

2 to 4 Year Operational Maintenance and Development Plan

Hell Creek State Park



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) has had a long relationship with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) at the Hell Creek Site, with a formal relationship dating back to at least the 1960's. The following is a general description of the departments intent to manage the recreational access and facility over the next 2 to 4-year lease term.

During the previous lease term, significant capital investments were made on the 337-acre site.

The greatest investment occurred in the latter half of the previous lease term. The improvements have included: two staff housing units, a maintenance building, comfort station, electrification of the public campground, and significant investments in site infrastructure related to public safety (public water supply and wastewater disposal).

FWP intends to maintain the current site at a high standard of safety, cleanliness and accessibility. Minimal new developments are planned over the term of the new lease.

Facilities

Park Infrastructure

FWP will operate and maintain the facilities listed below:

- Comfort Station (flush facilities, showers)
- Main Campground, satellite camping, and overflow camping areas
- Electrified campsites (main campground)
- Boat launch facilities/parking areas
- Fish Cleaning Station (FCS)
- Group Use Pavilion.
- RV Dump Station
- Playground
- Hiking Trails
- Interpretive exhibits
- Montana DEQ compliant public water supply and wastewater treatment system upgrades
- Park office/public contact station
- Maintenance/equipment storage building
- Staff housing units
- Permanent on-site staffing and periodic FWP Enforcement presence

Seasonal Use of Facilities

The park will be open year-round however not all facilities will be available for use during parts of the year.

The comfort station, water systems, and fish cleaning station are winterized by early October and reopened in the spring. Vault latrine facilities are available for visitors year-round.

Camping is available year-round. FWP will maintain a campsite and facility reservation program. Reservations will be taken between May and September. First-come-first-serve camping will be available both during the reservation period as well as the remainder of the year. As of 2021 there are seventy-one

campsites available for use in three separate camping areas. Of the seventy sites, thirty-three are reservable and fifty-four have a 50-amp electrical service.

Staffing and Operations

Currently annual operations cost (average):

Personal Services:	\$191,000
Operations:	\$ 67,000

Staffing Levels

Staffing levels as of 2021 are detailed below.

Any additions to staffing are subject to either internal adjustments or legislative action.

Currently, the permanent 2.91 FTE assigned to the site are:

- 1.0 FTE Park Manager
- 0.75 FTE Park Ranger
- 0.75 FTE Maintenance
- 0.41 FTE Groundskeeper

Additionally, FWP staff listed below provide indirect support to the Hell Creek operation.

- Regional Supervisor (Miles City Based)
- Regional Park Manager (Miles City Based)
- Regional Maintenance Manager
- Assistant Division Administrator
- Statewide Facility and Asset Manager
- Heritage and Cultural Resources Program Manager
- Facility Reservation Manager
- Volunteer and AmeriCorps Program Manager
- Design and Construction Unit

Operations:

Day to day operations are divided among the following expenditure categories:

- Contracted Services
- Supplies and Materials
- Communications
- Travel
- Utilities
- Repair and Maintenance
- Other

It is anticipated that operational costs will continue to rise over the term of the 2 to 4-year lease period. Budget adjustments will be made in consideration of other system-wide operational needs and priorities.

Concession Services

Upon concurrence and approval from ACOE the department would entertain a proposal for private concession operations which support the recreational activities common to the park. Minimum concession operations would include sale of gasoline, oil and boating supplies; food and beverage sales; grocery sales; fishing supplies and equipment; and firewood. Additional operations may also be considered to include rental of rooms for overnight accommodation, dock and dry dock storage rentals, sale of clothing, souvenirs and gifts, rental of boats excluding personal watercraft and an association with outfitted guide services.

Short / Long-Term Development Plans

Significant Capital Investments

Given the substantial investments made by Montana FWP during the last 20 years under the current lease arrangement, there are no plans for significant additional or new site infrastructure.

It is important to acknowledge that the general location, topography, and relative lake elevation associated with the Hell Creek site limits future development options. Lake elevation limits future development near the water and the site topography/soil conditions are a challenge in many locations on the site in the other direction.

Besides constructing future improvements on these areas of steeper topography, an added factor is meeting the requirements of the Montana DEQ concerning the permitting of future wastewater disposal systems.

The existing electrical system is at capacity and would need to be upgraded for any significant additional load to be added to the system. The expense of this project was estimated to exceed \$1.2 million in 2015. The required system upgrade to add new facilities is currently not a priority.

Beginning with the recent public water supply (PWS) system upgrade and FCS wastewater project investment completed in 2020, the useful life remaining of the on-site facilities is anticipated to span up to a 4-year lease term. This includes not only the new PWS and wastewater systems, but also the shop building, comfort station, campground and staff housing.

If there is a demonstrated public demand for expanded camping opportunities or other recreational facilities to be developed, coordination would be initiated by Montana FWP with the Army Corps. Any/all proposed future improvements would be documented, evaluated against other needs within the state park system and if deemed a priority provided to the Army Corps for approval, in compliance with the conditions of the lease. Legislative support would be required for any significant improvements.

Facility Upgrades and Major Maintenance

Current facilities will be maintained to a high standard, which may include upgrading existing facilities or replacing facilities with only minimal expansion of new infrastructure.

Possible future projects include:

- Boat ramp upgrades - Dependent on ice and lake conditions.
- In addition to ongoing maintenance, improvements to existing interior road and parking areas.
- Comfort station improvements. Possible upgrades to interior finishes and fixtures.
- Cyclical maintenance required for staff housing- roofs, windows, and energy conservation.
- Picnic shelter improvements – interior and exterior upgrades.
- Overflow parking for boaters staying out overnight on the lake.
- Hiking trailhead improvements.

Hell Creek State Park continues to be a popular sport fishing and outdoor recreation destination. The park provides important access to Fort Peck Lake and receives heavy use from Montana residents as well as regional visitors.

The remote location and substantial cost to construct and maintain amenities adds to the management challenges of the site. In addition, the seasonality of the fishery can create uneven use patterns.

For FWP it is vital that management decisions are made in consideration of all needs within the state park system. The health and safety needs and public interest at Hell Creek State Park are a priority. The success of this facility depends on good communication between the federal, state and private partners involved.