SMITH RIVER STATE PARK AND RIVER CORRIDOR

RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

Updated July 20, 2009

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

1420 E. 6th Avenue
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
(406) 444-3750
fwp.mt.gov

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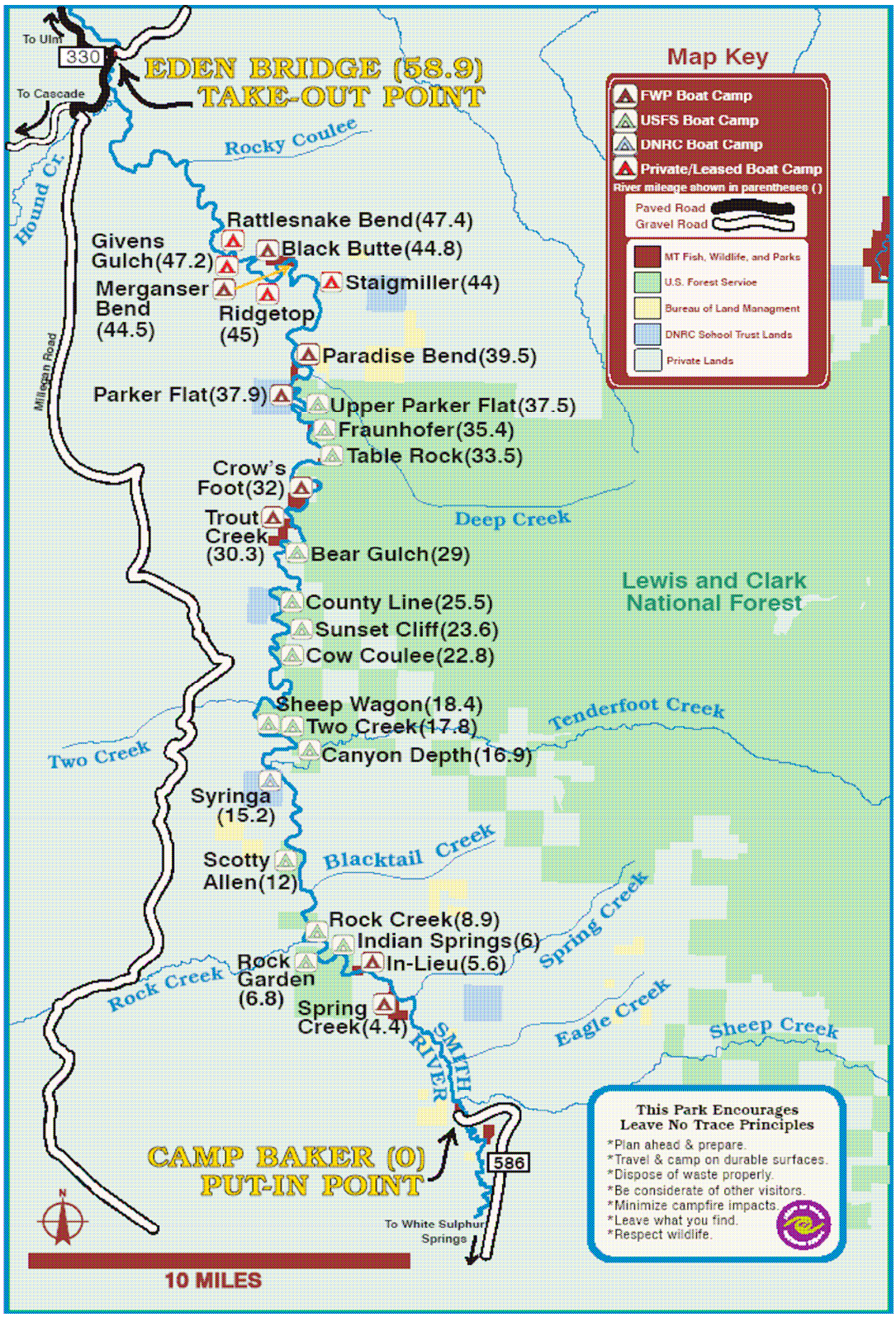
Chas Van Genderen, Parks Division Administrator

Figure 1: Smith River Map



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Smith River State Park and River Corridor has long been one of Montana's premier river recreation destinations. Its spectacular natural features and settings, outstanding fishing opportunities, and moderate degree of difficulty for floaters have all contributed to its popularity. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) manages the Smith River through strong partnerships with the people of Montana and their guests, landowners, outfitters, the United States Forest Service, county officials, and other people who have a passion for this resource and how it is managed.

This management plan will provide guidance to staff when managing recreation on lands and waters within the Smith River State Park and River Corridor under the jurisdiction of FWP. The plan will also provide guidance to the FWP Commission, the entity that establishes the rules and fees for the Smith River via the Smith River Special Use Area Rule. The plan is designed to assist decision-makers but it does not replace the need for sound judgment, common sense, and rational thinking.

The number of people applying for permits to float the Smith River has increased over time and this plan identifies ways to enhance floater opportunities while at the same time not increasing the overall amount of use on the river. This includes a one-year waiting period for successful applicants (May 15 – July 15), a minimum applicant age of 12, and a super permit lottery.

Outfitters provide a valuable service on the Smith River and FWP will manage for commercial use that is professional, safe, and in balance with the interests of the general recreating public. The plan calls for outfitters to lock in their launch dates one-week prior to the lottery drawing and cancel all un-booked launches 14 days prior to the launch date.

User fees enable FWP to manage for a high quality recreation experience. Fees also help to protect the fish, wildlife and cultural resources. This plan calls for a fee system that is reasonable and commensurate with the public's expectations and the quality of the experience.

Boat campsites are an integral part of the float experience and this plan calls for retaining the first come, first served boat camp selection process, a process that the appears to work well for the majority of floaters. A maximum 24-hour advance arrival policy will help to address equitability concerns.

Dogs and other pets are a valued addition for some floaters and yet have consistently led to concerns about public health and safety and threats to livestock and wildlife despite expanded efforts to educate floaters about the need to keep pets leashed. Pet will be prohibited on float trips with the exception of service dogs and those used during hunting season.

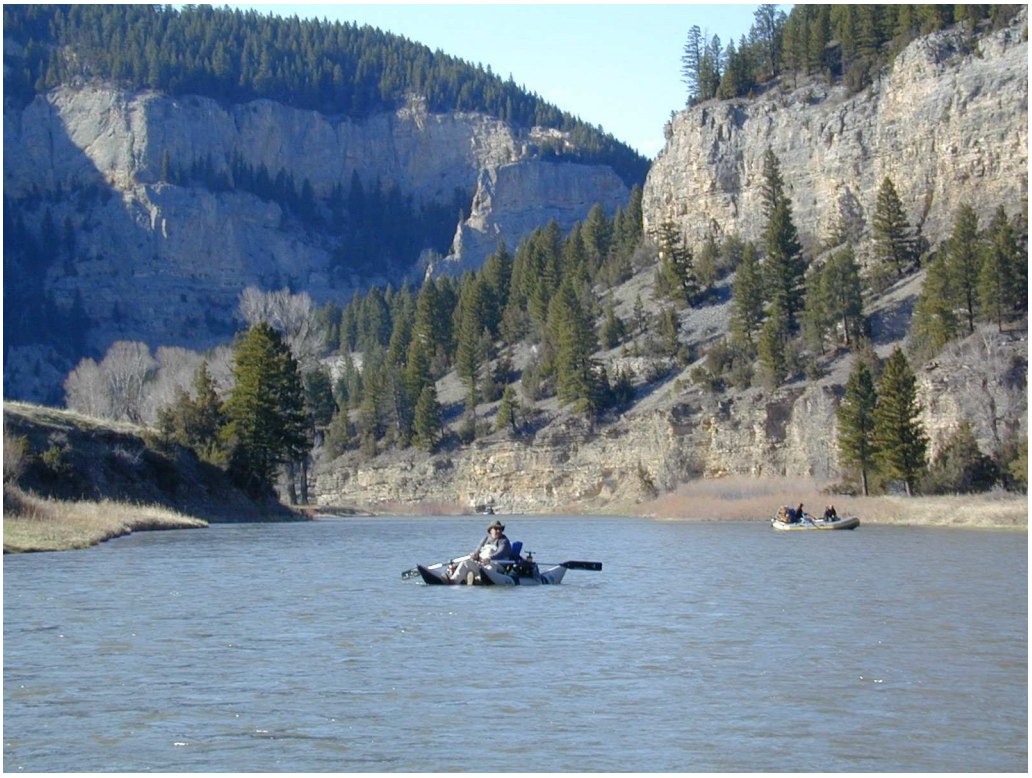
FWP will take a more active approach to managing human waste in order to protect the resources and meet the interests of the recreating public and landowners. This will include research and monitoring of resource and cultural impacts; research on methods and equipment for removal and disposal of human waste; and a voluntary incentive-based pack out program.

Much of the Smith River corridor is privately owned. The plan recognizes the importance of good relationships with landowners and directs FWP to manage recreation so as to minimize impacts to private land and protect the public's interests.

This plan recognizes the importance of the fish, wildlife and cultural resources that make up the Smith River. The plan identifies the Corridor Enhancement Account as a source of revenue available to help manage and protect these resources.

The wildlife within the river corridor adds special value to a Smith River float trip. The presence of wildlife also means that floaters must take steps to prevent opportunities for bears and other wildlife to come into contact with human food. The plan identifies the public safety concerns with food-habituated wildlife and calls for a more proactive approach to this issue.

Feedback from people who have floated the river indicates a high level of satisfaction and this plan is intended to build upon management actions that are working well. There are also critical issues that must be considered in order to ensure future generations have a similar positive experience. Above all, FWP is committed to meeting the public's interests and protecting the public's resources.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SMITH RIVER CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) was established to help identify key issues and recommend management actions. The CAC included citizens representing Smith River landowners, County Commissions, river recreationists, and Smith River outfitters. The committee also included agency representatives from FWP and the Forest Service. FWP thanks the committee members for serving the people of Montana and helping to preserve one of this state's greatest recreation and resource treasures, the Smith River.

- Tony Angland, Great Falls, MT
- Mike Geary, Helena, MT
- Andrew Hanson, Wise River, MT
- Carolyn Mazurek, Helena, MT
- Lance Olson, Great Falls, MT
- Tim Tilton, Helena, MT
- Ed Tinsley, Helena, MT
- Janet Zieg, White Sulphur Springs, MT
- Carol Hatfield, White Sulphur Springs District Ranger, Lewis & Clark Nat'l. Forest
- Colin Maas, Smith River State Park Manager, FWP
- John Metrione, Resource Assistant, Lewis & Clark National Forest
- Roger Semler, Region 4 Parks Manager, FWP (Co-Author of Plan)
- Charlie Sperry, Recreation Management Specialist, FWP (Co-Author of Plan)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS (continued)

SMITH RIVER FLOATERS

The Smith River is one of Montana's preeminent recreational resources and its advocates are both passionate and enthusiastic when it comes to managing this precious resource. The agency's best means of determining how to manage the Smith River is the input received from the people who float the river and others whose lives are in some way connected to this resource. FWP would like to thank all of those people who have provided comments and helped to shape the way this river is managed.

SUBJECT EXPERTS

The management plan covers a number of recreation and resource topics and FWP called upon subject experts to contribute to these areas.

- Bruce Auchly, Region 4 Information and Education Manager, FWP
- Rebecca Cooper, Federal Aid and Environmental Assessment Specialist, FWP
- Adam Grove, Region 4 Wildlife Biologist, FWP
- George Liknes, Region 4 Fisheries Manager, FWP
- Joe Meek, Water Quality Specialist, Montana DEQ
- Sara Scott, Parks Division Heritage Resources Specialist, FWP

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Figure 2: Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Terms

There are a number of acronyms and terms used throughout this planning document.

BLM……Bureau of Land Management

CAC……Smith River Citizen Advisory Committee

CEA……Smith River Corridor Enhancement Account

Commission…….Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission

DNRC……Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

FWP……Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

IAP……..Incident Action Plan

LAC……Limits of Acceptable Change

Park……Smith River State Park and River Corridor

RUP……Restricted Use Permit

Smith River……..The Smith River waterway and adjacent lands owned, leased, or administered by FWP (distinctions between the two when relevant)

SRMA……Smith River Management Act

USFS……..United States Forest Service

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the Plan

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) manages the Smith River State Park and River Corridor for the people of Montana and visitors to this state. Hereafter referred to as "The Smith River", it is a place for people to admire its scenic beauty, towering canyon walls, and abundant wildlife. It is a place for people to float, fish, hike, or relax. It is a place to enjoy the company of old friends, good food, the warmth of a campfire, or the starry nights. It is a place to reconnect with nature and a place where the elements of rain and snow can humble even the heartiest visitors. It is The Smith River.

FWP manages the Smith River through strong partnerships and cooperation with the Forest Service, counties, private landowners, and the recreating public. Successful management depends on the ability to sincerely listen to all those who have a vested interest in this precious resource.

FWP serves the interests of the public and protects the resources. These two mandates are not mutually exclusive and yet the delicate balance between the two may characterize best the inherent difficulty of managing a precious asset like the Smith River.

This management plan navigates a number of challenging social and resource issues and offers guidance and direction for managers and decision-makers. The plan is designed to assist decision-makers but it does not replace the need for sound judgment, common sense, and rational thinking.

1.2 Vision Statement

The Smith River will continue to hold a highly coveted and traditional place in Montana's recreational heritage and will enhance the spirit and morale of Montanans and their guests. FWP will manage the Smith River State Park and River Corridor to promote compatible uses of the river and adjacent public lands, to maintain the public's opportunity to enjoy scenic beauty in a primitive setting, and to conserve the recreational, aesthetic, cultural, and natural resource values of the river.

1.3 Purpose, Need, and Scope of Plan

The purpose of this management plan is to provide guidance to FWP and its Commission in the management of recreation in the Smith River State Park and River Corridor. The plan seeks to promote responsible management of river recreation that provides a high quality, safe experience for the public and protects natural and cultural resources in the river corridor.

The Smith River has long been one of Montana's premier river recreation destinations. Its spectacular natural features and settings, outstanding fishing opportunities, and moderate degree of difficulty for floaters have all contributed to its popularity. Over the past 15 years, FWP has witnessed an increase in the number of people applying for a permit to float the river. In addition, standards established in the 1996 management plan for number of people in the canyon at one time and average group size have been exceeded during six of the last 12 years.

These observations, coupled with an anticipated growing demand for river recreational opportunities in Montana, necessitated further river recreation management planning and updating of the 1996 Smith River management plan.

The plan provides guidance to staff when managing recreation on lands and waters within the Smith River State Park and River Corridor under the jurisdiction of FWP. In addition to the management plan there is a Smith River Special Use Area Rule that provides more detailed implementation direction and is updated by the FWP Commission every other year. The management plan will provide guidance to the Commission when updating the rule.

The plan addresses issues that may indirectly affect private land but the plan does not govern recreation occurring on private lands or public lands that are not under the jurisdiction of FWP. The plan reflects input from the United States Forest Service (USFS), a federal agency with land holdings along the Smith River. The plan does not govern USFS decision-making or supercede USFS authority over National Forest lands. The plan offers recreation management guidance that could be considered by the USFS and implemented where appropriate.

1.4 Objectives of the Plan

The following objectives form the basis of this plan and are consistent with the Smith River Management Act and Statewide River Recreation Rules and Guiding Principles.

- Promote compatible opportunities for the public to experience the Smith River with a high quality visitor experience.
- Maintain the waterway's natural scenic beauty and solitude and conserve its recreational, aesthetic, and scientific values.
- Conserve natural and cultural resources in and along the Smith River, including fish and wildlife species and their habitats, water quality and quantity, and a rich assemblage of cultural heritage resources.
- Minimize conflicts between river users and private landowners.
- Administer the Smith River outfitting industry in a manner that promotes compatibility with other users of the river and provides opportunities for the public to hire qualified service providers.
- Consider less-restrictive management tools before proceeding to more-restrictive management tools.
- Implement management actions that are technically and socially feasible, reasonable, legal, affordable, measurable, and enforceable.

- Promote and inspire safe, responsible, and ethical visitor behavior and practices to minimize social and resource impacts to natural, cultural, and recreational resources.
- Manage Smith River State Park and River Corridor as an integral part of the Montana State Park system.
- Cooperate and collaborate with the USFS in the administration and management of this public resource.

1.5 Planning Process Overview

FWP initiated the planning process in June 2007. An eight-member Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) was established to help identify key issues and recommend management actions. The CAC included eight citizens representing Smith River landowners, County Commissions, river recreationists, and Smith River outfitters. In addition to the citizen members of the committee, two representatives each from FWP and USFS served on the committee and contributed to the development of recommendations. The CAC conducted 12 meetings between June 2007 and September 2008. The committee delivered its recommendations to the FWP Parks Division Administrator.

During the planning process, staff conducted extensive research on many of the issues addressed in this plan. Research included literature reviews, discussions with River Managers throughout the country, evaluation of Smith River visitor use statistics and survey results, social science research, and discussions with subject matter experts.

FWP developed a Draft Plan based on the recommendations of the CAC and input from FWP and USFS staff. FWP also developed an Environmental Assessment (EA) that identified and discussed significant issues, presented a range of alternatives to address those issues, and identified the predicted impacts and consequences to the natural and human environment associated with each alternative.

FWP established a web page to communicate information about the planning process and to enable people to submit comments online at any time during the process.
The forty-five day public comment period included five public open houses.

On July 20, 2009 the FWP Director, in consultation with the Region 4 Parks Manager and the Parks Division Administrator, issued a Decision Notice for the Environmental Assessment and adopted a Final Smith River State Park and River Corridor Recreation Management Plan. The Decision Notice disclosed and responded to the content of formal public comments, and identified and justified the alternatives endorsed for each issue that will guide management of the Smith River for the next 10 to 15 years.

1.6 Land Ownership and Jurisdiction

1.6.1 Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

FWP owns 13 parcels of land totaling 797 acres within the Smith River corridor. These properties include Camp Baker (near the community of White Sulphur Springs), the river's only public launch put-in (51 acres) and Eden Bridge (near the community of Ulm), the only public take out on the permitted section of the river (4.47 acres).

FWP leases four parcels of land totaling 41 acres from private landowners for the purpose of providing public access to the Staigmiller, Ridge Top, Givens Gulch, and Rattlesnake boat camps. FWP also leases 12 parcels (644 acres) from the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), including a parcel that provides access at Syringa boat camp.

FWP jurisdiction includes use of FWP lands within the corridor, the fish and wildlife resources, and recreation that occurs on the river.

1.6.2 United States Forest Service

The United States Forest Service (USFS) is the largest public landowner within the Smith River corridor (permitted section). The Lewis and Clark National Forest comprises the eastern bank of the river for approximately 22 miles of the 58.8 river miles between Camp Baker and Eden Bridge. Nineteen boat camps are on Lewis and Clark National Forest lands. The Helena National Forest comprises the western bank of the Smith River for approximately five miles of river corridor. There are nine boat camps on Helena National Forest lands.

Several Forest Service trailheads east of the river corridor in the Little Belt Mountains provide trail access to the river corridor at mid-canyon via Trail # 331 (river mile 23.6), Trail #310 (river mile 29), Trail # 311 (river mile 30.5) and Trail # 309 (river mile 35.4). Recreational uses of these trails are managed in accordance with the Jefferson Division Travel Plan on the Lewis & Clark National Forest approved in 2007.

USFS jurisdiction includes public use of USFS lands within the corridor. FWP, the Lewis and Clark National Forest, and the Helena National Forest cooperatively maintain and manage these lands through a maintenance and operating agreement between FWP and the USFS.

1.6.3 Bureau of Land Management

FWP, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Montana Department of State Lands (now Department of Natural Resources and Conservation) participated in a three-way trade in 1983 that resulted in the transfer of 735 acres of land to FWP. This transaction involved 13 parcels, some of which included Smith River frontage.

The remaining BLM parcels in the Drainage are scattered, do not include river frontage and are managed by the BLM's Lewistown Field Office. The Environmental Impact Statement for the 1984 Headwaters Resource Management Plan (RMP) addressed management goals for these lands. This management plan will be updated in the future through a revision to the Lewistown RMP.

These BLM lands have a low priority for timber harvest and are open for mineral exploration and development. Subject to special stipulations, they are also available for oil and gas leasing. Moreover, they are accessible for motorized use and may be used as a utility and transportation corridor.

Although most parcels are identified for retention, several are identified for disposal. Reasons for retention include preserving important wildlife habitat, maintaining public access to the land, and reserving parcels adjacent to Forest Service lands. The preferred method of disposing of parcels is through a land exchange in which BLM would obtain land having equal or higher public values.

1.6.4 Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) owns three sections of land adjacent to the canyon section of the Smith River. DNRC manages these lands to provide income for the State Education Trust, primarily through grazing leases.

DNRC has responsibility for fire control on state lands, including FWP lands. DNRC also enforces the Streamside Management Zone Law that regulates any landowner or operator-conducting forest practices on private, state, or federal lands that will access, harvest, or regenerate these lands for commercial purposes.

Because the Smith is a navigable river, the streambed below the low-water mark is state owned. Therefore DNRC is responsible for any structure or improvement on this area, such as vehicle fords crossing the river.

FWP leases 12 parcels (644 acres) from the DNRC, including a parcel that provides access to Syringa boat camp.

1.6.5 County Government

The Meagher-Cascade County line splits the Smith River canyon in two, intersecting the river around river mile 24. Under state law, Meagher and Cascade counties are responsible for reviewing the planning, road maintenance, and zoning for subdivisions and other use and development restrictions in this area of the Smith River.

In particular, road improvements made by the counties contribute to the safety, access, and comfort of Smith River floaters.

Significant improvements in the past include the reconstruction of the Smith River Road from Eden Bridge north by Cascade County, replacement of Eden Bridge by Cascade County, repair of the Camp Baker Bridge by Meagher County, and improved gravelling and grading on the Milligan Road in both counties (completed through cooperative funding with FWP).

Each county has a Conservation District, which, in cooperation with FWP, establishes rules and administers the Montana Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act (commonly called the 310 permitting process). This permit is required by any private individual or non-governmental entity proposing any activity that physically alters or modifies the bed or banks of a stream.

The respective Meagher and Cascade County Sheriffs offices bear primary responsibility for search and rescue and other emergency responses within the river corridor. FWP Wardens and River Rangers provide interagency support for emergency responses.

1.6.6 Private Property

Privately owned property constitutes approximately 80% of the lands along the Smith River corridor. Seasonally occupied recreational cabins and homes represent the predominant type of private property utilization in the corridor. At the time this plan was written there are two seasonally occupied subdivisions, four large working ranches, one guest ranch, and one hunting lodge on the river corridor. 2008 Cadastral Survey data indicated approximately 70 private landowners in the corridor (this and other private landowner information may change over the duration of the management plan).

Some 20 private roads provide access to the Smith River in the canyon section. Many of these roads are primitive and/or useable only seasonally. Public access to the Smith River on these roads is at the discretion of the landowner.

As previously mentioned, FWP leases four private property parcels for the purpose of providing nine public boat camps.

1.7 Management Authority

There are a number or statutes, rules, and policies that apply to management of the Smith River. Those most frequently referenced are listed below:

- Smith River Management Act (23-2-401, MCA) (See Appendix C)
- Rules for Use of Lands and Waters (87-1-303, MCA)
- Montana Stream Access Law (23-2-301 & 302, MCA)
- Montana Trespass Law (45-6-201, MCA)
- Smith River Special Use Area Rule
- FWP River Recreation Management Rules (ARM 12.11.401 through 12.11.455)
- FWP Commercial Use Rules (ARM 12.14.101 through 12.12.170)
- FWP Public Use Regulations (ARM 12.8.201 through 12.8.213)
- Smith River Motorized Watercraft Closure (ARM 12.6.901)

- FWP Heritage Resource Management and Protection Policy (ARM 12.8.501)
- Smith River Management Plan (1996)
- 2020 Vision Montana State Park System Plan (2004)

1.7.1 Smith River Special Use Area Rule

The Smith River Special Use Area Rule is a biennial rule adopted by the FWP Commission. Whereas the management plan provides overall direction for recreation management, the rule includes more specific implementation details. The FWP Commission solicits public comment on all proposed changes to the rule, including any changes that might occur after the adoption of this management plan. Topics covered in the rule include:

- River capacity and permit lottery system
- Cancellation process
- Group size
- Fees
- Landowner float opportunities
- Corridor Enhancement Account
- Outfitter administration

1.7.2 FWP/USFS Cooperative Agreement

FWP and the Lewis and Clark and Helena National Forests established a Smith River Maintenance and Operating Agreement in 1993 for the purpose of cooperating in the management of public resources on the Smith River. This agreement endorses FWP's responsibility for the management and administration of the floater permit lottery system, the mandatory floater permit and allocation system, Camp Baker put-in and Eden Bridge take-out facilities, maintenance of 52 designated boat camps, and a river ranger patrol program. This agreement was supplemented in 1995 with a Challenge Cost Share Agreement and annual Financial and Operating Plan. The Challenge Cost Share Agreement is updated annually and includes a funding allocation from the USFS ($7,000 in 2008) to support FWP operations on the Smith River.

FWP and the USFS maintain a strong collaborative and cooperative relationship that is built on a foundation of open and frequent communication. The agencies conduct an annual Smith River work and maintenance float, an annual Smith River operations review meeting, and co-host an annual meeting with the authorized outfitters.

2 RECREATION AND RESOURCE VALUES

2.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the recreation, natural resource, and heritage resource values that help to define the Smith River and its importance to the people of Montana and their guests. These are the values that this plan strives to conserve and protect.

2.2 Recreation Values

2.2.1 Recreation Setting

The Smith River canyon has long been known for its unique beauty. The timbered slopes of the Belt Mountains and the broad grasslands of the Smith River valley dominate the upper reaches. Floating the river downstream, visitors soon encounter the rugged limestone cliffs and outcroppings on either side towering high overhead. Always the canyon's dominant feature, these cliffs sometimes appear to block the floater's passage completely and then slip by as the channel twists and turns between the enclosing walls. The buff-colored rocks stained with hues of brown, red, and yellow offer ever-changing vistas of color and form. After emerging from the 50-mile long canyon, the river meanders through rolling grasslands until it joins the Missouri River near Ulm, MT.

The river is formed by the junction of the South Fork, which drains a portion of the Castle Mountains, and the North Fork, originating from the south end of the Little Belt Mountains. These two forks join to form the main stem just west of White Sulphur Springs. The river flows northwest through a relatively wide valley between the Big and Little Belt Mountains until it enters a deep, narrow canyon several miles below Fort Logan.

One of the larger tributaries of the Smith River is Hound Creek, entering from the west near Eden Bridge. Hound Creek drains the northern portion of the Big Belt Mountains; some of its tributaries extend high up the slope of the mountain front. Other Smith River tributaries in the Little Belts include the North Fork, Newlan Creek, Whitetail Deer Creek, Sheep Creek, Eagle Creek, Blacktail Creek, Tenderfoot Creek and Deep Creek. The South Fork, Birch Creek, Camas Creek, Elk Creek, Thomas Creek, Benton Creek, Beaver Creek, Rock Creek, Freeman Creek, One Creek, Two Creek and Trout Creek drain the southeast flank of the Big Belt Mountains.

The 58.8-mile section of the canyon typically becomes ice-free in late March to early April and remains open until November or December. Water flows can vary widely during the ice-free months, but as a rule, mid-April through early July is the typical peak season for river recreation. Low water flows have historically limited floating opportunities in the late summer and fall.

Towering cliffs, an active stream channel, and remoteness from population centers accounts for the sparse development and corresponding difficulty of accessing the river corridor. Current public access to the river's canyon section is limited to 1) the Camp Baker Put-in, located approximately 27 miles northwest of White Sulphur Springs, MT via the Smith River Road; and 2) the Eden Bridge take-out located approximately 15 miles east of Ulm, MT via Montana Secondary Highway #330. Approximately 70 miles of graveled county roads link Camp Baker and Eden Bridge on the west side of the river. Surrounding this remote river is a major highway system, connecting several population centers. Interstate Highway #15 to the west; U.S. Highway #12 to the south; and U.S. Highway # 89 to the east provide access to White Sulphur Springs (and the Smith River area) from Helena, Great Falls, Bozeman, and Livingston. This surrounding area has a current population that is between 150,000 and 200,000 people.

Occasional views of cabins, roads and bridges are present along the river. Large commercial/industrial uses are not present and dwellings lining the banks of the river and clear-cut forestlands are sparse. Due to the terrain and vegetation, most developed land uses are hidden or blended into the landscape.

The combination of limited public access, remoteness of the river, and intermittent residential development leads FWP to classify the Smith River as a semi-primitive recreation setting. Note: the Smith River Management Act uses the term "solitude" to describe the Smith River Canyon. This term means different things for different people and therefore this management plan uses the term "semi-primitive" to more accurately describe the recreation setting.

2.2.2 Recreation Opportunities

The Smith River represents one of the preeminent public recreation resources in Montana. The river has a long-standing tradition of providing outstanding opportunities for river floating, camping, fishing, wildlife viewing, and enjoying the peace and tranquility of a remote, highly scenic river canyon. The Smith River is currently the only river in Montana requiring a permit for both public and commercial floating and the number of permits is limited.

2.2.3 Recreation Use Statistics and Trends

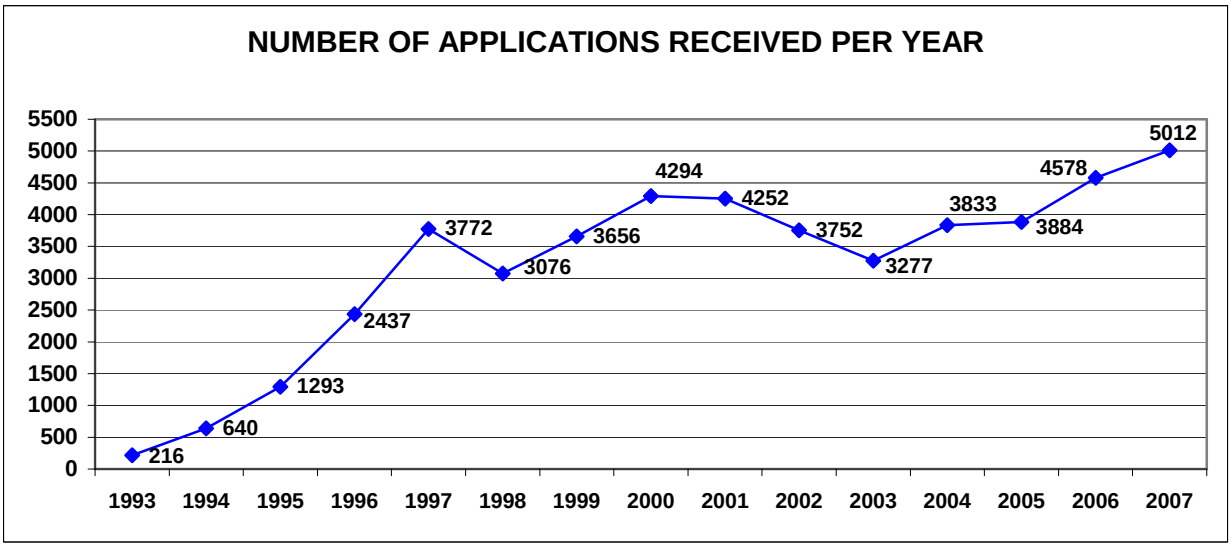
The public has enjoyed recreating on the Smith River for many years, with recreational activities documented from the early 1950's. Most use occurs as recreational river floating through the canyon portion of the Smith River, beginning at the Camp Baker Access Site northwest of White Sulphur Springs, Montana to the Eden Bridge area south of Great Falls, Montana.

The Smith River has evolved into a highly popular and coveted recreational experience for residents and non-residents alike.

Evidence of the increasing popularity includes a record 5,823 private floater lottery applications for the 2008 season as compared to 216 applications in 1993. Use levels have continued to increase as well with a near-record 4,836 floaters recorded in 2008.

FWP began collecting detailed visitor use statistics in 1993. Over the past 15 years (*1993-2007) the following visitor use trends and statistics have emerged:

- The average number of floaters per year = **3,814**
- The average number of groups per year = **593**
- The average number of user days per year = **16,596**
- The average group size = **6.45**
- The average Outfitter group size = **11.56**
- Rafts are the most popular type of watercraft @ **68%**
- Canoes are the 2nd most popular watercraft @ **19%**
- The average number of watercraft per group = **2.93**
- Outfitted groups % of total groups = **8.53%**
- Outfitted floaters % of total floaters = **15.38%**
- Floaters that are Montana residents = approx. **75%** (based on 2006-2007 data)
- Average # of days on river per group = **4.42**



A detailed summary of Smith River trend statistics is provided in ***Appendix A*.**

2.2.4 Commercial Use

Outfitters provide a valuable service to members of the public wishing to float the river in the accompaniment of a professional guide. The Smith River Special Use Area Rule limits the number of outfitters authorized to provide float trips on the Smith River and the maximum number of launches allowed per outfitter per year. There are currently nine outfitters and the total number of outfitter launches allowed per year is 73. FWP requires a Restricted Use Permit to outfit on the Smith River and the permit includes terms and conditions of use.

In addition to the FWP Restricted Use Permit, outfitters on the Smith River must obtain a Special Use Permit from the USFS. They must also be licensed by the Montana Board of Outfitters if they are providing angling services.

There are currently two watercraft "livery" providers who rent watercraft off-site and are authorized to deliver the equipment to Camp Baker and pick it up at Eden Bridge. These commercial services are authorized through a FWP Restricted Use Permit.

There are vehicle shuttle services that operate between Camp Baker and Eden Bridge. Vehicle shuttle services are exempt from the FWP Commercial Use Rules and therefore do not need a permit from FWP.

2.2.5 Visitor Services

On-site (or on river) visitor services provided by FWP include:

- Pre-float orientation (at Camp Baker)
- Overnight camping (at Camp Baker & boat camps)
- Firewood for purchase
- River Ranger patrols
- Floater assistance, emergency services and law enforcement
- Boat Camp maintenance
- Visitor assistance by site hosts at Eden Bridge

2.2.6 *Visitor Facilities*

Camp Baker Put-In:

This 50-acre administrative site is located in Meagher County, MT on river left at mile 0. This site serves as the only authorized public-owned put-in for the 58.8-mile permitted section of the Smith River. It also functions as the field operations center for Smith River State Park and River Corridor and serves as the duty station for seasonal Smith River operations. The following facilities are currently provided at Camp Baker:

- A three-bedroom house for seasonal river ranger staff, typically occupied from early April through July.
- A two-room Ranger Station building that serves as the primary point of visitor contact and provides administrative workspace for river rangers.
- A two-story log storage building that provides storage for basic supplies and equipment.
- An informational kiosk, with a self-registration fee payment feature for off-season river use.
- Two public ADA accessible vault latrines.
- A designated overnight parking area that accommodates approximately 50 vehicles.
- Public boat-launch ramps, hardened with cable mat.
- A general camping area with picnic tables and steel fire grates.

The USGS maintains a year-round, fully automated water flow gauging station at the Camp Baker Bridge, and a simple staff gauge near Eagle Creek approximately 1.5 river miles downstream from Camp Baker.

Eden Bridge Take-Out:

This 4.47-acre site is located in Cascade County, MT on river left at mile 58.8. This site serves as the primary take-out for Smith River floaters at the end of the permitted section of river. It also serves as a base for volunteer site hosts who meet, greet, and assist floaters as they exit the river. Eden Bridge is also available for fishing, picnicking, and swimming during the day, but is closed to overnight camping during the floater season. The following facilities are currently provided at Eden Bridge:

- A large, graveled take-out area (accessible to vehicles).
- One public vault toilet.
- A small storage shed.
- A hardened site host pad with electricity.
- Three designated campsites with a steel fire grate (for off-season use only).

Region 4 Headquarters:

This facility in Great Falls, MT serves as the year-round administrative center for the Smith River State Park and River Corridor. The Smith River State Park Manager and the Region 4 Parks Manager maintain year-round offices in this facility. A part-time Smith River Reservation/Cancellation Clerk also works out of the facility during the peak Smith River float season.

Boat Camps:

There are 52 designated public boat campsites provided on the Smith River corridor. The following amenities are provided at each boat camp:

- Location sign visible from the river.
- Wood post boat tie-offs.
- Steel fire grate.
- Pit toilet with privacy screening.

Land ownership of boat camp locations includes: FWP (14 sites); DNRC (one site, leased by FWP); private land (nine sites, leased by FWP); and USFS land (28 sites). A complete inventory of the Smith River Boat Camps is provided in ***Appendix B***.

2.3 Natural Resource Values

2.3.1 Fish & Aquatic Resources

The Smith River, a nationally known trout fishery, has been managed as a wild trout fishery since 1974 when the stocking of trout was discontinued.

The fisheries resource value for the floating section between Camp Baker and the mouth of Hound Creek is classified as high value and from Hound Creek to Eden Bridge as moderate value. Two long-term population-monitoring projects have demonstrated that rainbow and brown trout are the dominant trout species in the floating reach.

The Eagle Creek section, 2.04-miles long, starts downstream of Eagle Creek and is considered representative of the upper reaches of the float section. In 2007, the number of rainbow and brown trout greater than eight inches per mile was estimated at 291 and 254 per mile, respectively. Both were lower than the long-term average of rainbow (533 per mile) and brown (323 per mile) trout in this section (Figure 3).

The Deep Creek section, a 2.52-mile reach, is 40 miles downstream from Camp Baker, below the mouth of Deep Creek. Trout densities in this section have historically been lower than in the Eagle Creek section; the long-term average of rainbow and brown trout in this section has been 168 and 270, respectively. Since 1991 brown trout numbers have been greater that rainbow trout numbers.

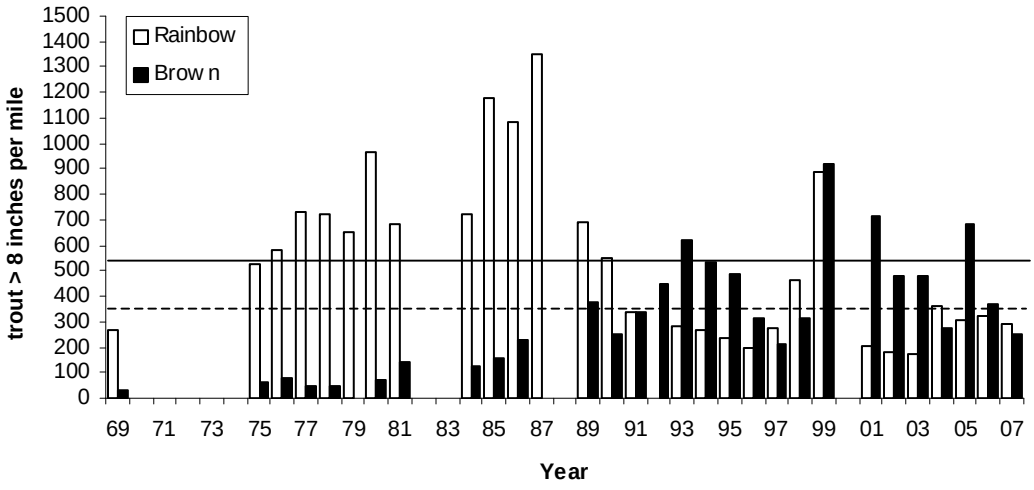
Other game fish species present in the Smith River include westslope cutthroat trout, brook trout, mountain whitefish, and burbot. Non-game species include stonecat, white, longnose, and mountain suckers, longnose dace, and mottled sculpins.

Environmental factors and habitat conditions regulate trout population levels on the Smith River. Periodic ice jams, flooding, as well as low flows and warm summer water temperatures associated with drought conditions result in mortality or additional stresses that can cumulatively affect fish health.

Figure 3: Estimated number of rainbow and brown trout

(Greater than 8 inches per mile in the Eagle Creek section of the Smith River 1969-2007)

(Solid line is long-term rainbow mean, dashed line is long-term brown mean).



Biologists have observed that rainbow trout population densities in the Smith respond to stream flow. Elevated water temperatures associated with drought and low stream flows provide additional stress on fish and fish health. In order to limit the additive impact of angling mortality during stressful conditions and help aquatic communities survive high water temperatures with a better chance to recover quickly, FWP has implemented an angling drought closure policy when daily maximum water temperatures reach or exceeds 73F (23C) for at least some period of time during three consecutive days.

Riparian habitat conditions vary along the floating section of the Smith River. In the upper reach near Camp Baker, the riparian zone transitions from a stream that meanders through sedge and hay meadows with a well-developed floodplain to the canyon reach where the river is straighter and incised confined between steep limestone walls. Between the end of the canyon and Eden Bridge, the river grades into an area of foothill grasslands. In the floating section of the Smith River, grasses tend to dominate the riparian zone and the woody shrub component is likely reduced from historic levels. Major tributary drainages such as Sheep and Tenderfoot creeks enter from the Little Belt Mountains and Rock and Hound creeks from the Big Belt Mountains. Work is under way to learn more about the importance of tributaries for main stem trout populations.

2.4 Geological Values

The Smith River valley narrows below Camp Baker and becomes a deep canyon incised about a thousand feet into the predominantly Paleozoic limestone strata. The angle of the strata indicates the river has cut across the axis of the central Montana arch, and in so doing has exposed the Paleozoic strata in sequence south to north from basal Cambrian upward through the Cambrian, Devonian, Mississippian, Jurassic, and Cretaceous strata. The latter two periods of strata are exposed from near the mouth of Hound Creek northward.

Exposures of rock strata range in age from pre-Belt crystalline metamorphics around 2.5 billion years old to Tertiary at 2.5 million years old. The rock strata are thrown into folds, extensively faulted, and intruded by several varieties of igneous rocks and numerous and varied geologic processes are evident, including extensive cave openings and systems and several natural bridges in the limestone strata.

The Smith River canyon offers an incredible natural classroom for students and experts alike to observe and study geological processes.

2.5 Heritage Resource Values

The Smith River Canyon has a wealth of heritage resources. It has been occupied continuously for thousands of years, and evidence of this occupation is abundant. Visitors' interest in the Canyon's heritage is also high and seems to be increasing. On a national level, as well as Montana-wide, visiting cultural sites and museums often ranks at the top of desired recreational activities.

Heritage resources and information about them afford visitors the opportunity to understand their past, the forces that have shaped their present, and the choices they have for the future.

Active management of heritage resources on the Smith River has not been a high priority to date and a compliance level heritage inventory of USFS or FWP lands has not been conducted. However, there has been significant research done in the river corridor that reflects a rich assemblage of heritage resources.

2.6 Historical Values

American Indians were attracted to the area for many centuries prior to Euro-American exploration in the Smith River basin. The recesses of the canyon offered shelter from the harsh winters and concentrations of game animals provided food, clothing and other necessities for life.

The first intrusion by Euro-Americans into the area resulted from the fur trade. Hardy trappers entered the area in search of furs and floated their catch down the Smith and the Missouri Rivers to eastern trade centers.

The earliest historic land uses of the Smith Canyon were consumptive: trapping, mining, logging, and the development of trails to and from these resources. In the early 1860s, the discovery of gold in the surrounding mountains stimulated a heavy influx of miners. Camp Baker, founded in 1869 by U. S. troops to provide protection to miners and settlers, was later moved 12 miles and renamed Fort Logan. Fort Logan was abandoned when conflicts with Indian groups became less serious. A well-preserved blockhouse still stands on the site.

Beginning in 1884 and continuing through the 1890's, the Smith River and its tributaries were used to float logs down to the Missouri and on to Great Falls. As gold veins became depleted and mining operations abandoned, farming and ranching began to take over as the predominant economy, as they remain today.

Access into the canyon evolved from these trails into routes used by homesteaders and more permanent activities. Consequently, the very earliest recreational floaters experienced a truly remote canyon, seeing only the occasional resident struggling to make a living off marginal land. The few established agricultural lands along the river have been used primarily as parts of larger ranching operations with owners living away from the river. Thus, agricultural use of the river corridor has had for the most part little impact on the floating experience.

Although the remote and rugged nature of the Smith has served to limit the development of lands along the river, these same aesthetic qualities have made it attractive for recreational development. Local residents of Great Falls were the first to desire recreational land use along the river.

Two major housing developments, the Castle Bar and Two Creeks subdivisions, were platted in the early 1960's. Today, several seasonally occupied residences and recreational cabins are maintained in the river corridor.

2.7 Historic Sites, Structures, & Landscapes

Many historic buildings and structures are located along the Smith River. These sites include the remains of homesteads, historic trails, ranches, outbuildings, machinery and historic artifact scatters (concentrations of cans, glass, bottle fragments, and ceramics). Many of the extant historic ranches and buildings are located on private land on the west side of the river. Little historical or archaeological survey work has been conducted on the public lands in the corridor.

To date, no traditional cultural property studies have been conducted within the Smith River corridor. Examples of a traditional cultural property would be a location associated with the traditional beliefs of a Native American group about its origins, its cultural history, or the nature of the world; or a rural community whose organization, buildings and structures, or patterns of land use reflect the cultural traditions valued by its long-term residents. Future investigations may yield the presence of these properties along the river.

2.8 Archeological Values

Prehistoric American Indian groups utilized the river corridor and its many tributaries as evidenced by prehistoric campsites or “lithic scatters”, many of which contain tipi rings. These sites reflect areas where Indian groups camped in tipis, re-worked stone and bone tools, butchered animals, gathered and processed plants, and cooked food on open fires or in rock lined pits.

Prehistoric pictograph or “rock art” sites also occur along the river. These sites are important to contemporary Indian Tribes and some are considered sacred. Many different kinds of images appear at these sites—tally marks, animal and human like figures, some with upraised arms and headdresses, and geometric and abstract designs. Images were commonly painted with either charcoal or iron oxide pigment mixed with paint binders including plant juices, blood, berry juice, fat, and water. The age of pictograph sites along the Smith River is uncertain. Four prehistoric pictograph sites on the south side of the Big Belts Mountains on the Helena National Forest were recently radiocarbon dated and found to be between 1200-1400 years old.

Between 1992 and 1994, researchers Mavis and John Greer recorded 68 prehistoric sites along the Smith River between Camp Baker and Eden Bridge**.** Mavis Greer wrote a Ph.D. dissertation on the many pictograph sites found in the canyon (Greer 1995). As part of her dissertation work, Greer visited selected sites and surveyed various areas along the river.

Many other site types (open campsites, rock shelters, tipi ring sites) are also located along the river though no compilation or synthesis of this data has been undertaken. A large number of the prehistoric sites are located on private land (approximately 40 sites) with the remaining sites located primarily on USFS land.

2.9 Economic Values

The Smith River contributes to the local, regional and statewide economy. Contributions at the local level include the purchase of gas, food, lodging, and amenities in the community of White Sulphur Springs. Floaters (commercial and non-commercial) also hire the services of local vehicle shuttle companies. The Smith River supports a commercial outfitting industry, which in turn contributes to the local and regional economy in the form of jobs (guides and support staff) and money spent by clients (pre and post trip expenditures).

Although FWP is not aware of any studies that focused specifically on the economic value of Smith River floating, there are some general conclusions that can be made based on 2007 State Parks visitation and per-visitor rates extrapolated from the *2002 Economic Impact Survey of Visitors to Montana's State Parks and Fishing Access Sites* conducted by University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research.

Findings from that study include: In 2007, state park visitors spent an estimated $274.5 million in trip related expenditures across Montana. Nonresidents visiting state parks contributed an estimated $71.8 million to the economy's total production in industries such as: petroleum refining and sales, wholesale trade, retail trade, hotels and lodging, and government in Montana communities. Nonresident visitor expenditures contributed about $20.6 million in personal income, which includes wages and salaries paid by employers, and income to self-employed workers. An estimated 1,033 full-time and part-time jobs were generated by nonresident expenditures. These park visitors influence jobs in the lodging industry, automobile service, grocery and retail stores, and recreation services.

3 RECREATION MANAGEMENT APPROACH

3.1 Recreation Management Overview

The FWP statewide River Recreation Rules address river recreation planning by requiring the agency to develop a range of management actions from *less restrictive to more restrictive*, to be implemented based on the severity of the conditions present. The Smith River management plan includes a *range of management tools* that could be used to address a particular issue (problem) or to prevent the problem from occurring in the first place. The management actions range from less restrictive to most restrictive. FWP would select a particular management tool (action) that is commensurate with the conditions present.

3.2 Limits of Acceptable Change

While no one can accurately predict future patterns of use on the Smith River, some change is inevitable. FWP can monitor changing conditions and implement management actions to achieve desired conditions or address undesirable conditions. Current statistics allow FWP to track the number of floaters, number of groups, user days, number of groups and individuals in the canyon on any given date, average group size, boat camp use, number and type of craft, and length of stay (see ***Appendix A***).

One of the more challenging aspects of managing river recreation is deciding when certain social or resource conditions warrant applying different or more restrictive management actions. This is difficult due to the different perspectives and expectations of each river user or user group. One person may view conditions as unacceptably crowded and another person may view those same conditions as tolerable or even desirable. To help overcome this challenge, this plan uses a planning tool called Limits of Acceptable Change.

Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) is a planning tool developed by the recreation profession. The LAC process starts with the identification of ***Desired Conditions*****.** These are the agreed upon conditions that the managing agency makes a commitment to maintain. The next step is to identify ***Indicators***, which are measurable attributes or values that can be monitored to detect changing conditions. For each indicator, a ***Standard*** is then set. The standard is a number or value that alerts managers of an unacceptable change in the quality of the resources and/or experience.

This plan identifies indicators that will be monitored over time as a way of assessing social and resource conditions on and along the river. The plan also identifies Standards or conditions that would trigger FWP to recommend that the FWP Commission adopt a particular management action(s). Trigger points are identified as a way to notify FWP when it should implement new, different, or *more restrictive* management tools. The less restrictive management tools are typically non-controversial and on going in nature and therefore no triggers are needed.

3.3 Floater Surveys and Social Science

3.3.1 Formal Surveys

The following surveys of Smith River floaters have been completed as a means of assessing visitor satisfaction and acceptance with the Smith River experience.

- **"The Smith River, An Opportunity for Quality."** Published in Dec. 1970 by the Governor's Council on Natural Resources and Development. A report prepared for Governor Forrest Anderson and the 42nd Montana Legislative Assembly.
- **"Smith River Survey."** Completed in 1980 by FWP. Survey was mailed to user and was qualitative in nature.
- **"The Smith River Floater Log Survey."** Completed in 1982 by FWP. Survey was given to floaters at Camp Baker and served as a floater registration form and quality of experience survey.
- **"The Smith River Study."** Published in July 1986 by Joel A. Shouse, P.E. Consulting Services in Bozeman, MT.
- **"Smith River Public Use Survey."** Published in February1990 by Stephen F. McCool, University of Montana, Missoula, MT.
- **"Public Response To The 1993 Smith River Tentative Allocation Rule."** Published in September 1992 by Dana E. Dolsen, FWP Responsive Management Unit.
- **"Smith River Survey."** Completed by FWP in 1997. Conducted to determine if floaters were satisfied with their experience and if they felt further use limitations should be implemented.
- **"Study of Smith River Floaters."** Published in December 2000 by Michael S. Lewis and Zoe King, FWP Responsive Management Unit.
- **"Smith River Private Permit Allocation and Cancellation Process Questionnaire."** Published in January 2004 by Kirsten Shelton, FWP Parks Division Outdoor Recreation Planner.

The results of these surveys indicate very high levels of visitor satisfaction with their Smith River experience. The surveys and other forms of public feedback also indicate that floaters and landowners alike want to maintain the Smith River's natural characteristics and semi-primitive setting. They support the policy of limiting recreational use in order to maintain a quality experience.

3.3.2 Floater Logs

The floater log is a brief questionnaire provided to each floater party requesting feedback on the quality of their experience and observations related to encounters, solitude and fishing. Floater logs have historically been provided to each party at the Camp Baker put-in with verbal request to complete the log and turn it in at the Eden Bridge take-out. Floaters have provided comments on their floater logs since 1981, with more extensive comments provided since 1991. Floater log comments are analyzed annually and summarized in the annual ***Smith River Report***.

4 RECREATION MANAGEMENT ISSUES AND DIRECTION

4.1 Introduction

Recreation and resource management occurs on an ongoing basis and much of this work can be accomplished with minimal oversight and direction. There are some management issues however that are more complex or potentially controversial and therefore it is beneficial to provide guidance or direction to managers and decision-makers. This chapter discusses these issues, identifies the desired condition, establishes a management direction, and lists actions needed to implement the management direction.

4.2 Recreation Management Direction

The remainder of this chapter identifies and discusses key management responsibilities, initiatives, and issues; describes the desired conditions for each issue, defines the specific management direction, and explains the specific actions needed to implement the management direction.

The following terms (with definitions) apply to the management direction provided in this plan:

a) Desired Condition: The long range, overarching conditions and results that FWP will strive to achieve and manage for.
b) Management Direction: Specific objectives and prescriptions that will guide FWP's decision making in order to achieve the desired condition.
c) Implementation: Specific actions that will be taken to apply the stated management direction for a given issue, program, or initiative. The implementation timeline will vary depending upon management priorities, public support, and availability of resources.

Timelines for implementing management directions established in this plan are dependent on program priorities, available funding and staffing, and FWP Commission approval if new rules or fees are required. Public education and outreach programs will generally be implemented before imposing any significant changes or new programs.

4.3 Public Floating Opportunities

Discussion: The Smith River float is a highly coveted river recreational experience treasured by many Montanans and out-of-state visitors. Interest in securing a floater permit continues to increase at a significant rate, as evidenced by the record 5,823 applications in 2008. This number reflects a significant increase over the 216 applications received in 1993.

Many river recreationists have a perception that lottery permits are extremely difficult to secure and indeed the 15% applicant success rate in 2008 supports that notion. This raises a question as to whether there are ways to increase the likelihood that either someone will obtain a permit and/or participate on a Smith River trip. When considering ways to improve the odds of floating the Smith River, FWP must factor in the consequences and impacts on social conditions and the floaters' satisfaction with their experience. Although the simplest means of increasing the odds is to increase the number of permits available, this could present a number of problems including a perception of crowding on the river and at boat camps and impacts to resources.

In weighing these factors, FWP has applied a basic principle of containing escalating levels of use by not allowing increases in the overall number of floater parties authorized to float the river each day (nine) and the maximum group size (15). However, FWP will implement some progressive action that will have a positive affect on floater opportunities.

Desired Conditions: *All interested persons will have a fair and equitable opportunity to experience the recreation opportunities and public resources provided by the Smith River.*

Management Direction: FWP will make recommendations to the Commission to improve the statistical odds of an individual drawing a permit without increasing the number of launches or the maximum group size.

Implementation:
Seek Commission approval through the Smith River Special Use Area Rule to:

a) Retain the limit of 9 launches per day and a maximum group size of 15 persons.
b) Require all lottery applicants who draw a permit for a launch date from May 15 through July 15 to wait one year before re-applying for a Smith River permit for that same time period. They may apply for a permit outside of this time period, accompany another permitted group during this time period, or obtain a cancelled launch permit.
c) Reallocate <u>all</u> cancelled launches for public use (rather than waiting until five cancellations have occurred before reissuing permits during the peak season). Maintain group size limit of 8 for reallocated cancelled launches.
d) Establish a minimum applicant age of 12.
e) Establish a "Super Permit Lottery" (see Section 4.6, User Fees).

4.4 <u>Private Landowner Floating Opportunities</u>

Discussion: Private landowners on the Smith River have been extended privileges to conduct single day floats on the Smith River that are managed outside of the limited entry permit system. This program was instituted in recognition of the relatively low impact that these single day floats have on social and resource conditions, and the shared interests and responsibilities for river stewardship between landowners and FWP.

The Commission acknowledged that private landowner float trips are not completely exempt from potential social or resource impacts and established rules to govern private landowner float trips in the Smith River Special Use Area Rule. These rules are explicit in allowing single day floats while prohibiting overnight float trips without a permit allocated through the public lottery system. These rules apply to two specific categories: 1) private landowner floats within the contiguous boundaries of their property, and 2) private landowner day floats that extend beyond the contiguous boundaries of their property.

These rules and provisions have been working reasonably well for many years and therefore this plan does not include any major changes to the private landowner floater program.

Desired Conditions: *Private landowners along the Smith River Corridor will have the privilege to conduct single day floats as a means of fostering continued cooperation in the stewardship of the river corridor.*

Management Direction: FWP will continue to provide unlimited opportunities for immediate family members of private landowners to conduct single day floats on the Smith River and limit private landowners floats conducted by non-immediate family members to a maximum of three groups per day.

Implementation:

a) Limit group size to 15 persons for float trips within the contiguous boundaries of the private property and six persons for float trips that extend beyond the contiguous boundaries of the private property.
b) Opportunities for private landowner floats are for day floats only unless the private landowner obtains a private launch permit through the lottery system or cancellation process.
c) Fees will not be charged for immediate family members participating in private landowner float trips.
d) Charge a nominal fee for non-immediate family members participating in private landowner float trips.
e) Permits are required for all private landowners conducting single day float trips.
f) Boat tags must be clearly displayed on all watercraft used on private landowner float trips.

4.5 Commercial Outfitter Use and Administration

Discussion: Commercial fishing and river outfitting is a valued service and provides a benefit to those people seeking professional guide services on the Smith River. Outfitting on the Smith River is authorized through the Smith River Management Act, the Smith River Special Use Area Rule, and the Montana Board of Outfitters.

A total of 73 Outfitter launches are authorized each year. This number was developed following analysis of historic use levels. There are currently nine licensed outfitters permitted on the Smith River with allocations ranging from 26 launches per year (Lewis & Clark Expeditions) to one launch per year (Glacier Wilderness Guides).

Commercial outfitting has accounted for an average of 15.38 % of the total number of floaters on the Smith River over the past 15 years (1993-2007). There has been a noticeable decline in Outfitters' use of the 73 allocated launches. In 2008, only 53 of 73 launches were utilized and the 16-year average (1993-2008) is 49 launches. The primary reason that outfitters have not been able to utilize all of their allocated launches is based on the late summer and early fall drought conditions resulting in unfloatable river flows.

Outfitters currently operate under a permanent launch calendar with 73 launches scheduled during the months of May, June, July and September. Unused commercial launches are typically allocated to the public through FWP's telephonic cancelled launch allocation system. These unused launches are not available in the lottery system and typically do not become available until very short notice. The current cancellation policy for Outfitters requires cancellation of unfilled commercial launches no later than two days prior to the scheduled launch.

The Smith River Special Use Area Rule and the FWP Commercial Use Rules stipulate that a Smith River outfitter may lease, rent or otherwise receive compensation from another Smith River outfitter for the opportunity to use a Smith River outfitter launch within a single use season. The rules prohibit a Smith River outfitter from permanently selling individual launches. When a Smith River outfitter sells or transfers their entire Smith River business, FWP will issue a new commercial use permit to the new owner so long as the seller has remitted all fees due to FWP and so long as the buyer has obtained all other licensed or permits required by state or federal law and agrees to the terms of the permit.

Smith River outfitters are subjected to a dual permit system, including a Restricted Use Permit issued by FWP for commercial use of the river and a Special Use Permit issued by the USFS for commercial use of boat camps located on National Forest lands. There is some redundancy and bureaucratic complications with the current dual permit system.

FWP administers commercial Outfitting on the Smith River through a Restricted Use Permit process, currently issued on an annual basis. Outfitters are subject to specific terms, conditions, and stipulations that require lawful and professional commercial services.

Desired Conditions: *Commercial outfitting on the Smith River will be managed by FWP as a necessary and desired service to the public and privileged use of a public resource. Outfitters will exercise the highest standards of professional conduct and stewardship of the Smith River resource.*

Management Direction: FWP will continue to allocate a maximum of 73 commercial outfitter launches per year and will continue effective communication with outfitters to ensure a high standard of public service and safety, compliance with permit terms and conditions, and protection of resources.

Implementation:

a) Produce an updated operations manual for Smith River Outfitters.
b) Assign outfitter launch dates in cooperation with outfitters and produce an outfitter launch calendar.
c) Establish a standard date for the annual FWP/USFS/Outfitters meeting.
d) Monitor riverbank "wade fishing" outfitting (not associated with a float trip) that originates on private property but extends into the streambed. If necessary, identify acceptable levels of use, permitting requirements and/or restrictions.
e) Monitor and investigate potential unlawful outfitting through river patrols, observations at Camp Baker, and review of commercial advertising and websites.
f) Assist the County Sanitarian, Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, and other applicable agencies to disseminate information to Smith River outfitters regarding the standards and best practices for sanitary food handling and preparation procedures.
g) Seek Commission approval for the following:
    - Require outfitters to finalize their launch dates one-week prior to the lottery drawing. All dates on the calendar not occupied by an outfitter will become available to the public in the drawing (approximately 30 more launch dates).
    - Require outfitters wishing to move a launch date after March 1 to call the reservation line to request a cancelled launch date, the same as the general public (previously two of the nine launches per day are set aside for outfitters on Sundays and Wednesdays during the outfitter "peak season").
    - Require outfitters to cancel all unbooked launches 14 days prior to the launch date (previously there was a two day cancellation requirement). This would improve the public's opportunities to pick up an open launch in a timelier manner.
    - Discontinue the outfitters "peak use season," formerly defined as the final Sunday in May through July 10. This would allow outfitters the opportunity to schedule two launches on any Sunday or Wednesday throughout the float season. Outfitters wishing to schedule a launch on one of these dates would have to petition FWP to adjust the outfitter calendar. If more than one Outfitter petitions for the same date, a random drawing would be conducted to determine which outfitter receives that date. Note: This would have little effect on the availability of public launches during the normal "peak season," as most Sundays and Wednesdays already have the maximum number of outfitter launches allocated.
h) Examine opportunities to streamline the commercial use permit administrative process by working cooperatively with the USFS and the Board of Outfitters.
i) Administer Restricted Use Permits in a manner consistent with the FWP Commercial Use Rules.

4.6 User Fees

Discussion: Smith River State Park, like all state parks in Montana, is a user-supported program. The revenue comes from a combination of permit fees and general parks funding. The permit fees are determined by the Commission and support the management and administration of the Smith River program, including funding for staffing, operations, routine maintenance, and resource protection. Permit fees also support the Smith River Corridor Enhancement Account, which provides a critical source of revenue that is dedicated to resource protection projects and initiatives on the river corridor. General parks funding is used for to pay for major maintenance projects and capital improvements.

Fee revenue can vary greatly dependent on early season weather conditions and late season water flow since low water renders floating impracticable. In years where snow, ice, and cold temperatures reduce early spring float trips or when water levels are low by midsummer, fee revenue may fall far below expenditures, while early spring floating or high water years will generate greater revenue.

It is important that FWP maintain a viable user fee structure (non-commercial and commercial) to sustain operations while remaining fair, equitable, affordable, and commensurate with other high quality outdoor and river recreation opportunities.

Desired Conditions: *User fees will be affordable and commensurate with a high quality recreational experience. Revenue should help sustain progressive management of the Smith River program.*

Management Direction: FWP will recommend that the Commission adopt new and modified user fees as necessary. The fee system will seek to balance revenue enhancement opportunities with a fair, equitable, and affordable fee structure.

Implementation:

a) Seek Commission approval for the following recommended fee schedule changes in the Smith River Special Use Area Rule.
   - Combine drawing and pre-registration fees into one, non-refundable permit application fee as a means to cover the cost of administering permit applications and simplify the process.
   - Eliminate the current practice of refunding pre-registration fees for unsuccessful lottery applicants.
   - Charge Camp Baker camping fees when improvements and reconfiguration are completed.
   - Establish a special Smith River Super Permit lottery. The successful applicant (one per year) would receive a permit that is valid for any day of their choosing during the float season. There would be no limit on the number of applications an individual could submit. Revenue generated by the Super Permit program would be directed to the Smith River Corridor Enhancement Account.

- Require floater fees on a year-round basis.

Note: Fee amounts would be developed via the Smith River Special Use Area Rule through the Commission rulemaking process, which includes opportunities for public involvement.

4.7 Corridor Enhancement Account

Discussion: In 1989 the Montana State Legislature passed a law (Section 23-2-409, MCA) directing portions of money collected as recreational and commercial user fees into a special revenue fund known as the Smith River Corridor Enhancement Account (CEA). This law requires that money deposited in the Smith River Corridor Enhancement Account must be expended to:

a) Protect and enhance the integrity of the natural and scenic beauty of the Smith River waterway and its recreational, fisheries, and wildlife values through the lease or acquisition of property, including lease or acquisition of partial interests in property by the department within the Smith River corridor;
b) Pursue projects that serve to protect, enhance, and restore fisheries habitat, stream bank stabilization, erosion control, and recreational values within the Smith River corridor; and
c) Pursue projects that serve to maintain and enhance in-stream flows for recognized recreational and aquatic ecosystem values in the Smith River corridor.

Desired Conditions: *The Corridor Enhancement Account (CEA) will be used in a manner that is consistent with statute (23-2-409, MCA).*

Management Direction: FWP will continue to generate revenue for the CEA as a source of funding for vital and high priority resource protection and conservation initiatives and use the governing statute (23-2-409, MCA) to determine and prioritize expenditures. FWP will support collaborative opportunities for enhancing the corridor in conjunction with other agencies, levels of government, private organizations, and individuals.

Implementation:

a) Establish guidelines and accept written proposals for use of the CEA. Decisions will be based on merit, department priorities, management direction provided in this plan, and severity of the issue being addressed in the proposal.
b) Provide internal review and discussion with fisheries and wildlife staff.
c) Allow and solicit private donations to the CEA.

4.8 Access Portals

Discussion: Public access to the Smith River corridor is limited due to the physical constraints of the canyon and the presence of private property along the river. As a result of these limitations, there is only one public land entrance point for the permitted section of the Smith River (Camp Baker).

Camp Baker serves as the headquarters for field operations and is staffed continuously during the high use period and occasionally during low use periods. This level of staffing maximizes the contact between FWP and the public. Full-time staffing at the put-in allows the rangers to register floater groups, collect fees, assign overnight campsites, and provide safety, regulatory, and interpretive information.

Eden Bridge is the established public take-out for Smith River float trips. Volunteer site hosts, many from the Great Falls Good Sam's Club, have traditionally provided FWP's site presence. These volunteers live on site for a weeklong shift, providing security for parked vehicles and assistance to floaters in finishing their trip safely and enjoyably. The hosts also help gather information about incidents occurring on the river and floaters' satisfaction with their Smith River experience through surveys and the completion of floater logs. The hosts are typically present from late April through mid July. The short duration of the site hosts (one week shifts) makes it challenging to maintain continuity of operations at the river's only public take-out.

Dumpsters and aluminum recycling bins are provided during the high use season for the disposal of floaters' trash. During the rest of the year, Eden Bridge is managed as a "pack-in, pack-out" site. Other regulations include the prohibition of overnight camping and campfires during the float season, prohibition on discharge of weapons, and a pet leash and restraint law.

Desired Conditions: *FWP will continue to maintain Camp Baker as the primary public put-in and point of contact with floaters, and Eden Bridge as the primary public take-out.*

Management Direction: FWP will continue to manage Camp Baker as the primary put-in for permitted floaters and require all permitted groups (private and commercial) launching from Camp Baker to complete the mandatory floater registration and orientation process at Camp Baker. Permitted groups wishing to launch from a site other than Camp Baker will continue to be required to contact the Smith River Manager or Rangers in advance of their launch date and arrange for registration and boat camp selection.

Implementation:

a) Provide a daily site presence at Camp Baker and Eden Bridge during the peak float season.
b) Enhance the training, orientation and performance standards for the volunteer site host program at Eden Bridge.

c) Recruit an Eden Bridge site host (or hosts) that can stay on site for more extended periods of time.
d) Upgrade the host site to include a sewage dump vault and above ground potable water tank as a means to encourage longer host tenures at Eden Bridge,
e) Update the site host handbook and improve the training program.

4.9 Accessibility

Discussion: FWP is required to comply with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 because it receives federal funding. Section 17.217(e) of Section 504 of this act provides that, "A recipient shall operate each program or activity, when viewed in its entirety, is readily accessible to and usable by handicapped persons. This paragraph does not require a recipient to make each of its existing facilities or every part of a facility accessible to and usable by handicapped persons." Regardless of the act's requirements, FWP is committed to providing all members of the public with equal opportunities to enjoy all of its programs and facilities.

Historically, management of the Smith River has met that commitment. People with both physical and mental disabilities have benefited from the recreational activities it offers. River floating and fishing have proven ideal activities for disabled persons because mobility is not a requirement for rowing or paddling a watercraft or to casting a fishing line.

To ascertain Smith River boat camp accessibility, FWP completed an inventory and assessment of all boat camps in 2008 (see ***Appendix B***). This inventory describes the slope and character of the landing as well as the slope and distance to the latrine and this information is available to the public to assist individuals in choosing campsites that will best suit their needs.

Vehicular access at both the Camp Baker put-in and Eden Bridge take-out is excellent and immediate to the river. There is, however, a need to upgrade the accessibility of the latrine facilities at Eden Bridge as the latrine facility lacks an accessible parking pad and sidewalk leading to the latrine.

Desired Conditions: *Special populations of floaters will be welcomed and accommodated to the greatest extent possible while maintaining the semi-primitive characteristics of the Smith River experience*

Management Direction: FWP will encourage special populations to experience the wonders of the Smith River. Persons with disabilities will be assisted in the selection of boat camps that can accommodate special needs.

Implementation:
a) Install ADA compliant parking pad and sidewalk at the Eden Bridge vault latrine.
b) Post boat camp accessibility “attributes” on the Smith River website and in the Smith River floater’s packet.

c) Monitor disabled access concerns and actively work to improve conditions annually.

4.10 Camp Baker Camping

Discussion: Overnight camping at Camp Baker has been a popular activity for many years. Groups commonly arrive at Camp Baker the day before their launch date and prepare for their trip. FWP has identified some concerns and issues associated with camping at Camp Baker. The lack of properly designed and designated campsites can result in inefficient use of the available space and people camping in unsuitable locations. The lack of designated sites also leads to congestion in the boat launch area due to the mixture of launching and camping activities. There are also impacts to soil and vegetation resulting from poorly delineated or designed parking and camping areas. Another challenge associated with camping at Camp Baker is staffing. The current level of staffing is not enough to properly manage overnight use.

Historically, camping fees have not been charged for overnight camping at Camp Baker. However, this practice is inconsistent with overnight camping fees in most other Montana State Parks.

Desired Conditions: *Camp Baker will serve as the primary put in for permitted floaters on the Smith River and overnight camping will be accommodated in campsites designed and located to reduce congestion and conflicts at the launch area.*

Management Direction: FWP will continue to accommodate overnight camping at Camp Baker. Camping activities will be separated from boat launch activities by developing a properly designed and delineated camping area, away from boat launch facilities. Overnight camping fees will be established at Camp Baker consistent with other State Park campgrounds.

Implementation:

a) Seek Commission approval to charge standard State Park camping fees at Camp Baker following the development of a campground.
b) Pursue capital funding to construct a properly designed campground loop including potable water, vault toilets, designated campsites, and delineated parking areas.

4.11 Boat Camp Selection

Discussion: There are currently 52 designated boat camps located between Camp Baker and Eden Bridge. Boat camps are distributed along the river in locations that accommodate the maximum of nine launches permitted each day. Certain boat camps are more popular than others for a variety of reasons, including their strategic location along the river corridor in relation to the water flows and/or duration of the trip, as well as physical or scenic attributes of the site.

Boat camp selection is just one part of the overall floater registration process that occurs at Camp Baker prior to launching. FWP has assigned boat camps on a first come, first served basis at Camp Baker. The picking order for the selection of boat camps was based on the order that one or more members of a floater party arrive at Camp Baker. The first come, first served registration and boat camp selection order has worked well for some people who are accustomed to the system and have the time and flexibility to show up at Camp Baker early. There are other people who believe that this system provides an unfair advantage to outfitters and other people who have the ability to arrive a day or two early.

Desired Conditions: *Boat camps will be selected and assigned in a fair and equitable manner that does not provide a decided advantage to any particular group while remaining reasonably simple to administer at Camp Baker.*

Management Direction: FWP will retain the first come, first served boat camp selection process with a limit on how early people are allowed to sign in.

Implementation:

a) Retain first come, first served boat camp selection process.
b) Establish limit on how far in advance people may sign in to select boat camps: 24 hours.
c) Evaluate boat camps to ensure that all campsites can physically accommodate the maximum group size of 15. In order to ensure that all boats camps can accommodate the maximum group size, some sites may need to be enlarged or relocated and/or boat camps may need to be designated in new locations.
d) Use the floater logs and other forms of public input to evaluate the boat camp selection system and determine whether to continue its use.

4.12 River Capacity and Social Conditions

Discussion: The Smith River Special Use Area Rule allows a maximum of nine launches per day and a maximum of 15 people per group. The 1996 Smith River Management Plan identifies acceptable standards for: the overall number of *groups* in the river corridor at one time; the overall number of *people* in the river corridor at one time; and the average *group size*. These standards were designed to indicate when conditions are approaching unacceptable levels.

The standards for number of people in the corridor at one time were exceeded in 1996, 1997, 1999, 2003, 2006, and 2007 and the standards for average group size were exceeded in 1999, 2003, 2006, and 2007. Despite these figures, post-float surveys indicate that floater satisfaction has remained high. This information led FWP to examine the validity of the indicators and standards identified in the 1996 management plan. FWP concluded that the number of groups and the number of people in the corridor at one time is useful in terms of boat camp capacities but is less effective for determining acceptable social conditions. The reason is that individual groups and floaters never encounter all of the other groups and people in the corridor.

This is due to the fact that groups are moving down river at similar speeds (on any given day a person starting their trip is not likely to encounter the person who is three or four days into their trip). A more useful indicator for quality of experience is the number of times a person encounters other boats on the river during the course of a day.

Desired Conditions: *The Smith River will be managed to provide a high quality river recreation experience with a level of solitude satisfactory to the majority of floaters.*

Management Direction: FWP will maintain the current allocation of nine launches per day and maximum group size of 15 persons. Current quantitative social indicators (total number of groups, total number of people in the river corridor, average group size) will be replaced with the more appropriate and relevant social indicator of encounters with other boats on the river. This indicator will become the basis for assessing floater satisfaction with the overall level of solitude on the Smith River. A qualitative standard will be established to ensure the desired conditions are being maintained.

Implementation:

a) Establish encounters with boats on the river as the indicator for the desired level of solitude in the river corridor
b) Establish a qualitative-based standard for floater satisfaction with the level of solitude (e.g. 80% of respondents rate their level of satisfaction with the number of other boats they observed on the river as very good or excellent on a scale of poor, fair, good, very good and excellent).
c) Develop a post-float survey instrument to assess floater satisfaction with their encounters with boats on the river.
d) If the social standard is not being met, FWP may implement management actions that do not require Commission rulemaking. This could include:
   - Public education and outreach to explain the problem.
   - Voluntary and/or incentive based programs to encourage group size reduction or use of fewer watercraft.
   - Closure and/or relocation of boat camps.
e) If less-restrictive management actions are unsuccessful, FWP may recommend that the Commission consider more-restrictive actions. This could include:
   - Reduction in maximum group size.
   - Reduction in maximum number of watercraft allowed per group.
   - Reduction in number of launches per day.
   - Modification or elimination of cancelled launch allocation program.

4.13 <u>Boat Camp Management</u>

Discussion: FWP currently maintains 52 designated campsites (boat camps) along the Smith River. Each boat campsite is limited to one group and a maximum of 15 persons per night. A group is required to camp each night in the site they selected during the registration process.

Designated campsites are important because: 1) the canyon's 60-mile length typically requires floaters to camp overnight; 2) the number of suitable locations for camping is limited since approximately 20 percent of the shoreline is publicly owned and steep cliffs account for a good deal of the riverbank; and 3) the impact of floaters is concentrated at camping locations.

The designated campsite system is supported by extensive recreation ecology research indicating that in high use recreational corridors, significant physical resource impacts occur in a relatively short amount of time. Therefore, an undesignated or dispersed campsite program and/or the practice of campsite rest-rotation in the Smith River Corridor would result in extremely high levels of campsite resource impacts and is therefore not recommended.

The availability of campsites has been an important factor in determining the river's capacity. In particular, the first and last night camping zones have traditionally been bottlenecks of use. Since floaters can make only a certain distance the first night, generally no more than 20 miles, there must be room at the first night campsites for all groups launching on any given day. Likewise, since the last campsite on the river is twelve miles from the Eden Bridge takeout, they are limited to timing their takeout day to cover at least that distance, and, again, usually no more than twenty miles.
To alleviate this situation for floaters, in 1983 FWP began leasing boat camps from private landowners in sections of the river where suitable public land is limited. FWP currently leases nine boat campsites annually from private landowners and one boat camp from DNRC. This measure has been critical to providing enough camping locations for floaters and has been greatly appreciated by floaters and landowners.

In the past, some boat camps were established on an opportunistic basis, either at historic locations or where public land or private leases allowed it. Some of these sites lack desirable characteristics and/or are poorly located to accommodate the pattern of use along the river.

There are four different components to a campsite: 1) the riverbank landing area, 2) the fire grate or core cooking and gathering area, 3) the tent or sleeping areas, and 4) the latrine. Other ancillary features, such as the trail to the latrine, an established hiking trail or a social trail to an excellent fishing hole, could be considered additional components of boat camps.

Beginning in 1991, FWP has worked to improve the physical separation between boat camps, since campsites in close proximity to one another have most often been the source of user conflicts. Also, delineation of distinct campsites became even more important in 1993 when floaters were required to declare where they intended to camp each night. Separation of campsites sites depends on the availability of screening - either vegetative (such as a grove of trees), topographic (such as a bend in the river), or distance. Privacy in and/or between boat camps continues to represent a desirable attribute in all boat camps.

In 2008, River Managers conducted a detailed assessment of boat camp conditions and resource impacts. This assessment confirmed on-going concerns regarding the severity and magnitude of bare ground and soil compaction, loss of vegetative cover, root exposure, and tree damage. The extent of bare ground and soil compaction in the boat camps has prompted FWP and the USFS to consider ways to delineate boat camp core areas and "harden" these areas with gravel. This assessment also confirmed deficiencies in a few boat camps that prompt consideration for possible closure and relocation (see Management Direction below). The results of the 2008 Boat Camp inventory and assessment are provided in ***Appendix B***.

The most critical issues regarding boat camp locations involve the leased private properties located between river mile 44 and 47.4. These campsites are critical for many groups' final night on the river. If FWP were to loose the privilege to lease these sites a major bottleneck could occur for floaters in need of a final night campsite. These leases are currently renewed automatically on an annual basis unless the landowner chooses to terminate them. FWP has authority to sell, trade, lease, or buy land in the Smith River corridor, both as a state land managing agency and as an agency working under the authority of the SRMA. FWP has a successful history in completing land transactions in the Smith River corridor that have enhanced recreational opportunities and access to public lands. State law and the Administrative Rules of Montana regulate FWP land acquisitions and adjustments.

Desired Conditions: *The number, distribution, location and condition of boat camps will be managed to accommodate allocated use. FWP will pursue additional boat campsites in key areas as opportunities arise. The level of development in boat camps will be commensurate with the public's desired experience and the measures needed to mitigate resource impacts.*

Management Direction: FWP will manage the river corridor so there is no net loss of camping opportunities. Boat camps may be added or relocated for the purposes of dispersing overnight camping use, more effectively accommodating the present level and pattern of use, addressing unacceptable resource conditions, or improving the separation between boat camps where privacy and solitude are compromised. FWP will pursue a more permanent solution regarding the leased boat camps on the lower river by monitoring changes in land ownership and investigating potential land acquisition opportunities.

Implementation:

a) Pursue long-term leases or acquire land for boat campsites in places where public lands are not available. Pursue public land and fee title sites before leased sites to assure long-term access and cost efficiency.

b) Pursue the removal and/or relocation of the following boat camps based on a boat camp inventory and assessment conducted in 2008, with the understanding that there must be no net loss in camping opportunities:
   - **Middle Trout Creek** (river mile 30.3). Justification: Close proximity to Upper and Lower Trout Creek Boat Camps with lack of privacy screening. Potential replacement/relocation site: Private lease downstream or on Robertson Homestead Site on FWP property along Trout Creek.
   - **Middle Table Rock** (river mile 33.5). Justification: Close proximity to Upper Table Rock with lack of privacy screening. Potential replacement/relocation site: Private property lease downstream or on FWP property at Snowbush.
   - **Middle Fraunhofer** (river mile 35.4). Justification: Extremely light use, very steep landing, campsite is on slope. Potential replacement/relocation site: Private lease downstream or on FWP property at Meadow Bend.
   - **New Boat Camp near Deep Creek** (river mile 39). Justification: A level, timbered site on river left near river mile 39 located on the FWP/Washington Corp. Conservation Easement boundary has excellent potential for an additional boat camp, just downstream from the popular Deep Creek drainage.
   - **Merganser Bend** (river mile 44.5). Justification: Brushy, small fire grate/core area, limited good tent sites, cannot adequately accommodate maximum group size. Potential replacement/relocation site: Private lease downstream between Ridge Top and Givens Gulch boat camps.
   - **Upper & Lower Black Butte** (river mile 44.8). Justification: Steep and muddy landing, boat camps are close together and lack privacy, cannot adequately accommodate maximum group size. Potential replacement/relocation site: Private lease downstream between Ridge Top and Givens Gulch boat camps.
   - **Middle Givens Gulch** (river mile 47.2). Justification: Hazardous vertical cut bank formed within 10 feet of fire grate/core area, loss of acreage from riverbank erosion, steep access trail from landing, no suitable area for expansion or relocation. Potential replacement/relocation site: Private lease downstream between Ridge Top and Givens Gulch boat camps

c) Monitor and measure resource impacts within boat camps including bare ground, loss of vegetative cover, root exposure, social trails, and tree damage.

d) Establish a Limits of Acceptable Change indicator for resource impacts in boat camps that factors in the extent and severity of the impacts. Develop an evaluation process that affixes a resource impact score with a corresponding rating scale of poor, fair, good and excellent.

e) Establish a standard for the resource impact indicator that all boat camps maintain a resource impact score of good or excellent.

f) If the resource impact standard is not being met, FWP may implement management actions that do not require Commission rulemaking. This could include:
   - Public education and outreach to explain the problem.
   - Voluntary and/or incentive based programs to reduce average group size.

- Planting trees, native plants, grass seed, or vegetation in boat camps.
- Hardening barren and/or delineating barren core areas in boat camps.
- Closure and/or relocation of boat camps.

g) If less-restrictive management actions are unsuccessful, FWP may recommend that the Commission consider more-restrictive actions. This could include:
   - Reduction in maximum group size.
   - Reduction in maximum number of watercraft allowed per group.
   - Reduction in number of launches per day.
   - Additional campsite layover day restrictions.
   - Modification or elimination of cancelled launch allocation program.

h) Concentrate camping impacts by restricting floater camping on public lands to designated boat camps only, contingent upon USFS approval for federal land.

i) Establish criteria for the location, terrain, design, and development features of any new or relocated boat camp on the Smith River (see **Figure 4**).

Figure 4: Boat Camp Criteria

Location	Terrain	Layout & Design	Development
Strategically located	Level	Room for a minimum of 10 tents	Boat camp sign
Out of sight of private homes or cabins	Well drained soil	Good tree or vegetative screening between tent areas	Boat tie-offs
Out of sight and sound of other boat camps	Low to moderate grade & steepness of riverbank landing	Fire grate	Steel fire grate
Free of sensitive heritage resources	Sparse riparian vegetation at landing area	A minimum width of 90 feet for riverbank landing	Private property signs as needed
Free of sensitive wildlife habitat	Free of wet, boggy, or thickly vegetated landing area		Livestock exclosure fencing as needed
Outside of any major flash flood zone			Other developments to enhance visitor experience / reduce resource impacts

4.14 Pet Policy

Discussion: Historically, FWP regulations (ARM 12.8.203) have required pets on the Smith River to be physically restrained or on a leash under 10 feet in length in hand or anchored at all times to be leashed and under control at all times. Proper removal and disposal of pet waste is required. The Lewis and Clark National Forest also prohibited unrestrained animals in the river corridor in 2007 in an effort to provide consistency with FWP's pet regulations (Forest Supervisor's Order # LC-07-06).

While the exact number or percentage of floaters bringing pets is unknown, many Smith River floaters have traditionally brought dogs (and occasionally other pets) on float trips. For some floaters, family pets are an important aspect of the recreational experience and/or family outing on the Smith River.

Despite the social and traditional values of bringing family pets along on float trips, FWP received numerous complaints over the years from floaters who reported conflicts and concerns, particularly with dogs running at large and pet excrement left in boat camps. FWP also documented two incidents involving floaters who were bitten by other people's dogs and required medical attention.

Animal restraint can be difficult to comply with in a river environment and physical restraint of an animal can be hazardous in the event of a boating accident. River Ranger observations indicate that many floaters with pets disregard the leash law once they depart the launch area at Camp Baker and are out of sight of FWP officials. There is also little evidence to indicate that pet owners are properly removing and disposing of pet waste from the river corridor in accordance with FWP regulations.

There are numerous concerns regarding dogs in the river corridor, the greatest of which is the potential dogs running at large to create a nuisance, conflict or safety hazard for other floaters. Other concerns associated with pets on the river include:

- Potential for dogs or other pets to chase, harass, stress, injure or kill wildlife and/or domestic livestock.
- Potential for dogs running at large to enter other floaters' campsites and/or trespass onto private property.
- Sanitation, disease, and aesthetic concerns with pet waste that is not properly removed from the river corridor.
- Noise associated with barking dogs.
- Undesirable law enforcement contacts with non-compliant floaters.

The difficulty of complying with the leash requirement, combined with the aforementioned complaints and incidents, lead FWP to reexamine this issue and consider prohibiting dogs and other pets on Smith River floats.

Desired Conditions: *Resource impacts and social conflicts associated with dogs and other pets will be eliminated on the Smith River.*

Management Direction: FWP will prohibit dogs and other pets on all Smith River float trips and at Camp Baker and Eden Bridge. Exceptions will be granted for legitimate service dogs and/or hunting dogs used for lawful hunting purposes during legal hunting seasons.

Implementation:

a) Prohibit dogs and other pets on all Smith River float trips and at Camp Baker and Eden Bridge under the authority of ARM 12.8.203.

b) Post signs announcing the pet prohibition on signs and kiosks at Camp Baker and Eden Bridge.
c) Encourage USFS to prohibit floaters from possessing dogs and other pets in boat camps located on National Forest lands within the river corridor through a Lewis & Clark and Helena National Forest Supervisor's Order.
d) Inform and educate the public of the pet prohibition through a multi-media campaign, including news releases, FWP website, the pre-float information packet, and a Smith River trip planning video.

4.15 Human Waste Management

Discussion: Disposal of solid human waste (and urine to a lesser degree) is a well-recognized challenge in remote recreation settings. This is particularly true in river corridors like the Smith River where use levels are high and vehicle access, campsites, and public land ownership is limited.

Human waste disposal affects recreational floaters in two significant ways, the first being how and where to dispose of solid human waste while floating in-between boat camps; and the second being how and where to dispose of human waste while in camp. Disposal of human waste *in* boat camps presents the greatest challenge given the concentrated and longer duration of use of at these sites. However, in transit disposal needs must also be addressed.

In regard to disposal of solid human waste while floating in-between boat camps, FWP has historically recommended that floaters use the designated boat camp latrines whenever possible. Given the distances between boat camps, this is not always feasible. One concern with this practice is the intrusion of transient floaters into boat camps that are occupied by other parties. Fortunately, boat camps are often unoccupied during the time of day when this occurs. When boat camps are not an option, FWP currently recommends the cat hole method in accordance with the national Leave No Trace program.

The guidelines for proper use of the cat hole technique include:

- Locate cat hole at least 200 feet from water
- Dig a small hole 6-8 inches deep, preferably in soil with a high organic content
- Deposit solid human waste in the hole, replace soil, tamp, and disguise
- Pack out toilet paper

The cat hole technique often presents difficulties finding suitable locations greater than 200 feet from water and the potential trespass on private property when seeking privacy and suitable locations.

Managers have provided pit latrines at all boat camps on the Smith River since the mid 1980's. This relatively primitive latrine system has worked reasonably well in terms of floater satisfaction and helping to prevent the problem of people going to the bathroom in inappropriate locations, e.g. in campsites, along the water, or on private land.

The pit latrines do raise some concerns however. Concerns include:

- Health Risks
- Soil and Vegetative Disturbances
- Improper Disposal of Trash
- Site Availability
- Cultural Resource Impacts
- Labor Costs and Time Allocation

Health Risks

One concern with the pit toilet system is the potential public health risk from disease-causing pathogens entering into the river or direct human contact with the pathogens when people use the latrines (human feces are known to contain over 100 forms of bacteria, viruses, and protozoa, including Giardia, Cryptosporidium, and Hepatitis A). FWP staff clean the pit toilet risers or seats less frequently than is done at more developed state parks and fishing access sites.

The Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) conducted a study in 2002 to evaluate fecal coliform contributions from recreation floaters on the Smith River. The study concluded that recreational floaters did not cause a measurable increase of coliform bacteria to the Smith River. FWP did relocate some of the latrine sites that were too close to the water. In preparation for this management plan, FWP consulted with DEQ again. A spokesperson from the Source Water Protection Program noted that the surface water quality standard for bacteria has changed since 2003. The new standard limits the number of E. coli where the old standard limited fecal coliform. The new standard is a better indicator of possible presence of pathogenic organisms. It appears that the 2003 study actually documented violations of what is now the E.coli standard (<126 cfu/100 ml) for the Smith River.

Furthermore, soils made up of the sands, gravels, and cobbles along the river are not great places for treatment of human waste. Some soils are thin and coarse and provide a poor filter for the small viral particles or any dissolved pharmaceuticals. It has limited organic matter that limits the uptake of nitrogen and phosphorus needed for decomposition.

As the amount of human waste increases within small cat holes or hand dug waste, there is an increase in pressure on the disease-causing pathogens and a greater likelihood that the pathogens will move through the subsurface soils.

Soil and Vegetative Disturbances

A serious concern with the pit latrine system is the disturbance to soil and vegetation resulting from repetitive digging of new latrine pits and the trails leading to the toilets. On average a pit toilet is 3.5 feet deep and 2 feet in diameter, which results in approximately 14 cubic feet of soil displaced per hole (In recent years staff has dug an average of 42 holes per float season). Soil disturbance of this magnitude creates an environment conducive to the spread of noxious weeds and the presence of multiple trails to both active and non-active sites detracts from the semi-primitive appearance of the landscape.

Improper Disposal of Trash

Pit latrines are regularly used as trash receptacles (beer cans, food, clothing, hygiene products, plastic bottles, etc.). Disposal of trash in pit latrines is unlawful, creates an attractor to wildlife, and is very difficult to remove.

Site Availability

Rangers dig a new hole each time a hole reaches its capacity. The location of the new hole varies depending on soil conditions, distance from the campsite, distance from the river, proximity to other holes, presence of cultural resources, etc. With an average of 42 holes dug per float season, over time it becomes more difficult to find a suitable location for new holes. This problem occurs most frequently at the most heavily used boat camps. Due to the rate of human waste decomposition and the difficulties of removing un-decomposed material, it is not feasible to reuse holes on a regular basis.

Cultural Resource Impacts

It is well documented that the river corridor contains a rich assemblage of cultural resources. FWP is alert to the fact that digging pit latrine holes could have adverse effects on these cultural resources. There is a need to conduct baseline surveys around boat camps in order to assess the conditions and prevent or mitigate adverse effects. As stated previously, the presence of cultural resources further limits the availability of suitable sites for holes.

Labor Costs and Time Allocation

Maintaining the pit latrine system is labor intensive and significantly reduces the amount of time that rangers have to conduct public outreach (the average time to dig a hole is 1.5 hours). Rangers use visitor contacts to educate floaters on a number of topics including low impact camping, river etiquette, and boating safety. The rangers also field questions on a range of topics such as trip logistics, river conditions, wildlife watching, or angling.

Each of the aforementioned concerns when considered on their own may not pose a significant threat at this time. This leads some people to conclude that a change from the current pit toilet system is not warranted. Others will argue that managers should take proactive measure now to ensure that minimal resource impacts occur, as required in statute.

There have been a variety of ideas proposed, researched, and/or tried as alternatives to the current system. In 2005, for example, FWP experimented with a dehydrating toilet at the Crowsfoot boat camp (the toilet was removed after a single season due to water accumulating in the toilet). Rangers use portable waste disposal systems on float patrols. Managers have researched methods used on other river systems that are comparable to the Smith River.

For each possible solution there exists an array of questions, concerns, and challenges. The issue of human waste management is both a social and a resource issue and it is imperative to consider each of these components seriously as a part of managing the Smith River State Park and River Corridor. FWP must consider the interests of the public. FWP must also protect the resources. These two mandates are not mutually exclusive and yet the delicate balance between the two may best characterize the inherent difficulty of managing a precious asset like the Smith River. The agency must take a more active role in managing this issue.

Desired Conditions: *Human waste disposal on the Smith River will be managed in a progressive manner that: reduces impacts and disturbance to soil, vegetation, and cultural resources; reduces contamination of water resources; reduces risk to public health; and minimizes impacts on the floating public and adjacent landowners.*

Management Direction: FWP will conduct research and monitor public health, soil, water, vegetative, and cultural conditions to assess further impacts from pit toilets. FWP will develop education and outreach material to inform floaters about the topic of human waste management and methods for addressing concerns. FWP will also develop voluntary and incentive-based programs to introduce the public to alternative methods of human waste management. FWP will make available equipment for such purposes. River rangers will employ alternative methods as well to demonstrate and evaluate various methods. In the future FWP may phase in a human waste pack out requirement for the Smith River after completing additional research on the impacts of the pit latrines and the appropriate methods and equipment for proper removal and disposal of waste from the river corridor.

Implementation:

a) Educate floaters and landowners about human waste management in the corridor.
b) Work collaboratively with floaters, landowners, the USFS and other agencies to identify an acceptable human waste management program for the Smith River.

c) Conduct research on impacts of pit toilets and initiate a cyclic monitoring program in cooperation with Montana DEQ to identify water chemistry and contaminate conditions in the Smith River.
d) Establish voluntary and incentive-based programs to familiarize floaters with alternative human waste management methods.
e) Demonstrate and evaluate alternative human waste management methods.
f) If research or monitoring indicates unacceptable conditions are present or imminent, seek Commission approval through the Smith River Special Use Area Rule to require packing out solid human waste in boat camps and/or comply with other agency-approved human waste management methods.
g) Solicit widespread public input on any proposed changes that require Commission rulemaking.
h) If the Commission adopts an alternative human waste disposal method, take the following actions before implementing changes:
    - Provide and maintain a means for proper disposal of human waste at Eden Bridge.
    - Advise and inform the public of the upcoming change for one full floater season in advance.
    - Inform and educate the public about the change through a multi-media campaign, including the FWP website, the pre-float information packet, and pre-launch orientation at Camp Baker.
    - Encourage sporting goods vendors in gateway communities to sell and/or rent portable toilet systems.
    - Sell or rent supplies at Camp Baker put-in to ensure that floaters are prepared to comply with the new changes.
    - Discourage the cat hole technique due to potential trespass onto private property and/or challenges related to finding suitable locations more than 200 feet from water.
i) Advise floaters to urinate a minimum of 200 feet from the boat camp perimeter.

4.16 Commercial Use (Other than River Outfitting)

Discussion: Commercial services other than river outfitting have historically been limited to vehicle shuttle drivers and a few watercraft rental/delivery vendors. Most commercial services and vendors are subject to the FWP Commercial Use Rules. However, vehicle shuttle drivers were expressly excluded from the provisions of that Rule.

Desired Conditions: *There will be a general absence of commercial enterprises on the Smith River (other than river outfitting). River recreationists will be encouraged to patronize businesses in nearby "gateway" communities to meet the majority of their needs for supplies, goods, and services.*

Management Direction: FWP will maintain a non-commercialized atmosphere in the Smith River State Park and River Corridor.

Implementation:

a) Evaluate requests for commercial services (other than river outfitting) and if deemed necessary and appropriate issue a Restricted Use Permit in accordance with the FWP Commercial Use Rules.
b) Disapprove Commercial Restricted Use Permits unless the proposed activity is deemed a necessary and appropriate public service and does not create adverse conditions with crowding, parking, boat launching, or other visitor use activities and aesthetic values.
c) Continue to sell firewood and other authorized products at Camp Baker.

4.17 Float Gates

Discussion: Float gates are structures installed across the river that facilitate safe and easy passage of floaters while containing and controlling livestock and marking property boundaries. The Smith River was one of the first areas in the state where float gates were installed. FWP accordingly has expertise in locating and designing float gates, labor and materials for constructing them, and river ranger patrols to maintain them.

Landowners generally request to have a gate installed and then work with FWP to install and maintain it. In some cases however, FWP or public floaters discover a new fence across the river, which precipitates contacting the landowner to recommend installation of a float gate.

Recent design changes have been aimed at making the gates more easily removed and reinstalled since ice will destroy a gate if it is left in the river through the winter. Another option has been to make the gates so they can be raised out of the water in the fall. The need for gates depends on water level and the grazing season for livestock. As more floaters have adapted recently to floating during low water years, more fence and corresponding float gates may be required.

Desired Conditions: *Float gates will be installed on the Smith River as a means to reduce hazards associated with livestock fences across the river and as a means to properly contain livestock.*

Management Direction: FWP will ensure that fence crossings of the Smith River are safely passable to floaters and float gate design will be varied to meet the unique requirement of each river crossings.

Implementation:

a) Produce detailed float gate design and installation standards that are effective for landowners, safe for floaters to use and economical to construct and maintain.
b) Assist landowners in establishing float gates. Either the landowner or FWP can initiate float gate projects.
c) Share costs with private landowners for materials, maintenance, operation, and labor associated with float gates.

4.18 Grazing & Fencing

Discussion: Grazing activities, both on public and private land, are historical uses along the river corridor. Depending upon the area and season, floaters may encounter both sheep and cattle. Livestock or evidence of their presence will occasionally be observed within boat camps and some visitors view the evidence of livestock in boat camps as an adverse impact. Ideally, all boat camps would be secure from livestock impacts.

Most FWP lands in the corridor are not fenced along their boundaries. This has not been a management priority because many of the parcels would be difficult to fence due to continual changes in the riverbed, steep and rocky terrain, and limited access. Also, fences would create another visual intrusion into the corridor's semi-primitive landscape.

All the sites that FWP received in the 1983 exchange with the BLM were under an active grazing lease. When the exchange took place, FWP agreed to honor the existing leases (which are non-transferable) until expiration and, at that point, reissue them with preference given to the current leaseholder. Currently, FWP leases 8 tracts totaling 257.57 acres lease to three lessees.

Floaters have occasionally complained about the impact of cattle on both the corridor and their floating experience. Since cattle in the past have not grazed in the corridor until mid-July, it is typically rare for floaters and cattle to make contact with each other. Conflicts between these two uses have seemed to increase as floaters now use the river at lower water levels and for longer seasons.

There are currently only two permitted range allotments bordering the river on National Forest Service land. Only one of these allotments is presently active under permit. The allotment is located from Bear Gulch boat camp to the vicinity of Table Rock boat camp. The grazing season for this allotment currently runs from August 1 through October 15 for a total of 83 animal use months.

Continuing downstream, the river leaves National Forest lands and is bordered by private lands that are grazed by both sheep and cattle from large ranches.

Desired Conditions: *Livestock grazing and associated impacts will be minimized within the Smith River Boat Camps.*

Management Direction: FWP will strive to determine the impact of grazing to natural resources and need for improving or installing fencing. FWP will seek to eliminate livestock related impacts in the boat camps, as well as fences that cross the river. Livestock owners will be encouraged to use natural terrain features and/or float gates to control the movement of livestock as much as possible.

Implementation:

a) Measure and monitor grazing impacts in boat camps and on a site-by-site basis assess the need for fencing to exclude livestock.
b) Respond on a case-by-case basis to landowner requests regarding float gates.

4.19 Private Landowner Relations

Discussion: Privately owned land constitutes approximately 80% of the land in the Smith River corridor, thus effective relationships with private landowners are vital to the long-term viability of river recreation and stewardship of the Smith River resource.

Desired Conditions: *FWP will strive to maintain and further develop positive relationships with private landowners in the Smith River corridor and seek collaborative ways to meet the interests of landowners and floaters.*

Management Direction: FWP will strive to establish a strong sense of trust and mutual respect with private landowners in the Smith River corridor through increased education and outreach efforts with Smith River landowners.

Implementation:

a) Continue to work cooperatively with landowners and the public in order to minimize the impacts of recreation on private land, recognize the interests of the recreating public, and protect the public land and resources.
b) Distribute the annual Smith River Report to all Smith River landowners.
c) Produce and distribute a Smith River landowner educational packet that includes information on the following topics:
    - River use regulations
    - Conservation easements
    - Viewshed and visual values
    - Weed control
    - Fire control & fuel reduction
    - Stream bank and water quality protection
    - Private property signing programs

- River corridor safety issues
- Float gates
- Living with wildlife (Bears)
- River manager contact information

d) Update the private land ownership map and landowner mailing list.
e) Host landowner meetings on a regular basis to discuss issues of mutual concern.

4.20 Administrative, Volunteer, Research & Educational Floats

Discussion: Administrative floats by FWP, USFS, or other cooperating agencies and organizations are an important component of cooperative management of the Smith River Corridor. Examples of necessary and appropriate administrative floats include but are not limited to fish population monitoring, fishery research, water quality monitoring, heritage resource surveys, noxious weed control, hazard tree or hazard fuel removal, wildlife control or management, boat camp maintenance, emergency responses, and law enforcement patrols and investigations.

Volunteer service projects have been approved in the past and have provided helpful services such as noxious weed pulling, fire grate cleaning, and litter removal. Research projects by legitimate scientists or students have also been approved on occasion, often resulting in information or data pertinent to the management of the river corridor.

Administrative floats typically require launch permits and boat camp assignments that fall outside of the standard public launch allocation system. Therefore it is imperative that launches are allocated for legitimate administrative purposes only, pertinent to the management of the Smith River Corridor. Administrative launches must also include authorized personnel only and limited to the minimum number of personnel necessary to complete the project.

Volunteer or scientific research project personnel may be granted fee waivers on a case-by-case basis per the division fee rule. Generally, educational institutions that are not performing a service or project directly related to the management of the Smith River will not be granted fee waivers or special exceptions for launch allocations. The Smith River Manager shall serve as the coordinator for all requests for administrative or other special projects or requests.

Desired Conditions: *Administrative, volunteer, or research floats will be limited to legitimate projects and needs associated with the management and protection of the Smith River and the park system. All administrative floats will practice the highest standards of river stewardship.*

Management Direction: FWP will ensure that administrative floats are conducted for necessary and appropriate purposes only. Administrative floats will be limited to a maximum of eight persons unless the project or assignment specifically requires more people. FWP will carefully evaluate launch permit or fee waiver requests.

Implementation:

a) The Smith River State Park Manager will coordinate all administrative, volunteer, research, or educational floats.
b) Include floater fee waiver policies in the Smith River Special Use Area Rule.
c) Launch permit or fee waiver requests that are outside of the standard allocation system will only be approved for legitimate projects or programs that support the management and administration of the river corridor.
d) Launch permit or fee waiver exceptions will not be granted for educational institutions unless they are providing legitimate social or scientific research in support of the management and administration of the river corridor or management functions.
e) All administrative float trips will display an administrative boat tag on all watercraft associated with the project.

4.21 Public Information & Education

Discussion: Outdoor recreationists typically desire and need three basic types of information: 1) regulatory; 2) informational; and 3) interpretive. FWP has provided all three types of public information since the beginning of Smith River management. This information can enhance the quality of a float experience, influence both floaters' and landowners' actions and opinions, influence the behavior and safety of river recreationists, and affect the condition of Smith River resources.

FWP has used the following multi-media approach to provide these types of information to the public: 1) personal contacts by FWP staff; 2) telephone; 3) printed handouts such as guides and maps; 4) signs and informational postings at Camp Baker and at boat camps 5) the Smith River web page, and 6) news releases. There is substantial demand for information, and it changes with time and with each individual or group involved.

Desired Conditions: *Public information and education programs and materials will promote and inspire safe, responsible, and ethical river recreation and stewardship of the Smith River resource.*

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Management Direction: FWP will implement a multimedia public outreach and education program that keeps the public well informed of Smith River operations, issues, and programs. Education and outreach initiatives will focus on river recreation safety; leave no trace outdoor ethics, river stewardship, and respect for private property, while Interpretive programs will emphasize self-guided and self-discovery techniques.

Implementation:

a) Produce an updated floater information packet (mailed to all successful lottery applicants) addressing the following topics:
    - River hazards and floater safety
    - River recreation regulations
    - Leave No Trace outdoor skills and ethics
    - Instructions for check in and registration at Camp Baker

- Human waste management
- Best practices for avoiding conflict with wildlife and for securing food and garbage
- Boat camp descriptions

b) Produce a 15-20 minute Smith River trip planning video for distribution to the public through a mail out loaner program.
c) Establish a "*special notice and advisory*" section on the Smith River website to post critical information regarding river conditions, hazards, and management actions.
d) Continue to publish an annual Smith River Report that summarizes visitor use statistics, operations, projects, accomplishments, impacts, non-compliance and incidents. The report will be posted on the Smith River website and hard copies will be distributed to all landowners as well as cooperating and interested agencies.
e) Produce a new and improved Smith River floater map and guide.
f) Limit bulletin boards, kiosks, and interpretive signage to Camp Baker put-in and Eden Bridge take-out.
g) Limit signage on the river to boat camp signs, private property advisories, and boat camp closures or postings related to public safety. Sign standards will be developed to ensure that sign size, shape and color and materials are compatible with the primitive character of the Smith River.
h) Hazardous condition warning signs will not be installed on the river unless they reflect a significant public risk and a fixed river hazard, blockage, or obstacle.
i) Practice open management with all records and management decisions.

4.22 River Patrols

Discussion: River patrols conducted by River Rangers have been the hallmark of FWP's river management presence since 1980. All river patrols focus on the following duties and responsibilities:

- Monitoring river hazards and providing visitor assistance and emergency services
- Providing useful information to enhance public safety and the floater experience
- Monitoring river corridor resource impacts and social conflicts
- Cleaning and maintaining steel fire grates
- Cleaning and maintaining pit latrines
- Installing and maintaining boat camp signs and boat tie-off posts
- Collecting and removing refuse and litter
- Monitoring floater's compliance with river recreation regulations

Desired Conditions: *FWP will maintain a visible and professional river ranger presence on the Smith River during the peak use season with a focus on public safety, visitor assistance and education, resource protection and stewardship, and boat camp maintenance.*

Management Direction: FWP River rangers will continue to conduct patrols of the river corridor, with an emphasis on visitor safety, resource stewardship, boat camp maintenance, and public education. Clear objectives will be established for river patrols and Rangers will be provided with appropriate training and equipment to function in a safe, productive, and professional manner.

Implementation:

a) Seek to increase seasonal staffing to adequately address public safety, resource protection and visitor use management activities.
b) Enhance River Ranger safety and productivity by conducting two-person tandem river patrols whenever possible.
c) Increase the visibility of river patrols by applying River Ranger markings to all FWP watercraft.
d) Provide staff training on the following skills and abilities: safety compliance, swift water rescue, canoeing & rafting skills, watercraft repair, and resource management.
e) Equip patrols with effective emergency communications and response equipment.
f) Produce River Ranger Patrol Guidelines.
g) Identify and procure all existing equipment needs to ensure safe and efficient river patrols.

4.23 Public Safety & Emergency Operations

Discussion: Floating the Smith River requires both competent boating skills and the ability to camp in a remote location often under extreme weather conditions. Self-reliance and the ability to deal with emergency situations are two important skills for floaters. Safe, competent boating skills are particularly important because FWP personnel are often not close enough to render emergency assistance in time.

FWP has resources and expertise to respond to difficulties on the river, including trained River Rangers and FWP Wardens, their collective knowledge of the river and river floating, and rescue skills and equipment such as watercraft. There are limited communications capabilities in place on the river, including telephone service at Eden Bridge and Camp Baker as well as satellite phone service available to River Rangers in the canyon.

Additionally, approximately 20 private roads lead into the canyon, and radiophone service is available in limited locations along the river. Moreover, landowners are usually willing to provide assistance to floaters in trouble. Such problems have primarily involved floaters' getting delayed due to weather conditions or getting stranded when their watercraft capsized or is damaged. During the last 15 years of active management, there have been no deaths and only a few cases of evacuation on record.

The Smith River is a natural river system in the middle of the Little Belt Mountains with natural hazards and conditions that continually change in intensity, character, and location. This includes changing channel conditions and obstructions.

The Cascade and/or Meagher County Sheriff has primary jurisdiction over search and rescue and other emergency services on the Smith River. However, Smith River Rangers or FWP staff are often first to encounter and/or learn about an emergency in the Smith River corridor. It is imperative that FWP establish effective communications and a collaborative working relationship with the County Sheriff Departments.

Desired Conditions: *Smith River State Park and River Corridor will be free of serious accidents, injuries or tragedies where all visitors practice the highest standards of safe and responsible river recreation.*

Management Direction: FWP will manage the Smith River for a high level of challenge and self-reliance, and strive to balance public safety with personal floater responsibility and awareness. Floaters will bear the primary responsibility for their own safety and welfare and will be encouraged to be aware of dangers and to possess the knowledge and skills to float the Smith safely. Floaters who have accepted these risks will be primarily self-reliant. Public information, education and outreach will serve as the primary tools to ensure floaters' safety, including printed materials in floater's packets, personal contact with river rangers during the floater orientation at Camp Baker put-in.

Implementation:

a) Minimize exposure to liability by developing a progressive risk management program and taking action to improve public education regarding unpredictable, ever changing natural processes and weather conditions and water related hazards.
b) Evaluate logjams and other boating safety hazards on a case-by-case basis to assess significance of risk to public and staff. Eliminate or mitigate hazard consistent with risk analysis.
c) Improve efforts to offer mutual aid and emergency services to the Cascade and Meagher County Sheriff Departments by promoting the knowledge, skills, expertise and resources of Smith River Managers, Rangers and FWP Wardens.
d) Maintain a high level of River Ranger training and proficiency in order to respond effectively to emergency situations.
e) Ensure that River Rangers are properly prepared and equipped to respond to emergency situations.
f) Prepare a progressive Incident Action Plan (IAP) that supports and compliments County search & rescue emergency service jurisdictions.
g) Incorporate into the Smith River web site a special floater advisory section to provide on-line access to changing conditions and hazards on the river.
    - The printed floater packet that is sent to all successful lottery applicants will be updated with improved safety and hazard information.
    - A Smith River trip planning video will be produced that will include important safety advice and hazard information. This video will be available on loan to all Smith River floaters in the months preceding their float trip.
h) Properly sign, post, or cordon off boat camps subject to public safety closures or postings.

4.24 Enforcement

Discussion: There are rules in place on the Smith River for the purpose of public safety, resource protection, and user enjoyment. The objective of enforcement efforts on the river is to promote knowledge and respect of regulations and to use enforcement only as needed to gain compliance.

Some of these rules are enforceable by seasonal river rangers as a part of their regular patrol duties. River patrols by fully commissioned FWP or USFS personnel occur on a less frequent basis. Some of the violations encountered include:

- Personal Flotation Device (PFD) violations
- Dogs off leash and failure to remove pet waste
- Campfires outside of fire grate or left smoldering
- Digging and disturbing soil
- Litter
- Trespassing on private property
- Permit compliance

One of the challenges of enforcing rules on the Smith River is the presence of different public agencies and lands. FWP staff, for example, may not have the authority to enforce rules on USFS lands and visa versa. Given the remote conditions in the canyon and the difficulty of responding to emergencies, and given the desire to provide a quality experience for all floaters, it is important for FWP, the USFS and other agencies to cooperate and provide a coordinated enforcement presence on the Smith River.

Desired Conditions: *Smith River State Park will have a balanced enforcement presence that enhances public safety and resource stewardship while encouraging respect and compliance with river recreation, resource protection, and public safety regulations.*

Management Direction: FWP's enforcement presence and actions will serve as an important element of visitor use management, public safety, and resource protection on the Smith River. Efforts will be made to increase the frequency of river patrols by fully commissioned personnel. Enforcement contacts will strive to gain compliance by educating the public about the purpose and reason for public use regulations.

Implementation:

a) Train and certify all seasonal River Rangers as Ex-officio Wardens.
b) Train and certify a member of the staff as a fully commissioned law enforcement officer whose responsibilities include the Smith River State Park and River Corridor as a part of improving emergency response, public safety, and equipping.
c) Schedule river patrols by fully commissioned law enforcement staff each float season.
d) Develop a written law enforcement response protocol for Smith River Rangers.

4.25 Human/Wildlife Conflicts & Food Storage

Discussion: The Smith River corridor is home to diverse wildlife species and wildlife viewing is one of the opportunities available to floaters. There are some risks associated with wildlife that comes in contact with river recreation activities. Species of particular concern include black bears, mountain lions, and raccoons. Raccoons have long been known as nighttime raiders in boat camps, but human-black bear conflicts pose the most significant and immediate issue.

The primary concern is the potential for wildlife to become habituated to human activities and/or food conditioned by obtaining human food in the boat camps. This can present a serious threat to human safety in the case of bears. The type, volume, and weight of food associated with river recreation makes it extremely difficult to properly secure these attractants out of reach of wildlife. Boat camps are currently not outfitted with food hanging or storage devices or facilities.

River recreationsists face challenges in properly securing food and garbage. The Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC) recently approved bear resistant insulated coolers that are suitable for watercraft and are available commercially.

In recent years, FWP has documented an increasing number of human-black bear conflicts. While no incident has resulted in personal injury, black bears have caused property damage, exhibited aggressive, habituated or food conditioned behavior, and obtained human food rewards in boat camps. The increase in incidents may be due to a number of factors, including bear population trends, weather and climate factors affecting natural food sources, unintentional and/or intentional feeding of bears on private property, and improved incident reporting procedures for River Rangers.

There is growing evidence that some black bear behavior documented in the river corridor is a result of intentional feeding of black bears on private property. FWP must actively address this concern through education and outreach with private landowners, and when necessary, appropriate law enforcement actions and wildlife control.

These incidents have prompted FWP and USFS officials to discuss the possibility of implementing a food storage order on the Lewis and Clark & Helena National Forests and FWP lands. This discussion may eventually culminate in a formal food storage order on USFS lands. If that happens, FWP may follow suit on its lands in order to ensure uniform and consistent regulations on the Smith River Corridor. In the meantime, FWP is evaluating options for properly storing or securing food in the boat camps.

Mountain lions have not been a particular concern in boat camps, but visitors choosing to hike or explore the inner canyons should be informed of the potential risks and recommended behavior if a mountain lion is encountered.

Desired Conditions: *River recreation on the Smith River will not adversely impact wildlife or result in human injury or property damage resulting from conflicts between humans and wildlife.*

Management Direction: FWP will promote appropriate food and garbage storage practices and respect of wildlife through proactive education and outreach efforts. An increased effort will be made to encourage living with wildlife best practices on privately owned lands in the Smith River corridor. If at some point in the future FWP and the USFS adopt a food storage order for public lands along the Smith River, an effective means of complying with the order will be established.

Implementation:

a) Include FWP's bear aware brochure in all Smith River floater packets.
b) Demonstrate electric fences, approved coolers, and other food storage techniques at Camp Baker and on river ranger patrols.
c) Conduct a pilot project and ask floaters to voluntarily experiment with and evaluate electric fences, approved bear resistant coolers, and/or other food storage techniques at boat camps.
d) If a food storage order goes into effect for the Smith River, employ the method(s) that worked the best during the pilot project and complete effective education programs for any new floater requirements.

5 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ISSUES AND DIRECTION

5.1 Fisheries Resources

The Smith River waterway is a nationally known trout fishery and has been managed as a wild trout fishery since 1974 when the stocking of trout was discontinued. The fisheries resource is classified as high value for the floating section between Camp Baker and the mouth of Hound Creek.

Primary issues associated with recreational angling include FWP's response to water temperature induced fishing restrictions and closures and promotion of responsible fishing etiquette. The primary mechanism for addressing these issues is through the fishing regulations setting process. The issues are referenced in this management plan however in recognition of the importance of these resources to the recreation experience and the impacts that recreation, e.g. angling, can have on the resources.

Desired Conditions: *The Smith River's biological and ecological conditions will sustain healthy and viable fish populations and aquatic resource communities.*

Management Direction: FWP will promote conservation practices that enhance stream and riparian habitats and minimize the potential for introduction of noxious and aquatic nuisance species. Efforts will be made to improve understanding of the fishery and aquatic resource through applied research.

Implementation:

a) Review and update fishing regulations as necessary to maintain a sustainable fishery.
b) Promote responsible fishing practices and etiquette, including appropriate catch and release techniques.
c) Limit angling mortality by implementing mandatory fishing closures in response to elevated water temperatures.
d) Implement water temperature induced fishing restrictions and/or closures in accordance with the statewide rules (ARM 12.5.501-12.5.508).
e) Establish fisheries staffing levels commensurate with the workload on the Smith River.
f) Work to further incorporate fishery related projects into the corridor enhancement account expenditures.

5.2 Water Resources

Discussion: Water quality in the Smith River basin can be described as fair to good quality. USGS unpublished water quality data shows that total dissolved solids concentrations, an indication of salinity, could be considered moderate in the Smith River near Camp Baker and low in Sheep Creek. All instantaneous measurements of dissolved oxygen levels in the Smith River have been above 7 mg/l, which are above the aquatic life water quality standards for life stages except early life stages. Nutrient sampling has shown phosphorous concentrations above the desirable level to prevent excessive algae growth in the Smith River. Potential sources of the nutrients include fertilizer, animal waste, sewage, and sediment.

The Montana Department of Environmental Quality 2006 Integrated Water Quality Report lists the floating section of the Smith River as a waterbody where one or more applicable beneficial uses have been assessed as being impaired or threatened. The probable cause of impairment in the river between Camp Baker and Hound Creek section of the river was identified as low flow alterations, nutrients (total phosphorus), and fecal coliform. According to the report, impairments from Hound Creek to Eden Bridge included low flow alterations, nutrients (total phosphorus), alteration of streamside vegetation, physical habitat alterations, and high water temperatures.

Primary water resource issues related to river recreation focus on diminished floater opportunities based on low water levels in mid to late summer.

Desired Conditions: *The Smith River will remain clean with flows that sustain outstanding opportunities for recreational floating and fishing for future generations.*

Management Direction: FWP will seek to enhance in-stream flows by supporting collaborative and cooperative relationships with private landowners, agencies, and conservation organizations. Biological and mechanical applications will be used to enhance native riparian vegetation.

Implementation:

a) Manage human waste in a manner that does not present a risk of contaminating water resources with fecal coliform or other human waste borne pathogens.
b) Mitigate human induced soil compaction, erosion, and sedimentation in the river corridor.
c) Seek to address impairments in the watershed identified in the TMDL process through cooperative projects with private landowners, other agencies, and conservation organizations.
d) Initiate a cyclic monitoring program in cooperation with Montana DEQ to identify water chemistry and contaminate conditions in the Smith River.

5.3 Wildlife & Terrestrial Resources

Discussion: While less known than the fishery, wildlife populations also contribute to the considerable recreational qualities of this area. In addition to supporting a resident mule deer population, the canyon portion of the river supplies an important winter range for mule deer and elk from both the Big and Little Belt Mountains. It also provides a year-round home for black bears, mountain lions, mountain grouse, raccoons, and a variety of other wildlife species generally associated with river bottom habitat. White-tailed deer, pheasants, and sharp-tailed grouse are also found throughout the lower, flood-plain segment of the river where shrubby vegetation interspersed with agriculture provides an excellent habitat.

Desired Conditions: *The Smith River's biological and ecological conditions will sustain healthy and viable wildlife and terrestrial resource communities.*

Management Direction: FWP will continue to promote and inspire river recreationists to practice the respect wildlife principle of Leave No Trace as a means of minimizing adverse impacts to wildlife and protecting public safety.

Implementation:

a) Include information in the floater packet about food storage and the best practices to avoid conflicts with wildlife.
b) Implement a proactive program to promote appropriate food storage practices in the boat camps and Living with Wildlife best practices on private properties (see Chapter 4 Section 4.25, Human/Wildlife Conflicts).

5.4 Vegetation and Soil

Discussion: Relatively healthy and viable forest and riparian vegetation and soils enhance the ecological diversity of the Smith River Corridor. The cliff bands, steep slopes, and benches above the river are predominated by mature stands of Douglas Fir and Ponderosa Pine, while the riverbank riparian areas host willow, and a few Cottonwood groves. Forest disease appears to be very limited.

The impact of river recreation is largely concentrated in the boat camps where the trampling effects of repetitive visitor use has resulted in barren core areas, soil compaction, loss of vegetative cover, root exposure, social trails, diminished tree seedling regeneration, and depletion of down and dead wood.

Desired Conditions: *Healthy native vegetation species and habitats will predominate in the Smith River Corridor.*

Management Direction: FWP will pursue streambank stabilization and riparian revegetation projects in high priority areas and continue to promote river recreationists to practice the principles of Leave no Trace as a means of minimizing adverse impacts to vegetation and soil.

Implementation:

a) Monitor each boat camp for impacts to vegetation on a three-year cycle.
b) Prohibit cutting of live trees in boat camps for firewood.
c) Actively pursue site hardening in the core areas of boat camps to prevent or mitigate resource impacts.

5.5 Noxious Weeds

Discussion: FWP is required by the Montana County Noxious Weed Management Act of 1985 (MCA 7-22-21) to control noxious weeds on its lands. Noxious weeds, primarily leafy spurge, are found throughout the Smith River from scattered patches to concentrated areas. The heaviest concentrations are along the river and on the low river floodplains and cannot therefore be treated with chemicals. At least two patches of leafy spurge have been discovered midway between the river and the top of the benches. In these areas, restricted use of chemical treatments and biological agents, both very effective, have been used to control the spread of this noxious weed on Forest Service land. Also, several years of releasing flea beetles are beginning to show results in limited areas. However, since the spurge seed is water borne, propagation of this noxious weed remains an ongoing problem along the river corridor on both public and private lands.

Spotted knapweed, houndstongue, whitetop, and field bindweed are also known to infest the area, although not to the extent of leafy spurge. Continued monitoring by both the public and managing agencies, as well as private landowners, is essential to effective control of this weed.

FWP has also cooperated in projects to increase the public's awareness of noxious weeds, including posting signs and inserting information about the weeds in floater packets.

***Desired Conditions**: Noxious weeds in the Smith River corridor will be contained and confined in a manner that increases the potential for viable populations of native vegetation species to predominate.*

Management Direction: FWP will continue to cooperate and collaborate with the Meagher and Cascade County Weed Control Districts, the USFS, and the Smith River Habitat Project to aggressively treat noxious weed infestations, evaluate current treatment techniques, explore alternative treatment strategies, and seek continued and varied funding for weed control.

Implementation:

a) Monitor and evaluate bio-control populations and effectiveness and consider new releases and/or species.
b) Improve methods to monitor and map weed control infestations and evaluate and program effectiveness as directed in regional weed plan.
c) Use signing and printed materials to educate floaters about noxious weeds and encourage their active participation in controlling them.
d) Train river rangers to monitor and control noxious weeds and to use bio-control agents.
e) Continue to direct financial, staffing, and equipment resources for mid summer and early fall weed spraying float trips. This might include installing a pressurized noxious species wash station at Camp Baker pending available funding.
f) Contact private landowners and pursue joint solutions for attacking noxious weeds in the corridor.

5.6 Fire Management

Discussion: Wildland fires have been relatively infrequent in the Smith River Corridor over the past 15 years. There are sufficient fuels and terrain features to create a significant risk of both human and/or natural caused wildland fire with potential to damage or destroy private property. The relatively inaccessible inner canyon and steep rugged terrain makes fire suppression a highly complex and potentially dangerous scenario.

Fire management and suppression on National Forest lands in the Smith River Corridor is the responsibility of the USFS. Fire suppression on BLM lands east of the Paradise Bend boat camp is the responsibility of the USFS through a cooperative agreement. The USFS also exercises responsibility for fire suppression on several parcels of privately owned land designated as affidavit land where the landowners pay the USFS for fire protection.

These areas include: all of Section 7 T14N, R4E adjacent to Sunset Cliffs boat camps; Sections 18 &19, T15N, R4E, on the east side of the river adjacent to Crows Foot boat camp; Sections 25, T14N, R3E & Section 30, T14N, R4E, both on the east side of the river located adjacent to the Canyon Depth boat camp

The Lewis and Clark Forest Plan's directive for wildfire in the Smith River Canyon is suppression. Thus, the USFS will enforce fire restriction regulations when in effect, including the use of campfires by river floaters.

In addition to fire suppression, the Lewis and Clark and Helena National Forests may consider using prescribed fire to achieve objectives for managing the ecosystem on National Forest lands.

Fire suppression on State lands (FWP & DNRC) within the Smith River Corridor is the responsibility of the Department of Natural Resource Conservation (DNRC). At present, FWP does not have a formal agreement with DNRC associated with fire suppression in the Smith River Corridor. However, in the event of a wildland fire on State land, DNRC resources may be requested.

Fire suppression on private lands in the river corridor is the responsibility of local County fire suppression programs. Other Fire Management activities (Prevention or Fuels Management) are the responsibility of the landowner.

Desired Conditions: *The Smith River corridor will not experience human caused fire associated with river recreation and in the event of a fire, suppression activities will focus on the protection of human life and private property.*

Management Direction: FWP will seek to minimize the risk of human caused wildland fire in the Smith River Corridor by continuing to provide and properly maintain steel fire grates in all boat camps. Fire restrictions will be implemented, posted and enforced in accordance with interagency fire restrictions at the regional level.

Implementation:

a) Post all interagency fire restrictions at the Camp Baker put-in.
b) Regularly assess boat camps for any hazardous fuel build up and/or fire hazards.
c) Provide and maintain steel fire grates in each boat camp.
d) Pursue agreements or protocol for fire suppression on FWP lands.
e) Continue to enforce public use regulations on attending fires.
f) Educate floaters about the danger of wildfires and ways to prevent them.
g) Meet with private landowners to identify their concerns and ideas for preventing wildfires associated with float use.
h) Continue campfire regulations that require all fires to be completely contained in the fire grate and completely extinguished prior to departing the Boat Camp. Unlawful use of campfires will be strictly enforced.

5.7 Viewshed Preservation

Discussion: The viewshed, or visual corridor, refers to the land floaters are able to see as they travel down the Smith River. This is an important value because it directly influences the level of solitude that the Smith River Management Act directs FWP to manage and represents one of the Smith River's most valued attributes.

In 1970 the Governor's Council on Natural Resources and Development noted, "Limited access has precluded intensive development up to this time. This situation cannot be expected to last, and it is imperative that this problem be reckoned with."

Since this statement was written, slow but steady development has occurred in the corridor. Additional construction of cabins at the two subdivisions and other established settlements occurs almost yearly. There is currently one commercial guest ranch with a golf course operation on the river as well. Virtually all of this activity has occurred on the west bank because of its easier access for development and private ownership of the land.

Development along the river reveals a heightened sensitivity about maintaining the river corridor's viewshed. Landowners, in partnership with the Montana Land Reliance, are increasingly using conservation easements to limit development in the corridor while also benefiting from reductions in property and inheritance taxes. The stair-step topography of the canyon also serves to hide much of the development and maintain an unobstructed view for floaters.

Consequently, floaters have a unique perspective on development along the Smith. Since they view the corridor in total, the appearance of most portions of the river corridor contrasts sharply with developed areas. New developments are particularly evident because of the associated impact of road construction, the seemingly sudden presence of people, vehicles, or structures in new areas, and the high percentage of floaters who return year after year. Concern about development is a consistent theme of floater's comments, ranging from resignation to vehement opposition.

Impacts on the floaters' viewshed often depend on the type, duration, and frequency of visual intrusions along a segment of river. It is also important to recognize the impact of direction of viewing on the level of visual impact. Since most floaters face downstream, objects viewed looking upstream generally don't have the impact of objects viewed downstream. Visual intrusions located on the canyon rim often have less impact than development on or near the riverbank.

Viewshed is also important to landowners, particularly those with recreational properties. For some landowners the viewshed includes the view of floaters boating by their property. The number and frequency of floaters observed and the behavior of those floaters all contribute the landowner's experience. Therefore, it is important to consider both the view from the river and the view of the river when considering viewshed management.

In managing the lands bordering the Smith River, FWP and the USFS have emphasized the need to preserve the semi-primitive recreation opportunities available, such as floating, while maintaining and protecting other resources.

Desired Conditions: *The Smith River will retain its vast open spaces and scenic viewsheds for future generations.*

Management Direction: FWP will strive to maintain the river corridor's natural appearance and scenic viewshed for the enjoyment of the public. Visual evidence of changes in the landscape will be minimized and visually intrusive developments on public lands will not be pursued. Changes in land ownership will be monitored and potential land acquisition or Conservation Easement opportunities will be investigated.

Implementation:

a) Encourage floaters to minimize their visual impact on private landowners by such things as discouraging them from stopping in front of cabins.
b) Work cooperatively with willing private landowners to minimize visual impacts on floaters and landowners and to identify ways in which visual impacts can be evaluated, minimized, and possibly removed.

5.8 Heritage Resource Preservation

Discussion: Cultural resources include all historic structures, trails, and artifacts, such as tools or household goods. Heritage resources also consist of prehistoric objects such as pictographs, tepee rings, and other evidence of habitation, vision quest sites, and lithic material including arrowheads, points, and scrapers. For the purpose of this plan, oral history is also considered a heritage resource.

The policy of FWP is to "consider heritage properties and paleontological remains systematically on lands owned or controlled by the department for the purpose of preserving the properties and to avoid, whenever feasible, department actions or department assisted or licensed actions that substantially alter heritage properties or paleontological remains on those lands." (ARM 12.8.501)

Desired Conditions: *Recreational and/or management activities on the Smith River will minimize damage to heritage resources, and educational and interpretive materials will promote protection and stewardship of these treasures.*

Management Direction: FWP will strive to enhance the floating experience on the Smith River through inventory, protection, and interpretation of the canyon's heritage resources. Continuing heritage resource research and survey work will be encouraged. Actions will be pursued to protect and stabilize endangered heritage resources when determined appropriate through consultation with the FWP heritage coordinator.

Implementation:

a) Consult with the State Historic Preservation Office in developing and carrying out heritage resource inventories and evaluations.
b) Complete a compliance level heritage resource survey of all boat camp locations
c) Cooperate with floaters, landowners, and others interested in the Smith River Corridor by publishing limited information on heritage resources that balances public education with resource protection.
d) Conduct a compliance level cultural resource survey of all existing and proposed new boat camp locations at the earliest possible date.
e) Establish a programmatic agreement with State Historic Preservation Office to ensure that activities that affect heritage resources are conducted in a lawful manner.

APPENDIX A: SMITH RIVER STATISTICS & TRENDS (1993-2007)

YEAR	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	AVERAGE
# OF FLOATERS-PRIVATE	3,172	2,689	3,534	3,757	4,149	3,507	3,396	1,878	1,678	2,798	3,065	3,187	3,197	3,894	3,567	3,165
# OF FLOATERS - GUIDED	432	459	520	652	622	621	669	602	505	626	452	517	573	638	617	567
# OF FLOATERS - ADMIN	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	55	49	32	59	85	48	37	51	38	50
# OF FLOATERS WAIVED	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	21	0	0	0	0	0	12	15	6
# OF FLOATERS LANDOWNER	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	17	21	12	42	40	47	67	19	33
# OF FLOATERS LANDOWNER NON IMMEDIATE FAMILY	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	29	26	46	70	63	87	74	73	59
# OF FLOATERS - TOTAL	3,604	3,148	4,054	4,409	4,771	4,128	4,120	2,596	2,262	3,541	3,714	3,855	3,941	4,736	4,329	3,814
# OF GROUPS - PRIVATE	664	481	665	632	689	585	511	340	291	450	450	503	526	582	507	525
# OF GROUPS - GUIDED	49	45	54	57	54	53	56	49	42	48	37	46	48	52	47	49
# OF GROUPS - ADMIN	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	17	13	13	20	18	16	12	13	13	15
# OF GROUPS-WAIVED	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
# OF GROUPS-LANDOWNER	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3	4	3	11	12	14	16	5	9
# OF GROUPS-LANDOWNER NON IMMEDIATE FAMILY	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	5	5	9	12	10	18	10	13	10
# OF GROUPS - TOTAL	713	526	719	689	743	638	584	412	355	530	528	587	618	674	586	593
USER DAYS - PRIVATE	12,656	10,925	14,644	15,712	18,334	14,848	14,230	8,096	7,657	12,340	13,673	13,867	14,278	17,307	15,517	13,606
USER DAYS - GUIDED	1,940	2,325	2,561	3,274	3,080	3,026	3,418	2,984	2,490	3,129	2,205	2,429	2,860	3,168	3,080	2,798
USER DAYS - ADMIN	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	238	228	127	195	377	215	157	222	171	214
USER DAYS - WAIVED	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	96	0	0	0	0	0	60	75	29
USER DAYS - LANDOWNER	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	17	21	12	42	40	47	67	19	33
USER DAYS - LANDOWNER NON IMMEDIATE FAMILY	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	29	26	46	70	63	87	74	73	59
USER DAYS - TOTAL	14,596	13,250	17,205	18,986	21,414	17,874	17,886	11,450	10,321	15,722	16,367	16,614	17,429	20,898	18,935	16,596
USER NIGHTS - PRIVATE	9,540	8,365	10,015	11,749	14,036	11,088	10,968	6,191	5,995	10,141	10,636	10,502	11,078	13,288	11,938	10,369
USER NIGHTS - GUIDED	1,504	1,866	1,991	2,576	2,299	2,358	2,715	2,328	1,960	2,256	1,777	1,796	2,432	2,393	2,551	2,187
USER NIGHTS - ADMIN	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	165	179	97	178	298	176	121	167	134	168
USER NIGHTS - WAIVED	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	63	0	0	0	0	0	48	60	21
USER NIGHTS - TOTAL	11,044	10,231	12,006	14,325	16,335	13,446	13,848	8,761	8,052	12,575	12,711	12,474	13,631	15,896	14,683	12,668
AVG DAYS/GROUP - PRIVATE	3.99	4.06	4.14	4.18	4.42	4.23	4.19	4.31	4.56	4.41	4.46	4.35	4.47	4.44	4.35	4.31
AVG DAYS/GROUP - GUIDED	4.49	5.07	4.93	5.02	4.95	4.87	5.11	4.96	4.93	5.00	4.88	4.70	4.99	4.97	4.99	4.92
AVG DAYS/GROUP - ADM	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	4.33	4.65	3.97	3.31	4.44	4.48	4.24	4.35	4.50	4.25
AVG DAYS/GROUP - TOTAL	4.00	4.20	4.20	4.30	4.50	4.30	4.54	4.64	4.49	4.24	4.59	4.51	4.57	4.59	4.61	4.42
AVG # FLOATERS/GROUP - PRIVATE	4.78	5.59	5.31	5.94	6.02	5.99	6.65	5.52	5.77	6.22	6.81	6.34	6.08	6.69	7.04	6.05
AVG # FLOATERS/GROUP - GUIDED	8.82	10.20	9.63	11.44	11.52	11.72	11.95	12.29	12.02	13.04	12.22	11.24	11.94	12.27	13.13	11.56
AVG # FLOATERS/GROUP - ADM	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3.24	3.77	2.46	2.95	4.72	3.00	3.08	3.92	2.92	3.34
AVG # FLOATERS/GROUP - WAIVED	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	10.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	12.00	15.00	4.69
AVG # FLOATERS/GROUP - LANDOWNER	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	5.67	5.25	4.00	3.82	3.33	3.36	4.19	3.80	4.18
AVG # FLOATERS/GROUPS - LANDOWNER NON IMMEDIATE FAMILY	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	5.80	5.20	5.11	5.83	6.30	4.83	7.40	5.62	5.76
AVG # FLOATERS/GROUP - TOTAL	5.05	5.98	5.64	6.40	6.42	6.47	7.05	6.30	6.37	6.68	7.03	6.57	6.38	7.03	7.39	6.45

APPENDIX B: BOAT CAMP INVENTORY

BOAT CAMP	LOCATION RIVER LEFT RIGHT	OWNER	LANDING GRADE	PRIVACY BETWEEN BOAT CAMPS	PRIVACY IN BOAT CAMP	BARREN CORE AREA	BARREN SATTELITE SITES	DISTANCE LATRINE TO RIVER	GRADE TO LATRINE	CAPACITY MAX. GROUP
Upper Spring Creek	Mile 4.4 L	FWP	Gentle	Fair	Poor	0	0	200 ft.	Gentle	Good
Lower Spring Creek	Mile 4.4 L	FWP	Moderate	Fair	Poor	0	0	150 ft.	Gentle	Good
In Lieu	Mile 5.6 R	FWP	Gentle	N/A	Poor	0	0	100 ft.	Gentle	Fair
Upper Indian Springs	Mile 6.0 R	Helena NF	Moderate	Fair	Poor	0	0	100 ft.	Gentle	Good
Middle Indian Springs	Mile 6.0 R	Helena NF	Gentle	Fair	Good	1,385	0	150 ft.	Gentle	Good
Lower Indian Springs	Mile 6.0 R	Helena NF	Gentle	Good	Good	1,809	0	150 ft.	Gentle	Good
Upper Rock Garden	Mile 6.8 L	Helena NF	Gentle	Good	Fair	1,336	0	150 ft.	Gentle	Good
Lower Rock Garden	Mile 6.8 L	Helena NF	Moderate	Good	Fair	415	0	150 ft.	Gentle	Good
Rock Creek	Mile 8.9 R	Helena NF	Gentle	N/A	Fair	1,554	7	200 ft.	Steep	Good
Upper Scotty Allen	Mile 12.0 L	Helena NF	Gentle	Good	Poor	491	0	200 ft.	Steep	Poor
Middle Scotty Allen	Mile 12.0 L	Helena NF	Gentle	Good	Poor	128	0	200 ft.	Steep	Fair
Lower Scotty Allen	Mile 12.0 L	Helena NF	Gentle	Good	Fair	1,385	2	200 ft.	Steep	Good
Syringa	Mile 15.2 L	DNRC	Gentle	N/A	Poor	881	1	300 ft.	Moderate	Good
Canyon Depth	Mile 16.9 R	L&C NF	Moderate	N/A	Fair	2,826	4	200 ft.	Gentle	Good
Two Creeks	Mile 17.8 R	L&C NF	Gentle	N/A	Poor	47	1	250 ft.	Steep	Good
Sheep Wagon	Mile 18.4 R	L&C NF	Gentle	N/A	Good	189	2	200 ft.	Gentle	Good
Upper Cow Coulee	Mile 22.8 R	L&C NF	Gentle	Fair	Poor	583	5	200 ft.	Gentle	Good
Middle Cow Coulee	Mile 22.8 R	L&C NF	Gentle	Fair	Good	1,385	1	200 ft.	Gentle	Good
Lower Cow Coulee	Mile 22.8 R	L&C NF	Moderate	Fair	Poor	0	0	200 ft.	Gentle	Good
Upper Sunset Cliff	Mile 23.6 R	L&C NF	Gentle	Fair	Poor	171	0	200 ft.	Moderate	Fair
Middle Sunset Cliff	Mile 23.6 R	L&C NF	Moderate	Fair	Fair	1,060	3	200 ft.	Gentle	Good
Lower Sunset Cliff	Mile 23.6 R	L&C NF	Moderate	Fair	Fair	2,850	6	200 ft.	Gentle	Good
County Line	Mile 25.5 R	L&C NF	Moderate	N/A	Poor	283	0	100 ft.	Gentle	Good
Upper Bear Gulch	Mile 29.0 R	L&C NF	Gentle	Fair	Poor	354	0	200 ft.	Gentle	Good
Lower Bear Gulch	Mile 29.0 R	L&C NF	Gentle	Fair	Poor	0	0	200 ft.	Gentle	Good
Upper Trout Creek	Mile 30.3 L	FWP	Gentle	Fair	Poor	1,661	1	200 ft.	Steep	Good
Middle Trout Creek	Mile 30.3 L	FWP	Gentle	Poor	Poor	2,418	1	300 ft.	Steep	Good
Lower Trout Creek	Mile 30.3 L	FWP	Gentle	Fair	Poor	2,226	1	350 ft.	Steep	Good
Crows Foot	Mile 32.0 L	FWP	Gentle	N/A	Poor	452	3	200 ft.	Gentle	Good
Upper Table Rock	Mile 33.5 R	L&C NF	Moderate	Poor	Poor	443	4	200 ft.	Gentle	Fair
Middle Table Rock	Mile 33.5 R	L&C NF	Moderate	Poor	Poor	291	3	200 ft.	Gentle	Fair
Lower Table Rock	Mile 33.5 R	L&C NF	Gentle	Fair	Poor	0	0	200 ft.	Gentle	Good
Upper Fraunhofer	Mile 35.4 R	L&C NF	Steep	Fair	Poor	1,679	0	200 ft.	Moderate	Good
Middle Fraunhofer	Mile 35.4 R	L&C NF	Steep	Fair	Poor	0	0	250 ft.	Moderate	Good
Lower Fraunhofer	Mile 35.4 R	L&C NF	Gentle	Fair	Poor	0	1	200 ft.	Moderate	Good
Upper Parker Flat	Mile 37.5 R	L&C NF	Gentle	N/A	Fair	1,134	0	350 ft.	Gentle	Fair
Parker Flat #1	Mile 37.9 L	FWP	Gentle	Good	Fair	87	0	200 ft.	Gentle	Fair
Parker Flat #2	Mile 37.9 L	FWP	Gentle	Good	Good	71	2	200 ft.	Gentle	Fair
Parker Flat #3	Mile 37.9 L	FWP	Gentle	Fair	Poor	452	2	200 ft.	Gentle	Good
Paradise Bend	Mile 39.5 R	FWP	Gentle	N/A	Poor	881	2	200 ft.	Gentle	Good

BOAT CAMP	LOCATION RIVER LEFT RIGHT	OWNER	LANDING GRADE	PRIVACY BETWEEN BOAT CAMPS	PRIVACY IN BOAT CAMP	BARREN CORE AREA	BARREN SATTELITE SITES	DISTANCE LATRINE TO RIVER	GRADE TO LATRINE	CAPACITY MAX. GROUP
Staigmiller	Mile 44.0 R	Private	Gentle	N/A	Poor	338	2	300 ft.	Gentle	Good
Merganser Bend	Mile 44.5 L	FWP	Steep	N/A	Good	201	3	250 ft.	Moderate	Poor
Upper Black Butte	Mile 44.8 R	FWP	Steep	Poor	Poor	283	1	200 ft.	Moderate	Poor
Lower Black Butte	Mile 44.8 R	FWP	Steep	Poor	Poor	108	0	200 ft.	Moderate	Poor
Upper Ridge Top	Mile 45.0 L	Private	Steep	Good	Fair	1,272	0	150 ft.	Gentle	Good
Middle Ridge Top	Mile 45.0 L	Private	Steep	Fair	Fair	389	3	200 ft.	Gentle	Good
Lower Ridge Top	Mile 45.0 L	Private	Fair	Fair	Fair	3,090	3	200 ft.	Gentle	Good
Upper Givens Gulch	Mile 47.2 L	Private	Gentle	Good	Fair	500 est.	?	100 ft.	Gentle	Fair
Middle Givens Gulch	Mile 47.2 L	Private	Gentle	Good	Poor	143	2	200 ft.	Moderate	Poor
Lower Givens Gulch	Mile 47.2 L	Private	Moderate	Fair	Fair	247	2	250 ft.	Moderate	Good
Upper Rattlesnake	Mile 47.4 R	Private	Moderate	Fair	Fair	1,046	1	250 ft.	Gentle	Good
Lower Rattlesnake	Mile 47.4 R	Private	Moderate	Fair	Fair	694	0	250 ft.	Gentle	Good

APPENDIX C: SMITH RIVER MANAGEMENT ACT

This legislation designated FWP as the agency with the primary responsibility for managing the Smith River waterway and required that the waterway be managed 1) to continue the compatible uses of recreational and public land uses, 2) to maintain the public's opportunity to enjoy the natural scenic beauty and solitude, and 3) to conserve the recreational, aesthetic, and scientific values of the Smith River.

The legislation also gave the Commission authority to administer the Smith River waterway through the adoption of rules. Specifically, this charge included authority 1) to regulate and allocate recreational and commercial floating and camping; 2) to restrict recreational use with a permit system; 3) to regulate recreational and commercial users of the water and land in the Smith River waterway legally accessible to the public as well as the land in the river corridor controlled by the Department and Commission; and 4) to establish fees.

Effective Date: Section 11, Ch. 512, L. 1989, provided that this part is effective April 12, 1989.

Part Cross-References:
Water rights, Art. IX, sec. 3, Mont. Const.
Stream access: Title 23, ch. 2, part 3.
Gratuitous permittee for recreation, Title 70, ch. 16, part 3.
Aquatic ecosystem protections, Title 75, ch. 7.
Surface and groundwater, Title 85, ch. 2.
Stream protection, Title 87, ch. 5, part 5.

23-2-401. Short title. This part may be cited as the "Smith River Management Act".

History: En. Sec. 1, Ch. 512, L. 1989.

23-2-402. Purpose - intent.

(l) The purpose of this part is to
- a) Provide continued recreational and commercial use
- b) And enjoyment of the Smith River waterway, consistent with the river's capacity;
- c) Seek ways to minimize conflicts between river users and private landowners; and
- d) Protect the integrity of the river's water and canyon resources for future generations.

(2) The intent of this part is to interpret and implement this part in a manner consistent with the statement of purpose for the state park system in 23-1-101.

APPENDIX C: SMITH RIVER MANAGEMENT ACT (continued)

(3) Nothing in this part may be construed in any way to restrict a landowner's access to or use of his land, improvements, water rights, or adjacent waterways.

History: En. Sec. 2, Ch. 512, L. 1989.

23-2-403. Definitions. As used in this part, the following definitions apply:

(1) "Commission" means the fish and game commission provided for in 2-15-3402.

(2) "Department" means the department of fish, wildlife, and parks provided for in 2-15-3401.

23-2-404. Applicability. This part applies to that portion of the Smith River waterway located in Meagher and Cascade Counties lying between the Camp Baker state fishing access site in Meagher County and the confluence of the Smith River with the Missouri River. This description does not prevent the department from naming or renaming areas pursuant to 23-1-102.

History: En. Sec. 4, Ch. 512, L. 1989.

23-2-407. Management responsibility and plan. The department has the primary recreational management responsibility for the Smith River waterway described in 23-2-404, consistent with the purpose stated in 23-1-101 and 23-2-402. The Smith River waterway must be administered to:

(1) Allow the continuation of compatible existing recreational and public land uses;

(2) Maintain the opportunity to enjoy the natural scenic beauty and public land uses;

(3) Conserve fish and wildlife and scientific and recreational values.

History: En. Sec. 5, Ch. 512, L. 1989.

23-2-408. Rulemaking authority. The commission has authority to provide for the administration of the Smith River waterway. The commission may adopt rules to:

(1) Regulate and allocate recreational and commercial floating and camping to preserve the biological and social benefits of recreational and commercial use of the Smith River waterway in its natural state. Recreational use may be restricted to preserve the experience of floating, fish, and camping in a natural environment and to protect the river's fish, wildlife, water, and canyon resources. The restrictions must:

(a) Consider the tolerance of adjacent landowners to recreational use;
(b) Consider the capability of the river and adjoining lands to accommodate floating and camping use; and
(c) Ensure an acceptable level of user satisfaction, including minimizing user conflicts and providing for a level of solitude.

(2) Restrict recreational use, if necessary, through the implementation of a permit system. An allocation of a portion of the permits may be made to licensed outfitters to preserve the availability of outfitting services to the public.

(3) Regulate the activities of recreational and commercial users of the water and land in the Smith River waterway that are legally accessible to the public and regulate the land in the river corridor that is under the control of the department and commission
(a) For the purposes of safety, health, and protection of property;
(b) To preserve the experience of floating, fishing, and camping in a natural environment;
(c) To protect the river's fish, wildlife, water, and canyon resources; and
(d) To minimize conflicts between recreationists and private landowners; and

(4) Establish recreational and commercial user fees for floating and camping on the Smith River waterway.

History: En. Sec. 6, Ch. 512, L. 1989.

23-2-409. Allocation of user fees. All money collected as recreational and commercial user fees for floating and camping on the Smith River waterway pursuant to 23-2-408 must be deposited in the state treasury in a state revenue fund to the credit of the department.

History: En. Sec. 7, Ch. 512, L. 1989.

23-2-410. Penalty. A person who violates a rule of the commission adopted pursuant to this part is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of not less than $50 or more than $500, by imprisonment in a county jail for not more than 6 months, or by both fine and imprisonment.

History: En. Sec. 8, Ch. 512, L. 1989.

APPENDIX D: CHRONOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT HISTORY

Year	Action Taken
1953	• A proposal was made to set aside a state-owned school section in the Smith River Canyon as a public river recreational area.
1954	• The State Fish and Game Commission recommended that the area be set aside for public recreation.
1954, 1956, 1957 & 1958	• The Montana Wildlife Federation passes resolutions favoring the project.
1957	• The Smith River Park Bill passes the House in the Montana Legislature, but dies in the Senate committee.
1959	• The Montana Wildlife Federation again proposes Smith River State Park to the Montana Legislature, but the proposal fails to pass.
1960	• FWP purchases the Smith River Fishing Access upstream of Camp Baker near Fort Logan.
1968	• The Camp Baker Fishing Access Site, put-in for the Smith River canyon float, purchased. • The Great Falls Office of FWP recommends purchasing the Fraunhofer Ranch for wildlife and recreational purposes.
1970	• A study called for by House Joint Resolution 12 passed by the 1969 Legislature by The Governor's Council on Natural Resources and Development. The Council recommended that the Smith River not be developed as a state park, but that legislation be passed designating the Smith a State Recreational Waterway, permitting the exchange of state lands for private lands, setting aside funding for acquiring scenic easements, and obtaining land use options. • The first documented meeting of Smith River landowners and DFWP to discuss recreational use and management of the river.
1980	• FWP and the BLM jointly hire seasonal employees to patrol the Smith River. • FWP publishes the first Smith River map and floater's guide. • Seasonal management activities include installing floater's gates and hazard signing, establishing and maintaining designated campsites, and conducting landowner and floater surveys about recreational uses of the river.
1981	• The Great Falls Office institutes the Smith River Floater Log as a method of voluntary registration. • FWP begins leasing Eden Bridge for a takeout.
1983	• The seasonal housing cabin is established at Camp Baker. • Latrines are built at high-use campsites. • A three-way exchange of land between DFWP, BLM, and the Montana Department of State Land results in the acquisition of 13 parcels of DFWP land along the river.
1984	• Representative floaters, outfitters, and landowners form the Smith River Ad Hoc Committee. • Fisheries creel census included as part of each floater's log.
1985	• The Host program begins at Eden Bridge and Camp Baker in cooperation with the Ramblin' Sams RV Club of Great Falls. The formal floater survey is given as part of the host program.
1986	• The first formal recreation-use survey is instituted and continued in 1987 and 1988. • The voluntary reservation system begins, allowing floaters to call in to gauge heavy-use days. • FWP starts leasing boat camps on private lands. • The Smith River Study is completed. Highlights include 1) an analysis of the public's use of the river and recommendations for managing that use, 2) a definition of the stream corridor and recommendations for preserving the corridor, 3) an evaluation of recreational conditions and trends and recommendations for protecting water quantity and quality.
1987	• FWP installs the voluntary declaration board, allowing floaters to declare their first-night camps.
1988	• FWP implements the first Smith River Plan. • The Annual Rule is drafted, limiting mid-stream access on DFWP land to established agricultural uses. This limitation was removed from the final rule.
1989	• The Montana State Legislature passes the Smith River Management Act, 23-2-401.410 (SMRA). • Lewis and Clark National Forest amend the Forest Plan and identify the Smith River as being suitable for study as a National Wild & Scenic River. Outstandingly remarkable values are found in all five categories: scenic, recreational, geologic, fisheries, and wildlife.
1990	• Mandatory registration for Recreational Use of the River. • Annual rule calls for voluntary limitation on mid-stream access by landowners.

APPENDIX D: CHRONOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT HISTORY (continued)

1991	• FWP institutes fees for private and outfitted floaters and requires boat identification tags. • Group size for floating limited to 15. • Waiver of fees and group size allowed for educational groups. • FWP refunds amount of fees paid by outfitters to Forest Service. • Voluntary declaration board expanded to entire river. • A basement is constructed under the Camp Baker ranger cabin. • FWP and Meagher County make a major release of flea beetles for bio-control of Leafy Spurge.
1992	• The total number of outfitter launches is limited to historic outfitters, two outfitted launches per day. • The Department sets terms for outfitter transfers. • Campsite assignment of outfitters is required and limited to 13 campsites. • The Ad Hoc Committee develops a campsite-courtesy handout. • A stream flow gauge is installed below Sheep Creek. • Utilities are added to the Camp Baker cabin and Eden Bridge host site. • The river's water level is particularly low this year.
1993	• The Commission adopts a use rule setting a capacity of 9 launches per day. Nine outfitted launches/week during the high-use season. Mandatory declaration board use. Limited to 16 outfitters. Increased outfitter fee to $65/client with additional amount deposited in Corridor Enhancement Account. Ten percent of user fees are designated for deposit in the Corridor Enhancement Account. Mandatory pre-registration is established. Separate campsites designated at each boat camp. • Land exchanges between the Helena National Forest and the Galt Ranches results in additional public land and boat camps on the upper river.
1994-95	• The Smith River Rule is included as part of the Montana State Parks Biennial rule. Landowners and immediate family day-floats are still required to register but exempted from use limits. • The Eden Bridge take-out is purchased through Fishing Access funds in July 1994.
1998	• The cancellation policy is modified due to a management plan "indicator standard" that is exceeded in 1996 and 1997. The "indicator standard" exceeded is the number of days with more than 300 people in the corridor at a one time. As a result, the new policy adopted by FWP is to "not fill the first 5 cancelled permits, private or commercial, per week between June 10 and July 10."
2002	• To address fire and resource protection concerns, steel fire rings are installed at each boat camp.
2004	• The cancellation policy is modified due to a management plan "indicator standard" that is exceeded in 2003. The "indicator standard" exceeded is the average group size during any given month. As a result, the new policy adopted by FWP is to "limit the maximum group size to 8 for all cancelled and reallocated permits between the time period of May 25 through July 10." • The 1993 Operating and Maintenance Agreement between FWP and USFS is replaced with a USFS Challenge Cost Share Agreement
2007	• FWP adopts new rules governing commercial use in December 2006 on all FWP administered lands. • In accordance with the new commercial use rules, FWP develops and issues new Restricted Use Permits to outfitters authorized to conduct commercial use on the Smith River. • A new prefabricated office structure and 3-bedroom house are installed at Camp Baker to house seasonal River Rangers. • Smith River Management Plan update and Citizen's Advisory Council are initiated.
2008	• FWP seasonal staffing is increased by adding a third river ranger