

RECREATION PROJECT

Sun River Boat Launch Facility

Project Description:

The proposed Sun River Boat Launch Facility would be located on the Sun River approximately five miles upstream of the confluence with the Missouri River. The facility would be located in Cascade County on property owned and managed by the City of Great Falls known as Wadsworth Park. Wadsworth Park is a 240 acre recreation area managed as a natural area which contains a 40 acre public fishing pond, primitive hiking trails and river frontage which borders the Sun River for approximately one mile. The location of the site would provide a 4.64 mile river float to an established City of Great Falls take out facility in Oddfellows Park located on the Missouri River. The facility would provide access to the lower Sun River and the Black Eagle Reservoir on the Missouri River for paddling, floating and fishing. Currently, the nearest public access on the lower Sun River is approximately 20 miles upstream at Sun River, MT. Given its proximity to Great Falls, it is expected that the boat launch will be heavily used by river recreationists.

The proposed project would be a carry-in style boat launch appropriate for use by small watercraft such as canoes, kayaks, rafts and small boats. It would not provide access for boat trailers and as such would naturally limit the size of the watercraft that can access the lower Sun River and ultimately the Missouri River. The river access ramp would be approximately 25 feet in length and shaped to create a 3:1 slope suitable for carry-in boat launching. It would also include installing cement logs or wire mesh mats or a combination of the two for the boat ramp to prevent erosion and rock for stabilization at the toe of the boat ramp.

Currently the site is totally unimproved. Consequently, the requested funding would also provide for construction of needed features other than the ramp. The project would also include construction of a short access road from Central Avenue West, a gravel parking lot suitable for eight to ten vehicles, installation of post and cable barriers, re-vegetation using native plants and signage.

Future improvements in the Sun River Boat Launch area may include a picnic area and nature trails along the Sun River. On-going and long term management and maintenance will be provided by the City of Great Falls Park and Recreation Department.

Scoring Criteria

1. *Project involves collaboration with other agencies or organizations.*

The City of Great Falls is the sponsor, developer and manager of the project. The City will provide design and construction management services along with on-going management and maintenance. Other participants and collaborators on the project include; the Sun River Watershed Group, the Medicine River Canoe Club, Missouri River Outfitters, Cascade County and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. The Sun River Watershed Group, Medicine River Canoe Club and Missouri River Outfitters will contribute approximately \$3,000 in cash towards the project along with in-kind services including design assistance, site preparation, sign development and installation and assistance with on-going maintenance. Cascade County supports the project due to the facilities role in providing additional recreation opportunities to the citizens of the county. Additionally, they will provide assistance in developing and constructing the approach off of Central Avenue West. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks will provide assistance in the ramp, parking lot and signage design. M.F.W.P. also supports the project due to the facilities role in providing public access to the river and increased fishing opportunities for the public.

2. *Project responds to a clearly identified need.*

As stated earlier, currently the only public access on the lower Sun River is located upstream of the confluence with the Missouri River approximately 20 miles at Sun River, MT. Use of the Missouri River in the Great Falls area has increased substantially in the past five years. Consequently, river users and anglers have asked that a river access site be established on the Sun River in this location for many years. This is reflected in the project collaboration noted earlier with several river use advocates. This project would serve to disperse river users resulting in a better quality experience for floaters, paddlers and anglers alike.

3. *Project provides a benefit to public recreation in the Project Area and addresses specific issues and goals of the Missouri-Madison Comprehensive Recreation Plan (CRP).*

This project would greatly benefit public recreation in the Great Falls area. Establishing a site at this location will provide a unique river recreation experience for 60,000 plus people minutes from their home. Additionally, the 4.64 mile float will provide direct access to the Missouri River further enhancing the recreational opportunities there. A steep banking exists along this reach of the Sun River. The Boat Launch Facility would provide for a safe place for recreationists to access the river. By providing the Boat Launch Facility at this location, the following Missouri-Madison Comprehensive Recreation Plan (CRP) goals would be addressed:

- *To provide safe and well managed recreation sites and dispersed use areas that provide enjoyable user experiences across a spectrum of opportunities and seasons.*
- *To maintain or proactively increase public safety for recreationists in the Project Area.*
- *To promote responsible user behavior that protects natural, cultural and social resources in the Project Area.*

4. *Project is for operation and maintenance of an existing recreation site.*

Funds for this project would develop and construct a river access site in an area where none currently exists. The City of Great Falls, Park and Recreation Department has an annual O & M budget for routine maintenance of facilities and very limited funds for capital improvement or construction projects such as this. By receiving cost-sharing funding through the Missouri-Madison River Fund, the Sun River Boat Launch Facility can be built, providing much needed and requested access to the Sun and Missouri Rivers.

5. *Project supports or protects other resources and is consistent with or supports resource plans in the Project Area.*

This project will provide safe public access to the Sun and Missouri Rivers while still protecting the environment and natural resources at the site. Construction techniques will be used to minimize the excavation necessary to install the boat ramp. Parking lot construction will be managed so as not to disturb the surrounding native vegetation and native plants and erosion control blankets will be used to re-vegetate the slopes of the ramp and access roadway. The ramp will be constructed so that bank erosion will be eliminated and bank stabilization enhanced.

The project is consistent with and supports management and resource plans for the area including the City of Great Falls Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the Wadsworth Park Master Plan, the Missouri River Corridor Master Plan, and the City of Great Falls Growth Policy. All of these plans support efforts to provide, improve or develop public access to recreational opportunities along the Missouri and Sun Rivers, maintain and improve safety conditions at recreational sites and protect, preserve and enhance cultural and natural resources along the Missouri and Sun Rivers.



View of Parking Area from
Central Avenue West



View of Driveway location
From Central Ave W.



View of Parking Area Looking
West towards Central Ave. W.



View of Ramp location.



View of Parking Area Looking
East towards Central Ave. W.



Driveway Location looking
Towards the Sun River.

Wadsworth Park

Non-Motorized
Boat Launch



CENTRAL AVE W

SUN RIVER



