

**DRAFT**

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**CHECKLIST**

**CULBERTSON BRIDGE FISHING ACCESS SITE**

**PARKING AREA AND CAMPSITE CONSTRUCTION**

**May 10, 2024**

**FWP-CEA-POR-R6-24-008**



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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

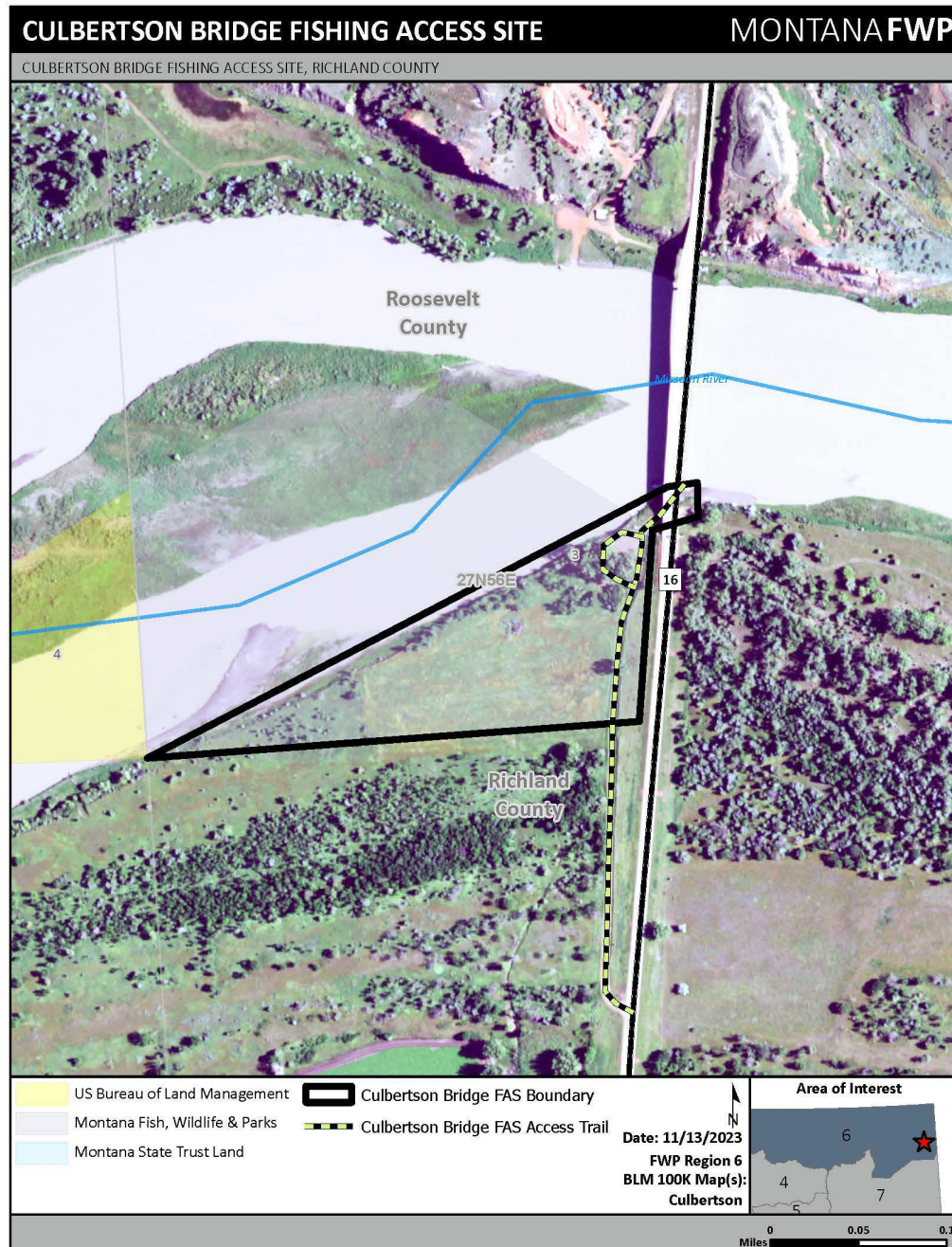
**Name of Project:** Culbertson Bridge Fishing Access Site Parking Area and Campsite Development

Due to shoreline erosion, the Culbertson Bridge Fishing Access Site (FAS) currently does not have adequate parking for vehicles towing a trailer. The project proposes to reroute the current parking and turn around access trail to incorporate a parking area for vehicles towing a trailer. The project also proposes to develop designated campsites within the FAS boundary. Construction of the designated campsites and new parking area would accomplish recreation goals for FWP in accordance with the Montana Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). Goals include promoting outdoor recreation opportunities for all Montanans, enhance public access to outdoor recreation resources and facilities, support economic vitality of communities and state,

improve quality of life through outdoor recreation experiences, adapt outdoor recreation for a changing environment, and honor Montana's Outdoor Legacy. This project would increase camping and recreational opportunities in eastern Montana. The project will likely include maintenance work to the boat ramp area.

**Affected Area / Location of Proposed Project:**

- Legal Description
  - Latitude/Longitude: 48° 7' 21" N, 104° 28' 32" W
  - Section, Township, and Range: 3, T 27N, R 56E
  - Town/City, County, Montana: Principal Meridian, Richland County, Montana
- Location Map



### III. Purpose and Need

*The EA must include a description of the benefits and purpose 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.*

Shoreline erosion along the Missouri River at Culbertson Bridge FAS damaged the parking lot, making it unsafe for vehicular traffic and parking of vehicles towing a trailer. Eastern Montana also has limited camping opportunities for the public. FWP proposes the following:

- Construct a parking area and turn around for vehicles towing a trailer to easily launch a boat and park their vehicle while boating on the Missouri River.
- Construct designated campsites on existing FAS property.
- Boat ramp maintenance.
- This project supports FWP goals to expand camping and enhance recreational opportunities in the region and eastern Montana.

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 state requirements but does not necessarily represent a complete and comprehensive list of all permits, certificates, or approvals needed. 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
FWP Heritage Program in consultation with the Montana State Historic Preservation Office	Cultural Assessment/Survey	Identification of historic and/or archaeological sites located within or near the proposed project area

## 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	
SPA 124 Permit - General Requirements (see Appendix 1)	FWP	SPA 124	SPA 124 Permit, General Conditions, provide best management practices in the form of enforceable controls to limit potential adverse impacts from the proposed project. Fines may be levied for violating these general requirements and/or corrective action may be required to remedy non-compliance.	
318 Authorizations (see Appendix 1)	MT DEQ	Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act	Any activity in any state water that will cause unavoidable short-term violations of water quality standards. "State water" includes any body of water, irrigation system, or drainage system, either surface or underground, including wetlands, except for irrigation water where the water is used up within the irrigation system and the water is not returned to other state water.	
Identification and Protection of Cultural Resources	FWP Heritage Program in consultation with State Historic Preservation Office	Montana Antiquities Act	Prior to implementation, the FWP Heritage Specialist would coordinate a cultural resource inventory of the project site. If cultural resources warranted for protection are discovered, FWP would protect these areas. If cultural artifacts were to be discovered during the implementation of this project, the FWP Heritage Specialist would cease activities and plan mitigation in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office.	
Northern Long Eared Bat Stipulations	FWP	FWP Stipulation	Northern Long Eared Bat may be present in the project area during summer roosting. To reduce impacts to roosting bats, construction would occur in late summer through early winter. Impacts to trees will be minimized in the project area to maintain any roosting sites.	

## VI. SPA 124 Permit Action

*Any applicable Montana stream work that is not otherwise excluded from MEPA review under the applicable requirements of ARM 12.2.454, Actions that Qualify for a Categorical Exclusion, and has the potential to alter the stream channel or bank, requires a project-specific 124 Stream Protection Act Permit or SPA 124 Permit prior to the start of work. The SPA 124 permit is issued by FWP's Fisheries Division and includes both the general conditions described in Attachment 1 and any additional Special Conditions deemed necessary to protect and preserve the affected waterway. Additional conditions deemed necessary to protect and preserve the affected stream from potential impacts associated with the proposed project are listed in Table 4 below.*

**Table 3: SPA 124 Permit Conditions the Department Will Require to Issue Permit.**

Activity	Special Condition	Description
Boat Ramp Maintenance	Terms and conditions are listed in SPA 124 Permit in Attachment 1	The project will likely include maintenance work to the boat ramp area.

## VII. 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, FWP would not do the proposed project.

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.

	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

## VIII. 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.

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

See **Table 4** (Impacts on Physical Environment) and **Table 5** (Impacts on Human Population) below.

**Table 4 - Potential Impacts of the 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
	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 type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to terrestrial, avian, and aquatic life and habitats would be expected because of the proposed project. All threatened and endangered species (T&amp;E), as well as species of concern that are known to be in the vicinity of Culbertson Bridge FAS are listed in Appendix B. The Northern long eared myotis (endangered) could occupy trees near the project site during the summer. This project would be completed in the fall or early winter after the Northern long eared myotis has migrated out of the area. Additionally, minimal trees would be impacted by the project. Other wildlife species located within or using the affected area include white-tail deer, mule deer, turkeys, rattlesnakes, and a variety of bird species. This list is representative but does not constitute a complete list of wildlife species present in the affected area.</p> <p>SPA 124 permit was issued in 2020 for a ten-year span to do boat ramp maintenance. Stipulations and time limits of that permit will be followed as instructed. SPA 124 permit is in Appendix A.</p> <p>Noise from the operation of heavy equipment necessary to implement the proposed project may impact terrestrial and avian resources. However, impacts would occur only during the operation of heavy equipment. Impacts to terrestrial and avian resources in the affected area would be short-term and minor.</p>
Water quality, quantity, and distribution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No significant adverse impacts to water quality, quantity, and distribution would be expected because of the proposed project. SPA 124 permit was issued in 2020 for a ten-year span to do boat ramp maintenance. Stipulations and time limits of that permit will be followed as instructed. SPA 124 permit is in Appendix A. Any impacts would be consistent with, but likely would not exceed, the level of turbidity generated by high water events experienced during spring runoff. Any impacts to water quality, quantity and distribution would be short-term, consistent with existing natural impacts, and minor.</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	
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. The proposed project would result in ground disturbance to facilitate construction of the site; however, no unique geologic formations are located within the affected area. Therefore, ground disturbance associated with the proposed project would not affect any geologic features and no impacts to geology would be expected from the proposed project.
Soil quality, stability, and moisture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	During the construction of the project, soil stability and moisture could be impacted. No construction or routine maintenance activities would be performed during periods when the soil is too wet to adequately support construction equipment. Soil quality would remain the same during the duration of the project. Standard soil stability practices would be adhered to during the duration of the project. All disturbed areas during the construction of the project would be reseeded using reseeding practice standards. Impacts to soil quality, stability, and moisture during the project would be short-term and minor.
Vegetation cover, quantity, and quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Vegetation cover, quantity, and quality would only be disturbed in the areas of road, campsite, and parking area construction. The remaining vegetation cover, quantity, and quality would remain in its current state. All soil removed of vegetation during construction would be reseeded using reseeding practice standards. Impacts to vegetation in the affected areas would be short-term and minor.
Aesthetics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Aesthetics of the area during the construction of the site would be affected with construction equipment staging. The aesthetics of the area during construction would be short-term and negligible. The long-term aesthetics of the

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	
									area after the completion of the project would be minor. All installed facilities of the project would be built to blend in with the environment and it has been a long time standard of the department to minimize the impacts on aesthetics of the natural environment.
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"/>	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 applicable National and Montana ambient air quality standards (NAAQS/MAAQS). The proposed project constitutes development of a parking area and campsites, that when completed would not result in additional new air quality disturbance in the affected area. Further, no significant point-sources of air pollution exist in the area affected by the proposed project. Existing sources of air pollution in the area are limited and generally include unpaved county roads (fugitive dust source), vehicle exhaust emissions, and various agricultural practices (vehicle exhaust emissions and fugitive dust). Fugitive dust and vehicle exhaust emissions resulting from the movement of heavy equipment and materials for the proposed project could impact air quality. However, any impacts to air quality would be short-term, consistent with existing impacts, and negligible.
Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources	<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"/>	No significant adverse impacts to any unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources would be expected due to the proposed project. The presence of any animal and/or plant species of concern and/or any Threatened or Endangered species located within the affected area were assessed. Please see Terrestrial, Avian, and Aquatic Life and Habitats (Table 4, page 10) for discussion on the Northern long eared

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	
										myotis (endangered). The proposed project would occur entirely within existing FWP land and any adverse impacts to affected species would be short-term and negligible with the listed stipulation of construction timing and minimal impact of trees.
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"/>	No significant adverse impacts to historical and/or archaeological sites would be expected due to the proposed project. In keeping with the Montana Antiquities Act and related regulations (ARM 12.8.501-12.8.510), all projects 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 would 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 would contact FWP's Heritage Program for further evaluation. Therefore, no impacts to any historical and archaeological sites would be expected because of the proposed project.
Demands on environmental resources of land,		<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"/>	No significant adverse impacts to demands on the environmental resources of land, water, air, and energy would be expected due to the proposed project. Fuel

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	
water, air, and energy									<p>may be required to operate equipment used for the construction phase of the proposed project. However, any impacts would be limited by the anticipated short timeline for the construction phase of the proposed project and, as such, the amount of fuel used would be relatively limited. Therefore, any impacts to the demands for energy would be short-term and negligible. As identified previously through the analyses of potential impacts to water quality, quantity, and distribution; soil quality, stability, and moisture; vegetation cover, quantity, and quality; and air quality; some impacts to the environmental resources of land water, and air could occur because of the proposed project. However, any such impacts would be short-term and negligible or minor (see cited impacts analyses above). No other impacts would be expected because of the proposed project.</p>

**Table 5 - Potential Impacts of the Proposed Project on the Human Population**

<b>HUMAN POPULATION</b>	<b>Duration of Impact</b>			<b>Severity of Impact</b>					
<b>Resource</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Short-Term</b>	<b>Long-Term</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Negligible</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Major</b>	<b>Summary of Potential Direct, Secondary, and Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures</b>
Social structures and mores	<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 social structures and mores would be expected due to the proposed project. The proposed project would construct a new parking area and camping sites. This FAS is located along the Missouri River, which has a quality fishery and provides other recreational opportunities for the public. As such, bird watching, fishing, hunting, camping, and related services support existing social structure, customs, values, and conventions in the affected area. Therefore, constructing FAS infrastructure for public use would be beneficial, long term, and have minor impacts.
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 due to the proposed project. The proposed project would construct a new parking area and camping sites. This action would not result in any relocation of people into or out of the affected area. Therefore, no impacts to the existing cultural uniqueness and diversity of the affected area would be expected because of the proposed project.
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 type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No significant adverse impacts to access and quality of recreational and wilderness activities would be expected due to the proposed project. No wilderness areas currently exist in the affected area; therefore, no impacts to wilderness recreation activities would occur because of the proposed project. The proposed project would construct a new footprint and infrastructure at the FAS. Because the proposed project would improve the access and recreational opportunities at the remodeled FAS it would likely increase the quality of the recreational experience. Therefore, any impacts would be long-term, beneficial, and minor. Noise,

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	
										odors, and fugitive dust resulting from construction activities could briefly impact the quality of the recreational experience for some individuals. After the construction phase is complete no additional impacts would occur. Negative impacts during construction would be short-term and minor.
Local and state tax base and tax revenues		<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 demands on local and state tax base and tax revenues would be expected due to the proposed project. The proposed project would construct a new footprint and infrastructure at the FAS and increase use of the site and possibly increase state and local tax revenues from the sale of fuel and other items to visitors. During the construction phase of the project, tax revenue could be generated through the sale of supplies and/or equipment needed to complete the project. Any impacts would be short-term and negligible. Further, the project may result in a minor increase in tourism to the area. Minimal increased tourism could result in beneficial, long-term, and minor impacts to the local tax base.
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 due to the proposed project. The affected area is an existing FAS and is not used for agricultural or industrial production. Because the affected area is not used for agricultural or industrial production, the proposed project would not impact such practices.
Human health and safety		<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 human health and safety would be expected due to the proposed project. Affected government staff and/or contractors hired to complete the project may realize increased risk to human health and safety during construction activities; however, FWP would require affected staff and/or contractors to operate



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
									in a safe manner and utilize best management practices, including the use of available and appropriate safety precautions. Therefore, any potential adverse impacts to staff or contractors completing the work would be short-term and negligible. Human health and safety would likely improve for users of the FAS as the project would increase access to recreation facilities and the opportunity for outdoor activity. Therefore, any impacts would be long-term, minor, and beneficial.
Quantity and distribution of employment	<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"/>	No significant adverse impacts to quantity and distribution of employment would be expected due to the proposed project. Contractors would be hired to complete this small project, however since it would be completed in a short amount of time any impacts would be short-term and negligible.
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 distribution and density of population and housing would be expected due to the proposed project. The proposed project is not expected to result in the movement of existing or new populations into or out of the affected area. Therefore, no impacts would be expected because of the proposed project.
Demands for government services	<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 demands for government services would be expected due to the proposed project. The proposed project would result in a net gain of infrastructure. If completed, FWP staff time would increase to monitor the area for maintenance needs, resource damage, and enforcement. The time commitment to complete work at the site would increase, so additional long-term demands for government services would be expected because of the proposed project, but the impact would be minor. Other local and county government services would increase because of the

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	
									increased use of the site, those services would include but are not limited to emergency services. No significant demands on other government services should be expected with the increased recreational use. Therefore, impacts on other government services would be long term but minor. During construction additional FWP staff time would be required to administer the project however those demands would be short-term and negligible because the project shouldn't take too long to complete. Therefore, any impacts during construction would be short-term, and negligible.
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 demands on industrial, agricultural, and commercial activity would be expected due to the proposed project. The proposed project would improve the infrastructure at the FAS and would not disturb or otherwise impact any industrial, agricultural, or commercial properties or operations in the affected area. Therefore, no impacts would be expected because of the proposed project.
Locally adopted environmental plans and goals	<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 locally adopted environmental plans and goals would be expected due to the proposed project. The goal of the proposed project is to improve access to existing recreation facilities and increase recreation opportunity, so no new impacts to environmental plans and goals would occur.
Other appropriate social and economic circumstances	<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 other appropriate social and economic circumstances would be expected due to the proposed project. The proposed project would be expected to improve public access and recreational opportunities. The impact to the local economy due to the improved recreational access is expected to be minimal. Therefore, any impacts from the proposed project to other appropriate social and economic circumstances would be long-term, minor, and beneficial.

**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 <b>severity, duration, geographic extent, and frequency</b> of the occurrence of the impact</p> <p><b>"Severity"</b> describes the density of the potential impact, while <b>"extent"</b> 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><b>"Duration"</b> describes the time period during which an impact may occur, while <b>"frequency"</b> 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
7	Potential conflict with local, state, or federal laws, requirements, or formal plans

## IX. Private Property Impact Analysis (Takings)

*The 54<sup>th</sup> 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)**

	Yes	No	
Is FWP regulating the use of private property under a regulatory statute adopted pursuant to the police power of the state? (Property management, grants of financial assistance, and the exercise of the power of eminent domain are not within this category.) If not, no further analysis is required	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Does the proposed regulatory action restrict the use of the regulated person's private property? If not, no further analysis is required.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Does FWP have legal discretion to impose or not impose the proposed restriction or discretion as to how the restriction will be imposed? If not, no further analysis is required	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
If so, FWP must determine if there are alternatives that would reduce, minimize, or eliminate the restriction on the use of private property, and analyze such alternatives. Have alternatives been considered and/or analyzed? If so, describe below:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>PRIVATE PROPERTY ASSESMENT ACT (PPAA)</b>			
<b>Does the Proposed Action Have Takings Implications under the PPAA?</b>	<b>Question #</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
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"/>
<b>Does the proposed action result in taking or damaging implications?</b>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Taking or damaging implications exist if <b>YES</b> 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 <b>NO</b> 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.			
<b>Alternatives:</b> 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.			

## X. Public Participation

*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/aboutfwp/public-comment-opportunities>*
- *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

- *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:** May 10, 2024  
**Public Comment Period Ends:** May 24, 2024

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

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

Name: TIM POTTER JR

Email: [tpotter@mt.gov](mailto:tpotter@mt.gov)

Mailing Address:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
 1 Airport Rd  
 Glasgow MT, 59230

## XI. Recommendation for Further Environmental Analysis

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

## XII. EA Preparation and Review

	Name	Title
<b>EA prepared by:</b>	Tim Potter Jr	Regional Recreation Manager
<b>EA reviewed by:</b>	LaWana Grewe	R6 Office Manager

## Appendix A

### SPA 124 Permit General Conditions



## Stream Projection Act (SPA 124) Permit

**July 17, 2020**

Applicant name: Steve Dalbey - Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks  
Address: #1 Airport Road, Glasgow MT. 59230

**Permit No.: SPA-0717-20-R7**

**Waterbody:** Missouri River in McCone County

**Project Name:** Boat Ramp Maintenance at Culbertson Bridge FAS

**Description of Project:** Annual removal of sedimentation deposited on boat ramp following high water events. Includes addition of 3" minus cobble as needed to provide a hardened surface beyond the concrete ramp.

In accordance with the Montana Stream Protection Act, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks reviewed the project application and issued this 124 Permit. Authorization for this work is approved provided all work is carried out as presented in the application and follows the attached general conditions on page 2.

**Term of Permit:** valid for 10 years (expires August 1, 2030).

**Timing Restrictions: Yes** – work should avoid high flow periods generally experienced on the Missouri River between May 1 – June 30.

**318 Authorization Review:** I have reviewed the above project on behalf of the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) pursuant to the Montana Water Quality Act Short-term Water Quality Standards for Turbidity 75-5-318 MCA:

Turbidity generated from this project is expected to be short-term and have only temporary and minor impacts on the physical and biological environment. Therefore, compliance with the conditions stated in the attached letter outlining *DEQ's Short Term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity Related to Construction Activity*, as well as other conditions listed in the 124 permit, are appropriate for this project.

Issuing Biologist: Kenneth M Backes, Regional Fisheries Manager  
PO Box 1630  
Miles City, MT. 59301  
406-234-0925  
[mibacke@mt.gov](mailto:mibacke@mt.gov)

Signature: 



## **Stream Protection Act 124 Permit General Conditions**

1. Complete work affecting a streambed or stream bank in an expeditious manner to avoid unnecessary impacts to the stream.
2. Limit the clearing of vegetation to that which is absolutely necessary for construction of the project. Take precautions to preserve existing riparian vegetation. Salvage and reuse native vegetation where possible.
3. Install and maintain erosion control measures where appropriate to protect aquatic resources. Do not clear and grub land adjacent to streams prior to installing proper erosion and sedimentation controls. Conduct all work in a manner that minimizes turbidity and other disturbances to aquatic resources.
4. Plan temporary construction facilities to:
  - a. Minimize disturbance to stream banks, stream bank vegetation, and the streambed by locating staging or storage facilities at least 50' horizontally from the highest anticipated water level during construction;
  - b. not restrict or impede fish passage in streams;
  - c. not restrict any flow anticipated during use.
5. Provide sediment controls for drainage from topsoil stockpiles, staging areas, access roads, channel changes, and instream excavations.
6. Isolate work zones from flowing and standing waters to prevent turbid water and sediments from being discharged into streams or other drainages that flow directly into the stream. Divert flowing waters around the work zone.
7. Do not spill or dump material into streams. Store and handle petroleum products, chemicals, cement and other deleterious materials in a manner that will prevent their entering streams.
8. Do not permit wash water from cleaning concrete-related equipment or wet concrete to enter streams.
9. Do not operate mechanized equipment in any stream or flowing water unless special authorization is obtained. If special authorization is granted, the following conditions apply:
  - a. Powerwash all equipment allowed in a stream prior to entering the stream channel.
  - b. Clean and maintain all equipment so that petroleum-based products and hydraulic fluids do not leak or spill into the waterway.
10. Reclaim streambeds and stream banks as closely as possible to their pre-disturbed condition.
11. Restore disturbed stream banks to their natural or pre-disturbed configuration to match adjacent ground contours or as specified in the project plans. Stabilize, reseed, and re-vegetate disturbed areas. Install and maintain long-term biodegradable erosion-control measures to protect these areas until adequate vegetation has been established.
12. Restore temporary access routes and any temporarily disturbed areas to original conditions, including original contours and vegetation.
13. Dispose of any excess material generated from the project above the ordinary high water mark and in an area not classified as a wetland.



SHORT-TERM WATER QUALITY STANDARD FOR TURBIDITY  
RELATED TO CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY  
(318 Authorization)

Dear Applicant:

This 318 authorization is the result of your recent application for a 310 permit from your local Conservation District or a 124 permit from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. This authorization is valid for the time frame noted on your permit.

**This is not your 310 or 124 permit and no construction activity should occur until you have received a valid 310 or 124 permit as well as any other permits that apply to this proposed construction activity.**

This authorization is the result of an Operating Agreement between the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP).

The applicant agrees to comply with the conditions stated below, as well as other conditions listed in the 310 or 124 permit issued for this project. Signatures of the applicant and FWP are required to validate this authorization.

1. Construction activity in or near the watercourse are to be limited to the minimum area necessary, and conducted so as to minimize increases in suspended solids and turbidity that could degrade water quality and adversely affect aquatic life outside the immediate area of operation.
2. The use of machinery in the watercourse shall be avoided unless absolutely necessary.
3. All disturbed stream banks and adjacent areas created by the construction activity shall be protected with erosion control measures during construction. These areas shall be reclaimed with appropriate erosion control measures and revegetated to provide long-term erosion control.
4. Any excess material generated from this project must be disposed of above the ordinary high water mark, in an area not classified as a wetland, and in a position not to cause pollution of State waters.
5. Clearing of vegetation will be limited to that which is absolutely necessary for construction of the project.
6. This authorization does not authorize a point source surface water discharge. MPDES permit is required for said discharge.
7. The applicant must conduct all activities in full and complete compliance with all terms and conditions of all permits required for this activity issued pursuant to the Montana Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act (310 permit), the Stream Protection Act (124 permit) the Federal Clean Water Act (404 Permit), any MPDES permits for dewatering or storm water control in the construction area and any valid Memorandum of Agreement and Authorization (MAA) negotiated for this activity.

The FWP representative has determined that this project is within the scope of the programmatic Environmental Assessment prepared by DEQ and FWP for the issuance of narrative turbidity standards.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'K. Smith', is written over a horizontal line.

Date: 7/17/2020

FWP Representative's Signature

Applicant's Signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name and location of project: Boat Ramp Maintenance at Culbertson Bridge FAS

**DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS**  
1420 E 6th Ave, PO Box 200701 Helena, MT 59620-0701  
(406) 444-2535

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

Project Title Boat Ramp Maintenance at Culbertson Bridge FAS

Division/Bureau: Fish and Wildlife/Fisheries

Program: Fisheries

Description of Project: Annual removal of sedimentation deposited on boat ramp following high water events. Includes addition of 3" minus cobble as needed to provide a hardened surface beyond the concrete ramp.

**POTENTIAL IMPACT ON PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

	MAJOR	MODERATE	MINOR	NONE	UNKNOWN	COMMENTS ON ATTACHED PAGES
1. Terrestrial & aquatic life and habitats			X			X
2. Water quality, quantity & distribution			X			X
3. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture				X		
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality				X		
5. Aesthetics				X		
6. Air quality				X		
7. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				X		
8. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
9. Historical & archaeological sites				X		

### POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

	MAJOR	MODERATE	MINOR	NONE	UNKNOWN	COMMENTS ON ATTACHED PAGES
1. Social structures & mores				X		
2. Cultural uniqueness & diversity				X		
3. Local & state tax base & tax revenue				X		
4. Agricultural or industrial production				X		
5. Human health			X			X
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income				X		
7. Access to & quality of recreational and wilderness activities		X				X
8. Quantity & distribution of employment				X		
9. Distribution & density of population & housing				X		
10. Demands for government services				X		
11. Industrial & commercial activity				X		
12. Demands for energy				X		
13. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals				X		
14. Transportation networks & traffic flows				X		

Other groups or agencies contacted, or which may have overlapping jurisdiction: none

Individuals or groups contributing to this EA: Steve Dalbey R6 Fisheries

Recommendation concerning preparation of EIS: NA

EA prepared by: Kenneth M Backes

Date: 7/17/2020

### **COMMENTS**

Physical Environment Comments: 1 – short term increase in water turbidity during work could have minor impacts to fisheries and aquatic insects, impacts will be minimized by working during low flow period; 2 – short term impacts from increased turbidity will be minor and minimized by conducting work during low flow period.

Human Environment Comments: 5 – project maintains future public access and use of the Missouri River which generally increase the quality of life for users; 7 – project benefits the future use of the site and public access to the river.

## Appendix B

### Species Occurrences



# MONTANA STATE LIBRARY

NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM

[mtnhp.org](http://mtnhp.org)

1201 11th Ave • P.O. Box 201800 • Helena, MT 59620-1800 • fax 406-444-0266 • phone 406-444-3989

## Species Occurrences

### from Environmental Summary



Latitude	Longitude
48.11284	-104.45591
48.13104	-104.50530

Summarized by: Culbertson Bridge FAS (Custom Area of Interest)

Filtered by: Species with MT Status = Species of Concern, Special Status, Important Animal Habitat, Potential SOC



Suggested Citation: Montana Natural Heritage Program. Environmental Summary Report. Custom Field Guide. Summarized by: Culbertson Bridge FAS (Custom Area of Interest). Filtered by: Species with MT Status = Species of Concern, Special Status, Important Animal Habitat, Potential SOC. Retrieved on 11/7/2023.

**Note:** This PDF version of the Montana Field Guide is intended to assist in offline identification and field work. It is not intended to replace the online Field Guide, as that version contains more information and is updated daily. For the most up-to-date information on Montana species, please visit [FieldGuide.mt.gov](http://FieldGuide.mt.gov)

The Montana Natural Heritage Program is part of the Montana State Library's Natural Resource Information System. Since 1985, it has served as a neutral and non-regulatory provider of easily accessible information on Montana's species and biological communities to inform all stakeholders in environmental review, permitting, and planning processes. The program is part of the NatureServe network that is composed of over 60 member programs across North America that work to provide current and comprehensive distribution and status information on species and biological communities.





**Species of Concern**  
**Native Species**  
**Global Rank:** G3G4  
**State Rank:** S2S3

**Agency Status**  
**USFWS:**  
**USFS:**  
**BLM:**  
**FWP SWAP:** SGCN2-3

## General Description

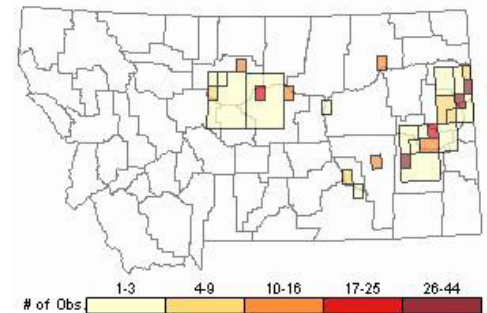
Eastern Montana is the home of the Blue Sucker. This species appears to inhabit only the larger streams, primarily the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers. It is easily recognized by its elongate shape, long dorsal fin, and slate-blue coloration. The largest weight for this species in Montana is slightly over 10 pounds. It was once taken commercially from the Mississippi River but is now too rare.

Montana populations appear to be stable and fairly abundant with a healthy size structure. Although the Blue Sucker populations appear to be healthy and stable, special recognition is warranted because this species may be susceptible to population declines due to its unique biological characteristics (longevity, low recruitment, migratory nature and reliance on high flows in tributary streams for spawning). Montana has some of the finest habitat for Blue Suckers found in their range and losses of Montana populations would be significant to the overall gene pool (Montana AFS Species Status Account).

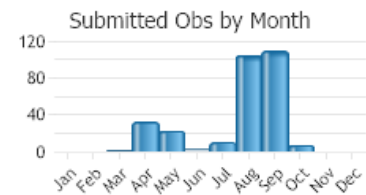
For a comprehensive review of the ecology, conservation status, threats, and management of this and other Montana fish species of concern, please see Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Species of Concern Status Reviews.



Range **Native**



# **Observations:** 291



## Diagnostic Characteristics

The Blue Sucker has a back and sides that are dark blue to dark olive, and a white underside. Its most distinctive features are its elongated head/snout and the tall, sickle-shaped dorsal fin.

## Habitat

Blue Suckers prefer waters with low turbidity and swift current (Brown 1971).





**Species of Concern**  
**Native Species**  
**Global Rank:** G5  
**State Rank:** S3

**Agency Status**  
**USFWS:**  
**USFS:**  
**BLM:** SENSITIVE  
**FWP SWAP:** SGCN3

## General Description

There are about 100 species of small perches called darters. In Montana we have only one representative, the Iowa Darter. It is a native fish found in small streams and reservoirs in the plains region of our eastern drainage. During the spawning season, this species becomes one of Montana's most highly colored fish. Its maximum size is a little less than 3 inches (Brown 1971, Holton and Johnson 1996).

For a comprehensive review of the ecology, conservation status, threats, and management of this and other Montana fish species of concern, please see Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Species of Concern Status Reviews.

## Diagnostic Characteristics

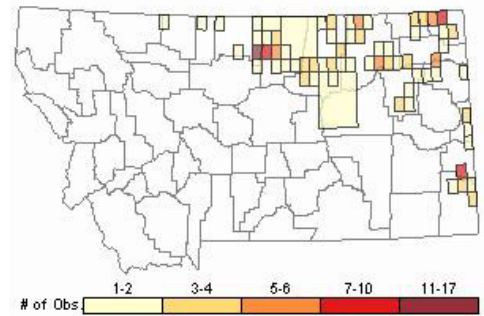
Iowa Darters are greenish or brownish with about eight saddle bands across the back and about nine to twelve dark blotches on the side. Teardrop mark below the eye is diagnostic to darters. In breeding males these blotches become bluish-green with rust-red between them. The underside becomes orange and the first dorsal fin has a reddish band between a blue outer edge. The body is slender, the eye large, and the lateral line is incomplete (Brown 1971, Holton and Johnson 1996).

## Habitat

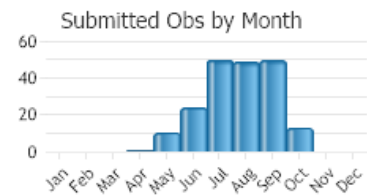
Iowa Darters prefer clear slow-flowing streams with solid bottoms, although they have a wide range of tolerance for changes in water flow rates. They are also found in lakes and reservoirs, such as Nelson Reservoir east of Malta (Brown 1971) and in stock ponds of the Matador Ranch on Big Warm Creek (Stagliano 2012). In Little Beaver Creek (Carter County), Iowa Darters were present during April to August in upstream and midstream pools and riffles that were characterized by cooler, clearer, lower water-velocity habitats, but were absent from downstream segments that were sampled, which had more riffles, reduced stream flows, and elevated late-summer water temperatures (to 30 C or more) (Barfoot and White 1999). Temperatures were 12-15 C in breeding pools of streams in Colorado during late April to early June, and the fish were found in masses of organic debris and slime on the pool bottoms; during the remainder of the year they were found under pebbles and in riffles in higher velocity water (Jaffa 1917). Breeding habitat in Michigan typically included the slow current of streams that contained some vegetation and submerged fibrous root banks. In lakes, Iowa Darters bred near shores over areas of fibrous root and organic debris. Sandy bottoms were often present in breeding habitats, males were never seen in muddy areas. After breeding, Iowa Darters moved to deeper waters of stream pools or lakes; in winter they could be found in thick organic debris and plants, to depths of 1.2 m (4 ft) (Jaffa 1917, Winn 1958a, 1958b).



Range **Native**



# Observations: 197





**Species of Concern**  
**Native Species**  
**Global Rank:** G5  
**State Rank:** S3

**Agency Status**  
**USFWS:**  
**USFS:**  
**BLM:**  
**FWP SWAP:** SGCN3

## General Description

The Northern Redbelly Dace is one of Montana's small native minnows found in small cool, prairie streams. During the spawning season, the males of this species become quite colorful with red flanks. Its maximum size is approximately 3 inches.

For a comprehensive review of the ecology, conservation status, threats, and management of this and other Montana fish species of concern, please see Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Species of Concern Status Reviews.

## Diagnostic Characteristics

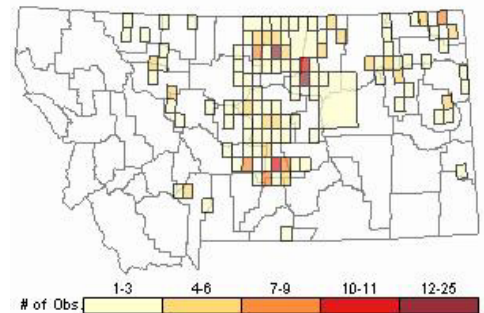
The Northern Redbelly Dace is olive to dark brown above; the lower side and belly are yellow or silvery except on adult males during summer when the lower side is red. The side has two dark stripes with a light band between them; the upper stripe often breaks into spots toward the tail. The lower stripe is broader and extends from the snout to the base of the tail fin where it may end in a spot. These two lateral stripes are sometimes connected by a dark, oblique line or crossband. The eyes are large. The body is almost round in cross section. The front of the dorsal fin is behind the front of the pelvic fins. The lateral line is incomplete and not distinct and there are no barbels (Brown 1971, Holton and Johnson 1996).

## Habitat

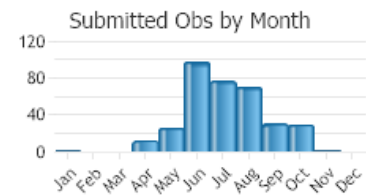
Northern Redbelly Dace are found in clear, cool, slow-flowing creeks, ponds and lakes with aquatic vegetation, including filamentous algae, and sandy or gravelly bottoms interspersed with silt (Brown 1971). In Montana, this species is an indicator species of the Northern Glaciated Prairie Stream Ecological System and may occur in the intermittent prairie stream systems. In Stink Creek of northern South Dakota (Morey and Berry 2004), dace were found in a single unconstrained and low-gradient prairie channel with little surface flow at the time (early June). Pools were 26 to 84 cm (1.0 to 3.3 inches) deep in a wetted area about 1.3 m (4.3 ft) wide. Water temperature was 16.6 C, filamentous algae and rooted macrophytes were abundant. In western South Dakota, the range of this species appears to be limited to perennial streams with slow, clear water and abundant macrophytes and algae (Morey and Berry 2004). In Colorado (Bestgen 1989), the presence of cool springs or cool tributary flow was a consistent feature of Northern Redbelly Dace habitats in prairie streams and marshes. Strong thermal stratification existed in some heavily vegetated ponds. In water < 0.3 m (0.9 ft) deep, surface temperature was 27 C when bottom temperature was 18 C; water < 22 C was present in all occupied habitats. Individuals were usually found in water 0.25 to 1.3 m (0.8 to 4.3 ft) deep and congregated near the shores of ponds >3.0 m (9.8 ft) deep. Substrate in all habitats ranged from black anoxic silt to sand.



Range **Native**



**# Observations:** 345





**Species of Concern**  
**Native Species**  
**Global Rank:** G4  
**State Rank:** S2

**Agency Status**  
**USFWS:**  
**USFS:**  
**BLM:** SENSITIVE  
**FWP SWAP:** SGCN2

## General Description

The Paddlefish is an ancient, mostly cartilaginous fish with a smooth skin. It is a close relative of sturgeons. Although it is sometimes called a spoonbill or spoonbill cat, it is not closely related to catfish. Most species of Paddlefish are now extinct, and fossil Paddlefish from 60 million years ago have been found in the Missouri River basin near Fort Peck Reservoir, Montana (Montana AFS Species Status Account).

Montana is home to one of the few remaining self-sustaining populations of Paddlefish, and harbors the largest individual fish as well. Specimens have been taken weighing up to 150 pounds.

For a comprehensive review of the ecology, conservation status, threats, and management of this and other Montana fish species of concern, please see Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Species of Concern Status Reviews.

## Diagnostic Characteristics

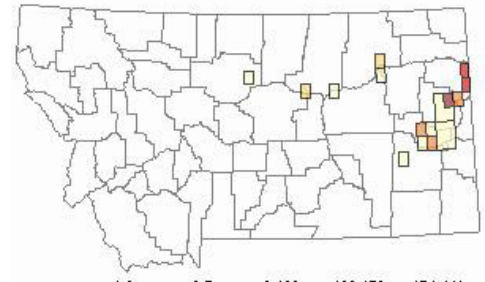
Paddlefish are readily identified by the long paddle-like snout, long, tapered gill covers, and the "backbone" bent up into the upper lobe of the tail fin. The body is smooth and virtually scaleless (Holton and Johnson 2003).

## Habitat

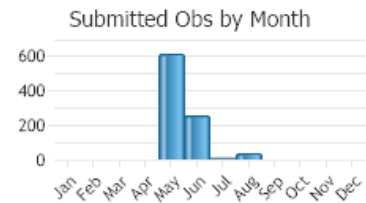
Habitat includes slow or quiet waters of large rivers or impoundments. They spawn on the gravel bars of large rivers during spring high water. Paddlefish tolerate, or perhaps seek, turbid water (Holton and Johnson 2003).

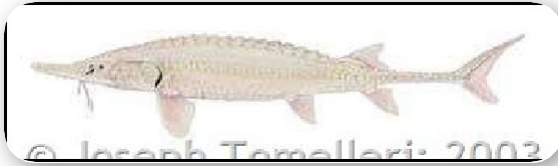


Range **Native**



# **Observations:** 933





**Species of Concern**  
**Native Species**  
**Global Rank:** G2  
**State Rank:** S1

**Agency Status**  
**USFWS:** LE  
**USFS:**  
**BLM:** ENDANGERED  
**FWP SWAP:** SGCN1

## General Description

The Pallid Sturgeon is the larger of the two species of sturgeon found east of the Continental Divide. Both sturgeon species, Pallid and Shovelnose, co-occur in the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers. Pallid sturgeons have a unique dinosaur-like appearance and have been swimming around since the dinosaurs. They have a flattened snout, long slender tail and are armored with lengthwise rows of bony plates instead of scales. Their mouth is toothless and positioned under the snout for sucking small fishes and invertebrates from the river bottom. Pallid sturgeon can weigh up to 80 pounds and grow to about 6 feet long.

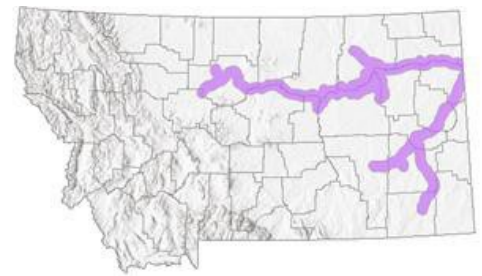
For a comprehensive review of the ecology, conservation status, threats, and management of this and other Montana fish species of concern, please see Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Species of Concern Status Reviews.

## Diagnostic Characteristics

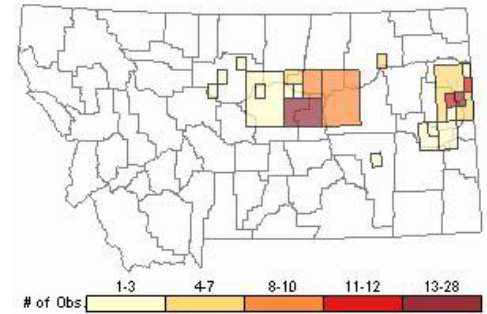
The Pallid Sturgeon is a large fish (to 186 centimeters) with a heterocercal tail, a long slender caudal peduncle, a flat shovel-shaped snout, four fringed barbels on the snout, a ventral mouth, and large bony scutes on the head, back, and sides; 37 to 43 dorsal rays; 24 to 28 anal rays (Page and Burr 1991). The Pallid Sturgeon is similar to the Shovelnose Sturgeon but has no scale-like scutes on the belly, the bases of the outer barbels usually are posterior to the bases of the inner barbels, the inner barbels are shorter, the head is larger, the mouth is wider, the eye is smaller, and the color is usually paler (gray-white above and on sides) (Page and Burr 1991).

## Habitat

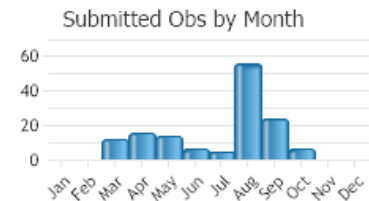
Pallid Sturgeon use large, turbid rivers over sand and gravel bottoms, usually in strong current; also impoundments of these rivers (FWP). In Montana, Pallid Sturgeon use large turbid streams including the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers (Brown 1971, Flath 1981). They use all channel types, primarily straight reaches with islands (Bramblett 1996). They primarily use areas with substrates containing sand (especially bottom sand dune formations) and fines (93% of observations) (Bramblett 1996). Stream bottom velocities ranged between 0.0 and 1.37 meters per second, with an average of 0.65 meter per second (Bramblett 1996). Depths used were 0.6 to 14.5 meters and averaged 3.30 meters, and they appeared to move deeper during the day (Bramblett 1996). Channel widths from 110 to 1100 meters are used and average 324 meters (Bramblett 1996). Water temperatures used ranged from 2.8 to 20 degrees C. (Tews 1994, Bramblett 1996). Water turbidity ranged from 12 to 6400 NTU (Turbidity Units) (Tews 1994).



Range **Native**



# **Observations:** 143







**Species of Concern**  
**Native Species**  
**Global Rank:** G5  
**State Rank:** S2

**Agency Status**  
**USFWS:**  
**USFS:**  
**BLM:** SENSITIVE  
**FWP SWAP:** SGCN2

## General Description

The Sauger is one of two native percoid species to Montana east of the Continental Divide closely resembling the introduced walleye. It inhabits both large rivers and reservoirs, but is mainly a river fish. In the spring, Sauger broadcast their spawn over riffles in rivers. Sauger are a highly prized sport fish and in some areas outside Montana are also commercially fished. Their major food items are insects and small fish.

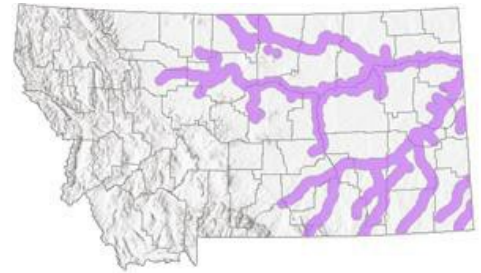
For a comprehensive review of the ecology, conservation status, threats, and management of this and other Montana fish species of concern, please see Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Species of Concern Status Reviews.

## Diagnostic Characteristics

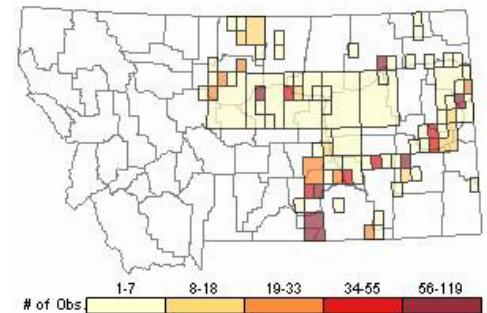
One of the most important features to differentiate sauger from walleye is the spotted dorsal fin, which has a spiny appearance. Sauger jaws and the roof of the mouth have large canine teeth. The body is almost round in cross section. The anal fin has 2 spines and 11 to 14 (usually 12 or 13) soft rays. The body often has a grayish hue with dark blotches.

## Habitat

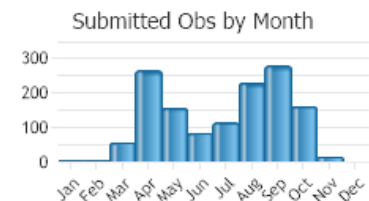
Sauger inhabit the larger turbid rivers and the muddy shallows of lakes and reservoirs. They spawn in gravelly or rocky areas in shallow water and seem to prefer turbid water.



Range **Native**



# Observations: 1380





**Species of Concern**  
**Native Species**  
**Global Rank:** G5  
**State Rank:** S3

**Agency Status**  
**USFWS:**  
**USFS:**  
**BLM:**  
**FWP SWAP:** SGCN1

## General Description

The gar family has only one representative in Montana, the Shortnose Gar. This fish is native to Montana and has been previously found at only one location--the dredge ponds below Fort Peck Reservoir. But more recent collections (2010-2015) have reported this species in the the Milk and the Yellowstone Rivers. Because of its restricted distribution and limited population size, it has been named a Montana state Fish of Special Concern. Gars are predaceous. They are spring, broadcast spawners. They have several unusual features including rectangular scales found only in primitive fishes, and a gas bladder that can function like a lung. All fish have gas bladders, which they use to regulate their buoyancy, but the gas bladder of a gar can extract the oxygen from air that is swallowed. Consequently, gars can survive in waters that have very little oxygen where most other fish would perish. Gar eggs are poisonous to humans.

For a comprehensive review of the ecology, conservation status, threats, and management of this and other Montana fish species of concern, please see Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Species of Concern Status Reviews.

## Diagnostic Characteristics

This prehistoric-appearing fish is cylindrically shaped, with an elongated bony head and snout containing one row of sharp, conical teeth. The dorsal fin is located well posterior and the pectoral and pelvic fins have no spots (Marshall 1966). The skin is covered with diamond shaped ganoid scales arranged in oblique rows, providing a very protective surface armor (Moyle 1993). Scales number 60 to 64 along the lateral line. Color varies from brownish or olive-green on the dorsal surface lightening to yellow on the sides and white on the belly (Holton and Johnson 1996). Young gar less than 10 inches in length process a black stripe along the midline. Shortnose Gar may reach a size and weight of about 31 inches and about 3.5 pounds (Montana AFS Species Status Account).

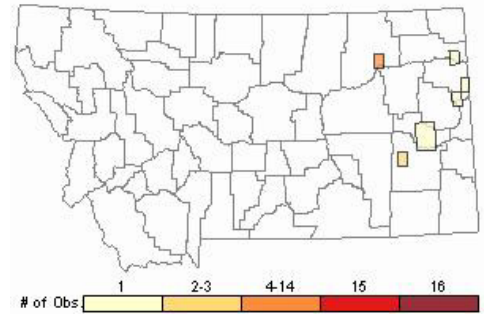
## Habitat

Shortnose Gar are typically found in large rivers, quiet pools, backwaters, and oxbow lakes. It has a higher tolerance to turbid water than the other four gar species found in North America (Montana AFS Species Status Account).

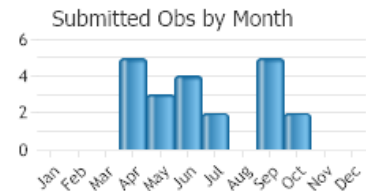
They are found in dredge cuts below Fort Peck Dam (Holton 2003).

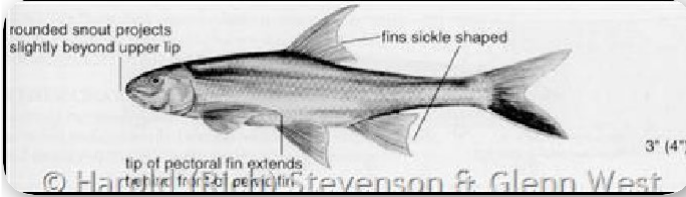


Range **Native**



# **Observations:** 21





**Species of Concern**  
**Native Species**  
**Global Rank: G3**  
**State Rank: S1**

**Agency Status**  
**USFWS:**  
**USFS:**  
**BLM:**  
**FWP SWAP: SGCN1**

## General Description

The Sicklefin Chub is a rare, large-river minnow species found in the lower Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers (Large Valley River Ecosystems) of Montana. It was first collected in 1979, and to date has only been found in about a dozen river segments. Because it is rare and specialized to this large river system, it is a Montana Fish of Special Concern. Its general habitat and distribution is much like that of the Sturgeon Chub. The Sicklefin Chub is found in large, turbid streams in the plains region of Montana. This species is very similar in appearance to the Sturgeon Chub except that its pectoral fins are strikingly long. The life history features and maximum size of the Sicklefin Chub are similar to those of the Sturgeon Chub.

For a comprehensive review of the ecology, conservation status, threats, and management of this and other Montana fish species of concern, please see Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Species of Concern Status Reviews.

## Diagnostic Characteristics

Sicklefin Chub are light brown on the back and upper sides and silvery-white below. There is a conspicuous barbel at each corner of the mouth.

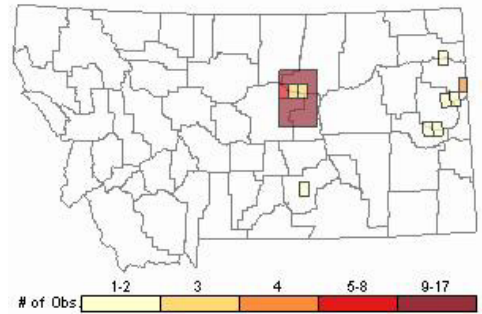
## Habitat

Sicklefin Chub are strictly confined to the main channels of large, turbid rivers where they live in a strong current over a bottom of sand or fine gravel (Pflieger 1975).

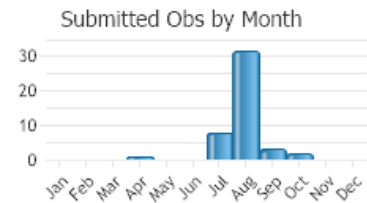
Unlike the Sturgeon Chub, all of the Montana captures have been from only the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers, indicating a strong preference for large turbid rivers (Montana AFS Species Status Account).



Range ☒ Native ☐ Historical



# Observations: 47





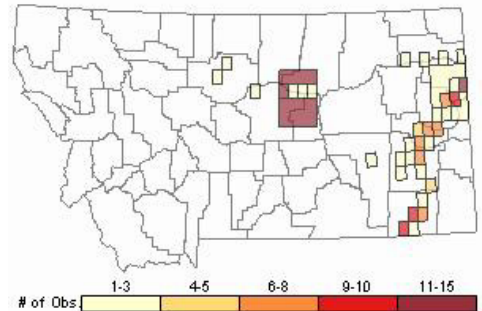
© MTNHP - David Stagliano

**Species of Concern**  
**Native Species**  
**Global Rank: G3**  
**State Rank: S2S3**

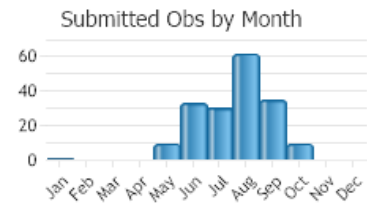
**Agency Status**  
**USFWS:**  
**USFS:**  
**BLM: SENSITIVE**  
**FWP SWAP: SGCN2-3**



Range ☒ Native ☐ Historical



# Observations: 181



## General Description

The Sturgeon Chub is one of several native minnows found in the eastern MT prairie river drainages (Missouri, lower Yellowstone and Powder Rivers) and is an indicator species of the Large Mainstem Warmwater River Fish Assemblage that includes other big river species- the Sicklefing Chub, Shovelnose Sturgeon, Freshwater Drum and Blue Sucker. This fish is so named because its mouth is ventral and its snout is long and overhangs the mouth, somewhat like the snout of the sturgeon. Sturgeon Chubs have been rarely collected in the past and were placed as a candidate on the Endangered Species list in 1994, but were removed from consideration in 2001 with more collection efforts. They are a Fish Species of Special Concern in Montana (and 9 other states) due to extensive loss of habitat in the Missouri and Bighorn River systems. They are typically found in the rapid, gravelly turbid waters in larger, plains rivers. They are benthic invertivores using their ventral mouth to feed on bottom-dwelling insects; a short intestine also indicates they do not consume plant materials to a large degree. Sturgeon chubs attain a maximum length of about 4 inches and spawn over gravels in June to July.

For a comprehensive review of the ecology, conservation status, threats, and management of this and other Montana fish species of concern, please see Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Species of Concern Status Reviews.

## Diagnostic Characteristics

Sturgeon Chub have small eyes and many external papillae on their bodies and fins, probably to aid in locating food (Cross 1967, Pflieger 1975, Montana AFS Species Status Account).

The back is brownish to blueish, and the sides and underparts are silvery to white. The overhanging snout on their ventral mouth is the classic characteristic and there is a conspicuous barbel at each corner of the mouth.

## Habitat

Sturgeon Chub are found in turbid water with moderate to strong current over bottoms ranging from rocks and gravel to coarse sand (Brown 1971, Holton 1980).

In the Powder River, Sturgeon Chub were taken most frequently at sites with depths less than 51 centimeters and depth velocities of less than 90 centimeters per second at 0.6 depth (Stewart 1981, Werdon 1992, Gould 1997, Montana AFS Species Status Account).





**Special Status Species**  
**Native Species**  
 Global Rank: G5  
 State Rank: S4

**Agency Status**  
 USFWS: BGEPA; MBTA  
 USFS: SENSITIVE  
 BLM: SENSITIVE  
 PIF: 2

## General Description

With a white head and tail contrasting with a dark brown body and wings, the adult plumage of the Bald Eagle, attained at approximately 5 years of age, is unmistakable. In addition to the obvious white head and tail, other distinguishing features include the yellow bill, cere, iris, legs and feet. Second in size of North American birds of prey only to the California Condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*), the Bald Eagle ranges in total length from 71 to 96 cm, with an average wingspan of 168 to 244 cm and a body mass ranging from 3.0 to 6.3 kg (Buehler 2000). In general appearance the sexes are similar with females approximately 25 percent larger than males. The plumage of the juvenile birds is much less distinct, being dark brown overall. The head, body, wings, and tail are dark brown with limited mottling on the underside of the wings and on the belly. While the legs and feet of the young bird are yellow like those of adults, the bill and cere are dark gray and the iris is dark brown.

The voice of the Bald Eagle is a weak series of chirps. The vocalization is described as flat chirping, stuttering whistles, given in a halting fashion, with the immature calls generally harsher and more shrill than those of the adults (Buehler 2000, Sibley 2000).

For a comprehensive review of the conservation status, habitat use, and ecology of this and other Montana bird species, please see Marks et al. 2016, Birds of Montana.

## Diagnostic Characteristics

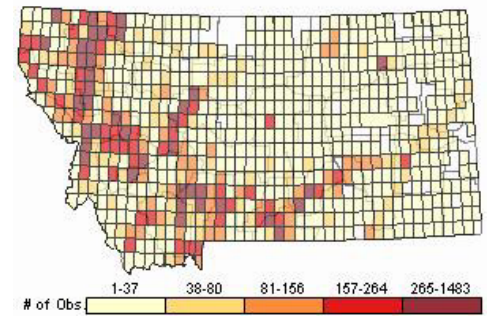
In adult plumage, the Bald Eagle is unlikely to be confused with any other species. Juvenile Bald Eagles may be confused with Golden Eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*), especially with adult Golden Eagles. A few characteristics differentiate these two species. The Bald Eagle has unfeathered legs, while those of the Golden Eagle are feathered. During flight, the head and neck of the Bald Eagle extend to about half the length of the tail, while the Golden Eagle is considerably less. This distinction is true for all age classes of both species. The terminal tail band on the Golden Eagle is dark and well defined, especially on the juveniles. In addition, the underwing and belly of the Bald Eagle show a greater amount of white compared to the Golden Eagle, whose white feathering is restricted to the base of the flight feathers (Buehler 2000).

## Habitat

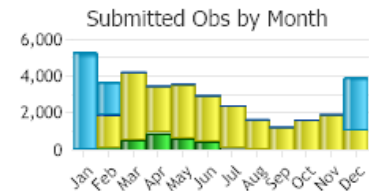
In Montana, as elsewhere, the Bald Eagle is primarily a species of riparian and lacustrine habitats (forested areas along rivers and lakes), especially during the breeding season. Important year-round habitat includes wetlands, major water bodies, spring spawning streams, ungulate winter ranges and open water areas (Bureau of Land Management 1986). Wintering habitat may include upland sites. Nesting sites are generally located within larger



Range **Year-round**



# Observations: 45953



forested areas near large lakes and rivers where nests are usually built in the tallest, oldest, large diameter trees. Nesting site selection is dependent upon maximum local food availability and minimum disturbance from human activity (Montana Bald Eagle Working Group 1994). See the Montana Bald Eagle Management Plan (1994) for further details including home range sizes and habitat requirements of fledgling birds.



© Tyler Pockette

**Species of Concern**

**Native Species**

**Global Rank:** G5

**State Rank:** S3B

**Agency Status**

**USFWS:** MBTA; BCC11;  
BCC17

**USFS:**

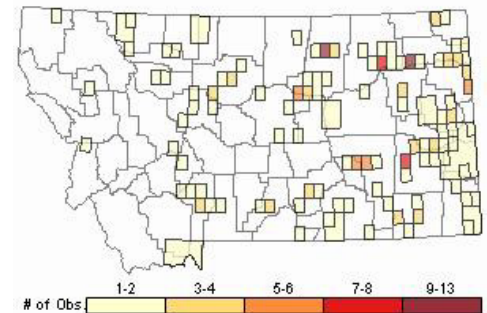
**BLM:** SENSITIVE

**FWP SWAP:** SGCN3, SGIN

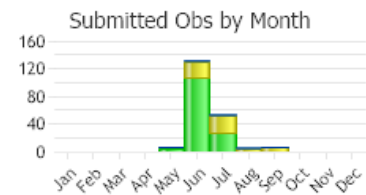
**PIF:** 2



Range **Summer** **Migratory**



**# Observations:** 212



## General Description

The Black-billed Cuckoo is a 31 centimeter-long bird with a stout slightly decurved bill, zygodactyl feet, grayish-brown dorsum, white venter (except tail), and a long tail that is patterned on the underside in gray with white feather tips. The bill is usually all dark, and may show yellow at the base of the lower mandible. There is a reddish eye ring. In juveniles, the undertail is whiter, the eye ring is buffy, the pale underparts may have a buffy tinge, and there may be some rusty-brown color on the outer wing.

For a comprehensive review of the conservation status, habitat use, and ecology of this and other Montana bird species, please see Marks et al. 2016, Birds of Montana.

## Diagnostic Characteristics

The Black-billed Cuckoo differs from the Yellow-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*) by lacking rufous primaries and the absence of an extensively yellow lower mandible.

## Habitat

Black-billed Cuckoos are birds of wooded draws, forest edges, thickets, and shelterbelts. In Montana they are found most often in riparian cottonwoods, green ashes, and American elms with a shrubby understory of willows, box elders, and alders; they also occur in foothill deciduous woodlands (Skaar 1969; Walcheck 1969, 1970; Kroodsma 1973; Jones and Hansen 2009).



**Species of Concern**  
**Native Species**  
**Global Rank:** G4  
**State Rank:** S3

**Agency Status**  
**USFWS:**  
**USFS:** SENSITIVE  
**BLM:** SENSITIVE  
**FWP SWAP:** SGCN3

## General Description

Townsend's Big-eared Bat is a moderately sized bat found throughout the state where suitable habitat exists, primarily near caves, mines, rock outcrops, and badlands. As the common name suggests, the species has large ears compared to its overall size. Although it never appear to be common in any portion of the state, it's distribution is widespread and is among the most commonly observed species during cave surveys.

The species has large ears (30 to 39 millimeters) joined across forehead are a prominent feature in Townsend's Big-eared Bat; the tragus is long and pointed. The dorsal hairs are brownish at the tips, contrasting a little or considerably with the lighter underfur; ventral hairs are dark brownish-gray in color with brown to cinnamon tips. The hairs on the toes do not project beyond the toenails. There are two large, fleshy lumps on the snout, the basis for one of its common names, "lump-nosed bat." Total length is 90 to 113 millimeters; forearm length is 39.0 to 47.6 millimeters; adult mass is 5.0 to 13.5 grams. The greatest length of the skull is 15.2 to 17.4 millimeters; the skull has 36 teeth (Handley 1959, Kunz and Martin 1982, Nagorsen and Brigham 1993).

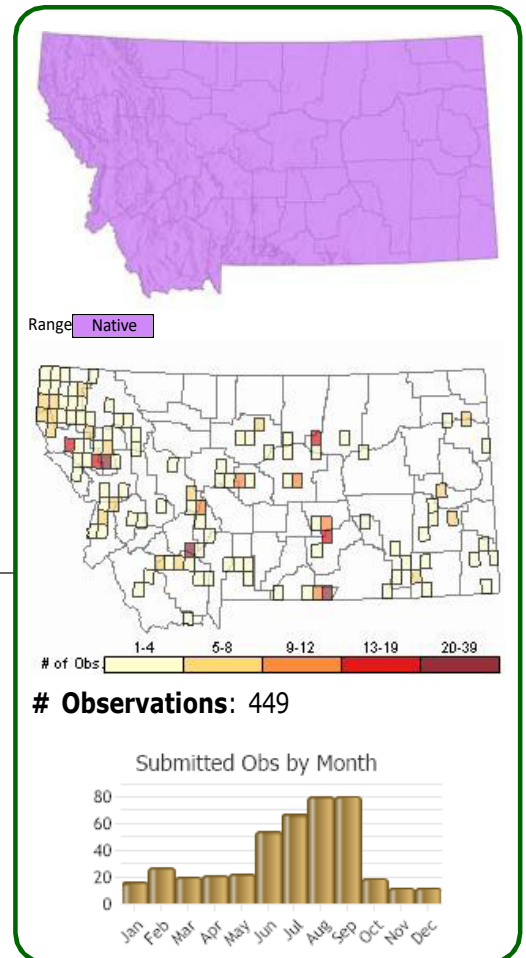
## Diagnostic Characteristics

Townsend's Big-eared Bat differs from other Montana bats by its combination of extremely long, brownish ears that are joined at the base, the prominent lumps on the nose, the absence of large, white spots in the pelage (as with the Spotted Bat) and a dorsal pelage that is darker at the tips than the base (opposite that of the Pallid Bat, which is also larger-bodied).

The species is infrequently captured in mist nets. Nets set over water can be used, but captures are typically rare. The species is more frequently captured by placing nets within tight flyways in high clutter environments such as tall brush and densely forested areas. Surveys of caves and mines are an efficient way to detect the species as it is one of the most commonly encountered species within these features, particularly in the winter. Acoustic methods are effective and call sequences distinct, but echolocation is typically much quieter than other bat species and microphones must be placed close to roosts or foraging areas to ensure any individuals in the area are recorded.

## Habitat

Of all of Montana's bat species, Townsend's Big-eared Bat is the most closely associated with caves, mines, and other similar features such as talus caves and erosion cavities found in badlands and river breaks. Caves and abandoned mines are used for maternity roosts and hibernacula (Worthington 1991, Hendricks et al. 1996, Hendricks 2000, Hendricks et al. 2000, Foresman 2012, Hendricks and Kampwerth 2001); use of buildings in late summer has also been reported (Swenson and Shanks 1979). In hibernacula, ambient temperatures ranged from -1.0 to 8.0 degrees (30 to 46 when torpid Townsend's Big-eared Bats were present) (Hendricks and Kampwerth 2001). Temperatures at maternity roosts are poorly documented; the temperature was 12 degrees



(54 in mid-July near a colony in an abandoned mine in Lake County), and 18 degrees (66 in August near a colony in a large and relatively open cave chamber in Lewis and Clark County). Most caves and mines in Montana appear to be too cool in summer for use as maternity roosts.



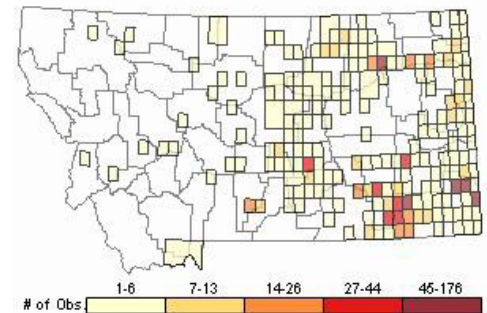


**Species of Concern**  
**Native Species**  
**Global Rank:** G5  
**State Rank:** S3B

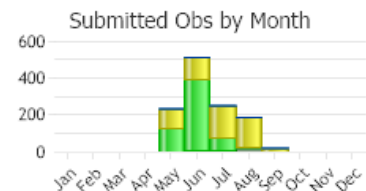
**Agency Status**  
**USFWS:** MBTA; BCC11;  
 BCC17  
**USFS:**  
**BLM:** SENSITIVE  
**FWP SWAP:** SGCN3  
**PIF:** 2



Range: Summer Migratory



# Observations: 1272



## General Description

Red-headed Woodpeckers are medium sized woodpeckers averaging approximately 9.25 inches in length. Adults of both sexes have a bright red color on their entire head, neck and throat. The underparts are white and the back is a blue-black (National Geographic Society 1987). Red-headed Woodpeckers have a strikingly white rump patch and inner wing (secondaries) patches that are clearly visible in flight and while perched (Sibley 2000). Juveniles have an overall brown color to their head, neck and throat. They obtain the red during their first winter molt (National Geographic Society 1987).

The vocalization of the Red-headed Woodpecker is a wheezy "queeah" or "queerp" contact call similar to the Red-bellied Woodpecker (*Melanerpes carolinus*), but weaker overall. They also have a low, harsh "chug" call while in flight, also similar to the Red-bellied Woodpecker (Sibley 2000). Their drum is weak, short and slow.

For a comprehensive review of the conservation status, habitat use, and ecology of this and other Montana bird species, please see Marks et al. 2016, Birds of Montana.

## Diagnostic Characteristics

The completely red head (in adults) and the white wing patches (on secondaries) are both diagnostic features separating the Red-headed Woodpecker from any other woodpecker. The Red-bellied Woodpecker is sometimes confused with, and given the same name as, the Red-headed Woodpecker. However, a close look will reveal no red on the throat or the sides of the head on the Red-bellied as well as a lack of white wing patches. The Red-breasted Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus ruber*) is also superficially similar to the Red-headed Woodpecker. However, their ranges do not overlap and the sapsucker has white patterning on the back, rather than the all black back and white rump of the Red-headed Woodpecker (Smith et al. 2000).

## Habitat

With no systematic surveys completed within the state, little is known about Red-headed Woodpecker habitat in Montana. When they have been observed, they are usually found along major rivers having riparian forest associated with them. Another area where they may be found is open savannah country, as long as adequate ground cover, snags and canopy cover can be found. Large burns can also be utilized by the species (Bent 1939, Ehrlich et al. 1988). They nest in holes excavated 2 to 25 meters above ground by both sexes in live trees, dead stubs, utility poles, or fence posts. Sometimes they use existing holes in poles or posts. Individuals typically nest in the same tree or cavity in successive years (Ingold 1991).



**Species of Concern**  
**Native Species**  
**Global Rank:** G2G3  
**State Rank:** S2

**Agency Status**  
**USFWS:** LE  
**USFS:**  
**BLM:** ENDANGERED

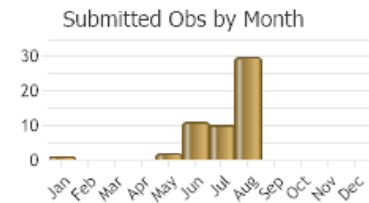


Range **Native**



# of Obs 1 2 3 4-45 46

# **Observations:** 54



## General Description

Northern Myotis has relatively long ears (14-19 mm) extending < 5mm beyond the nose when pushed forward, a long pointed tragus, forearm length 34-38 mm, hind foot length 8-10 mm and tail length 35-42 mm; the calcar lacks a prominent keel (but a slight keel may be present), and the fringe of the tail is hairless or with only a few sparse hairs. Pelage and membranes are brown and usually the same color. Females are generally larger and heavier than males. Dental formula is I 2/3, C 1/1, P 3/3, M 3/3 (Nagorsen and Brigham 1993, Caceres and Barclay 2000, Adams 2003).

## Diagnostic Characteristics

Northern Myotis was formerly considered a subspecies of Keen's Myotis (*Myotis keenii*). Northern Myotis can be distinguished in the hand from *Myotis lucifugus* by the longer ears (extending beyond the snout when pushed forward) and tragus and relatively longer tail; pelage color is similar, but less glossy than in *Myotis lucifugus*. Characteristic frequency of call is slightly higher than for *Myotis lucifugus* (41-45 kHz vs. 37-43 kHz) and high frequency calls may reach to 120 kHz. *Myotis evotis* has darker membranes and paler pelage, and the ears are longer; characteristic frequency of calls is lower (33-38 kHz) than for Northern Myotis.

## Habitat

In Montana, Northern Myotis have been located hibernating in an abandoned mine in riverbreaks habitat in Richland County (Swenson and Shanks 1979). Northern Myotis prefers cooler hibernacula than *Myotis lucifugus* and selects narrow crevices in which to hibernate. Summer day roosts are often in cavities or crevices behind peeling bark in trees, usually in tall, wide-diameter and partially dead hardwoods (Caceres and Barclay 2000). All active season captures within the state have been in or near riparian forest dominated by cottonwood (*Populus spp.*) and green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*) typical of the Great Plains Floodplain Ecological System.



## Species of Concern

### Native Species

Global Rank: G4

State Rank: S1B

### Agency Status

USFWS: DM; MBTA

USFS:

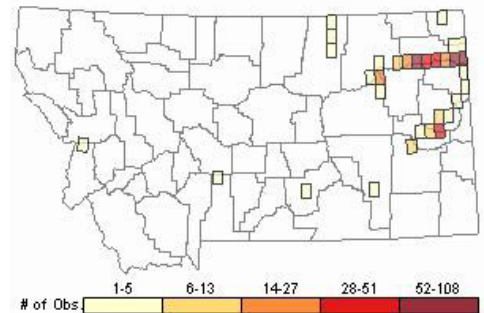
BLM: ENDANGERED

FWP SWAP: SGCN1, SGIN

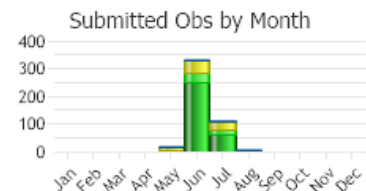
PIF: 1



Range: Summer | Migratory



# Observations: 504



## General Description

The smallest tern in North America, the Least Tern averages 21 to 24 cm long and has a wingspan of 51 cm (Thompson et al. 1997). In breeding plumage the species is characterized by a black cap and stripe through the eye that contrast sharply with a white forehead (Thompson et al. 1997). The underparts of the bird are white, while the upperparts are gray. The outer primaries of their long, narrow wings are black. They have a short, slightly notched tail, and a slightly decurved and tapered yellow bill (unique from other tern species) with a small black tip. The sexes are virtually identical, although Whitman (1988) notes some subtle differences; the male bill is described as orange to bright yellow, while the female's is light, dull yellow, or straw-colored. The iris is dark brown (Thompson et al. 1997); the feet and legs of the male are bright orange and generally bright to pale yellow on the female (Whitman 1988).

Vocalization of the Least Tern is described as a shrill, rapid, sharp "piDEEK-adik" or "keDEEK" as well as a weak, nasal sounding "whididi" and high, sharp "kweek" or "kwik" squeaks. The alarm call is a sharp, rising "zreek" (Sibley 2000).

For a comprehensive review of the conservation status, habitat use, and ecology of this and other Montana bird species, please see Marks et al. 2016, Birds of Montana.

## Diagnostic Characteristics

It is unlikely for the Least Tern to be confused with any other tern species in Montana. Its diminutive size, yellow bill, and white forehead are distinctive. Another tern species found in the state, the Forster's Tern, also has a black cap, but it lacks the white forehead. Also, the Forster's Tern is larger than the Least Tern, has a large orange, not yellow, bill and lacks black primaries in breeding plumage (Sibley 2000).

## Habitat

Least Terns nest on unvegetated sand-pebble beaches and islands of large reservoirs and rivers in northeastern and southeastern Montana, specifically the Yellowstone and Missouri river systems (Christopherson 1991). These wide, open river channels, and lake and pothole shorelines provide the preferred characteristics for nesting Least Terns. Sites with gravel substrate provide the most suitable sites for nesting (Montana Piping Plover Recovery Committee 1994). One of the most limiting factors to nesting site selection is vegetational encroachment; Least Terns avoid areas where relatively thick vegetation provides cover for potential predators. Fine-textured soils are easier to treat mechanically than rocky or gravelly soils when vegetation is determined as a limiting factor in an area's ability to provide suitable nesting habitat, but fine soils are not typically a preferred nesting substrate (Montana Piping Plover Recovery Committee 1994).

In Montana, as in other areas, another and more important limiting factor in nest site selection is the location of nesting sites in relation to surrounding water levels. Nests are often inundated because water levels are kept unnaturally high throughout the breeding season (and high winds can cause nests to be flooded) or nesting sites

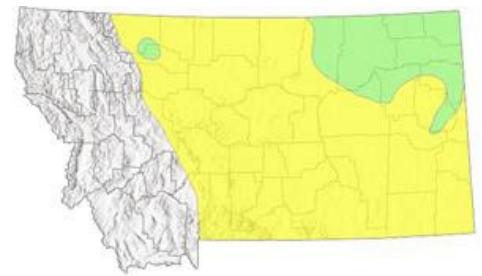


are not available (either because of encroaching vegetation or because water levels are so high that beaches are under water during the early part of, and possibly throughout, the nesting season) (Montana Piping Plover Recovery Committee 1994).

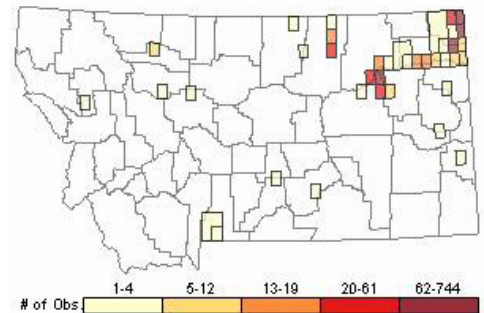


**Species of Concern**  
**Native Species**  
**Global Rank:** G3  
**State Rank:** S2B

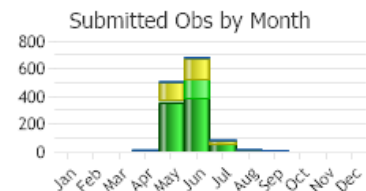
**Agency Status**  
**USFWS:** LT; CH; MBTA  
**USFS:**  
**BLM:** THREATENED  
**FWP SWAP:** SGCN2  
**PIF:** 1



Range **Summer** **Migratory**



**# Observations:** 1493



## General Description

One of the smaller plovers of North America, weighing only about 46 to 63 grams, the Piping Plover is approximately 17 to 18 cm long with an average wingspan of 48 cm. The back, wings, cheek patches, crown, and breast band are a pale gray. The rest of the body is white, except the tail, which is dark above with white terminal ends and uppertail coverts. The wing tips have a band of black, then a broad band of white, and end in black. In breeding plumage, the breast band changes to black, and is often not a continuous line, with a break in the center. Also at this time, the otherwise singularly gray crown is banded in front with a black stripe that reaches over the head from eye to eye. During the non-breeding season, the short bill is dark, but changes to orange with a dark tip in the breeding season. Throughout the year, the legs are chrome-orange (Haig 1992). The iris is dark. Immature plumage resembles adult non-breeding plumage; juveniles acquire adult plumage in the spring after they fledge.

This plover's common vocalization is described as clear, low-pitched, mellow whistled "peep, peeto" or "peeplo" (Sibley 2000). When agitated, the Piping Plover is known to express an extended series of low, soft whistles "woo-up, woo-up, woo-up, woou-up..."; while during display, the call repeated in flight is a high-pitched "pipe-pipe-pipe-pipe-pipe..." (Haig 1992).

For a comprehensive review of the conservation status, habitat use, and ecology of this and other Montana bird species, please see Marks et al. 2016, Birds of Montana.

## Diagnostic Characteristics

The other plover species found in Montana of comparable size and coloration is the Semipalmated Plover. The Piping Plover is, however, distinguishable from this other species by its lighter overall appearance. The Semipalmated Plover has much darker upperparts, is larger, has thicker, longer legs and a broad, black stripe through the eye, which the Piping Plover does not. The Piping Plover is also similar in appearance to the Snowy Plover, a rare species in Montana. The dark legs and thinner bill of the Snowy Plover during the breeding season easily separates these two species.

## Habitat

Piping Plovers primarily select unvegetated sand or pebble beaches on shorelines or islands in freshwater and saline wetlands. Vegetation, if present at all, consists of sparse, scattered clumps (Casey 2000). Open shorelines and sandbars of rivers and large reservoirs in the eastern and north-central portions of the state provide prime breeding habitat (USFWS 2003). In Montana, and throughout the species' range, nesting may occur on a variety of habitat types. If conditions are right, alkali wetlands, lakes, reservoirs, and rivers can all provide the essential features required for nesting. The alkali wetlands and lakes found in the northeastern corner of the state generally contain wide, unvegetated, gravelly, salt-encrusted beaches. Rivers that flood adequately can supply open sandbars or gravelly beaches, as can large reservoirs, with their shoreline beaches, peninsulas, and islands of gravel or sand (USFWS 2003).

Sites with gravel substrate provide the most suitable sites for nesting (Montana Piping Plover Recovery Committee 1994). One of the most limiting factors to nesting site selection is vegetational encroachment; Piping Plovers avoid areas where vegetation provides cover for potential predators. Fine-textured soils are easier to treat mechanically than rocky or gravelly soils when vegetation is determined as a limiting factor in an area's ability to provide suitable nesting habitat, but fine soils are not typically a preferred nesting substrate (Montana Piping Plover Recovery Committee 1994). Another, and more important limiting factor in nest site selection is the location of nesting sites in relation to surrounding water levels. Nests are often inundated because water levels are kept unnaturally high throughout the breeding season (and high winds can cause nests to be flooded), or nesting sites are not available, either because of encroaching vegetation or because water levels are so high that beaches are under water during the early part of, and possibly throughout, the nesting season (Montana Piping Plover Recovery Committee 1994). Nests are simple scrapes dug into the nest substrate which may or may not be lined with pebbles (Montana Piping Plover Recovery Committee 1994, 1995, Haig 1992).



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**Species of Concern**  
**Native Species**  
**Global Rank:** G5  
**State Rank:** S3B

**Agency Status**  
**USFWS:** MBTA  
**USFS:**  
**BLM:** SENSITIVE  
**FWP SWAP:** SGCN3  
**PIF:** 2

## General Description

The Veery is an 18-cm-long bird with a reddish brown dorsum, white belly, gray flanks, grayish face, small spots (often indistinct) on the breast, indistinct grayish eyering, and straight slim bill. Western populations have a darker dorsum and more breast spotting than do eastern populations.

For a comprehensive review of the conservation status, habitat use, and ecology of this and other Montana bird species, please see Marks et al. 2016, Birds of Montana.

## Diagnostic Characteristics

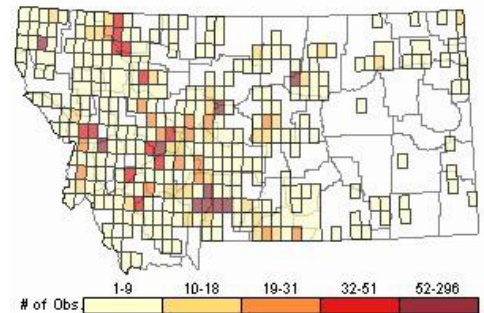
Veerys differ from other thrushes by having less breast spotting (less distinct and more restricted). They differ from Pacific coast populations of Swainson's Thrush (*Catharus ustulatus*) in having gray, instead of buffy brown, flanks.

## Habitat

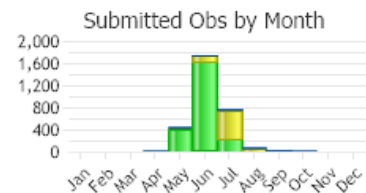
Generally inhabits damp, deciduous forests in the east. Has a strong preference for riparian habitats in several regions, including the Great Plains. Prefers disturbed forest, probably because denser understory is not found in undisturbed forests (Moskoff 1995). In Montana, Veerys are often associated with willow thickets and cottonwood along streams and lakes in valleys and lower mountain canyons (Saunders 1921, Hand 1969, Skaar 1969), including the Flathead and Lewistown regions (Silloway 1901, 1903a). It also occupies riparian cottonwood stands along the lower Missouri River (Kroodsma 1973). Along Beaver Creek in the Bears Paw Mountains, Veerys were present in a variety of plant community types (box elder, alder, aspen, cottonwood, and lodgepole pine) so long as willow was a significant component (Walcheck 1969).



Range Summer Migratory



# Observations: 3062



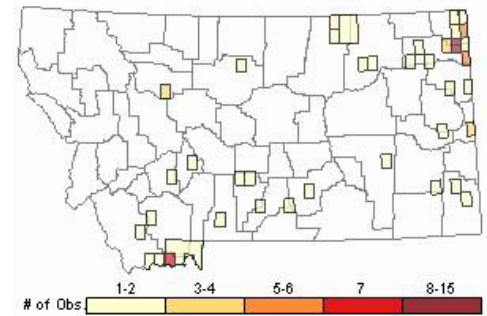


**Species of Concern**  
**Native Species**  
**Global Rank:** G1  
**State Rank:** S1M

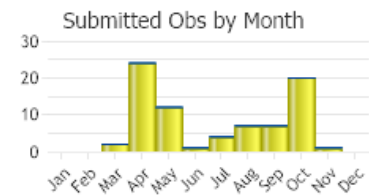
**Agency Status**  
**USFWS:** LE; MBTA  
**USFS:**  
**BLM:** ENDANGERED  
**FWP SWAP:** SGCN1  
**PIF:**



Range **Migratory**



# Observations: 80



## General Description

The tallest bird of North America, the Whooping Crane reaches nearly 1.5 meters in height. The sexes appear similar; adult plumage is snowy-white overall, with males generally larger than females. Black primaries, not visible when the wings are folded, contrast with the otherwise white plumage. The crown, malar, and a patch on the nape are bare, exposing red skin. These areas are covered with black bristly feathers. They are more heavily feathered on the nape patch, making it appear black in color. The lores and malar region, extending down the throat, are more sparsely covered and appear red or crimson in color. The tertial wing feathers often conceal the bird's short tail while it is standing (Lewis 1995). The bill, generally olive-colored, is tipped in dark gray. The long legs are dark gray to black, while the feet are lighter in color, nearly to light tan (Lewis 1995). The iris in young birds is a dark olive, turning to a yellow or white-yellow as the birds mature (Lewis 1995).

The vocalization of the Whooping Crane is the feature that defines its common name. The call is described as a clear, loud, bugling "bKAAAH", high-pitched and longer than that of the Sandhill Crane (Sibley 2000). When alarmed, individuals give a loud, single note call (Lewis 1995). The loud resonating calls may be heard up to two miles away (Johnsgard 1986).

For a comprehensive review of the conservation status, habitat use, and ecology of this and other Montana bird species, please see Marks et al. 2016, Birds of Montana.

## Diagnostic Characteristics

Viewed from a distance, only a few species may be confused with the Whooping Crane. The Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*) stands nearly the height of the Whooping Crane and although gray or light rusty-brown, the Sandhill Crane may appear whitish in bright light. In general, the Sandhill Crane's overall gray plumage, lack of black primaries, lack of red malars, and smaller stature (with a 1.4 meter wingspan in comparison to the 2.0 wingspan of the Whooping Crane) distinguish them from the endangered species. Two other bird species that may be confused with the Whooping Crane are the Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens*) and the American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*). These two species are primarily white and have black wingtips, but are smaller and shorter than the Whooping Crane. Unlike the Whooping Crane's longer legs, the short legs of these two species do not extend beyond the tail during flight.

## Habitat

The Whooping Crane has been observed in the marsh habitat present at Medicine Lake National Wildlife Refuge and Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. Observations of individual birds in other areas of the state include

grain and stubble fields as well as wet meadows, wet prairie habitat, and freshwater marshes that are usually shallow and broad with safe roosting sites and nearby foraging opportunities (Montana Bird Distribution Committee 2012).





**Species of Concern**  
**Native Species**  
**Global Rank:** G5  
**State Rank:** S3B

**Agency Status**  
**USFWS:** MBTA; BCC11  
**USFS:**  
**BLM:** SENSITIVE  
**FWP SWAP:** SGCN3  
**PIF:** 2

## General Description

The Long-billed Curlew is the largest shorebird in North America. It is considered an endemic to the Great Plains. The Long-billed Curlew's long, decurved bill is adapted for capturing invertebrates living in mudflats on its wintering grounds (Dugger and Dugger 2002). Its familiar "curlew" call can be heard throughout the mixedgrass prairie of Montana during the spring and summer.

For a comprehensive review of the conservation status, habitat use, and ecology of this and other Montana bird species, please see Marks et al. 2016, Birds of Montana.

## Phenology

Migrants arrive in Montana late March to mid-April. Adults observed on nests with eggs in mid- to late-May. Adults with young birds observed in early June to early July. Females leave breeding grounds before males; tagged females left around June 28 and tagged males left July 28 (see Migration, below).

## Diagnostic Characteristics

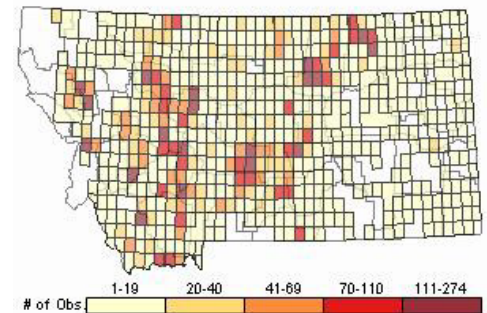
The large size, long decurved bill, and cinnamon color is diagnostic of this species. Sexes are similar in appearance, but females average slightly larger than males. Plumages are similar throughout the year. Body is a rich buff tinged with cinnamon or pink. Upperparts are streaked with dark brown. Juveniles are similar to adults except the bill is much shorter (Dugger and Dugger 2002).

## Habitat

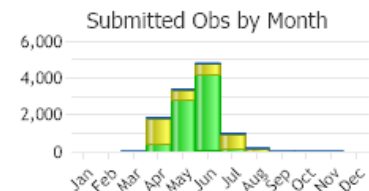
The Long-billed Curlew breeds in mixedgrass prairie habitats and moist meadows throughout Montana. It prefers to nest in open, short-statured grasslands and avoids areas with trees, dense shrubs, or tall, dense grasses (Dugger and Dugger 2002).



Range **Summer** **Migratory**



# Observations: 11406





**Species of Concern**  
**Native Species**  
**Global Rank:** G4  
**State Rank:** S1

**Agency Status**  
**USFWS:**  
**USFS:**  
**BLM:**

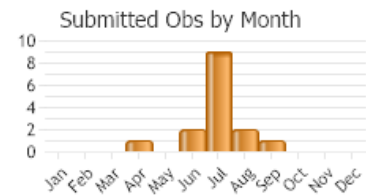


Range ☒ Native



# of Obs: 1 2 3 4 5

# Observations: 15



## General Description

The Brimstone Clubtail is a rare dragonfly found in the sandy-bottomed prairie rivers of the arid west. It probably reaches the northern distribution in Alberta and in Montana only inhabits the Powder River and lower Yellowstone and Missouri. This is a very pale clubtail with pale shins. The thorax is more pale than dark and mostly yellow-green.

## Phenology

Main flying times occur from June through September.

## Diagnostic Characteristics

Eyes spaced apart like most clubtails, moderate club and paler in color than most other clubtails in Montana.

## Habitat

The habitat of the Brimstone Clubtail includes slow-moving, sand-bottomed, warm muddy rivers in open country and occasionally irrigation canals as well (Dunkle 2000, Paulson 2009).





## Bat Roost (Non-Cave)

*Bat Roost (Non-Cave)*

[View in Field Guide](#)

**Important Animal Habitat**

**Native Species**

Global Rank: **GNR**

State Rank: **SNR**

# Observations: 1624

No photos are currently available

Agency Status

USFWS:

USFS:

BLM:

### General Description

Information on this species is incomplete.