Finding of No Significant Impact

Wild Plum Landing Boat Launch Project
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
Sanders County, Montana

Based on the attached final Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Wild Plum Landing Boat Launch Project (Project), I have determined that by implementation of the proposed action, the Project will have no significant impact on the quality of the human environment. The Project involves constructing a new river access site on the Flathead River Sčilíp, in Sanders County, Montana, on the Flathead Indian Reservation (Reservation). The Project would include construction of a boat launch, parking area, vault toilet, and improved access road. In accordance with section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be required.

This determination is supported by the following findings:

1. Agency and Tribal Interdisciplinary Team involvement was conducted and environmental issues related to development of the Project were identified. Alternative courses of action and best management practices (BMPs) were developed in response to environmental concerns and issues. The following coordination was performed during project development:

    - CSKT Interdisciplinary Team review, December 18th, 2025
    - Ksanka Culture Committee meeting December 10th, 2025
    - Séliš-Q̓lispé Culture Committee meeting December 17, 2025
    - CSKT Tribal Council authorization, November 13, 2025
    -

In addition to agency and Tribal involvement, the Draft EA was available for a one-month public comment period during June-July 2026, and CSKT held a community meeting regarding the Project in Sčilíp in July 2026. Public comment is discussed in section 6.0 of the EA.

2. The EA discloses the environmental consequences of the "proposed action" and "no action" alternatives.

3. The proposed action will not cause a significant effect to water resources or wetlands (E.O. 11990). The Project will not result in discharge of pollutants into waters of the U.S. Clean Water Act sections 401 and 404 permits will be acquired prior to the start of construction as the Project will result in temporary and permanent fill impacts to Waters of the U.S. Areas of temporary impact will be restored to pre-construction conditions following construction activities. Protective measures will be levied to minimize impacts to water resources and wetlands, as discussed in EA Section 2.5, Conservation Measures and Best Management Practices.

4. The proposed action will not jeopardize threatened or endangered species (Endangered Species Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) as discussed in Section 3.3.3 of the EA. A Biological Assessment was prepared by a private consultant with technical review by CSKT biologists, and submitted to the Service in spring 2026. A subsequent Letter of Concurrence (attached to the EA) was issued by the Service agreeing with the following determinations:

    - Spalding's catchfly (*Silene spaldingii)*, threatened, *no effect* due to the absence of suitable habitat
    - Canada Lynx (*Lynx canadensis)*, threatened, *no effect* due to the absence of suitable habitat

- Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis)*, threatened, *may affect, not likely to adversely affect*
- Bull Trout (*Salvelinus confluentus)*, threatened, *may affect, not likely to adversely affect*
- Bull Trout designated critical habitat, *may affect, not likely to adversely affect*
- North American Wolverine (*Gulo gulo luscus)*, threatened, *may affect, not likely to adversely affect*
- Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus)*, proposed threatened, *not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the species*
- Suckley's Cuckoo Bumble Bee (*Bombus suckleyi)*, proposed endangered, *not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the species*

EA Section 2.5 outlines conservation measures and BMPs that will be followed during Project implementation in order to minimize or eliminate impacts to listed species in the project area as well as to aquatic resources and nesting and migratory bird species.

5. There are no adverse effects on historic properties for the purpose of 36 CFR 800.9(b) by preserving archeological value through conduct of appropriate research in accordance with applicable standards and guideline (National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 470).

   Various meetings and coordination efforts were held with the CSKT Tribal Preservation Department and the Séliš-Qlispé and Ksanka Culture Committees. A Letter of Cultural Clearance was issued in spring 2026 and is provided as an attachment to the EA. Measures to protect cultural resources are presented in EA Section 2.5. A cultural resource monitor will be present during any ground-disturbing activities related to the Project. Should undiscovered archeological remains be encountered during ground-disturbing activities, work will stop in the area of discovery and the stipulations of 36 CFR 800.11 will be followed.

6. Impacts to public health and safety are discussed in Section 3.6.3 of the EA. By implementing the Project, public safety will be improved by adding a river access point on a 30-mile stretch of the Flathead River that is currently inaccessible, including for search and rescue operations. Traffic control and area closures would minimize public safety issues during construction.

7. Protective measures will be levied to protect air quality (Clean Air Act, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 7401 et seq.) and minimize noise impacts as outlined in the measures listed in EA Section 2.5, Construction Best Management Practices.

8. Energy resources (Energy Policy Act of 2005), are not analyzed in the EA as these resource concerns are not present in the Project Area. The Project is located within the floodplain of the Flathead River, but it is not within an area mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency National Flood Insurance Program that is subject to E.O. 11988. Impacts to the Flathead River floodplain were still analyzed in the EA as part of the evaluation of other resources in the EA (i.e., vegetation, water resources, and wetlands).

9. The proposed action would not result in negative economic impacts. The Project would have a beneficial impact to the local community by providing a new access to the Flathead River for recreation and cultural activities, as well as access for search and rescue and CSKT administrative operations. The Project would be implemented by CSKT, and any contractors hired for construction or post-construction operation would follow Indian Preference hiring procedures.

10. The proposed action will not have significant impacts on: natural and unique geographic features; park, recreation, or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild and scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or prime drinking water aquifers; prime and unique farmlands; national monuments; eagles and migratory birds, and other ecologically significant areas.

11. The proposed action will not produce highly controversial effects on the quality of the human environment, and will not have unresolved conflicts concerning alternate uses of available resources.

12. The proposed action will not have highly uncertain effects on the human environment or involve unique or unknown risks.

13. The proposed action will not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a consideration.

14. The Project is not related to other actions with individual insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects. Reasonably foreseeable federally-funded actions are discussed in EA Section 3.7, Cumulative Impacts. The Project would not result in cumulative effects of the environment.

15. The proposed action will not affect American Indian Religious Freedom (42 U.S.C. 1996). The action will not limit access to, and ceremonial use of, Indian sacred sites on federal lands, by Indian religious practitioners, and/or adversely affect the physical integrity of such sites (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, 25 U.S.C. 32).

16. The proposed action will take measures to avoid the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area, as described in EA Section 2.5, Conservation Measures and Best Management Practices. Disturbed soils will be reclaimed and reseeded with a CSKT-approved seed mix as soon as possible after construction activities in order to minimize the recruitment of invasive species.

17. The proposed action will not threaten a violation of federal, state, local, or tribal law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. The Project would adhere to all Best Management Practices as outlined in section 2.5 of the EA and would comply with any associated permit conditions.

GENE HUGHES Digitally signed by GENE HUGHES Date: 2026.08.05 07:01:25 -07'00'

Gene Hughes, Acting Superintendent
Flathead Agency
Bureau of Indian Affairs
U.S. Department of the Interior

Date

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

Wild Plum Landing Boat Launch Project

Sanders County, Montana

Final Environmental Assessment

Prepared for:

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes

PO Box 278

Pablo, MT 59855

Prepared by:

Geum Environmental, Inc.

307 State St.

Hamilton, MT 59840

July 2026

BIA-NWR-EA-26-33

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ALCO: CSKT Aquatic Lands Conservation Ordinance
BA: Biological Assessment
BGEPA: Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act
BIA: Bureau of Indian Affairs
BMP: Best management practices
°C: degrees Celsius
CFR: Code of Federal Regulations
cfs: cubic feet per second
CSKT or the Tribes: Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
EA: Environmental Assessment
EPA: Environmental Protection Agency
ESA: Endangered Species Act
FGDC: Federal Geographic Data Committee
FERC: Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
FIIP: Flathead Indian Irrigation Project
FMO: foraging, migration, and overwintering habitat for fish
IPaC: Information on Planning and Consultation
MBTA: Migratory Bird Protection Act
MDOA: Montana Department of Agriculture
MNHP: Montana Natural Heritage Program
NAAQS: National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NEPA: National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA: National Historic Preservation Act
NTU: nephelometric turbidity units
OHWM: Ordinary high water mark
PM: particulate matter
SKQ: Selis-Ksanka-Qlispe’
TPD: Tribal Preservation Department
USFWS: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS: U.S. Geological Survey

1.0 Introduction

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (Tribes or CSKT) of the Flathead Indian Reservation (Reservation) are proposing to construct the Wild Plum Landing Boat Launch Project (Project or proposed action) on the Flathead River at Sčilíp, in Sanders County, Montana (Figure 1). The Project is located on land owned by the CSKT. Funding for the Project would be provided through the CSKT-Montana Water Compact[1], which the Department of Interior distributes to the Tribes for allocation and management to implement the Montana Water Rights Protection Act[2] (MWRPA). Given the explicit requirement in the MWRPA and the federal funding and approvals required, the Project is required to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended (42 USC § 4321-4375, 516 DM 1 DOI NEPA Implementing Procedures, and Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations [CFR], Subtitles A and B). This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared in accordance with Executive Order 14154 Unleashing American Energy; the Department of the Interior Departmental Manual 516 DM 1; and the Department of the Interior regulations (43 CFR Part 46).

1.1 Project Area

The Project is located along the lower Flathead River at Sčilíp (Figure 1) (latitude 47.324439 N, longitude -114.330872 W; Section 18, Township 18 North, Range 21 West, Montana Principal Meridian). The Project is located approximately 50 miles downstream of the Selis-Ksanka-Qlispe' (SKQ) Dam (a few miles below the natural outlet of Flathead Lake), and 25 miles upstream from the lower Flathead River's confluence with the Clark Fork River. The Project area is at approximately 2,510 feet elevation.

The Project area consists of the area of potential temporary or permanent disturbance, to include the project footprint and construction workspaces, as well as a narrow buffer to allow for minor shifts in design. Resources were also evaluated in a broader scale Project vicinity (Figure 2), as described in Section 3.0, Affected Environment and Environmental Impacts, which corresponds to the action area defined for the Biological Assessment (BA; CSKT 2026a) completed for the Project.

CSKT owns all of the land within the Project area, across two CSKT parcels (Figure 2). Land ownership within the broader Project vicinity is both CSKT land, as well as private lands. Much of the riparian area along the river is CSKT Wildlife Program mitigation lands, managed for conservation values. Development in the action area consists of the town of Sčilíp, Highway 200, private residences, the BNSF Railway railroad tracks, Old Sloan Road, the former Hoskins Landing boat launch, a user-created two-track road that approaches the riverbank, and an unofficial boat launch used by the public to access the Flathead River at the location of the proposed new boat launch.

[1] 85-20-1901, MCA, https://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/title_0850/chapter_0200/part_0190/section_0010/0850-0200-0190-0010.html

[2] Pages 1829 – 1859, Pub. L. 116 – 260, 134 Stat. 3008, https://www.congress.gov/116/plaws/publ260/PLAW-116publ260.pdf

The area within the Project footprint is currently used as a CSKT grazing lease and livestock have access to the river.

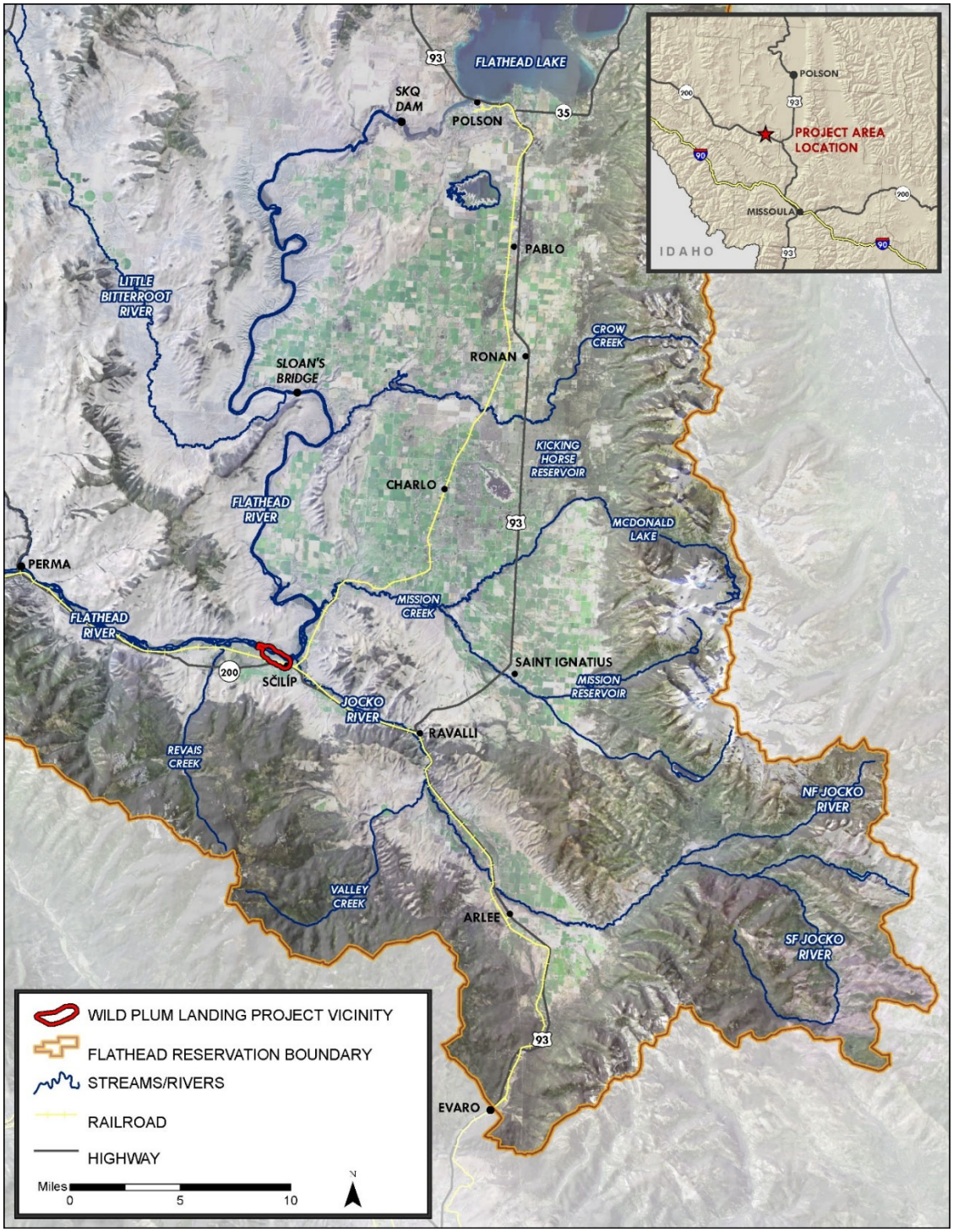

Figure 1. Project location.

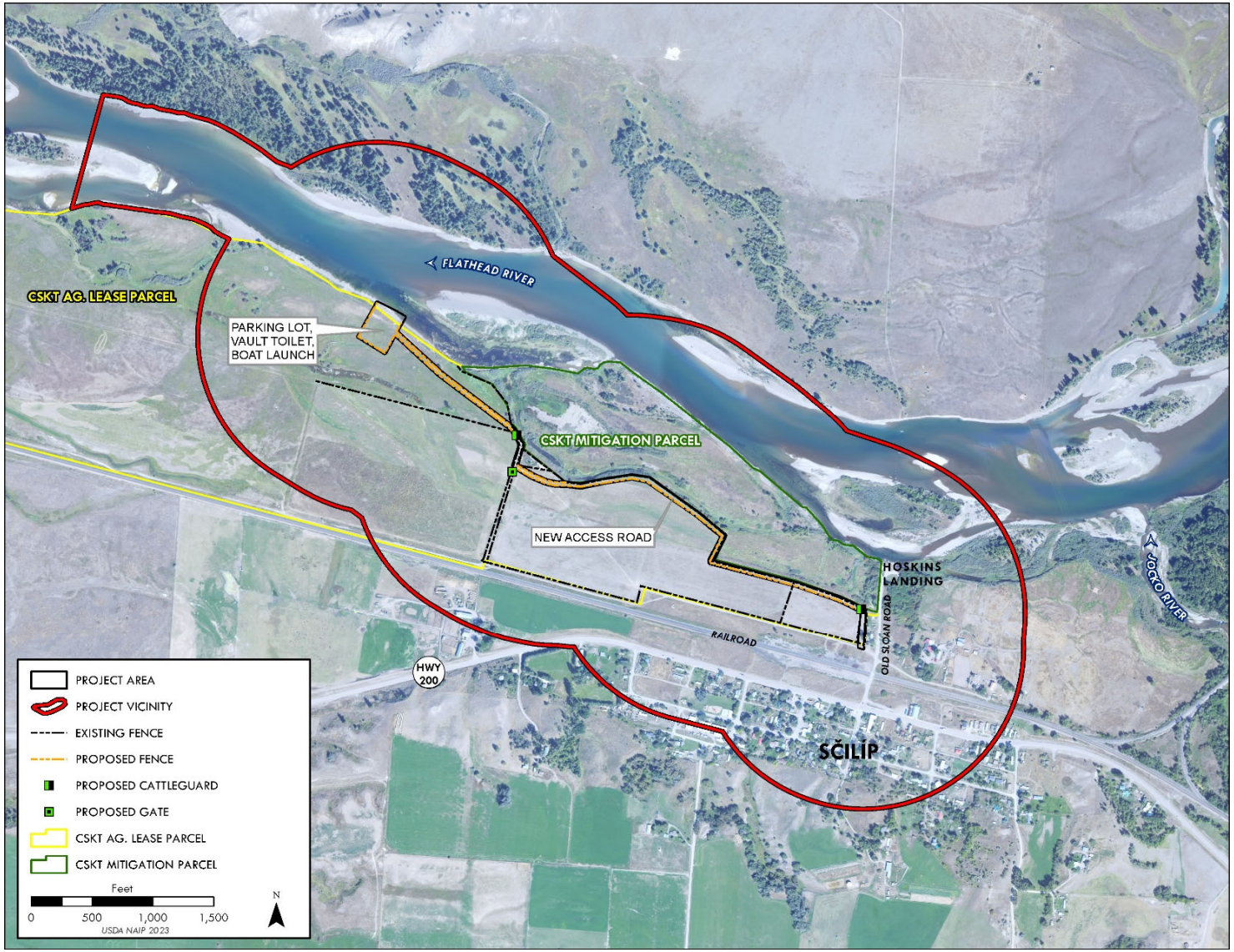

Figure 2. Project area and vicinity overview.

1.2 Background

There is currently no accessible developed river access site for a roughly 30-mile stretch of the Flathead River between Sloan's Bridge and the bridge at Perma (known as the "Perma Bridge"; Figure 1), which limits access for search and rescue operations, recreation, and CSKT administrative personnel such as for fish monitoring efforts. Hoskins Landing, located at the upstream end of the Project vicinity (Figure 2), was previously a formal river access point; however, this site is no longer a public access point due to changes in river geomorphology and land ownership. The proposed Project site is currently used as an unofficial access point to the Flathead River for recreationists which has led to a degraded riverbank, erosion and sedimentation, and the development of user-built, two-track access roads. The current informal boat launch is also used as a cattle watering location.

In addition to access issues, CSKT desired to mitigate for the loss of recreation access on Kicking Horse Reservoir due to the Kicking Horse Dam Modification Project, which will close the reservoir to recreation during the four to five years of construction (anticipated to begin in the fall of 2026 or spring 2027).

1.3 Purpose and Need

The need for the Project is to address 1) the lack of a developed access site on the Flathead River between Sloan's Bridge and the Perma Bridge (Figure 1) which have resulted in user-created access sites on the Flathead River that are detrimental to natural and cultural resources; and 2) the upcoming loss of recreation access at Kicking Horse Reservoir due to the Kicking Horse Dam Modification Project. Therefore, the purpose of the Project is to provide safe, sustainable public access to this section of the Flathead River, while mitigating for lost recreation opportunities during construction of the Kicking Horse Dam Modification Project. The construction of a formal river access site would also allow CSKT resources managers to manage and/or contain the adverse impacts of dispersed recreation on cultural and natural resources that is currently occurring on this stretch of the Flathead River.

2.0 Alternatives

The proposed action and no action alternatives were the only alternatives evaluated. There are no unresolved conflicts about the proposed action with respect to alternative uses of available resources that merit evaluation of additional alternatives.

2.1 No Action Alternative

The no action alternative provides the baseline of environmental conditions that are used to quantify the effects of the proposed action during the analysis. Under the no action alternative, the Project area would remain in its current state, with no development of a formal boat launch. Reliable boat access to the lower Flathead River would remain limited. CSKT would continue to manage the Project area for grazing, wildlife, and fisheries mitigation, including maintenance of fencing, access roads, and weed management. The location would continue to be used as an informal boat launch

and causing erosion on the riverbank, and delivering sediment to the river during storm or runoff events.

2.2 Proposed Action

The Project would construct a new access site on the Flathead River, including a formal boat launch, parking lot, picnic tables, vault toilet, new/updated perimeter fencing, and improvement of the existing informal access roads. Project elements are presented in Figure 2 and described below. The design for the parking and boat launch area is presented in Attachment A. After construction, the new access site would be managed by the CSKT Wildland Recreation Program as a day-use facility.

2.3 Construction

2.3.1 Ancillary Features

Ancillary features are presented in Figure 2 and include the following:

- *Access road*: A new single-lane gravel access road would be developed, extending from Old Sloan's Road to the boat launch parking lot. Cattle guards would be installed where the new road leaves Old Sloan's Road, and at the entrance to the parking area along the perimeter fencing to exclude cattle from the parking and boat launch area.
- *Staging*: Construction staging would occur exclusively in the proposed parking lot area to minimize disturbance.
- *Parking lot*: An approximately 5,500 square foot asphalt parking lot would be constructed adjacent to the boat launch. The parking lot design is presented in Attachment A.
- *Fencing*: The existing fencing would be reconfigured and improved as needed and new fencing would be installed to exclude cattle from the recreation area, and to mitigate the risk of off-roading by vehicles. A cattle guard would be constructed at the upper end of the boat launch to exclude cattle from entering the parking area from the river (Sheet 2, Attachment A).
- *Vault toilet*: A single hole vault toilet would be installed within the fence, adjacent to the parking lot (Sheet 2, Attachment A).
- *Picnic tables*: Two picnic tables would be mounted inside the fence perimeter for day-use.
- *Revegetation*: Any areas of ground disturbance outside of existing disturbance would be reseeded directly after construction with a native seed mix approved by CSKT. The Division of Engineering and Water Resources (DEWR) would monitor the project for one year post-construction to ensure successful revegetation of disturbed areas and reseed if necessary. The Wildland Recreation Program would be responsible for long-term management of the site, including vegetation management.

2.3.2 Boat Launch

The boat launch would be constructed at the existing informal boat launch location. Prior to any in-water work, sediment control measures would be installed to isolate the construction area within the

river. The method of work area isolation and sediment control would be determined by the construction contractor, with approval by CSKT. The contractor would be required to adhere to the requirements listed in Section 2.5.1 Aquatic Resource Conservation Measures . Work area isolation and sediment control could be achieved using various methods including a coffer dam, a floating turbidity curtain, or other method that results in controlling sediment production to minimize suspended sediment and turbidity downstream of the in-water work area.

If a coffer dam is used, it would be constructed using a method selected by the contractor and approved by CSKT (i.e., bulk bags, or approved alternative method). Fill size gradation within bulk bags or other method would also need to be approved by CSKT. The area behind the coffer dam would be dewatered using a pump, with water pumped to an upland area where water would not return via surface flow to the river or wetlands. If a turbidity curtain is used, it would be heavy-duty, anchored to the channel bed, and would be tall enough to contain fluctuating water levels. Removal of the turbidity curtain would be done incrementally, slowly releasing sediment trapped behind the curtain to avoid a large pulse of suspended sediment downstream. Outside of the river channel, sediment control fence would be installed in any areas potentially subject to sediment erosion from construction ground disturbance (i.e., grading uphill of the river).

The boat launch design is presented in Attachment A. The footprint of the launch would be 95 feet long and 14 feet wide, with two thirds of the length extending below the OHWM of the river. Currently, the area is largely devoid of vegetation, but any vegetation removal would be minimized. The riverbank and bed would be graded to a specified slope to accommodate placement of the boat ramp, and gravel and geotextile material would be placed on the graded riverbed and bank. The boat launch would be constructed using prefabricated cement planks and concrete cable mat installed on top of the geotextile material.

2.3.3 Schedule

Timing and estimated duration of the construction of Project components are presented in

Table 1. Construction activity including mobilization and demobilization would occur between August and November, 2026. Specific sequencing would be determined by the contractor and relevant CSKT programs responsible for the work. Construction is tentatively scheduled for 2026, but if the project gets delayed to a future year, all project components and timelines would remain as disclosed here. The fencing, access road improvements, and boat launch construction would likely be completed first, followed by construction (paving and striping) of the parking lot, and then the picnic tables and vault toilet installation. Seeding of disturbed areas would occur directly after construction. Weed management would be implemented the first season post-construction and as needed thereafter as part of general site management.

In-water work is defined by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as any work below the ordinary high-water mark (OHWM; dry or wetted channel), or on the stream banks abutting the OHWM that could subsequently produce sediment into the channel below the OHWM. In-water work is highlighted in blue in Table 1, and would be limited to installation and removal of the sediment control/work area isolation measures (i.e., coffer dam or turbidity curtain), and construction of the boat launch.

Table 1. Project construction schedule (in-water work in blue).

Project Component	Time Frame (2026)	Estimated Duration
Fencing improvements, picnic table and vault toilet installation	Any time after environmental permitting is complete	2 weeks to 2 months
In-water work area isolation/sediment control installation (i.e., coffer dam or turbidity curtain)	August	1 day
Boat launch construction	August - September	6 – 8 weeks
Access road improvements	August - November	1 - 2 weeks
Parking lot construction	August - November	1 - 2 weeks
Removal of in-water work area isolation/sediment control measures (i.e., coffer dam or turbidity curtain)	September	1 day
Seeding	Directly post-construction	1 day
Weed management	1st season post-construction, and as needed	As needed

2.4 Post-Construction Site Management

After construction, the CSKT Recreation Program would manage the river access site as a day-use area. No camping would be allowed at the site, which would be enforced by the CSKT Fish and Game Wardens. Additional management actions by CSKT would include weed control/vegetation management as needed and maintenance of the vault toilet, picnic tables, roads, and fences. The CSKT Recreation Program would visit the site once per week during peak season as part of scheduled site maintenance, including removing garbage or any other attractants.

2.5 Conservation Measures and Best Management Practices

Adverse effects of the Project would be avoided and minimized to the greatest extent practicable through the Project conservation measures and construction best management practices (BMPs). The BMPs specific to species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), are presented in the BA prepared for the Project (CSKT 2026a). Measures related to aquatic resource protection, cultural resources, and other general construction BMPs, are listed below.

2.5.1 Aquatic Resource Conservation Measures

1. In-water work is defined by the USFWS as any work below the OHWM (dry or wetted channel), or on the stream banks abutting the OHWM that could subsequently produce sediment into the channel below the OHWM.
2. To prevent introduction and spread of terrestrial and aquatic invasive species, clean mud and plants from (preferably by power washing) and dry all equipment to be used for in-water work prior to mobilizing onsite.
3. Work area isolation and turbidity/sediment control requirements. The method of isolation would be determined by the construction contractor, with approval by CSKT. Conservation measures associated with coffer dams and turbidity curtains, and turbidity monitoring, are presented below.

a. Coffer dam (used to route the river around the construction area to work in the dry)
    i. During dewatering/coffer dam installation the dewatered area would be monitored for stranded fish, which would be relocated to the active channel.
    ii. If bulk bags are used, they would be filled with washed material. Cofferdam heights would be elevated above anticipated water elevations during the construction period to preclude overtopping.
b. Turbidity curtain (capture sediment within work area, to work in the wet)
    i. The curtain would be inspected frequently to confirm effectiveness.
    ii. The curtain would be tall enough to accommodate changes in water level.
    iii. Removal of the curtain would occur incrementally to release small amounts of suspended sediment, minimizing a turbidity plume downstream of construction area.
c. Turbidity monitoring
    i. Turbidity would be monitored during any in-water work, regardless of the method of work isolation (i.e., coffer dam or turbidity curtain), to ensure compliance with CSKT water quality standards for turbidity which require no more than a five NTU increase above naturally occurring turbidity (CSKT 2023a).
    ii. When such work is underway, turbidity would be monitored a minimum of three times per week at the following locations:
        1. Upstream of the work area to determine baseline turbidity levels.
        2. 50 feet downstream of the point where turbidity is being generated.
        3. 300 feet downstream of the work zone for comparison with the baseline level. This measurement would determine if there is an exceedance.
    iii. Monitoring results would be recorded in a monitoring log at the project site and digitally archived by CSKT.

4. Spills/contaminants
    a. Perform daily visual checks on vehicles, equipment, and heavy machinery to minimize the chances of introduction of petroleum products to waterways. External grease and oil would be removed from vehicles, equipment, and machinery offsite prior to operating in the Project area.
    b. Have and maintain a spill kit and backup spill materials onsite.
    c. Fuel equipment away from waterbodies, preferably at least 150 feet.
    d. No equipment stored below the OHWM.

e. All imported materials would consist of clean, granular material free of contaminants and all other deleterious material.

2.5.2 Cultural Resource Conservation Measures

The Project would adhere to the following cultural resource conservation measures:

1. A cultural resource monitor be on-site, or available, for the duration of the Project.
2. The CSKT Tribal Preservation Department (TPD) would work closely with Project managers to ensure cultural resources were protected and would be available for research or recommendations regarding cultural resources during the Project.
3. The construction contractor would cease all construction disturbances of an area and notify the TPD if any potential cultural resource sites are discovered. Construction work may not continue in the area of the discovery until the TPD issues a notice to proceed.

2.5.3 Other General Construction Best Management Practices

1. Permit compliance:
   a. The Project would follow all requirements and conditions included in permit authorizations and clearances (e.g., Section 401 Certification, Section 404 authorization, CSKT Aquatic Lands Conservation Ordinance (ALCO) 87A permit, Stormwater Construction General Permit, CSKT cultural resources clearance).
   b. The construction manager would review permit provisions with the contractor, and copies of Project permits would be posted on-site.
2. Vegetation management:
   a. Limits of disturbance would be clearly staked to avoid ground disturbance in wetlands or other sensitive areas where disturbance is not authorized.
   b. All vehicles would follow designated access routes to minimize disturbance.
   c. Excavated materials would be stockpiled outside of existing wetlands, other areas noted for preservation, or cultural resource buffer zones (if applicable).
   d. All areas of ground disturbance would be seeded and revegetated as soon as reasonably possible after construction.
   e. Post-construction CSKT would manage weeds along the access road, and at the new day-use area using standard control methods. Weed control methods could include spraying or mechanical methods. Pesticide application would not be conducted in high-quality habitat without close coordination with CSKT Natural Resources Department staff to avoid impacts to pollinators.
3. Erosion and sediment control:
   a. The construction contractor would follow the Montana State Department of Transportation Erosion and Sediment Control Best Management Practices Manual (MDT 2016).

b. The construction contractor would develop a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan prior to the start of Project construction.
c. Fugitive dust would be controlled by wetting soil and access roads with water during dry periods.
d. Disturbance to riverbanks would be minimized by limiting the area permitted for equipment access to the existing disturbed informal boat launch area.
e. Prior to construction, install and maintain erosion and sediment control measures, such as swales, grade stabilization structures, berms, dikes, waterways, filter fabric fences, and sediment basins.
f. Turbidity filtration devices such as silt curtains, gravel berms, bulk bags or other filtration devices would be used to reduce or eliminate instream turbidity.

2.6 Alternatives Considered but Dismissed

Different access road alignments were reviewed with the goals of avoiding wetland areas and maximizing the available grazing area. The chosen access road alignment along the far north end of the pasture achieves these goals by minimizing fill in the wetlands and infringement on the grazing pasture.

Three alternative locations for river access on the Flathead River were also reviewed but were dismissed: Hoskins Landing, Old Agency, and Foust Slough (Figure 3). These locations were not considered viable alternatives compared to the location chosen under the proposed action.

Hoskins Landing is located just upstream of the proposed Project area and previously served as a public river access point with a boat launch. Access was provided through an agreement between CSKT and a private landowner. A Tribal Recreation Permit was required for non-Tribal members. Hoskins Landing is no longer a public river access point due to a change in land ownership. The river channel has also changed over the years such that the boat launch is located in a shallow side channel, and larger watercraft can no longer enter or exit the river at this location due to shallow water.

Old Agency is located approximately two river miles upstream of the proposed Project area. The existing informal boat launch at the Old Agency site was remediated as part of the Flathead Post and Pole Brownfields cleanup project and it is no longer contaminated, but it remains in a degraded state. There are issues with unauthorized camping and trash, there is no public toilet, and there are the remains of the former Agency household garbage dump along the river. CSKT NRD had proposed further clean up and development the site, but further review revealed cultural resource concerns that precluded river access development. CSKT resource staff also had concerns regarding general increased use of the Old Agency site and the potential for increased degradation.

Foust Slough is located approximately six river miles upstream of the proposed Project area. It is a high use area for recreation, but does not have a formal boat launch. Its location is in a more remote area of the river corridor, accessed via several miles of gravel and two-track road from Moiese, Montana. CSKT determined that Foust Slough would not provide adequate access due to the complexities of site access.

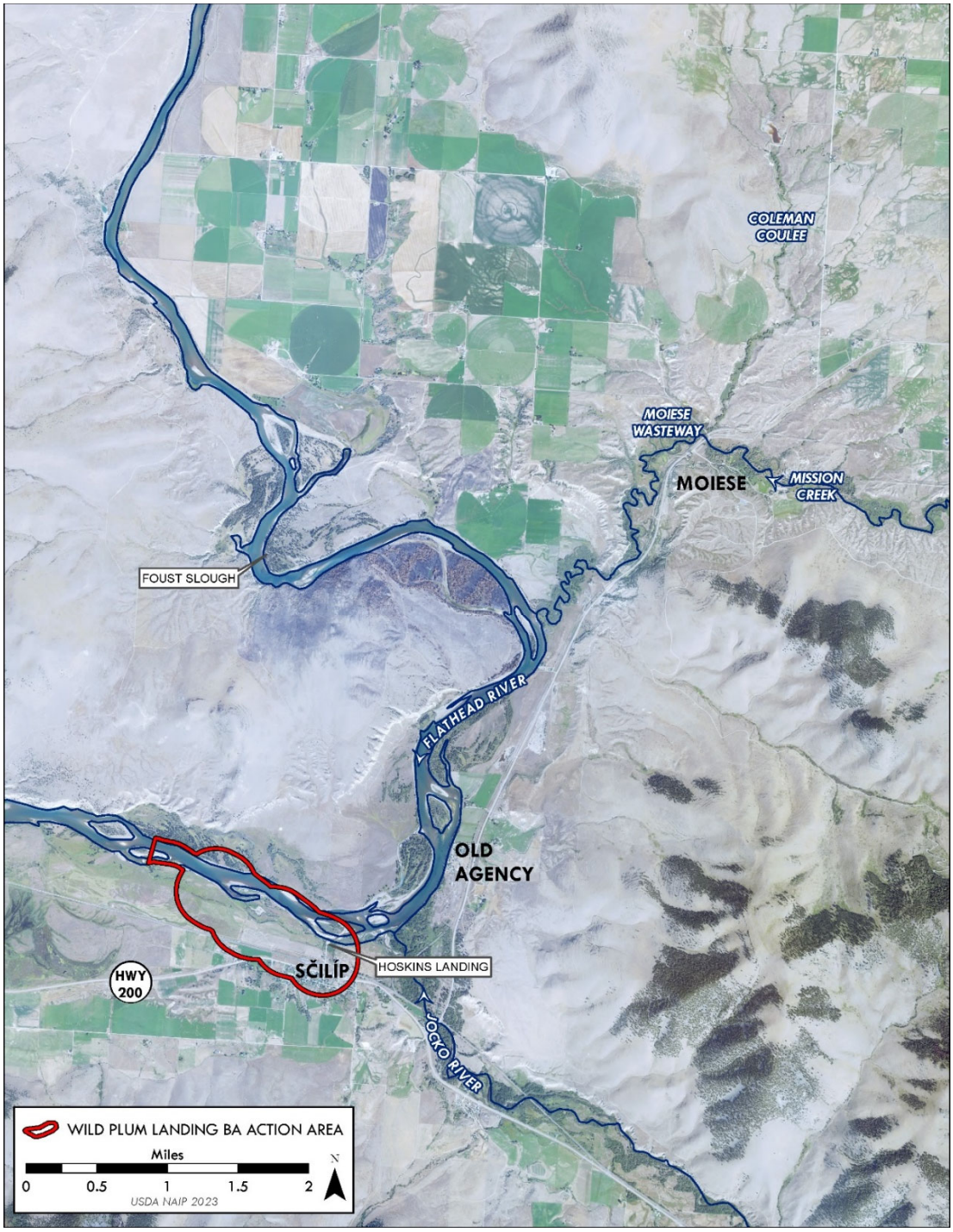

Figure 3. Alternative locations evaluated and key tributary streams to lower Flathead River.

3.0 Affected Environment and Environmental Impacts

This section describes the present condition of the affected environment and the potential environmental impacts of the no action alternative and the proposed action. For the purpose of this EA, evaluation extents, impact duration, and impact magnitude are defined below. Direct and indirect impacts are analyzed within each of the individual resource sections below. Cumulative impacts are considered in Section 3.7 Cumulative Impacts.

Evaluation Extents

Resources were evaluated at the following evaluation extents:

- Socioeconomic resources and public health and safety were evaluated at the general "regional" scale to capture the broader geographic extent for human-related resources.
- All other resources were evaluated within the Project vicinity (Figure 2), which corresponds to the action area defined for the BA completed for the Project (CSKT 2026a). The Project vicinity includes all areas to be directly or indirectly affected by the proposed action, and consists of the following:
    - The area within 0.25 miles of the Project footprint (i.e., boat launch, parking area, access roads), to account for the effects of Project vehicles and construction equipment noise and dust, and;
    - The Flathead River within 0.5 miles downstream of the proposed boat launch structure, to account for the effects of construction-generated suspended sediment.

Impact Duration

- Temporary (short-term) impacts: impacts that are restored to pre-construction conditions after construction is complete (i.e., within two to three years post-construction).
- Permanent (or long-term) impacts: impacts that are not restored to pre-construction conditions after construction is complete.

Impact Magnitude

Impact magnitude evaluates the magnitude of intensity or severity of change to the resource. For this EA, all impacts are adverse unless otherwise noted (i.e., as neutral or beneficial). For adverse impacts, the amount and type of mitigation required to offset the impact provides a useful tool to assess impact intensity. Magnitude of intensity is assigned to one of the five categories below.

- No impact/None: no change to resource conditions.
- Negligible: slight but immeasurable or imperceptible change to resource conditions.
- Minor: small measurable or perceptible change to resource conditions. Simple, standard avoidance and minimization measures would easily offset the impact.
- Moderate: measurable, perceptible change to resource conditions. Tailored mitigation measures beyond standard avoidance and minimization measures would be needed to offset the impact, possibly including compensatory mitigation.

- Major: large, measurable, or perceptible change to resource conditions. Tailored, complex, or extensive mitigation measures would be needed to offset the impact, likely to include compensatory mitigation.

Geographic extent (local or regional) and frequency of the impact are also often evaluated, depending on the resource and type of impact.

Resources Evaluated

Table 2 presents the resources that were initially evaluated per BIA Guidance (BIA 2012). Each resource was evaluated to determine whether it would be analyzed in greater detail in this EA, and the associated rationale. Resources were analyzed in detail in the EA if they were determined to be associated with meaningful impacts to the environment, *or* if additional impact description was required beyond what could be succinctly described in Table 2. Resources were not analyzed further if they, 1) were not present in the Project vicinity, *or* 2) were not applicable to the proposed action or environment, *or* 3) would not be expected to be meaningfully impacted by the proposed action or no action alternative, *and* the rationale for this determination could be succinctly described within Table 2.

Table 2 also presents a summary of the environmental impacts of the proposed action based on the analysis in this EA. The summary of impacts includes the type (beneficial or adverse) and duration (temporary or permanent).

Table 2. Resources evaluated in this EA and a summary of proposed Project impacts.

Component	Detailed analysis in EA		Rationale	Impact Type[a]	
	Yes	No		Temporary	Permanent
Land Resources					
Topography		x	Topography would not be impacted	○	○
Soils		x	Surface soils would be disturbed within the immediate project footprint but would not be meaningfully impacted	○	○
Geology/Mineral/ Paleontological Resources		x	Geology would not be impacted. There are no mineral or paleontological resources in the Project area.	○	○
Water Resources					
Surface Water Quality & Quantity	x		The Project would impact surface water in the Project area by constructing a boat launch in the Flathead River. Water quality would be improved by hardening the existing launch location.	**-**	**+**
Ground Water Quality & Quantity		x	Ground Water would not be impacted	○	○
Water Rights/Use		x	Water Rights would not be impacted	○	○
Waters of the U.S. and Wetlands (Clean Water Act)	x		The Project would impact waters of the U.S. in the Project area.	**-**	**-**
Air					
Air Quality	x		Project construction would cause a temporary local increase in air pollutants.	**-**	○
Living Resources					
Vegetation and Invasive Weeds	x		Vegetation would be impacted by the Project. Noxious weeds are abundant in the Project area.	**-**	**-**
General Wildlife	x		Fish may be impacted by instream construction activity. Wildlife may be impacted by construction noise and activity, and by increased use of the site.	**-**	**-**
Federally Protected Species	x		Endangered Species Act listed species may be temporarily adversely impacted by Project construction, and permanently impacted by increased use of the site.	**-**	**-**

Component	Detailed analysis in EA		Rationale	Impact Type[a]	
	Yes	No		Temporary	Permanent
Cultural Resources					
Historic Properties & Archaeological Resources		x	Within the Project area, there are no historic properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places that are subject to regulation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.	○	○
Cultural, Sacred, & Traditional Cultural Properties		x	The CSKT Tribal Preservation Department determined the Project would have "no adverse effect" to cultural and historic sites (see clearance letter in Attachment B), given the implementation of cultural resource conservation measures listed in Section 2.5.2. However, there could still potentially be a temporary or permanent impact to cultural resources if artifacts or cultural resources are discovered during construction.	○	○
Socioeconomic Conditions					
Employment and Income		x	Project would not have a meaningful impact or increase in construction jobs or local work force development.	○	○
Demographic Trends		x	Project would not result in a change to demographic trends.	○	○
Lifestyle and Cultural Values (Rural, Urban)	x		The Project would have a beneficial impact on local lifestyle and cultural values through improved public access to the Flathead River.	○	**+**
Community Infrastructure (Public Services, Utilities)	x		The Project would have a beneficial impact on community infrastructure through improved public access to the Flathead River, and administrative access for search and rescue activities.	○	**+**
Resource Use Patterns					
Timber Harvesting		x	No timber harvesting at the Project area.	○	○
Agriculture	x		The Project would impact the current CSKT grazing lease.	○	**-**
Mineral Extraction		x	No mineral extraction in or near the Project area.	○	○
Hunting, Fishing, Gathering	x		Access to the Flathead River at the Project area would be closed during construction, but post-construction river access would be improved for hunting, fishing, and gathering.	-	**+**
Recreation	x		Post-construction recreational river access would be improved.	-	**+**

Component	Detailed analysis in EA		Rationale	Impact Type[a]	
	Yes	No		Temporary	Permanent
Transportation Networks		x	The Project would result in a negligible increase in traffic on Highway 200 and at the railroad crossing. Traffic on local roads would not be meaningfully adversely affected.	○	○
Land Use Plans and Management		x	The Project area is included in the Lower Flathead River Plan (CSKT 1993) and aligns with the goals and objectives in the plan. Project would not affect the portions of the Project area that are managed as CSKT Wildlife Program mitigation lands. The Project would result in a slight (negligible) reduction in grazing area managed by the CSKT Lands Department.	○	○
Other Values					
Wilderness, Refuges, Ecological Sensitive/Critical Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers		x	No Tribal or Federal Wilderness, Refuges, or Wild and Scenic Rivers are present.	○	○
Noise and Light	x		Construction would increase noise levels in the vicinity during construction, and post-construction when the site is a recreation area.	**-**	○
Visual	x		The Project would adversely affect visual resources during and after construction due to the change from a natural aesthetic.	**-**	**-**
Indian Trust Assets		x	The Project area is located exclusively on Tribal Trust lands (two parcels owned by CSKT). The Project would not cause any encumbrances, or adverse or beneficial impacts, on Tribal Trust lands, as it would not change the land status.	○	○
Public Health and Safety	x		The Project would improve public health and safety.	○	**+**
Hazardous Materials		x	No hazardous materials are or were currently or historically present in the Project area. No state or federal Superfund sites are located within the Project vicinity or upstream of it. Hazardous materials used on the Project would be managed in accordance with governing regulations.	○	○

[a] *- adverse, + beneficial, ○ no meaningful impacts to resource*

3.1 Water Resources

3.1.1 Surface Water

3.1.1.1 Affected Environment

The reach of the lower Flathead River where the Project is located is primarily a single-thread channel meandering river with scattered mid-channel bars, approximately 400 feet wide. Substrate in this section is primarily cobble, gravel, and fine substrates. The Flathead River is regulated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, and by the CSKT Shoreline Protection Program under Ordinance 64A.

Stream Flows

Average monthly and annual stream flows are presented in Table 3 based on the United States Geological Survey (USGS) gage at Perma (#12388700), 15 miles downstream of the action area (Figure 1) for the period of 1999-2025. Stream flow data were analyzed for the post-1998 period of record to account for changes in SKQ Dam operations that were required as part of the 1997 renewal of their Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) license. The 1997 FERC license required operational changes to minimize impacts to aquatic habitat and biota, including implementing seasonal minimum flows and more normative streamflow fluctuations.

From the start of SKQ Project operation in 1938 until 1997, the SKQ Dam was a power-peaking and load-control facility, where water releases were increased or decreased rapidly (steep ramping rates) to match power generation needs resulting in unnatural rises and declines in downstream stream flows. These pre-1997 SKQ Project operations caused frequent short-term flow fluctuations, resulting in varial zones (zones of recurrent wetting and drying) of greater than 100 meters wide in the unconfined low gradient reaches of the river, including within the action area. Stipulations in the 1997 FERC license required the SKQ Project to shift to a base-load operational regime. The new license placed restrictions on within and between-day flow fluctuations (reduced ramping rates). Since 1997, SKQ Dam operations have reduced within and between-day fluctuations as a result of these ramping rate provisions, in turn reducing the area of the varial zone.

Table 3. Average monthly water temperature and stream flow in the Flathead River.

Month	Average Water Temperature (°C)	Average Stream Flows (cfs[a])
Jan	2	9,438
Feb	3	8,936
Mar	5	8,260
Apr	8	10,602
May	11	20,467
Jun	15	26,480
Jul	21	14,263
Aug	22	6,875
Sep	17	5,969
Oct	12	6,632
Nov	6	7,928
Dec	2	10,047
Average annual	***10***	***11,325***

Source: USGS Gage at Perma 12388700 for the period of 1999-2025
[a] cfs = cubic feet per second

Water Quality

The CSKT Surface Water Quality Standards classifies the lower Flathead River as a B-1 waterbody, which must be suitable for "…drinking and culinary and food processing purposes after conventional treatment; bathing, swimming and recreation; wildlife…[and] salmonid fishes and associated aquatic life; and agricultural and industrial water supply purposes" (CSKT 2023a). The Water Quality Standards require that the maximum allowable increase above naturally occurring turbidity is five nephelometric turbidity units (NTU).

Water temperature data for the lower Flathead River at Perma are presented in Table 3 (1999-2025), which is representative of temperatures in the action area. Average temperatures in June through October range from 15-22 degrees Celsius (°C). Warmer temperatures of the Flathead River can be a barrier of Bull Trout migrating upstream from the Clark Fork River in the late summer season. Maximum water temperatures in the lower Flathead River can be several degrees warmer than in the lower Clark Fork River, with maximum water temperatures commonly exceeding 20°C after late June and into September (Table 3), depending on the year.

The riverbank at the current informal boat launch is eroding and delivers an unknown amount of sediment to the Flathead River during storm events (stormwater runoff) and high flow events. There are no data for suspended sediment levels in or near the action area, but levels of suspended sediment and turbidity are generally not elevated in the lower Flathead River outside of peak runoff. However, sources of nutrients and suspended sediment to the lower Flathead River upstream of the action area include agricultural runoff, livestock grazing, and delivery through Flathead Indian Irrigation Project (FIIP) irrigation wasteways.

Coleman Coulee and Moiese Wasteway (FIIP irrigation wasteways) deliver the most suspended sediment and nutrient-laden irrigation return water to Mission Creek (personal communication, C. Barfoot 2026). Mission Creek flows into the lower Flathead River approximately three miles upstream

of the action area (Figure 3). The irrigation wasteways deliver water to Mission Creek primarily between July and October annually and are also a source of increased water temperature. An example of increased suspended sediment delivery from Mission Creek to the lower Flathead River from the wasteways is depicted in Figure 4. During these turbidity events CSKT Fisheries Biologist Craig Barfoot has observed a layer of fine sediment (isolated to the edge of the river) on the riverbed as far downstream as Old Agency (approximately 1 mile downstream of Mission Creek, and 2 miles upstream of the action area [Figure 3]) (personal communication, C. Barfoot 2026). These high turbidity events from Mission Creek are less common today than they were prior to mitigation projects implemented on the Moiese Wasteway (installation of treatment wetlands and an erosion control project). However, they still occur, causing increased suspended sediment along the left bank (facing downstream) of the river.

Jocko River sediment inputs can also be elevated during peak flows, or when slope failures occur in lacustrine soils along the Jocko River. Slope failures are exacerbated by channelization in locations such as the Bison Range Reach approximately 2.5 miles upstream of the confluence, which is currently being restored and moved away from the failing slopes.

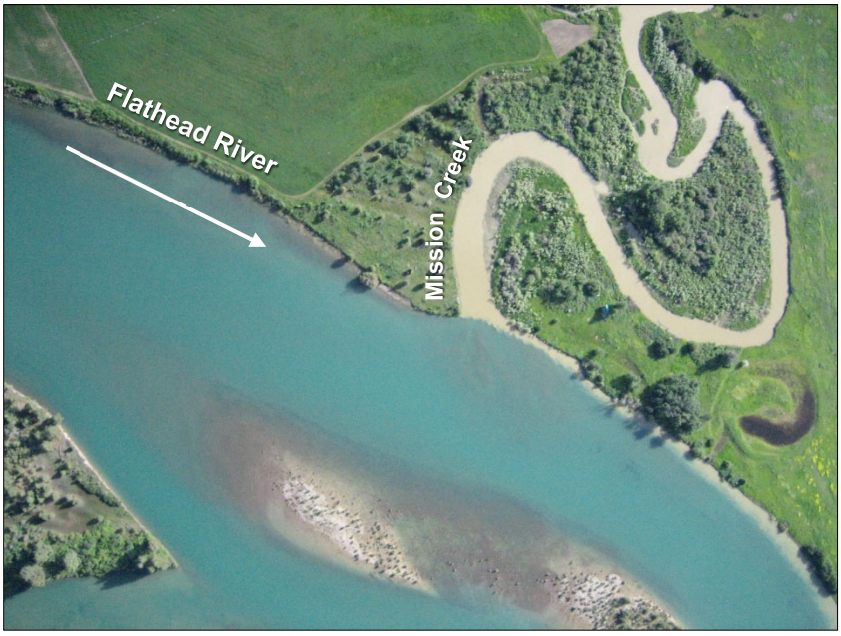

Figure 4. Mission Creek entering the Flathead River upstream of the action area (arrow indicates flow direction).

3.1.1.2 No Action Environmental Impacts

Surface water quantity and quality would remain unchanged under the no action alternative, and the Flathead River habitat and water quality conditions would remain as described above.

3.1.1.3 Proposed Action Environmental Impacts

The Project could cause temporary impacts to water quality in the Flathead River due to increased suspended sediment during installation and removal of the in-water work area isolation measures (i.e., coffer dam or turbidity curtain) for boat launch construction, and the potential introduction of contaminants due to construction equipment. Installation and removal of the work isolation measures would each require one day or less, in August and/or September. Based on general observations by CSKT Fisheries Program staff of sediment transport in the Flathead River, sediment would likely be elevated for less than two hours after in-water disturbance activities (personal communication, C. Barfoot 2026). Given the volume of flow, increased suspended sediment would be expected to rapidly dissipate to background levels within 2,500 feet (about 0.5 miles) or less, and these sediments would be very fine in nature. Farther effects would only be expected if rain events occur during or immediately after the in-channel disturbance. Increased sediment would be minimized through the implementation of erosion and sediment control BMPs presented in Section 2.5, Conservation Measures and Best Management Practices

The Project could temporarily introduce contaminants into the river during construction due to the presence of construction equipment in and near the channel, but this would occur primarily within the work isolation area. The construction contractor would be required to follow the BMPs and adhere to the spill prevention and containment measures presented in Section 2.5, Conservation Measures and Best Management Practices to avoid contamination into the river. The increased boat use at the site could also increase the potential for hydrocarbon spills or leaks from boat motors.

With the implementation of Project BMPs, these adverse impacts to water quality would be considered negligible given their limited duration and spatial extent. The Project would also result in a minor permanent beneficial impact by reducing sediment inputs during storm events by replacing the existing eroding informal boat launch with a hardened structure.

3.1.2 Wetlands

3.1.2.1 Affected Environment

Wetlands were delineated in September 2025 and April 2026 (CSKT 2026b) within an evaluation area that encompassed the original (early design phase) potential disturbance areas (Figure 5). A total of 2.56 acres of wetlands were documented within the evaluation area in four areas: along the edge of the Flathead River below the OHWM, and in three swales in the northcentral portion of the evaluation area. All of the wetlands were classified as palustrine emergent (herbaceous) wetlands (FGDC 2013), and were dominated by Nebraska sedge (*Carex nebrascensis*), reed canarygrass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), and dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale).* Scattered sandbar willow (*Salix exigua)* were present in the wetlands on the edge of the Flathead River but the willows were not abundant enough for the wetlands to be classified as scrub-shrub wetlands.

Figure 5. Delineated wetlands and waters.

3.1.2.2 No Action Environmental Impacts

Wetlands and waterbodies would not change under this alternative.

3.1.2.3 Proposed Action Environmental Impacts

A small area of wetlands (less than 0.1 acre) would be permanently impacted by placement of fill for construction of the boat launch and access road (Figure 5). The impacted wetlands are not considered high quality wetlands. The wetlands within the Flathead River at the boat launch area are already disturbed due to the current informal boat launch, and the wetlands at the access road crossing are dominated by invasive reed canarygrass.

An even smaller area of wetlands would be temporarily impacted by the construction workspaces for the boat launch and the access road. Temporary impact areas would be restored to their pre-construction conditions after the Project is completed. The impacts to wetlands require authorization under the CSKT Shoreline Protection Program ALCO 87A, and Clean Water Act Section 404 (permits under these programs would be in place prior to the start of construction). With the implementation of design elements and BMPs, and adherence to the required permits, the Project is expected to result in negligible adverse impacts to wetlands.

3.2 Air Quality

3.2.1 Affected Environment

Sanders County does not have any non-attainment areas for any criteria pollutants identified under the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) (EPA 2026) as of the writing of this EA. The closest Montana Department of Environmental Quality air monitoring station is located in Frenchtown, to the south of the Project area on Interstate 90. This monitoring station would not reflect air quality at the Project vicinity. Sources of air quality pollutants within the Project vicinity are limited to light-duty vehicle emissions from Highway 200, train engine emissions from the railroad, open burning of brush piles, and smoke from wood stoves. During the summer months smoke from local and regional wildfires also commonly cause air quality impairment.

3.2.2 No Action Environmental Impacts

Air quality would not change under this alternative.

3.2.3 Proposed Action Environmental Impacts

Construction equipment and vehicles would temporarily emit NAAQS criteria pollutants such as particulate matter (PM) PM2.5 pollutants, nitrogen dioxide, and carbon monoxide. PM10 pollutants could also result from construction activities that produce fugitive dust such as driving on gravel roads, excavation, grading, and dust blown from bare ground prior to revegetation. Construction BMPs would be implemented to limit the emission of air quality pollutants including ensuring all equipment and vehicles comply with emissions standards; wetting soil and access roads with water during dry periods to limit fugitive dust; and revegetating bare soils as soon as possible after construction to limit fugitive dust.

With the implementation of design elements and BMPs, adverse impacts to air quality are expected to be negligible, temporary, and local to the site. No permanent adverse or beneficial impacts to air quality are expected once the Project is constructed.

3.3 Living Resources

3.3.1 Vegetation and Invasive Weeds

3.3.1.1 Affected Environment

Vegetation

The Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) Ecological Systems Map Viewer (MNHP 2026) maps several land cover types within and adjacent to the Project. The Project vicinity is mapped as the following land cover types: Rocky Mountain lower montane, foothill, and valley grassland; northern Rocky Mountain lower montane riparian woodland and shrubland; alpine-montane wet meadow; and open water. These same cover types are dominant in the areas adjacent to the Project area, with the addition of the cultivated crops land cover type mapped within agricultural lands, and developed areas.

Vegetation types in the Project vicinity are listed below (excluding the developed area within the town of Sčilíp):

- Upland
    - *Upland pasture*: this habitat is found on the bench away from the river and is dominated by non-native species such as small tumble mustard (*Sisymbrium loeselii*) and intermediate wheatgrass (*Elymus hispidus)*. The vegetative community in this habitat type is likely present due to agricultural practices. There are limited patches of native plant species and the area is heavily grazed by livestock.
- Mesic (non-wetland)
    - *Herbaceous mesic swales*: these areas are historical Flathead River channels dominated by small tumble mustard and intermediate wheatgrass, as well as mesic vegetation such as reed canarygrass, Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*), and scattered native forbs and sedges. Non-native agricultural vegetation such as red clover (*Trifolium pratense*) was found to be far more lush and more mature than the vegetation found in the surrounding upland pastures.
    - *Riparian herbaceous-shrub*: this habitat is located along the top and side slope of the low bench above the river, and as the non-wetland component throughout the CSKT mitigation parcel. The riparian herbaceous shrub habitat ended just outside the evaluation extent and serves as a transition between the upland pastures and the herbaceous shrub-wetland fringe. Dominant species include reed canarygrass, houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale),* Canada goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*), Wood's rose (*Rosa woodsii),* sandbar willow, and common snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*). This habitat is assumed to be occasionally inundated by higher river runoff events.

    - *Riparian forest*: riparian forests of black cottonwood (*Populus trichocarpa*) are located where the Project vicinity extends across the Flathead River on the north side of the river.
- Wetland
    - *Herbaceous wetland swales*: these are historical Flathead River channels, classified as palustrine emergent wetlands (Figure 5) and dominated by reed canarygrass. Opportunistic non-native vegetation such as common dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale)* and red clover had a minute presence here. Native vegetation was not found in this habitat. These swales are not likely regularly inundated but have the potential following heavy storm events or snow melt off.
    - *Herbaceous-shrub wetland fringe:* these wetlands are located along (above and below) the ordinary high water mark of the Flathead River, and within the river floodplain of the CSKT mitigation parcel (Figure 5). Dominant species are reed canarygrass, Nebraska sedge, and sandbar willow. This habitat is typically inundated during higher flow events, and is classified as palustrine emergent wetlands (Figure 5).
    - *Open water/emergent wetland ponds*: these wetlands are located north of the evaluation extent and within a side channel of the lower Flathead River that bisects the CSKT mitigation parcel. Portions of this side channel are not connected via surface water. Plant species present on the marginal fringe includes sandbar willow, Nebraska sedge, reed canary grass, and broadleaf cattail (*Typha latifolia*). This habitat is inundated during low flow conditions.

Invasive Weeds

During the wetland delineation, CSKT documented the following invasive noxious weeds listed by the Montana Department of Agriculture (MDOA; MDOA 2019), as well as additional non-native invasive weed species of concern specified by the Tribes. The densest areas of weeds were found in the upland pastures.

- Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), MDOA Priority 2B
- St. Johnswort (*Hypericum perforatum*), MDOA Priority 2B
- Houndstongue, MDOA Priority 2B
- Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), MDOA Priority 3 (invasive, not noxious)
- Small tumble mustard (*Sisymbrium loeselii*), CSKT weed species of concern

3.3.1.2 **No Action Environmental Impacts**

Vegetation would not change under this alternative.

3.3.1.3 Proposed Action Environmental Impacts

Vegetation

Temporary impacts to vegetation would result within the construction workspaces surrounding the parking lot, access road, and boat launch. Permanent impacts to vegetation would result from the Project footprint (parking lot, access road, and boat launch). The Project would impact almost exclusively the upland pasture grass vegetation type on the bench above the river, which is primarily non-native species and is heavily grazed. Riparian herbaceous-shrub wetlands would also be impacted at the boat launch area; however, the boat launch area is already disturbed and nearly devoid of vegetation, with scattered non-native grass and occasional sandbar willow saplings. Temporary impact areas from construction would be recontoured and seeded with a CSKT-approved native seed mix after construction is complete such that they would be expected to return to pre-construction conditions. New and existing fencing would also confine future disturbance (i.e., foot and vehicle traffic) to the parking and boat launch area, avoiding additional vegetation disturbance. All other impacts to vegetation would be avoided as part of the Project conservation measures.

With the implementation of design elements and BMPs, temporary and permanent adverse impacts would be localized to the Project and considered negligible, given that the impacts would primarily affect disturbed areas.

Invasive Weeds

The Project may cause a temporary increase in invasive weeds due to ground disturbance that may allow existing weed seeds in the soils to germinate. Most of the ground disturbance would occur in previously-disturbed areas, but care would still be taken not to increase invasive weeds in the disturbed areas, and not to spread weeds to the undisturbed areas. Post-construction, the CSKT Recreation Program would manage weeds along the access road and at the new day-use area, using standard management methods which could include spraying or mechanical control methods.

With the revegetation activities and weed management measures proposed as part of the Project conservation measures, this temporary increase in invasive weeds is expected to be minor and confined to within the Project area.

3.3.2 General Fish and Wildlife

3.3.2.1 Affected Environment

The Project area provides habitat for a variety of terrestrial and aquatic wildlife and fish species. Threatened, endangered, and special status species (migratory birds and eagles) are described in more detail in Section 3.3.3 Threatened and Endangered Species and Other Federally Protected Species.

Fish and Other Aquatic Species

The lower Flathead River within the Project area is described in Section 3.1.1 Surface Water, and provides habitat for a variety of native and non-native fishes. Native fish species include Bull Trout

(*Salvelinus confluentus),* Mountain Whitefish (*Prosopium williamsoni*), Westslope Cutthroat Trout (*Oncorhynchus lewisi*), sculpin (*Cottus* spp.*)*, Northern Pikeminnow (*Ptychocheilus oregonensis),* Peamouth (*Mylocheilus caurinus),* Longnose Dace *(Rhinichthys cataractae),* Redside Shiner *(Richardsonius balteatus),* Longnose Sucker *(Catostomus catostomus),* and Largescale Sucker *(C. macrocheilus)*. Non-native fish species include Rainbow Trout (*O. mykiss*), Brown Trout (*Salmo trutta*), Northern Pike (*Esox lucius)*, Smallmouth Bass (*Micropterus dolomieu),* Largemouth Bass (*M. salmoides*), Yellow Bullhead (*Ameiurus natalis*), Black Bullhead (*A. melas*), Pumpkinseeds (*Lepomis gibbosus)*, and Yellow Perch (*Perca flavescens*).

The lower Flathead River provides FMO habitat for all of these species, and spawning and rearing habitat for Largescale Sucker, Northern Pikeminnow, Mountain Whitefish, Northern Pike, and Smallmouth Bass (personal communication, C. Barfoot 2026). All of the other species spawn and rear in smaller tributary streams.

Bull Trout are listed as threatened under the ESA and are discussed further in Section 3.3.3 Threatened and Endangered Species and Other Federally Protected Species. In addition to Bull Trout, the Flathead River at the Project area is FMO habitat for Westslope Cutthroat Trout (a species of concern in Montana and a Tribal Species of Special Consideration). Both fluvial (migratory) and resident forms exist. The fluvial Westslope Cutthroat Trout in the Flathead River at the Project area live their adult lives in river, migrating annually or every other year to smaller tributary streams (such as the Jocko River) between late April and early June, and spawning in these streams in early to mid-June. After sac-fry emerge, migratory Westslope Cutthroat Trout mature in their natal streams for up to several years, then migrate back downstream to live their adult lives in larger rivers such as the Flathead (Barfoot 2015).

There are no physical barriers to fish passage on the lower Flathead River at or downstream of the Project vicinity, but warm water temperature in the Flathead River is a potential barrier for Bull Trout migrating between the Clark Fork and Jocko rivers later in the summer. Several irrigation diversions in the Jocko River drainage do not provide sufficient passage for Bull Trout and Westslope Cutthroat Trout between foraging, migration, and overwintering (FMO) habitat and spawning and rearing habitat. CSKT is in the process of planning for, or installing, fish passage on many of these diversions. Until recently the three large dams on the Clark Fork River downstream of the action area (Thompson Falls, Cabinet Gorge, and Noxon Rapids) did not provide upstream fish passage. In 2011, the Thompson Falls Dam was retrofitted with a fish ladder designed to allow Bull Trout passage as well as incidental passage of other fish species including Westslope Cutthroat Trout. Bull Trout captured below Cabinet Gorge Dam are also transported and released at various locations upstream based on genetic assignment to natal streams, including fish assigned to the Jocko River.

The CSKT Fisheries Program has found no evidence of Western Pearlshell Mussels (*Margaritifera falcata*), a Montana State species of concern, in the lower Flathead River. However, they have not conducted extensive surveys for this species in the lower Flathead River. The closest known population of this species is in Finley and Valley Creeks, which are tributaries to the Jocko River upstream of the Project (personal communication, C. Barfoot 2026).

The invasive species Zebra Mussels and Quagga Mussels have not been detected in the Flathead River or Flathead Lake. There are strict protections to prevent these species from entering the basin,

including requiring all watercraft entering the Flathead River Basin to be inspected at a CSKT or Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks check station.

Terrestrial Wildlife

Terrestrial habitats are described in Section 3.3.1 Vegetation and Invasive Weeds. The MNHP occurrence database (MNHP 2026) reports that the area within the USGS Dixon quadrangle, where the Project vicinity is located, supports at least 345 species of terrestrial wildlife including amphibians (7 species), reptiles (8 species), birds (275 species), and mammals (55 species). Common species in the Dixon quadrangle are summarized below.

The most common amphibians and reptiles are the Columbia Spotted Frog (*Rana luteiventris*), Long-toed Salamander (*Ambystoma macrodactyllum*), and Sierran Tree Frog (*Pseudacris sierra*), Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta*), Prairie Rattlesnake (*Crotalus viridis*), and species of Gartersnake (*Thamnophis* spp.).

The most common birds are Black-billed Magpie (*Pica hudsonia*), Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*), American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*), Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*), European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), Common Raven (*Corvus corax*), Black-capped Chickadee (*Poecile atricapillus*), Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*), Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), Red-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta canadensis*), Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*), and Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*).

Common small mammals include North American Deer mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatus*), Meadow Vole (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*), Montane Vole (*Microtus montanus*), American Badger (*Taxidea taxus*), and Mountain Cottontail (*Sylvilagus nuttallii*). Common bat species include Townsend's Big-eared Bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*), Long-eared Myotis (*Myotis evotis*), and California Myotis (*Myotis californicus*).

Common large mammals in the Dixon quadrangle include Pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*), Elk (*Cervus canadensis*), White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), Mule Deer (*O. hemionus*), Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*), Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*), and Coyote (*Canis latrans*).

Existing disturbance to wildlife within and adjacent to the Project area includes limited human presence and noise due to the use of the current informal boat launch and the surrounding area, and the proximity to the town of Sčilíp. Noise from the trains on the adjacent railroad tracks, and Highway 200, are also current sources of disturbance to wildlife.

3.3.2.2 **No Action Environmental Impacts**

Fish and wildlife would not change under this alternative.

3.3.2.3 Proposed Action Environmental Impacts

Fish and Other Aquatic Species

Fish and other aquatic species could be adversely affected by the proposed action through: 1) temporary sediment delivery and increased suspended sediment and turbidity associated with disturbance of the riverbed during installation and removal of the measures used for in-water work area isolation (i.e., coffer dam or turbidity curtain); 2) possible temporary chemical contamination associated with construction activities which could cause injury to individual fish and aquatic species, and 3) permanent habitat encroachment due to placement of the boat launch. The Project would result in a permanent beneficial impact by reducing sediment inputs during storm events by replacing the existing eroding informal boat launch with a hardened structure.

Potential effects to water quality are described in Section 3.1.1 Surface Water. Increased suspended sediment and embeddedness could impact individual adult and sub-adult fish by causing gill trauma and reduced feeding effectiveness. Increased embeddedness could degrade aquatic macroinvertebrate habitat, and spawning habitat for fishes that spawn in the lower Flathead River (Largescale Sucker, Northern Pikeminnow, Mountain Whitefish, Northern Pike, and Smallmouth Bass). Chemical contamination from construction equipment fluids or increased motorized boat traffic could cause injury to individual fish and other aquatic species. Increased boat traffic could also allow the introduction of aquatic invasive species.

The Project would temporarily reduce habitat availability due to isolation of the boat launch area during construction. This would occur for one to two months between August and September. Placement of the boat launch structure would permanently cause an encroachment/loss of shoreline habitat along the river. This shoreline habitat is not high quality or complex, with no large wood, side channels, pools, or undercut banks.

All BMPs related to erosion control, stormwater management, and spill prevention and response would be adhered to, thereby minimizing the temporary Project impacts from sediment and chemical contamination. The current CSKT and Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks aquatic invasive species watercraft inspection programs would also minimize the risk of aquatic invasive species introduction. Therefore, adverse impacts to fish and other aquatic species from the temporary Project construction are expected to be negligible, given the short duration and spatial extent of increased sediment, and the low probability of the introduction of contaminants and aquatic invasive species.

The permanent impact to aquatic habitat due to encroachment of the boat launch would not occur in high quality habitat, and there is ample aquatic habitat adjacent to the boat launch area for aquatic species to disperse into. Therefore, this permanent adverse impact is also considered negligible. The Project would result in permanent minor beneficial impacts fish and aquatic species, related to reduced sediment delivery from hardening of the boat launch area.

Terrestrial Wildlife

Impacts to terrestrial wildlife include disturbance due to noise and increased human presence, vehicle and construction equipment usage, and injury or mortality due to human interactions due to increased human presence, or attractants such as improperly stored food or garbage. These impacts

could occur either during construction or after construction is complete when the site is a more active recreation area. During Project construction, noise from construction equipment and increased human presence could disturb or displace individual animals traveling through the Project vicinity. However, disturbance from Project construction would be temporary, and limited to a single, late summer to early fall construction period.

Wildlife-human interaction may threaten animals as well as human safety. When interactions are frequent, wildlife have the potential to become habituated to human presence. Project construction would follow all food storage guidelines to minimize any potential exposure to human attractants that could lead to wildlife habituation. The Project would also increase human presence in the Project vicinity after construction, with increased recreation use of the boat launch area. No camping would be allowed at the developed site; however, there would still be the possibility of increased garbage and food attractants.

Construction and post-construction use of the site would only be allowed during the daytime, limiting disturbance to wildlife. With the exception of attractant-based interactions, wildlife would be expected to avoid the area when humans were present, dispersing into the ample adjacent habitats. Most of the Project area is also already heavily disturbed, within limited quality terrestrial habitat. While there are higher quality habitats within the adjacent Project vicinity (e.g., in the CSKT Wildlife Mitigation lands in the riparian area), the Project vicinity is near Sčilíp, with existing noise and human presence.

With the implementation of the proposed conservation measures and BMPs, temporary and permanent impacts to terrestrial wildlife are expected to be localized to within or adjacent to the Project area, and of minor magnitude. Adverse effects would only affect individual animals and would have no population-level effects.

3.3.3 Threatened and Endangered Species and Other Federally Protected Species

This section evaluates species listed under the federal ESA, Migratory Bird Protection Act (MBTA), and Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA).

3.3.3.1 Affected Environment

Threatened and Endangered Species

Section 7 of the ESA requires federal agencies to ensure that federal actions are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered or threatened species. CSKT prepared a Biological Assessment (BA) for the Project (CSKT 2026a) as part of Section 7 consultation with the USFWS. The findings of the BA are summarized below.

Threatened and endangered species were evaluated within the BA action area, which corresponds to the Project vicinity (Figure 2).

Table 4 presents the ESA-listed species identified by the USFWS Information on Planning and Consultation (IPaC) report (Attachment A of the BA [CSKT 2026a]) as potentially occurring in the BA action area, along with brief assessments of population and habitat occurrence known by Tribal wildlife and fisheries specialists, and a review of the MNHP species habitat and occurrence information (MNHP 2025, 2026). Bull Trout and critical habitat, Grizzly Bear, Wolverine, Monarch Butterfly, and Suckley's Cuckoo Bumblebee have the potential to occur within the Project vicinity (even if only incidentally) and were therefore fully analyzed in the BA (referred to as "affected species" in (Table 4). Lynx, and Spalding's catchfly were assigned an effects determination of "no effect" and were not evaluated further in the BA as they are unlikely to occur in the Project vicinity and there is no suitable habitat.

Table 4. Federally listed species screened for potential to be affected by the Project.

Species	Federal Status[a]	Known Occurrence in or Near Action Area[b]	Suitable Habitat in Action Area[c]	Potentially Affected Species?
Spalding's catchfly *Silene spaldingii*	T	**Unlikely.** Nearest MNHP occurrence is 35 miles from action area. Not documented during recent wetland delineation in action area.	**No.** Found in open mesic native grasslands and prairies in valleys and foothills along draws and swales (often north facing).	No
North American Wolverine *Gulo gulo luscus*	T	**Unlikely.** Possibly incidental/ migratory. CSKT documented an individual near the Revais Creek drainage west of the action area using track sign and trail camera footage in winter.	**Yes.** Potential dispersal habitat only. Primarily found in alpine tundra, mountain forests, often in larger wilderness areas. Known to disperse through other habitats.	Yes
Grizzly Bear *Ursus arctos horribilis*	T	**Yes.** Known to use the CSKT Bison Range May - July (personal communication, A. Swicegood 2024). Multiple MNHP occurrences over the past within 10 miles of the action area. May move through the area most often April - July and September - October.	**Yes.** Found in diverse habitats, including meadows, grasslands, riparian, woodlands, forests, and alpine.	Yes
Canada Lynx *Lynx canadensis*	T	**Unlikely.** CSKT documented in Valley Creek area, 7- 8 miles southeast of the action area. MNHP nearest recent occurrence is ~18 miles from action area.	**No.** Primarily found in dense conifer forest in mountains and subalpine at elevations ~4,000 – 7,000 ft. Known to disperse through other treed habitats.	No
Monarch Butterfly *Danaus plexippus*	PT	**Yes.** Observations have been made in the Mission Valley (>10 miles northeast of site) within the past 5 years, primarily July - September.	**Yes.** Found in open habitats, native prairie, foothills, open valley bottoms and weedy fields. In Montana only present from July – September (not breeding).	Yes
Suckley's Cuckoo Bumble Bee *Bombus suckleyi*	PE	**Unknown.** No records have been confirmed in Montana since 2015, the closest was in Glacier County. CSKT documented their host species, Western Bumble Bee (*B. occidentalis)* near the Project site in 2025.	**Yes.** Reported in grassland, shrub steppe, conifer forest uplands, and montane/ subalpine mesic and wet meadows. In summer, nests in holes in the ground and in Western Bumble Bee nests.	Yes
Bull Trout *Salvelinus confluentus* Bull Trout critical habitat	T	**Yes.** Bull Trout are documented in this reach of the Flathead River. Action area is Feeding, Migration and Overwintering (FMO) habitat. **Designated critical habitat**	**Yes.** The Flathead River is seasonally occupied FMO habitat. Water temperatures limit use during summer and early autumn.	Yes

[a] T= threatened; E= endangered; P=proposed. [b] Personal communication A. Swicegood, 2025; MNHP Occurrence Data (MNHP 2026). [c] MNHP Field Guide (MNHP 2025). This includes any type of habitat known to be used by the species, including low quality habitat used primarily for migration and dispersal.

Migratory Bird Protection Act Species, and Eagles

All native birds except upland game birds are afforded protection under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA; 16 U.S.C 703-712). Under the MBTA it is unlawful to intentionally or incidentally (86 FR 54642-54656) at any time, by any means or in any manner pursue, hunt, take, capture, kill, or possess any migratory bird, nest or egg, or parts thereof. The USFWS also maintains a list of Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC; USFWS 2021), which are migratory and non-migratory birds that (beyond those already listed under the ESA), represent the USFWS's highest conservation priorities. The IPaC report identified 13 migratory BCC that may be found in the Project vicinity (Attachment A of the BA [CSKT 2026a]).

Bald Eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and Golden Eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) are additionally protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA; 16 U.S.C. 668-668d). "Take" is defined under the BGEPA as agitating or bothering a bald or golden eagle to a degree that causes, or is likely to cause, based on the best scientific information available, 1) injury to an eagle, 2) a decrease in its productivity, by substantially interfering with normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering behavior, or 3) nest abandonment, by substantially interfering with normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering behavior. Nests are also protected year-round under the BGEPA.

Bald eagles nest and roost in riparian forests but can be found hunting and scavenging in open upland landscapes. Golden Eagles are primarily found in open and semi-open grasslands, and nest on cliffs and steep terrain in various vegetation types. There is no eagle nesting habitat in the Project vicinity (trees or cliffs) on the south side of the Flathead River where the Project would be constructed. There are cottonwood trees approximately 800 feet across the Flathead River within the Project vicinity. The IPaC report indicates that there is a high probability that Bald Eagles could be present in the Project vicinity from September through June, and Golden Eagles could be present December through May (Attachment A of the BA [CSKT 2026a]).

3.3.3.2 No Action Environmental Impacts

Threatened, endangered, and other federally protected species would not change under this alternative.

3.3.3.3 Proposed Action Environmental Impacts

ESA-listed species, migratory birds, and Bald and Golden Eagles could be impacted by the Project. Potential adverse Project impacts to ESA-listed species, migratory birds, and Bald and Golden Eagles, are the same as those described in Section 3.3.2 General Fish and Wildlife.

Terrestrial vertebrate species could be temporarily impacted during construction by noise, increased human presence, and by vehicle and construction equipment usage. Post-construction, terrestrial species could be permanently impacted by increased noise, vehicles, human presence, and injury or mortality due to human interactions or attractants such as improperly stored food or garbage.

The ESA-listed pollinator species (Monarch Butterfly and Suckley's Cuckoo Bumble Bee) could be temporarily adversely affected by ground and vegetation disturbance associated with road improvements and Project construction. The main concern during the proposed Project construction

timeframe (August to November) would be loss of foraging resources within the Project footprint or possible harm to individuals. A pollinator specialist would be consulted to minimize adverse impacts to pollinator habitat within the action area. With adherence to the Project conservation measures, effects to the ESA-listed pollinator species are expected to be minimal given the small Project footprint, short construction timeframe, lack of ground disturbance during key periods and in high quality habitat, and proposed revegetation measures for disturbed areas.

Bull Trout could be impacted by the proposed action through: 1) temporary sediment delivery and increased suspended sediment and turbidity associated with disturbance of the riverbed during installation and removal of the measures used for in-water work area isolation (i.e., coffer dam or turbidity curtain); 2) possible temporary chemical contamination associated with construction activities which could cause injury to individual fish and aquatic species, and 3) permanent habitat encroachment due to placement of the boat launch. The Project would result in a permanent beneficial impact by reducing sediment inputs during storm events by replacing the existing eroding informal boat launch with a hardened structure.

The USFWS concurred with the effects determinations in the BA (CSKT 2026a) on April 28, 2026 (Attachment C; and summarized in Table 5), completing ESA Section 7 consultation for the Project.

Table 5. ESA-Listed species- summary of USFWS effects determinations.

Species/Critical Habitat	Status	Effects determination
Spalding's catchfly	Threatened	No effect
Canada Lynx	Threatened	No effect
Grizzly Bear	Threatened	May affect, not likely to adversely affect
North American Wolverine	Threatened	May affect, not likely to adversely affect
Monarch Butterfly	Proposed threatened	Not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the species
Suckley's Cuckoo Bumble Bee	Proposed endangered	Not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the species
Bull Trout	Threatened	May affect, not likely to adversely affect
Bull Trout critical habitat	Designated	May affect, not likely to adversely affect

Any migratory birds and Bald and Golden Eagles in the Project vicinity during Project construction would be expected to be done nesting, or at the end of their breeding season, which goes through August at the latest for most species based on the IPaC report probability of presence summary (Attachment A of the BA [CSKT 2026a]). Therefore, any migratory birds and Bald and Golden Eagles in the Project vicinity could avoid the Project vicinity if they are disturbed by Project construction.

The Project would also comply with the seasonal activity restrictions put forth in the National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines (USFWS 2007), which state that certain disturbance activities should occur greater than 330 feet or 660 feet from an active nest (depending on the disturbance). The potential Bald Eagle nesting habitat in the cottonwood forest across the river from the proposed boat

launch is located greater than 800 feet from where the disturbance would occur, either during construction or post-construction. There is no Golden Eagle nesting habitat within the Project vicinity.

With the implementation of the proposed conservation measures, BMPs, and regulatory requirements, the Project could cause temporary minor impacts to Bull Trout critical habitat, and to individual Bull Trout, Grizzly Bear, Wolverine, Suckley's Cuckoo Bumble Bee, and Monarch Butterfly localized to within or adjacent to the Project vicinity. However, none of these species are very likely to actually be present in the Project vicinity during Project construction.

The Project could have permanent minor adverse impacts to terrestrial ESA-listed wildlife species due to increased noise and human presence post-construction. This impact was considered minor because the Project vicinity is not high quality habitat and wildlife can disperse to adjacent habitats. There would be no permanent adverse impacts to Bull Trout or Bull Trout critical habitat, but the Project would result in permanent major beneficial impacts to Bull Trout and critical habitat through the hardening of the boat launch area which would reduce sediment inputs to the Flathead River.

3.4 Socioeconomic Conditions

Table 2 contains brief evaluations for employment and income and demographic trends, which were found to have no adverse impacts from Project activities. This section contains an integrated discussion on Project impacts to lifestyle and cultural values as well as community infrastructure.

3.4.1 Lifestyle, Cultural Values, and Community Infrastructure

3.4.1.1 Affected Environment

No residential or commercial structures, or public services are located within the Project area. The town of Sčilíp is located within and adjacent to the Project vicinity, where community infrastructure and public services include a post office, school, utilities (electric, gas, internet), water and sewer district, rural fire district, and refuse district. Until recently, the Hoskins Landing boat launch provided public access to the Flathead River within walking distance of Sčilíp (Figure 2), with a Tribal Recreation Permit required for non-Tribal members. Hoskins Landing is no longer a public river access point due to a change in land ownership.

The Tribes value healthy riparian and aquatic habitats, and the native plants, fish, and wildlife that they support (CSKT 2023b). The lower Flathead River is designated as a Cultural Waterway under the CSKT Cultural Waterways Ordinance 113-A. This ordinance establishes the vision to "protect and preserve the Lower Flathead River Cultural Waterway in perpetuity as a Tribal traditional cultural sanctuary and an area of land preserved in a generally natural condition", while including uses such as subsistence hunting and fishing, and recreation, if developed appropriately.

3.4.1.2 No Action Environmental Impacts

Lifestyle, cultural values, and community infrastructure would not change under this alternative.

3.4.1.3 Proposed Action Environmental Impacts

The Project would not eliminate or adversely impact any community lifestyle activities, infrastructure, public services or cultural values. The construction of a new public river access point, located adjacent to the town of Sčilíp, would replace the community amenity that was lost when Hoskins Landing was removed as a public access point. The Project would not adversely affect the Cultural Waterways designation under CSKT ordinance 113-A.

With the implementation of the proposed conservation measures, BMPs, and regulatory requirements, the Project would result in moderate permanent beneficial impacts to lifestyle, cultural values, and community infrastructure.

3.5 Resource Use Patterns

Table 2 contains brief evaluations for timber harvest, land use plans and management, transportation networks, and mineral extraction. It was determined that these activities would not be impacted by the Project and were not evaluated further. Agriculture; hunting, fishing, gathering; and recreation are evaluated below.

3.5.1 Agriculture

3.5.1.1 Affected Environment

The parcel where the Project area is located is an active grazing lease, managed by CSKT (Figure 2). Cows are currently grazed seasonally throughout the leased parcel, including within the proposed Project area.

3.5.1.2 No Action Environmental Impacts

Agriculture would not change under this alternative.

3.5.1.3 Proposed Action Environmental Impacts

The Project would permanently adversely impact the grazing lease by reducing its area, but the grazing lease would continue. Efforts were made to limit encroachment on the grazing lease area, including siting the access road along the perimeter of the leased parcel wherever possible. Existing fences would be improved and expanded to fence cows out of the parking area and access road corridor, and a cattle guard would be installed at the uphill end of the boat launch (see the design in Attachment A). Cows would continue to have access to the river from adjacent parcels, including access to the river at the boat launch. Dogs would be required to be on a leash, which would limit impacts to cows where cows and dogs could potentially interact, such as at the river area. This leash restriction would be stated on signage at the new recreation area. With the implementation of these design elements, the permanent adverse impacts to agriculture are expected to be minor and local to the site.

3.5.2 Hunting, Fishing, Gathering

3.5.2.1 Affected Environment

Fishing and gathering are permitted within the Project area with the appropriate Tribal permits. Hunting is not permitted within the grazing lease portion of the project area. Non-Tribal members may fish and hunt certain species of upland game birds and waterfowl with the proper licenses and during set seasons (CSKT and MFWP 2024). Tribal members may fish and hunt all upland game birds, waterfowl, and big game without a license. Although hunting is permitted with the proper permits, CSKT land managers agree that hunting is very limited within the Project vicinity, if it is occurring at all.

Tribal members may gather plants in the Project area where there are native plants, such as in the mesic swales and in the riparian zone along the river. The extent of use is not documented, but gathering is not commonly observed within the Project vicinity (personal communication, T. Espinoza 2026). Non-tribal members are not permitted to gather plants on Tribal land.

3.5.2.2 No Action Environmental Impacts

Hunting, fishing, and gathering would not change under this alternative.

3.5.2.3 Proposed Action Environmental Impacts

Access for fishing and gathering would be temporarily adversely impacted, as public access would be restricted during construction. This temporary impact would be considered negligible, as there is currently limited use. Hunting would not be allowed after construction, as the site would be managed as a recreation day-use site. This permanent loss of hunting access would also be considered negligible, as there is currently no or minimal hunting within the Project vicinity. There would be a permanent beneficial impact due to improved access for boat fishing on this stretch of the Flathead River.

3.5.3 Recreation

3.5.3.1 Affected Environment

Recreational activities are permitted in the Project vicinity outside of the grazing lease, but non-Tribal members must have a valid CSKT recreation permit. The current use of the Project area and vicinity for recreation is considered low. The most recent formal recreation study for the lower Flathead River was completed by the CSKT Recreation Program in the early 1990’s. At that time (and currently) this 30-mile section of the Flathead River between Sloan’s Bridge and the bridge at Perma saw some recreational floating and fishing during the summer months, but less than the upstream areas between SKQ Dam, Buffalo Bridge, and Sloan’s Bridge (CSKT 1993). However, the current lack of river access is also likely one cause of the lower recreational use for this stretch of river. There is a private campground (Big River Rentals) with five recreational vehicle sites located off of Old Sloan’s Road at the eastern end of the Project vicinity.

3.5.3.2 No Action Environmental Impacts

Recreation would not change under this alternative. There would continue to be no formal public access to the Flathead River between Sloan's Bridge and Perma Bridge, and natural and cultural resources would continue to be adversely impacted by dispersed recreation along the river.

3.5.3.3 Proposed Action Environmental Impacts

Recreation access would be temporarily adversely impacted, as the current informal public access would be restricted during construction. The Project is expected to have permanent major beneficial impacts on recreation due to 1) improvement of the site into a formal recreation access point with a toilet, picnic tables, parking area, and boat launch, and 2) by providing access to the 30-mile stretch of the river between Sloan's Bridge and the bridge at Perma that is currently inaccessible, in turn allowing for shorter river floats which could be particularly beneficial to non-motorized watercraft. The construction of a formal river access site would also allow CSKT resources managers to manage and/or contain the impacts of dispersed recreation on natural and cultural resources that is currently occurring on this stretch of the Flathead River.

3.6 Other Values

Table 2 contains a brief screening for Wilderness and hazardous materials. These factors would not be impacted by the Project and they were not evaluated further. Noise and light, visual resources, Indian Trust assets, and public health and safety are evaluated below.

3.6.1 Noise and Light

3.6.1.1 Affected Environment

There are currently no light sources in the Project area. Ambient noise levels within the Project area have not been measured but noise sources are limited given the rural location. Traffic on Highway 200 is a consistent source of noise in the Project area. Trains on the railroad tracks adjacent to the Project area (Figure 2) are the loudest source of noise, but they are infrequent, with an average of five trains running per day (FRA 2026a). In addition to noise from trains moving on the tracks, the trains are required to sound their horn at at-grade crossing at Old Sloan's Road adjacent to the Project area (FRA 2026b). Occasional vehicles and agricultural equipment on adjacent parcels to the east and west of the Project area may also be sources of noise. Traffic and train noise levels vary considerably across the Project area depending on proximity to the railroad tracks and to Highway 200, and environmental factors such as vegetation, terrain, and wind.

Noise receptors in the Project area are limited to the general public and wildlife within and adjacent to the Project area. The closest noise receptors off-site are residences and the Big River Rentals private campground along the eastern boundary of the Project area off of Old Sloan's Road. The next closest residences are across the railroad tracks and Highway 200 in Sčilíp, approximately 0.15 miles from the Project area.

3.6.1.2 No Action Environmental Impacts

Noise and light conditions would not change under this alternative.

3.6.1.3 Proposed Action Environmental Impacts

The Project would not have any temporary or permanent impacts on light, as Project construction would occur during daylight hours, and there would be no sources of light within the Project area after construction is complete.

Project construction would cause noise levels within and adjacent to the Project area to increase beyond background conditions, with increased noise associated with heavy equipment and backup alarms, and vehicles. The Project does not involve any blasting or vibratory activities such as sheet pile driving. The impact of increased noise during Project construction on wildlife, residences, and the campground would be temporary (during Project construction), limited to the Project vicinity, and occur only during daylight hours. Overall, the impacts of Project construction noise would be minor.

After the Project is constructed, noise levels would increase compared to current conditions, as the Project area would be used as a day-use only river access site. Noise levels would be expected to increase moderately, with the new river access site likely receiving use only by Tribal members or non-members with a Tribal Recreation Permit. Use would occur primarily during the warmer months (i.e., May-October) almost exclusively at the parking and boat launch area, and at relatively low volume.

Therefore, although the Project would permanently increase noise levels above current levels, impacts of the increased noise on local residences and wildlife would be expected to be minor given the distance to residences, the proximity to other noise sources, and the ability of wildlife to avoid the area.

3.6.2 Visual Resources

3.6.2.1 Affected Environment

The Project area is primarily undeveloped and is open with no vegetation screening. Disturbance is limited to a two-track road, fences, and grazing impacts. The key observation points that would receive the most views are from the Flathead River corridor (boaters) and from Old Sloan's Road. The parking/boat launch area would be visible from the river; the access road in the eastern end of the Project area would be visible from Old Sloan's Road and the campground and residences. The Project area is not visible from Highway 200.

3.6.2.2 No Action Environmental Impacts

Visual resources would not change under this alternative.

3.6.2.3 Proposed Action Environmental Impacts

Access road construction would be visible from Old Sloan's Road and the campground and residences. Construction of the parking area and boat launch would be visible from the Flathead

River corridor, including staging and construction equipment. After construction, areas of ground disturbance directly adjacent to the construction footprint would still be visible until vegetation establishes. Seeded grasses and forbs are expected to colonize within two years after construction. CSKT would actively revegetate disturbed areas, which would minimize the time that these areas are visible. The CSKT Recreation Program would manage the site, including periodic litter pickup, but there would be no trash receptacles or trash pickup service.

With the implementation of design elements and BMPs, most adverse impacts to visual resources would be temporary (during construction) and would be limited to the Project area and adjacent areas. Post-construction, the recreation site (boat launch, parked vehicles, toilet, and recreationists) would be visible to boaters on the Flathead River, which would diminish the natural aesthetic. This adverse effect to visual resources would be localized to the boat launch and parking area, primarily during the summer and fall seasons, and would be considered minor. The development of a formal recreation site, with increased management, could also potentially have a permanent beneficial impact through reduced riverbank erosion and enforcement of proper site use.

3.6.3 Public Health and Safety

3.6.3.1 **Affected Environment**

There is no developed access site on the Flathead River for the 30-mile stretch of river between Sloan's Bridge and Perma Bridge (Figure 1). The Tribes consider this lack of access to be a public safety hazard, as emergency services are currently unable to efficiently access any potential incidents on this stretch of the river.

3.6.3.2 **No Action Environmental Impacts**

Public health and safety would not change under this alternative.

3.6.3.3 **Proposed Action Environmental Impacts**

The proposed action would permanently improve public safety by allowing motorized access for search and rescue operations on the stretch of the river between Sloan's Bridge and Perma Bridge. This would be considered a moderate beneficial impact to public health and safety.

3.7 Cumulative Impacts

This section analyzes cumulative impacts of the Project, combined with any other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions (RFFAs). Cumulative impacts were analyzed within the following temporal and geographic scope:

- Temporal
    - Past: from the construction of the SKQ Dam in 1938, to account for the start of Flathead River flow alterations that continue to affect hydrology, river sediment transport, and geomorphology.

  - Future: through the year 2030, which is the general estimated planning timeframe for development projects, including projects associated with the CSKT-Montana Water Compact in the Jocko River watershed. It is also the timeframe within which other CSKT or non-CSKT project information is reasonably available for forecasting development actions.

- Geographic
  - Upstream of the Project area on the Flathead River to the SKQ Dam, including tributary streams, to account for cumulative effects to aquatic habitat and migratory and resident aquatic species.
  - Lands within 0.5 mile of the Project area.

Table 6 displays past actions, present actions, and RFFAs that were evaluated for their potential cumulative effects on resources.

Table 6. Cumulative effects analysis of past, present, and future actions.

Action	Timeframe	Project Description and Impacts	Cumulative Effects Analysis
SKQ Dam operation	Past, present, and future	Current SKQ Dam operations maintain semi-natural, but still altered, hydrograph in the Flathead River.	Dam operations would not contribute to adverse cumulative impacts when combined with the Project, as the Project would not alter the hydrologic regime.
Agricultural activities	Past, present, and future	Agricultural activities (farming and ranching) have transitioned native vegetation to cultivar grasses and invasive weeds, including at the grazing lease within the Project vicinity. Agricultural runoff through the irrigation wasteways (namely Coleman Coulee and Moiese wasteway) contribute suspended sediment, nutrients, and increased water temperatures to Mission Creek, which flows into the Flathead River approximately 3 miles upstream of the Project vicinity.	Agricultural activities could contribute to adverse cumulative impacts related to invasive weeds when combined with the Project. Agricultural activities would not contribute to adverse cumulative impacts related to water quality, given the upstream distance of the irrigation wasteways.
FIIP infrastructure upgrades	Past, present, and future	CSKT is rehabilitating and modernizing FIIP infrastructure (canals and diversions) in the Flathead River watershed downstream of SKQ Dam to improve irrigation efficiency, instream flows, and fish passage. Projects have been completed and are underway in the Jocko River watershed, and projects are in the planning stage for the Little Bitterroot, Crow Creek, and Mission Creek watersheds. The upgrades have and will continue to result in minor temporary adverse impacts within 0.5 miles downstream of each Project, with net benefits from increased instream flows, improved sediment transport, and fish passage.	All of the FIIP infrastructure upgrades are located several miles upstream of the Project vicinity; therefore, they would not contribute to an adverse cumulative impact when combined with the Project. The upgrade projects would also not contribute to a beneficial cumulative impact, as the Project does not affect instream flow or fish passage.
Jocko River restoration and mitigation projects	Past and present	The CSKT Fisheries Program implemented restoration projects in the Jocko River watershed and has acquired conservation easements or real properties along many miles of the Flathead and Jocko Rivers, resulting in permanent beneficial impacts to the Flathead and Jocko River watersheds.	CSKT Fisheries Program restoration projects would not contribute to an adverse or beneficial cumulative impact when combined with the Project, as the Project does not have a restoration component.
CSKT Tribal Broadband Infrastructure Project	Future	This Project is proposed to tentatively start construction in 2026. Construction could temporarily increase noise and vibration within the Project vicinity and change visual resources, but these changes would occur only during installation along the portion of Highway 200 directly adjacent to the Project vicinity (i.e., for a few days to weeks, depending on schedule). These temporary adverse impacts would be negligible.	This action could contribute to temporary adverse cumulative impacts related to noise and associated disturbance to wildlife, and visual resources.

4.0 Mitigation

No significant impacts have been identified for the proposed action, and thus no mitigation is required. Conservation measures, BMPs, and design elements intended to avoid or minimize impacts to resources are presented in Section 2.5 Conservation Measures and Best Management Practices, and in the relevant resource sections above.

5.0 Consultation and Coordination

The following agencies and individuals were consulted as part of preparation of this EA:

- CSKT TPD: Travis Arlee, (NHPA Section 106 consultation).
- USFWS: Brian Hamm (ESA Section 7 consultation).

In addition to consultation, communication occurred with BIA Northwest NEPA Coordinator Tobiah Mogavero. Coordination and communication is also ongoing with Project permitting agencies (CSKT Water Quality Program, CSKT Shoreline Protection Program, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers).

6.0 Public Comment

The Draft EA was made available for a two week public comment period (June 19 to July 6, 2026). The CSKT Tribal Council requested that the public comment period be extended, and it was therefore extended to July 20, 2026. On July 13, 2026, DEWR hosted a community meeting in Sčilíp to hear any public comments on the Draft EA. A single member of the public commented on the EA, with comments pertaining to potential impacts to the grazing lease. DEWR discussed the concerns with the commenter at the community meeting, and one item was added to the design (related to signage requiring dogs to be leashed). Other community members present either voiced support of the proposed action or were silent.

7.0 List of Contributors

The following individuals contributed to this EA:

- Geum Environmental Consulting
    - Levia Shoutis, Senior Regulatory Specialist
    - Kris Boyd, Wildlife Biologist
- CSKT
    - Morgan Schultz, Restoration Ecologist
    - Tabitha Espinoza, Restoration Program Manager
    - Taryn Bushey, NEPA Coordinator
    - Craig Barfoot, Fisheries Biologist

- Amber Swicegood, Wildlife Biologist
- Gunner Davies, Restoration Ecologist

8.0 References

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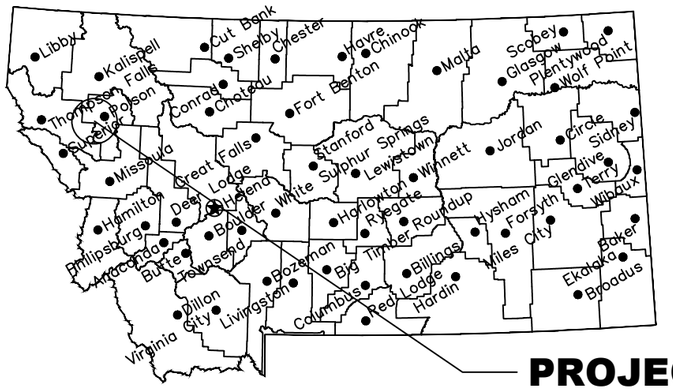
Attachment A

Project Design (parking area and boat launch)

CONFEDERATED SALSISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES

WILD PLUM LANDING
BOAT RAMP AND PARKING LOT

25% PLANS

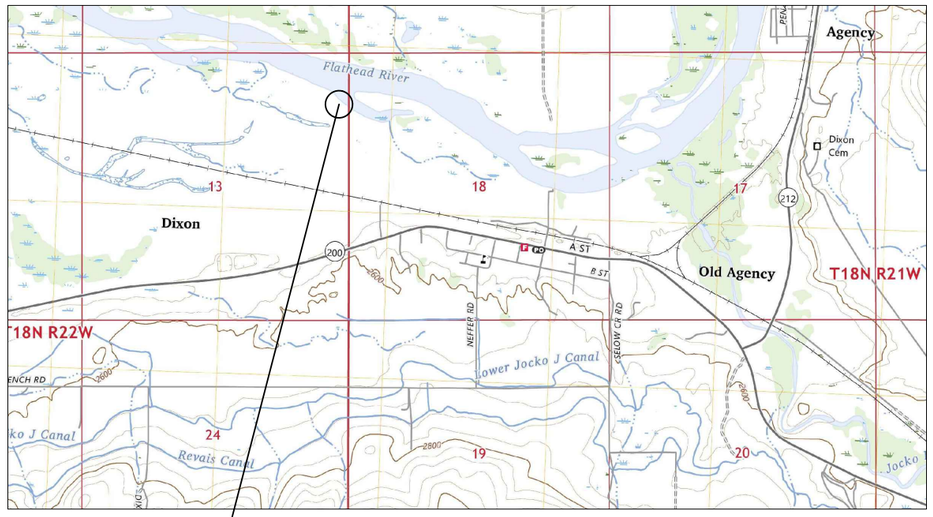


PROJECT LOCATION

Location Map

No Scale

North



PROJECT LOCATION

Vicinity Map

1" = 3,000' IMAGE SOURCE: USGS 7.5' QUAD

PREPARED FOR:
WESTSLOPE FOREST MANAGEMENT INC.

MAILING ADDRESS:
16976 SCHEFFER LN.
FRENCHTOWN, MT 59834
ATTN: JOSIAH DENHAM
TEL 406.241.4161

PREPARED BY:
COLDWATER ENGINEERING

MAILING ADDRESS:
1 N. LAST CHANCE GULCH, SUITE 2
HELENA, MT 59601
ATTN: TYLER PHELPS
TEL 406.431.2171

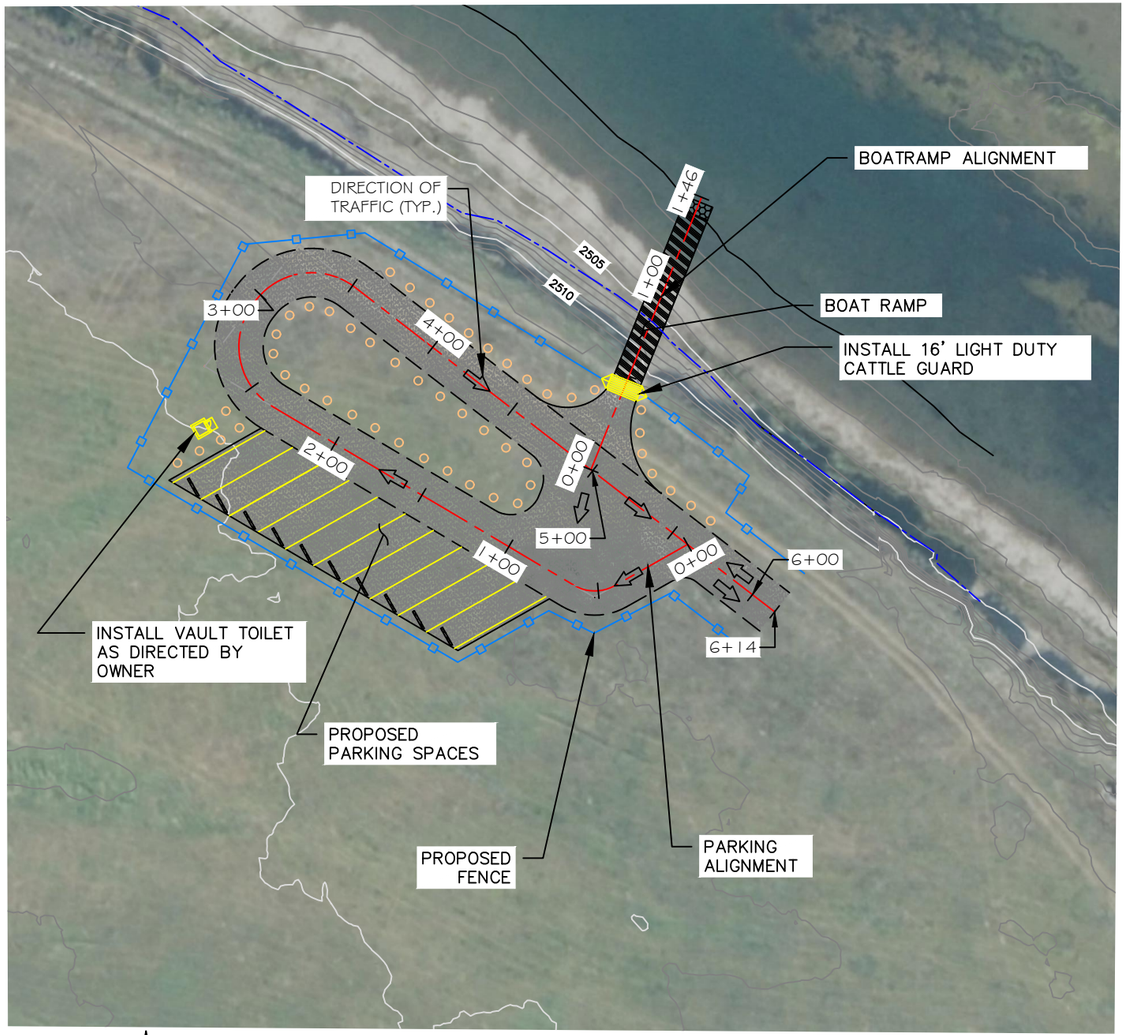
DRAWING INDEX

DRAWINGS ARE PRELIMINARY AND WERE RELEASED ON MAY 27, 2026 UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF T. PHELPS (MT PE 59776) FOR THE PURPOSE OF PERMITTING.

P. STENERSEN MAY 2026 DRAWN BY: DATE:	APPROVED BY: DATE:	APPROVED BY: DATE:	COVER SHEET
T. PHELPS MAY 2026 CHECKED BY: DATE:	APPROVED BY: DATE:	APPROVED BY: DATE:	
BIA-NWR-EA-26-33			

COLDWATER ENGINEERING

SHEET: 1 of 8



SURVEY CONTROL

NAME	NORTHING (IFT)	EASTING (IFT)	ELEVATION (SFT)
BMJ507	1152481.955	779677.49	2540.54

SURVEY NOTES:
1. COORDINATE SYSTEM = NAD83(2011), MONTANA STATE PLANES PROJECTION, VERTICAL DATUM = NAVD88, GEOID 18
2. SURVEY CONTROL WAS ESTABLISHED BY OTHERS.

LEGEND

- EXISTING CONDITIONS MAJOR CONTOUR
- EXISTING CONDITIONS MINOR CONTOUR
- ORDINARY WATER MARK (SURVEY)
- PROPOSED FENCE
- PROPOSED TRAVEL CENTERLINE
- PROPOSED BOAT RAMP (CABLE-MAT/CONCRETE)
- PROPOSED PAVEMENT AREA
- PROPOSED EDGE OF ROAD TRAVEL WAY
- PROPOSED EDGE OF PARKING/STAGING AREAS
- PROPOSED STRIPING
- SAFETY BARRIER BOULDER

MATERIAL SCHEDULE

ITEM	QUANTITY	UNITS	NOTES
ASPHALT CONCRETE	2700	SQ YD	3" THICNKESS PER SQUARE YARD
1" MINUS CRUSHED BASE COURSE	450	CY	1" MINUS CRUSHED BASE COURSE PER MPWSS SECTION 02235
SEPARATION GEOTEXTILE	2850	SQ YD	CLASS 1 AS SPECIFIED IN AASHTO M 288
SUBGRADE PREPARATION	670	CY	ESTIMATED CUT/FILL TO ACHIEVE 2% CROSS-SLOPE
WHEEL STOP	10	EACH	PARKING SPACE WHEEL STOPS
FENCE	815	LF	FENCE ADJANCENT TO PARKING AREA ONLY AS SHOWN. SIZE AND TYPE TO BE DETERMINED BY OWNER
STRIPING	583	LF	4" WIDE STRIPE, YELLOW WATERBORNE PAVEMENT MARKING PAINT PER MPWSS SECTION 02581
BOAT RAMP CAST-IN-PLACE CONCRETE	40	CY	4000 PSI MEDIUM STRENGTH CONCRETE
REBAR	1900	LBS	#4 REBAR UTILIZED IN BOATRAMP
3/4" MINUS CRUSHED BASE COURSE	30	CY	3/4" MINUS CRUSHED BASE COURSE PER MPWSS SECTION 02235
CABLE-MAT BOAT RAMP	11	SQ YD	BOAT RAMP CABLE MAT RAMP BELOW LWM
SAFETY BARRIER BOULDER	57	EACH	48" LARGE DIAMETER BOULDER
VAULT TOILET	1	EACH	INSTALL VAULT TOILET AT LOCATION SHOWN. SIZE AND KIND TO BE DETERMINED BY OWNER.
CATTLE GUARD	1	EACH	INSTALL 16' LIGHT DUTY CATTLE GUARD PER MDT STANDARD DETAIL DRAWINGS

Scale:
0 75' 150'

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:
" = INCHES
' = FEET
% = PERCENT SLOPE
X:1 = HORIZONTAL : (1) VERTICAL SLOPE
AC = ASPHALT CONCRETE
CBC = CRUSHED BASE COURSE
CONT. = CONTINUED
CY = CUBIC YARD
DXX = PERCENT PASSING GRADATION
ELEV. = ELEVATION
ETC. = ETCETERA
FWP = FISH WILDLIFE AND PARKS
FT = FEET
IE = FOR EXAMPLE
IFT = INTERNATIONAL FEET
LBS = POUNDS (WEIGHT)
LF = LINEAR FEET
LS = LUMP SUM
LWM = LOW WATER MARK
MDT = MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
MPWSS = MONTANA PUBLIC WORKS STANDARD SPECIFICATIONS
NAD83 = NORTH AMERICAN DATUM 1983
NAVD88 = NORTH AMERICAN VERTICAL DATUM 1988
N.T.S. = NOT TO SCALE
RECP = ROLLED EROSION CONTROL PRODUCT
SEG = SEGMENT
SFT = U.S. SURVEY FEET
SQ YD = SQUARE YARD
TYP. = TYPICAL
WSE = WATER SURFACE ELEVATION

GENERAL NOTES:
1. CONTRACTOR IS RESPONSIBLE FOR VERIFICATION OF CURRENT CONDITIONS AND LOCATIONS OF ALL EXISTING ITEMS WITHIN OR ADJACENT TO THE WORK OR THAT MAY BE DISTURBED BY THE WORK.
2. CONTOURS ARE REPRESENTATIVE OF SITE SURVEY AND PUBLICLY AVAILABLE LIDAR. SURVEY DATA WAS SUPPLIED FOR AREAS ADJACENT TO THE BOAT RAMP BY OTHERS.
3. CONTRACTOR SHALL PROTECT AND REPAIR AT CONTRACTOR'S EXPENSE ANY DAMAGE TO UTILITIES CAUSED BY CONTRACTOR. NO UTILITY INFORMATION WAS SUPPLIED DURING PREPARATION OF THESE DRAWINGS.
4. ESTIMATED EARTHWORK QUANTITIES ARE REPORTED AS THE MATERIAL RESTS IN IT'S UNDISTURBED, NATURAL STATE. NO SHRINK/SWELL FACTORS WERE APPLIED.
5. DRAWINGS PLOTTED IN COLOR FOR REALIZATION OF ALL DESIGN FEATURES.

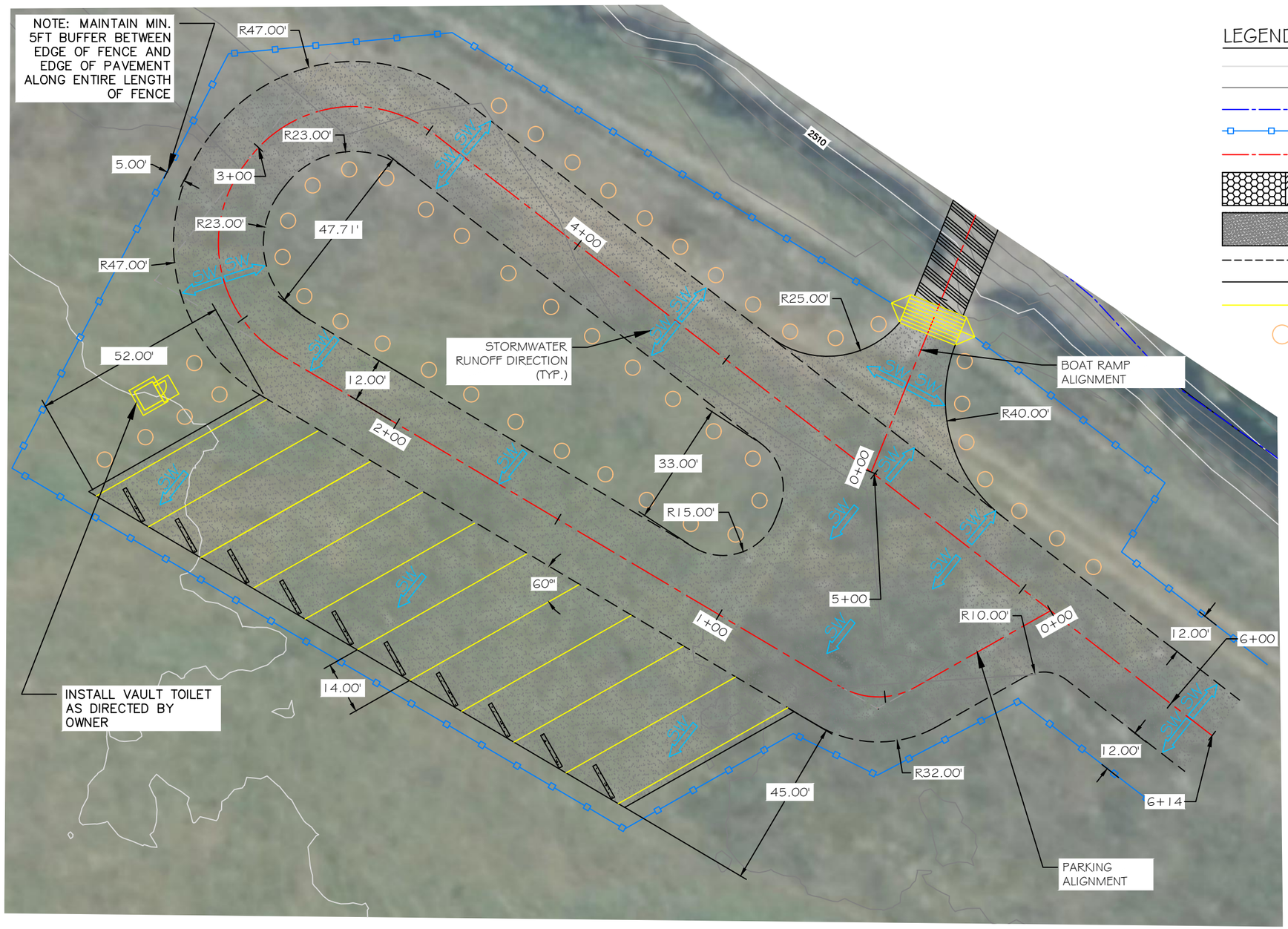
P. STENERSEN MAY 2026
DRAWN BY: DATE:
T. PHELPS MAY 2026
CHECKED BY: DATE:
BIA-NWR-EA-26-33

REVISED BY: DATE:
APPROVED BY: DATE:

APPROVED BY: DATE:
APPROVED BY: DATE:

SITE OVERVIEW

COLDWATER ENGINEERING



LEGEND

- EXISTING CONDITIONS MAJOR CONTOUR
- EXISTING CONDITIONS MINOR CONTOUR
- ORDINARY WATER MARK (SURVEY)
- PROPOSED FENCE
- PROPOSED TRAVEL CENTERLINE
- PROPOSED BOAT RAMP (CABLE-MAT/CONCRETE)
- PROPOSED PAVEMENT AREA
- PROPOSED EDGE OF ROAD TRAVEL WAY
- PROPOSED EDGE OF PARKING/STAGING AREAS
- PROPOSED STRIPING
- SAFETY BARRIER BOULDER

Scale:

0 30' 60'

P. STENERSEN MAY 2026
DRAWN BY: DATE:
T. PHELPS MAY 2026
CHECKED BY: DATE:
BIA-NWR-EA-26-33

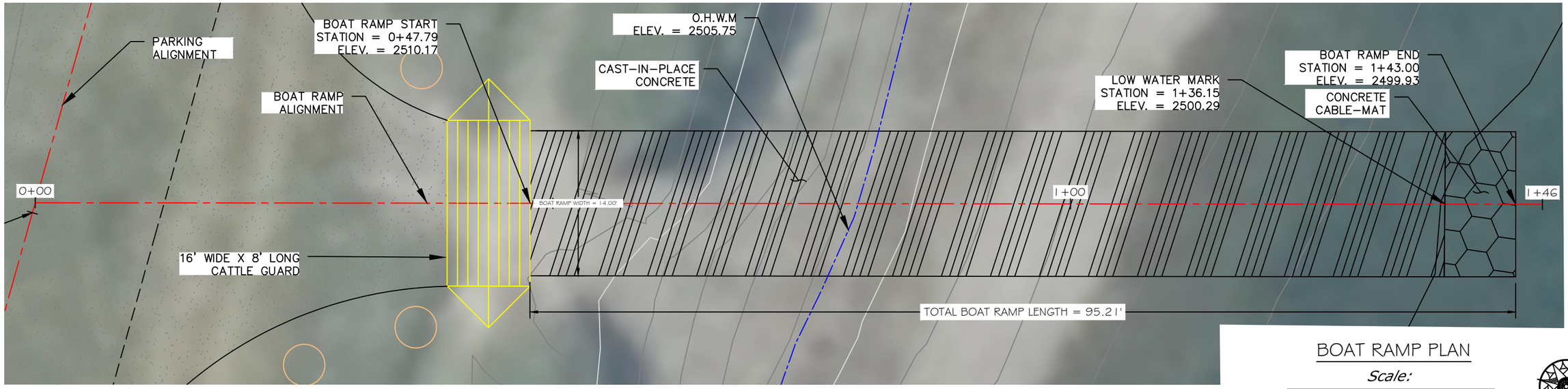
REVISED BY: DATE:
APPROVED BY: DATE:

APPROVED BY: DATE:
APPROVED BY: DATE:

PARKING LOT PLAN

COLDWATER ENGINEERING

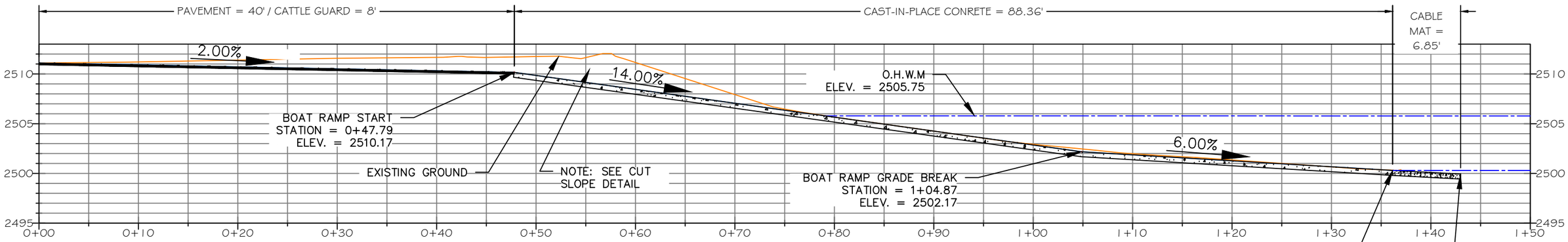
SHEET: 3 of 8



BOAT RAMP PLAN

Scale:

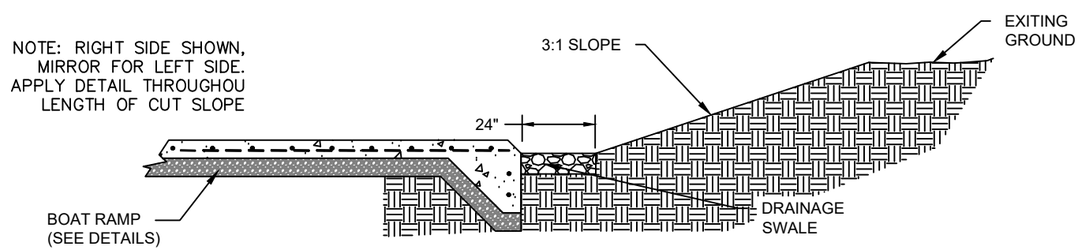
0 10' 20'



BOAT RAMP PROFILE

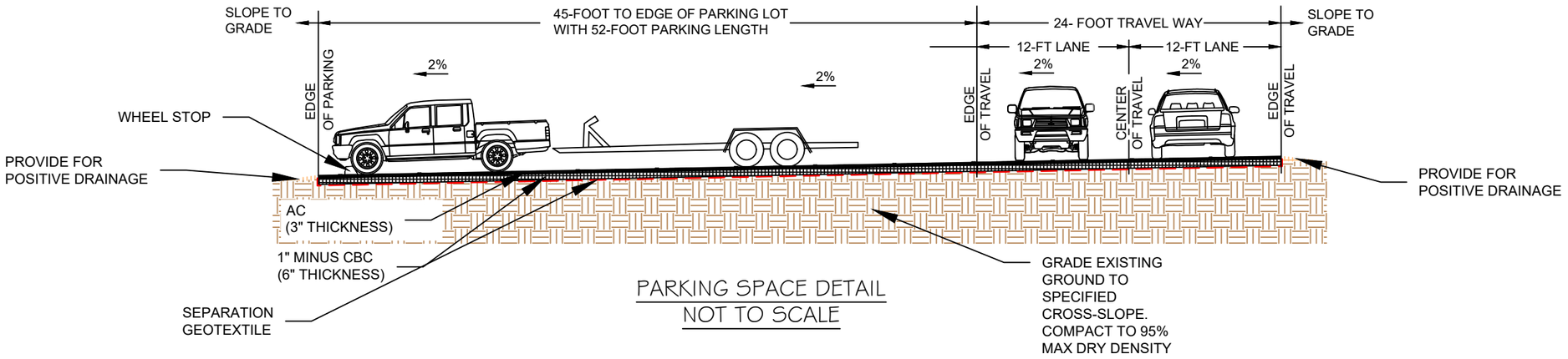
Scale:

0 10' 20'

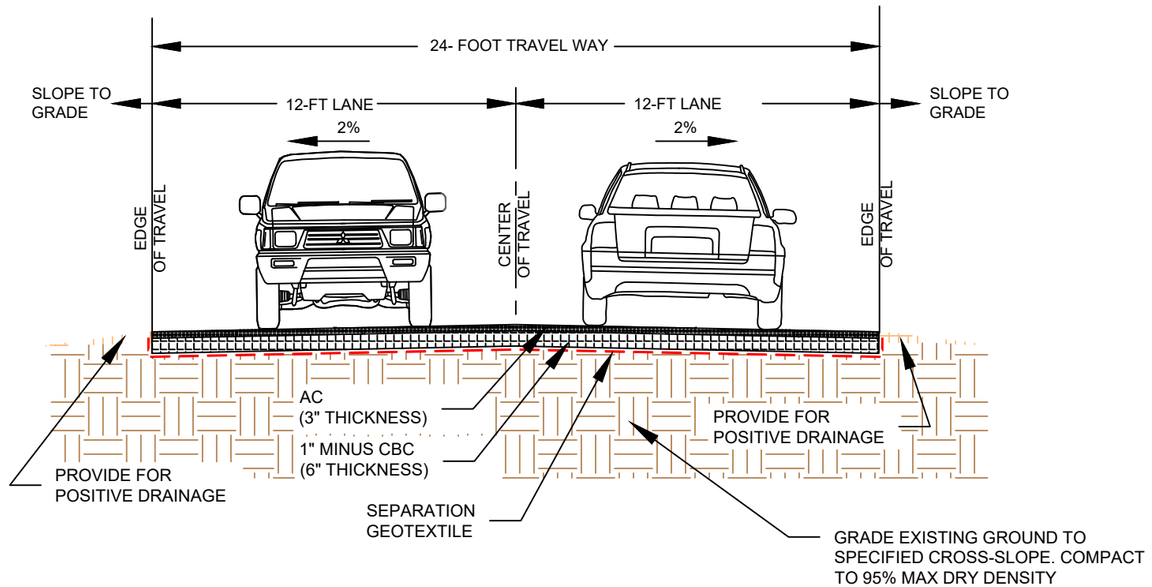


BOAT RAMP CUT SLOPE DETAIL
NOT TO SCALE

P. STENERSEN MAY 2026			
DRAWN BY: DATE:	REVISED BY: DATE:	APPROVED BY: DATE:	# BOAT RAMP PLAN & PROFILE
T. PHELPS MAY 2026			COLDWATER ENGINEERING
CHECKED BY: DATE:	APPROVED BY: DATE:	APPROVED BY: DATE:	SHEET: 4 of 8
BIA-NWR-EA-26-33			

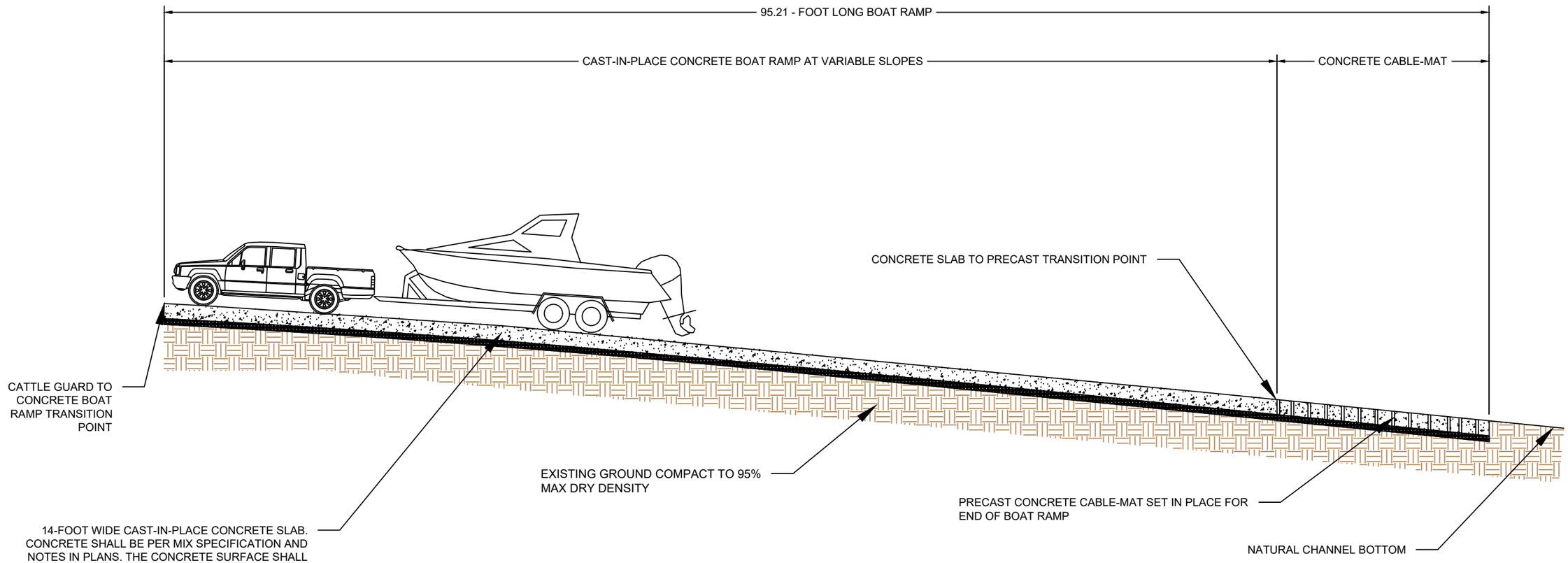


PARKING SPACE DETAIL
NOT TO SCALE



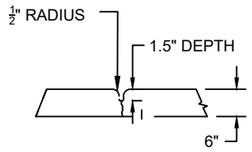
PARKING LOT TRAVEL WAY DETAIL
NOT TO SCALE

P. STENERSEN DRAWN BY: DATE: MAY 2026	REVISED BY: DATE:	APPROVED BY: DATE:	# PARKING LOT DETAILS
T. PHELPS CHECKED BY: DATE: MAY 2026	APPROVED BY: DATE:	APPROVED BY: DATE:	COLDWATER ENGINEERING
BIA-NWR-EA-26-33			SHEET: 5 of 8

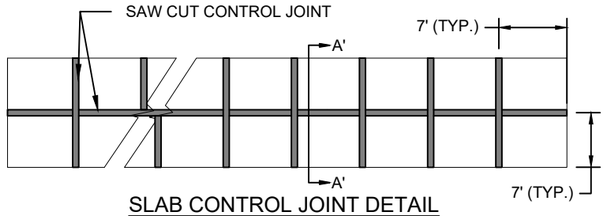


BOAT RAMP DETAIL
ALL DETAILS NOT TO SCALE

P. STENERSEN MAY 2026 DRAWN BY: DATE:	REVISED BY: DATE:	APPROVED BY: DATE:	BOAT RAMP DETAILS
T. PHELPS MAY 2026 CHECKED BY: DATE:	APPROVED BY: DATE:	APPROVED BY: DATE:	COLDWATER ENGINEERING
BIA-NWR-EA-26-33			SHEET: 6 of 8

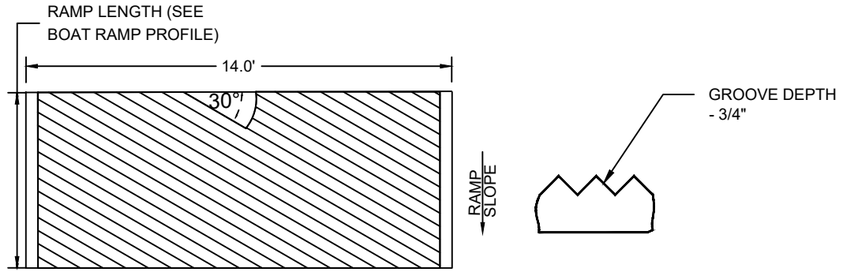


CONTRACTION CONTROL JOINT DETIAL

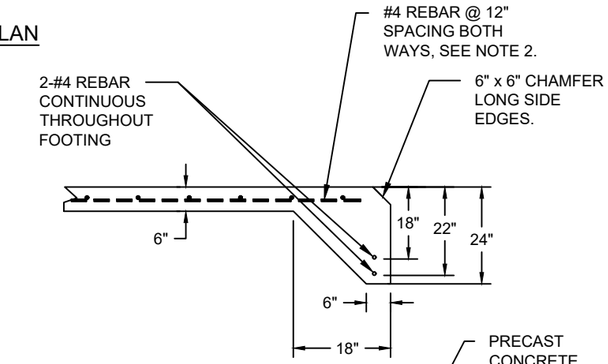


SLAB CONTROL JOINT DETAIL
PLAN VIEW

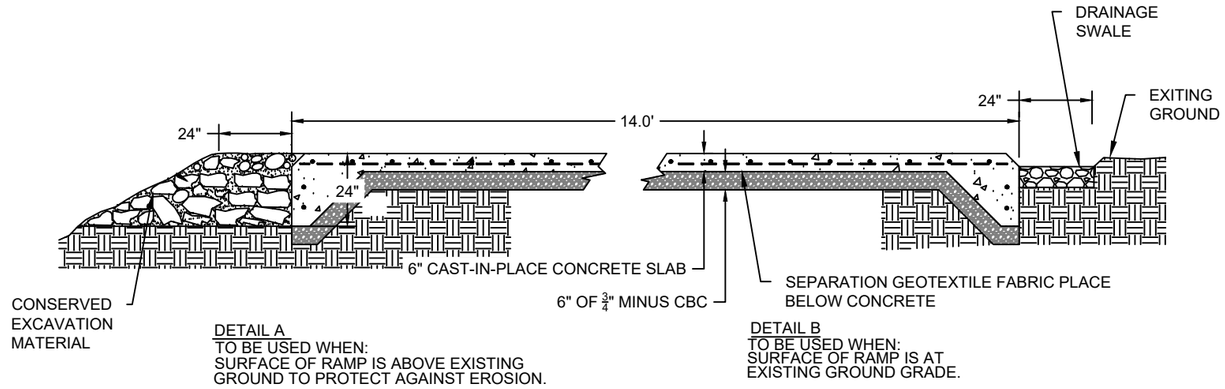
NOTES:
1. CONCRETE FOR NEW RAMP IS A 3/4" MINUS; 6-1/2 SACK MIX WITH A MIN 28 DAY STRENGTH OF 4000 PSI, REINFORCED WITH # 4 BARS @ 12" SPACING BOTH DIRECTIONS.
2. SCREED CONCRETE FOLLOWED BY GROOVING THE SURFACE.
3. SAW CUT CONTRACTION JOINTS AFTER RAMP IS GROOVED.



GROOVED SURFACE PLAN
PLAN VIEW



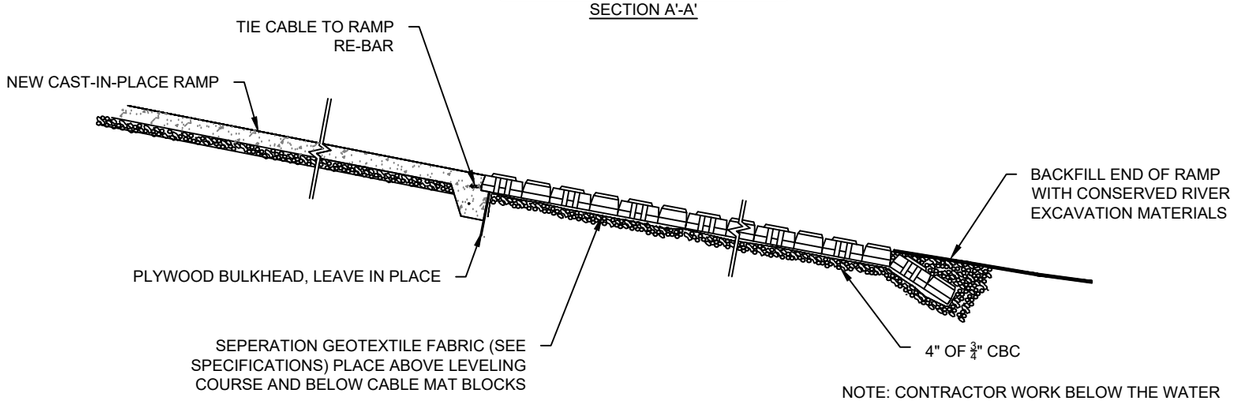
THICKENDED EDGE DETAIL
FOR CAST-IN-PLACE RAMP



DETAIL A
TO BE USED WHEN:
SURFACE OF RAMP IS ABOVE EXISTING GROUND TO PROTECT AGAINST EROSION.

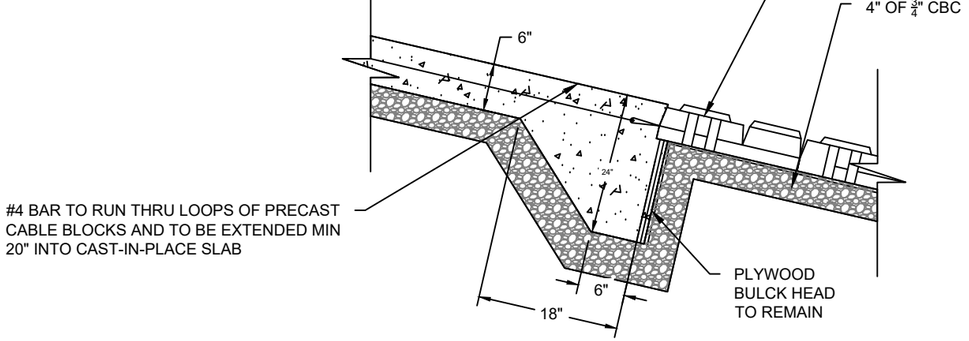
DETAIL B
TO BE USED WHEN:
SURFACE OF RAMP IS AT EXISTING GROUND GRADE.

CAST-IN-PLACE CONCRETE
SECTION A'-A'

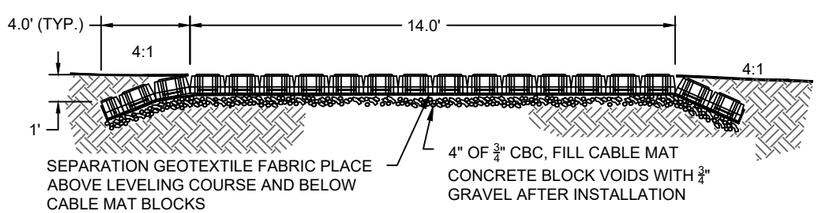


CABLE MAT/PLANKS DETAIL
ELEVATION VIEW

NOTE: CONTRACTOR WORK BELOW THE WATER LINE SHALL BE PROTECTED BY A TURBIDITY CURTAIN INSTALLED AND MAINTAINED PER MANUFACTURER'S SPECIFICATIONS.



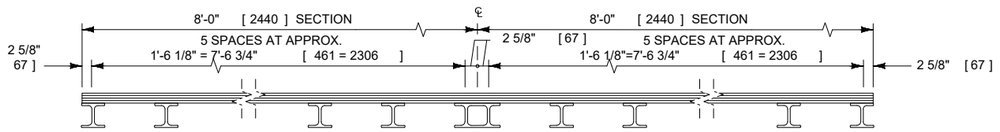
CABLE CONNECTION DETAIL
ELEVATION VIEW



CABLE MAT RAMP DETAIL
SECTION VIEW

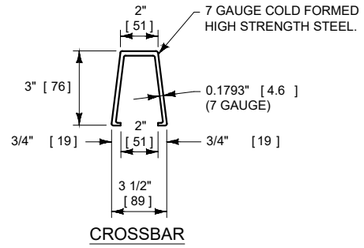
P. STENERSEN MAY 2026			BOAT RAMP DETAILS (CONT.)
DRAWN BY: DATE:	REVISED BY: DATE:	APPROVED BY: DATE:	
T. PHELPS MAY 2026			
CHECKED BY: DATE:	APPROVED BY: DATE:	APPROVED BY: DATE:	
BIA-NWR-EA-26-33			

COLDWATER ENGINEERING



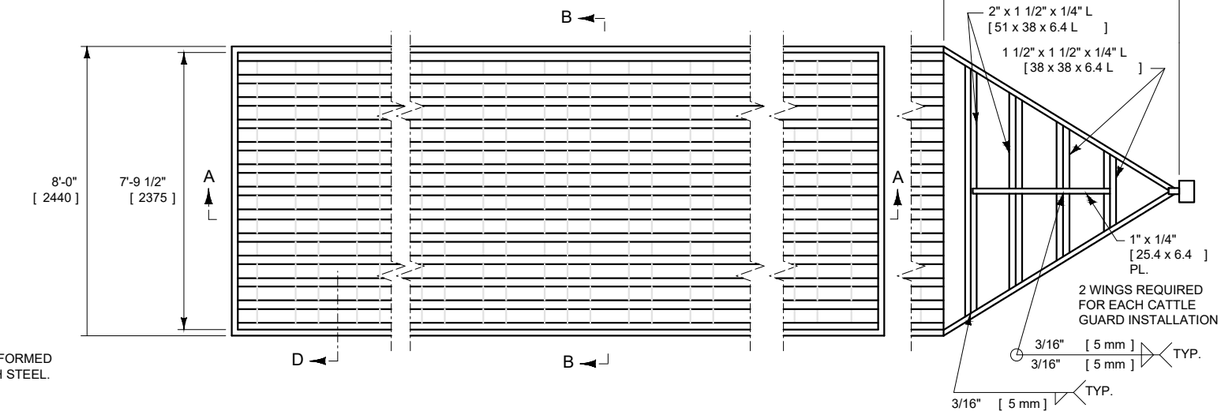
SECTION A-A

(8' [2440] SECTIONS)



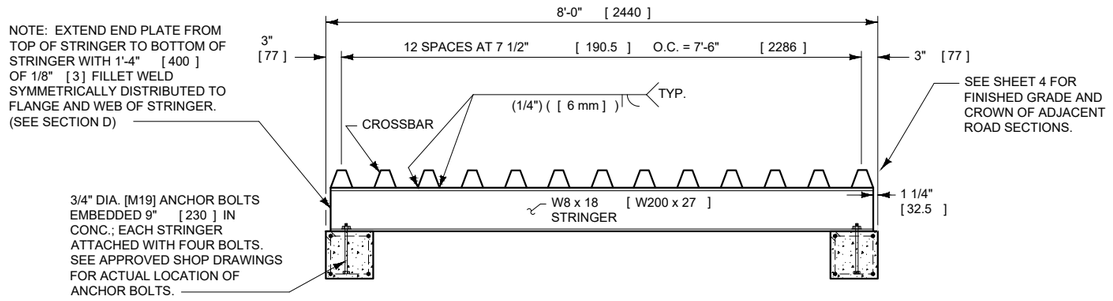
CROSSBAR

LIVE LOADING: STANDARD (HS20) LOADING



PLAN

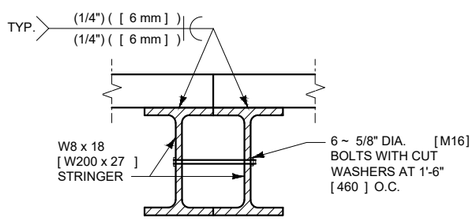
STEEL WING



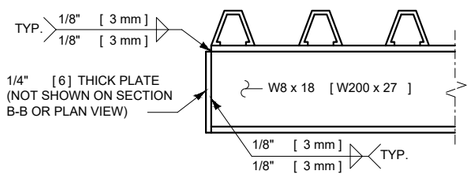
SECTION B-B

CATTLE GUARD NOTES:

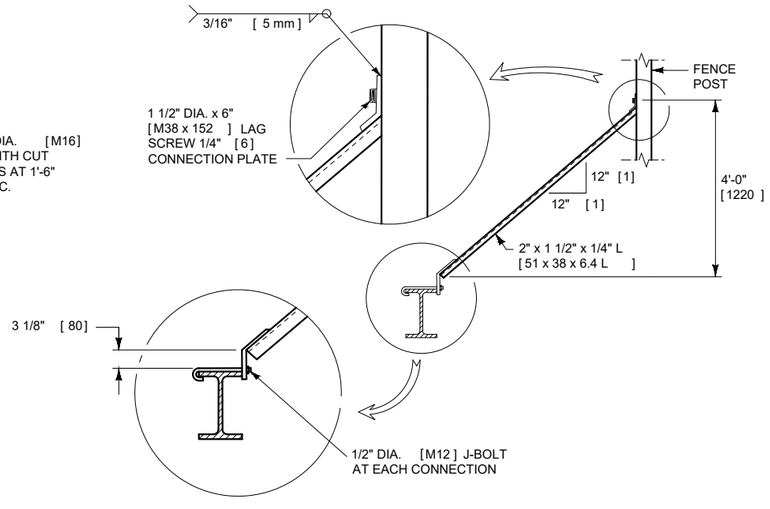
1. CATTLE GUARD DETAIL DRAWINGS ARE REFERENCED TO APPLICABLE MDT LIGHT-DUTY CATTLE GUARD STANDARD DETAIL DRAWINGS. REFER TO THE FOLLOWING MDT STANDARD DETAIL DRAWINGS FOR ADDITIONAL DETAILS:
   - 1.1. 611-00: CATTLE GUARD GRATE
   - 1.2. 611-03: CATTLE GUARD HINGED GRATE
   - 1.3. 611-10: LIGHT DUTY CATTLE GUARD - PRECAST
   - 1.4. 611-20: PRECAST CONCRETE CATTLE GUARD BASE DETAILS
2. FOR CATTLE GUARDS ON FARM FIELD OR PRIVATE APPROACHES, PRECAST CONCRETE BASES IN DETAIL DRAWING NO. 611-10 MAY BE USED.
3. ANCHOR BOLTS ARE TO CONFORM TO AASHTO M 314 GRADE 36.
4. ALL NUTS, BOLTS, AND WASHER ARE TO BE GALVANIZED.
5. UNITS NOTE: UNITS SHOWN IN BRACKETS [] ARE METRIC AND ARE IN MILLIMETERS (mm) UNLESS OTHER UNITS ARE SHOWN.



MULTIPLE INSTALLATION JOINT



SECTION D



STEEL WING CONNECTION DETAILS

T. PHELPS MAY 2026			
DRAWN BY: DATE:	REVISED BY: DATE:	APPROVED BY: DATE:	# CATTLE GUARD DETAILS
T. PHELPS MAY 2026			COLDWATER ENGINEERING
CHECKED BY: DATE:	APPROVED BY: DATE:	APPROVED BY: DATE:	SHEET: 8 of 8
BIA-NWR-EA-26-33			

Attachment B

Cultural Resources Clearance

Preservation Department
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
P.O. Box 278
Pablo, MT 59855
(406) 675-2700 Ext. 1075

Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes

Cultural Clearance Form

Date 04/20/2026

Cultural Clearance # 26-121 Project Name: Wild Plum Boat Launch - Sčilíp/Dixon

Applicant Name: Taryn Bushey Phone #: taryn.bushey@cskt.org

Agency Name: NRD DWER

The Tribal Preservation Office requires the following conditions:

☐ *There are **NO KNOWN** cultural or historical site locations present. Project may commence as described in Cultural Clearance application.*

■ *This undertaking will have **NO ADVERSE EFFECT** to cultural and /or historical site(s). Project may commence as described in Cultural Clearance application.*

☐ *This undertaking will have an **ADVERSE EFFECT** to cultural and /or historical site(s). Special conditions are required to be in compliance with CSKT's Cultural Resource Protection Ordinance. See comments and/or attached document(s).*

This project qualifies as a NEPA Categorical Exclusion? Yes ☐ No ■

COMMENTS: After research, review, and completion of field survey, there are no concerns of adverse effect to historic structures and/or cultural resources. Therefore, with these studies and/or investigations, by the CSKT Tribal Historic Preservation Office, the project construct new access site on the Flathead River to consist of formal boat launch, parking lot, vaulted toilet, new fencing, and improvements to existing road, at the location of: Township 18 North, Range 21 West, Sections: 18, at or near (Sčilíp) Dixon, MT area, may go forward.

****All areas** within the exterior boundaries of the Flathead Indian Reservation have the potential to contain cultural and historical resources. If any such resources or site locations are located during the project, cease activity in the vicinity of the cultural and/or historical resource and contact the Tribal Preservation Office (TPO) immediately.****

Patrick Lefthand Jr.
Compliance Technician

Approving Official

IMPORTANT STIPULATIONS: This Cultural Clearance permit is only valid for the activity described within the original application for one year. Any alterations to project plans invalidate this permit. All conditions established by the TPO must be adhered to or this permit is invalid. The applicant/agency are subject to penalties as defined in CSKT's Cultural Resource Protection Ordinance.

Attachment C

USFWS Letter of Concurrence for ESA Section 7 Consultation

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Montana Ecological Services Office
585 Shephard Way, Suite 1
Helena, Montana 59601

In Reply Refer to:
File: M.01 Bureau of Indian Affairs
2026-0080604

April 28, 2026

Shannon Hopkins
Acting Superintendent
Bureau of Indian Affairs
Shannon.hopkins@bia.gov

Tobiah Mogavero
Regional NEPA Coordinator
Bureau of Indian Affairs
Tobia.mogavero@bia.gov

Dear Shannon Hopkins and Tobiah Mogavero:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has reviewed your request for informal consultation and the biological assessment (BA) prepared for the proposed Wild Plum Landing Boat Launch Project (project), to be funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) under the CSKT–Montana Water Compact. Federal funding constitutes a Federal action requiring consultation under section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act (Act; 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.). The BA evaluated the potential effects of the project on federally-listed threatened, endangered, and proposed species and designated critical habitat within the action area.

The species considered include the threatened bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*), North American wolverine (*Gulo gulo luscus*), Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), and Spalding's catchfly (*Silene spaldingii*); the proposed threatened monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*); the proposed endangered Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee (*Bombus suckleyi*); and designated critical habitat for the bull trout. The BA determined that the project would have *no effect* on Canada lynx and Spalding's catchfly due to the absence of suitable habitat; therefore, written concurrence from the Service is not required for those species.

As described in the BA, the proposed project is located along the lower Flathead River near the community of Sçilíp on the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Reservation, within a reach designated as Feeding, Migration, and Overwintering (FMO) habitat for bull trout. The project would construct a hardened boat launch to replace the existing informal and actively eroding

launch, which is currently delivering sediment into the Flathead River. Additional components include improvements to the existing access road, construction of a parking area, installation of fencing and a vault toilet, and completion of in-water construction activities between August and September using isolation measures such as a coffer dam or turbidity curtain. Following construction, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) will manage the site as a day-use recreation facility.

Conservation Measures

Key conservation measures incorporated into the project include:

- Implementation of erosion and sediment control best management practices (BMPs), including turbidity monitoring during installation and removal of in-water isolation structures.
- Spill prevention and response protocols for all equipment operating near the river.
- Restriction of in-water work to late summer/early fall, when water temperatures limit bull trout occurrence in the action area.
- Revegetation of disturbed upland areas using native seed mixes.
- Measures to minimize disturbance to sensitive wildlife, including adherence to bear-attractant storage requirements and avoidance of unnecessary vegetation removal.
- Consultation with a pollinator specialist to minimize impacts to bumble bee foraging habitat and ensure avoidance of Western bumble bee nests.

These measures are expected to minimize potential short-term effects and to reduce the likelihood of long-term adverse impacts to listed and proposed species.

Grizzly Bear

Grizzly bears may occasionally move through the action area for dispersal or foraging, although habitat is low quality, already disturbed, and adjacent to development. Construction activities may cause temporary disturbance due to noise and increased human presence, but effects would be short-term, localized, and limited to individual bears. Strict adherence to food-storage practices and avoidance of attractants will reduce risk of habituation or human-bear conflicts. Effects to this species are expected to be insignificant.

Based on the limited spatial extent of the project, its short duration, and the existing level of human activity in the vicinity, the Service concurs with the determination that the project *may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect* the grizzly bear.

North American Wolverine

The action area does not contain suitable denning or foraging habitat, and wolverines are highly unlikely to occupy the site except potentially as rare dispersers. Construction-related disturbance would be temporary, and adequate displacement habitat exists in surrounding mountain ranges. Effects to this species are expected to be insignificant or discountable.

The Service therefore concurs with the determination that the project *may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect* the North American wolverine.

Monarch Butterfly (Proposed Threatened)

Milkweed and nectar plants occur in small patches in the action area; however, habitat quality is low, and monarch butterflies are unlikely to be present during construction. Temporary disturbance to vegetation may occur, but revegetation and conservation measures will limit long-term impacts.

The Service concurs that the project is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the monarch butterfly.

Suckley's Cuckoo Bumble Bee (Proposed Endangered)

Although the Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee has not been recently detected in the action area, its host species (Western bumble bee; *Bombus occidentalis*) is present. Construction during late summer and fall will avoid the critical period of queen emergence and nest establishment. Ground disturbance would be limited, temporary, and followed by revegetation, resulting in minimal impacts to potential habitat or host species for the Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee.

The Service concurs that the project is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee.

Bull Trout and Bull Trout Critical Habitat

The Flathead River within the action area is designated bull trout critical habitat and is seasonally used by low numbers of subadult and adult bull trout as Feeding, Migration, and Overwintering (FMO) habitat. As described in the BA, long-term monitoring by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) indicates that bull trout occur at very low densities in this reach of the lower Flathead River, with only a small number of individuals detected over multiple decades of fisheries surveys. Water temperatures in the lower Flathead River typically exceed 15°C during late summer, including the planned August-September in-water work window, and these elevated temperatures generally exclude bull trout from the action area during this period. As a result, the likelihood that bull trout would be present during construction is extremely low.

The BA evaluated the potential effects of the project on bull trout and designated critical habitat. Installation and removal of in-water isolation structures, such as a coffer dam or turbidity curtain, may result in temporary increases in suspended sediment downstream of the construction area. These effects are expected to be highly localized, of short duration (hours to less than one day during each disturbance event), and quickly dissipate given the river's flow regime and sediment transport characteristics. Required turbidity monitoring and implementation of erosion and sediment control best management practices (BMPs) will further minimize sediment-related effects. Risk of chemical contamination from equipment operating near the river would be

minimized through strict spill-prevention planning, equipment maintenance requirements, and adherence to applicable construction BMPs.

The permanent footprint of the hardened boat launch would affect a small area of simple shoreline habitat, which lacks complex features such as large wood, pools, or undercut banks. The BA determined that this modification is not expected to reduce habitat function for bull trout. In fact, replacement of the existing informal and eroding boat launch will reduce chronic sediment delivery to the Flathead River, resulting in a long-term beneficial effect to water quality and substrate conditions within FMO habitat.

Because bull trout presence during the in-water work window is unlikely due to high seasonal water temperatures, and because all potential effects are expected to be minor and/or temporary, the BA concluded that the potential for adverse effects is extremely low. After reviewing the proposed action, the BA, and information in our files, the Service believes that effects of the project to bull trout and their critical habitat would be insignificant or discountable and therefore concurs with the determination that the project *may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect* bull trout or designated bull trout critical habitat.

Conclusion

This letter concludes informal consultation pursuant to 50 C.F.R. § 402.13. Reinitiation of consultation is required if: (1) new information reveals that the action may affect listed species or critical habitat in a manner or to an extent not previously considered; (2) the action is modified in a way that causes effects not previously analyzed; or (3) a new species is listed or critical habitat designated that may be affected by the project (50 C.F.R. § 402.16).

We appreciate your ongoing coordination and efforts to conserve threatened and endangered species. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Brian Ham at brian_ham@fws.gov.

Sincerely,

for Amity Bass,

Office Supervisor