

DRAFT

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

CHECKLIST

(FWP-CEA-POR-R4-23-011)

White Bear Fishing Access Site Improvement Project

September 12th, 2023



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I. Compliance with the Montana Environmental Policy Act

Before a proposed project may be approved, environmental review must be conducted to identify and consider potential impacts of the proposed project on the human and physical environment affected by the project. The Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) and its implementing rules and regulations require different levels of environmental review, depending on the proposed project, significance of potential impacts, and the review timeline. § 75-1-201, Montana Code Annotated (“MCA”), and the Administrative Rules of Montana (“ARM”) 12.2.430, General Requirements of the Environmental Review Process.

FWP must prepare an EA when:

- *It is considering a “state-proposed project,” which is defined in § 75-1-220(8)(a) as:
 - (i) a project, program, or activity initiated and directly undertaken by a state agency;
 - (ii) ... a project or activity supported through a contract, grant, subsidy, loan, or other form of funding assistance from a state agency, either singly or in combination with one or more other state agencies; or
 - (iii) ... a project or activity authorized by a state agency acting in a land management capacity for a lease, easement, license, or other authorization to act.*
- *It is not clear without preparation of an EA whether the proposed project is a major one significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. ARM 12.2.430(3)(a));*
- *FWP has not otherwise implemented the interdisciplinary analysis and public review purposes listed in ARM 12.2.430(2) (a) and (d) through a similar planning and decision-making process (ARM 12.2.430(3)(b));*
- *Statutory requirements do not allow sufficient time for the FWP to prepare an EIS (ARM 12.2.430(3)(c));*
- *The project is not specifically excluded from MEPA review according to § 75-1-220(8)(b) or ARM 12.2.430(5); or*
- *As an alternative to preparing an EIS, prepare an EA whenever the project is one that might normally require an EIS, but effects which might otherwise be deemed significant appear to be mitigable below the level of significance through design, or enforceable controls or stipulations or both imposed by the agency or other government agencies. For an EA to suffice in this instance, the agency must determine that all the impacts of the proposed project have been accurately identified, that they will be mitigated below the level of significance, and that no significant impact is likely to occur. The agency may not consider compensation for purposes of determining that impacts have been mitigated below the level of significance (ARM 12.2.430(4)).*

MEPA is procedural; its intent is to ensure that impacts to the environment associated with a proposed project are fully considered and the public is informed of potential impacts resulting from the project.

II. Background and Description of Proposed Project

Name of Project: White Bear Fishing Access Site Improvement Project

Affected Area / Location of Proposed Project:

- Legal Description
 - Latitude/Longitude: 47.43323, -111.29157
 - Section, Township, and Range: Section 1, Township 19N, Range 3E,
 - Cascade County, Montana

- Location Map

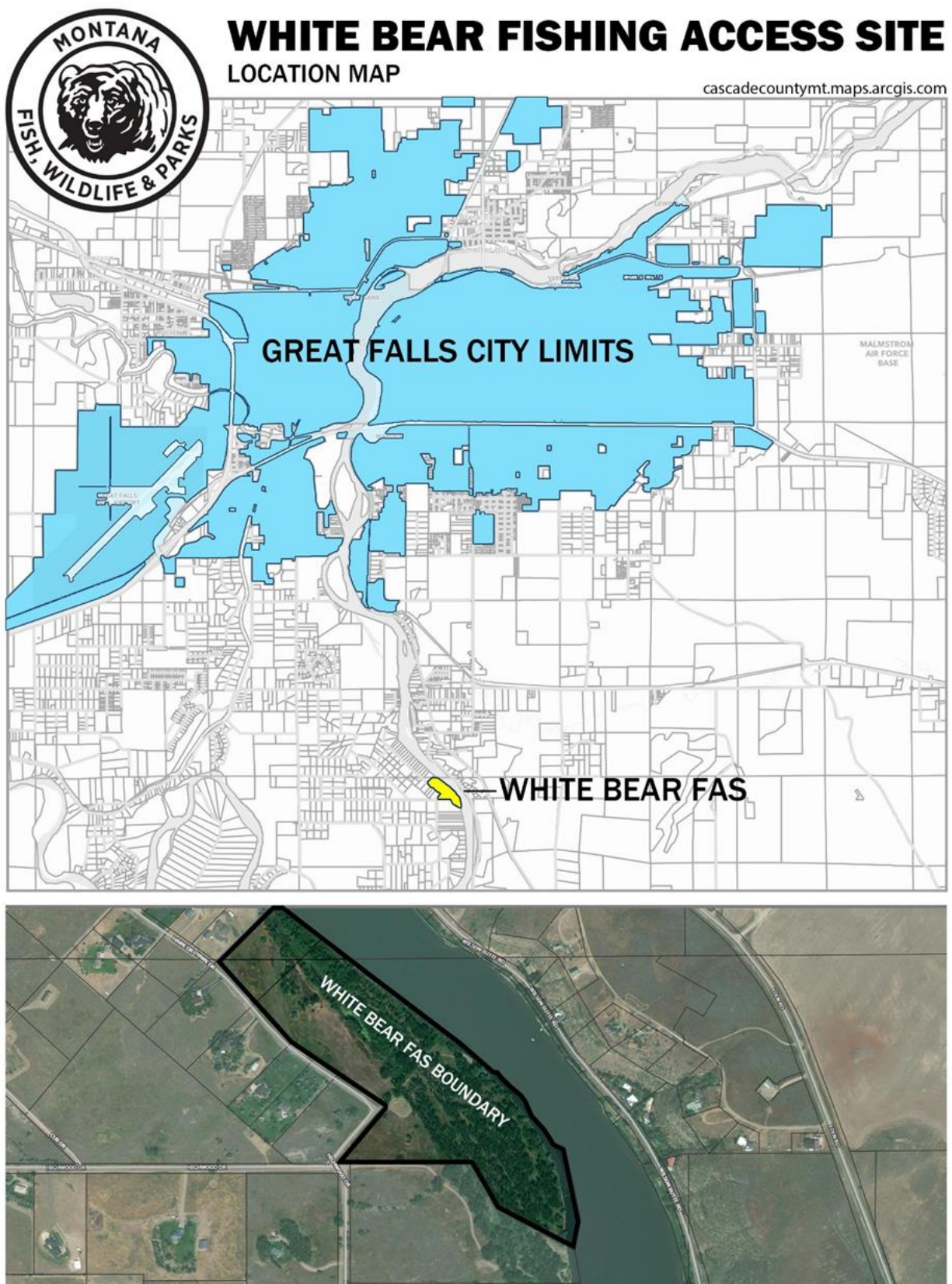


Figure 1 (above): Location of White Bear FAS

Background: White Bear Fishing Access Site (FAS), managed by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP), is located on the Missouri River three miles upstream of the Great Falls city limits on the northwest shoreline of the Missouri River. The FAS is accessible by driving on Fox Farm Road and then turning on either Fawn Drive, Highwood Drive, or Dune Drive. The FAS is also accessible from the Missouri River by watercraft.

Undesirable and illegal public behavior at the FAS (underage drinking, intoxication, illegal drug use, after-hours use, etc.) and concerns raised by the public (many of which included nearby homeowners) prompted the Fish and Wildlife Commission (commission) to implement a temporary, seasonal closure at White Bear FAS in 2015 that restricts public entry June 1st through early September of each year. The closure was implemented as a temporary measure to allow FWP time to identify actions that would mitigate the undesirable and illegal behavior, or to trade or dispose of the FAS in the event satisfactory mitigation is not achievable at the affected site. FWP has developed an improvement plan, outlined in this checklist EA, to improve public safety, reduce unwanted, undesirable, and illegal behavior at the property, prohibit entry at night, and create recreational opportunities that enhance desirable public use of the White Bear FAS.

Description of Proposed Project: Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks has developed a twofold plan to address the issues that have plagued White Bear FAS and prompted the commission to impose seasonal closures at the site. The plan proposes additional safety and security measures, as well as additional recreational amenities to attract desirable use of the site.

Safety and Security Measures:

FWP proposes to install the following safety and security measures:

- an automatic electronic gate at the entrance of the White Bear FAS to increase compliance with the existing “day use only” rule. The electronic gate would prevent entry during the hours the FAS is closed (8 pm to 6 am). The gate could be programmed to allow vehicles to exit, after the gate has closed.
- a light pole that would illuminate the electronic gate.
- security cameras would be positioned to capture video of the electronic gate and the parking area within the FAS.
- a graveled access road for authorized vehicle access from the existing parking area down to the river’s edge. The road would be developed behind an existing locked metal gate and open only to authorized vehicles for law enforcement patrols, maintenance, emergency access to the river, and other authorized use.

Recreational Amenities:

FWP proposes to develop and install the following recreational amenities:

- a crushed-stone trail totaling approximately one mile in length that would complete a loop on the south end of the property and another loop on the north end of the property. Each loop would be approximately 0.5 miles in length. Culverts would be located and installed along the trail loops, as necessary, to enable proper drainage.
- a dog waste bag dispensing box as well as a small garbage disposal can for those who utilize the trails to walk their dogs.
- benches along the trail that would allow visitors to sit and observe the surrounding natural area.

- signs at the parking lot entrance, within the parking lot, near the river, and along the trail that would provide visitors with information pertaining to rules and regulations, a map of the trails, and interpretive information about the natural resources and historical significance of the area.



Figure 2 (above): 3D Rendering of Proposed Improvements to Parking Area

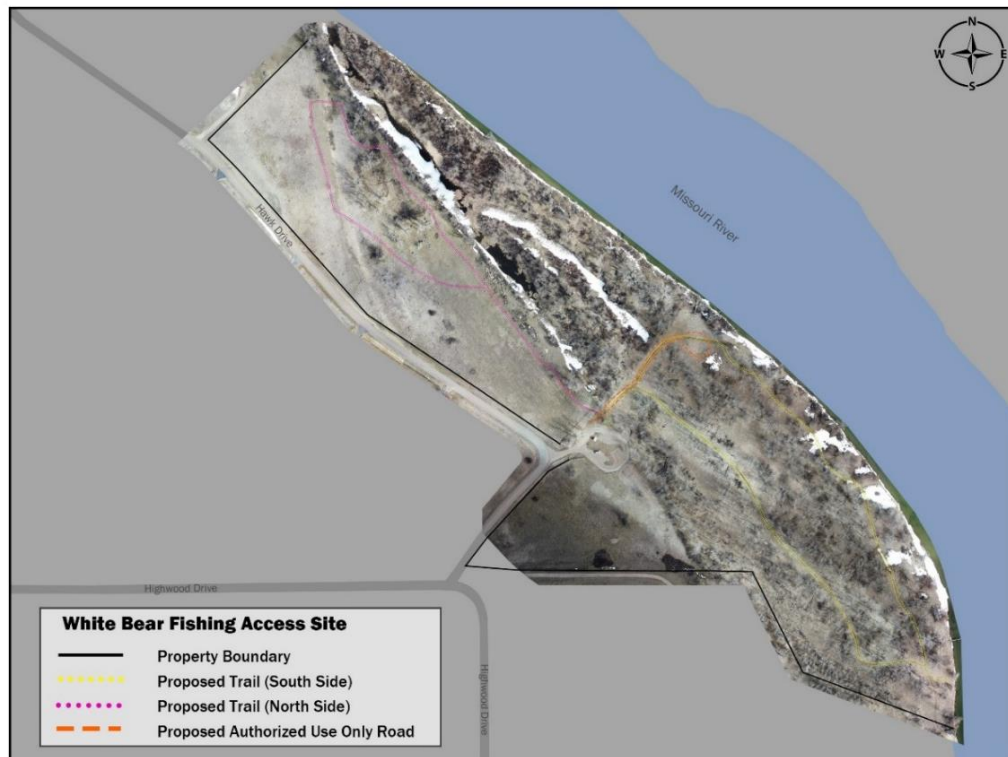


Figure 3 (above): Overview of Proposed Improvements

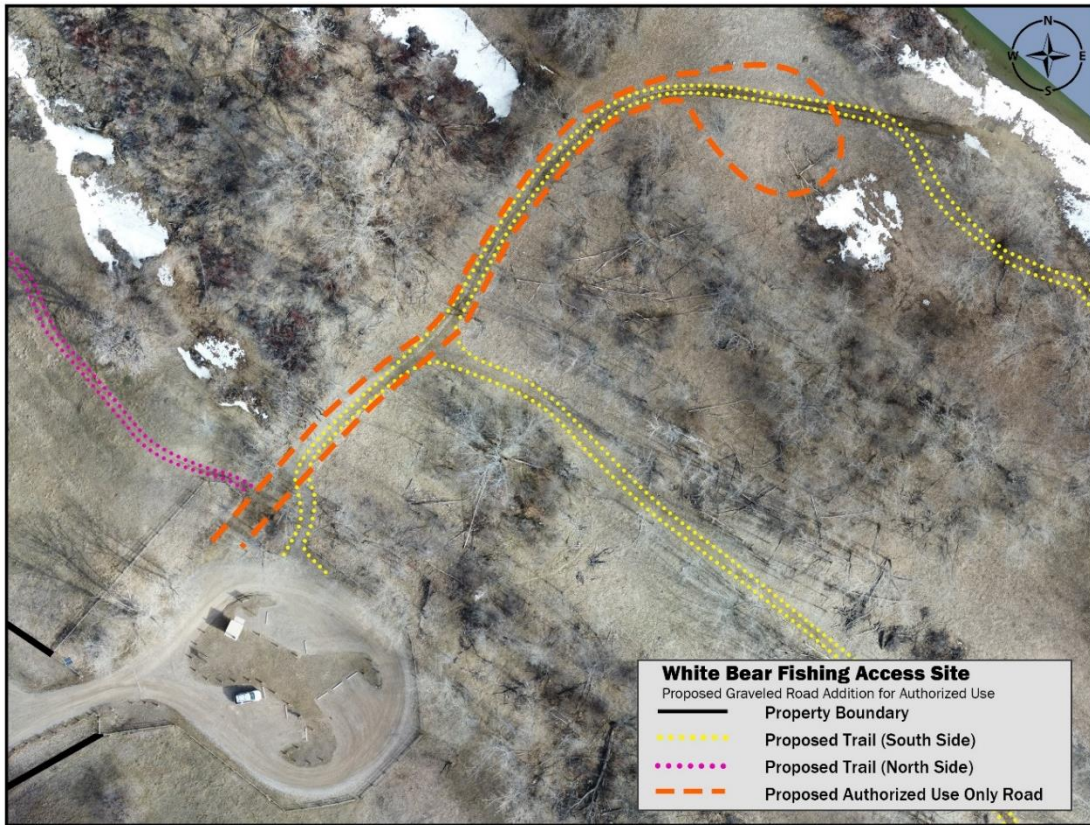


Figure 4 (above): Proposed Graveled Road Addition



Figure 5 (above): Proposed South Trail Addition

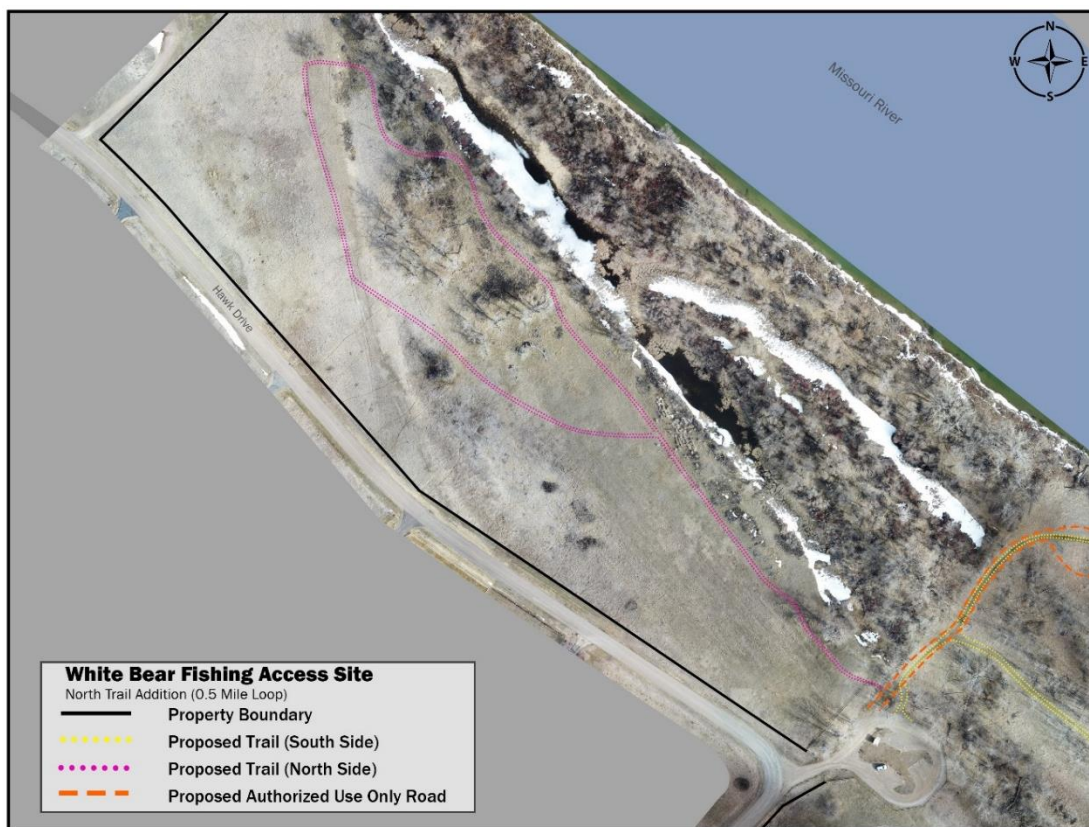


Figure 6 (above): Proposed North Trail Addition

III. Purpose and Need

The EA must include a description of the purpose and need or benefits of the proposed project. ARM 12.2.432(3)(b). Benefits of the proposed project refer to benefits to the resource, public, department, state, and/or other.

Project Purpose and Benefits: The proposed project would provide security features and develop additional recreational amenities to mitigate undesirable and illegal public behavior that has led to commission-imposed seasonal closures at White Bear FAS.

The proposed project would provide the following benefits:

- Provide additional security features to increase the safety and security of the public who visit the FAS;
- Provide additional recreational amenities to attract desirable use of the FAS and provide opportunities for nature viewing, fishing, walking, biking, dog walking, and learning about the natural, cultural, and historical resources unique to the area;
- Reduce the undesirable and illegal use of the FAS; and
- Eliminate commission-imposed seasonal closures, keeping the FAS open year around.

FWP's objective would be to begin work in early 2024 and complete the project by the fall of 2024. This would negate the need for a seasonal closure in 2025.

If FWP prepared a cost/benefit analysis before completion of the EA, the EA must contain the cost/benefit analysis or a reference to it. ARM 12.2.432(3)(b).

	Yes*	No
Was a cost/benefit analysis prepared for the proposed project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

* If yes, a copy of the cost/benefit analysis prepared for the proposed project is included in Attachment A to this Draft EA

IV. Other Agency Regulatory Responsibilities

FWP must list any federal, state, and/or local agencies that have overlapping or additional jurisdiction, or environmental review responsibility for the proposed project, as well as permits, licenses, and other required authorizations. ARM 12.2.432(3)(c).

*A list of other required local, state, and federal approvals, such as permits, certificates, and/or licenses from affected agencies is included in **Table 1** below. **Table 1** provides a summary of requirements but does not necessarily represent a complete and comprehensive list of all permits, certificates, or approvals needed for the proposed project. Agency decision-making is governed by state and federal laws, including statutes, rules, and regulations, that form the legal basis for the conditions the proposed project must meet to obtain necessary permits, certificates, licenses, or other approvals. Further, these laws set forth the conditions under which each agency could deny the necessary approvals.*

Table 1: Federal, State, and/or Local Regulatory Responsibilities

Agency	Type of Authorization (permit, license, stipulation, other)	Purpose
Montana State Historic Preservation Office	Cultural Assessment	By Montana law (22-3-433 MCA), all state agencies are required to consult with the State Historic Preservation Office to identify heritage properties on land owned by the state that may be adversely impacted by a proposed action or development project. Construction of parking areas and other ground disturbing activities would require consultation with the State Historical Preservation Office to ensure adequate protection of such resources.
Cascade County	Floodplain Permit	A floodplain permit is required for projects within the floodplain. Most of this project would be within the floodplain but specifically the development/improvement of the trails and the improvement of the access road would require a floodplain permit.

V. List of Mitigations, Stipulations

Mitigations, stipulations, and other enforceable controls required by FWP, or another agency, may be relied upon to limit potential impacts associated with a proposed Project. The table below lists and evaluates enforceable conditions FWP may rely on to limit potential impacts associated with the proposed Project. ARM 12.2.432(3)(g).

Table 2: Listing and Evaluation of Enforceable Mitigations Limiting Impacts

Are enforceable controls limiting potential impacts of the proposed action? If not, no further evaluation is needed.			Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, are these controls being relied upon to limit impacts below the level of significance? If yes, list the enforceable control(s) below			Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Enforceable Control	Responsible Agency	Authority (Rule, Permit, Stipulation, Other)	Effect of Enforceable Control on Proposed Project	

Cultural Resource Protection	Montana State Historic Preservation Office/FWP Heritage Program	Cultural Assessment and Inventory	In keeping with the Montana Antiquities Act and related regulations (ARM 12.8.501-12.8.510), all undertakings on state lands are assessed by a qualified archaeologist or historian for their potential to affect cultural resources. The process for this assessment may include a cultural resource inventory and evaluation of cultural resources within or near the project area, in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office. FWP also consults with all Tribal Historic Preservation Offices affiliated with each property in accordance with FWP's Tribal Consultation Guidelines. If cultural resources within or near the project area are recorded and are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, they will be protected from adverse impacts through adjustments to the project design or cancellation of the project if no design alternatives are available. If cultural resources are unexpectedly discovered during project implementation, FWP would cease implementation and contact FWP's Heritage Program for further evaluation.
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VI. Alternatives Considered

In addition to the proposed project, and as required by MEPA, FWP analyzes the "No-Action" alternative in this EA. Under the "No Action" alternative, the proposed project would not occur. Therefore, no additional impacts to the physical environment or human population in the analysis area would occur. The "No Action" alternative forms the baseline from which the potential impacts of the proposed Project can be measured.

If the No Action alternative is selected, there would be no additional safety and security measures in place to mitigate undesirable and illegal behavior at the site. This would leave the commission with a future decision as to whether to continue the seasonal closure that limits public opportunities to enjoy the site but has thus far been the means for mitigating undesirable and illegal behavior.

	Yes*	No
Were any additional alternatives considered and dismissed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

* If yes, a list and description of the other alternatives considered, but not carried forward for detailed review is included below

VII. Summary of Potential Impacts of the Proposed Project on the Physical Environment and Human Population

*The impacts analysis identifies and evaluates **direct**, **secondary**, and **cumulative impacts**.*

- **Direct impacts** are those that occur at the same time and place as the action that triggers the effect.

- **Secondary impacts** “are further impacts to the human environment that may be stimulated or induced by or otherwise result from a direct impact of the action.” ARM 12.2.429(18).
- **Cumulative impacts** “means the collective impacts on the human environment of the proposed action when considered in conjunction with other past and present actions related to the proposed action by location or generic type. Related future actions must also be considered when these actions are under concurrent consideration by any state agency through pre-impact statement studies, separate impact statement evaluation, or permit processing procedures.” ARM 12.2.429(7).

Where impacts are expected to occur, the impact analysis estimates the **extent, duration, frequency, and severity** of the impact. The duration of an impact is quantified as follows:

- **Short-Term:** impacts that would not last longer than the proposed project.
- **Long-Term:** impacts that would remain or occur following the proposed project.

The severity of an impact is measured using the following:

- **No Impact:** there would be no change from current conditions.
- **Negligible:** an adverse or beneficial effect would occur but would be at the lowest levels of detection.
- **Minor:** the effect would be noticeable but would be relatively small and would not affect the function or integrity of the resource.
- **Moderate:** the effect would be easily identifiable and would change the function or integrity of the resource.
- **Major:** the effect would irretrievably alter the resource.

Some impacts may require mitigation. As defined in ARM 12.2.429, mitigation means:

- Avoiding an impact by not taking a certain action or parts of a project;
- Minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of a project and its implementation;
- Rectifying an impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment; or
- Reducing or eliminating an impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of a project or the time period thereafter that an impact continues.

A list of any mitigation strategies including, but not limited to, design, enforceable controls or stipulations, or both, as applicable to the proposed project is included in **Section VI** above.

FWP must analyze impacts to the physical and human environment for each alternative considered. The proposed project considered the following alternatives:

- **Alternative 1: No Action. Evaluation and Summary of Potential Impacts on the Physical Environment and Human Population**

Under the “No Action” alternative, the proposed project would not occur. Therefore, no additional impacts to the physical environment or human population in the analysis area would occur. The “No Action” alternative forms the baseline from which the potential impacts of the proposed Project can be measured.

If the No Action alternative is selected, FWP would not proceed with installation of site security and public safety measure. FWP would not develop recreation amenities to attract more appropriate public use of the site. FWP anticipates the potential for undesirable and illegal behavior during the daytime and nighttime hours to resume at the site if the commission decides not to adopt a seasonal closure in the future without site modifications. Continuing the seasonal closure would limit opportunities for the public to enjoy the site.

- **Alternative 2: Proposed Project. Evaluation and Summary of Potential Impacts on the Physical Environment and Human Population**

See **Table 3** (Impacts on Physical Environment) and **Table 4** (Impacts on Human Population) below.

Table–3 - Potential Impacts of Proposed Project on the Physical Environment

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT		Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
Resource		None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	
Terrestrial, avian, and aquatic life and habitats		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to terrestrial, avian, and aquatic life and habitats would be expected from the proposed project. The proposed project constitutes improvements to support and increase safety and security measures and add certain recreational amenities to the existing 41.8-acre White Bear FAS. The Montana Natural Heritage Program classifies the land cover of the proposed project location as Lowland/Prairie Grassland and Riparian/Floodplain. The project area proposed for construction of the north trail loop is on lowland prairie grassland. Care would be taken in the development of the north trail to avoid disturbing native woody vegetation. The project area proposed for construction of the south trail loop and the authorized use only access road is in the riparian floodplain, characterized by cottonwood stands. Culverts would be installed within the footprint of the proposed trails and access road, as necessary, to facilitate drainage. Construction activities associated with the proposed electronic gate, light pole, informational signs, security cameras, dog waste facilities, and trailside benches would occur within the footprint of existing and proposed FAS infrastructure. Short-term, negligible adverse impacts to the abundance and movement of terrestrial and avian species would be expected during the construction phase of the proposed project. Following construction, long-term, negligible adverse impacts to the abundance and movement of terrestrial and avian species would be expected during hours when FAS-users are actively engaged at the site. The proposed electronic gate and light pole would be constructed where the existing manual metal gate is located. Any adverse impacts</p>

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
Resource	None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	
									associated with installation and use of the light would be long-term and minor as the light's reach would be limited to the area around the gate and construction would occur in an area with previous ground disturbance. No impacts to aquatic life and habitats would be expected because of the proposed project. Overall, any adverse impacts to terrestrial and avian life and habitats would be short- and long-term, consistent with current impacts at the existing FAS, and negligible.
Water quality, quantity, and distribution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to water quality, quantity and distribution would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project would not require the use of new water resources, nor would it significantly affect the distribution or quality of any existing water resources in the affected area. The addition of the crushed gravel trails and the access road may cause long-term, negligible adverse impacts to area drainage. Culverts would be installed as necessary to enable proper drainage.
Geology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to geology would be expected because of the proposed project. No unique geologic formations are located within the FAS; therefore, no impacts to geology would be expected because of the proposed project.
Soil quality, stability, and moisture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to soil quality, stability, and moisture would be expected because of the proposed project. The project area for the proposed north trail loop includes a soil profile of Ryell-Rivra Complex that are consistent with deep well-drained soils according to the Natural Resources Conservation Service Web Soil Survey Map. The project area for the proposed south trail loop and access road includes a soil profile of Rivra Gravelly Loam consistent with a deep well-drained soil according to

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
	None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	
									the Natural Resources Conservation Service Web Soil Survey Map. Construction of the proposed project would result in long-term, minor adverse impacts to soil compaction in the area where the graveled road and trails would be developed.
Vegetation cover, quantity, and quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to vegetation cover, quantity and quality would be expected because of the proposed project. The Montana Natural Heritage Program classifies the land cover of the proposed project location as Lowland/Prairie Grassland and Riparian/Floodplain. The construction of the trail, signage, benches, and authorized access road would have long-term, minor adverse impacts to the vegetation cover by disturbing and covering approximately 21,000 square feet of existing vegetation. Care would be taken in the development of the trails (particularly the north trail) to avoid disturbing native woody vegetation. Public use of the site and trails would lead to increased opportunity for noxious weeds to spread and take root. FWP would manage noxious weeds and would use the most effective means, depending on species and location, to eradicate identified noxious weeds. Therefore, any adverse impacts from the proposed project would be long-term and minor.
Aesthetics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to aesthetics would be expected because of the proposed project. There would be short-term, minor, and adverse impacts to site aesthetics during construction due to increased levels of noise during working hours and the presence of equipment and construction materials. Installation of an electronic gate and light at the entrance of the parking lot would have long-term, negligible, adverse impacts to site aesthetics. The proposed crushed gravel trails would provide long-term beneficial impacts to the site

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT		Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
Resource		None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	
										<p>aesthetics. A graveled access road for authorized vehicles would be constructed where a two-track dirt road currently exists. The proposed graveled road would give the appearance of a well-maintained site and thereby provide long-term and minor beneficial impacts to the aesthetics of the project area. The existing un-developed trail on the south side of the FAS is often muddy after rain events or snowmelt and is often overgrown by grass and vegetation. Creating a graveled trail would reduce maintenance and allow for improved trail usage as well as increased aesthetic appeal. Developing a trail on the north side, where no trail currently exists, would create an additional walking/biking experience on a maintained graveled trail. Walking both the north and south proposed trail loops would be a total of one mile in length. Any adverse impacts to aesthetics would be short- and long-term and negligible to minor.</p>
Air quality		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to air quality would be expected because of the proposed project. Air quality in the area affected by the proposed project is currently unclassifiable or in compliance with/attainment for the applicable national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS). Existing sources of air pollution in the area are limited and generally include fugitive dust associated with high wind events and exposed ground, vehicle travel on unpaved roads (fugitive dust), vehicle exhaust emissions, and various agricultural practices (vehicle exhaust emissions and fugitive dust). No significant point-sources of air pollution exist in the area affected by the proposed project. Fugitive dust emissions resulting from the construction of the gravel trails and road may adversely impact air quality. However, no air quality restrictions exist for the affected area and the proposed project would</p>

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
	None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	
									not be expected to cause or contribute to a violation of the applicable NAAQS for particulate matter (fugitive dust). Therefore, any adverse impacts would be short-term and negligible.
Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources would be expected because of the proposed project. The presence of any animal and/or plant species of concern or any Threatened or Endangered species located within or using the affected area were assessed and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hoary Bat (<i>Lasiurus cinereus</i>) Global Rank: G3G4 State Rank: S3B • Bald Eagle (<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>) Global Rank: G5 State Rank S4 • Great Blue Herron (<i>Ardea Herodias</i>) Global Rank: G5 State Rank: S3 • Spiny Softshell (<i>Apalone spinifera</i>) Global Rank: G5 State Rank: S3 <p>The construction of trails and added presence of people could displace some species, primarily during daylight hours when the site is open to the public. The added ability to prevent night-time (illegal) use of the property could help to mitigate some adverse impacts to the affected species. Overall, any adverse impacts from the proposed project would be consistent with current impacts at the existing FAS, long-term and negligible.</p>
Historical and archaeological sites	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to historic and archaeological sites would be expected because of the proposed project. In keeping with the Montana Antiquities Act and related regulations (ARM 12.8.501-12.8.510), all undertakings on state lands are assessed by a qualified archaeologist or historian for their potential to affect cultural resources. The process for this assessment</p>

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT		Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
Resource		None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	
										may include a cultural resource inventory and evaluation of cultural resources within or near the project area, in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office. FWP also consults with all Tribal Historic Preservation Offices affiliated with each property in accordance with FWP's Tribal Consultation Guidelines. If cultural resources within or near the project area are recorded and are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, they will be protected from adverse impacts through adjustments to the project design or cancellation of the project if no design alternatives are available. If cultural resources are unexpectedly discovered during project implementation, FWP would cease implementation and contact FWP's Heritage Program for further evaluation.
Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air, and energy		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to demands on environmental resources of land, water, air, and energy would be expected because of the proposed project. The affected land would remain a FAS and would not place additional demands on the environmental resources of land, water, and air. Fuel would be required to operate equipment and vehicles used to develop and maintain the proposed project. Energy would be required to operate the electric gate and the light; however, the amount would be minimal. Therefore, any adverse impacts to energy resources would be short- and long-term and negligible.

Table 4 - Potential Impacts of Proposed Project on the Human Population

HUMAN POPULATION		Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
Resource		None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	
Social structures and mores		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to social structures and mores would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project constitutes improvements to an existing FAS with the goal of adding certain recreational amenities to improve user-experience and reduce the occurrence of illegal and undesirable activities that have occurred at the FAS in the past. These nefarious activities have led to seasonal closure of the FAS for the past nine years, as imposed by the commission. A primary objective of the White Bear FAS is to provide, maintain, and enhance public access to the Missouri River for angling, boating, rafting, and other recreational opportunities. Many Montanans and those visiting the state for outdoor recreational purposes hold high regard for public lands, such as FASs. The proposed project would improve existing recreational facilities and support secure and safe use of the existing FAS. Therefore, no adverse impacts to existing social structure, customs, values, and conventions in the affected area would be expected because of the proposed project.
Cultural uniqueness and diversity		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to cultural uniqueness and diversity would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project constitutes improvements to an existing FAS and would not result in any new or changed employment opportunities or housing in the affected area. Therefore, the proposed project would not be expected to result in any relocation of people in to or out of the affected area. Therefore, no impacts to existing cultural uniqueness and diversity of the affected area would be expected because of the proposed project.

HUMAN POPULATION		Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
Resource		None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	
Access to and quality of recreational and wilderness activities		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>There would be no significant adverse impacts to the access to and quality of recreational and wilderness activities from the proposed project. The proposed project constitutes improvements to an existing FAS. No wilderness areas exist within the proposed project area; therefore, no impacts to access and quality of wilderness activities would occur. Noise, odors, and fugitive dust resulting from construction activities could adversely impact the quality of the recreational experience for some users of the FAS. However, any adverse impacts would be short-term and minor, as once the construction phase is completed no additional adverse impacts would be expected. As part of the proposed project, a new trail system would be developed to allow users the ability to walk a one-mile crushed-stone trail system within the existing FAS footprint. Walking and dog-walking are the most common form of recreation reported in the scoping survey of adjacent residents conducted to inform the proposed project (see Appendix A). The proposed project would enhance the quality of these activities and encourage more desirable use of the FAS. The proposed safety measures, including an electronic gate and security cameras, would further support an improved and safe experience for recreational users. Additionally, the main goal of the proposed project is to prevent the need for future seasonal closures of the FAS, which would ensure year-round access for recreational purposes. Therefore, primarily beneficial impacts to access and quality of recreational activities would be expected because of the proposed project.</p>
Local and state tax base and tax revenues		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to the local and state tax base and tax revenue would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project would be</p>

HUMAN POPULATION	Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					
Resource	None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
									expected to increase state and local tax revenues from the sale of fuel, supplies and/or equipment needed to complete the project. Any impacts would be beneficial, short-term, and negligible.
Agricultural or Industrial production	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to agricultural or industrial production would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project constitutes improvement of an existing FAS where no agricultural or industrial production currently occurs. No change in land use would occur because of the proposed project. Therefore, no impacts to agricultural or industrial production would be expected because of the proposed project.
Human health and safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to human health and safety would be expected because of the proposed project. A primary objective of the proposed project is to increase security and safety at the existing FAS. More specifically, installation of an automatic electronic gate, light pole, security cameras, an authorized-use graveled road to the river, and maintained walking trails would facilitate increased safety for affected FAS users. These safety developments would be expected to address historic and undesirable illegal types of use, such as illegal entry and partying, which have resulted in seasonal closure of the FAS by the commission. The physical barrier from the gate as well as 24/7 security cameras installed on the property would deter illegal and undesirable use of the property. Therefore, any impacts from the proposed project would be long-term, moderate, and beneficial.
Quantity and distribution of employment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to the quantity and distribution of employment would be expected because of the proposed project. Some impacts to the local quantity and distribution of employment may be realized because contracted services would be used to develop the

HUMAN POPULATION	Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
	None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	
									proposed project. The proposed project would increase security and safety and enhance recreational opportunities at the existing FAS. Increased security and safety and improved recreational opportunities may result in higher use and an associated increase in demands for local services. Increased demands for services could result in increased need for seasonal or long-term local employment. Because the proposed project area is already experiencing a high level of use, any increase in employment necessary to accommodate higher use would be limited. Therefore, any impacts to the quantity and distribution of employment because of the proposed project would be short- and long-term and negligible to minor.
Distribution and density of population and housing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to the distribution and density of population and housing would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project constitutes development of an existing FAS and would not be expected to result in the movement of existing or new populations in to or out of the affected area. Therefore, no impacts to the distribution and density of population and housing needs would be expected because of the proposed project.
Demands for government services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts on the demands for government services would be expected because of the proposed project. The safety and security measures being proposed would be expected to decrease the demands on enforcement calls for service, especially during the nighttime hours when the electronic gate creates a physical barrier to prohibit entry to the property. The proposed project also includes developing a trail with additional signs, benches, a dog waste bag station, and used-bag receptacle. The improvements would be

HUMAN POPULATION	Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
	None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	
									expected to attract more desirable public use of the property and thereby reduce current demands for government services related to enforcement. The proposed improvements may place additional demands on government maintenance staff for upkeep of the improved facilities and added services associated with improvements to the existing FAS. Any adverse impacts would be consistent with current impacts at the existing FAS, long-term and minor
Industrial, agricultural, and commercial activity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to industrial, agricultural, and commercial activity would be expected because of the proposed project. The proposed project area is currently owned by FWP, managed as a FAS, and is not used for the purposes of Industrial, agricultural, and/or commercial activity. Therefore, no impacts would be expected because of the proposed project.
Locally adopted environmental plans and goals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to locally adopted environmental plans or goals would be expected because of the proposed project. The affected property is currently, and would remain, a designated FAS. A primary objective of an FAS is to provide public access to waters for angling, boating, rafting, and other recreational opportunities. White Bear FAS has had seasonal closures since 2015, and the proposed project is intended to negate the need for these closures in the future. FWP is unaware of any other locally adopted environmental plans or goals that might be impacted by the proposed project. Therefore, any impacts from the proposed project would be long-term, minor, and beneficial.
Other appropriate social and economic circumstances	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts would be expected because of the proposed project. FWP is unaware of any other appropriate social and economic circumstances that might be impacted by the proposed project. Therefore,

HUMAN POPULATION	Duration of Impact			Severity of Impact					
Resource	None	Short-Term	Long-Term	None	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures
									no impacts would be expected because of the proposed project.

Table 6: Determining the Significance of Impacts on the Quality of the Human Environment

If the EA identifies impacts associated with the proposed project FWP must determine the significance of the impacts. ARM 12.2.431. This determination forms the basis for FWP's decision as to whether it is necessary to prepare an environmental impact statement. An impact may be adverse, beneficial, or both. If none of the adverse effects of the impact are significant, an EIS is not required. An EIS is required if an impact has a significant adverse effect, even if the agency believes that the effect on balance will be beneficial. ARM 12.2.431.

According to the applicable requirements of ARM 12.2.431, FWP must consider the criteria identified in this table to determine the significance of each impact on the quality of the human environment. The significance determination is made by giving weight to these criteria in their totality. For example, impacts identified as moderate or major in severity may not be significant if the duration is short-term. However, moderate or major impacts of short-term duration may be significant if the quantity and quality of the resource is limited and/or the resource is unique or fragile. Further, moderate or major impacts to a resource may not be significant if the quantity of that resource is high or the quality of the resource is not unique or fragile.

Criteria Used to Determine Significance

1	<p>The severity, duration, geographic extent, and frequency of the occurrence of the impact</p> <p>"Severity" describes the density of the potential impact, while "extent" describes the area where the impact will likely occur, e.g., a project may propagate ten noxious weeds on a surface area of 1 square foot. Here, the impact may be high in severity, but over a low extent. In contrast, if ten noxious weeds were distributed over ten acres, there may be low severity over a larger extent.</p> <p>"Duration" describes the time period during which an impact may occur, while "frequency" describes how often the impact may occur, e.g., an operation that uses lights to mine at night may have frequent lighting impacts during one season (duration).</p>
2	The probability that the impact will occur if the proposed project occurs; or conversely, reasonable assurance in keeping with the potential severity of an impact that the impact will not occur
3	Growth-inducing or growth-inhibiting aspects of the impact, including the relationship or contribution of the impact to cumulative impacts
4	The quantity and quality of each environmental resource or value that would be affected, including the uniqueness and fragility of those resources and values
5	The importance to the state and to society of each environmental resource or value that would be affected
6	Any precedent that would be set as a result of an impact of the proposed project that would commit FWP to future actions with significant impacts or a decision in principle about such future actions

VIII. Private Property Impact Analysis (Takings)

The 54th Montana Legislature enacted the Private Property Assessment Act, now found at § 2-10-101. The intent was to establish an orderly and consistent process by which state agencies evaluate their proposed projects under the "Takings Clauses" of the United States and Montana Constitutions. The Takings Clause of the Fifth Amendment of the United States Constitution provides: "nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation." Similarly, Article II, Section 29 of the Montana Constitution provides: "Private property shall not be taken or damaged for public use without just compensation..."

The Private Property Assessment Act applies to proposed agency projects pertaining to land or water management or to some other environmental matter that, if adopted and enforced without due process of law and just compensation, would constitute a deprivation of private property in violation of the United States or Montana Constitutions.

The Montana State Attorney General's Office has developed guidelines for use by state agencies to assess the impact of a proposed agency project on private property. The assessment process includes a careful review of all issues identified in the Attorney General's guidance document (Montana Department of Justice 1997). If the use of the guidelines and checklist indicates that a proposed agency project has taking or damaging implications, the agency must prepare an impact assessment in accordance with Section 5 of the Private Property Assessment Act.

Table 7: Private Property Assessment (Takings)

PRIVATE PROPERTY ASSESMENT ACT (PPAA)			
Does the Proposed Action Have Takings Implications under the PPAA?	Question #	Yes	No
Does the project pertain to land or water management or environmental regulations affecting private property or water rights?	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the action result in either a permanent or an indefinite physical occupation of private property?	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the action deprive the owner of all economically viable uses of the property?	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the action require a property owner to dedicate a portion of property or to grant an easement? (If answer is NO, skip questions 4a and 4b and continue with question 5)	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is there a reasonable, specific connection between the government requirement and legitimate state interest?	4a	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the government requirement roughly proportional to the impact of the proposed use of the property?	4b	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the action deny a fundamental attribute of ownership?	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the action have a severe impact of the value of the property?	6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the action damage the property by causing some physical disturbance with respect to the property in excess of that sustained by the public general? (If the answer is NO, skip questions 7a-7c.)	7	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the impact of government action direct, peculiar, and significant?	7a	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the government action resulted in the property becoming practically inaccessible, waterlogged, or flooded?	7b	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the government action diminished property values by more than 30% and necessitated the physical taking of adjacent property or property across a public way from the property in question?	7c	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the proposed action result in taking or damaging implications?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Taking or damaging implications exist if **YES** is checked in response to Question 1 and also to any one or more of the following questions: 2, 3, 4, 6, 7a, 7b, 7c; or if **NO** is checked in response to question 4a or 4b.

If taking or damaging implications exist, the agency must comply with MCA § 2-10-105 of the PPAA, to include the preparation of a taking or damaging impact assessment. Normally, the preparation of an impact assessment will require consultation with agency legal staff.

Alternatives:

The analysis under the Private Property Assessment Act, §§ 2-10-101 through -112, MCA, indicates no impact. FWP does not plan to impose conditions that would restrict the regulated person's use of private property to constitute a taking.

IX. Public Participation

Initial scoping of residential properties near White Bear Fishing Access Site: FWP contacted two Homeowners Associations that have been involved in past discussions regarding White Bear FAS and invited them to participate in a meeting at FWP Region 4 Headquarters Office on May 31st, 2023. At this meeting FWP described the planning process for improvements to White Bear FAS, shared initial conceptual ideas for improvements and development at the site, and invited HOA members to share ideas and ask questions of FWP staff. The meeting included staff from FWP's Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division, FWP's Region 4 Acting Regional Supervisor, and FWP Law Enforcement.

FWP conducted a scoping survey to gather information from impacted area residents about potential future management of the White Bear FAS. The survey was distributed to all people in attendance at the May 31st, 2023, meeting and to 140 residential addresses located near White Bear FAS, directly across the Missouri River from White Bear FAS, and along all access roads from Fox Farm Road to White Bear FAS. The survey was conducted online from May 31st to June 18th, 2023, and was also made available in hard copy upon request. The survey was not a vote on what improvements or decisions would or would not be made at the property, but rather a scoping tool to better understand the opinions and input from those who reside near the FAS. The information collected from the survey helped FWP draft the improvements proposed in this Draft EA. The results from the survey are provided in Appendix A.

The level of analysis in an EA will vary with the complexity and seriousness of environmental issues associated with a proposed action. The level of public interest will also vary. FWP is responsible for adjusting public review to match these factors (ARM 12.2.433(1)). Because FWP determines the proposed action will result in limited environmental impact, and little public interest has been expressed, FWP determines the following public notice strategy will provide an appropriate level of public review:

- *An EA is a public document and may be inspected upon request. Any person may obtain a copy of an EA by making a request to FWP. If the document is out-of-print, a copying charge may be levied (ARM 12.2.433(2)).*
- *Public notice will be served on the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks website at: <https://fwp.mt.gov/news/public-notices>*
- *Copies will be distributed to neighboring landowners to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project and opportunity for review and comment on the proposed action.*
- *FWP maintains a mailing list of persons interested in a particular action or type of action. FWP will notify all interested persons and distribute copies of the EA to those persons for review and comment (ARM 12.2.433(3)).*
- *FWP will issue public notice in the following newspaper periodical(s) on the date(s) indicated.*

Newspaper / Periodical	Date(s) Public Notice Issued
Great Falls Tribune	9/12/23

- *Public notice will announce the availability of the EA, summarize its content, and solicit public comment.*

- **Duration of Public Comment Period:** The public comment period begins on the date of publication of legal notice in area newspapers (see above). Written or e-mailed comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., MST, on the last day of public comment, as listed below:

Length of Public Comment Period: 15 days

Public Comment Period Begins: 9/12/2023

Public Comment Period Ends: 9/26/2023

Comments must be addressed to the FWP contact, as listed below.

- **Where to Mail or Email Comments on the Draft EA:**

Name: CANNON COLEGROVE

Email: cannon.colegrove@mt.gov

Mailing Address:

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

Attn: White Bear FAS

4600 Giant Springs Rd

Great Falls, MT 59405

X. Recommendation for Further Environmental Analysis

NO further analysis is needed for the proposed action	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
FWP must conduct EIS level review for the proposed action	<input type="checkbox"/>

XI. EA Preparation and Review

	Name	Title
EA prepared by:	Cannon Colegrove	FWP Recreation Manager
EA reviewed by:	Alex Sholes	FWP Regional Recreation Manager
	Jason Rhoten	FWP Region 4 Supervisor
	Charlie Sperry	FWP Assistant Administrator POR
	Hope Stockwell	FWP Division Administrator POR
	Eric Merchant	FWP MEPA Coordinator

Appendix A: Results of Scoping Survey

FWP.MT.GOV



THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

White Bear Fishing Access Site

Scoping Survey of Residential Properties near White Bear Fishing Access Site

Report of Results

Prepared by

Cannon Colegrove
Recreation Manager



Background

White Bear Fishing Access Site, managed by the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, is located on the Missouri River 3 miles upstream of the Great Falls city limits on the northwest shoreline of the Missouri River. The Fishing Access Site is accessible by driving on Fox Farm Road and then turning on either Fawn Drive, Highwood Drive, or Dune Drive. The Fishing Access Site is also accessible from the Missouri River by watercraft.

Undesirable and illegal public behavior and actions in the past, in addition to comments received by the public, many of which included nearby homeowners, prompted the Fish and Wildlife Commission to implement a temporary closure to the property. The temporary closure has been in place since 2015 and prohibits public entry to the property during the summer months. Since the temporary closure was first implemented in 2015, FWP has not developed any improvements to the property. On April 18th, the biennial temporary summer closure was reinstated for the years of 2023 and 2024 by the Fish and Wildlife Commission at the Commission meeting. 3 written public comments were received on the Commission agenda item of reinstating the seasonal closure. Members of the Fish and Wildlife Commission expressed a desire of FWP to develop an improvement plan to reopen the property for public access and use during the summer months.

As FWP looks to develop management objectives and an improvement plan for the future of White Bear Fishing Access Site, the agency acknowledges the importance of incorporating feedback, input, and suggestions of nearby residents and Homeowners Associations into the initial planning effort of future management and improvement plans for White Bear Fishing Access Site due to the history of undesirable uses the site has had in the past and the impacts that can occur to residential properties that exist near the Fishing Access Site. While FWP manages the Fishing Access Site for all public access and recreation, because of the history of undesirable and illegal activity at White Bear Fishing Access, and the unique challenges that come with urban Fishing Access Sites, FWP believes it is especially important to provide nearby residents the opportunity to provide input on initial planning concepts, which was conducted through a scoping survey.

Scoping Survey

FWP reached out to two Homeowners Associations that have been involved with discussion involving White Bear Fishing Access Site in the past to participate in a meeting at FWP Region 4 Headquarters Office on May 31st for FWP to describe the planning process for improvements to White Bear Fishing Access Site, share initial conceptual ideas for improvements and developments plans to the property, and allow HOA members the opportunity to share ideas and ask questions of FWP staff involved in the project. FWP staff present at the meeting included staff from the Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division, the Region 4 Acting Regional Supervisor, and FWP Law Enforcement.

To effectively gather information from area residents on future management of White Bear Fishing Access Site, FWP created a scoping survey. The survey was distributed to all people in attendance of the May 31st meeting. The survey was also mailed out to 140 residential addresses located near White Bear Fishing Access site, directly across the Missouri River from White Bear Fishing Access Site, and along all access roads from Fox Farm Rd. to White Bear Fishing Access Site (Figure 1). The survey was conducted online using the Survey Monkey platform and was also available by hard copy upon request for those who were unable to complete for survey online or preferred to complete the hard copy. The survey was open from May 31st to June 18th, 2023, for those that chose to participate in the survey. The survey was not a vote on what improvements or decisions will or will not be made for the property, but rather was developed to better understand the opinions and input from those who reside near the fishing access site, and consider additional comments and ideas for future management that were brought forth by those who responded to the survey. The survey was

intended to capture impacted resident views and not the views of the public as a whole, who may or may not utilize this FWP Fishing Access Site.

There were 67 people who participated in the survey. Results from the survey are published in this report and distributed to all those who selected to be informed by email on the survey and provided their email to distribute this information to. FWP will take the results of this survey into consideration as the agency looks to develop an Environmental Assessment for the improvement plan of White Bear Fishing Access Site.

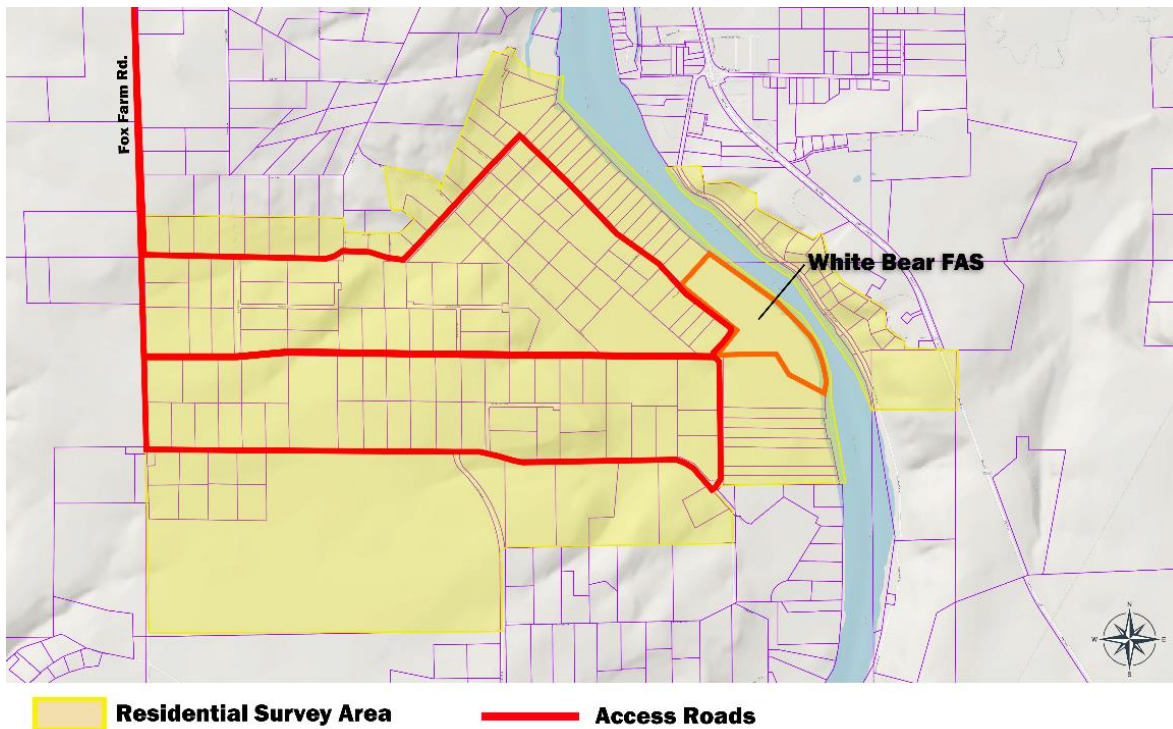
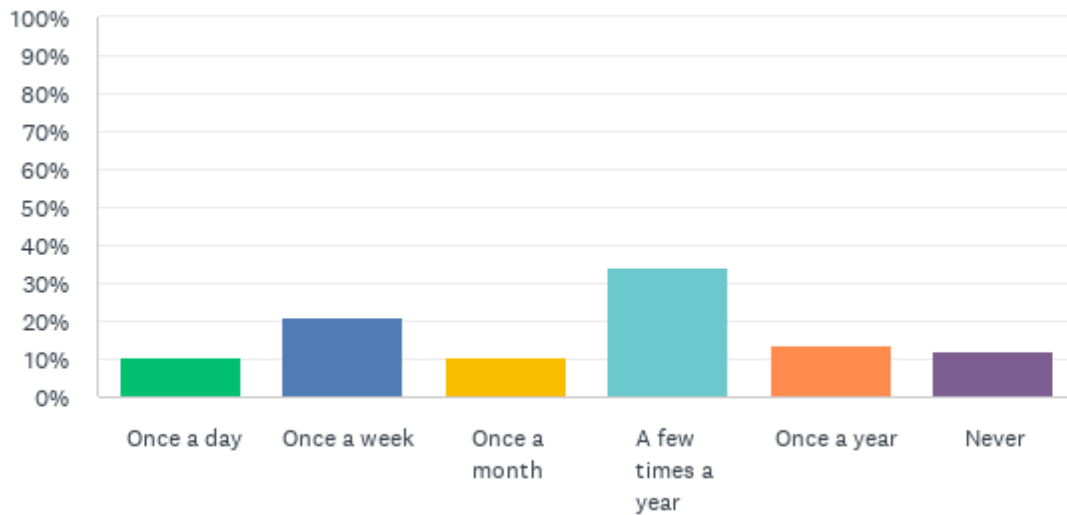


Figure 1

Results

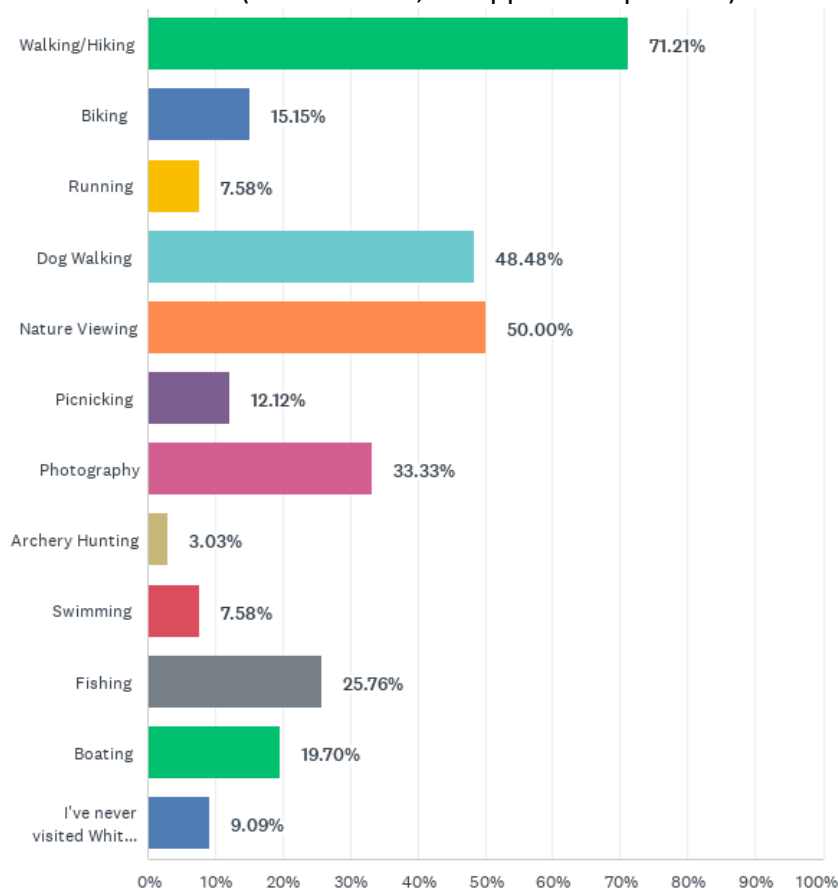
The survey results indicate varying perspectives, opinions, desires, and preferences for future management of White Bear Fishing Access Site from survey respondents. All results and comments from this survey are published below.

About how often do you visit White Bear Fishing Access Site?
(67 answered, 0 skipped the question)



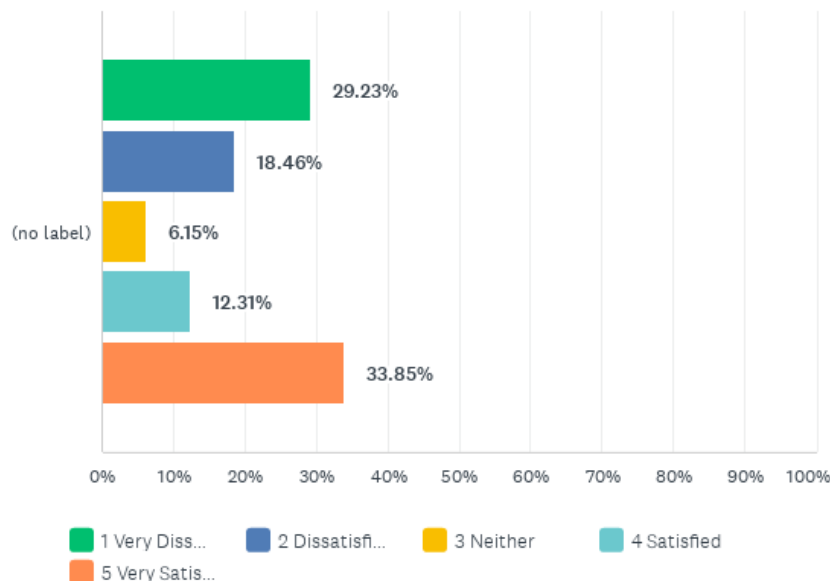
**In White Bear Fishing Access Site, which of the following recreational activities have you taken part in?
(Check all that apply)**

(66 answered, 1 skipped the question)

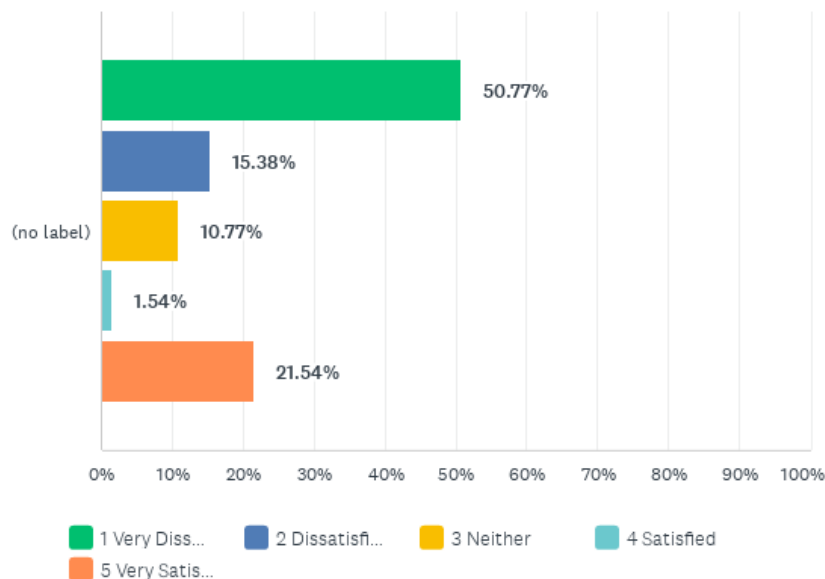


On a scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied), what is your level of satisfaction with the current summer closure in place at White Bear FAS?

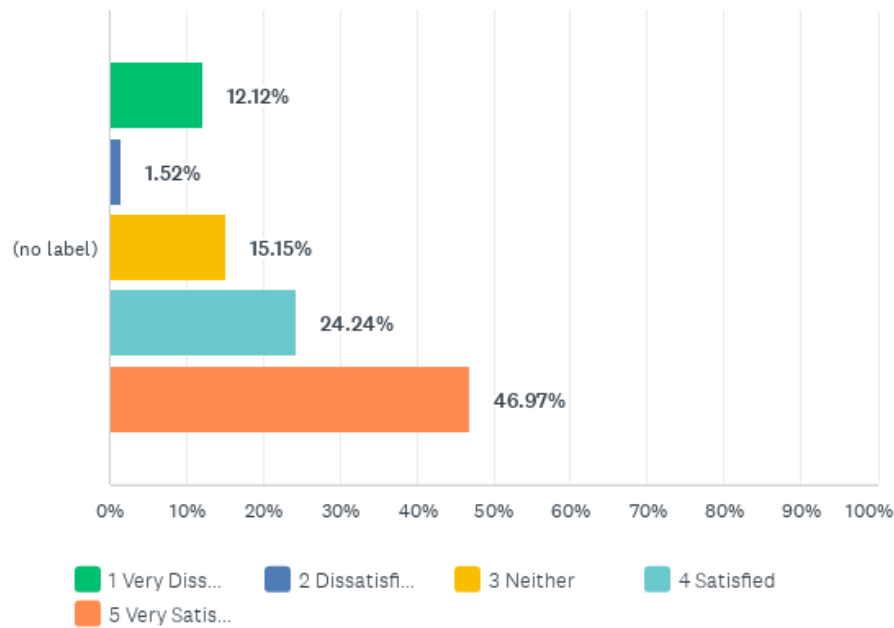
(65 answered, 2 skipped the question)



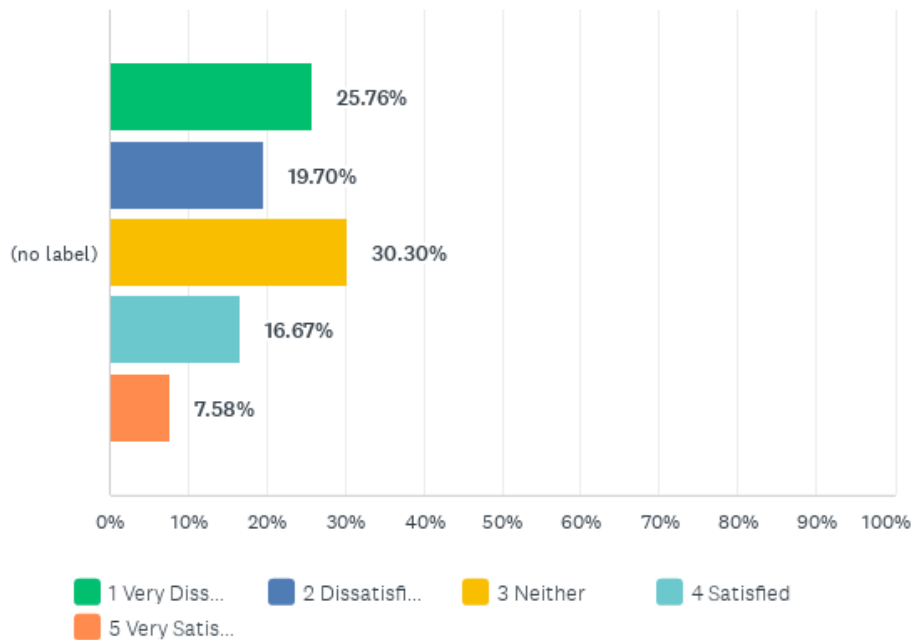
On a scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied), what would your level of satisfaction be if FWP divested from White Bear Fishing Access Site, traded, or sold the property?
(65 answered, 2 skipped the question)



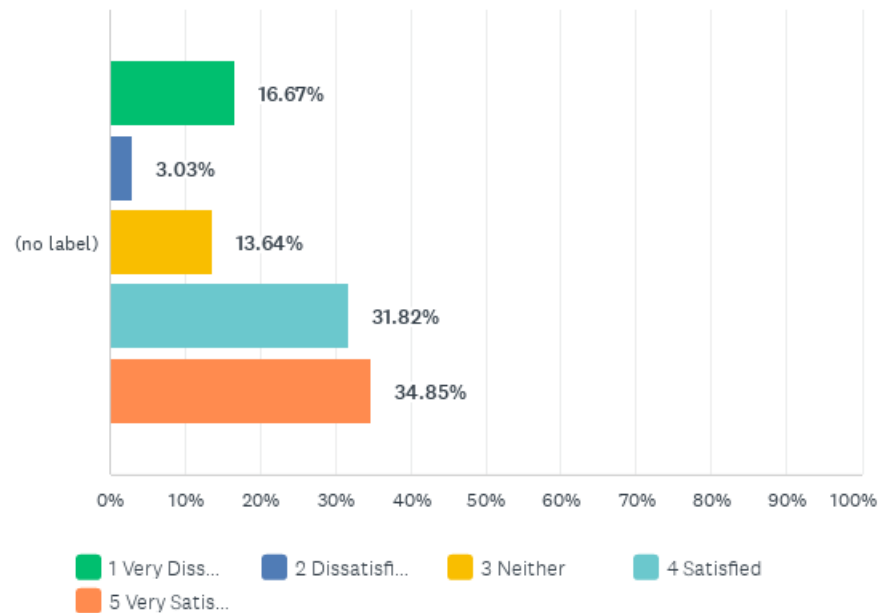
On a scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied), what would your level of satisfaction be if FWP invested funds to enhance recreation opportunity and install safety measures to the property?
(66 answered, 1 skipped the question)



On a scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied), what is your overall level of satisfaction with White Bear Fishing Access Site's current visitor behavior?
(66 answered, 1 skipped the question)

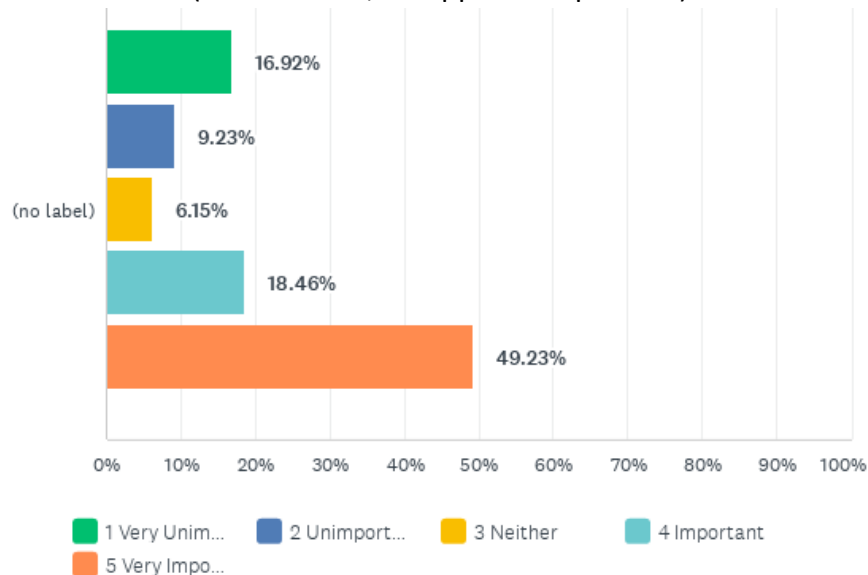


On a scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied), what would be your level of satisfaction towards re-opening the site during the summer months if FWP invested funds into an improvement plan for White Bear Fishing Access Site?
(66 answered, 1 skipped the question)



Public Access to open space and the Missouri River in the Fox Farm area is currently limited to White Bear Fishing Access Site and the DNRC land adjacent to Fox Farm Rd. and 45th Ave SW. On a scale from 1 (very unimportant) to 5 (very important), how important is it to retain White Bear Fishing Access Site as an area for the public to access?

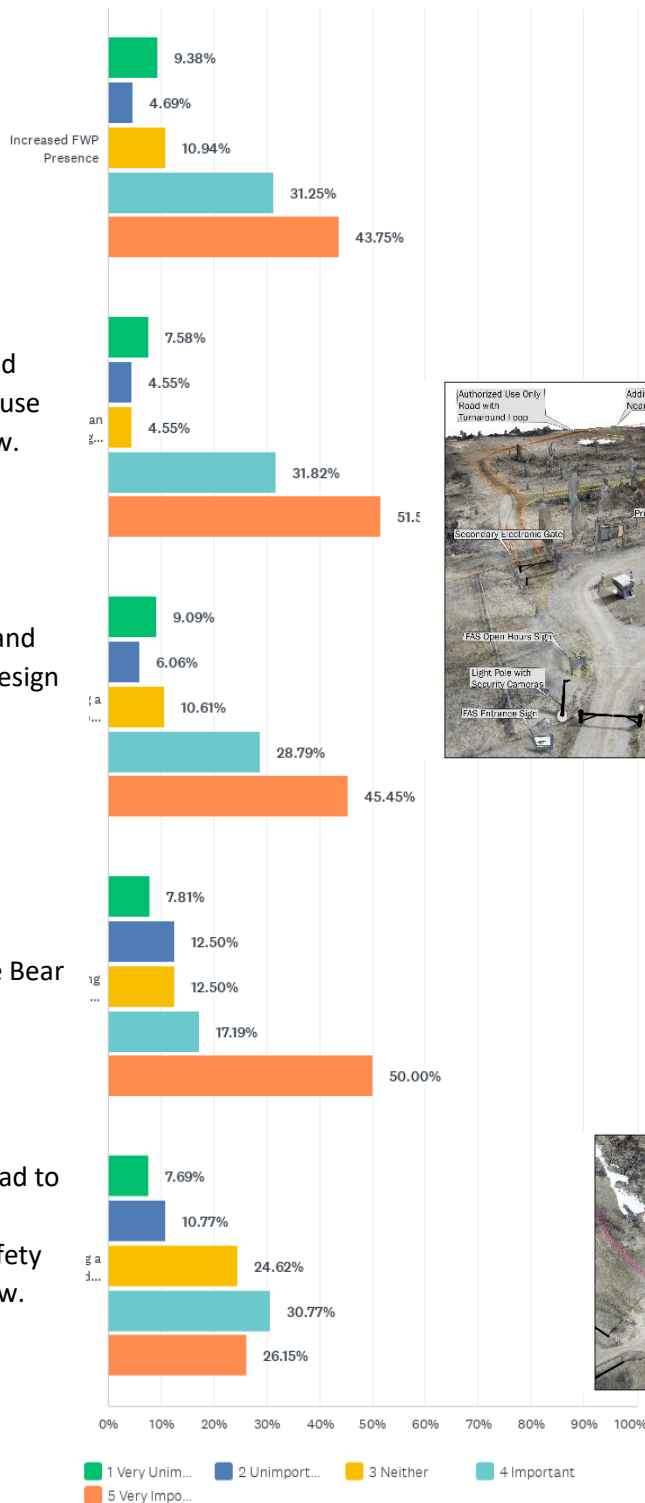
(65 answered, 2 skipped the question)



On a scale from 1 (very unimportant) to 5 (very important), how important is it that the following recreational activities and/or developments are offered at White Bear Fishing Access Site?

(66 answered, 1 skipped the question)

Increased
FWP Presence



On a scale from 1 (very unimportant) to 5 (very important), how important is it that the following recreational activities and/or developments are offered at White Bear Fishing Access Site? (66 answered, 1 skipped the question)



Category	Percentage
Creation of a 0.5 mile...	4.55%
Creation of a 0.5 mile...	15.15%
Creation of a 0.5 mile...	19.70%
Creation of a 0.5 mile...	21.21%
Creation of a 0.5 mile...	39.39%

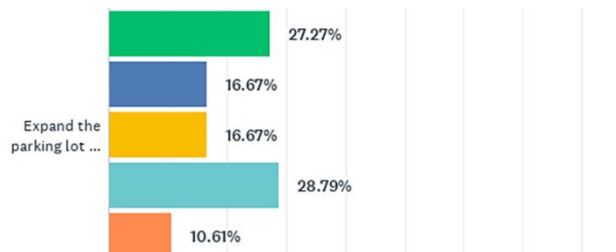
Reason	Percentage
To improve safety	41.54%
To improve traffic flow	23.08%
To improve school district revenue	20.00%
To improve school district reputation	10.77%
To improve school district facilities	4.62%

Category	Percentage
Picnic Tables	31.25%
	29.69%
	20.31%
	10.94%
	7.81%

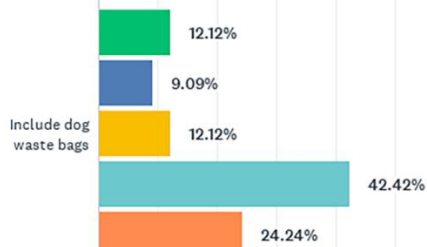
Category	Percentage
Interpretive signage talk...	27.69%
Interpretive signage talk...	27.69%
Interpretive signage talk...	10.77%
Interpretive signage talk...	7.69%
Interpretive signage talk...	26.15%



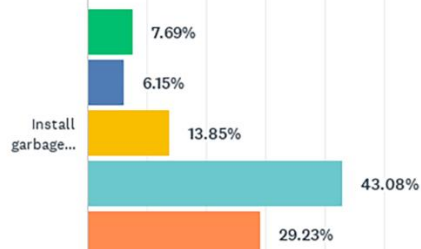
Expand the parking lot to include more parking spaces.



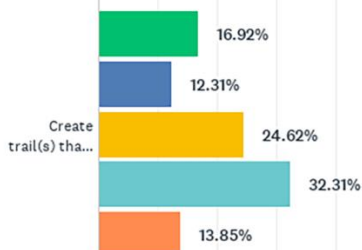
Include dog waste bags.



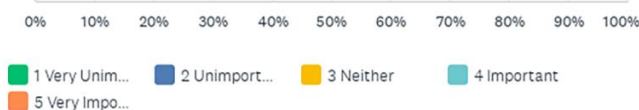
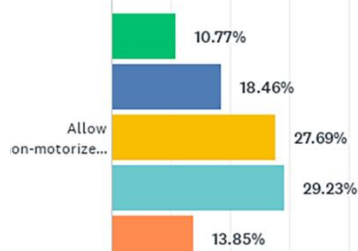
Install garbage disposal at the site.

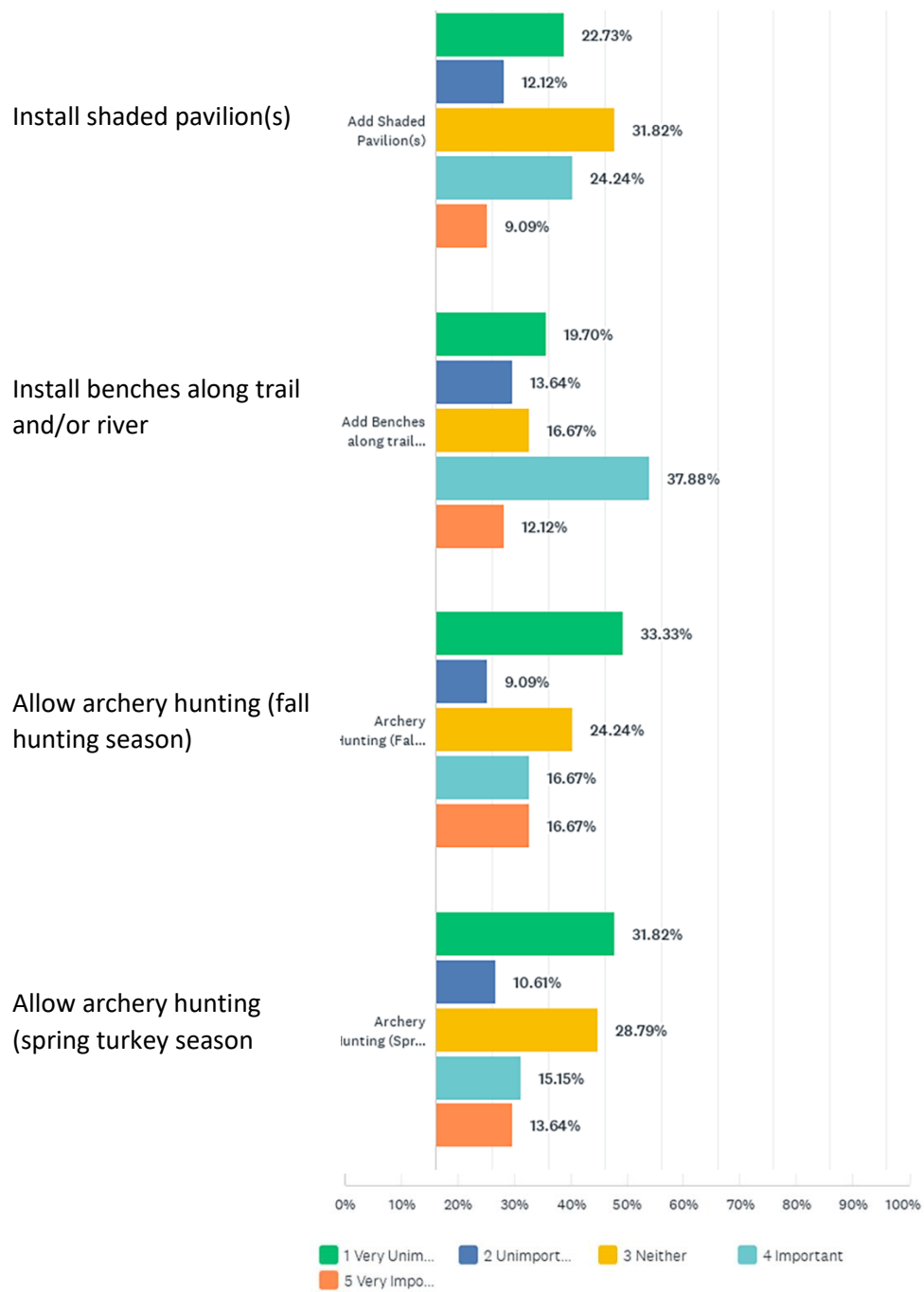


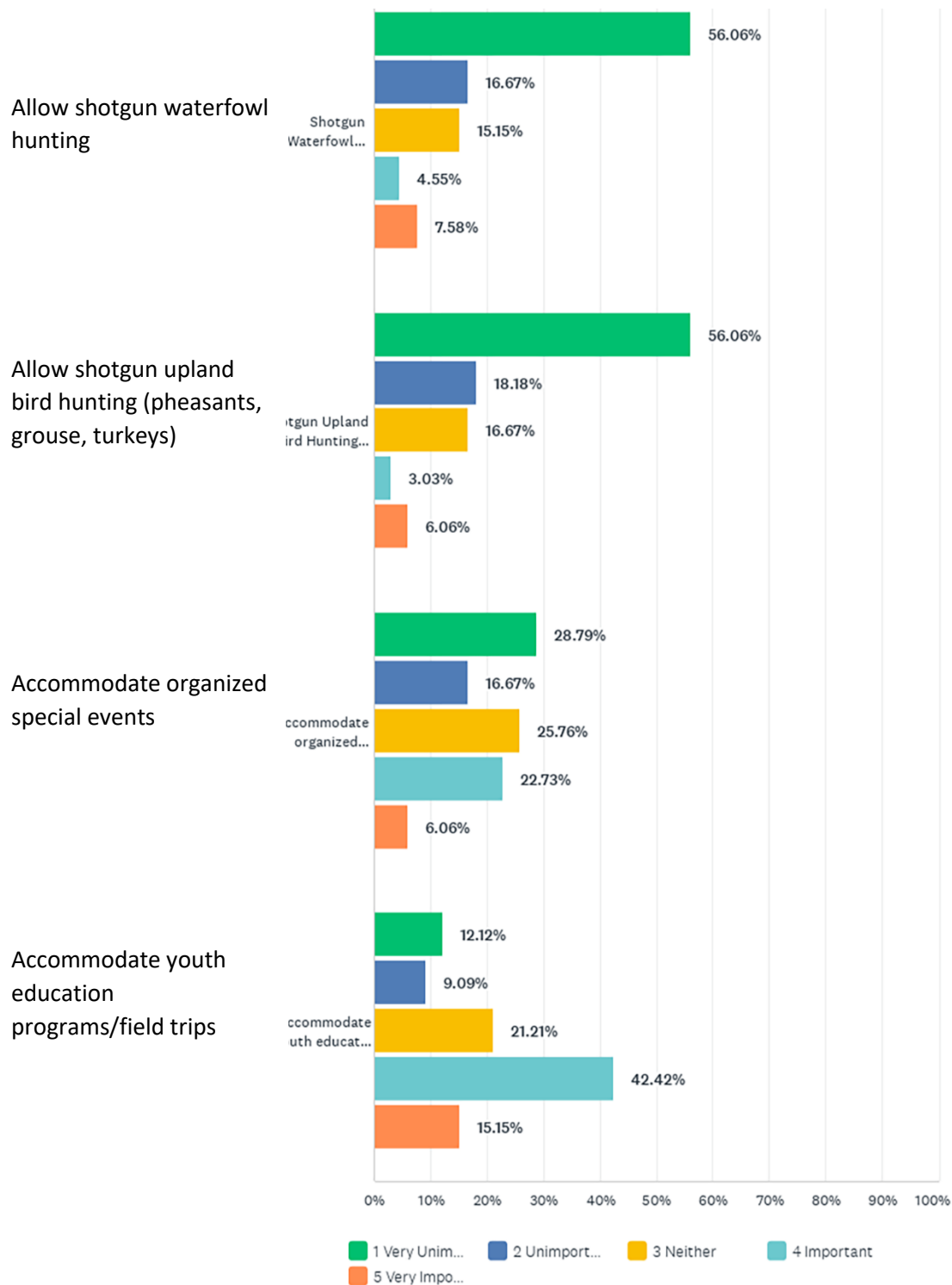
Create trail(s) that are ADA compliant and accessible



Allow non-motorized biking on the trail(s)

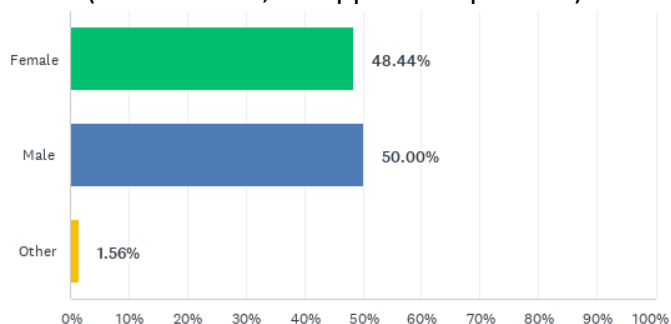




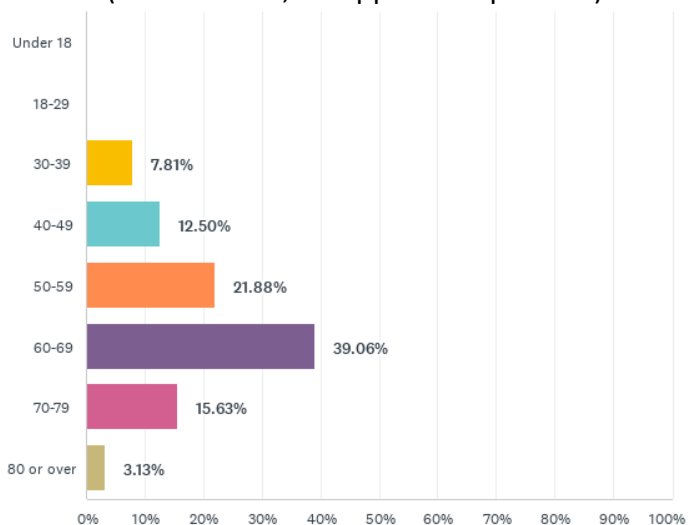


Respondent Information

(64 answered, 3 skipped the question)

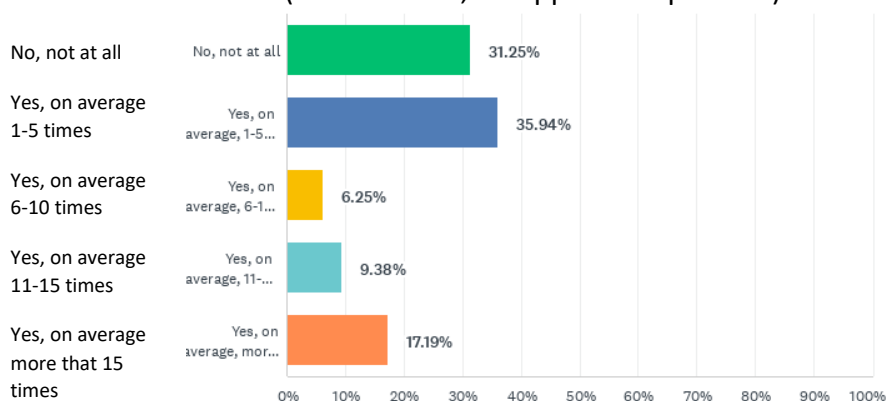


(64 answered, 3 skipped the question)



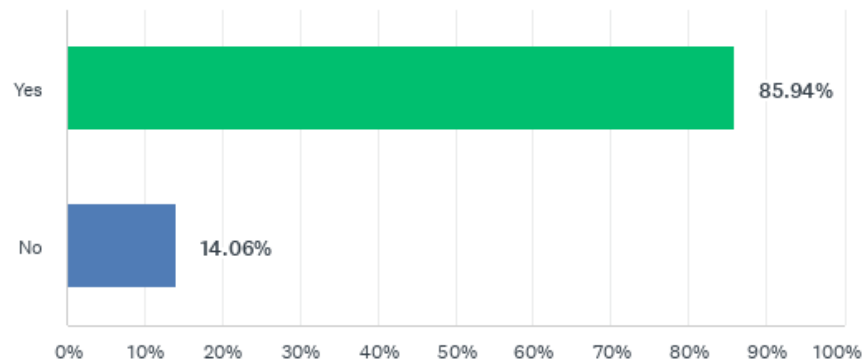
I have used White Bear Fishing Access Site in the last year.

(64 answered, 3 skipped the question)



I am a resident of the Fox Farm Rd. area located within a few miles of White Bear Fishing Access Site?

(64 answered, 3 skipped the question)



Survey Comments

All comments received through the online survey are provided below. Comments received show varying perspectives and opinions from residents living near White Bear FAS on future management plans for White Bear Fishing Access Site and provide suggestions, concerns, and feedback to FWP for consideration. FWP staff have reviewed all comments and results of this survey and will consider all comments and survey results in the development of an improvement plan for White Bear Fishing Access Site.

General Comments and Input

"I prefer the site is closed or sold as the residential area has grown exponentially surrounding the site and it feels very unsafe at the site. It also creates increased high speed vehicle traffic through the surrounding residential area, and traffic enforcement is minimal."

"Make fishing access ADA accessible."

"I think that it is important to have a place where people can go to enjoy nature, but I do not think that hunting should be allowed in that area. With the surge in houses being built in this area, wildlife has fewer places to go."

"The White Bear fishing access is one of the few place on the river that hasn't been developed and should remain that way and never be sold."

"So vital to provide access to public lands and river access. The river should not only be accessible for those wealthy enough to buy land adjacent to the river."

"I feel your ideas are great, but if this area is not monitored at all times and the trash picked up, I do not see it being as great as you would like it to be. This is an area far away from town that is not a boat launch and is very large. It has not worked in the past and has been a head ack for the sheriff department and fish and game. It would be way better to be sold."

"In the past the public had an opinion on opening or closing the access. When attending the meeting, I was told the decision has already been made to open the access year round. Unfair to the public. Statics should be looked at as far as crimes, sexual assaults, after hour calls, etc. During the next 2 years would be a great time to look at the amount of calls for illegal activities, verbal or citations given, and proper use of the facility. Then a decision made."

"If fwy divested could the property be built on or is it in the flood plane?"

"It is public land that should be kept accessible, improved, maintained, monitored, and covered by reasonable rules that are enforced!"

"Increased traffic and usage violators are a concern."

"Most locals would love to see it improved and available. However, if the old partying comes back, closure is better."

"Great Falls needs to provide easily accessible natural areas. With the expansion of housing into previous farmland, keeping some places natural is essential. That means that the natural environment is preserved as much as possible and that human use is limited to enjoying and relaxing in it without a lot of other activities. Also, that means that the Sheriff's department has to be available to monitor the area for people who are exploiting it."

"Archery hunting would be welcomed. The deer population is out of control. I wish land owners were provided fencing material like ranches to protect our investment."

"By just changing the name, you put people in a different mindset. Nature/viewing would help in reducing the just want to party and have fun crowd. This may also help slow down the traffic going to and from the site. I believe changing the name would help in reducing vandalism and littering also."

"I really support the White Bear staying open! It is a great spot for people to be able to access the river. I think that the plans to disallow alcohol, and close the park at night should make a huge difference. The rest of the year use of the White Bear is never a problem. The proposed changes make sense to dissuade the partying and driving under the influence that lead to closure."

"Please have FWP come by more during weekends"

"We are a family of 5 and really enjoy spending time at the access site. Thank you!"

"I think this is a positive iniative for the public to appreciate."

"I think that area should be family friendly with picnic and hiking areas. I do not think that hunting should be allowed"

"We who live close to this access love it for walking and biking and really want to keep it open for the residents to enjoy year round."

"Live across the river with a full view of this access. I watch the birds & deer & beaver and love it. See many many people enjoying the space. Bathrooms are needed to decrease the human waste. Increased security to discourage the illegal drug and fire behaviors."

"I have lived in this area since 1985 when there were only six homes or so. Now we have over 200 families living in the immediate area. I am confident that most of those families would love to see this area open year round. Unfortunately, at the May 31st meeting (as is usual in all meetings it seems), only those who were not favor of opening the area made their somewhat angry opinions known. I would like to thank each of you who have worked so hard on this project (and will do so into the future) for your efforts. Please do not let a"

"I have lived across from white bear for 23 years and I have seen how out of control this place gets. We do not have enough sheriffs or fish and game people to deal with this area. If you call a sheriff just to come to your house it can sometimes take up to an hour to get a person unless you are lucky enough to have one already in your area. I live across the river from this island and I hate to say it but I have no good feelings. Like I have said before you need a person on the premisses daily."

"I strongly oppose gun use in the facility. We live directly across from the "beachy area" shooting takes place too close to surrounding houses. Since this is already a done deal..... spreading out the beachy area to additional sites would help keep the number of people to a minimum in one area. Currently everyone uses the one beachy area available to them. A way to control/ban alcohol would be beneficial. Trash pickup from the public who do no "pack it out, when they pack it in" needs to be addressed."

"Please no hunting."

"Suggest building (or ask locals to build) a bridge over the North end of the Slough to facilitate a "round robin" path through more of the area, especially in higher water, when the slough is wet/full. Also: Consider involving Lewis & Clark Int-center personnel for helping with interpretive signing ref L&C passing the site in 1805, possible hunting by L&C there, dates when they passed etc, Pierre Cruzatte could well have hunted there, for instance."

"I do not believe that hunting by either bow or shotgun is safe at White Bear due to the number of homes within close proximity on both sides of the river."

"Build and maintain an access boating ramp at least capable of launching a raft, kayak, canoe or small fishing boat"

"It's a small access (and has to be developed accordingly) but every public access has to be esteemed and developed to full potential of the individual site. Do not sell! Keep the sort of wild aspect of this site while developing realistic use."

"We appreciate the information from the two meetings we've attended."

"There needs to be no waterfowl shot in this area. This has been tried and due to fast running water the dead geese float down the river and if a dog is involved the dog floats down the river. (I have seen this with my own eyes) The current in that area is very strong. In the day the bus would stop in front of my house, on Wilson Butte Road, the bullets would fly towards the bus. I was told shotgun shells could not go that far, across the river, but why take the chance. If you do archery in Fall and spring do you plan on closing park for that period of time and if you do how do you plan on enforcing the closure. Special events would be great as long as there is Fish and Game representatives there."

"More surveillance needed during the closed time. Currently individuals are in the access when it is closed during the summer, after hours, etc. Unfortunately, the sheriff, FWP and Tipmont do not reply consistently to calls in a timely manner. So, the actions continue with no consequences."

"Possible video cameras to keep watch of illegal activities."

"Routine presence of FWP and/or Sheriff personnel will be paramount to keeping the partying, camping, & mixing of teenagers and middle aged Motorcycle Bikers, and drug/alcohol users, that occurred in the past from re-occurring in the future. Live camera coverage would be a great addition, and help to Law enforcement & FWP, in my opinion."

"You have covered my concerns"

"I do not see that prohibiting alcohol would have a positive effect. Under age drinking could still occur and people would sneak it in."

"The more visits by law enforcement the better!"

"Clearing deadfall and underbrush to allow better line of sight for users and FWP personnel"

"I like the idea of limiting night time activity as that seems to be when most of the things occur that are objectionable."

"I moved to this area with this fishing access area in mind. It seems like the people who live next to this area feel like they own it. They will continue to enter the area even when closed. It would be nice to be able to leave the river on my kayak here. We kayak from Cottonwood Fishing Access."

"There needs to be no guns, no fires, no tents and no parties. The swimming in the area does not agree with the boating. There is a large sand bar which makes a swimmer able to walk almost half way across the river which causes safety issues with the water skiers, boaters, jet skies. There needs to not be rope swings, or motor vehicles like ATVs ect. No Fireworks should be allowed. Due to past experience if people had to pay to get in or

get a pass like at Giant Springs that would be the way to go, maybe a ticket that opens gate for entrance would be a good way to monitor area if a person could not be there."

"There is currently only 1 beach area. Perhaps additional beach areas to the north of the current beach area would assist with congestion of the one area. More area for individuals to go..... help keep the are uncongested."

"The site was fine for public access prior to the previous development. The development itself is what prompted all of the undesirable activity during the summer months. The more money and features you put into this development, the more problematic it will become. It will be impractical to police it constantly"

"how about a full time person staffing it during hours it's open to the public"

"Due to the closeness of houses in the area and across from the "beach area" I would like to not see shotgun/hunting in the access. No alcohol to keep it a family friendly site and less noise and partying/ criminal activity. Close facility at 7pm for neighboring houses to have peaceful evenings. Evening are when the current "rules/regulations" are not being followed by the public. That, along with little response from game warden's, tip mont, and law enforcement make it easier for individuals to use the facility not for what it was meant to be used for. Proper gates and fencing will detour individuals from entering the access when closed. Violators need to be fined for their actions"

"The more you develop it the more problems you will have."

"The access site is not the safety factor , it is the number of vehicles on the road, number of obnoxious people and disrespectful people on the roads. We live here and don't want grand central station out my front door. And people sneaking in off the river."

"It is important to keep it open on a limited/manageable basis"

"Public access is very needed in this area."

"its too close to the city limits and invites a bad element of people that do not respect the residents of the area or the traffic laws and speed limits"

"Don't want the traffic!"

"In the past this access has had public comment time available. During the meeting we attended it was made clear that the decision has already been made to open the access year round starting in 2025. We the public have proven that the access being open during summer months has had increased trash, partying, drug use, sexual assaults, citizens deaths, etc. These items should be monitored over the next 2 years of closures, with statics being analyzed, and then a decision should be voted upon. If the access is opened and gets out of control, as in the past, the site should be closed immediately and permanently. Along with maximum fines and loss of fishing and hunting privileges."

"It was a disaster out here when FWP opened the site and developed it. It encouraged drinking & driving and drug use/deals/parties. There were numerous near miss accidents and extreme speeding. It got to the point it wasn't safe to walk or bike the local roads. Further development is going to put us back in that same spot!"

"In the past when it has been open in the summer, it has caused frequent speeding, and dangerous driving in the neighborhood. If the site is opened and improved, it is likely that someone is going to be injured or killed."

"the fishing access sight has been nothing but a party spot for younger people, causing a need for more police prescence and conflict with the residents, public access sights shouldnt be in a neighborhood of people and their residences"

"Think of the safety of the people living here, the taxes we pay and the freeloaders using it and destroying it!"

"I live in the area but have only tried to use it at time that it was closed."

"Visitor behavior is poor; too many litter bugs"

"No hunting ever / no how / no way. No arrows / no bullets. This is a danger to a residential area and to people within the site."

"NO HUNTING (archery or shotgun). This is a residential area. Hunting would be unsafe for residents and for those that walk the trails. I would hope that hunting would be done in a more rural location."

"The fishing access site is a great idea, however, the reason I marked it as unimportant is because it is not managed correctly. The misbehavior from outside groups overwhelms the desire to have the site open. There was an incident where an individual from the site was shooting his laser pointer (red dot) into nearby homes of nearby residents. Because I noticed police response - two patrol vehicles, I called 911 to find out what was going on. The dispatcher said the police were looking for a subject who was shooting his laser pointer into different homes. Because it was about midnight, I had no other choice but to arm myself in case this person showed up at my house. The partying that goes on, the drugs and alcohol, other kinds of mischief needs GFPD input. I believe that it would be wise to get input from GFPD as to its ability to provide law enforcement to this site. If an incident occurs multiple responders will be necessary. FWP presence would be a good deterrence, but if an incident escalates GFPD will have to be called to provide reinforcement. GFPD cannot be left out of the picture. Any decision making on behalf of this site must include GFPD and its ability to protect, otherwise we're making assumptions."

"You guys owe me for picking up all the litter I find in there. Trash cans onsite might be a blessing or a curse; hard to say."

"I love this area and use it daily (when it is open). I hope that the site continues to exist. It would be great if it were open in the summer but I worry about the safety of the residents and the disruption of the quiet by some people who play loud music. Also, hunting in a residential neighborhood seems dangerous to me for the

residents but also for those of us who walk the trails on a daily basis. Hunting in Spring and Fall would make the site inaccessible 2 seasons of the year. This seems to be a poor use of the land."

"Open the access for a short period of time to start to monitor what additional security might be needed and extend the hours open once satisfied safety issues have been addressed"

"We are a residential area. Homes are too close to the white bear fishing access to allow shooting. Too many people are walking in this area ,too many problems could develop. As a fishing access site, there's no need to put up pavilions or to have any kind of partying events. This area is to protect wildlife and to allow fishing only. The area needs to be monitored and managed as fish and wildlife says they are going to do to prevent any of the things that have happened in the past. Fish and wildlife needs to also consider the fact that the people coming to use that fishing access area are speeding down our streets which are not wide enough for the increased traffic. They also have crushed mailboxes and thrown garbage on residents property. These are things we as residents must contend with and FWP has no way to prevent this from happening. Alcohol has been a constant problem we do not need to introduce this to the site. No boating access is necessary at this site."

What are necessary items FWP should consider when drafting an improvement plan for White Bear Fishing Access Site?

"It's hard with stupid kids these days. I hear that is the main problems."

"Impact of the increase of high speed traffic through the residential area accessing the site. Hilly and shoulderless roads through residential neighborhoods are the only access to this fishing access site."

"Access, site security, reasonable rules, and enforcement!"

"If opened during the summer, the amount of traffic in the area increases dramatically and some times detrimentally."

"Safety of local residents, school kids and visitors. Speeding of party goers on their way to "the party" has been a problem in the past, on Fox Farm road, Fawn Drive, Hawk Drive, Highwood Drive & Dune Drive. Drugs and Alcohol use in the presence of youth has been a problem as well. Sleeping bags, and tents, and garbage left at the site, in the past. "Shoulder parking" all along Hawk Drive adjacent to the site, has caused traffic and safety issues in the past"

"Security."

"Lots of partying goes on down there, underage drinking and use of illegal drugs, speeding up and down Highwood drive"

"Assess the successful management of other FAS around the state. Use experience to develop a plan going forward. I can't believe this one little site is such a problem to manage."

"Enforced hours of operation"

"Safety, lighting"

"safety for the neighborhood"

"Cameras"

"Don't call the site a fishing access! It is a poor fishing spot. Hiking/Wildlife viewing site would put people visiting in a different mindset. It may even help keep the neighbors happy."

"Automatic security gates to keep people out after hours"

"Get support from residents. Communicate."

"Safety and drug/alcohol free"

"Keep it natural, don't commercialize it, install safety gates, prevent alcohol,"

"In my opinion, in order to have it open in the summer, there would need to be dramatically increased patrols, especially after dark. I would also like to suggest better signage implicitly listing what is allowed and what is not allowed, along with possible fines and punishment."

"Whatever it takes to prevent bad behavior from developing. I think if you come out strong with law enforcement drive byes for this summer and next summer it will prevent any bad behavior."

"better access to the river by building and maintaining a boat ramp"

"Safety of the neighborhood; increased traffic and excess speed on Highwood, Hawk, and Fawn Drives. Enforcement and / or presence of Law Enforcement is necessary."

"Keeping the area safe and clean should be the most important aspects to consider."

"Safety and not allowing underage drinking and partying and keeping it trash free and keeping the walking and biking trails open."

"More patrols, more parking available, more parking enforcement for those that break the rules. More signage that parking is prohibited on the street and prohibited on my land at [REDACTED] [REDACTED]"

"Lighting and motion cameras that FWP could access from their phones to prevent night access"

"As much as reasonable, prevention of illegal activities (without closing). Including illegal fires & drugs."

"I like the automatic gate that limits access at night time as an idea"

"Open as much as possible"

"self locking gate install so neighbors near the site won't cry thinking they need to be the watch dogs."

"Good gates and not allowing alcohol."

"Pretty well covered at the May 31st meeting in Gt. Falls"

"Security, limited hours, and it needs to have a person on land daily during the busy hours and late at night. Being this far out of town makes it a great place for illegal activity. I feel this will start out with a bang and then it will go back to the way it was before it was closed"

"Please consider the increased traffic burden placed in the local roadways. Roads paid for by local residents through SID. Does FWP pay its fair share of that to accommodate all this usage they are proposing???"

"Parking problem and squatter in the site"

"Make sure that you check with the county to be sure that you have paid a proportionate fare of the local Road SID. We paid a lot of money as individual homeowners in the neighborhood. We should not be subsidizing public usage. If you promote more usage, you need to pay the larger percentage of the road maintenance."

"the residents of the area were taxed with an RID by the county for road improvements, why would we want any public access to a road we are paying for"

"Moving it somewhere else !"

"Park host, do to the location being so close to town there is a lot of use of the location. Having a host on site during the summer months to react to illegal activity would be helpful"

"GFPD input."

"Less is more; leave it natural. More FWP patrol presence would be appreciated."

"Safety of area residents from drinking and drugging that have occurred in the past. Safety of area residents from reckless drivers. The site needs to be kept quiet."

"Create a plan to truly address the safety issues that have happened in the past when the area was open to the public. Have Fish and Game personnel at the site to monitor activities"

"FWP must take into consideration the events that will happen to residential property if they continue to move forward with this plan. Safety is the most important issue and monitoring needs to be addressed."

If you visit White Bear Fishing Access Site, what is your favorite thing about the Fishing Access Site that you would like to see continue?

"If it can be built on then it would make great home sites"

"No leash dog walking."

"Open easy access to quiet natural setting."

"Ease of access as a homeowner in the area"

"The "walk in the park, watching birds, seeing the river, wildlife, trees, etc. experience."

"Walking trails."

"Safety. Enjoy easy access to such a beautiful place."

"The tranquility"

"Easy to get to"

"Access"

"Year-round early morning access"

"Nothing as it is right now. It needs to be renamed as a nature/wildlife viewing area."

"Easy access to the river"

"Access to canoeing"

"Place to enjoy nature and picnic"

"Natural landscape and place to enjoy nature, not commercialized."

"Being able to walk in a treed setting, which is rare near Great Falls."

"Keep the trail maintained. Very nice for kids to walk through the woods."

"ability to access and use it year round"

"Feeling safe whrn walking my dog."

"I think that picnic areas and maintained trails would be nice."

"The walking/biking trail and access for fishing"

"Managed by FWP"

"Fishing"

"Close to Great Falls, but still kind of 'wild.' Access to the river for non-motorized watercraft."

"day time access"

"River access"

"Year around access"

"Trails and fishing"

"Walking dogs and kayak access."

"The natural beauty of the sight"

"This is not a real fishing access. It is a piece of land that really has no real uses. It is to far out of town, but when I have gone over there I do like to walk the south side. The North side is really useless, only good for animals due to not being able to get to water. There are lots of coyotes that live in that area also. (I hear them early in the morning)"

"Primitive/wild nature."

"Not crowded with a lot of people."

"nothing, it needs to go away"

"It's closure!"

"Being able to recreate without being exposed to illegal activities and panhandling"

"Leave it is as natural as possible. No path improvements are needed."

"It's an amazing walking trail and I hope that the trail continues. Also, please don't pave or gravel the trail."

"The access to the river"

"Fishing only."