

Lone Pine State Park Management Plan



Developed by the
Lone Pine Planning Committee and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
May 2003



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Lone Pine State Park, located within the boundaries of the Lone Pine Game Preserve, was added to the Montana State Park system in 1947, making it one of the oldest state parks in Montana. For the next several decades the park was an unmanaged recreation area and by the late 1970's had fallen into severe disrepair resulting from unregulated use. In 1984, the Montana legislature authorized capital funding to develop the Lone Pine Interpretive Center, paved parking lots, and picnic shelter. Park entrances were developed, and seasonal staff hired, and the park soon began to heal from years of misuse. Today, Lone Pine has become an important resource for outdoor recreation in the Flathead Valley. Thousands of visitors use the park's hiking trails for exercise and exploration. The Interpretive Center serves as a classroom for area schools, and the scenic overlooks provide commanding views of the Flathead Valley year-round. The Lone Pine archery range provides a safe practice facility for local archers, and the park's picnic grounds and shelter are ideally located to Kalispell for outdoor gatherings.

Initially, FWP and the Flathead County Parks and Recreation Department jointly operated the Interpretive Center as a community meeting room. A seasonal staff person was funded by Flathead County and FWP maintained the building. This arrangement was dissolved in 1993. Today the Center is staffed by an FWP seasonal employee, and offers small-scale interpretive displays, visitor information pertaining to the Flathead Valley, and a meeting place for organizations and schools groups.

In 1998 the Lone Pine Preliminary Interpretive Plan was completed to guide the park in development of interpretive displays and programming. The plan was a collaborative effort involving citizens with a wide diversity of interests and talents. To date, the plan has guided the development of displays within the Interpretive Center, and a self guided interpretive walk along Lone Pine's scenic overlooks.

In 2002 a citizen based management team was formed to develop a management plan to guide Lone Pine State Park for the next decade. Public scoping and planning team sessions identified management issues at Lone Pine, and developed alternative actions to address the issues. This plan highlights those issues and describes the selected actions for addressing them. These actions are scheduled to be implemented during the life of this plan, but are subject to funding and personnel availability. The Lone Pine Management Plan will be reviewed in 2008 to gauge implementation progress and make necessary revisions.

The Planning Issues

1. Financial and Human Resources

Current Lone Pine State Park funding and staffing levels are not adequate to provide a sufficient level of recreational opportunities and interpretive programming for park visitors. Funding is also inadequate for appropriate levels of park operations such as Interpretive Center maintenance work. Fees and other existing revenue sources are not sufficient to remedy the problem.

Management Actions:

- Increase contact with visitors
- Diversify use of Lone Pine
- Increase volunteer and staffing levels to implement plan objectives

2. Ecology

Currently, FWP treats noxious weeds throughout Lone Pine's grounds; however, ecological management at the park is not comprehensive. The park does not have a forest management plan or an integrated weed management program. In addition, trail degradation from visitor use and erosion is negatively impacting park ecology. The park suffers from a severe Dwarf Mistletoe infection in Douglas fir and larch stands, and Ponderosa pine stands are gradually disappearing due to interspecies competition, fire suppression and disease.

Management Actions:

- Implement comprehensive forest management
- Develop a comprehensive weed management program

3. Interpretation

Montana State Parks has implemented some components of the 1998 Lone Pine Preliminary Interpretive Plan. However, the park needs to refine and implement the entire plan. Paramount to this effort is the need for a phased action plan to facilitate thematic, professional-grade interpretation and programming and to establish the facility as a regionally significant source of information for resident and non-resident visitors alike.

Management Actions:

- Refine interpretive goals and themes of the Lone Pine Preliminary Interpretive Plan
- Allocate State Park resources (staffing and funding) to implementing and improving interpretive funding
- Expand current interpretive programming
- Develop an integrated interpretive program system throughout the Flathead Valley
- Establish the Interpretive Center as the focal point from which visitors can experience the rest of the park

4. Visitor Conflict

Visitor conflicts between various user groups (i.e. bicycle, horseback and pedestrian) are occurring on Lone Pine's trail system. Mitigation needs to address trail requirements for different trail uses, and enforcement of horse and pet regulations. Mitigation also needs to address user impacts on park trails.

Management Actions:

- Create educational programs, beyond signage, on domestic stock and pet regulations

- Develop a trail-signing program to minimize trail user conflict
- Increase visitor contacts and provide education pertaining to trail etiquette.
- Increase education about the archery range area.

5. Trails

Lone Pine's trail system suffers from user conflicts, trail damage due to visitor use and erosion, and inadequate mapping and signage.

Management Actions:

- Inventory and address severely damaged segments of trail, and segments with potential for severe damage
- Institute trail-specific closures on trail conditions for events such as spring break-up
- Coordinate with regional trail planning efforts to link Lone Pine with larger trail systems

6. Future Development

Development of a parking lot and connecting trail at the Valley View entrance to Lone Pine, as well as basic site protection at the Foy's Lake parcel is necessary. Parkland uses and development need to be addressed in a comprehensive manner consistent with current levels of development at the Park.

Management Actions

- Integrate the September 2002, 41-acre land acquisition into the park.
- Provide basic development of the Foy's Lake property.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Montana State Parks would like to recognize the Lone Pine State Park Planning Committee for their contributions in both time and energy throughout the Lone Pine State Park planning process. Without the committee member's dedication to the process and their resources and innovation, the plan would not have been possible.

Lone Pine Planning Committee Members:

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Carol Edgar – Flathead Visitor and Convention Bureau

Alan Schmautz – Mountain Bike Users Representative

Lex Blood – Retired FVCC Faculty Member and Lone Pine Advisor

Mike Baker – Kalispell City Parks

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INTRODUCTION

Lone Pine State Park spans 223 acres five miles southwest of Kalispell, Montana (see front of plan for the Lone Pine Location Map). The park is located on a series of limestone bluffs overlooking the city and the Flathead Valley. Ernest and Hazel White donated the original 162 acres of the park to the state in 1941. A series of land purchases, trades and donations from Flathead County and park neighbors, along with the acquisition of 41 acres on the parks east boundary in 2002, have brought the park to its current size.

The White donation stipulated that the park be developed for public enjoyment and to teach appreciation for the benefits of conservation. In response to this vision, an interpretive plan was completed in 1998 to define the interpretive mission and goals of the park. In March 2002, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) began the process of developing a comprehensive management plan for the park. FWP collaborated with a citizen-based planning committee, guided by input from the general public, to identify park issues and trends and formulate management goals, objectives, policies and actions. The goals, objectives, policies and actions are incorporated into this management plan in a format intended to guide management projects and activities in Lone Pine State Park for the next ten years. This plan provides a vision and work plan to conserve the park's natural resources, provide recreational opportunities for park users, and develop educational and interpretive opportunities for Flathead Valley residents and visitors.

ABOUT THE PARK

Geography and Resources

Lone Pine State Park is a natural park in an increasingly suburban setting in the middle of Montana's Flathead Valley. The Valley is a popular tourist destination that attracts approximately 1.5 million visitors a year. Natural attractions in the area include Glacier National Park, Flathead Lake and the Bob Marshall Wilderness. The area not only experiences high levels of visitation but also high levels of population growth. From 1990-2000, the Flathead County population grew by over 25% and it is still increasing. In 2001, the Flathead County population was 76,269. The City of Kalispell contains approximately 17,000 people (Census, 1999) and grew by 36% in the 1990's.

Lone Pine is predominantly a forested park. Douglas Fir, Western Larch and Ponderosa Pine forest cover approximately 78% of the park's acreage. Portions of the park were harvested prior to being donated to the state. In addition, Lone Pine contains approximately 42 acres of open grasslands. These grasslands support a wealth of native grasses and forbs such as Rough Fescue, Idaho Fescue, Bluebunch Wheatgrass, Common Lupine, and Arrowleaf Balsamroot. These grasslands are important winter range for White-tailed deer and summer nesting habitat for the Western Bluebird. They also offer interpretive opportunities to discuss prairie habitat ecosystems, and provide open, scenic views of the Flathead Valley. Noxious plants present a threat to park ecosystems, with Spotted Knapweed and St. Johnswort being two of the most abundant species in the park. Dwarf Mistletoe is a prominent feature, infecting approximately 40% of Lone Pine's Douglas Fir and Larch stands.

The park is bordered by private property on all sides. A small portion of the park is detached from the main section and is located on the shore of Foy's Lake at the junction of Lone Pine Road and Foy's Lake Road. Currently, the Foy's Lake property is not managed as part of the park. This property is 2.09 acres in size and is used for access to Foy's Lake.

Facilities and Infrastructure

Lone Pine is a day use park, open year round to visitors. The park can be accessed via the main park entrance on Lone Pine Road, or through two walk-in entrances on Valley View Drive and Learn Lane. An additional entrance will be developed on the recently acquired 41-acre tract also located on Valley View Drive. Visitors to Lone Pine participate in bicycling, hiking, running, horseback riding, archery, cross-country skiing nature study and family activities such as picnicking. The park also serves as a venue for special events such as orienteering and archery competitions, and provides an outdoor classroom for area educators to utilize for field trips. One of the park's most popular assets is its diverse trail system (see Appendix A for a park trail map). Trails in Lone Pine offer terrain suited for a variety of recreational users. While on the trails or in the park woodlands, visitors can view White-tailed deer, a variety of birds, and other wildlife. A .5-mile self-guided interpretive trail leads visitors from the Interpretive Center and offers scenic views of the Flathead Valley, including the Bob Marshall Wilderness, the Mission Mountains, Glacier National Park, and Flathead Lake. The recent 41-acre park addition will provide a significant expansion of the park's trail system.

The Lone Pine Interpretive Center was built in 1984. Seasonal employees and volunteers staff the center from Memorial Day through Labor Day. The center contains an interpretive space, restrooms, a meeting room and an administrative office. Interpretive displays at the center are supported through park operations funds, donations and volunteer efforts. The meeting room adjoining the interpretive space is rented on a daily basis to organizations for meetings and educational programs (maximum capacity: 50 persons).

A picnic area, located east of the main park entrance, provides a covered picnic shelter with seating for 50 individuals, and a cooking area. A volleyball court, drinking water and restrooms are located in the picnic area. A seven-target archery range is also located west of the main entrance to the park.

Operations

Lone Pine is open from 7:00 AM to Dark. With the addition of a year-round volunteer attendant in 2000, the park remains open all year. The Interpretive Center is open five days per week from Memorial Day through Labor Day for visitor information and interpretation. The center is available for meetings from April through late October.

Staffing and Organization

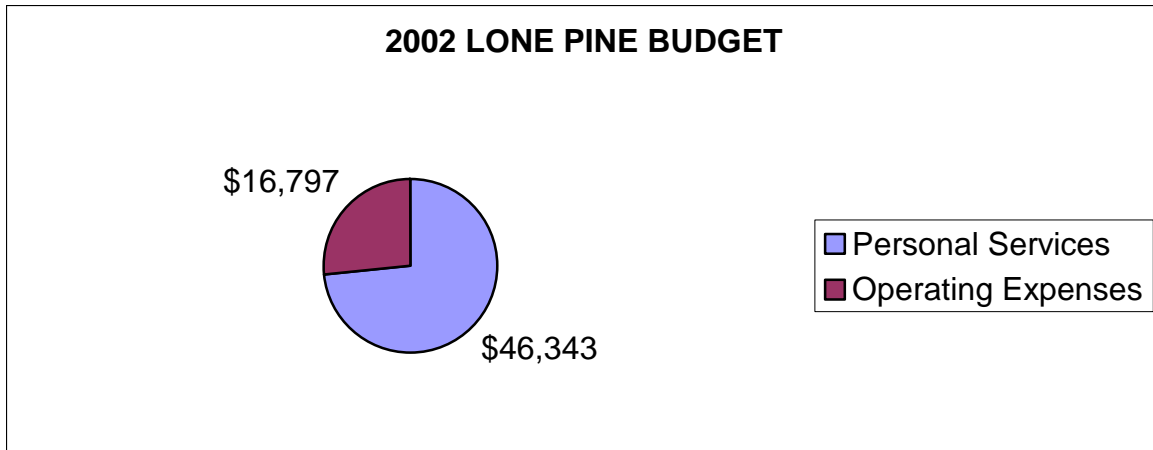
In total, Montana State Parks manages 42 state parks and 320 fishing access sites statewide. The parks system is divided into seven regions; Lone Pine is located in Region One, which covers the northwest corner of the state. The park is staffed by one seasonal Park Attendant. Management duties are shared by the Region One Park Manager, two regional Park Operations Supervisors, the Region One Parks Division Administrative Assistant, and the Region One maintenance crew.

Funding and Revenue

Region One FWP operates with 11.58 FTE, 1.26 of which operates Lone Pine. The Lone Pine FTE is allocated as follows: .40 administration, .25 maintenance, .25 reservation clerk, .21 seasonal Park Attendant, and .15 Park Patrol Officer.

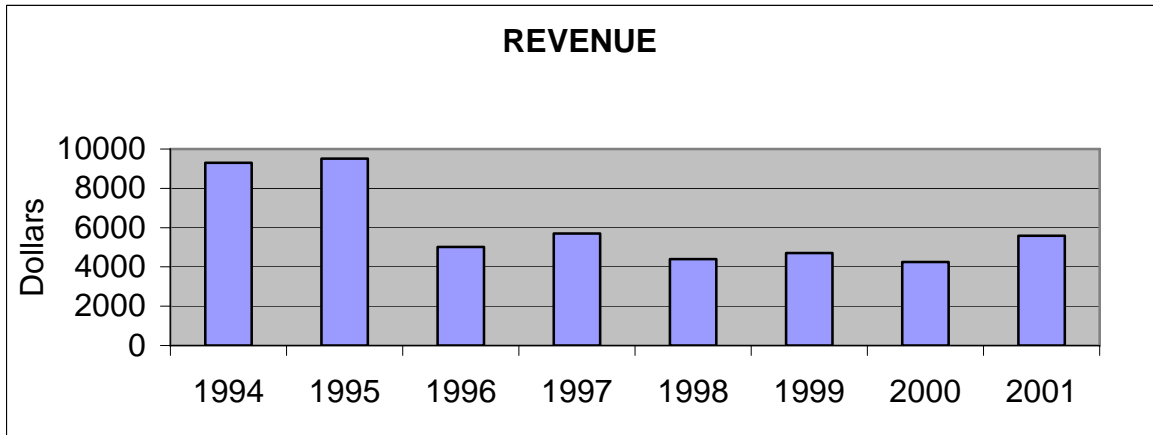
Lone Pine’s budget for fiscal year 2002 was \$63,140. \$46,343 of this budget funded personal services, which include wages and benefits for park personnel. \$16,797 was earmarked for operating expenses. Montana State Parks earned revenue and coal tax trust fund dividends are the primary funding sources for Lone Pine, while donations and gifts make up a small percentage of operations money.

Table 1. 2002 Lone Pine Budget



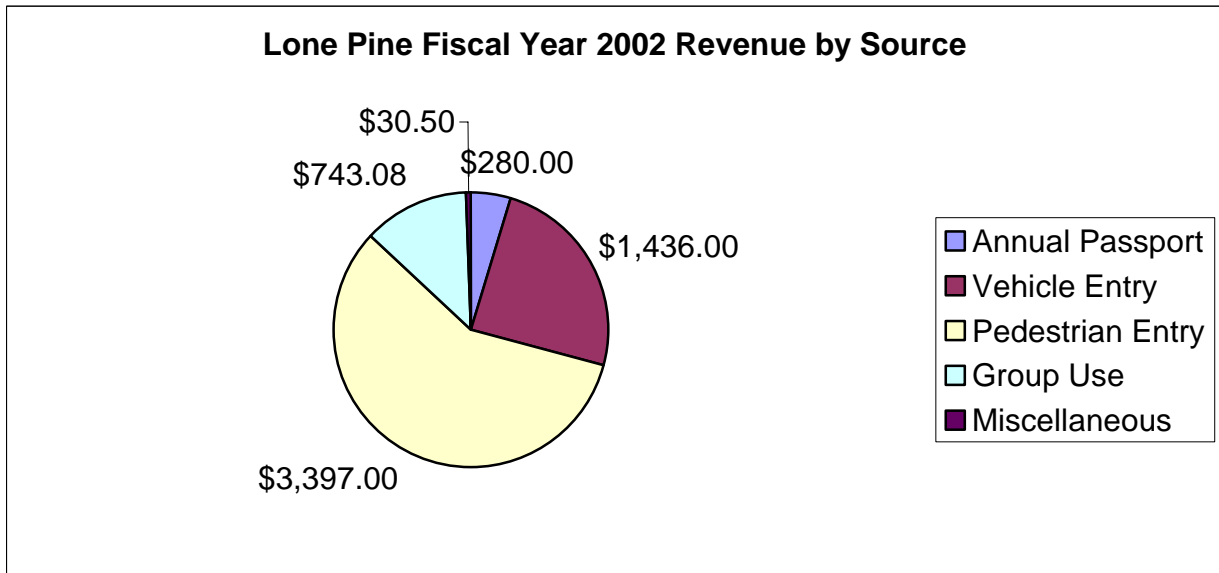
Lone Pine’s earned revenues dropped substantially since the mid 90’s. The park’s earned revenue sources are daily entrance fees, and rental fees for the picnic shelter and Interpretive Center. The drop is primarily due to less Interpretive Center rental revenue.

Table 2. Lone Pine Annual Revenue 1994-2001



82 % of Lone Pines revenues were generated by park entrance fees. 70% of the entry fees paid in fiscal year 2002 were paid by visitors who walked, biked or rode a horse into the park.

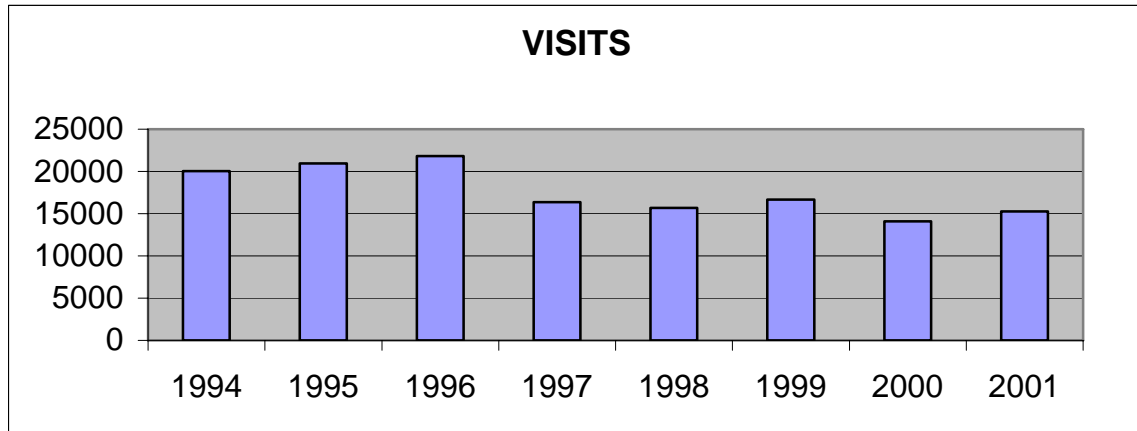
Table 3. Lone Pine Fiscal Year Revenue Sources 2002



Visitation

Lone Pine has experienced relatively stable levels of visitation for the past five years, averaging approximately 15,000 visitors per year.

Table 4. Lone Pine Visitation Since 1994



Note: Visitation Estimates are based upon electronic counters at the park's two main entrances.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Lone Pine State Park Management Plan offers a comprehensive vision and action plan for the park for the next 10 years. This plan will be reviewed according to FWP policy after five years. This plan expands upon the 1998 Lone Pine Preliminary Interpretive Plan and concentrates on conserving Lone Pine's natural resources, providing recreational opportunities, and developing additional educational and interpretive opportunities. Above all, the plan offers guidance for park managers to engage Flathead Valley residents and visitors, and help Lone Pine to realize its potential as an interpretive park.

This Lone Pine Management Plan was developed to address the following specific planning needs:

1. Involve the Flathead Valley community in developing a vision for Lone Pine and guiding park management.
2. Implement the Lone Pine Preliminary Interpretive Plan.
3. Create an action plan for the development of interpretive opportunities within the Lone Pine Interpretive Center.
4. Develop an action plan for the development of interpretive opportunities within the park grounds.
5. Develop action plans for the park's natural resources, including a framework for forest and grassland stewardship, noxious weed abatement, and conservation of the park's wildlife populations.
6. Develop an action plan for enhancement of recreational resources in Lone Pine.
7. Develop ideas to gain greater involvement and interest in Lone Pine State Park from area residents and organizations.

PLANNING PROCESS

The core planning process for the Lone Pine State Park Management Plan consisted of a citizen-based advisory committee (see Appendix B for the committee charter and list of members), which met monthly, and several general public meetings. The advisory committee was facilitated by the Parks Division Planner and consisted of a Region One Park Operations Supervisor and six non-FWP volunteer committee members representing a diversity of park users and interests. Committee members met in monthly evening meetings from May through October of 2002. Public meetings were held in May for public scoping and in December for draft review. FWP utilized input from these meetings to draft a management plan with a first draft completed in mid-November.

The following timeline outlines the planning process:

- March, 2002 Establish planning committee criteria, public participation process, plan purpose and sideboards, data collection.
- April 15, 2002 Committee selection is completed and monthly meetings are scheduled.
- May 15, 2002 Committee members convene and identify park issues.
- June 13-16, 2002 Public scoping is conducted to identify additional issues.
- June-Oct., 2002 Committee evaluates park issues and develops policy recommendations.
- November 22, 2002 First draft of management plan is issued for committee review.
- Dec. 15, 2002 Second Draft is released for public review.
- May 9, 2003 Final Draft is submitted to FWP director for approval.

LONE PINE STATE PARK HISTORY AND MISSION

Flathead Valley lore indicates that early settlers of the Kalispell area used the prominent bluffs of what is now Lone Pine State Park as a navigational landmark while traversing the rugged wagon trail along the west side of Flathead Lake. These early travelers transformed this lush valley, aboriginal territory of the Kootenai Indians, into a hub of economic and recreational activity. Today, nearly 80,000 people inhabit the valley floor and foothills between the community of Whitefish and the head of Flathead Lake.

In 1941 Kalispell area residents Ernest and Hazel White foresaw the need for public recreation land close to the growing community of Kalispell. They donated to the State of Montana 162 acres of what is today the core of Lone Pine State Park. The property was donated with instructions that the property be “managed and developed in accordance with approved forestry practices of the state, and to the same degree and extent that other state forest lands are protected, developed and managed, but with special emphasis on the recreational use of this area by the public...and that ultimately this property shall be developed as a state park.” Lone Pine State Park was established in 1947.

By 1979 however, the condition of the property was in a serious state of deterioration due to recreational abuse. In a 1979 report intended to guide Lone Pine State Park management, W.A. Blood and M.P. Britton remarked that “the park and adjacent private lands have been subject to vandalism, late night party activities, and, in particular, misuse by four-wheel drive vehicles and motorcycles. These vehicles have gouged trails in grasslands and created severe erosion and noise problems. Little has been done by local law enforcement officials or Fish & Game to control this abuse and today the park has been abandoned by responsible users and is an eyesore, public hazard and nuisance”.

A subsequent planning and capital improvement project resulted from this report, and in 1984 a picnic area and visitor center were constructed, and site control measures were installed to quell off-road vehicle abuse. Park staff moved onsite to discourage late-night partying, and the park slowly began to heal. Today these abuses are nearly nonexistent, and a public planning process has resulted in this 2003 Lone Pine Management Plan to guide Lone Pine towards realizing its park mission and commitment to Ernest and Hazel White.

LONE PINE MISSION

The Lone Pine State Park Mission is guided by a commitment to the Whites and by the Montana State Parks Program Mission, as defined by the *2020 Vision for Montana State Parks*. The 2020 Vision document provides a broad, long-range direction for the Montana State Park System for the first two decades of the twenty-first century. The Lone Pine Management Plan reflects the mission and applicable goals and objectives in the 2020 Vision plan:

20/20 Parks Program Mission Statement

The mission of the Montana State Park system is to preserve, enhance, and interpret a diverse representation of Montana's most outstanding natural, cultural/historic, and recreational resources, for the personal, social, and economic benefit of present and future generations.

Lone Pine State Park is a natural and cultural landmark for the Flathead Valley, in particular the city of Kalispell. The park's role as a provider of open space and public recreation land is historically significant, and its value as such continues to increase as the valley is developed. Lone Pine's mission statements reflect these interpretive, natural resource conservation and public recreation values.

Lone Pine State Park Mission Statement

Interpretive Mission

In 1998 the Lone Pine Natural Resource Education Committee (LPNREC) completed a Preliminary Interpretive Plan for Lone Pine State Park. The guiding theme of the plan is: *In the Flathead, we live with nature in our backyard.* A dual mission of providing natural resource educational opportunities, and providing a location for environmental education activities for community interests has been adopted as a result of this plan. Interpretive displays and programming will focus on Flathead Valley natural and cultural history with an emphasis on stewardship and human interaction in the urban/wildland interface.

LPNREC Mission Statement

- 1) To provide natural resource educational opportunities for people of all ages at Lone Pine State Park.*
- 2) To use Lone Pine State Park as a location for environmental education activities by Flathead Valley community interests.*

Natural Resources Mission

Lone Pine State Park provides valuable wildlife habitat, a land-base for outdoor recreation, and an outdoor classroom for ecological studies. Park staff must balance the need for ecological diversity with the need to provide public recreational opportunities. At the same time, they must be responsible community members and provide for community-based interests such as fire protection and noxious weed abatement.

Public Recreation Mission

A primary function of Lone Pine is to develop and maintain low impact outdoor recreation opportunities for park visitors, primarily through the creation of a non-motorized trail system. Compatible developed recreational opportunities, including picnic areas, volleyball courts and an archery range, will be provided as well.

LONE PINE STATE PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN

The planning committee and general public (through a scoping session, which included an opinion questionnaire (see Appendix C), identified the following issues as significant to Lone Pine management: Financial and Human Resources, Ecology, Interpretation, Visitor Conflict, Trails, and Future Development. In the plan, the issues are listed in order of importance to the committee as a whole. The planning committee and FWP developed a goal for the next ten years for each issue, along with a set of objectives and action items to reach each goal. The management actions are listed along with a timeline for completion, and additional resource needs where appropriate.

1. ISSUE: FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Issue Statement: Current Lone Pine State Park funding and staffing levels are not adequate to provide a sufficient level of recreational opportunities and interpretive programming for park visitors. Funding is also inadequate for appropriate levels of park operations such as Interpretive Center maintenance work. Fees and other existing revenue sources are not sufficient to remedy the problem.

Discussion: Since the mid 1990's Lone Pine's revenues have dropped by approximately 50%. This drop can be attributed in part to a drop in visitation as well as a drop in reservation fees collected at the Interpretive Center. A policy change in 1996 prohibited the Interpretive Center from being rented for weddings and other non-business related functions. Planning committee members also suggested that a lack of educational and recreational programming might be responsible for flat or declining visitation. The lack of programming is directly linked to understaffing.

Currently, park revenues account for less than a quarter of the park's annual budget needs (see Tables 1 & 2). Park revenues are derived from entrance fees and from facility rentals. Both the Lone Pine Interpretive Center meeting room and the Lone Pine Picnic Shelter are rented on a daily basis to groups of fifty persons or less. Interpretive Center rentals are restricted to business meetings. The picnic shelter is available for a wider range of activities including weddings and family gatherings. Lone Pine is subsidized, by other state parks and the Montana State Park system for resources and management support. Volunteer hours contribute significantly to Lone Pine operations, and include a full-time, year-round volunteer host currently stationed at the park. The presence of this volunteer host has allowed the park grounds to remain open to the public year-round. The Interpretive Center is not staffed from October through May, thus making it unavailable to visitors.

Planning team discussions emphasized that more financial and human resources in the park would allow the Interpretive Center to remain open to the public year-round, and would allow the park to offer a wider range of programs to park visitors. It is a long-term goal of this plan to hire a professional manager dedicated specifically to Lone Pine. However, this goal is dependent on State Park funding, and it is not possible to predict if funding will be available for a manager during the life of this plan. Region One Parks

personnel need to actively pursue partnerships to create a wider range of opportunities at Lone Pine. That theme will be present throughout this planning document.

GOAL: Support Lone Pine with resources (revenue, staff and volunteers) adequate for skilled interpretation and program services and for park infrastructure improvements and natural resource management and development.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Increase contact with visitors.

Action Items:

- **Increase volunteer and/or staff presence on park grounds.**

Implementation:

Region One will increase visitor contacts on the park's trail system, at un-gated lower entrances to the park, and at the archery range for the purpose of increasing visitor service and encouraging fee compliance. These contacts will allow for visitors who seldom use the Interpretive Center and picnic shelter area (locations where visitor contacts traditionally occur) to have contact with FWP staff. Visitors will be encouraged to share thoughts and suggestions regarding opportunities at Lone Pine by filling out State Park Comment Cards. These contacts will also be used to educate park visitors about park regulations and the importance of park entrance fees to the operation of Lone Pine. These contacts should be made in addition to the regular visitor contacts that occur at the Interpretive Center and picnic shelter areas of the park, and should occur a minimum of once per week between the months of June and October. Contacts should alternate between morning, mid-day and evening periods in an attempt to contact as many visitors as possible. Volunteer Park Hosts, Interpretive Center Seasonal Staff, and Park Rangers will be scheduled to make these contacts.

Timeline for Completion: One year after plan approval.

- **Increase promotion of the current season pass (Parks Passport) to pedestrians, equestrians, and bicyclists.**

Implementation:

Advertise the passport at all points of entry to the park (including at park kiosks, see Issue #3), accompanied by information to inform visitors about Lone Pine's funding sources, highlighting the roll that user fees play in maintaining Lone Pine. Region One Parks staff will also approach Kalispell area FWP license vendors to encourage them to advertise and sell State Park Passports. Currently this is optional, and few of the area license vendors sell them.

In order to market the Passport more effectively, Regional Parks staff will write and promote articles for newspapers and relevant newsletters in coordination with trail development on the newly acquired 41-acre parcel. Articles will highlight the requirement for, and importance of, user fees to the operation of Lone Pine, and will promote the purchase of Park Passports.

Timeline for Completion: Within one year of plan approval.

- **Establish a staffed gate at the main entrance to the park.**

Implementation:

Develop a visitor contact station at the main park entrance on Lone Pine Road, and staff for visitor information services and fee collection during high use times at the park.

Additional Resource Needs:

- Funding to install fee station. Recently constructed visitor contact stations have cost approximately \$5000.00 each.
- .15 FTE at grade 7 to staff a visitor contact station.

Timeline for Completion: Three to four years after plan approval.

2. Diversify use of Lone Pine.

Discussion:

The long-range vision for the development of the Lone Pine Interpretive Center gradually transforms the usage of the Interpretive Center Meeting Room from that of a meeting hall to that of a multipurpose resource room that can be used as both interpretive space and as classroom space for workshops, educational programs, and entertainment. This transition is discussed in greater detail during Issue #3, Interpretation. During the interim, committee members feel that Interpretive Center Meeting room should have a wider range of rental opportunities for the purpose of increased visitor service and revenue generation.

Action Items:

- **Increase allowed uses at the Interpretive Center.**

Implementation:

Eliminate the requirement that the meeting must have a “legitimate business purpose” to rent the Lone Pine Interpretive Center meeting room. All other restrictions and requirements will remain in place. This change would allow Region One to increase revenues while still maintaining the integrity of the Interpretive Center. Events such as educational workshops, and recreational programs and seminars will be actively encouraged and promoted.

Timeline for Completion: One year after plan approval.

- **Promote the park as a venue for special events.**

Implementation:

Lone Pine is suitable for a variety of outdoor-related special events. In recent years the park has earned revenue through hosting archery competitions, orienteering competitions, and painting retreats. Lone Pine has the potential to accommodate a greater number and variety of similar events. Region One Parks will design promotional materials to attract event promoters. Materials will be made available to area Chambers of Commerce as well as city, county, state and federal agencies and educational institutions that regularly receive inquiries regarding venues for special events.

Timeline for Completion: One year after plan approval.

POLICY:

Individuals or organizations wishing to hold a special event at Lone Pine are required to complete a Special Use Application Form, and are subject to review by a Region One Park Operations Supervisor or the Regional Park Manager. Please see Appendix D for special use criteria and fee schedules.

3. Increase volunteer and staffing levels to implement plan objectives.

Action Items:

- **Formalize a *Friends of Lone Pine* group.**

Implementation:

Build on the current Lone Pine support network to formalize an organized friends group to support the park and park visitors, including identification and organization of new volunteer sources and development of cooperative agreements with other institutions, including private-public partnerships and agreements with educational entities.

Timeline for Completion: Two years after plan approval.

- **Create a full time Park Operations Specialist position for Lone Pine State Park.**

Implementation:

Secure a Park Operations Specialist position for Lone Pine. This position will be vital to expanding visitor opportunities at Lone Pine. A full time Park Operation Specialist will develop and enhance visitor opportunities within the park's boundaries. This includes projects aimed at enhancing the park's trail system, and supervising projects designed to maintain Lone Pine's natural resources. This position will develop and implement year-round programming at the Lone Pine Interpretive Center, supervise seasonal staff, and develop partnerships with park user groups and other agencies and organizations for

the purpose of sharing resources and creating comprehensive programming for Flathead Valley visitors and residents.

Additional Resource Needs: 1.0 FTE within a professional pay band.

Timeline for Completion: Within ten years of plan approval.

2. ISSUE: ECOLOGY

Issue Statement: Currently, FWP treats noxious weeds throughout Lone Pine's grounds; however, ecological management at the park is not comprehensive. The park does not have a forest management plan or a thorough weed management program. In addition, trail degradation from visitor use and erosion is negatively impacting park ecology. The park suffers from a severe Dwarf Mistletoe infection in Douglas Fir and Larch stands, and Ponderosa Pine stands are gradually disappearing due to interspecies competition, fire suppression and disease.

Discussion: Contract Forester, Jim Cancroft conducted an evaluation of Lone Pine's forest conditions in 2000 (see Appendix E). This evaluation quantified habitat types and forest plant species, fuel loading, and the general health of Lone Pine's forest ecosystem. The analysis concludes that Lone Pine's forests are in a general state of decline due to Dwarf Mistletoe infestations, interspecies competition, fire suppression, and prolonged drought. This is in contrast to pre-settlement forest conditions at Lone Pine, which, according to Steve Barrett, a Fire Ecologist and planning committee member, were significantly impacted by frequent wild fires. Barrett believes that a mature Ponderosa Pine forest type was prevalent on much of the park, and that mature Ponderosa Pines are in danger of disappearing altogether. In addition, fire suppression is believed to have resulted in forest encroachment on Lone Pine's grasslands. In 2002 Contract Forester Fred D. Hodgeboom also conducted a brief survey of Lone Pine's forest conditions, and reached some of the same conclusions as Cancroft. Hodgeboom noted the prevalence of Dwarf Mistletoe, suppressed Fir and Larch stands, and declining Ponderosa Pine stands.

A survey of Lone Pine visitors conducted in 2000 (see Appendix F) revealed that 77% of respondents prefer that Lone Pine's forests continue to be managed for the existing closed canopy, which is partially due to fire suppression. In the same survey, respondents expressed concern about fire management in the park. Some of this concern arises from conditions caused by years of fire suppression resulting in fuel loading, and the associated danger to properties neighboring the park.

Committee members were unanimous in agreeing that management actions are needed to address these issues. There was general agreement that controlled burning was not a feasible management tool at Lone Pine due to the park's topography and proximity to residential property.



Invasive plant species are of significant ecological concern in Lone Pine's forest and grassland habitats. Dwarf Mistletoe, a common parasitic ailment that causes the eventual death of the host tree, effects over 50% of the park's forest. The grasslands suffer from infestations of noxious weeds such as Spotted Knapweed and St. Johnswort. In 2000, a cooperative agreement was developed between easement holders on Radio Tower Road. Bonneville Power Company and Western Wireless Inc. agreed to contribute \$500 per year for three years to treat noxious weeds along the access road. The money has been used to contract with Flathead County Parks and Weeds to apply herbicides to large patches of St. Johnswort and Spotted Knapweed infestations. The treatments appear to be having a positive effect, but treatment will need to continue beyond the three-year agreement to maintain the parks grasslands. Treatment of noxious weeds elsewhere in the park has been conducted by Parks staff, Region One maintenance staff, and Flathead County employees in a piecemeal fashion. In 2001, park managers spent \$1,900 on weed control. A comprehensive weed inventory and treatment plan is needed to coordinate, prioritize and evaluate weed treatment efforts at the park.

**Dwarf Mistletoe
infestation at Lone Pine**

Trail degradation is another significant ecological issue affecting Lone Pine. The park's primitive trails have a natural tread surface that is susceptible to erosion. This issue is addressed in the Trails Issue section of this plan (Issue #6).

GOAL: Manage Lone Pine State Park for ecological diversity, including a wide range of wildlife habitat (forest and grassland), as well as for non-motorized, dispersed public use.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Implement comprehensive forest management.

Action Items:

- **Address trees in liability situations with attention to other ecological issues.**

Implementation:

Identify and remove hazardous trees located in developed or heavily used areas within the park. Hazard trees that are located in regions of the park that are natural, low development areas will be left to enhance ecological diversity. Hazard tree are typically identified through a combination of crown inspection and core sampling. Regional staff will receive training in hazardous tree identification, thus reducing the need to contract for this service.

Timeline for Completion: Continuously revise hazard tree inventory at least annually.

- **Develop prescriptive action plans to address forest management goals identified during the planning process.**

Implementation:

FWP will seek the assistance of the Flathead Forest staff, the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, and citizens to develop prescriptive actions based on recommendations from Contract Foresters Jim Cancroft and Fred D. Hodgeboom, as well as Fire Ecologist Steve Barrett and the Lone Pine Planning Team, the following goals will guide prescriptive action plans:

- Reduction of Dwarf Mistletoe infestations
- Creation of canopy openings to promote conifer regeneration and promote understory diversity.
- Fuels reduction.
- Restoration of an historic, fire-resistant forest, comprised largely of Ponderosa Pine in designated regions of the park.
- Utilization of self-supporting forest health treatments when appropriate (e.g. sale of commercially useable timber during thinning projects).
- Encourage native grasses, forbs and shrubs through reduction of invasive conifers in the grasslands and noxious weed treatments.

Timeline for Completion: Five years after plan approval.

2. Develop a comprehensive weed management program.

Action Items:

- **Develop a systematic weed control regime that emphasizes integrated weed management.**

Implementation:

Initiate a Request for Proposal (RFP) process with either the private sector or other government land management agencies to conduct a noxious weed inventory and write a long-range, integrated weed management plan. The integrated plan will coordinate biological, chemical, and mechanical methods for combating noxious weeds within the park, based on level of human use, neighboring properties, and targeted plant species. Region One park staff will communicate with neighboring property owners to coordinate and enhance efforts to control noxious weeds. The plan will be implemented through a combination of regional maintenance staff, Flathead County Weeds and Parks staff, volunteer labor, and private contractors. The Region One Noxious Weed and Exotic Vegetation Management Plan will be updated in January of 2003, and this plan will set general guidelines for noxious weed treatment at all Region One State Parks. The Lone Pine long range, integrated weed management plan will be specific to Lone Pine, and will define seasonal, scheduled actions to combat noxious weeds.

Additional Resource Needs:

The contract cost for a noxious weed inventory and abatement plan will depend on proposals received through RFP process. It is not feasible to

estimate the cost of implementing an integrated weed management plan for Lone Pine until an inventory and plan has been written.

Timeline for Completion: Within two years of plan approval.

- **Evaluate the Cooperative Noxious Weed Treatment Agreement.**

Implementation:

The current three-year cooperative agreement between FWP, Bonneville Power and Western Wireless to treat noxious weed along the radio tower access road will expire in 2003. An analysis of the effectiveness of the three-year cooperative agreement will be conducted during the noxious weed inventory, and through observations provided from the Flathead County Parks and Weeds Department, who have been involved with this effort since its inception. Future proposals for cooperative efforts along the radio tower access road will be incorporated into the weed management plan.

Timeline for Completion: One year after plan approval.

3. ISSUE: INTERPRETATION

Issue Statement: Montana State Parks has implemented some components of the 1998 Lone Pine Preliminary Interpretive Plan. However, the park needs to refine and implement the entire plan. Paramount to this effort is the need for a phased action plan to facilitate thematic, professional-grade interpretation and programming and to establish the facility as a regionally significant source of information for resident and non-resident visitors alike.

Discussion: The Lone Pine Interpretive Program is currently guided by the 1998 Lone Pine State Park Preliminary Interpretive Plan. The purpose of the plan is to guide the development of interpretive materials, displays, trails and events in the park. The interpretive goals discussed in the plan address fostering public appreciation for the natural resource; land stewardship; ecological messages; provision of recreational opportunities; attention to practical, quality interpretive displays; and American Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility.

To date, the plan has been used to guide the development of a self-guided interpretive loop along the park's scenic overlook trail, and to develop interpretive displays exploring wildlife common to the Flathead Valley. The planning committee identified the need to offer more comprehensive and thematic interpretation that includes cultural as well as natural history.

This preliminary plan identifies the broad goals and



Station #1 on Lone Pine's Interpretive Trail

themes for interpretation at the park. The next step is a specific action plan.

The Lone Pine Interpretive Center is the only facility of its kind in the state park system that does not have a designated manager to develop interpretive displays and programs. As indicated earlier in this plan, a long-range goal for this park is to acquire such a manager for that purpose. During the interim, it is critical that FWP staff forge partnerships with federal and state agencies, city and county government, school districts, and conservation and recreation oriented clubs and organizations to facilitate further development of interpretive efforts at Lone Pine.

The Lone Pine Interpretive Center was built in 1984. The center is staffed by a seasonal employee and volunteers from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Interpretive displays at the center are supported through park operations funds, donations and volunteer efforts. The Interpretive Center has substantial maintenance needs that should be addressed in the near future. Funding for interpretive infrastructure is necessary to make use of the many other interpretive possibilities discussed in this plan

Prior to this planning effort, Region One Parks staff drafted a proposal for a capital improvement project at the Lone Pine Interpretive Center. This proposal, completed in 2000, details improvements to the facility that would increase the usefulness of the building by maximizing space, and by installing interpretive equipment and interactive displays. Planning committee members echoed sentiments expressed by the public during scoping that the Interpretive Center has far greater potential as a regionally significant interpretive and education facility. Discussion concentrated on developing the Interpretive Center into the focal point of interpretation at Lone Pine. Unlike parks such as Ulm Pishkun or Bannack, whose mission is to interpret specific historic events or periods, Lone Pine's interpretive mission is to highlight the dynamic interactions between people and the natural environment in the Flathead Valley. Committee members, park visitors, and FWP personnel have all expressed a vision for the Lone Pine Interpretive Center that involves upgrading interpretive displays, increasing educational programming activities, increasing visitor information services, and providing better information about Lone Pine's opportunities.

GOAL: Continue to implement and refine the 1998 Preliminary Interpretive Plan.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Refine interpretive goals and themes of the Lone Pine Preliminary Interpretive Plan

Action Items

- **Create an action plan based on the Lone Pine Preliminary Interpretive Plan that develops specific interpretive displays and programs according to a phased schedule.**

Implementation:

Region One will need to prioritize this effort by allocating time for the northwest district Park Operations Supervisor to develop this action plan. The action plan will require collaboration with the FWP Resource Program Manager based in Helena. This plan will use a phased approach to refine interpretive themes into specific thematic displays and interactive programs. Again, collaborative efforts with local school districts, land management agencies and conservation groups will be of great importance.

Timeline for Completion: Within one to two years of plan approval

2. Allocate State Park resources (staffing and funding) to implementing and improving interpretive funding.

Action Items:

- **Research and apply for grants for developing interpretive displays.**

Implementation:

Research and write grants to supplement funding for Lone Pine interpretive displays. In the absence of a dedicated Park Operations Supervisor position at Lone Pine, one of the current Region One Park Operations Supervisor positions will need to assume this role. It will also be necessary for outside organizations or a friends group to provide grant writing assistance.

Timeline for Completion: Ongoing.

3. Expand current interpretive programming.

Action Items:

- **Develop live programming to include interpretive themes and educational workshops.**

Implementation:

Identify opportunities for live programming at the park and designate staff or volunteers to develop the programs. Living history performances, musical events, and lecture series are all potential programming activities for Lone Pine that should be pursued. Programming should be offered during peak season (May through September) and shoulder season (April through May and October through November), with shoulder season programming aimed at resident visitors.

Educational skill-based workshops (e.g. nature photography, backyard habitat building, native plant landscaping) should be offered, culminating in an annual calendar of events produced and distributed by Region One parks staff.

Timeline for Completion: Within one year of plan approval.

- **Increase the number of interpretive displays on park grounds.**

Implementation:

Research and produce interpretive panels that are consistent with the goals of the Lone Pine Interpretive Plan and place them on the Lone Pine main trail corridor. These trailside exhibits will focus on Lone Pine's natural history, with topic to include, but not be limited to:

- Lone Pine's historic forest conditions and the forces that shape them.
- Geologic features of Lone Pine State Park.
- Lone Pine's animal communities.
- Lone Pine's plant communities.

Additional Resource Needs:

The price of exterior interpretive panels range from \$600.00 to \$1,200 each. Funds will come from a combination of operations money, donations, and possibly grants.

Timeline for Completion: Phased placement between years three and five of plan approval.

4. Develop an integrated interpretive program system throughout the Flathead Valley.

Action Items:

- **Develop K-6 interpretive curriculum.**

Implementation:

For several years, local grade schools, and to a lesser extent Flathead Valley Community College, have utilized Lone Pine as a destination for field study exercises. Survey work conducted prior to the completion of the Lone Pine Interpretive Plan indicated strong interest from local educators in using Lone Pine in this capacity. Habitat conservation, living with wildlife, water quality and conservation, fish and wildlife conservation, and recycling were the topics of highest interest to survey respondents.

Region One parks staff receive frequent inquiries from local educators regarding educational programs at the park. Most inquiries have come from K through 6 educators. Lone Pine does offer limited opportunities for educational field trips, but is failing to meet the demand for providing curriculum. Regional parks staff, in cooperation with area conservation groups, agencies, and individuals need to prepare and offer curriculums for primary (K-6) students. The curriculum will consist of material organized into educational blocks that could be presented by a teacher in 30 minutes to one hour. The education blocks will reflect the interpretive themes described in the Lone Pine Interpretive Plan:

- ◆ Land Stewardship,

- ◆ Flathead Valley Geology.
- ◆ Flathead Valley Water Resources.
- ◆ Plant and Animal Communities of Northwestern Montana.
- ◆ Wildlife/Human Conflicts.
- ◆ Flathead Valley Cultural History.

Additional Resource Needs:

Region One will either seek a graduate-level student for a thesis project or a contractor for the purpose of creating K-6 curriculum for visiting students.

Timeline for Completion: Three to five years after plan approval.

- **Promote Lone Pine for use by Flathead Valley Community College (FVCC) as a venue for field study activities.**

Implementation:

Lone Pine is perfectly situated near FVCC for use by faculty as a field trip destination. In some cases this usage is already occurring, but few faculty members are aware of the park's potential. Current Park Operation Supervisors will make personal contacts with FVCC administrators and faculty to promote the park for field studies

Timeline for Completion: Within one year of plan approval.

5. Establish the Interpretive Center as the focal point from which visitors can experience the rest of the park.

Action Items:

- **Provide information at the Interpretive Center regarding recreational opportunities offered at the park.**

Implementation:

The Lone Pine Interpretive Center displays are most frequently viewed by first time or infrequent visitors to the park. A high percentage of the non-resident, peak season park visitors make the Interpretive Center their first stop at Lone Pine. Information will be provided in brochures, and through Center staff, about recreational opportunities in the rest of the park.

Timeline for Completion: Upon plan approval.

- **Provide interpretive displays at the Interpretive Center that are thematically consistent with displays offered on the park grounds.**

Implementation:

Interpretive displays will strive to convey the overall interpretive theme of the Lone Pine Interpretive Plan: *In the Flathead, we live with nature in our*

backyard. Subject matter should include land stewardship, Flathead Valley geology, Flathead Valley water resources, natural plant and animal communities, wildlife/human conflicts, and Flathead Valley cultural history. Ideally, high quality interpretive materials within the Interpretive Center will offer a context in which the visitor can view the rest of the park.

Timeline for Completion: Two years after plan approval.

- **Develop a revised park brochure and informational kiosks.**

Implementation:

Lone Pine Interpretive Center staff regularly receive requests for information on activities available on the park grounds, and for a park map. It is necessary for Region One parks staff to develop and print a park map for distribution to visitors. The map should include trail information, location of amenities, special attractions, and park regulations. In addition, three informational kiosks should be developed and installed. One kiosk will be installed either near the Interpretive Center or the picnic shelter, and the remaining two will be installed at the two Valley View Drive entrances to the park. If future use at the Learn Lane entrance to the park increases, a kiosk will be installed there as well. The kiosk should provide a “you are here” map; trail map dispenser, and a synopsis of park regulations. The kiosk should also provide space for posting of information regarding park operations or upcoming events and programs (see Issues #1 and #5 for additional discussion of kiosks).

Additional Resource Needs:

Informational kiosks will be installed at the two Valley View Drive entrances, and inside the Lone Pine Road entrance. These kiosks will be built in-house at an approximate cost of \$900.00 each (see Issue #3 for more information on kiosks).

Timeline for Completion: Within two years of plan approval

4. ISSUE: VISITOR CONFLICT

Issue Statement: Visitor conflicts between various user groups (i.e. bicycle, horseback and pedestrian) are occurring on Lone Pine’s trail system. Mitigation needs to address trail requirements for different trail uses, and enforcement of horse and pet regulations. Mitigation also needs to address user impacts on park trails.

GOAL: Provide recreational opportunity for a broad range of recreational use, while minimizing conflict, liability and resource damage.
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Discussion: While user conflict is currently at low levels in the park, serious conflicts have occurred. While there have not been any recorded injuries, regional parks staff have received complaints regarding near misses between hikers and bicyclists. There have

also been complaints regarding trail damage by both bicycles and horses, and numerous complaints have been received regarding dog droppings on the park's main trail. As visitor numbers increase, the potential for conflicts is projected to also increase. Proactive measures to mitigate conflict will prevent possible injury to park visitors and damage to park resources. Most conflicts occur between hikers, mountain bikers, domestic stock and pet owners. The majority of these conflicts occur on park trails. Thus, this section is relevant to the trails issue addressed in this plan and many recommended objectives and actions in this section are important to addressing the trails issue (Issue #5).

Compliance with the dog leash regulation has improved in the last two years as a result of enforcement efforts. The central problem with non-compliance seems to be that users do not agree with the regulation. A dog exercise area where dogs could be off-leash was discussed but the idea was not adopted due to the concern for park wildlife and the lack of space for an enclosed exercise area.



Lone Pine Archery Range

Some opposition to the archery range was voiced during planning committee meetings. Opposition to the archery range based on safety issues is determined to be primarily a matter of education, as the range and adjacent trails are placed to maintain user safety. The perception that the archery range, when unused, closes off land to others can be remedied through education and through expanded emphasis on other opportunities in that area of the park. The archery range needs to be revisited regularly to ensure its continued relevance to the park. Safety concerns at the range will be documented by FWP staff and addressed as they arise.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Create educational programs beyond signage on domestic stock and pet regulations.

Action Items:

- **Educate seasonal park staff and volunteers on the reasons behind the regulations.**

Implementation:

Incorporate information on the reasoning behind the regulations into staff and volunteer training sessions. Make staff and volunteers aware of locations of this information (e.g. kiosks and brochures, see Issue #3). Volunteers and seasonal staff will disseminate this information during regularly scheduled trail maintenance and visitor contact periods.

Timeline for Completion: One year after plan approval.

- **Incorporate education on regulations into interpretive programs.**

Implementation:

Add reference to the regulations and the reasons behind them to the self-guided tour and any programs provided by interpretive professionals. Include an explanation sheet about the regulations in the Interpretive Center and add information to park brochures and kiosks (see Issue #3 for information on proposed brochures and kiosks).

Timeline for Completion: Ongoing

2. Develop a trail signing program to minimize trail user conflict.

Action Items:

- **Create a naming system for park trails to coincide with a Lone Pine Trail map.**

Implementation:

Park trails will receive signing that designates trail names and distance to other trail junctions or destinations within the park. A corresponding trail map will be designed calling attention to trail use etiquette and specific trail hazards.

Timeline for Completion: Within two years of plan approval.

- **Develop and distribute a park trail map.**

Implementation:

A park trail map will be an element of a park brochure as described in Issue # 3. The map will include specific trail regulations, trail markings, hazardous areas, or use designations.

Timeline for Completion: Within two years of plan approval.

- **Ensure information kiosks (see Issues #1 and #3) include a park trail map.**

Implementation:

Design and construct kiosks as discussed in Issue #1 and #3 that include the park trail map, trail etiquette, trail closures (temporary or permanent), and known hazards.

Timeline for Completion: Within two years of plan approval.

- **Establish trail use designations where necessary.**

Implementation:

Trail use designations typically prohibit bicycles and horses on certain segments of trail. Areas within the park, such as the scenic overlook area, and segments of the trail beneath the overlook already carry these designations. All future trail use designations will be evaluated by the Region One parks management team. Criteria to be considered will include:

1. Visitor Safety: Trails segments that are perceived to have a high risk for collisions between bicycles and other trail users may be restricted to pedestrians and equestrians. These sections of trail will typically have low visibility due to sharp, serpentine curves or dense vegetation. Areas of high pedestrian concentration such as the self guided interpretive trail and the picnic shelter area will be restricted to pedestrian traffic.
2. Resource Protection: Sections of trail that are experiencing severe erosion due primarily to steepness of grade will receive a pedestrian only designation. Rerouting sections of severe erosion will be explored to mitigate trail restrictions when feasible.
3. Social Conditions: In specific areas, such as the scenic overlook, where bicycle or horse traffic may not be conducive to scenic viewing or interpretive experiences, it may be necessary for segments of trail to be designated for pedestrian traffic only. Staff should utilize trails that already prohibit horse and bicycle traffic to accomplish this when possible.

Timeline for Completion: Ongoing

3. Increase visitor contacts and provide education pertaining to trail etiquette.

Action Items:

- **Designate a FWP employee or volunteer to walk the trail system weekly from June through September.**

Implementation:

In conjunction with objective #1 listed under the Financial and Human Resources issue (#1), FWP personnel and volunteers should walk or ride the trail system during varied time frames, a minimum of once weekly, to increase visitor contact and educate park users about trail use regulations.

Timeline for Completion: One year after plan approval.

4. Increase education about the archery range area.

Action Items:

- **Sign seasonal closures at the archery range.**

Implementation:

Design and post signs in the archery range area that announces seasonal closures from the first weekend in November through the last weekend in March. This closure will provide time for non-archers, who are uncomfortable recreating on the radio tower road while the range is in use, to utilize that area of the park. The closure will also be intended to decrease overall use of the grasslands area of the park during a time when White-tailed Deer utilize the grasslands for winter range habitat, and also during spring break-up.

Timeline for Completion: One year after plan approval.

- **Educate visitors that Radio Tower Road is available for safe pedestrian passage around the range during the archery range season.**

Implementation:

Trail maps and kiosk information will indicate that the archery course is designed to allow for use of the radio tower road by non-archers while the range is open. Targets are situated to provide safe passage through the range. In addition signing will be provided at the archery range registration stand to remind archers that the Radio Tower Road is open to all park users year-round.

Timeline for Completion: Within two years of plan approval.

- **Document user conflicts and visitor comments pertaining to the archery range.**

Implementation: Park volunteers, seasonal staff, and Park Operation Supervisors shall document any user conflicts, visitor comments, or safety concerns regarding the Lone Pine Archery Range. During the five-year management plan update, these records will help to determine the future of the archery range at Lone Pine.

Timeline for Completion: Ongoing until five year update in 2008.

5. ISSUE: TRAILS

Issue Statement: Lone Pine's trail system suffers from user conflicts, trail damage due to visitor use and erosion, and inadequate mapping and signage.

Discussion: The user conflict component of this issue is addressed in the visitor conflict discussion (Issue #4), which is a separate but related issue in this plan. Although a map of the park trails does exist, it does not provide information about length, conditions, or level of difficulty. The park trail map also needs to incorporate the newly acquired 41-acre parcel. An action recommendation for a more comprehensive and user-friendly trail

map and other education and signage is described in the visitor conflict section of this plan.

As discussed in Issue #2, trail degradation is a significant ecological issue affecting Lone Pine State Park. The park's primitive trails have a natural tread surface that is susceptible to erosion and many of the park trails include sections of steep, sustained grades. Trail damage due to visitor use was historically related to off-highway vehicle use, and is more recently related to mountain bike and equestrian use. Trail damage due to erosion is evident on many of the traditional, user caused trails within the park. These trails typically have long sections of uninterrupted steep grade, and are often situated in natural drainage routes. Recently, trail construction, rerouting, water bar installation, and staircase construction projects have been completed at Lone Pine to address trail degradation and visitor conflict.



Staircase on Overlook Trail

FWP will seek trail user input and assistance on trail construction projects. The Parks Division has a well-established relationship with the Montana Conservation Corps regarding trail projects, and this will remain an important element of Lone Pine's trail program. FWP will actively pursue Recreational Trails Grants for the purpose of enhancing the system.

GOAL: Provide for long-term use of the park trail system for a diversity of non-motorized trail uses while minimizing trail degradation.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Inventory and address trail damage and establish restoration and maintenance projects.

Action Items:

- **Inventory severely damaged segments of trail, and segments with potential for severe damage.**

Implementation:

Map and prioritize segments of trail that are experiencing erosion due to grade, loose or soft surface materials, misuse, or lack of moisture. Areas that have potential for severe damage based on these indicators need to be mapped as well. Indicators of severe trail damage will include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ Evidence of erosion or run-off gullies.
- ◆ Trail braiding or excessive widening of tread.
- ◆ Severe tread hazards such as exposed rocks and roots
- ◆ Tread deterioration due to bicycle skidding and braking or horseback riding.

- ◆ Loose, powdery tread surfaces resulting from lack of moisture.

Timeline for Completion: Within one year of plan approval.

- **Prioritize and implement trail restoration and maintenance projects.**

Implementation:

- ◆ Structural stabilization Wood or rock enforced embankments, turnpikes, and reinforced switchbacks should be installed in areas where surface sloughing is occurring.
- ◆ Trail surfacing Trails experiencing high traffic volume, and trails that are sustaining erosion due to soft or powdery surface materials need to be covered with aggregate material or wood chips. Wood chips created during other vegetation removal projects should be utilized to coat Lone Pine trails when feasible.
- ◆ Installation of erosion control devices and design features Upgrading of erosion control devices should continue throughout the entire Lone Pine trail system, bicycle friendly water bar designs should be installed on those trails open to mountain bikes. When feasible, the use of rolling grade dips should be installed in place of water bars. Traditional water bars may be used on remaining trails. New trails and re-routes should be engineered to incorporate design features that limit the need for erosion control devices. This includes route selection, rolling grade dips and grade reversals. See Appendix G for details on design features.
- ◆ Construction of a rustic staircase A staircase such as the one located beneath the parks overlook may be necessary at higher elevations on the overlook trail. The use of staircases will be on trails designated for foot traffic only.
- ◆ Trail reroutes or abandonment, On segments of trail that are beyond repair, or located in areas that are too delicate or too steep to accommodate trails, abandonment or rerouting should be enacted. Re-routing trails should be consistent with ecological parameters of the park. Trail reroutes should also incorporate erosion control design features mentioned under *Installation of erosion control devices and design features* in this objective. Re-routing is also required on a small segment of trail that briefly encroaches on private property located on the parks southeast boundary.

Timeline for Completion: Work can begin within one year of plan approval, and will be ongoing as labor and funding are available.



Trail braiding and erosion at Lone

2. Institute flexible trail-specific closures

Action Items:

- **Base trail-specific closures on trail conditions for events such as spring break-up.**

Implementation: Seasonal trail closures are necessary due to excessive moisture associated with spring thaw and heavy rains. Ongoing analysis of trail conditions is necessary to institute this action. Trail closures may also be necessary during maintenance projects, or to prevent further damage on severely eroded trails. Region Park Managers or Operations Specialists will implement trail closures based on visual inspections. Signage must be developed to clearly indicate the closure and briefly explain the cause for closure.

Timeline for Completion: Continuous surveillance and closure when necessary beginning immediately after plan approval.

3. Coordinate with regional trail planning efforts to link Lone Pine with larger trail systems.

Action Item:

- **Develop communications with Kalispell Parks and Recreation, the Flathead Regional Development Office, and community based trail planning organizations.**

Implementation:

The Region One Trails Program Coordinator will develop relationships, and work cooperatively with regional trail planning efforts to provide trail system linkages with Lone Pine's trail system. Ongoing projects that have the potential to create linkages include Rails to Trails projects on the southeast edge of Lone Pine, and Kalispell city efforts to create trail linkages to Foy's Lake and Herron County Park via Foy's Canyon.

Timeline for Completion: Ongoing, beginning with plan approval

POLICY: Zero Net Growth in User Caused Trails.

User created trails typically ignore such issues as slope, drainage, and overall effect on the park. Much of Lone Pine's current trail system is user caused, resulting in severe erosion. All new additions to the Lone Pine trail system should be planned to accommodate use while minimizing damage from erosion. Year-round inspections will be required to identify new, user caused trails and obliterate or discourage their use. Obliteration should take place as soon after discovery as possible to avoid permanent resource damage. Natural materials such as wood debris and rock should be used to make the trail impassible, and signing should be installed to explain the closure and direct visitors onto other trails.

6. ISSUE: FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Issue Statement: Development of a parking lot and connecting trail at the Valley View entrance to Lone Pine, as well as basic site protection at the Foy's Lake parcel is necessary. Parkland uses and development need to be addressed in a comprehensive manner consistent with current levels of development at the Park

Discussion:

Park visitors, planning team members, and FWP staff have expressed a desire to see facility development, trails projects, and future resource enhancement projects guided by an overall strategy based on a zoning system that identifies desired conditions and appropriate levels of development within specific zones inside of the park. There was considerable discussion of adopting the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) planning model to guide future development at Lone Pine State Park. Ultimately FWP staff have determined that the LAC system, typically used by land management agencies for defining objectives on large tracts of recreational land, was a poor fit for Lone Pine, and would create an unrealistic work load for limited park staff.

FWP is in the early stages of developing a similar zoning system that is tailored more specifically to the State Park system, however, this system is not yet ready for implementation. It may be necessary to include Lone Pine in this system during the plan update in 2008. In the interim, FWP will utilize current development patterns at Lone Pine to guide future park projects. Specifically:

- The Interpretive Center, picnic shelter and associated road and parking facilities will remain the focus of any future high-level development projects at the Park. The only exception to this will be the construction of a new parking lot and trailhead on the park's southeast corner.
- Lone Pine's natural setting will be maintained outside of these highly developed areas by limiting development to trail construction, maintenance, resource protection, and recreational amenities deemed to be low impact (e.g. trail-side benches, informational kiosks, hitching posts, trail counters, trail signing.) Resource enhancement work such as future forest health projects will be designed to mitigate impacts to Lone Pine's natural setting.

- The access road to the radio towers on the park's west side will remain open to administrative and easement holder vehicle traffic. All other access will be non-motorized.
- Only administrative and emergency motorized uses will be authorized on the park's trail system and grounds.

The Foy's Lake parcel is heavily used as an access point to Foy's Lake, but has little relevance to Lone Pine State Park. The property has become severely eroded as a result of vehicle use on the steep embankment dropping from the Foy's Lake Road to the lakeshore. Excessive littering and late night partying are common on this property. In 1996 a capital improvement project was proposed for this parcel, and would have included a parking area, vault toilet, and a handicapped accessible fishing platform. There was little public support for the project however, and the proposal was scrapped.

A 2002 acquisition of 41 acres served to eliminate a small inholding along the park's east boundary and will be utilized for trail development and the creation of a parking lot for visitors accessing Lone Pine via Valley View Drive. Timelines for completion of this parking lot and construction of a multi-use trail to connect the lot to the current Lone Pine trail system are consistent with timelines listed in the Lone Pine Land Acquisition and Parking Lot Environmental Assessment written in 2002. There are no remaining inholdings within the boundaries of Lone Pine State Park

GOAL: Future development of the park should be comprehensive in nature, and perpetuate Lone Pine's natural character.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Integrate the September 2002 41-acre land acquisition into the park.

Action Items:

- **Improve entry road and develop a parking lot at the new Valley View entrance to Lone Pine.**

Implementation:

In accordance with timelines stated in the Land Acquisition EA of 2002, Region One Parks must improve the entry road and develop a parking lot at the newly acquired Valley View Drive Entrance to the park. New directional signing will be required along Valley View Drive to direct park visitors to this parking area. The entry road into the new parking lot will require widening to meet two-way traffic standards, and a gate will be installed similar to the one at the Lone Pine Road Entrance. This gate will be opened and closed daily in conjunction with the main entry gate. Finally, an earthen berm shall be constructed to provide privacy to the private lot that borders the new parking lot on the east side. The entry road to the new parking lot crosses private property, and public access is guaranteed through easement. According to the *Reciprocal Easement and Road Maintenance Agreement* entered into with the

owner of this tract, Region One FWP will share the costs of road maintenance, including snow removal (see Appendix H).

Timeline for Completion: Parking lot and road improvements within one year of plan approval

- **Develop a connecting trail to the existing Lone Pine trail system.**

Implementation:

In accordance with the acquisition EA, a multi-use trail shall be constructed to join the new parking lot with the current Lone Pine trail system. Additionally, a trailhead will be developed to include a self pay station and a kiosk on which visitor information and a trail map will be provided. This project should include the input and assistance from trail user groups in the Flathead Valley. The new trail will add up to one mile of new, non-motorized trail to the Lone Pine trail system, and will eventually link the park to a future leg of the Kalispell Rails to Trails system.

Additional Resource Needs:

A National Trails Recreation Grant Application will be prepared to seek construction funding for this project.

Timeline for Completion: Within three years of plan approval.

2. Provide basic development of the Foy's Lake property.

Action Item:

- **Install barrier rocks, reclaim user caused roads, and install day use signing.**

Implementation:

Barrier rocks need to be installed in two separate parking areas on the Foy's Lake segment of Lone Pine State Park. Barrier rock will be intended to keep vehicular traffic on the lakeshore, and on the same grade as Foy's Lake Road. Rutted user caused roads that exist now need to be reclaimed through soil scarification and reseeding. Day Use signing needs to be installed as well.

Timeline for Completion: Three to five years after plan approval.

IMPLEMENTATION

This plan will be implemented in accordance with the following action timeline. While there is no guarantee each action will be completed by its timeline for completion, this schedule provides a guideline for park managers when implementing this plan. Therefore, barring mitigating circumstances, the desired plan for implementation will be completed within the following time periods after plan approval:

ONGOING	
Issue	Action
Ecology	Address trees in liability situations with attention to other ecological issues.
Interpretation	Research and apply for grants for developing interpretive displays.
	Provide information at the Interpretive Center regarding recreational opportunities offered at the park.
Visitor Conflict	Document visitor conflicts and visitor comments pertaining to the archery range.
	Incorporate education on regulations into interpretive programs.
	Establish trail use designations where necessary.
Trails	Base trail-specific closures, based on trail conditions, for events such as spring break-up.
	Develop communications with Kalispell Parks and Recreation, the Flathead Regional Development Office, and community-based trail planning organizations.

WITHIN ONE YEAR	
Issue	Action
Financial and Human Resources	Increase volunteer and/or staff presence on park grounds.
	Increase promotion of the current season pass (Parks Passport) to pedestrians, equestrians, and bicyclists.
	Increase allowed uses at the Interpretive Center.
	Promote the park as a venue for special events.
Ecology	Evaluate the Cooperative Noxious Weed Treatment Agreement.
Interpretation	Develop live programming to include interpretive themes and educational workshops.
	Promote Lone Pine for use by Flathead Valley Community College (FVCC) as a venue for field study activities.
Visitor Conflict	Educate seasonal park staff and volunteers on the reasons

	behind the regulations.
	Designate an FWP employee or volunteer to walk the trail system weekly from June through September.
	Sign seasonal closures at the archery range.
Trails	Inventory severely damaged segments of trail, and segments with potential for severe damage.
	Prioritize and implement trail restoration and maintenance projects.
Future Development	Improve the entry road and develop a parking lot at the new Valley View entrance to Lone Pine.

WITHIN TWO YEARS	
Issue	Action
Financial and Human Resources	Formalize a <i>Friends of Lone Pine</i> group.
Ecology	Develop a systematic weed control regime that emphasizes integrated weed management.
Interpretation	Create an action plan based on the Lone Pine Preliminary Interpretive plan that develops specific interpretive displays and programs according to a phased schedule.
	Provide interpretive displays at the Interpretive Center that are thematically consistent with displays offered on the park grounds.
	Develop a revised park brochure and informational kiosks.
Use Conflict	Educate visitors that Radio Tower Road is available for safe pedestrian passage around the range during the archery range season.
	Develop and distribute a park trail map. Ensure park kiosks include the map.
	Create a naming system for park trails to coincide with a Lone Pine trail map.

WITHIN THREE TO FIVE YEARS	
Issue	Action
Financial and Human Resources	Establish a staffed gate at the main entrance to the park.
Ecology	Develop prescriptive action plans to address forest management goals identified during the planning process.
Interpretation	Submit a capital improvement proposal for upgrading the Lone Pine Interpretive Center.
	Increase the number of interpretive displays on park grounds.
	Develop a K-6 interpretive curriculum.

Visitor Conflict	Incorporate education on regulations into interpretive programs.
Future Development	Develop trails within the acquisition and connect them with the current park trail system.
	Install barrier rocks, reclaim user caused roads, and install day use signing at the Foy's Lake property.

WITHIN TEN YEARS	
Issue	Action
Financial and Human Resources and Interpretation	Create a full time Park Operations Specialist position for Lone Pine State Park.