

Environmental Assessment

Smith River Camp Baker Streambank Stabilization Project



June 2022



**MONTANA FISH,
WILDLIFE & PARKS**

Environmental Assessment CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. **Type of proposed state action:** Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks proposes to stabilize a portion of the streambank (labeled with red line on map page 3) of the Smith River that has seen substantial erosion downstream of the secondary boat launch (labeled B on map) located at Camp Baker, Smith River State Park. This will include the addition of rock, willows, and soil. In addition, the boat ramp, (labeled B) will be removed. A section of the project is located on private property and an agreement is pending with the landowner.

2. **Agency authority for the proposed action:**
Montana state statute 23-1-102 authorizes the department to make a study to determine the scenic, historic, archaeological, scientific, and recreational resources of the state. The department may by purchase, lease, agreement, or acceptance of donations acquire for the state any areas, sites, or objects that in its opinion should be held, improved, and maintained as state parks, state recreational areas, state monuments, or state historical sites.

Furthermore, state statute 23-1-110 and Administrative Rule 12.2.433 guides public involvement and comment for the improvements at state parks and fishing access sites, which this document provides.

3. **Anticipated Schedule:**
Estimated Construction Commencement Date: October 2022
Estimated Completion Date: November 2022
Current Status of Project Design (100 % complete):

5. **Location affected by proposed action (county, range and township – included map):**
Smith River State Park, Camp Baker Meagher County Section 13 Township 12N Range
04 E



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><1</u>
Residential	<u>0</u>		
Industrial	<u>0</u>	(e) Productive:	
(existing shop area)		Irrigated cropland	<u>0</u>
(b) Open Space/	<u><1</u>	Dry cropland	<u>0</u>
Woodlands/Recreation		Forestry	<u>0</u>
(c) Wetlands/Riparian	<u><1</u>	Rangeland	<u>0</u>
Areas		Other	<u>0</u>

8. **Permits, Funding & Overlapping Jurisdiction.**

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

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permits</u>
Meagher County	Flood Plain/Determination
US Army Corps of Engineers	404
MDEQ (turbidity)	318
Meagher County Conservation District	310
Montana FWP	SP 124
DNRC	Land-Use License

(b) **Funding:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks	\$200,000.00

(c) **Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Type of Responsibility</u>
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9. **Narrative summary of the proposed action:** The Smith River, Camp Baker Streambank Stabilization Project will be constructed to repair stream bank erosion damage at Camp Baker and directly downstream. The damage has been caused by natural river dynamics and exacerbated by the lower boat ramp configuration and floater usage.

It is important to all habitats that the streambank restoration include natural features and vegetation along with significant engineering to overcome shear stresses and promote public safety. It is proposed to utilize a bioengineered method of treatment generally described as "Live Encapsulated Lifts". In this method, a streambank toe is constructed with an engineered gradation of gravel and boulders. Above the toe and starting at the edge of the new bank, coir log lifts will be placed and anchored. Locally harvested willows will be planted between the horizontal lifts. Above the final lift, select backfill, topsoil and

seeding will be added to the newly shaped bank in the effort to promote vegetative growth and stabilization. Minor small tree plantings in the bank will facilitate the interface of the bioengineered slope to the natural slope on the downstream end. A well and stock tank will be installed to eliminate the livestock water gap previously used to water cattle which will also minimize continued erosion.

Other work to be performed as part of this effort include re-aligned fencing to preclude livestock usage of the area and removal of the lower boat ramp. The work is proposed for late fall to take advantage of low water and the dormancy phase of the willows to be harvested and planted.

10. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:

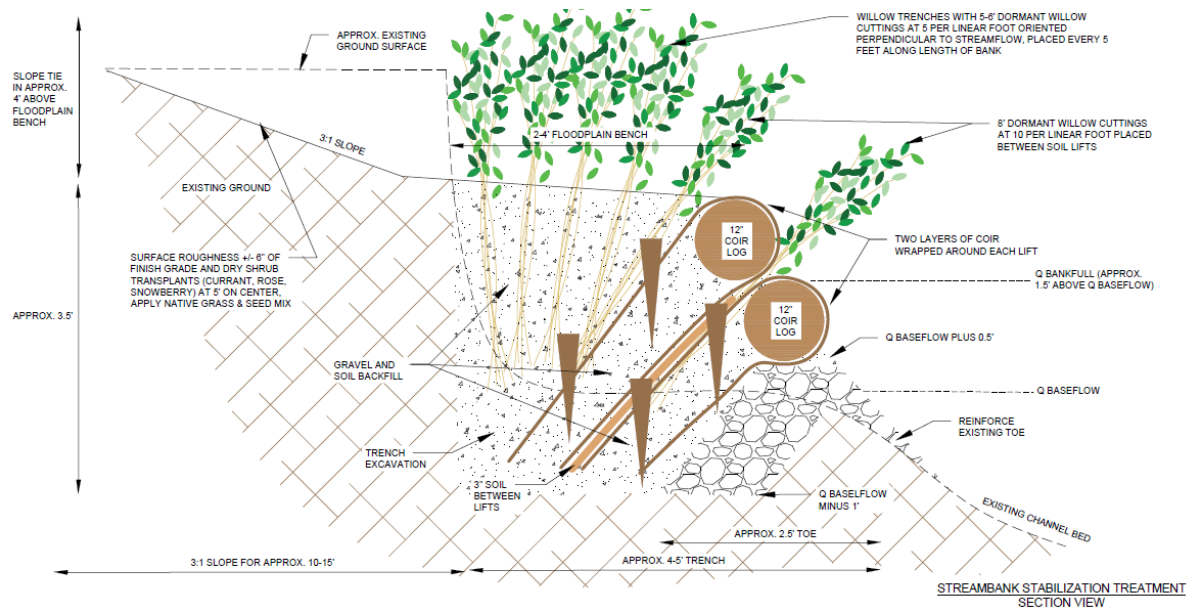
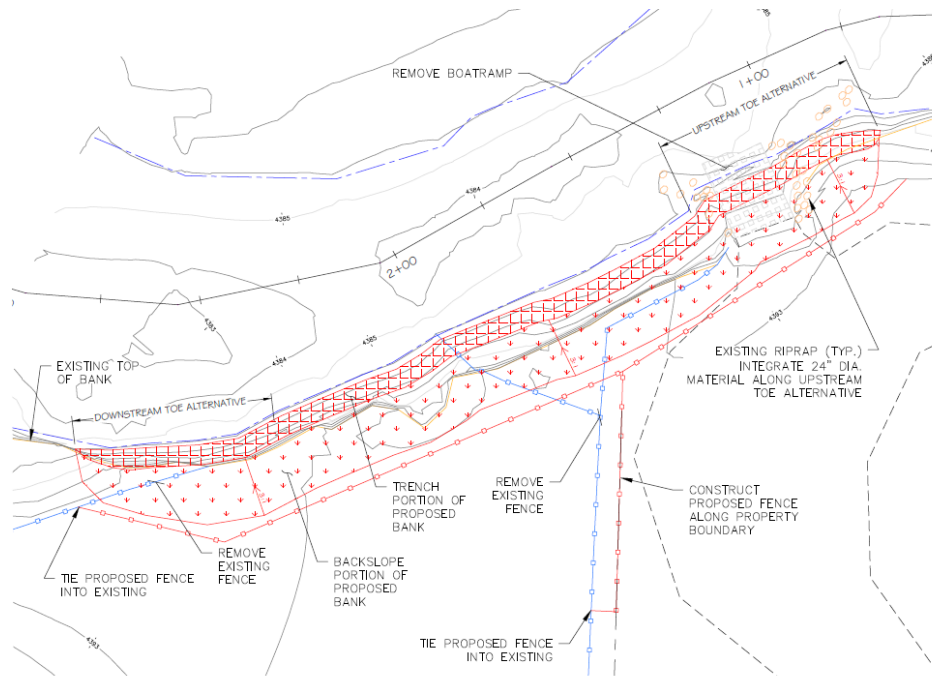
Alternative A: No Action; This alternative would result in the continued erosion of the riverbank causing the loss of additional bank including adjacent landowner property.

Alternative B: Proposed Action; This alternative would stabilize the portion of the Smith River streambank which would prevent continued erosion and loss of property. A soft design approach will be used and the secondary boat launch removed to lessen the impact and disperse hydraulic pressure on the affected section of riverbank.

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

At a minimum the following agencies will be contacted to obtain the appropriate permits. The agencies may require specific mitigation, stipulations, or other control measures.

- Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks - Stream Protection Act 124 Permit – Pending
- Montana Department of Environmental Quality – 318 Authorization/401 Certification – Pending
- US Army Corps of Engineers – Section 404 Permit – Pending



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			1.
2. Air quality or objectionable odors			X			2.
3. Water quality, quantity and distribution (surface or groundwater)			X			3.
4. Existing water right or reservation				X		
5. Vegetation cover, quantity and quality			X			5.
6. Unique, endangered, or fragile vegetative species				X		6.
7. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats			X			7.
8. Unique, endangered, or fragile wildlife or fisheries species				X		8.
9. Introduction of new species into an area			X			9.
10. Changes to abundance or movement of species			X			10.

1. The project will utilize a bioengineered method of treatment generally described as “Live Encapsulated Lifts.” Intent of the project is to slow lateral migration by increasing soil stability in the area.

2. During construction the project will utilize heavy equipment, which will emit fumes and objectionable odors. This would result in a minor short-term impact that will cease with the completion of the project.

3. The project will result in decreased erosion along the treated bank. Overall, there may be an improvement in water quality from decreased erosion at the site.

5. The existing bank is largely vertical resulting in minimal riparian vegetation. The bioengineered treatment to the bank will result in an increase in riparian vegetation, if completed properly and vegetation survives.

6. It is unlikely there are endangered or fragile species given the existing vertical bank and lack of vegetation present.

7. The live encapsulated lifts may provide improved riparian habitat.

8. It is unlikely there are any unique, endangered, or fragile wildlife species within the project area. Westslope Cutthroat Trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii lewisi*) are a state species of special concern that are present within the Smith River drainage. While Westslope Cutthroat Trout are largely limited to headwater streams in the drainage, individuals have been sampled in the Smith River mainstem and could potentially be present in the project area at low abundance. Western Pearshell (*Margaritifera falcata*) are a mussel state species of concern that have also been documented within the Smith River drainage.

9. The project has the potential to introduce noxious weeds to the area and/or allow existing weeds to spread in disturbed areas. The potential for noxious weeds to be introduced and/or spread in the project area can be mitigated by requiring construction equipment to be cleaned prior to accessing the site, promptly revegetating any disturbed area with native seed mix, and monitoring and weed control of the construction area following the completion of project.

10. Once established, the live encapsulated lifts may provide improved riparian habitat resulting in potential benefit to species abundance and/or movement.

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			1.
2. Land use				X		
3. Risk and/or health hazards				X		
4. Community impact				X		
5. Public services/taxes/utilities				X		
6. Potential revenue and/or project maintenance costs			X			6.
7. Aesthetics and recreation			X			7.
8. Cultural and historic resources	X					8.
9. Evaluation of significance				X		
10. Generate public controversy			X			10.

1. During construction the project will utilize heavy equipment, which will result in noise. This is expected to have a minor short-term impact that will cease with the completion of the project.

6. Bank stabilization projects, have the potential to fail and maintenance may be required depending on the consequences of the failure, and the expectations of the FWP and landowner.

7. Once established, the live encapsulated lifts may provide improved riparian habitat and subsequently improve aesthetics of the site.

8. The project site will be monitored by FWP Cultural Resource Manager.

10. The project has the potential to generate public controversy due to the diverse interests of Smith River users. However, this project will benefit recreation and access to the river by floaters which should outweigh any controversy.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

This project is necessary to prevent the continued loss of streambank caused by the river dynamics and to some degree

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Public involvement:

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on this current EA, the proposed action and alternatives:

- Two public notices in each of these papers: Helena Independent Record/ Great Falls Tribune
- One statewide press release
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: <http://fwp.mt.gov>.

Copies of this environmental assessment will be distributed to the neighboring landowners and interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project.

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

Duration of comment period: 30 Days

The public comment period will extend for (30) thirty days following the publication of the second legal notice in area newspapers. Comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m. on July 28, 2022, and may be emailed to: jtaillie@mt.gov

Comments can also be mailed to the address below:

Regional Recreation Manager
Montana FWP
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls MT 59405

PART V. EA PREPARATION

1. **Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? (YES/NO)?** No EIS required
If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action. This project does not meet the criteria necessary to require an EIS.
2. **Person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:** John Taillie /Regional Recreation Manager
3. **List of agencies or offices consulted during preparation of the EA:** Montana FWP, Montana DEQ, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Montana DNRC, Meagher County

