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**Draft Environmental Assessment  
for Clark Canyon Reservoir and Barretts Diversion Dam**

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***Chapter 1  
Introduction and Background***

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## 1.0 Introduction and Background

### 1.1 Executive Summary

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has prepared this Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate Resource Management Plan (RMP) alternatives addressing management of lands and public use facilities at Clark Canyon Reservoir and Barretts Diversion Dam in Beaverhead County, Montana. This EA evaluates potential environmental effects associated with a range of alternatives for implementing a resource management plan (RMP) for Clark Canyon Reservoir. **Reservoir operations are not a subject of the RMP and are thus not evaluated in this EA.** This EA is prepared to assist Reclamation in finalizing a decision on a preferred RMP alternative and to determine whether to issue a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or a Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The RMP identifies goals and objectives for resource management, specifies desired land and resource use patterns, and explains the policies and actions that will be implemented during the life of the plan to achieve those goals and objectives.

Clark Canyon Reservoir is situated alongside Interstate 15 approximately 19 miles south of Dillon, Montana. Clark Canyon Reservoir has a water surface area ranging from 4,500 acres at a typical low pool to over 5,900 acres at full pool that can be realized after wet winters with high spring runoff. The RMP alternatives do not consider modifying reservoir operations rather the RMP options are plans to provide comprehensive land resource management plan options focusing on how to best manage the 4,350-acres of Reclamation lands adjoining the reservoir and 38 acres of Reclamation land at Barrett's Diversion Dam, located 11 miles downstream of the reservoir. There are 11 developed recreation sites including 11 campground facilities around the reservoir and at Barrett's Diversion Dam. These facilities attract approximately 57,000 visitors annually. Other than nearby foraging bald eagles, there are no other known occurrences of federally listed Endangered or Threatened species at the project. Similar to most valleys in Beaverhead County there is however, a continuing problem with noxious weeds.

Development of this EA began with a scoping process in fall of 2002. Public scoping meetings were held in Idaho Falls, Idaho, Dillon and Butte, Montana. Based on input gained from the scoping process along with the previous analyses, a range of alternative management and improvement measures were identified. The alternatives addressed in this EA are: No-action, representing a continuation of current management practices, Alternative A; moderate resource development that provides some improvements to most facilities around the reservoir, and Alternative B; a maximum resource development alternative that would bring all facilities up to current standards representing a close-to-build-out condition for the current facilities.

The impacts of maintaining the status quo management regime under No-action, are generally minor and generally represent a continuation of resource trends as described in the affected environment portions of the EA. The impacts of implementing Alternative A are also generally minor with several positive effects such as improving conditions for recreation use and increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of management measures for terrestrial and recreation resources. Noxious weed

management and wildlife management efforts would lead to slightly improved conditions for biological resources at Clark Canyon Reservoir, while construction at recreation sites could lead to some short-term inconvenience to recreationists visiting sites during construction periods and could increase the potential for soil erosion and spread of noxious weeds. The environmental effects of implementing Alternative B are similar to those of Alternative A and would be slightly more severe in extent due to the more extensive construction and changes planned at recreation facilities, however such effects would still be minor and generally of short-term duration. The overall positive effects on recreation resources is highest under Alternative B.

Lastly, a monitoring program is considered in the EA. Periodic monitoring program would be conducted to provide periodic checks on the successes and outcomes of all management measures.

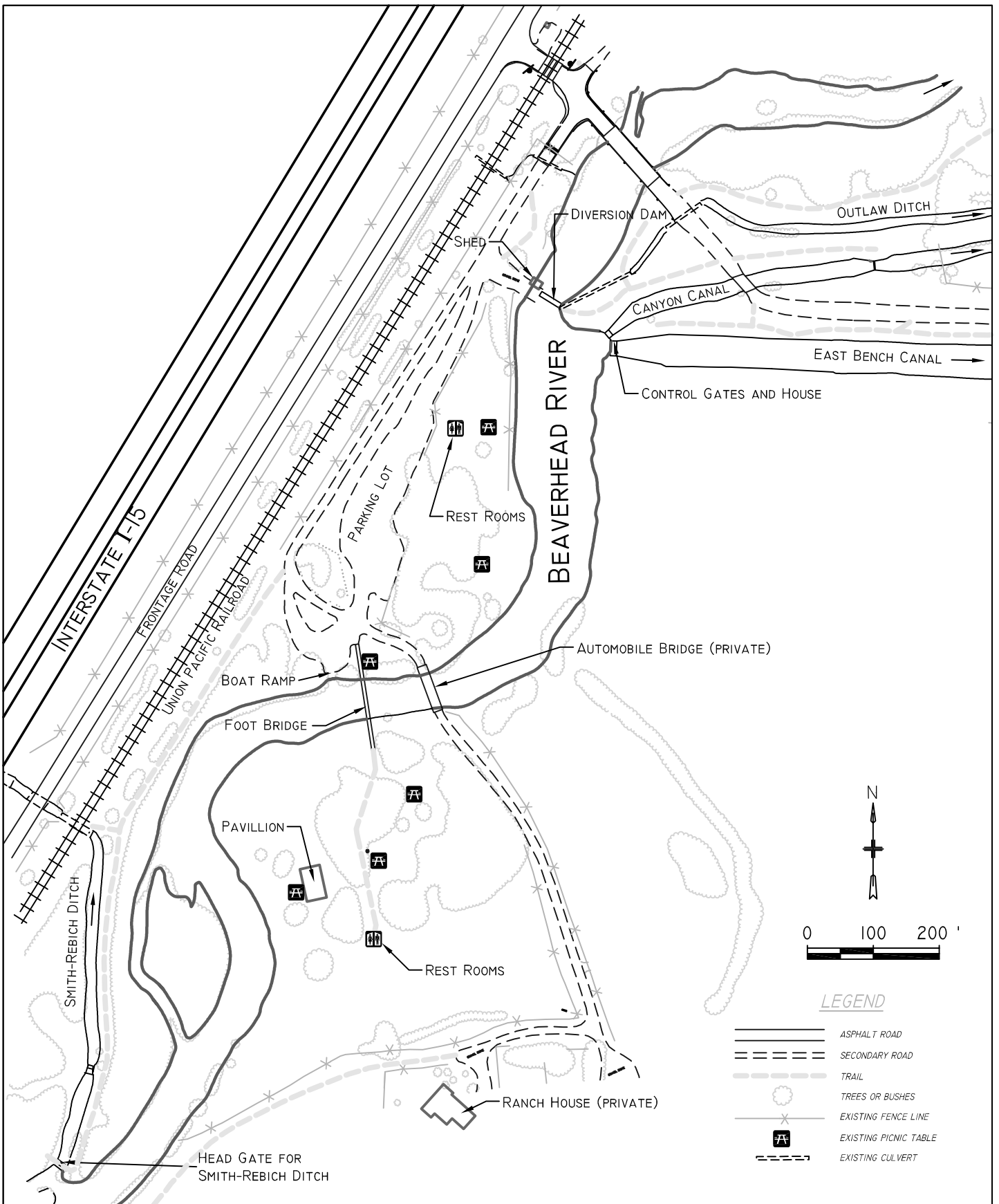
## **1.2 Introduction**

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has prepared this Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate Resource Management Plan (RMP) alternatives addressing resource management of lands and public use facilities at Clark Canyon Reservoir and Barretts Diversion Dam in Beaverhead County, Montana (See Location Map and Figure 1.0-1).

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 requires Reclamation to explore a range of possible alternative management approaches and evaluate the environmental effects of these actions. Three alternatives are evaluated and compared in this document, including a No Action Alternative, a moderate-level development alternative and a maximum-level development alternative. The impacts of each alternative are evaluated for the following resource topics: geology and soils, air quality, water use and water quality, vegetation, fish and wildlife resources, threatened and endangered species, cultural resources, land use and management, recreation resources, visual resources, noise, transportation and access, public services and utilities, and socioeconomic factors (including environmental justice).

## **1.3 Authority**

Title 28 of Public Law 102-575, Section 2805 (106 Stat. 4690; Reclamation Recreation Management Act of October 30, 1992) provides Reclamation with authority to prepare resource management plans. The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 as amended, and the Council on Environmental Quality's Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA provide Reclamation authority to prepare NEPA documents. Reclamations Departmental Manual (DM) 516DM1-7 provides further guidance in preparing NEPA documents.



DATE: AUGUST 2004  
 SCALE: 1" = 200 FEET  
 Barretts diversion.dwg  
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BUREAU OF RECLAMATION  
 CLARK CANYON RESERVOIR

FIGURE I.0-1  
 BARRETT'S DIVERSION DAM

## 1.4 Purpose and Need

This EA is evaluating effects of the implementation of an RMP for Clark Canyon Reservoir and Barretts Diversion Dam. The intent of the RMP is to serve as a blueprint for the future use, management, and site development of Reclamation lands and resources at Clark Canyon Reservoir and at Barretts Diversion Dam for the next 10 years. **Reservoir operations are not subject to change under the RMP and are not considered in the RMP or this EA.**

The purpose of this EA is to assist Reclamation in finalizing a decision on the preferred RMP alternative and to determine whether to issue a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or a Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The purpose of the RMP is to effectively manage recreation use and natural and cultural resources at Clark Canyon Reservoir and Barretts Diversion Dam. A plan is needed to address current and anticipated future issues. Also, to permit the orderly development and management of lands and facilities under Reclamation jurisdiction at the reservoir.

Reclamation's mission statement is "to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public" (Reclamation 2003). According to Reclamation's *2000-2005 Strategic Plan*, a RMP is to provide management direction consistent with authorized Project purposes while recognizing the rights and interests of existing contracts, legislation, and other entities concerning an identified land area under the jurisdiction of Reclamation.

## 1.5 Location and Background

Clark Canyon Reservoir is located within Beaverhead County in southwestern Montana. Clark Canyon Reservoir serves as the headwaters source of the Beaverhead River and receives inflows from the Red Rocks River and Horse Prairie Creek. The project area includes lands around Clark Canyon Reservoir and Barretts Diversion Dam facility, 11 miles downstream from the reservoir (see Location Map). Clark Canyon Reservoir is situated on the west side of I-15 approximately 19 miles south of Dillon, Montana. Dillon is the county seat of Beaverhead County with a year 2000 population of 3,752 persons. The City of Idaho Falls, Idaho is 128 miles to the south and Butte, Montana is 84 miles to the north. The reservoir has a maximum storage capacity of 325,324 acre-feet of water with a water surface of approximately 6,606 acres. At its normal pool capacity of 124,160 acre-feet it has a water surface area of approximately 5,903 acres (see site map).

Another segment of the East Bench Unit is Barretts Diversion Dam. Barretts Diversion Dam is located 6 miles south of Dillon, Montana. The diversion is used to feed the East Bench Canal and the Canyon Canal. These canals provide water for 28,000 acres of irrigated farmland in Madison and Beaverhead Counties. Excess water from the canals and return flows eventually return to the Beaverhead River. Approximately 38 acres of land adjacent to the diversion dam, referred to as Barretts Diversion Dam, are managed by Reclamation for public use.

After construction of Clark Canyon Dam, development, operation and maintenance of the recreational facilities surrounding the reservoir was controlled by the State of Montana Fish,

Wildlife and Parks (MFWP). Improvements were made under the direction of MFWP from 1964 until 1978. In 1978, MFWP relinquished its management responsibilities and Reclamation assumed maintenance responsibilities for the existing recreation facilities at the reservoir. Under Reclamation policy, existing facilities have been operated and maintained, however, no new recreation sites have been developed since the mid-1970s.

Reclamation lands within the project area were originally acquired for the construction and maintenance of irrigation works and other Project purposes. The total area available for public recreation consists of 5,903 water surface acres (Normal Pool at elevation 5535.70 feet msl) and 4,350 acres land surface acres immediately adjacent to Clark Canyon Reservoir.

## **1.6 Scoping and Issues**

To solicit input from members of the public, agencies, and other interested parties concerning the scope of issues that should be addressed in the RMP and this EA, Reclamation conducted a series of scoping meetings in the fall of 2002. Public scoping meetings/workshops were held in three locations: Idaho Falls, Idaho; Butte, Montana; and Dillon, Montana. The meetings were held on November 19th, 20th, and 21st, respectively. The meeting locations were selected for public convenience, and meetings were held at the Idaho Falls Hotel, the Red Lion Inn in Butte, and at the Beaverhead County Search and Rescue Building in Dillon.

Many issues were raised during scoping and all have been considered during the preparation of this EA and accompanying RMP. Issues of particular note included:

- The need for a managing partner to assist Reclamation in securing adequate funding and in co-management of the recreation facilities
- The need for a marina operator to improve and operate the marina facility
- The desire for consistently higher reservoir levels
- The need to control the spread of noxious weeds

Prior to 1978, the MFWP managed the recreation and wildlife resources at Clark Canyon Reservoir, but since that time Reclamation has managed the recreation facilities through its limited authority under Public Law 89-72. MFWP continues to manage fishing and hunting activities and its regulatory program regarding these resources. Changes in regulations are not evaluated in this EA. Reclamation intends to use the Final RMP as a tool to obtain assistance in funding and in bringing on a concessionaire to further manage and operate recreation facilities and wildlife habitat areas.

In August 2002, Reclamation published a Recreation Management Condition Assessment for Clark Canyon Reservoir and Barretts Diversion Dam. The assessment found that these facilities are not utilized to their full recreation potential; therefore opportunities exist to provide additional or improved recreation opportunities and experiences to meet existing and future public recreation needs. The bicentennial celebration of the Lewis and Clark expedition, which is anticipated to bring thousands of new visitors to the area during the next five years, provide additional incentive for Reclamation to evaluate the adequacy of the current facilities, and implement an RMP that provides for accommodating the likely increase in visitation.



Reservoir operations are determined through an annual operating plan prepared for the reservoir. Therefore, the RMP does not consider changes to reservoir operation or river outlet works. Instead, the RMP focuses on methods to manage the lands and associated resources, and recreational activities, in a manner compatible and adaptable to the reservoir operations and its annually fluctuating water levels.

## 1.7 Related Actions and Activities

In addition to its responsibilities in managing lands around the reservoir, Reclamation will also be negotiating the renewal of the contract (Contract No. 14-06-600-3592) that provides the Clark Canyon Water Supply Company, East Bench Unit, Montana authority to operate the project and manipulate water releases. The negotiation process has begun and will be fully evaluated before the contract expiration on December 31, 2005 (Federal Register: February 28, 2003 (Volume 68, Number 40)). At the same time Reclamation will also be negotiating the renewal of the East Bench Irrigation District Contract (Contract No. 14-06-600-3593). This contract expires December 31, 2005.



The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages much of lands adjoining Clark Canyon Reservoir. Currently, the BLM is preparing a resource management plan for these lands in what is called the Dillon Resource Area.

The BLM's Dillon Resource Management Plan is currently under preparation and will describe broad, multiple-use guidance for managing public lands and mineral estate administered by the BLM. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 directs the BLM to develop, maintain, and when necessary, to revise land use plans to provide for the appropriate use of public lands. The plan must highlight goals and objectives for resource management and establish measures needed to achieve those goals and objectives. The plan must also identify which public and commercial uses are appropriate, where they are appropriate, and under what conditions. The plan is developed with public involvement and impacts of the plan are analyzed in an environmental impact statement (EIS) as required under the NEPA. Public scoping was completed in late 2001. This planning process is guided by BLM regulations found in Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1600 (43 CFR 1600) and regulations prepared by the Council on Environmental Quality at 40 CFR 1500.

The BLM draft Resource Management Plan was released in March 2004 for a 90-day public review period.

Other related land management plans in the area of Clark Canyon Reservoir include:

- Forest Plan – Beaverhead National Forest (USDA-FS 1986)
- Beaverhead Riparian Plan Amendment (USDA-FS 1997)

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- Beaverhead County Resource Use Plan (Beaverhead County 2001)
- Montana Bald Eagle Management Plan (USDI-BOR 1994)