



MONTANA STATE PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: March 10, 2020

Agenda Item: 2018-2019 State Agency Biennial Report on Cultural Resources

Background: Every two years, in compliance with the reporting requirements of MCA 22-3-424(4), enacted in 2011, Montana's state agencies document the status, condition, stewardship efforts, and maintenance needs of our cultural resources. Montana State Parks (MSP) submitted our report as required on February 4, 2020, for review by the Montana Historic Preservation Review Board in spring 2020. This presentation is intended as a summary for the State Parks board of the work of the Heritage Program and this most recent report.

Montana State Parks (MSP) manages over 356 archaeological and historical sites throughout the state of Montana. We report on 37 sites in the 2020 report, including seven National Historic Landmarks (NHL), eleven sites that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and 18 sites that have been determined eligible for listing on the NRHP. The other 319 sites we manage have not had their eligibility formally evaluated.

Of the 37 listed or confirmed eligible sites that MSP manages, 25 are historic and 12 are pre-contact archaeological sites. Several sites, like Travelers' Rest or Medicine Rocks, are multi-component. Historic sites include buildings and structures (like Bannack, which contains over 85 individual buildings), landscape features noted by the Lewis and Clark expedition, a historic trading post, historic campsites, and one battlefield. Pre-contact sites include campsites, cave sites, buffalo jumps and pictograph/petroglyph sites.

In considering the present status of our cultural resources, we listed six sites within the MSP system as "threatened."

Three sites within Rosebud Battlefield are considered threatened because the state does not own the mineral rights beneath the park's surface. Energy development within the park would adversely affect the integrity of the battlefield, the bison jump and petroglyphs, and the historic homestead. Archaeological site 24ME0075, located at the Camp Baker boat launch on the Smith River, is threatened by high numbers of visitors. The Gallatin City II Hotel in Missouri Headwaters State Park is listed as threatened because of its poor condition despite stabilization efforts in 2015. The Belt Creek Railway in Sluice Boxes State Park is listed as threatened because the trestles that the park has long used as a hiking route are beginning to fail, and the cost of fully restoring them is prohibitive.

Notable stewardship accomplishments over the last two years include the following:

Region 1:

- 1) Hosting the Montana Preservation Roadshow at Wild Horse Island State Park, where visitors toured the culturally-peeled trees and historic homestead remains.

Region 2:

- 2) Partnership between Region 2 and the Selis-Qlispe Culture Committee on place names for Region 1 State Parks, particularly Travelers' Rest and Council Grove.
- 3) The turning tide at Fort Owen, where a very active Friends group has formed, and the new surrounding landowner is interested in preservation at the park.
- 4) Travelers' Rest Crossroads Interpretive Plaza was completed in 2018, and includes new interpretive signage related to the 6,000-year history of indigenous occupation as well as Lewis and Clark's visit.

Region 3:

- 5) The successful nomination of the Lewis and Clark Caverns Historic District for the National Register of Historic Places. This district includes a variety of notable CCC structures.
- 6) The design and installation of a \$1.2 million fire alarm system for Bannack, representing a remarkable investment in keeping this National Historic Landmark and its 49,000 visitors per year safe.

Region 4:

- 7) Completion of the curation of excavated artifacts from First Peoples Buffalo Jump in association with Montana State University, the University of Montana and the Park Service.
- 8) Repairs to CCC-era rockwork at Giant Springs State Park.

Region 5:

- 9) Over 50,000 people visited Pictograph Cave each year, and 3,000 of them per year participated in interpretive tours of the park.
- 10) New volunteer site stewards began monitoring archaeological sites at Makoshika and Medicine Rocks, building community engagement and increasing MSP's awareness of site condition.

Region 7:

- 11) Montana State Parks signed an agreement with the Museum of the Rockies to formally recognize the museum as the repository for MSP fossils and to identify the museum as an agent of limited authority acting on behalf of MSP in paleontological research.
- 12) Friends of Makoshika and the Montana History Foundation helped to fund new fossil cabinets for Makoshika, and fossils in the park collection are now identified and stored properly.
- 13) Archaeological fieldwork at Rosebud Battlefield, undertaken by Colorado-Mesa University, focused on surveys in areas of potential future firebreaks as we consider how best to prevent and fight wildfires in this park.