

**MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS  
FISHERIES DIVISION  
JOB PROGRESS REPORT**

**STATE:** MONTANA

**PROJECT NUMBER:** F-46-R-4

**JOB NUMBER:** VI F

**PROJECT TITLE:** STATEWIDE FISHERIES INVESTIGATIONS  
**STATE TITLE:** STATEWIDE SURVEY AND INVENTORY  
**JOB TITLE:** FISHING ACCESS SITE PROGRAM COORDINATION  
**PERIOD COVERED:** JULY 1, 1990 TO JUNE 30, 1991

**ABSTRACT**

No new Fishing Access Sites were acquired during the report period. A substantial percentage of each region's sites were reviewed to develop a working knowledge as well as a statewide perspective of site maintenance. No new Applications for Federal Assistance were written, but environmental information collection was initiated for future efforts. Regional priorities were solicited and reviewed. Considerable effort was focused on the management of all lease-out properties. Previous handling varied greatly and should be approached in a uniform fashion. A public information article was written on the Fishing Access Site program. Lastly, a first draft of a policy and procedures document was produced and submitted to all involved parties for review.

**OBJECTIVES AND DEGREE OF ATTAINMENT**

1. Coordinate fishing access site acquisition, development and maintenance statewide. This task was completed and data is included.
2. Coordinate fisheries division activities funded by Dingell - Johnson motorboat access funds. This task was completed and data is included.
3. Assist Fisheries Management Bureau Chief with management plans, fishing contest applications and other tasks as assigned. This task was completed and data is included.

## PROCEDURES

Today's Fishing Access Site (FAS) system started with a reorganized Department in 1964 that was charged with acquiring, developing and maintaining these sites. In 1977, anglers successfully pursued legislation for an expanded FAS program. This new approach provided an earmarked portion of the fishing license for purchase of new access sites.

The FAS program now manages a total of 300 sites dispersed around the state. These sites offer varied opportunities.

The relatively rapid expansion of the FAS system has presented some new problems. An internal review of development needs accomplished in 1987, showed that nearly 40% of our FAS sites needed substantial development or major maintenance work. At that time, the cost of bringing these sites up to an acceptable standard was estimated to be approximately \$4 million. Since that time, an increased awareness of handicapped accessibility has added to our development liability.

In 1988, the administration of the Fishing Access Site system was transferred from the Parks Division to the Fisheries Division. A coordinator position was created to direct the program. The main goal of this position is to thoroughly and efficiently manage the Department FAS sites commensurate with their level of use. The main "tool" to be used in accomplishing this task is the employment of Federal D.J. funds which will "stretch" the existing state dollars.

In addition to the Fishing Access Site responsibilities, the expansion of the Federal Sport Fish Restoration program includes a 10% earmarking of federal dollars which can only be used to develop motorboat access consistent with fisheries objectives.

The FY 90-91 biennial appropriation is about \$1.2 million. Administration of this program is divided between the Fisheries and the Parks Divisions according to development needs on appropriate waters.

## FINDINGS

The first objective was to produce a updated article on the Fishing Access Site system for Montana Outdoors. This was accomplished in the March/April 1991 edition of that magazine. The article intended to explain:

1. that the Montana system is large (over 300 sites),
2. the system is strongly supported by the public,
3. the system is often confused with State Parks but is generally less developed and is intended mostly as access to water alone and
4. the "earmarked funds" only pay about 25% of the annual program costs.

The second task was determined to be the development of a Fishing Access Site manual of policies and procedures. The first draft of this document was produced and distributed by April. The topics included were:

1. The statutory and administrative rules pertaining to this system,
2. Site procurement,
3. Site protection and
4. Site maintenance.

There were no Fishing Access Site acquisitions made during this period.

Site Protection functions were restricted to initiating the collection of environmental information. Additionally, a request was sent to each region for needed projects in FY 92 - 93. These responses were reviewed, rated and costs were estimated. Once the legislative session was completed and funding levels were determined, site projects could be decided upon. The 1991 Legislature appropriated \$1.1 million for Site Protection projects during FY 92 -93.

Most Regions were visited for a multi-day site review. This was done so that a working knowledge and a regional approach could be obtained. Additionally, this review was done to develop a statewide perspective of site maintenance.

Sites that lend themselves to motorboat access development were requested from each Region. Many state operated sites that would allow motorboat development are confined within the state Park system. Therefore, funds that are earmarked for the motorboat access purpose, are currently divided between the Parks and the Fisheries Divisions. The site projects were requested and prioritized. Actual decisions had to be delayed until after the legislative session and a sufficient time to review Division budgets. The net result to the Fisheries Division was the appropriation of \$500,000 for motorboat access.

Other assigned fisheries management tasks were limited to assisting with the development of a promotional statewide fishing brochure. This project should be completed during the next report period.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that this project be continued since approximately \$2 to \$4 million worth of upgrading work remains.

Prepared by: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Project No. \_\_\_\_\_

