
**Clark Canyon Draft Resource Management Plan
for Clark Canyon Reservoir and Barretts Diversion Dam**

***Chapter 3
Needs, Constraints, and Opportunities***

3.0 Needs, Constraints, and Opportunities

During the RMP scoping process, various opportunities and constraints associated with the management of resources and recreation at Clark Canyon Reservoir and Barretts Diversion Dam were identified. These needs, opportunities, and constraints were evaluated and considered as part of development of the project alternatives. The types of opportunities and constraints considered include financial, legal, reservoir carrying capacity, and environmental conditions (topography, cultural resources, water quality, endangered species).

3.1 Recreation Resources

Needs

Use of Clark Canyon Reservoir recreation resources is limited by several factors, including a low regional population base, limited and aging facilities, little to no shade or shelter, and fluctuations in reservoir levels, which are based on current hydrologic cycles, contractual requirements, and down stream environmental needs.



Constraints

Constraints identified in the conditions assessment report include operation of the reservoir for flood control, irrigation, and other downstream purposes, which limits Reclamation's ability to manage reservoir storage and releases for the purpose of enhancing recreation. As identified in the report, Reclamation has limited flexibility to change the historic operation of its water projects because of its existing contractual obligations. In addition, Reclamation lacks specific recreation authority to manage specifically for recreation. Through P.L. 89-72 Reclamation can develop new recreation resources in cooperation with non-federal government entities; however, if a managing partner is not obtained, Reclamation is restricted to providing only minimum and basic recreation facilities.

Opportunities

Recreational opportunities abound at Clark Canyon Reservoir. The reservoir is located roughly halfway between the cities of Butte, MT and Idaho Falls, ID, and is immediately accessible from Interstate 15. Clark Canyon Reservoir has one of the most productive reservoir fisheries in the State of Montana, and with an abundance of open space and easy access.

The August 2002, "Recreation Management Condition Assessment" for Clark Canyon Reservoir and Barretts Diversion Dam identified several opportunities. One of the recreation opportunities identified was cost sharing for recreation purposes with other federal, state and local agencies could increase the capability of Reclamation to successfully manage Clark Canyon Reservoir and Barretts Diversion Dam. Also identified were partnerships with private organizations to better maintain the recreational amenities available at the reservoir.

3.2 Natural Resources

Needs

Sport fishing could benefit from improved water quality through shoreline stabilization. In addition, wildlife and natural habitats could also benefit from closing ORV trails, establishing better-defined parking and camping areas, and improving vegetative cover to reduce noxious weeds. Improving habitat could also increase the number and types of birds and other animals using the reservoir shoreline and riparian areas, which in turn could likewise increase interest in the designated wildlife viewing area previously discussed.

Constraints

Clark Canyon Reservoir is operated for irrigation water supply and flood control under existing authorities. Under these authorities the runoff from upstream is primarily stored or released as needed to meet irrigation demands. The operation of the reservoir is not a subject of this RMP. As a result, the changing water level is a major constraint to provide potential fish and wildlife enhancement measures. The extensive on going efforts to control the spread of noxious weeds, also constrains the ability of Reclamation to focus on other enhancements. Constraints that limit or provide challenges to natural resource management include steep slopes on portions of the shoreline, shoreline erosion areas, noxious weed infestation, and potential conflicts between wildlife and recreation users. In addition, the carrying capacity of the area to support wildlife also limits the amount and type of wildlife present.

Opportunities

There are numerous opportunities to improve and protect the existing natural resources at Clark Canyon Reservoir and Barretts Diversion Dam. The existing designated wildlife viewing area located on the Beaverhead River just below the dam could be enhanced for the public to enjoy with relatively minor access improvements. In doing so, this enhancement could help add to the local economy by increasing visitation to the area of visitors coming to the wildlife area for reasons other than fishing.



Federal laws require that Federal lands be managed for protection of cultural resources and enhancement of species listed under the Endangered Species Act. At Clark Canyon Reservoir, protection from bald eagle disturbance, particularly during the foraging seasons, may limit some recreation activities. In addition there are several candidate species on nearby lands and any future actions that would adversely affect these species will not be allowed. All actions near eagle foraging areas will need to consider potential effects to ESA and Federal Candidate species.

3.3 Lands

Needs

There is a need to maintain public access to reservoir lands and surrounding public lands. This includes all Reclamation lands owned and easements located East of I-15. A need exists to continue

the management of existing lands for fishing, hunting, and wildlife viewing. Provide administrative access and use of MFWP Fish Trap facility. Near Clark Canyon Dam, there are continuing needs to pave the main access road, rehabilitate drainage and erosion features, and add guardrails on road to Beaverhead River Fishing access below dam. There is a need to increase noxious weed control along old railroad grade and south boundary near Red Rock Creek, Horse Prairie open lands, and around all recreation sites. For the fences on the South Shore Lands, there is a need to repair, rebuild and extend sections including creating more adaptable passage for Antelope. On all lands there are needs to: 1) Exclude ORV trails and vehicles in sensitive areas. 2) Limit firearm usage to shotgun, handgun, and black powder. On the lands around Horse Prairie Creek Mouth there is a need to develop a grazing plan to reduce residue built up and stimulate new vegetative growth through prescribe grazing by livestock. Finally there is a need to plant willows and cottonwoods in the riparian areas of Horse Prairie Creek lands.

Constraints

Reclamation has limited budget and personnel resources to construct and maintain improvements, and enforce regulations. Reclamation is also limited in its ability to apply effective chemicals and or biological control to noxious weeds in a recreation setting. In the effort to preserve and encourage vegetation the competition from noxious weeds, other vegetation, and lack of moisture limits success in establishing or preserving important native vegetation.

Opportunities

There are numerous opportunities to partner with dedicated hunting clubs; sports based groups, wildlife clubs, and youth groups such as, Boy Scouts, to obtain volunteers in fence repair, tree and willow planting. Opportunities exist to enter into cooperative agreements with adjacent landowner(s) to lease grazing rights. Through more public awareness campaigns and partnerships with recreationists and nature lovers, reporting of abuse from ORVs will result in less ORV abuse and the spread of noxious weeds. Through partnerships and coordination with County, State, and Federal agencies scheduling of road upgrades can reduce cost and increase opportunities for improving access roads.

3.4 Cultural Resources

Needs

While there have been some cultural resource surveys at several locations around Clark Canyon Reservoir, there is a need to perform further surveys to identify and protect other resources not yet identified.

Constraints

The primary constraint to effectively manage the cultural resources is related in the low funding levels. Additional comprehensive evaluations have been provided in the past to better guide cultural resource management.

Opportunities

Clark Canyon Reservoir lands contain both historic and prehistoric resources of importance. These resources provide great opportunities for interpretive displays and programs that can showcase both Native American cultures and historic settlements and past resource uses of the area.

Research conducted in the area has revealed prehistoric sites that demonstrate extensive Native American utilization of the region. Artifact scatters and quarry sites show the area was used for stone tool production, bison kills, and butchering sites demonstrate meat procurement, and camps with fire hearths and grinding stones demonstrate food preparation. Although none of the prehistoric sites at Clark Canyon Reservoir have been nominated to the National Register of Historic Places some may be eligible since they may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

The historic period at Clark Canyon Reservoir dawned in 1805 when the Lewis and Clark Expedition entered the area. Their meeting with the Lemhi Shoshoni Indians at “Camp Fortunate” at a location now under the waters of Clark Canyon Reservoir was an important factor in the success of the expedition. The Lemhi Shoshoni Indians were not the only tribe known to have utilized the area, research has reported usage by the Bannock, Flathead, Pend Oreille, Nez Perce and Blackfeet as well.



Lewis & Clark Monument at Clark Canyon

Discovery of gold by John White’s party in 1862 started the gold rush to Montana. Bannack and Virginia City, located northwest and northeast of Clark Canyon became leading mining towns.

The Gilmore & Pittsburgh Railroad (G & P) was constructed from the mainline of the Utah and Northern up Horse-Prairie Creek to the mines at Salmon and Gilmore, Idaho. A community named Armsted, Montana developed at the junction of the two railroads. Portions of the grade were so steep, that the gained the nickname “Get Out and Push”. The (G O & P) was not profitable, and the tracks were removed in the early 1940’s. The post office remained open at Armstead until 1962.

Few historic remains are located on Reclamation land adjacent to the Reservoir, and none are on the register of historic places. However, given this rich history, there are several areas on Reclamation lands where interpretation opportunities exist. There are enough landscape features that directly relate to the specific historical and prehistorical documentation of the area. These areas provide prime settings for interpretive displays or view points keyed to an interpretive brochure or booklet. The Federal Government is required by law and regulations to protect and preserve significant cultural resources. To this end, Reclamation’s undertakings are subject to compliance required by the National Historic Preservation Act and its regulations found in 36 CFR Part 800. These mandate require that the Government consider the effects of its action on prehistoric and historic resources before implementing those actions.

3.5 Operations, Maintenance, Enforcement, Public Health and Safety

As identified earlier, there are several opportunities for Reclamation to increase and enhance the existing recreational and wildlife resources. However, with Reclamation’s limited authority under Public Law 89-72, major improvements of recreation operations and maintenance activities at the

reservoir would have to use cooperative agreements with a managing partner(s). This would allow for collection of user fees to help fund capitol improvements and recreational facilities maintenance. Public health and safety would also be improved with improved facilities.

3.6 Funding Opportunities

The ability to retain recreation-related fees to offset operation and maintenance expenses is an important aspect to consider when managing recreation activities on Federal lands. Currently, Reclamation does not collect user fees at Clark Canyon Reservoir. Reclamations budget is based on annual Congressional appropriations.

P.L 89-72 authorizes Reclamation to enter into recreation management agreements with non-federal entities. This act also authorizes the transfer of management of project lands or facilities to these agencies with terms and conditions that best promote development and operation of the land and facilities for recreation purposes in the public interests (Recreation Management Condition Assessment, 2002). While this presents an opportunity to improve the recreation and natural resources at Clark Canyon Reservoir and Barretts Diversion Dam, a limiting factor is the ability to find a willing and suitable partner. To date, Reclamation has only had limited success in attracting a private concessionaire for operating a marina primarily because of the need for key capitol improvements that would allow for a concessionaire to successfully manage a marina and provide a reasonable investment and return. Also, due to the recent drought and low water levels over the past few years, it is difficult to attract a large amount of recreationists to the marina.

