

# Public Draft Environmental Assessment

October 2012

## Finley Point State Park Campground Improvement Project



# Draft Environmental Assessment MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST

## PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

**1. Proposed state action:**

Montana State Parks (MSP), a division of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, is proposing to complete campground improvements at Finley Point State Park. The proposed improvements consist of: 1) eliminating up to 10 of 16 RV sites in the current camp area and reconfiguring and adding spacing between the remaining sites, 2) constructing a new campground loop upslope with up to 12 individual campsites, 3) adding 5 tent-only sites and 2 yurts, 4) relocating and constructing new campground host pads, and 5) reconfiguring and widening of the park entrance to allow for easier ingress and egress of trailers.

It should be noted that no shoreline, marina, or day-use improvements are being considered in this project.

**2. Agency authority for the proposed action:**

MSP has the authority to develop outdoor recreational resources in the state per 23-2-101 MCA.

Furthermore, state statute 23-1-110 MCA and ARM 12.6.601-606 guide public involvement and comment for the improvements at state parks and fishing access sites, which this document provides.

**3. Name of project:** Finley Point State Park Campground Improvement Project

**4. Project sponsor:**

Montana State Parks  
490 North Meridian Road  
Kalispell, MT 59901  
406-752-5501

**5. Approximate timetable:**

Estimated construction/commencement date: Late summer 2013

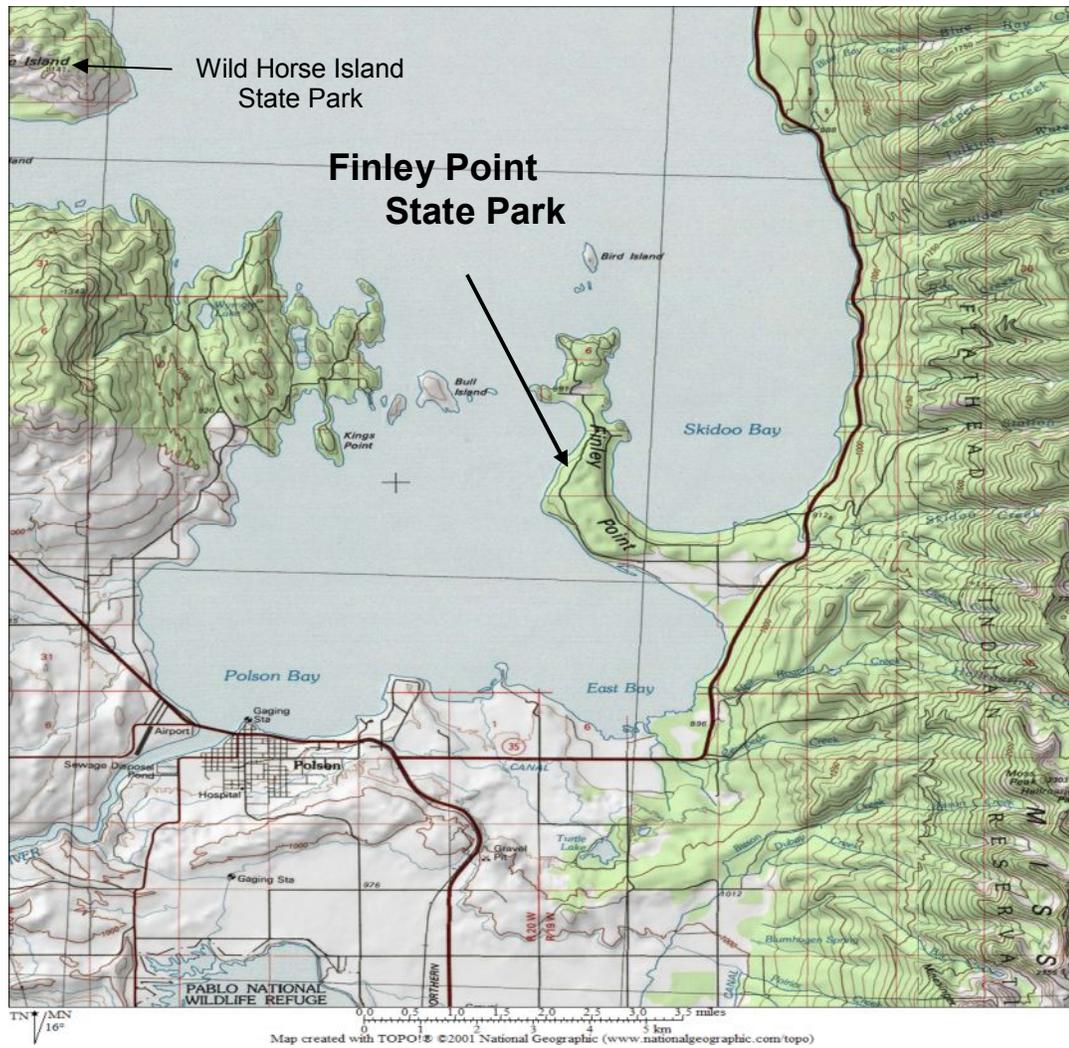
Estimated completion date: Spring 2014

Current status of project design (% complete): 25%

**6. Location affected by proposed action:**

The project is located at Finley Point State Park camping area, approximately 6 miles north of Polson, Montana, in Lake County. The project is more specifically located in Section 18, Township 23 North, Range 19 West. **See the following page for a location map.**

## Finley Point State Park Location Map



### 7. Project size:

	<u>Acres</u>		<u>Acres</u>
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	<u>0</u>
Residential	<u>0</u>		
Industrial	<u>0</u>	(e) Productive:	
(b) Open Space/ Woodlands/Recreation	<u>11</u>	Irrigated cropland	<u>0</u>
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas	<u>0</u>	Dry cropland	<u>0</u>
		Forestry	<u>0</u>
		Rangeland	<u>0</u>
		Other	<u>0</u>

**8. Listing of any other local, state, or federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction:**

(a) **Permits:** Permits will be filed at least 2 weeks prior to project start.

State Electrical Permit secured by contractor.  
Lake County Sanitarian for installation of new vault toilets.

(b) **Funding:**

Montana State Parks \$ 350,000

(c) **Other overlapping or additional jurisdictional responsibilities:**

Montana State Historical Preservation Office Archeological & Cultural  
Site Protection

**9. Narrative summary of the proposed action:**

Finley Point State Park is located in Lake County, 6 miles north of Polson, Montana, on Flathead Lake. The park is one of 5 state parks providing public access to the lake and one of 3 state parks on the east side of the lake. The park provides boating, fishing, and camping opportunities to approximately 20,000 visitors annually. The lake itself affords some of the best lake trout fishing and water-based recreational opportunities in the western United States. MSP expects the proposed improvements to result in higher quality camping experiences for RV and tent campers, with a slight overall increase in camping opportunities on Flathead Lake.

The Flathead Valley is a destination area for millions of visitors annually. The many local attractions include Flathead Lake itself with numerous recreational opportunities, Glacier National Park, Whitefish Mountain, and many small towns and communities that hold a variety of events such as art & craft fairs, outdoor concerts, classic auto & boat shows, and farmers' markets, among others. A good portion of the local economy is dependent upon tourism through the summer months. By attracting campers through better park amenities, local businesses will be among the beneficiaries of the park improvements.

The proposed improvements consist of several components (Figure1). First, up to 10 campsites in the existing camp area will be eliminated. The remaining six sites will be reconfigured to allow for easier back-in of trailers and motor homes. More space will be added between the sites to allow for slide-outs and vegetative screening from adjacent sites. Areas between sites will be landscaped and revegetated to improve spacing and aesthetics. A new campground loop will be constructed upslope from the current park host sites with up to 12 individual campsites to replace those eliminated in the existing camp area. Electricity will be available at each of the new campsites, while individual water hookups would be eliminated as an amenity. Water hydrants would be situated in convenient locations throughout the camping area. Two additional tent sites would be added in the general area of the existing walk-in tent sites at the southwest portion of the campground. Three additional tent sites would be constructed on a topographical bench that overlooks the marina and boat ramp. Two yurts would be set up near the end of the road that accesses the current host sites to provide an alternative camping experience. Walking trails will lead from the upper loop past the yurts and down to the lake. The net gain for campsites will be 2 sites to accommodate RVs, 5 tent-only walk-in sites and 2 yurts.

The current host pads would be relocated to the north of the entrance road and upslope from the new tent sites. The 2 existing vault toilets will be removed and replaced with newer designs and relocated away from the immediate vicinity of any campsite. Two vault toilets will be

placed in the new camp loop. Locations for the new vaults will be on each end of the lower and upper camping areas. This would result in a net gain of 2 vault toilets.

Another change would be to the park entrance coming off the county road. It would be widened and reconfigured to allow for a greater turning radius for large RVs and those towing boats. This will provide a safer and easier turn-off into the park. A new entrance station would be constructed as well to accommodate camping reservation electronic equipment and include design provisions that make it easier for staff/visitor communication.

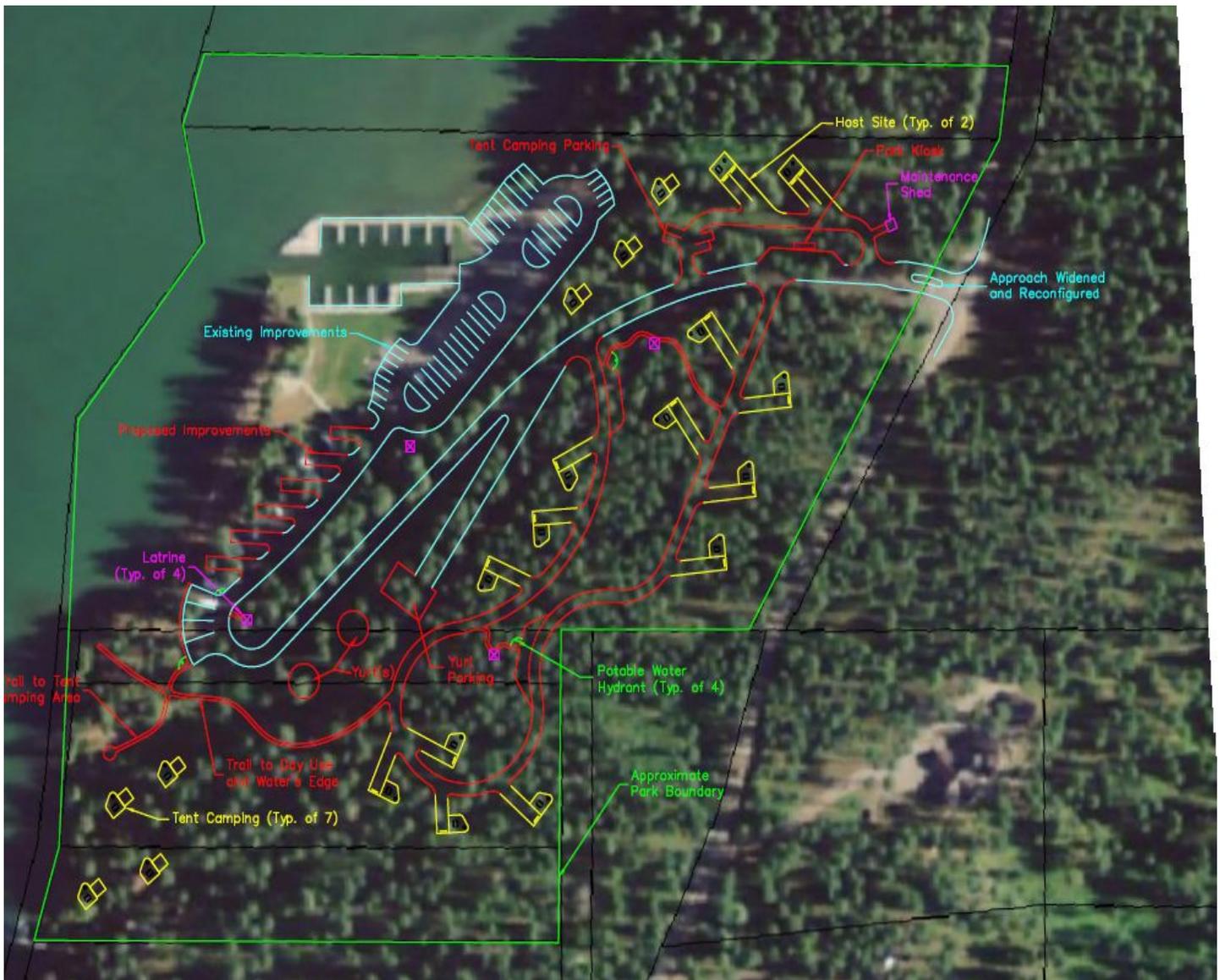


Figure 1. Proposed Configuration of Finley Point State Park Campground Improvement Project

The preliminary plan for the proposed project will require infrastructure improvements that will include the positioning of additional electrical conduit from current power sources to a new electrical panel, which will then facilitate the distribution of electricity to the proposed campground loop pedestals and host pads. This plan is designed with all conduits underground (i.e., trenching) so that the natural environment of the park can be maintained. Ground-disturbing activities are required in order to bury the conduits and to construct new camp area loop roads and spurs. Some ground-covering vegetation including mature trees will be displaced. Efforts will be taken to limit the number of trees requiring removal, and all disturbed areas will be reseeded with native vegetation.

10. Alternatives:

**Alternative A: No Action - MSP does not make campground improvements.**

There are no practical advantages, other than monetary, to maintaining the status quo. The No Action Alternative would save the dollar expense for this project, which might then be reallocated for improvements in parks elsewhere.



The disadvantages of Alternative A are that the current campground design (Figure 2) reduces the quality of the camping experience due to the crowded nature of the sites. At present, the only delineation between campsites is a stripe on the asphalt, which gives the campground a parking-lot-like feel. It also limits tent camping opportunities because of the lack of sufficient physical space to set up a tent without encroaching on adjacent campsites. The close proximity of campsites to the main road and the straight-in configuration present a safety hazard to visitors who must be careful not to walk out into traffic. With very little

space between sites, camper activity often occurs at the head of the site next to the road. It's not uncommon to see tents, bicycles, or toys on the asphalt within feet of the roadway. This issue is further compounded because the road to the day-use parking and boat launching area passes through the campground, resulting in increased traffic flow.



The vault toilets are of an older design and located too close to campsites on the north end of the camp area. Due to these factors and the prevailing winds, they render a good portion of the camp and day-use areas malodorous.



The present entrance to the park was designed for smaller, shorter vehicles, and hence the turning radius is now insufficient for the more common larger RVs in the 32-36' length range. The current entrance turning radius is too tight, and many towed vehicles have left their mark on the barrier posts that protect the entrance station.

**Alternative B: MSP proceeds with campground improvements as proposed.**

The proposed enhancement to the campground at Finley Point State Park would provide for less crowded camping conditions, a more aesthetically pleasing design, safer vehicle traffic flows, and enhance tent camping opportunities. The campground improvements would mitigate the previously mentioned issues of campsite spacing and tent camping opportunities, and provide a significant design improvement. The additional widening and reconfiguration of the entrance would allow larger camper units and trailers easier access into the park off the county road.

The issue of close spacing and straight-line configuration of campsites that presents a significant inconvenience and hazard to visitors from day-use vehicle traffic would be eliminated in the new design. The current straight-in design makes it difficult to maneuver, and there is no buffer between the site and the main road. The new proposal would eliminate sites and create vegetative buffers, and the remaining sites would be angled to allow for easier back-in. With an additional buffer of 20-30 feet on either side of the site and angled

configuration, it's less likely that visitor activities would occur at or near the road. The new camp loop would also have adequate spacing between sites, allowing for tents and slideouts. Additionally, less vehicle traffic would be encountered in the upper loop as day-use traffic is eliminated. The spacing of sites creates a less crowded condition and will enhance the quality of the camping experience.

The new vault toilets in the lower camp area would be 80-100 feet farther away from the nearest campsites. An added advantage is that the newer vault toilet designs significantly reduce odors. Similarly, placement of vaults at either end of the upper loop would provide the necessary convenience and sanitary requirements to accommodate the yurts and the RV and tent camper.

The proposed widening of the entrance off the county road will make for easier ingress and egress of larger RVs and boat trailers. The entrance station improvements will provide better staff services and visitor interaction.

The project as proposed will greatly add to park visitor satisfaction by providing a safer, less congested atmosphere. Easier access to the park, and campsites with more room between them, will promote a more traditional camping experience. This project will add 2 RV-style campsites, 5 tent-only sites, and 2 yurts. It is anticipated that a longer season of higher occupancy due to improvements will generate more revenue for the State Parks system and the local economy.



The addition of 2 yurts broadens the range of camping opportunities. At present, there are 3 yurts at Big Arm State Park that are very popular. They have high occupancy rates mid-June through Labor Day with reservations being booked far in advance. Expanding this type of opportunity to Finley Point would bring more diversity and choice for the camping public. At left is an example of the proposed yurt design.

Alternative B would offer additional tent camping opportunities. The 3 new tent sites on a bench on the north side of the park would provide outstanding views of Flathead Lake and help fill the niche for tenters. It would eliminate "asphalt tenting" and offer a more traditional camping experience.



View from proposed north side tent area.

The primary disadvantage to the proposed improvements is the immediate cost of the project and the temporary disruption to park users from construction activities during the late summer. Traffic is not projected to increase significantly on Finley Point Road since currently many people either drive to the park only to find it full and hence must return to the main highway, or they find the current design to be unacceptable and leave. It is expected that some of this displaced camper traffic that would normally return to Hwy 35 will stay at the park.

## PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

### 1. Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

#### A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?			X		yes	1b
c. Destruction, covering, or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition, or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				1d
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other:		X				

- 1b. The reclamation and reconfiguration of existing sites in the lower camping area and the construction of the new loop will disturb ground covering and related soils. Trees will need to be removed for the spatial needs of the road and camping spurs. All attempts will be made to minimize tree removal, and only those that would interfere with the design plan where no other option is available will be cut.

Any new electric and water lines will be trenched to an anticipated width of 12' and depth of 24". This will provide enough width and depth for the conduits and required fill materials. With the completion of the installation of the conduits and lines, the disturbed areas will be reclaimed and reseeded with native vegetation to decrease the potential for erosion.

- 1d. Paving will require road surface preparation. This will consist of the addition of road base materials to bring the surface to the grade as specified in the design plan. There is little risk of sediment washing into water sources due to the distance from the lake and lack of continuous or intermittent streams in the immediate area. Erosion control barriers will be used if necessary to prevent sediment loss prior to paving.

2. <u>AIR</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 c.)			X			2a
b. Creation of objectionable odors?			X			2b
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns, or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a.)		N/A				
f. Other:		X				

2 a/b. Minor and temporary dust and vehicle emissions would be created by heavy equipment during clearing, paving, and road and spur preparation. The trenching for the conduit and placement of new electrical panels and pedestals, and the clearing and site preparation of the new camp loop area, would also create minor dust & vehicle emissions. After the project's completion, the amount of dust and emissions will return to normal levels.

An expected benefit of the electric pedestals at individual sites is the reduction of personal generator use. This would improve air quality by reducing emissions in the immediate camp area.

3. <b>WATER</b>  Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality, including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen, or turbidity?		X				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?			X		yes	3b
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water-related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. For <u>P-R/D-J</u> , will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)		N/A				
m. For <u>P-R/D-J</u> , will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)		N/A				
n. Other:		X				

3b. The proposed project is not expected to detrimentally alter any surface drainage patterns. Paving and proper road drainage design will eliminate the accumulation of large puddles on the road and the potential for runoff into camp areas. All disturbed areas will be reseeded with native vegetation to decrease the potential chance of different drainage patterns becoming established in the vicinity of the covered trenches.

4. <b>VEGETATION</b> Will the proposed action result in?	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity, or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X		yes	4a
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				4c
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X		yes	4e
f. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		N/A				
g. Other:		X				

4a. Some trees and shrubs will be removed in the location of the proposed upper camp loop and host site as identified in the final site design specifications. Corresponding forest floor vegetation will be lost to provide vehicle parking. Other vegetation may be adversely impacted by the trenching for the electrical conduit and new water lines and require the removal of those individual plants. Efforts will be taken to limit impacts by routing lines so as not to require removal of mature trees. Because of the planned underground design of the conduits, surface vegetation will be displaced. Reseeding/replanting the disturbed areas with native species will mitigate these influences to the overall plant community.

Conversely, vegetative cover will be increased in the original campsites as site density is reduced and vegetative buffers are developed between sites.

4c. A search of the Montana Natural Heritage database revealed no occurrences of plant life that is designated a species of concern, threatened, or endangered within the park.

4e. The proposed new camp loop, host sites, and installation of electrical components will increase the potential of noxious weeds becoming established within the campground loop since there are noxious weeds already present in the park. Mitigating actions will include reseeding with native species and monitoring of growth of noxious weeds at disturbed areas. Any noxious weeds discovered will be eradicated using Integrated Weed Management (IWM) methods identified in the Region 1 Noxious Weed and Exotic Vegetation Management Plan. This typically involves chemical and mechanical control efforts.

5. <b>FISH/WILDLIFE</b>  Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				5b
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				5c
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				5f
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest, or other human activity)?		X				
h. For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)		N/A				
i. For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		N/A				
j. Other:		X				

5 b/c. Since construction is limited to the campground area, the impact to game and nongame species is not considered significant. Little forage and cover is available in the campground. Consequently the area is primarily a travel zone for larger animals. During the construction activities, some species travel patterns may be altered to avoid the campground. Some smaller nongame species may be affected by the removal of trees for the new camp loop and road improvements. Overall, the impact to wildlife habitat will be minimal. Big game species are not likely to be affected in any way other than a temporary avoidance of the area during construction. Nongame species including small mammals and birds may be displaced to adjacent areas until the project is completed and reseeded areas have returned to preconstruction condition. Construction is scheduled to take place in late summer and fall to avoid any possible disturbance during the spring nesting and birthing period.

5f. A search of the Montana Natural Heritage database revealed no occurrences of species that are designated a species of concern, threatened, or endangered within the park.

## B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			X		yes	6a
b. Exposure of people to severe or nuisance noise levels?			X		yes	6b
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other:		X				

6 a/b. There would be a temporary increase in noise levels due to the construction equipment during the course of the project. Most of the work will take place during the fall off-season period when visitation is low. This will limit the inconvenience to park visitors. Distance between the project areas and nearest year-round neighbor is such that it is anticipated that they will be minimally affected.

Summer residences adjacent to the park may occasionally experience some ambient noise from the relocation of campers to the upper loop nearer to the east boundary. However, there is still approximately 200 yards distance to the nearest residence to the east from the proposed upper loop, and park rules state that quiet hours are in effect between 10 p.m. to 7 a.m. There would be no additional disturbance to homeowners on the south, as that residence is closer to already existing tent sites, and there is no closer proposed development.

The addition of the electrical pedestals at the new RV sites will greatly reduce the potential for noise from generators affecting neighboring homes.

7. <u>LAND USE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?			X			7a
b. Conflict with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use, the presence of which would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other:		X				

7a. The proposed enhancement to the campground will not change the existing use of the area, but will provide the potential for the park to increase profitability from camping-generated revenues.

8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?		X				
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				
d. For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)			X			8d
e. Other:		X				

8 d. Chemical spraying may be used to control the establishment and growth of noxious weeds in the proposed construction areas. Weed treatment will follow the guidelines of the Region 1 Weed Management Plan.

9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?			X			9d
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				
f. Other:		X				

9d. The campground improvements at Finley Point State Park could affect private campgrounds negatively since campers may choose to stay at the park rather than at commercial facilities. However, there are no private campgrounds in the immediate area of the park. The closest private campgrounds open to the general public are in Polson, 10 miles away.

Private campgrounds typically offer additional services that are not available at Finley Point State Park, such as laundry, sewer, and water hook-ups. MSP limits camper stays to 14 days within a 30-day period, whereas at private campgrounds patrons can choose to stay for longer periods.

The University of Montana's Institute of Tourism and Recreation Research survey of traveler characteristics based from summer 2006 statistics reflected that the same percentage of respondents stayed overnight at private campgrounds compared to public campgrounds when visiting Lake and Flathead Counties. This would indicate there is little to no dominant preference by campers as to which type of campground they stay at.

10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?			X			10c
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?			X			10d
e. Define projected revenue sources						10e
f. Define projected maintenance costs.						10f
g. Other:		X				

- 10c. The proposed action will require the establishment of new underground electrical conduit lines between existing or new electrical panels in order to provide electricity to individual campsite pedestals.
- 10d. The proposed installation of electrical hookups for the campsites at Finley Point State Park is expected to only slightly increase the park's consumption of electricity. Furthermore, the convenience of the campsite outlets will provide visitors the opportunity to recharge boating equipment, cell phones, and other electronic equipment.
- 10e. If Alternative B were completed, the park could expect an increase in revenue. It is impossible to determine the exact cost as there is a fee differential between residents and nonresidents for campsite fees and a difference in fees between tent & electrical sites and yurts. Nonresidents will pay more than residents for the same site. The following are revenue estimates based on full Montana resident occupancy with the additional sites. The revenue generated by resident occupancy of 7 new sites is about \$200/night. The estimate will be higher depending on the resident/nonresident occupancy ratio. Full occupancy at the park occurs for approximately 40 days in the season. The estimated additional annual revenue generated with the addition of 7 sites is \$8,000-\$9,000.
- 10f. Increases to current maintenance costs are expected by the proposed improvements. Utility costs will rise with the net gain of 2 added electric sites and the 2 yurts. Facility repairs will be necessary from time to time. Seven additional picnic tables at the new sites will require staining every 3 years. Tent pads will require added material periodically. Addition of yurts will require more maintenance by staff and cleaning supplies for routine cleaning. Two added vaults will require pumping 1-2 times per year. It costs approximately \$200 per vault per pump. Estimated increased maintenance cost is \$800-\$900 a year.

11. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?			X		yes	11a.
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (See attached Tourism Report.)			X (possible)			11c
d. For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		N/A				
e. Other:		X				

11a. The anticipated design for the campground renovation project will have all conduits underground, with only the outlet pedestals and electrical panels visible. This design will minimize the effect on aesthetics at individual sites.

The proposed reconfiguration and spacing of the lower camp area is in an area previously disturbed. It will improve the aesthetics and greatly enhance the camping experience by providing more space and more native vegetation between sites.

The upper camp area will be constructed in a previously undisturbed area. The site design will take into account the natural setting, with removal of as few trees as possible, and the revegetation of disturbed areas with native species. Spacing between sites will allow for vegetative barriers to be maintained.

The upper loop will be visible from the county road, whereas in the current design the camping area cannot be seen. This will diminish the through-traffic vista. However, this is considered minor in nature as the travel time through the park is a matter of seconds and most nonpark areas along Finley Point Road currently have private homes and structures visible from the road.

11c. There will be minor positive impacts on tourism opportunities at the site. See *Appendix B* for the Tourism Report.

The project as proposed will increase the number and diversity of camping opportunities at Finley Point State Park. The site design will promote a more natural look to the park by eliminating the asphalt-parking-lot look and adding space and vegetation between sites.

During construction, some sections of the campground loop may need to be closed to campers for a limited amount of time when paving the loop road and campsite spurs, while trenching, and for site preparation. Conversion of the current camp area will require temporary closures. This may affect any type of day use. When required, MSP will work with the contractor to schedule this project so that park visitors are the least inconvenienced. Most work should occur during the late summer, fall, and spring, when visitation is lowest.

Once the project is completed, the effects on the quality of the recreational opportunities will be positive. Reconfiguring of current campsites and construction of a new camp loop will offer additional camping opportunities in a more natural, less crowded setting. Addition of yurts and tent-only sites will provide a greater diversity of camping experiences.

12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure, or object of prehistoric, historic, or paleontological importance?		X				
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.)		N/A				
e. Other:		X				

12a-c. No impacts to cultural or historical resources are anticipated. There are no obvious structures or sites in the proposed area. A State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) file search indicates there have been no previously recorded sites within the designated search locale. However, SHPO has recommended a cultural resource inventory be completed within the project area to ensure no culturally sensitive sites are impacted by the proposed improvements. See *Appendix C* for SHPO's recommendation letter.

In accordance with the Montana Antiquities Act (22-3-421 to 22-3-442) and with FWPs ARM rules (12.8.501 to 12.8.10), a heritage resource survey will be conducted prior to project development to identify possible historic and archaeological sites. Impacts to these sites, if identified, will be taken into consideration as part of project planning and will be avoided, if possible. If sites are identified and cannot be avoided in accordance with MCA 22-3-430, mitigation measures will be proposed.

Additionally, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal Preservation Office will be consulted to ensure no known cultural sites are affected by the proposed project.

## SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. <u>SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE</u>  Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard, or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				13e
f. For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)		N/A				
g. For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		N/A				

13e. No significant public controversy is expected. Improvements to the park will further the Parks Division's goals to provide quality camping experiences by improving amenities and site controls that will protect human health, natural resources, and enhance recreational opportunities. The project will not create any cumulatively negative impacts that might affect the use of the park by visitors.

## 2. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

Final plans and specifications for the project will be developed by the state-appointed engineering consultant in conjunction with MSP engineering staff. MSP engineers will design other portions of the project. All state and federal permits will be obtained by MSP. Construction will be completed by a private contractor selected through the state's competitive bid process. Final inspection will be the responsibility of the MSP Design and Construction Bureau.

State pesticide use laws and regulations will be followed. Application records will be submitted to the Montana Department of Agriculture as required every five years, and these records will be available to state investigators upon request.

If the cultural resource inventory identifies any previously unknown historical sites in the path of the underground conduits, MSP will work with SHPO and the MSP and CSKT cultural resource specialists to discuss alternatives to the design of the conduit system to ensure culturally sensitive areas are not disturbed.

### **PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT**

The proposed campground renovation at Finley Point State Park will meet the increasing needs for camping diversity and the Parks Division mandate to provide quality recreational experiences. Currently, RV campers are crammed into tight spaces, and there is little opportunity for tent camping. The development of a more traditional & natural looking campground will encourage more campers to visit the park. This in turn will lead directly to more park revenue to maintain the statewide park system and indirectly to increased revenue for the local community. The continuation of providing electricity at the campsites will keep noise levels down from use of generators. More tenting opportunities will fulfill visitor demand for this type of camping experience. It will also allow greater choice or duplicity of use at a campsite as many times there are requests to set up tents along with the RV or trailer. Providing more tenting options will also reduce visitor conflicts with hosts who currently must attempt to restrict tents at the majority of the campsites due to space limitations.

The paving of the new campground loop road and site spurs will prevent health issues related to dust from traffic during the summer months. Paving will also reduce road maintenance costs over the long term with the elimination of the need to grade and fill potholes. Campsite spur paving will clearly delineate spaces and thus reduce the potential for damage to vegetation from off-road parking.

Because of the scope of the proposed improvements, it is expected there will be a limited number of impacts to the human and physical environment. However, most of these influences, which were previously noted, are expected to be for only a relatively short duration of the construction period with no lasting negative effects on the local environment. For those actions requiring minor mitigation, such as the trenching for electrical system hook-ups and construction of the new camp loop layout and host pads, measures will be taken to landscape and reseed disturbed areas. The reseeding of the affected areas will decrease the chance of noxious weeds being established and will limit erosion. Additionally, MSP's cultural survey of the project will ensure previously unknown historical areas are not affected by any ground disturbance.

Widening of the park entrance will promote a safer and faster turnoff into the park from the county road. A large number of park complaints are generated by the difficulty of larger units or trailers making the turn into the park without striking barrier posts that are too narrowly set.

Since there have been no major improvements to the campground or facilities in over 20 years, the primary purpose of the project is to upgrade facilities and improve camping opportunities. The present campground design was intended for shorter and narrower recreational vehicles. The changing nature of the RV industry has given rise to bigger units, many in the 35-40-foot range. The current design does not accommodate those dimensions very well, resulting in a less than satisfactory experience for many. Tight, cramped conditions now exist, which are not a desirable park feature. Higher quality RV and tent sites are the goal for the park system statewide.

The project improvements are expected to promote a higher quality camping experience by improving camper satisfaction with the park's facilities. This in turn ensures returning visitors and increases revenue generated by camping fees for future state park improvements. With the recent highly successful state parks campsite reservation system, it is anticipated that the occupancy rates for campsites will be high. Online viewing of photos and descriptions of the new amenities while visiting the reservation website will help convince potential campers to book a site. Whereas with the current campground information now shown online, many find camping opportunities uninviting. This project also complies with the long-range goals of MSP to raise state park standards, provide quality and diverse recreational experiences, and meet the Parks program outcome of protection and enhancement of resources.

## **PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

### **1. Public involvement:**

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on this current EA, the proposed action, and alternatives:

- Two public notices in each of these papers: *Helena Independent Record*, *Daily Inter Lake*, and the *Lake County Leader*.
- One statewide press release.
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: <http://MSP.mt.gov>.

Copies of this environmental assessment will be distributed to the neighboring landowners and interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project.

If requested within the comment period, the department may arrange a public meeting.

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope, having few minor impacts, many of which can be mitigated.

### **2. Duration of comment period:**

The public comment period will extend for (30) thirty days; written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., November 30, 2012, and can be mailed to the address below:

Finley Point State Park Improvements Project  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
Region 1 Headquarters  
490 N. Meridian Road  
Kalispell, MT 59901

Or e-mail comments to: [jsawyer@mt.gov](mailto:jsawyer@mt.gov)

## **PART V. EA PREPARATION**

### **1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required?**

Based on the criteria provided by MEPA Model Rule III to assess if an EIS is required, this environmental review revealed no significant negative impacts will be created from the proposed action. Therefore, an EIS is not necessary and an EA is the appropriate level of analysis.

### **2. Persons responsible for preparing the EA:**

Jerry Sawyer  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
490 N. Meridian Road  
Kalispell, MT 59901  
406-751-4575

### **3. List of agencies consulted during preparation of the EA:**

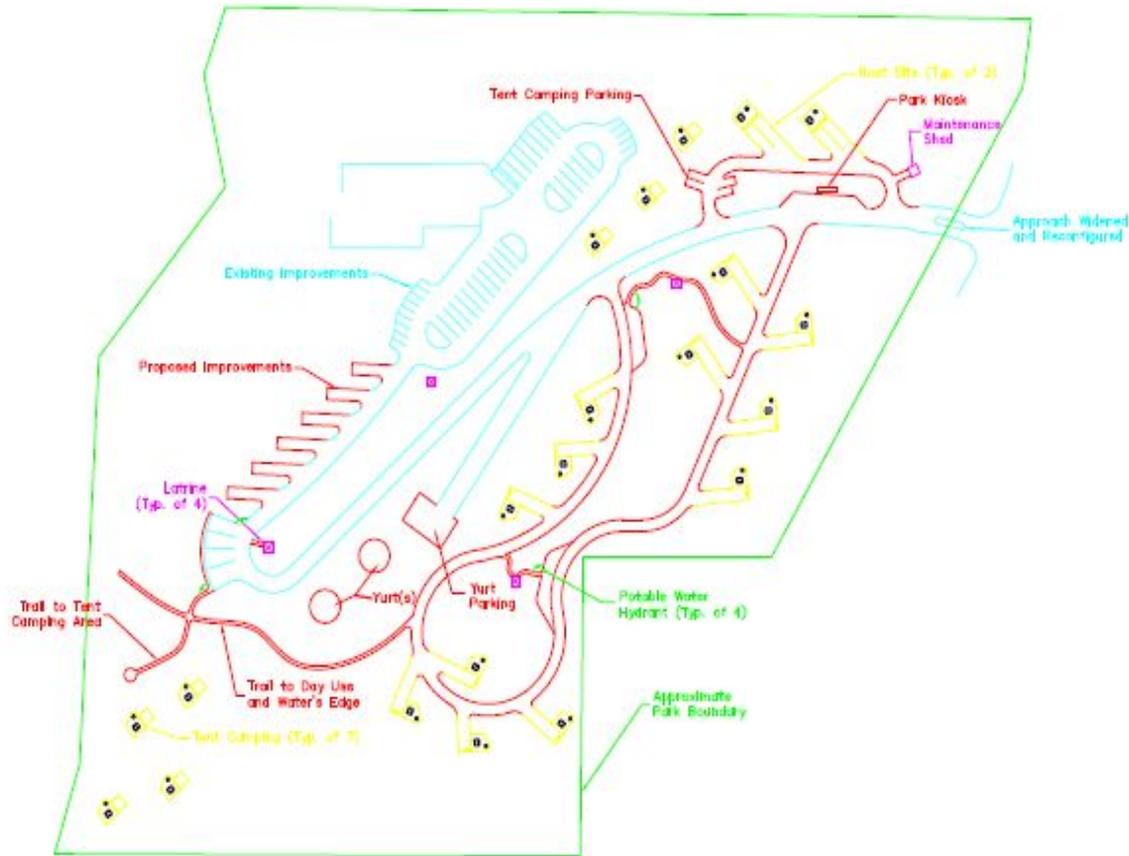
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
Parks Division  
Wildlife Division  
Fisheries Division  
Design & Construction Bureau  
Legal Bureau  
Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)  
Montana Department of Commerce – Tourism

# APPENDICES

- A. Finley Point State Park Proposed Configuration
- B. Department of Commerce - Tourism Report
- C. State Historic Preservation Office – Recommendation Letter
- D. 23-1-110 MCA - HB495 Project Qualification Checklist

# APPENDIX A

## Finley Point State Park Alternative B Site Plan



Scale 1:150



K. Wilson NREJ					
DRAWN BY:	DATE:	REVISED BY:	DATE:	APPROVED BY:	DATE:
CHECKED BY:	DATE:	APPROVED BY:	DATE:	APPROVED BY:	DATE:



**Proposed Configuration**  
Finley Point State Park



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## **APPENDIX B**

- Tourism Report pending

## APPENDIX C

**From:** Murdo, Damon  
**Sent:** Friday, October 19, 2012 11:40 AM  
**To:** Ivy, Nancy  
**Subject:** RE: File Search Request Form  
**Attachments:** 2012101907-FWP.xls; CRABS.pdf



October 19, 2012

Jerry Sawyer  
MT-State Parks  
490 Meridian Road  
Kalispell MT 59901

RE: FINLEY POINT STATE PARK CAMPGROUND IMPROVEMENT PROJECT. SHPO Project #:  
2012101907

Dear Mr. Sawyer:

I have conducted a cultural resource file search for the above-cited project. According to our records there have been no previously recorded sites within the designated search locale. However, there have been a two previously conducted cultural resource inventories done in the area. I've attached a list of these reports. If you would like any further information regarding these reports you may contact me at the number listed below.

It is SHPO's position that any structure over fifty years of age is considered historic and is potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. If any structures are to be altered and are over fifty years old we would recommend that they be recorded and a determination of their eligibility be made.

These two inventories that have been conducted within the park boundary were not conducted in the proposed project area. Based on this, the lack of previous inventory and the ground disturbance required by this undertaking we feel that this project has the potential to impact cultural properties. We, therefore, recommend that a cultural resource inventory be conducted in order to determine whether or not sites exist and if they will be impacted.

If you have any further questions or comments you may contact me at (406) 444-7767 or by e-mail at [dmurdo@mt.gov](mailto:dmurdo@mt.gov). I have attached an invoice for the file search. Thank you for consulting with us.

Sincerely,

Damon Murdo  
Cultural Records Manager  
State Historic Preservation Office

File: FWP/PARKS/2012

**APPENDIX D**  
**23-1-110 MCA**  
**PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST**

**Date:** 9/24/2012

**Person Reviewing:** David Landstrom

**Project Location:** Finley Point State Park, approximately 6 miles north of Polson, Montana in Lake County, Section 18, Township 23 North, Range 19 West.

**Description of Proposed Work:** Montana State Parks is proposing to complete campground improvements at Finley Point State Park. The proposed improvements consist of: 1) eliminating up to 10 of 16 RV sites in the current camp area and reconfiguring and adding spacing between the remaining sites, 2) constructing a new campground loop upslope with up to 12 individual RV campsites, 3) adding 5 tent sites and 2 yurts, 4) relocating and constructing new campground host pads and 5) reconfiguring and widening park entrance to allow for easier ingress and egress of trailers.

The following checklist is intended to be a guide for determining whether a proposed development or improvement is of enough significance to fall under 23-1-110 rules. (Please check all that apply and comment as necessary.)

- A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?  
Comments: *A new camping loop road would be constructed in this project.*
- B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?  
Comments: *This project proposal includes two rental yurts.*
- C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?  
Comments: *Road construction and campsite restoration would result in excavation greater than 20 cubic yards.*
- D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?  
Comments: *No.*
- E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a double wide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?  
Comments: *No.*
- F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?  
Comments: *No.*
- G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry-quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?  
Comments: *No.*
- H. Any new above ground utility lines?

Comments: *No.*

- [x] I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?

Comments: *This project would add up to 6 new camping sites - 2 RV sites and 4 tent-only camping sites.*

- [ x] J Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern, including effects of a series of individual projects?

Comments: *This project is expected to have a positive impact on existing camping features by improving the aesthetics and functionality of the existing camping opportunities at Finley Point State Park.*

If any of the above are checked, 23-1-110 MCA rules apply to this proposed work and should be documented on the MEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST. Refer to MEPA/HB495 Cross Reference Summary for further assistance.