



# **MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS**

## **Environmental Assessment**

### **SCAT Machine Installation Eden Bridge – Smith River State Park**



**July 8, 2022**

# Environmental Assessment CHECKLIST

## **PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION**

**1. Type of proposed state action:**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is proposing to install a SCAT machine at the Eden Bridge take-out on the Smith River. A SCAT machine is a portable toilet dumping and cleaning station. On February 02, 2022, the department issued a decision notice for the 2022 Recreation Management Plan update, approving mandatory human waste pack-out using a department approved portable, self-contained toilet system. On May 13, 2022, the Parks and Recreation Board approved the proposed change to the Smith River Biennial Rule requiring human waste pack-out using a department approved portable, self-contained toilet system. Installation of a SCAT machine would provide the public a convenient and sanitary means of solid waste disposal.

**2. Agency authority for the proposed action:**

The 1939 Montana State Legislature passed MCA 23-1-101, which states that a State Park System would be established “for the purpose of conserving the scenic, historic, archeological, scientific and recreational resources of the state and providing for their use and enjoyment, thereby contributing to the cultural, recreational and economic life of the people and their health.” Montana statute 23-1-102 (4) gives MFWP “jurisdiction, custody and control of all state parks, recreational areas, public camping grounds, historical sites and monuments.”

**3. Name, address and phone number of project sponsor (if other than the agency):**

Not applicable.

**4. Anticipated Schedule:**

Estimated Construction Commencement Date: September 2022

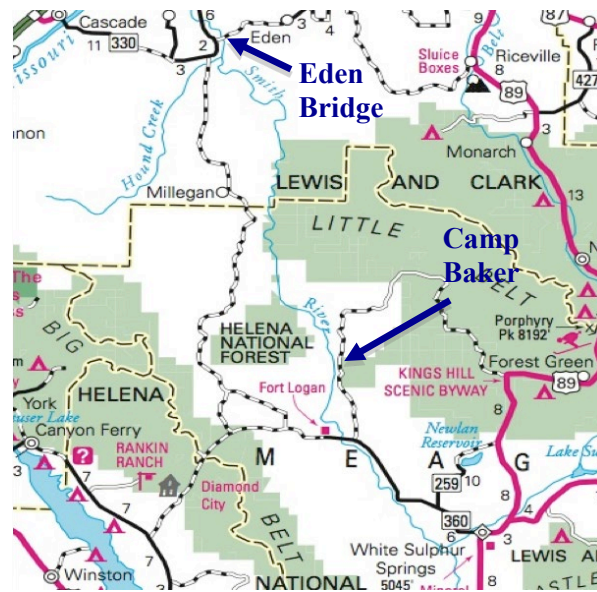
Estimated Completion Date: November 2022

Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 100% complete

**5. Location affected by proposed action (county, range and township – included map):**

Eden Bridge is located in the northern portion of the Smith River State Park along the Smith River, approximately 17 miles southeast of Ulm, Montana on Highway 330 in Cascade County, Section 7, Township 17 North, Range 3 East (Figures 1 and 2).

**Figure 1. Smith River and Smith River State Park**



**Figure 2. Eden Bridge Topographic Map**



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>0</u>
Residential	<u>0</u>		
Industrial	<u>0</u>	(e) Productive:	
(existing shop area)		Irrigated cropland	<u>0</u>
(b) Open Space/	<u>.5</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>

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>
MT Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)	COSA Re-write
Cascade County	Septic Permit

(b) **Funding:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks	\$600,000

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

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Type of Responsibility</u>
N/A	

9. **Narrative summary of the proposed action:**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is proposing to install a SCAT machine at the Eden Bridge take-out on the Smith River. A SCAT machine is a portable toilet dumping and cleaning station. On February 02, 2022, the department issued a decision notice for the 2022 Recreation Management Plan update, approving mandatory human waste pack-out using a department approved portable, self-contained toilet system. On May 13, 2022, the Parks and Recreation Board approved the proposed change to the Smith River Biennial Rule requiring human waste pack-out using a department approved portable, self-contained toilet system. Installation of a SCAT machine would provide the public a convenient and sanitary means of solid waste disposal.

Development would consist of installing the SCAT machine within a 10.5' x 30' precast building. An additional passive waste disposal system would be constructed adjacent to the precast building which will serve as a "backup" to the SCAT machine in case of a breakdown. A separate 200 amp meter would be installed, and underground electric lines would run from the existing underground electrical lines. An underground water line would be installed and run from the existing water line that services the host pads. Two (2), 5,000 gallon holding tanks would be buried approximately ten feet deep to contain the wastewater from the SCAT machine. A one-way, 25-foot wide graveled ingress and

egress road would be constructed, to allow vehicular access to the SCAT machine for the public and access to the buried holding tanks for a pumper truck.

**10. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:**

**Alternative A: No Action**

MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks would not install a SCAT machine at the Eden Bridge take-out on the Smith River. The public would be required to determine and locate a proper means of human waste disposal (ex: RV dump station).

**Alternative B: Proposed Action**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is proposing to install a SCAT machine at the Eden Bridge take-out on the Smith River. Installation of a SCAT machine would provide the public a convenient and sanitary means of solid waste disposal.

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

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (Department) would employ FWP Best Management Practices, which are designed to reduce or eliminate sediment delivery to waterways during construction. The Department has developed the final design and specifications for the Proposed Action (Appendix A). All permits listed in Part I 8(a) above would be obtained by the Department as required. A private contractor selected through the State's contracting processes would complete the construction.

## **PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST**

### **Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical 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		X	9.
10. Changes to abundance or movement of species				X		10.

1. Installation of the SCAT machine and associated infrastructure may have a minor affect to the localized geological substructure however, soil quality, stability and moisture will not be affected. Soils excavated for the holding tanks will be used to bury them. Disturbed areas will be reseeded with a native grass seed mix to reestablish ground cover vegetation.
2. Dust and diesel exhaust will be generated during excavation and construction activities. However, this would only occur for a short period and likely not impact the overall ambient air quality of the site.
3. Ground water quantity and distribution may decrease slightly once the SCAT machine begins utilization and begins drawing water from the well. However, most use will occur during spring and early summer, when water table levels tend to be higher and should have negligible effects on ground and/or surface water. Water quality will not be affected.
5. Vegetative cover and quantity will experience minor impacts during excavation and construction activities. Disturbed areas will be reseeded with a native grass seed mix to reestablish ground cover vegetation and reduce the potential of noxious weeds becoming established.
6. There are no known unique, endangered or fragile vegetative species found within the project site.

7. The footprint of the building and graveled road may result in a very small reduction in the amount of available habitat for terrestrial species. However, there are no anticipated effects to populations of terrestrial and/or aquatic life.
8. There are no known unique, endangered or fragile wildlife species found within the project site. Westslope Cutthroat Trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkia lewisi*) and Western Pearshell (*Margaritifera falcata*), a mussel, are both a state species of special concern and are present within the Smith River drainage. However, the project site is located approximately 50 yards away from the river and is unlikely to affect these, or other, aquatic species.
9. The project has the potential to introduce noxious weeds to the area and/or allow existing weeds to spread into disturbed areas. This can be mitigated by requiring construction equipment to be cleaned prior to accessing the site, promptly revegetating any disturbed areas with native reclamation seed mix and monitoring and weed control of the construction area following the completion of the project.
10. There are no anticipated effects to the abundance and movement of terrestrial or aquatic species.

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

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

1. There would be temporary increases in noise levels caused by heavy equipment during construction. However, this is expected to produce a minor, short-term impact that will cease with completion of the project.
3. There are no anticipated risks and/or health hazards anticipated during the construction phase of this project. However, once the SCAT machine begins being utilized, there is a risk of exposure of the public and employees to pathogens found within human waste.
5. This project will not result in changes to public services or taxes in the local community. The project will result in a minor increase to the use and cost of electricity.
6. This project will require annual maintenance to the SCAT machine and infrastructure and has been estimated to cost approximately \$29,000 per year. This annual cost includes anticipated repairs to the SCAT machine, weekly pumping of the holding tanks, electricity, cleaning and winterization.
7. The presence of an additional building and a short, graveled roadway may have a minor impact to the aesthetics of the site. However, the color and design of the building will match that of the existing vault toilets and storage shed as closely as possible. The availability of a SCAT machine for the public's use will likely enhance their recreation experience by providing a convenient and sanitary means to dispose of human waste.
8. FWP's Heritage Specialist will survey the project site prior construction. If no cultural resources are discovered during the survey, there is the potential that cultural or historic remains could be discovered during excavation and construction.
9. During construction of the proposed project, minor and temporary impacts to the human environment are anticipated, but they are expected to be short-term.
10. This project may have the potential to generate some public controversy, since the issue of requiring mandatory human waste pack-out during the management plan update did generate some comments, both in support of and opposition to it. However, providing a convenient and sanitary means of human waste disposal at Eden Bridge should result in public support.





### **PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT**

During construction of the proposed project, there will be minor and temporary impacts to the physical and human environments. However, the impacts will be short-term and the availability of a SCAT machine at the Eden Bridge take-out will provide a great service to the public, by providing a convenient and sanitary means to dispose of human waste.

This analysis did not reveal any secondary or cumulative impacts to the physical or human environments.

### **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:

- One 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.

#### **2. Duration of comment period:**

The public comment period will extend for (30) thirty days following the publication of the legal notice in area newspapers. E mail comments to [cmaas@mt.gov](mailto:cmaas@mt.gov). Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., August 8, 2022 and can be mailed to the address below:

Montana FWP  
Attn. Colin Maas  
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

**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 negative impacts from the proposed action; therefore, an EIS is not necessary and an environmental assessment is the appropriate level of analysis.

- ## Appendix A. Scat Machine Site Plan

