

Montana State Parks and Recreation Board Policy



Classification and Investment Strategy		
Chair Approval	Effective Date	Review Date

Board Policy

Strategic allocation and investment of resources to manage Montana State Parks and provide high-quality visitor experiences will be accomplished through a systematic approach aligned with state statute, rule, policy, planning, and evaluation.

Purpose

Montana is a place where people have abundant opportunities to connect with outstanding state parks that define our state and where a responsive and relevant Parks Division has the capacity and public support it needs to ensure that park resources and experiences remain an essential part of Montana's culture, economy, and high quality of life.

The Montana State Parks and Recreation Division must develop and implement strategies for the investment of human and fiscal resources across the park system to deliver high-quality experiences to our visitors while protecting and maintaining the public resources in our care.

By identifying the types of state parks resources the division manages and the public's desire to experience those resources, the division can better align management objectives and develop investment strategies to provide a range of quality visitor experiences across the system.

Directives

The Montana State Parks and Recreation Board directs the division to use the following guiding principles to evaluate and revise the parks classification and prioritization criteria in order to guide management and investment strategies for all of Montana's State Parks.

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1. Develop service-level designations which will be used to categorize the types of service visitors can expect at any given state park. Service-level groups will also provide management direction and guide park managers toward greater consistency and targeted investment partnerships.
2. Group parks in a way that reflects the primary visitor experience offered at each park: Natural, Heritage, and Recreation.
3. Establish criteria that will help prioritize how human and fiscal resources are allocated to and invested in park resource protection and management while continually striving to ensure and improve positive visitor experiences across all service-level designations and experience categories.
4. Establish methods to receive internal and external feedback, assess conditions, and identify where adjustments in classification may be needed.
5. Establish performance measures and evaluation tools that will track progress and identify gaps where work is necessary to address unmet resource needs, visitor satisfaction, and interest in creating new or improved visitor experiences.
6. Use planning tools to develop strategies to meet unmet needs, engage constituents, and build partnerships.

Authority/Reference

23-1-101, MCA, State Parks Purpose
23-1-102, MCA, Powers and Duties of the Department
23-1-111, MCA, Powers and Duties of the Board
23-1-127, MCA, Maintenance Priority

Rustic

Parks with rustic services attract visitors who expect a self-directed experience with limited developed amenities. Visitors may expect:

- Limited amenities, such as vault toilets, or
 - Campsites without paving or electrical service
 - Trail systems which may be unpaved
 - Sites without potable water
 - Pack in pack out trash
 - Limited on site staffing or active programming
- (P- Indicates Primitive Park under MCA 23-1-116)

Core

Parks with core services provide a moderate amenity and service level:

- A combination of vault latrines and flush toilet comfort stations
- Gravel or paved road surfaces
- Campsites or overnight facilities,
- Developed day use facilities- boat ramps, group shelters, picnic areas
- Potable drinking water
- Interpretive signage or programs
- Other services such as small concessions
- Trails – Paved and / or unpaved
- Limited, but regular on-site staffing

Please note: On-site staffing and other services may not be available year-round.

(P- Indicates Primitive Park under MCA 23-1-116)

Enhanced

Parks with enhanced services have a high amenity level and offer a number of options for an enhanced visitor experience. In addition to the amenities at the core service level, they will offer some or all of the following:

- A combination of overnight camping options
- Full service comfort stations with showers
- Visitor center with interpretive exhibits
- Regularly scheduled interpretive and educational programming and special events
- Full service concessions
- Natural/heritage/recreational experiences that supplement the predominant experience.

Parks with enhanced services are typically staffed full-time and open all year.

Natural

Parks connect visitors with nature in ways that cause them to learn, reflect, and appreciate. These experiences may provide the opportunity for solitary reflection in the presence of Montana's scenic beauty, or they may engage the visitor with others as they explore natural processes related to exceptional geologic, wildlife, botanical, paleontological, riparian and riverine environments.

- Beavertail Hill (C)
- Fish Creek (R)
- Giant Springs (E)
- Grey Cliff Prairie Dog Town (R)
- Lewis and Clark Caverns (E)
- Lost Creek (R)
- Lone Pine (E)
- Makoshika (E)
- Medicine Rocks (R) (P)
- Milltown (C)
- Pirogue Island (R) (P)
- Sluice Boxes (R) (P)

Heritage

Parks invite reflection on the past by revealing the stories of Montana's cultures and histories in the very places where they occurred.

Heritage parks provide opportunities to view, explore, or learn about the cultural and historic features unique to the site.

- Anaconda Stack (R)
- Bannack (E)
- Beaverhead Rock (R) (P)
- Chief Plenty Coups (E)
- Clarks Lookout (R) (P)
- Council Grove (C)
- Elkhorn (R)
- First Peoples (E)
- Fort Owen (C)
- Granite (R)
- Madison Buffalo Jump (C) (P)
- Missouri Headwaters (C)
- Pictograph Cave (E)
- Rosebud Battlefield (C)
- Travelers Rest (E)
- Tower Rock (R) (P)

Recreation

Parks encourage play in adult and child alike through a variety of options for outdoor activity. A park may provide a specific type of outdoor recreation – e.g., fishing, camping, hiking, boating – or a mix of diverse outdoor opportunities ranging from active to passive and from solitary to social in nature.

- Ackley Lake (R)
- Black Sandy (C)
- Brush Lake (C)
- Cooney (C)
- Flathead Lake- (E)
FHL is 6 Units Wild Horse Island (P)
- Frenchtown Pond (C)
- Hell Creek (E)
- Lake Elmo (C)
- Lake Mary Ronan (C)
- Logan (C)
- Painted Rocks (R)
- Placid Lake (C)
- Salmon Lake (C)
- Smith River (R)
- Spring Meadow (C)
- Thompson Chain of Lakes (R)
- Thompson Falls (C)
- Tongue River Reservoir (E)
- Whitefish/Les Mason (C)