



Draft Environmental Assessment

Lost Creek State Park Site Improvement Projects



March 2022

Draft Environmental Assessment

MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST

Project Name: Lost Creek State Site Improvement Projects

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of proposed action:

New trail construction, camp pad leveling, and parking area.

2. Agency authority for the proposed action:

Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (MT FWP), Park and Outdoor Recreation Division
Mark Filonczuk, Region 3, 1400 S 19th Ave, Bozeman MT 59718
406-577-7894

3. Anticipated Schedule:

Estimated Construction Commencement Date: June 2022

Estimated Completion Date: October 2022 (depending on MCC crew availability)

Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 90%

Summarize precisely when (what time of year) project phases will be occurring:

- Spring 2022 - finalization of mapping and trail layout, flagging, and hazard assessment.
- Summer 2022 - depending on MCC availability, begin work on east end of trail and perform the rough-out, intend to create tread for the .5-mile trail.
- Fall 2022 - finish work on the trail if needed; Contractor construct/improve parking area at the east end of the park. Construction of new tent pad areas

5. Location affected by proposed action. Include a map. If your project will take place on specific trails, ensure they are clearly identified here by name as well as on your map:

Northeast side of Lost Creek State Park: New trail will start just east of the fee station and camp host pad and will traverse the park trending W by NW on the north side of Lost Creek to the small picnic location near the first road bridge over Lost Creek. Plans are to connect with the USFS trail departing from the upper campground/waterfall area of the park in the future (see attached map for clarification.)



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

	<u>Acres</u>		<u>Acres</u>
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	<u>.2</u>
Residential	<u>0</u>		
Industrial	<u>0</u>	(e) Productive:	
(Existing shop area)		Irrigated cropland	<u>0</u>
(b) Open Space/	<u>1-2</u>	Dry cropland	<u>0</u>
Woodlands/Recreation		Forestry	<u>0</u>
(c) Wetlands/Riparian	<u>0</u>	Rangeland	<u>0</u>
Areas		Other	<u>0</u>

7. Permits, Funding & Overlapping Jurisdiction.

(a) **Permits:** permits will be filed at least 2 weeks prior to project start.

Agency Name No Permits required Permits

Consultation with MT FWP Fisheries Division about streamside work and MT FWP Design and Construction Bureau determined that the project would not enter the watercourse and would not disturb any wetlands, so it would not require any permits. There will be a Heritage Survey performed by our Heritage Resource specialist, but no permit is anticipated stemming from this survey (Appendix B, SHPO Concurrence Letter).

Should other phases of this project commence, the trail has an eventual connection with a USFS trail but will in no other way alter that trail. Where it connects is still fully within the boundary of Lost Creek State Park, not on USFS land.

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>Type of Responsibility</u>
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8. Narrative summary of the proposed action (include reasons why project is necessary and benefits of the project):

Scenic views and newly recognized climbing opportunities are drawing an increasing number of people to Lost Creek State Park. After soliciting public input, we found that camping and hiking/walking are the most common uses of Lost Creek State Park followed by rock climbing.

One of the most traveled and scenic sections of the park is Lost Creek Canyon, but the only trail available is a Forest Service trail that starts within the park that crosses onto USFS property almost immediately. This leaves much of the foot traffic on a potentially dangerous narrow and windy park road.

The newly proposed trail will travel .5 miles along the north side of the park taking visitors above the stream level at which the road travels. This trail will provide better access and experiences for visitors including the dramatic viewshed of Lost Creek State Park as well as climbing access to replace quickly eroding social trails. This trail is Phase 1 of a larger project to provide connectivity to the USFS trail at the west end of the park. This trail will immediately increase safety by removing some of the foot traffic from the narrow winding road. Because the trail will be relatively short, it can be easily maintained by limited park staff and volunteers.

The project will take place completely within the boundaries of Lost Creek State Park. The project also includes a small parking pad of five spaces at the newly formed trailhead as there is presently no parking at that end of the park. This parking area would assist in one of the prime goals of the project, to direct foot traffic onto a trail and off the narrow roadway.

9. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action

This would not mitigate the continuing issue of eroding social trails used by rock climbers and other off-trail explorers in the park. Park foot traffic would remain restricted to the potentially dangerous roadway. Campsites would not be adequate for paying park visitors.

Alternative B: Proposed Action

Visitor experience to the park is improved as a result of new trail access, off road parking area, and level tent pads.

Other alternative(s):

Alternative C: Complete the entire project in one phase. This would be a 1.5-1.8-mile hiking trail that would by necessity cross large talus slopes or require bridges across Lost Creek. This is a long-range plan and may not be feasible in the timeframe proposed.

Alternative D: Complete this climber's access trail and Phase 1 of a larger project, but no added parking area. This would save nearly \$10,000 from the project but would not address the lack of parking to access the new trail resulting in having foot traffic continue use on a significant section of roadway. This alternative would, however, have a smaller footprint in the park as there would be less earth work and heavy equipment construction.

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

Montana Conservation Corps would go under agreement to work only on the trail corridor as laid out.

A contractor will be hired for work on the parking area and campsite tent pads and will operate specifically on the site in the manner required by MT FWP. They would be required to work in accordance with all contract stipulations of MT FWP to ensure no impacts beyond what is listed in this document.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

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

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Provided
1. Geology and soil quality, stability, and moisture			x		x	1
2. Air quality or objectionable odors				x		
3. Water quality, quantity, and distribution (surface or groundwater)				x		
4. Existing water right or reservation				x		
5. Vegetation cover, quantity, and quality			x		x	2
6. Unique, endangered, or fragile vegetative species				x		
6. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats						N/A
7. Unique, endangered, or fragile wildlife or fisheries species			x		x	3
8. The nesting or movement of migratory bird species			x		x	4
9. Introduction of new species into an area			x		x	5
10. Changes to abundance or movement of species				x		

1. This trail work should improve soil stability as it will replace quickly eroding social trails. There will be minor soil displacement in construction but will stabilize rapidly and should have minimal impact over time. This is based on trail work done at Lewis & Clark Caverns which often has loose soil on steep hillsides in which the trails have helped stabilize sections. The parking area is directly adjacent to the road and will be sloped to prevent high erosion issues.
2. Some vegetation will be cleared in creation of the trail, and replacement plantings can then be made to mitigate. This new trail should help preserve the vegetative community compared to the network of social trails in place presently and greatly reduce future damage by directing foot traffic onto set lanes.
3. Pika make the rock slopes their home. This is an unusual low elevation population, and every effort will be made to avoid their prime territories during trail construction.
4. Final flagging and a bird survey will be completed in the spring during peak nesting, and these efforts will avoid cutting any brush or trees used for nesting along the trail corridor.
5. A more formal trail should help control weeds better than the social trails currently present. Some of this area already contains significant spotted knapweed spread, and this project will help in future control efforts by opening a corridor to access these areas for increased weed mitigation.

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Provided
1. Noise and/or electrical effects				X		
2. Land use		X				1
3. Risk and/or health hazards			X		X	2
4. Community impact			X		X	3
5. Public services/taxes/utilities				X		
6. Potential revenue and/or project maintenance costs			X			4
7. Aesthetics and recreation		x			X	5
8. Cultural and historic resources				X		
9. Evaluation of significance			X		X	6
10. Generate public controversy			X		X	7

1. This project will have people utilizing parts of the park that previously had no human interaction. More climbers and foot travelers could potentially be joined by mountain bikers to access this area. As a State Park with recreation as an aspect of our mission, this is seen as a positive usage within the park.
2. With more people hiking and rock climbing, there is an added chance of injury as associated with any self-directed outdoor activity. This should be more than balanced by people taking part in outdoor activities that promote better health.
3. Through public meetings, the community has stated that walking/hiking is the most universally appreciated aspect of Lost Creek State Park. This impact is seen as a positive, not a negative.
4. There is a chance for an increase in revenue by more people camping at and visiting the park with a trail inside park boundaries (Appendix C, Department of Commerce Tourism Report). The trail will be short and have minor maintenance costs that can be handled by volunteer labor and FTE already allocated to the park manager and park caretaker.
5. This is seen as a positive impact as it is adding recreational opportunities with a very minor impact to aesthetics as it will be a single-track trail. The parking area will also have a minor impact on aesthetics at the trailhead. There is already extensively disturbed and impacted ground at the proposed parking lot site.
6. This will have a small impact on the significance of the park, and that impact should be positive.
7. Any change in a setting can have some dissenting voices, but through the public meetings we have had a near universal support of this proposed project.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

1. Summarize the impacts of the proposed action and address any cumulative impacts:

The project will have minor impacts along a narrow corridor of the park. There will be temporary soil displacement and short-term erosion which will be easily mitigated by offsetting the quickly eroding social trails in place. This project should spread usage out in the park so cumulative impacts should be minor. The parking area will create a small temporary degraded area that will be directly adjacent to the present roadway having a very limited impact on natural communities and the aesthetic of the park (Appendix A). Every care will be taken to preserve the integrity of the biotic communities and scenic nature of the park that meet this trail corridor.

One of the primary purposes of this project is to spread out some of the park use. In this way, the proposed trail project hopes to help alleviate cumulative impacts concentrated at the west end of the park while creating very few new ones. This might draw more rock climbers to the park. There will be no promotion of rock climbing in the park until impacts can be properly monitored and addressed. This includes ensuring that climbing can be a sustainable activity for this area of the park while providing an official and more sustainable access to the cliffs.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Public involvement:

Two public meetings have been held in Anaconda, one to assess the interests of the community in project types at the park and one to follow up with the proposed actions. There was no dissent, and all who attended supported a new trail in the park.

2. Comment Period:

March 30 to April 29, 2022.

3. This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having limited impacts, many of which can be mitigated.

PART V. EA PREPARATION

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

There will be limited impacts to the physical and human environments with an opportunity for improvement of the soil and vegetation communities due to eliminating social trails.

2. Person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:

Mark Filonczuk, Regional Maintenance Supervisor; 406-577-7894; Mark.Filonczuk@mt.gov

Betsey LaBroad, Parks and Outdoor Recreation Planner II, 406-577-7892; Betsey.LaBroad@mt.gov

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

MT FWP: Fisheries

Heritage Resource Office
Design and Construction.
Deer Lodge Valley Conservation District.
Montana Conservation Corps.
Gallatin Valley Land Trust
United States Forest Service- Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest

Appendix A

Proposed Scope of Work for Parking Area and Tent Pads



MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

Design & Construction
1522 Ninth Avenue • P O Box 200701
Helena MT 59620-0701
Phone: (406) 841-4001 • Fax: (406) 841-4004

Project Name: Lost Creek State Park Hikers Parking lot and Tent Pads FWP #: 7216202/7196147
Location: Anaconda, Montana Date: _____

Scope of Work:

- Lost Creek State Park hikers parking and tent pads project consists of the excavation and site preparation to expand an existing small parking spot to accommodate five vehicles at the proposed trail head for the rock climbing area. This project includes but is not limited to clearing, grubbing, and excavation of existing area within project limits. Grading and gravel will follow the site prep and precast concrete wheel stops to delineate each parking spot.
- Lost Creek campground tent pads will be installed within existing individual camp sites. They include site prep, 14'x16' redwood timbers secured with 24" rebar. The pads will be filled with 2" of 3/8" washed pea gravel. Note this will not increase the total number of camp sites just improve the existing.



MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

#7216301

LOST CREEK STATE PARK

ROCK CLIMBER'S PARKING LOT AND
CAMPGROUND TENT PADS

Engineer's Estimate

BASE BID

Item #	Description	Estimated Quantity	Unit	UNIT PRICE	AMOUNT
1	Mobilization, Project cleanup	1	LS	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,500.00
2	Parking Lot Gravel Placement, Grade, Water and Compact for 4" of 3/4" Crushed Base Course	30	CY	\$ 150.00	\$ 4,500.00
3	Clearing Grubbing and Unclassified Excavation	130	CY	\$ 40.00	\$ 5,200.00
4	Precast concrete wheel stops	5	EA	\$ 375.00	\$ 1,875.00
5	Revegetation and Erosion Control	1	LS	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00
					\$ 15,075.00

ADDITIVE ALTERNATE #1

Item #	Description	Estimated Quantity	Unit	UNIT PRICE	AMOUNT
1	Tent Pad includes Site leveling and Prep, Redwood Timbers, Hardware, Rebar, and 2" of 3/8" Washed Pea Gravel	6	EA	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 9,000.00
					\$ 9,000.00
TOTAL BOTH SCHEDULES					\$ 24,075.00

Appendix B
SHPO Concurrence Letter



November 8, 2021

Rachel Reckin, Ph.D.
Heritage Program Manager
Montana State Parks
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701

*Historic Preservation
Museum
Outreach & Interpretation
Publications
Research Center*

Re: New Trail within Lost Creek State Park, Deer Lodge County

Dear Ms. Reckin:

Thank you for your letter (received October 28, 2021) regarding the new trail at Lost Creek State Park. We concur on your determination of No Historic Properties Affected.

If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me at (406) 444-7719 or Laura.Evilsizer@MT.gov. Thank you for consulting with us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Laura Evilsizer".

Laura Evilsizer, M.A.
Review and Compliance Officer
Montana State Historic Preservation Office

Appendix C
Tourism Report

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, Bureau Chief, Industry Services and Outreach
MOTBD, Montana -Department of Commerce
301 S. Park Ave.
Helena, MT 59601

Project Name: Lost Creek State Park; Cliffside Trail Project

Project Description: Lost Creek State Park is a small natural park located near Anaconda. With natural parks trails are often a big draw and at this time the only trails that that park contains are a USFS trail that immediately leaves the park and is managed by that agency and a short, paved trail to the park's feature waterfall. This is about 100 yards long and does not offer much of a hike.

The Cliffside Trail project proposes to add a half mile hiking trail towards the east end of Lost Creek State Park. This area features some of the park's most impressive vistas and in recent years has grown in popularity with rock climbers. Presently the rock climbers have created a mosaic of social trails with high erosion. This project would eliminate those trails while building a more sustainable one providing long term access to these cliff bands.

The project also would help pull foot traffic away from the narrow road. The road features short lines of vision and is presently one of the main foot traffic corridors in the park as well. This alternative would enhance safety of our visitors by moving them away from the road.

The trail would also expand recreational use in the park. As we have surveyed visitors to Lost Creek State Park, walking/hiking was found to be the number one recreational draw. This would give people more reason to both visit the park and stay longer with an added activity.

The Lost Creek State Park Cliffside Trail project will expand recreational activities, provide better access to additional activities, and provide a safer travel corridor within the park for foot traffic. Through these offerings this project will better serve the people of Montana and visitors to our state.

1. Would this site development project have an impact on the tourism economy?
NO YES If YES, briefly describe:

Yes, as described, the project has the potential to positively impact the tourism and recreation industry economy if properly maintained. Montana's 12.6 million non-resident

visitors spent over \$3.8 billion in the state in 2019 (University of Montana's Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, 2020). Recreation access and activities in state parks are in high demand for visitors with continually increasing intent to visit a state park while visiting Montana. This intent to visit has dramatically increased this year because of the pandemic and a desire for safe outdoor recreation experiences.

Additionally, 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. In 2020, there was a record 3.4 million Montana resident and non-resident visitors to Montana state parks, an increase of 30% over 2019.

It is important to note that a strategic tourism goal is to disperse recreational visitors throughout Montana away from heavily visited areas around Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks to other recreational opportunities. Located near Anaconda, this park offers a location featuring walking/hiking, rock climbing, and scenic vistas.

The Lost Creek State Park Cliffside Trail project will expand recreational activities, provide better access to additional activities, and provide a safer travel corridor within the park for foot traffic.

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

NO

YES

If YES, briefly describe:

Yes, as described, the project has the potential to improve quality and quantity of tourism and recreational opportunities. This project eliminates potentially unsafe social trails with high erosion replaced by a more sustainable trail providing long term access. Additionally, the project would enhance safety of our visitors by moving them away from a narrow road that has short lines of vision and is the main foot traffic corridors in the park as well.

With these improvements, 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: 2/16/21