuild the shoreline.
- 1b. This project is intended to halt erosion. Compaction may occur due to materials transport and the use of heavy equipment on the lakebed and adjacent wetlands. Compaction would be mitigated with the use of tracked equipment and a temporary log corduroy road.
- 1d. This project is intended to halt erosion at SBSP. The eastern 1,592 lineal ft of shoreline would be shaped with cuspate bays and spits designed to accumulate sediments and organic material.

2. AIR	IMPACT *					
Will the proposed action result in:	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
a. **Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)			x			2a.
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		х				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		x				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		x				
e. ***For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a.)		x				
f. Other:		Х				1

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (attach additional pages of pages o

narrative if needed):

2a. Vehicle and equipment emissions would be present during beach construction. These emissions would be short-term and typical of other similarly sized construction projects.

3. WATER	IMPACT *		Can			
Will the proposed action result in:	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant	Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
 a. *Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity? 				X (Positive)		3а
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		х				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?			x			Зс.
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?		х				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		х				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		х				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		х				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		х				
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?		х				
I. **** <u>For P-R/D-J</u> , will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)				х		31
m. *** <u>For P-R/D-J</u> , will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)		x				
n. Other:		х				

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

3a. Shoreline stabilization would reduce turbidity in the area during full pool conditions. Disturbance to the lakebed during construction operations may cause increased turbidity as the lake level rises in the spring. This is expected to be minimal and short term.

- 3c. The eastern 1,592 lineal ft of shoreline would be shaped with cuspate bays and spits designed to interrupt longshore currents and encourage depositional conditions.
- 3l. This project would be constructed entirely within the 100-year floodplain. Flood conveyance is not expected to be altered. A floodplain development permit was issued for this project for the previous owner, but the project was not completed. Construction would not proceed without a valid floodplain development permit.

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

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Vegetation (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- 4a. This project is expected to benefit wetland plant species by stabilizing the shoreline and creating additional wetland habitat as peat and sediments accumulate and are colonized by wetland species.
- 4f. This project would halt the erosion of wetlands along the north shore of Flathead Lake and create additional wetland habitat over time as peat and sediments accumulate along the beach.

The portion of the haul road that will cross wetland will be constructed in a manner to minimize wetland soil and vegetative impacts. Initially, the hauling activities will only occur when there is sufficient depth of frozen soil to keep the equipment from sinking. Secondly, logs will be laid side by side in a "corduroy" fashion over the wetland portion for the heavy equipment to cross. The logs will be picked up once the haul road is no longer in use. This process may extend into the following year depending on weather and schedule. Finally, if any disruption of wetland vegetation remains after the corduroy road is picked up, vegetation will be re-planted. The USCOE has evaluated the detailed plan for the wetland crossing by Freshwater Map, deeming it sufficient and issuing the permit to proceed.

** 5. FISH/WILDLIFE	IMPACT *	1	1			
Will the proposed action result in:	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		х				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		х				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		х				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		х				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		х				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		х				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?			х			5g
h. **** <u>For P-R/D-J</u> , will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)			х			5h
i. *** <u>For P-R/D-J</u> , will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		x				
j. Other:		Х				

- 5g. This project, along with the development of SBSP, would likely increase recreational use at the site which may stress the local wildlife and alter their behavior. Additionally, construction activities may temporarily displace some wildlife. However, habitat loss due to current levels of erosion would be mitigated, thus preserving existing wetland habitat.
- 5h. Flathead Lake is designated as critical habitat for Bull Trout. The shallow water habitat adjacent to SBSP is not frequently used by Bull Trout and this project is not expected to affect them. All construction would be completed when the lake level is low preventing fish from occupying the area.

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS	IMPACT *		Can			
Will the proposed action result in:	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant	Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			х			6a.
b. Exposure of people to severe or nuisance noise levels?		х				
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?		х				
e. Other:		х				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Noise/Electrical Effects (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

6a. The development of beach erosion control structure could temporarily cause an increase in existing noise levels associated with construction activity and the transport of materials to the site. The project duration may last up to three months.

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

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

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS	IMPACT *					
Will the proposed action result in:	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
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?			х		х	8a.
 b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan? 		х				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		х				
d. *** <u>For P-R/D-J</u> , will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		х				
e. Other:		х				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Risk/Health Hazards (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

8a. There is a very low chance that the mitigation actions taken on or near the BNSF sites could fail, which could release hazardous substances (creosote-contaminated water or sediment) into Flathead Lake. There is a small chance that people recreating at the park would be temporarily exposed to creosote-contaminated water.

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

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Community Impact (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

9a. This project would improve the recreational experience of SBSP users and would be expected to be an economic benefit to the local community.

10 PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES	IMPACT					
Will the proposed action result in:	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
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?		х				
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				
 Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source? 		х				
e. Define projected revenue sources						
f. Define projected maintenance costs.						
g. Other:		Х				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Public Services/Taxes/Utilities (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

** 11 AESTHETICS/RECREATION	IMPACT *					
Will the proposed action result in:	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?			х			11a.
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?			х			11b.
c. * *Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings?			х			11c.
d. *** <u>For P-R/D-J</u> , will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails		х				

or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)			
e. Other:	х		

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Aesthetics/Recreation (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- 11a. The proposed action would use local materials to develop a natural appearance. The existing condition is an unnatural eroding shoreline, with abrupt and severely eroded sections.
- 11b. SBSP is on the outskirts of Somers. This project would alter the appearance of the shoreline at the project site, by converting the severely eroded sections to a more natural appearance.
- 11c. This project is part of a larger effort to improve the newly acquired SBSP. These improvements are likely to result in increased recreational use at the site which was previously private property.

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

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Cultural/Historical Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

12a. In keeping with the Montana Antiquities Act and related regulations, all undertakings within State Parks are assessed for their potential to affect cultural resources. Any temporary or permanent developments within SBSP would require cultural resource assessment. Under the proposed project, FWP would contract with the CSKT Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) for the completion of a cultural resource inventory in the affected area in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office. The process for cultural resource inventory and consultation is outlined in Administrative Rules 12.8.501-12.8.510. FWP would also consult with all Tribal Historic Preservation Offices affiliated with SBSP in accordance with our Tribal Consultation Guidelines.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE	IMPACT *				Can	
Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:		None	Minor *	Potentially Significant	Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
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			13b
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			13d
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		х				
f. *** <u>For P-R/D-J</u> , is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)		х				
g. **** <u>For P-R/D-J</u> , list any federal or state permits required.			x			13g

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Significance Criteria (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

13b. Property owned by BNSF is the site of a former tie plant that was designated as a superfund site in 1984. Remedial actions began in 1985 resulting in the removal of over 22,000 cubic yards of contaminated soils and treatment of over 100,000 gallons of contaminated water from the Swamp Pond area (Site). Despite this remediation, areas of contaminated soil remain under the Site and SBSP. The residual contamination is being monitored by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and does not pose a risk to human health. Disturbance of contaminated soils during this project is very unlikely.

13d. Installation of the gravel beach would have ecological and recreational benefits regardless of future development plans at the park.

13g. A Clean Water Act section 404 permit would be required from the Army Corps of Engineers. A Floodplain Permit would be required from the Flathead County Floodplain Administrator.

PART IV. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

Overall, this EA found that the proposed action of developing a beach erosion control structure at SBSP would halt erosion, maintain, and protect wetland function, limit impacts from recreationists, and begin restoring shoreline habitat.

Negative impacts from the project would be minimal, short term, and primarily associated with construction activities. There remains a very low risk of disturbing contaminated soils near the BNSF property.

PART V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Describe the level of public involvement for this project if any, and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?

The public will be notified by way of a statewide press releases in the *Independent Record, The Daily Interlake, and the Flathead Beacon,* and by public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: <u>https://fwp.mt.gov/public-notices</u>. Individual notices will be sent to those that have requested one.

An information public meeting will be held January 18, 2022 at 6:00 pm via Zoom. The meeting link will be provided on the Region 1 webpage at: https://fwp.mt.gov/aboutfwp/regions/region1

2. Duration of comment period, if any.

A 15 day public comment period is proposed. This level of public involvement is appropriate for this scale of project.

The public comment period will run from January 10, 2022 until 5:00 pm on January 24, 2022. Comments should be sent to:

Stevie Burton, SBSP Erosion Control EA Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks 490 N. Meridian Road Kalispell, MT 59901

or sent by e-mail to: Stevie Burton at Stevie.Burton@mt.gov

PART VI. EA PREPARATION

1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? (YES/NO)?

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

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

Kenneth Breidinger Fisheries Biologist 490 N. Meridian Rd Kalispell, MT 59901 (406) 751-4574

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

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Parks Division Wildlife Division Fisheries Division Design & Construction Bureau Lands Section Legal Section Responsive Management Unit

Montana Department of Environmental Quality United States Environmental Protection Agency

References

U. S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 8. 2017. Fifth Five-Year Review Report for the Burlington Northern Former Tie Treating Plant Superfund Site Somers, Montana

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Lorang, M.S., 1991. An artificial perched-gravel beach as a shore protection structure. Proc. Coastal Sediments '91, American Society of Civil Engineers, II: 1916-1925.

Lorang, M, S. 2017. Assessing Shoreline Restoration on the North Shore of Flathead Lake. Final report submitted to Energy Keepers Incorporated, A Corporation of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe Polson, MT 59860.

Lorang, M, S. 2016. Assessing Shoreline Restoration on the North Shore of Flathead Lake. Final report submitted to Energy Keepers Incorporated, A Corporation of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe Polson, MT 59860.

Lorang, M.S. 2014. North Shore Erosion Control, Monitoring and Wetland Restoration 2010 through 2014 Final Report for PPL Montana.

Lorang M.S. 2007. Conceptual soft structure plan for the North Shore of Flathead Lake: Erosion control and nearshore aquatic/wetland habitat restoration. Final design report submitted to PPL-MT. 29 pp.

Lorang, M.S. 2006a. North Shore Erosion Control: Soft Structure Conceptual Design Ideas for the US Fish and Wildlife, Waterfowl Product Area (WPA). Design report submitted to PPL-MT. 25 pp.

Lorang M.S. 2006b. Final report for the East Bay and Blue Bay project. Final report to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. 22 pp.

Lorang M.S. 2003. Salish Point Waterfront Redevelopment Project: Designing a Natural Gravel Beach for the Waterfront area. Final report to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. 18 pp.

TOURISM REPORT MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA) & MCA 23-1-110

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has initiated the review process as mandated by MCA 23-1-110 and the Montana Environmental Policy Act in its consideration of the project described below. As part of the review process, input and comments are being solicited. Please complete the project name and project description portions and submit this form to:

Jan Stoddard Montana Office of Tourism 301 S. Park Ave. Helena, MT 59601

Project Name: Somers Beach State Park Erosion Control Structure

Project Description:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) is proposing to construct an erosion control structure along the north shore of Flathead Lake at Somers Beach State Park (SBSP). The proposed dynamic equilibrium and gravel beach structure is similar to those installed at other eroding sites along the lakeshore. This beach is designed to halt erosion and collect sediments, detritus, and coarse woody debris without isolating the adjacent wetlands. It is also intended to minimize impacts to the shoreline from recreational use at the new state park. To complete this project a temporary road constructed of logs and gravel would be built from the agricultural field to the shoreline. Access to the construction site on the west side of the park would be via Burnell Avenue.

Would this site development project have	an impact on the tour	ism economy?
NO	(YES)	If YES, briefly describe:

SBSP is on the outskirts of Somers. This project would alter the appearance of the shoreline at the project site, by converting the severely eroded sections to a more natural appearance. The existing condition is an unnatural eroding shoreline, with abrupt and severely eroded sections. This project would improve the recreational experience of SBSP users and would be expected to be an economic benefit to the local community.

In 2019, Montana's 12.6 million non-resident visitors spent over \$3.8 billion in the state according to a 2020 report from the University of Montana's Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research. Montana residents use and value state parks. A 2018 ITRR study confirmed that over half of Montana residents 18 and older use Montana State Parks at least once a year and that the importance of having state parks is agreed upon by all residents. This project would enhance the visitor experience to the park and protect the shoreline from further erosion so that visitors can enjoy it for years to come.

Additionally, this state park will add unique opportunities for wildlife viewing, as it is located immediately adjacent to the USFW Flathead Lake Waterfowl Production Area. The park is located in close proximity to other developed tourism attractions and is readily accessible from the major population centers in the Flathead Valley.

Finally, recreation access and activities are in high demand for visitors and Montana State Parks

are seeing record numbers in visitation. The intent to visit has dramatically increased this year due to the pandemic and a desire for safe outdoor recreation experiences.

2. Does this impending improvement alter the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings?

NO

(YES

If YES, briefly describe:

The proposed action would use local materials to develop a natural appearance. The existing condition is an unnatural eroding shoreline, with abrupt and severely eroded sections. This project is part of a larger effort to improve the newly acquired SBSP. These improvements are likely to result in increased recreational use at the site which was previously private property.

This project will improve the quality and quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities. The park adds 106 acres of publicly owned and accessible property on Flathead Lake, which is one of Montana's featured attractions. These improvements are critical to the usability and long-term sustainability of visitor assets for outdoor recreation, including non-resident visitors. As the interim analysis is being completed, we are assuming the agency has determined it has necessary funding for the on-going operations and maintenance once this project is complete.

Signature Jan Stoddard

Date 1/14/21