

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

STATE: MONTANA

PROJECT NUMBER: F-46-R-7
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, 1993 TO JUNE 30, 1994

ABSTRACT

Eight new Fishing Access Sites were secured with state funds during the report period. These sites are:

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|----|----------------------------|---|
| 1) | Big Casino Creek Reservoir | - South of Lewistown, |
| 2) | Eagle Island | - Below the mouth of the Dearborn River, |
| 3) | Sidney Bridge | - On the Yellowstone River immediately south of the town of Sidney, |
| 4) | Thompson Chain of Lakes | - Between Kalispell and Libby, |
| 5) | Superior | - On the Clark Fork River, upstream from St. Regis, |
| 6) | St. Regis | - On the Clark Fork River, |
| 7) | Point of Rocks | - On the Yellowstone River, south of Livingston, and |
| 8) | Trout Creek/Noxon Rapids | - On Noxon Rapids Reservoir. |

Site Protection functions continued with identifying 17 new projects to be funded by the FY 94-95 capital budget. All of these sites were visited with the engineering staff and cost estimates were made. Montana Environmental Policy Act documents were produced for all needed acquisitions and site projects. Four more motorboat access projects were written into Grant Agreements. In addition, Grant Agreements were written for Como Reservoir Enlargement and Bearpaw Dam Improvement.

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

The Fishing Access Site program now manages a total 312 sites dispersed around the state. These sites offer extremely varied angling opportunities and are considered essential in providing much of the state's fishing pressure.

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 efficiently manage the program. The new strategy to be employed in accomplishing the upgrade of the program is the use of Federal D-J funds.

In addition to the Fishing Access Site responsibilities, the expansion of the Sport Fish Restoration program includes 12.5% earmarking of federal dollars which can only be used to develop motorboat access consistent with fisheries objectives.

The combined site protection and motorboat FY 94-95 biennial appropriation was \$1,060,000.

FINDINGS

The first objective is to coordinate FAS acquisition, development and maintenance.

- 1) The acquisition function of this program had previously been described in a Draft Policy and Procedures document. The acquisition procedure has again been changed during this report period. The Priority Meetings which were used to develop consensus and inform the Director's Office have now been suspended until the situation requires.

The float-fishing portion of the FAS system continues to be a major focus. Generally, the sites still missing from floating rivers have been identified. Regional staff have been informed of the needed sites and attention is being directed to secure these locations. There are approximately 40 float sites needed in this system.

- 2) The development function of this program is handled through establishing priorities for site upgrades, completing environmental documents and writing the Project Agreements. Although these efforts continue every year, the biennial budget and state construction procedures result in most of the documentation work falling in the second year of the biennium.

The funding appropriated for FY 92-93 has resulted in project construction in the current biennium (FY 94-95). During this report period, all required cultural surveys have been conducted in advance of the MEPA document process for the FY 94-95 projects.

- 3) The coordination of the maintenance function for this program is still moving along without the long-needed standards. It appears likely that as operation funds become intolerably tight, the requested information from the regions will be seen as potential corrective measures to funding shortfalls.

The intention is to have a uniform approach that considers site use levels, periodicity of required site visits, per site travel requirements, personnel needs and operation needs. The basics of this system would be a summary of regional cost accounting.

The second objective is to coordinate D-J motorboat access funds.

The funds appropriated for this function (FY 94-95) were divided between the Parks Division (operator of water-based parks) and the Fisheries Division. The funds available to Fisheries are \$500,000. One Grant Agreement was written for the Dailey Lake site which totaled \$150,000. This project was funded from the remaining balance of the FY 92-93 appropriation. Additionally, the Dailey Lake project was prorated between motorboat and unrestricted D-J because of the documented site use.

Because of difficulties Montana is having encumbering D-J motorboat funds, an exercise was initiated to retroactively fund some previously built projects that had partial motorboat use. A total of 15 projects funded from the FY 90-91 and FY 92-93 bienniums were involved in this process. By doing this, Montana was able to credit another \$237,275 to the D-J motorboat uses.

Of the 17 projects scheduled with the FY 94-95 appropriation, 12 are partial or total D-J motorboat qualified projects.

The third objective of this position is to perform tasks for the Fisheries Management Bureau Chief as assigned.

During this report period, two such work assignments were made. This included writing the Grant Agreements for the Como Lake Enlargement and the Bearpaw Dam Improvement projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that this project be continued since much of the intended work is yet to be accomplished.

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