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STATE DOCUMENTS

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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Pursuant to: Montana Environmental Policy Act
Section 69-6504 (b) (3)

and

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969

Project No. FG-20

Frenchtown Pond

Fishing Access Site

August 7, 1972

Prepared by

Montana Fish and Game Department
Recreation and Parks Division
Helena, Montana

MONTANA FISH AND GAME DEPARTMENT

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

FRENCHTOWN POND

FISHING ACCESS SITE

I. PURPOSE

The Fish and Game Department will receive an easement on 40 acres of ground adjacent to Interstate 90 from the Montana Department of Highways. The project will provide camping and day use facilities for the convenience of the highway travelers and for residents of the Missoula area. Fishing, swimming and paddle boating will also be enjoyed at the site.

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT.

The site is a 40 acre tract located west of Missoula about 20 miles. It is situated between the interstate highway and the frontage road which adjoins it. The major attraction is a fishing and paddle boating pond which was developed by excavation for gravel during the highway construction. The excavation was accomplished in such a manner as to leave an attractively shaped pond area. In addition, the entire area was graded to provide adequate drainage and a pleasing contour. Unsightly debris was removed but existing trees were left. The Highway Department constructed interior roads, camping spurs and parking areas with a double shot oil penetration to provide dust proofing. Finally, the entire area was graded and seeded with grass.

The Fish and Game Department will install a water well, water system, modern rest rooms, picnic tables, grates, garbage cans and racks and traffic control devices as required. Landscape work including tree planting will also be included in the project.

III. DESCRIPTION OF EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

A. Human Resources

Frenchtown Pond is located about a mile west of the town of Frenchtown. It is in a rural setting with numerous farms and ranches in the immediate area. The city of Missoula, located twenty miles to the east, has a population of 29,497. Albion is fourteen miles west and has a population of 363. Frenchtown is listed as having 175 residents. Missoula County has a population of 58,263.

There are no residences on the site of the project and no human problems will occur as a result of the proposed developments.

B. Physiography and Geology

The terrain is generally flat with gentle slopes that lead to the pond. The immediate area surrounding the site is quite level with the mountains of Reservation Divide rising to elevations of near 6,000 feet some three to five miles to the north. The Bitterroot Range is to the south about three miles and rises to elevations of 7,600 feet. The Clark Fork River is one mile south.

The access site is in the Northern Rocky Mountain physiographic province, which is characterized by deeply dissected structurally complex mountain uplands. Pleistocene glaciation resulted in the deposition of fine sediments in Glacial Lake Missoula and glacially derived alluvium in the Missoula Valley. The Clark Fork River is dissecting these deposits and redepositing them as alluvium along its flood plain.

C. Land Use

The project site is located on an old gravel pit. It has been used for this purpose for many years. The adjacent areas are farm lands where hay and grain are raised.

For many years prior to the construction of the interstate highway the site was used by the public as a picnic spot. It was also used for dumping refuse and debris. The junkyard appearance was eliminated during the construction period and the debris was removed or buried.

D. Fish and Wildlife

The fishery in Frenchtown Pond is managed primarily for warm water species. Sportfish include large mouth bass, black bullheads, yellow perch and pumpkin seeds. Brook trout were planted in the pond in 1970 on the possibility that they would be able to spawn in the areas where springs are located. It has not yet been ascertained if the plant was successful. The pond is considered to be a fair fishery. Motor boats will not be permitted on the pond. Small rafts and boats with paddles will be permitted.

There is no wildlife of any type on the site and it is not anticipated that there will be.

E. Vegetative Resources

During the construction of the interstate highway the site was used as a gravel source and most of the vegetation was damaged or removed. After the construction was completed, the site was graded and then seeded by the Highway Department. The grass is now beginning to germinate and grow. With normal rainfall this spring and early summer the area should have a good vegetative cover. A number of trees and bushes

along the shore of the pond were saved during the construction period and will help to enhance the site.

F. Climate

The site is considered to be situated in one of the more moderate climates in Montana. Temperature variables are not so extreme as in many parts of eastern and northern Montana. Daytime temperatures in the summer months will often reach into the upper 90's and will exceed 100 degrees on occasion. Nighttime temperatures may stay relatively high at this time of year. Winter temperatures may range as low as 20 degrees below zero but this would be the extreme. Moisture would average about 17" to 18" each year. Snow cover may be heavy at times in the winter months.

G. Transportation Systems

There are no transportation systems in the project site. Interstate Highway 90 is immediately adjacent on the south side of the area and the Burlington Northern Railroad is adjacent to the south side of the highway.

H. Utility Systems

There are no utility systems within the project site. The frontage road skirts the northern edge of the area and an electric power distribution line follows along the frontage road right-of-way. It does not enter the site at any point.

IV. EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

A. Environmental Impact of Proposed Action

The improvements to be undertaken in the project include the installation of one modern rest room with septic tank and drain field, one double latrine, a sanitary dump station, a well and water distribution system, direct bury of power service lines required for electric service, traffic control devices, picnic tables, stoves, garbage cans and racks and directional signs.

The modern rest room will be located in the camp loop area at a distance of 400 feet from the pond. Percolation tests indicate that the soil is satisfactory for the installation of septic tanks and drain fields. The sanitary dump station will be located near the entrance area. This will be equipped with a septic tank and drain field at a distance of 500 feet from the pond. The water table varies from 12' to 15' below the surface. The ground water flow would be southwesterly toward the Clark Fork River approximately 1½ miles away. The general terrain is flat.

The well will be centrally located between the camp loop and the day use area. It will be drilled to a depth of at least 40 feet. Electric power will be brought in from the distribution line on the frontage road adjacent to the site. The line will be underground. Excavations for the water distribution lines and the power distribution lines will be reseeded. Traffic control devices (barriers) will be placed as required on the parking areas and along the interior roads. The barriers will be log or concrete. Directional signs will be placed as necessary.

B. Adverse Environmental Effects Which Cannot Be Avoided

The placement of the facilities on the site is considered to have a minimum of effect on the environment. The site was designed for recreation purposes with a portion of the work already completed by the Highway Department. The installation of the facilities will complete the project.

There will be some intrusions during the construction period when men, equipment and materials will be on the site completing the installations. These intrusions will be minor and of short duration. Construction scars will be softened or eliminated by grading and reseeding.

C. Alternatives

The only alternative to the project would be to eliminate the installation of the facilities and leave the site in its present condition. Since the interior road and parking area construction has been completed it would appear that the project should proceed as planned.

D. Short Term - Long Term Use

The site has been designed for recreation purposes. During the construction of the interstate highway, the site was used as a gravel source. It was planned that it would be restored as a recreation area with the pond area to be utilized for fishing and water sports. It is apparent that the short term and long term uses of the site are in harmony.

E. Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources

Since the site has been planned for recreational use, the highest and best use is for this purpose. The project makes no further commitment of the resources.

F. Discussion of Problems and Objections by Other Agencies or the Public

We do not anticipate any problems or objections by the public or other public agencies.

 

V. BENEFITS

The area will benefit by the installation of the recreational facilities and will be given protection by planned maintenance and operation. The public will be provided with a recreation area that will be convenient to the traveling public as well as the residents of the Missoula area.

VI. SUMMARY STATEMENT

This has been a planned recreational development from the outset and the public will benefit by its completion. It will be a definite improvement over its previous unsightly appearance and indiscriminate use with no maintenance or supervision provided. The public will have an added opportunity for recreational pursuits.