# United States Department of the Interior
# Bureau of Land Management

**Environmental Assessment**
DOI-BLM-ID-C010-2016-0009-EA
**October 2016**

## Ross Point Recreation Site

Bureau of Land Management
Coeur d'Alene Field Office
3815 Schreiber Way
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83815

# Contents

# 1.0 Introduction

This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared to disclose and analyze the environmental consequences of a BLM proposal to construct a day-use recreation site on BLM lands at Ross Point, in Post Falls, Idaho.

The EA assists the BLM in project planning and ensuring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and in making a determination as to whether any "significant" impacts could result from the analyzed actions.

## 1.1 Background

The project would occur on a parcel of public land located at an area known as Ross Point, between the Spokane River and Maplewood Ave. in Post Falls. This parcel is part of the Coeur d'Alene Lake Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA). Formerly there was an irrigation pumping station on the parcel which was run by the Bureau of Reclamation. After the pumping station was abandoned, the parcel became an undeveloped recreation site (primarily used for swimming). The site receives most of its visits during the late spring into the early fall when the weather is better for lake activities. In 1994, the BLM removed the concrete pump house building and much of the associated piping and electrical lines. In February of 2000, the BLM hauled off additional debris (primarily broken concrete and rebar) and placed three truckloads of boulders along the shoreline to help reduce bank erosion from boat wakes and flood flow that impact the site. In February 2016 the BLM placed additional boulders to reinforce the shoreline.

Currently, there is a small parking area delineated by cement barriers on the north side of the parcel and walk-in access to the Spokane River. There is a small beach on the river that is being used mainly for fishing and swimming. The beach is approximately 350 linear feet along the south end of the property, with the western portion of the beach being significantly wider and used primarily for swimming. The current recreation infrastructure includes a kiosk, portable restroom, trashcan on the north side near the small gravel parking area off of Maple Ave., and a picnic table near the water.

There is a forested area on the eastern portion of the property that is comprised of mature ponderosa pine trees with an understory consisting of small trees, shrubs, and grasses. This area is relatively undisturbed and gives the site a more natural appearance.

### 1.2 Proposed action summary:

The BLM proposes to construct a day-use recreation site on the Ross Point parcel. The recreation site would be developed with grass, paved parking, restroom, walking paths, picnic tables, shade structures, etc. The parking area would be delineated with fencing and have trails leading to the rest of the site from the parking area. There would be a non-motorized access point to the river that would allow for swimming, paddling, rowing, fishing, etc. A dock would be constructed for swimming, fishing, and for small watercraft to access the day-use site. (See Appendix A: Conceptual Plan and Section 6 for a detailed description of the proposed action.)

**1.3 Location** The BLM parcel at Ross Point is located along the Spokane River in Post Falls, ID, at 50N, R4W, Section 8, Boise Meridian. (See Appendix B: Map)

## 2.0 Purpose and Need

Demands for outdoor recreation opportunities along the waterfront on the Spokane River continue to increase which makes Ross Point a desirable recreation site. The demand is largely due to limited public access to the Spokane River and Lake Coeur d'Alene. The demand for recreation is also due to its proximity to large population centers (e.g., Coeur d'Alene, ID and Spokane, WA).

The Coeur d'Alene Resource Management Plan (RMP) supports the need to partner with the City of Post Falls and develop the area into a community park (BLM 2007). Additionally, the RMP supports providing opportunities for quality outdoor recreation experiences on BLM managed lands.

The purpose of the project is to improve the recreational opportunities within the Coeur d' Alene Lake SRMA while providing more opportunities for people to visit the Spokane River and enjoy recreating with amenities.

## 3.0 BLM Decision to be Made

In accordance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), the BLM Coeur d'Alene Resource Management Plan, and Federal Regulations (43 CFR 5003), the BLM Coeur d'Alene Field Manager will decide whether or not to construct the proposed Ross Point day-use site.

## 4.0 Land Use Plan Conformance

The proposed Action is in conformance with the Coeur d'Alene Resource Management Plan (RMP) approved in 2007. The Proposed Action is consistent with the following RMP Decisions contained within this plan:

Goal RC-1 – Provide opportunities for quality outdoor recreation experiences ensuring enjoyment of natural and cultural resources on BLM-managed or partnered lands and waters.

Objective RC-1.2 – Manage the Coeur d'Alene Lake SRMA for land- and water-based leisure activities for outdoor sport, relaxation, social group or family affiliation, and personal enrichment or learning through environmental study within accessible natural forested lakeshore settings.

Action RC-1.2.1 – Maintain the existing rural and roaded-natural settings (which are characterized by a culturally modified pastoral environment or by a generally natural appearing environment with moderate evidence of the sights and sounds of man) by:

- Providing paved and improved road access and motorized boat access to developed recreation facilities
- Providing accessible recreation facilities for user convenience, resource protection, and visitor health and safety.
- Accommodating visitor use in developed sites at moderate to high levels, where contact between visitors is frequent or common and opportunities for solitude are either not provided or are minimal.

Action RC-1.2.6 – Provide controls and limit management actions to protect visitors and developed recreation sites or to protect and enhance water, riparian, and wildlife resource values that contribute to the area's unique setting by:

- Applying VRM [visual resource management] Class II management constraints.

Action RC-1.2.13 – Enter into a cooperative management agreement with the city of Post Falls and Kootenai County for their joint development and operation of a community park at Ross Point.

Objective WA-1.1 – Comply with state and federal requirements to protect public waters

Action WA-1.1.1 – prescribe and implement BMPs to reasonably prevent degradation of water quality.

RCA-1 – Activities in RCAs [riparian conservation areas] will be designed to enhance, restore or maintain the physical and biological characteristics of the RCA by implementing the following:

- Activities in RCAs that are not at or moving towards desired conditions as indicated by RMOs or other measures must include a restoration component as part of the project if determined to be necessary/beneficial by a fisheries biologist, hydrologist or other aquatic specialist.
- Activities in RCAs must not result in long-term degradation to aquatic conditions. Limited short-term adverse/negative effects from activities in the RCA may be

acceptable when outweighed by the long-term benefits to the RCA and aquatic resources.

# 5.0 Scoping and Issues

## 5.1 Internal Scoping

The Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) of the BLM's resource specialists conducted internal scoping through the project planning process, which included on-site field examinations of the project area, professional observations and judgment, literature review, and IDT discussions. In the project planning process the IDT considered environmental elements particular to this project site. The IDT also developed a preliminary Proposed Action and identified preliminary relevant issues for consideration.

## 5.2 External Scoping

The Coeur d'Alene Field Office (CdAFO) initiated the planning process by meeting with Avista and the City of Post Falls Parks and Recreation. Several conceptual plans were discussed with the conclusion that a day-use site would be the most appropriate proposal for the 2.5 acre parcel. The CdAFO also discussed the proposal with the Resource Advisory Council (RAC), invited the public to comment, and held a public meeting. During the public meeting the concept plans were discussed with the conclusion that the day-use site should be scaled back to illustrate a park with less parking and less infrastructure.

- November 5, 2015, met with Avista and City of Post Falls on-site
- June 14, 2016, sent out scoping notice and published information on the project website
- June 24, 2016, met with the RAC on-site
- June 14 – July 31, 2016, invited public to comment
- July 6, 2016, held a public meeting on-site

## 5.3 Issues Considered for Analysis

The IDT identified the following issues for analysis based on applicable law, management direction contained in the RMP, and information gathered during the scoping and project planning process. Issues identified helped to determine whether the Proposed Action should be modified, and helped to determine the significance of the project effects on elements of the environment which helped shape the alternatives to analyze.

- Botany: construction could result in loss of native vegetation and introduction of invasive species.
- Fish and Aquatic Species: the constructed dock, and sediment run-off from construction of other facilities could adversely affect aquatic species, to include special status fish species (federally listed threatened or endangered or BLM sensitive) or their habitat.

- Recreation and Public Safety: site development could encourage unauthorized overnight camping. The site development and improved access would affect the water and land based recreation opportunities along the Spokane River. Site development could affect public safety e.g., traffic congestion, water use, etc.
- Soil and Water Resources: soil and sediment movement may be affected by site construction.
- Visual Resources: addition of the new facilities and landscaping could affect the visual quality of the landscape.

### 5.4 Issues Eliminated from Further Analysis

*Cultural Resources:* A cultural resource inventory was completed and no cultural resources found. This resource will not be further analyzed in this document.

## 6.0 Alternatives

This EA focuses on the Proposed Action, one action alternative (Alternative B) and a No Action alternative. The No Action alternative is considered and analyzed to provide a baseline for comparison of the impacts of the Proposed Action and Alternative B.

### 6.1 Alternative A (Proposed Action)

Under the Proposed Action the site would be developed by adding the following facilities as depicted in the Conceptual Diagram (see Appendix A: Conceptual Plan):

- Parking (15 total parking spaces)
- Trails
- Restroom
- Large group pavilion
- Picnic tables and grills
- Dock and buoys
- Signs
- Landscaping
- Children's playground area
- Boulder retaining walls
- Perimeter fence

Parking: The parking area would be less than 0.5 acres in size and consist of 13 parking spaces and 2 accessible parking spaces. The parking area would be located on the north end of the property with the parking spaces facing north and south. Some trees would be removed during construction, but tree removal would be minimal. The parking area would have a gate at the entrance that could be used when the site is closed or under significant maintenance. The entrance would be located in an area that provides adequate sight lines to enter Maplewood Avenue safely.

Trails*:* There would be approximately 0.4 miles of concrete trails leading to the restroom, picnic sites, pavilion, and beach area from the parking. Where possible the trails would be designed to be accessible. There would also be a 250 foot graveled trail that traverses below the pavilion and down to the beach area.

Restroom*:* Located south of the parking area would be an accessible restroom. If feasible, the restroom would be a flush building tied into city water and sewer. If not, a double vault toilet would be installed.

Large group pavilion*:* A larger picnic site with a pavilion would be built on the point overlooking the river that would accommodate larger groups. The picnic shelter would be approximately twenty feet by twenty four feet and accommodate twenty to twenty five people.

Picnic Sites*:* Four picnic sites (tables and gravel pads) would be constructed on the west side of the property within the area vegetated with ponderosa pine trees. Disturbances in this area would be minimal and limited to the immediate areas of picnic pad and trail construction. Two more picnic pads would be placed along the sidewalks throughout the area. The picnic sites could include normal picnicking amenities such as tables, grills, and trashcans.

Dock and buoys*:* A dock would be constructed in an "L" shape and placed near the beach area. The dock would be constructed in a manner to help delineate the swim area. Buoys would also be placed from the dock back to the shore to help further define the swim area.

Signs*:* An entrance sign would be installed near the north end of the parking area. Interpretive kiosks would be installed throughout the site to illustrate topics such as the history of the site, public lands information, and outdoor ethic guidelines. Signs would be placed near the dock about the dangers of high boat traffic, no life guard on duty, etc.

Landscape*:* The landscaping throughout the site would mostly remain natural, especially on the eastern side within the ponderosa pine stand. Some irrigated grass areas would be installed near the pavilion, near the parking where the ground is bare and flat, and then blended into the natural vegetated areas. The beach area would have clean sand and fill hauled in to enhance and widen the beach front.

Children's playground area*:* A small playground would be built just north of the pavilion adjacent to the irrigated grass.

Rock retaining wall: Along the eastern half of the shoreline, and continuing in an arc to the west and north, rock terracing and rip rap methods would be used to help protect the exposed soil and roots. The slopes would be cut back to help lessen the steepness of the bank. These erosion control methods would be conducted in a manner that would help improve the aesthetics of the site.

Perimeter fence*:* A post and rail fence would be installed along the north and east boundary of the recreation site. Private property signs would be installed where the public parcel perimeter meets the shoreline on the east and west sides.

Construction, maintenance, and upkeep of the site would be conducted through a collaborative effort between the BLM and the City of Post Falls. This would be accomplished through a Memorandum of Understanding, which would also include provisions for increase law enforcement presence. The recreation area would have similar regulations and signs that are located within the other city parks.

Project Design Features: The following design features would be implemented under the Proposed Action to reduce or avoid potential environmental impacts:

- Construction would be conducted in a manner that would minimize disturbance to the existing plant community on the east side of the tract. Specifically, the field office botanist would work with the Project Lead to locate the picnic sites where the impact to ocean spray shrubs is minimized. Native plants would be incorporated into the site landscaping wherever possible.
- The Coeur d'Alene Field Office Weed and Vegetation Management Strategy would be employed to monitor and treat weed infestations, as described in the Integrated Weed and Vegetation Management program in environmental assessment #ID-410-2008-EA-224 (BLM 2008). Removal of trees and native vegetation would be minimized as much as possible during design and construction to reduce the likelihood of weed invasion and/or establishment.
- Include some environmental educational info about native plant communities and pollinators on site interpretive signs.
- Large group events would be required to adhere to site rules and apply for appropriate permits. A reservation system would be in place for groups who wish to utilize the pavilion.
- Implement best management practices (BMPs) to minimize sediment loading into the river, including: supervision of shoreline work by a hydrologist or fisheries biologist; working at low water; use of a temporary silt fence; and requiring the excavator to work from dry land where practical.
- If possible, vegetation would be removed in the non-breeding months to reduce impacts to migratory and resident bird species. In this location, the ideal time period for vegetation removal would be between July 15th and April 1st. If this is not possible, then measures would be taken to survey the area for active nests and then buffer nests until the nest attempt is complete.
- Timing of in-water work would occur during US Fish and Wildlife Service recommended bull trout work windows. The dock would be constructed using pilings that are 10 inches or less in diameter.

### 6.2 Alternative B
This alternative is the same as the Proposed Action, except it would exclude the dock and the children's play area. The Swim area would no longer be delineated with a dock, but have a full buoy line to define it.

### 6.3 Alternative C (No Action)
Under the No Action Alternative, no new site developments would occur.

There would be no MOU developed with the City of Post Falls for maintaining the site.

### 6.4 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Analysis
The BLM considered alternative areas for the parking area, but found this to be impractical due to the small size of the property.

## 7.0 Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

### 7.1 Introduction
*Affected Environment*
The purpose of the affected environment sections is to describe the existing environment potentially affected by the alternatives. The affected environment of this EA was considered and analyzed by an interdisciplinary team of resource specialists. The resources identified and discussed in this chapter include the relevant physical and biological conditions that may be impacted with implementation of the alternatives and provides the baseline for comparison of the environmental consequences.

*Environmental Consequences*
The potential consequences or effects of both alternatives are discussed after each resources affected environment. Impacts are defined as modifications to the existing condition of the environment and/or probable future condition that would be brought about by implementation of one of the alternatives. The intent is to provide the scientific and analytical basis for comparison of the effects of each alternative.

Impacts can be direct or indirect; direct impacts are those effects that are caused by the action or alternative and occur at the same time and place, while indirect effects are those effects that are caused by or would result from an alternative and are later in time or further removed in distance, but that are still reasonably certain to occur. Cumulative effects are generally assessed using the environmental impacts of past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions within the project area.

The impact analyses in the following sections were based on knowledge of the resources and the project area, review of existing literature, information provided by experts and other agencies, and professional judgment.

### 7.1.1 General Setting

The Ross Point site is located along the Spokane River in Post Falls, ID approximately five miles west of Coeur d'Alene, ID. The Ross Point site is within the Coeur d' Alene Lake Special Recreation Management Area where the site consists of approximately 400 Acres.

### 7.1.2 Related Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Actions

The site receives most of its recreational visits during the late spring into the early fall when the weather is better for lake activities. Currently, there is a small delineated parking area with walk-in access to the Spokane River. There is a small beach on the river that is currently used for some fishing and swimming. The beach is approximately 350 linear feet along the south end of the property, with the western portion of the beach being significantly wider. The western side is used primarily for swimming. The current recreation infrastructure includes a kiosk, portable restroom, and trashcan on the north side near the small gravel parking area off of Maple Avenue, and a picnic table near the water.

Wake, mainly from recreational activities, on the Spokane River have continuously eroded the bank on the eastern portion of the site, although this was greatly reduced after the installation of boulders along the shoreline.

In 1994, the BLM removed the concrete pump house building and much of the associated piping and most of the electrical lines. In February of 2000, the BLM hauled off additional debris (primarily broken concrete and rebar) and placed three truckloads of boulders along the shoreline to help reduce bank erosion. In 2015, the BLM added more boulders to further reduce shoreline erosion.

There is still one electrical line that runs across the river and then north-south through the eastern portion of the site.

There are homes on adjacent and nearby properties on both sides of the project area. All have private docks in the river. Most have been constructed in the past 10 years. The house and dock to the west and directly adjacent to the project site were constructed within the past year.

Also, every fall, the AVISTA Corporation opens the Post Falls dam which lowers the water level in Lake Coeur d'Alene and in the Spokane River above the dam, which includes the portion of the river adjacent to the Ross Point site. Then dam is partially closed in the spring raising the water level.

### 7.1.3 Analytical Assumptions

With the No Action Alternative, recreational activities would continue at current levels. Under the Proposed Action, recreational use will noticeably increase.

## Affected Resources/Values

### 7.2 Botany

#### 7.2.1 Affected Environment

Vegetation Communities, including Special Status Plant Species
The most prominent plant community in the project area is a dry forest type, dominated by ponderosa pine and commonly associated shrubs, forbs and grasses. Introduced grass and tree species occur where they have been planted by the BLM and previous land managers. Weeds have invaded where disturbance has disrupted the native vegetation cover. Areas of bare soil are present.

Idaho BLM Special Status Plants
The Idaho Natural Heritage Program database was searched for known occurrences of rare plants in the project area. Field work has been done the past two years at Ross Point.

No water howellia (*Howellia aquatilis*-threatened) or Spalding's catchfly (*Silene spaldingii*-threatened) individuals, populations, or habitat occur in the project area.

No whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*-candidate) individuals, populations, or habitat occur in the project area.

Clustered lady's-slipper (*Cypripedium fasciculatum*) is a perennial, terrestrial, wild orchid. In Idaho, this species usually blooms from May through June. Clustered lady's-slipper mainly grows in shaded, moist to dry western redcedar forests and occasionally in grand fir forests. A small population occurs at the BLM's Blue Creek Bay recreation site, and a second, smaller population grows at Mineral Ridge. The locations of both populations indicate that this species can also occur in drier seral stands of Douglas fir, often underneath larger shrubs. This species grows from elevations of 1,700 to 4,600 feet. (Lichthardt 2003, Hammet 2008) No clustered lady's-slipper plants were found in the project area.

Pine broomrape (*Orobanche pinorum*) is a plant that lacks chlorophyll and obtains its nutrients by parasitizing other plants. It occurs only in western North America, from northern California to Oregon and north to central Washington and through northern Idaho (Ellis et al. 1999). Pine broomrape is uncommon throughout Idaho, Washington, and British Columbia but is apparently secure in Oregon. In Idaho, it is a root parasite of oceanspray shrubs (*Holodiscus discolor*). (NatureServe 2015) No pine broomrape plants have been found in the project area. A small amount of potential habitat occurs on the east side of the tract, where the oceanspray shrubs are growing.

#### 7.2.2 Environmental Effects from Alternative A (Proposed Action)

Vegetation Communities

The Proposed Action would alter site vegetation by replacing a certain amount of it with recreation facilities, as described in the Proposed Action. However, placement of picnic sites, for example, would be conducted in a manner that would minimize disturbance to the existing plant community on the east side of the tract. Plantings of native shrubs and vines along the west boundary would enhance a part of the site that currently supports minimal native vegetation. Native plants would be incorporated into the site landscaping wherever possible, which would further enhance areas that are lacking in native vegetation cover. Although the proposed recreation site is small, relative to other BLM recreation facilities around Lake Coeur d'Alene, the potential for re-creating somewhat of a native plant community in the midst of wall-to-wall residential development makes this an important area.

Vegetation and ground disturbance associated with site development would create sites favorable for weed invasion. Therefore, weeds, which currently occupy sites in or adjacent to the units and tend to do extremely well in warmer, drier environmental conditions, may spread or at least maintain their present level of infestation. However, along with development of an official recreation site will come regular site maintenance, with weed control being one part of that activity. Treatment of project-related noxious weed infestations, especially, would assist re-establishment of native vegetation in disturbed areas by reducing competition for sunlight, water, nutrients, and pollinators. (BLM 2007)

A formally developed recreation site is likely to bring more people into the project area, as they are attracted to its amenities. There is a possibility of the site's native plant community being trampled if over use occurs off of developed pathways. The interpretive kiosk could be used to educate the public about the importance of the native vegetation at Ross Point as a way of reducing the impact from site users.

A benefit of environmental education would be to educate the public about native plant communities, rare plants, weeds, and related issues.

Idaho BLM Special Status Plant Species

The Proposed Action would not affect water howellia, Spalding's catchfly, or whitebark pine individuals, populations or potential habitat.

The Proposed Action would not affect clustered lady's-slipper individuals, populations, or habitat. The Proposed Action would not affect pine broomrape individuals or populations. Some of the potential habitat on the east side of the tract could be destroyed if picnic sites are constructed in areas currently occupied by oceanspray shrubs. However, the Field Office botanist would work with the Project Lead to locate the picnic sites where the impact to the shrubs is minimized. Weed control efforts discussed in Section 7.6 would also conserve the native habitat features that favor pine broomrape.

### 7.2.3 Environmental Effects from Alternative B

#### Vegetation Communities

Project impacts would be similar to those described for Alternative A, except they might be slightly less if fewer visitors were attracted to the site because no dock or play area would be available.

#### Idaho BLM Special Status Plant Species

Project impacts would be similar to those described for Alternative A, except they might be slightly less if fewer visitors were attracted to the site because no dock or play area would be available.

### 7.2.4 Environmental Effects from Alternative C (No Action)

Plant succession would continue toward the potential natural community, where possible, in the absence of disturbance. Areas of bare soil would likely persist. “Rabbit-trails” would still be present in the native vegetation on the east side of the tract.

This alternative would have no effect on water howellia, Spalding’s catchfly, or whitebark pine, or their habitat. As succession proceeds, habitat for shade tolerant rare species such as clustered lady’s-slipper might develop. In contrast, as succession proceeds, a reduction would occur in the early successional habitat favored by pine broomrape’s host plant, oceanspray, which could, in turn, affect the rare species.

### 7.2.5 Cumulative Effects

The analysis area for vegetation communities and Idaho BLM Special Status Plant Species is the Spokane River corridor upstream of Post Falls dam to Lake Coeur d’Alene.

#### Alternative A, Proposed Action

As summarized in Section 7.1.2, past land use practices and disturbances in the analysis area have influenced the species composition, vertical structure, and density of existing plant communities, including rare plants. Invasive and/or introduced species have established in the analysis area. Currently, various stages of ecological succession are present due to past disturbances.

Present human-caused and natural disturbances in the analysis area which affect vegetation include home site development; road building, use and maintenance; boating, especially boat wakes; other recreational activities; and insect and disease outbreaks.

Reasonably foreseeable future actions and natural disturbances in the analysis area include home site development; road building, use and maintenance; boating, especially boat wakes; other recreational activities; and insect and disease outbreaks.

Ongoing and future vegetation-disturbing activities in the analysis area would continue to promote a mosaic of plant communities in various stages of ecological succession. The variety of successional stages would provide the diverse habitats needed to support rare species such as bank monkeyflower and pine broomrape, though habitat condition would be degraded by the presence of weedy species. Ecological succession would proceed where vegetation is left undisturbed and would influence vegetation species composition, vertical structure, and density. Plant communities that revert to earlier ecological succession stages due to disturbance such as insect infestation or disease would begin the process of maturing all over again and include habitat characteristics favorable for rare species like pine broomrape. Ongoing and proposed activities that impact vegetation would open up sites favorable to weed invasion due to ground disturbance and/or reduction of tree canopy cover. Where left untreated, weeds would continue to threaten native plant communities, including Idaho BLM Special Status Plant Species.

Alternative A
The Proposed Action, would treat approximately one acres of about two acres of vegetation in the analysis area; therefore, this project is unlikely to contribute cumulative effects to common, native plant communities, clustered lady's-slipper, or pine broomrape; due to the relatively small area of disturbance and its staggered timing of implementation, when compared to the overall analysis area.

Alternative B
In comparison to the Proposed Action, Alternative B would affect about one of 2.5 acres.

No Action Alternative
Under this Alternative, zero acres of vegetation in the project area would be disturbed by vegetation treatment. Where left untreated, weeds would continue to threaten native plant communities, including rare plant populations.

Include some environmental educational info about native plant communities and pollinators on site interpretive signs.

## 7.3 Fisheries/Threatened and Endangered Fisheries

### 7.3.1 Affected Environment

The proposed project site is located adjacent to the Spokane River partially in the Riparian Conservation Area (RCA), approximately 4.5 miles downstream of Coeur d'Alene Lake and upstream of Post Falls Dam. Coeur d'Alene Lake has two major tributaries, the Coeur d'Alene and St. Joe Rivers, numerous smaller tributaries, and one outflow, the Spokane River. This reach of the Spokane River, which includes the small parcel of public land and mostly private homes, is not in a desirable condition for riparian and aquatic resources. The BLM managed land, which includes approximately 300 feet of the west bank of the Spokane River, is in a fairly natural state. However there is a lack of riparian vegetation, and part of the river bank is unstable and eroding,

a condition mainly caused by boat wakes and water level fluctuation due to dam operation.

Thirteen native fishes inhabit the Coeur d'Alene Lake basin: northern pikeminnow (*Ptychocheilus oregonensis*), redside shiner (*Richardsonius balteatus*), cedar sculpin, *Cottus schitsuumsh*, torrent sculpin (*C. rhotheus*), shorthead sculpin (*C. confusus*)[1], speckled dace (*Rhinichthys osculus*), longnose dace (*R. cataractae*), longnose sucker (*Catastomus catastomus*), largescale sucker (*Ca. macrocheilus*), bridgelip sucker (*Ca. columbianus*), mountain whitefish (*Prosopium williamsoni*), westslope cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki lewisi*) and bull trout *Salvelinus confluentus*. There are a variety of nonnative fish species found within the watershed as well, including smallmouth bass (*Micropterus dolomieue*), largemouth bass (*M. salmoides*), crappie (*Pomoxis* sp.), sunfish (*Lepomis* sp.), yellow perch (*Perca flavescens*), brown bullhead (*Ameiurus nebulosa*), channel catfish (*Ictalurus punctatus*), northern pike (*Esox lucius*), brook trout (*S. fontinalis*), rainbow trout (*O. mykiss*), chinook salmon (*O. tshawytscha*), and kokanee (*O. nerka*). Many of these species have the potential to be present in the Spokane River adjacent to the proposed project site, some transitory as they migrate up or down the river, and some likely use the river as rearing habitat.

**Threatened and Endangered Species**: Bull trout were federally listed as threatened on June 10, 1998 by the USFWS (63 FR 31647). The USFWS issued a final rule for bull trout critical habitat on September 26, 2005, and on October 18, 2010 issued a revised designation of bull trout critical habitat, which includes Coeur d'Alene Lake.

Bull trout are found primarily in colder streams, although some are migratory in larger, warmer river systems throughout the Columbia River basin (Fraley and Shepard 1989; Rieman and McIntyre 1993, 1995; Buchanan and Gregory 1997; Rieman et al. 1997). Water temperature above 59°F is believed to limit bull trout distribution, which may partially explain patchy distributions within a watershed (Fraley and Shepard 1989; Rieman and McIntyre 1995). Bull trout typically spawn from August to November; spawning areas are often associated with cold water springs, groundwater infiltration and the coldest streams in a watershed (Pratt 1992; Rieman and McIntyre 1993; Rieman et al. 1997). No potential bull trout spawning habitat exists adjacent to or downstream of the proposed project site.

Currently, within the Coeur d'Alene Basin bull trout are found primarily in the upper portions of the St. Joe River subbasin (USFWS 2015a; USFWS 2015b), which contains spawning and rearing habitats. The current distribution is substantially less than the historical distribution. Bull trout were documented in nearly 60 streams and river reaches throughout the basin over 60 years ago (USFWS 2002), but have not been observed in many of these streams in recent years. Spawning and rearing appear to be concentrated in relatively few tributaries of the St. Joe River subbasin. Surveys conducted in 1994 and 1995, and more recently, have failed to detect the presence of bull trout within the Coeur d'Alene River subbasin. However, in 1998, two bull trout

[1] The shorthead sculpin has been historically confused with the newly described cedar sculpin; though the shorthead sculpin is currently listed as an inhabitant of the Coeur d'Alene watershed it may not be present.

were caught in Black Lake, which is located in the lower portion of the Coeur d'Alene River subbasin and may provide coldwater refugia and a forage base for bull trout (USFWS 2002). Overall, within the Coeur d'Alene Basin, bull trout persist at low numbers in fragmented local populations (USFWS 2002; USFWS 2015a; USFWS 2015b).

Little is known about the role of Coeur d'Alene Lake or the Spokane River in providing habitat for bull trout populations within the Coeur d'Alene Basin. Subadult and adult bull trout inhabit Coeur d'Alene Lake, which provides foraging, migration and overwintering habitat (USFWS 2010). Bull trout may use the Spokane River as a migratory corridor though this has not been documented. The Spokane River is not bull trout designated critical habitat.

**BLM Sensitive Species**: Two BLM sensitive fish inhabit the Coeur d'Alene Lake basin, westslope cutthroat trout and the newly described cedar sculpin (Lemoine, et al. 2014).

Westslope cutthroat trout are found in Coeur d'Alene Lake and many of its tributaries. Westslope cutthroat trout are found in the Spokane River as well, though there is little population information available (http://www.streamnet.org/). They spawn mainly in small tributaries from March through July, when water temperatures warm to about 50°F. No potential westslope cutthroat trout spawning habitat exists adjacent to or downstream of the proposed project site.

Cedar sculpin were recently described in 2014 as a new species using genetic and morphological methods. They have been found at sample sites throughout the Coeur d'Alene basin. Because of morphological similarities among sculpin species, cedar sculpin have been historically confused with the shorthead sculpin. The species is common to abundant in cool to cold tributaries with cobble and gravel bottoms (Lemoine, et al. 2014) and are likely to be spring spawners like other sculpin species (Hendricks 1997). It is not known if they inhabit Coeur d'Alene Lake or the Spokane River. The torrent sculpin, a sympatric species, is known to inhabit rocky shoals and beaches of lakes (Hendricks 1997).

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game manages this section of the Spokane River (Coeur d'Alene Lake to Post Falls Dam) for a quality westslope cutthroat trout fishery. They also manage for a nonnative sport fishery for largemouth bass, northern pike, black crappie, yellow perch, pumpkinseed and bullhead (IDFG 2014).

### 7.3.2 Environmental Effects from Alternative A (Proposed Action)

The Coeur d'Alene Native Fish Strategy (CNFISH), contained within the Coeur d'Alene Resource Management Plan, provides direction for protecting native fish populations within the planning area. The Proposed Action is partially within the Riparian Conservation Area (RCA) adjacent to the Spokane River. The CNFISH defines RCAs as lands that are likely to affect the condition and/or function of aquatic habitat, and are usually adjacent to streams, ponds, lakes and wetlands. In RCAs, riparian-dependent

resources receive primary emphasis, and management activities are subject to specific guidelines in order to meet the CNFISH strategy goals and riparian management objectives.

RCA1: Activities in RCAs will be designed to enhance, restore or maintain the physical and biological characteristics of the RCA by implementing the following:

a. Activities in RCAs that are intact and functioning in a desired condition as indicated by RMOs or other measures must be designed to at least maintain that desired condition.

b. Activities in RCAs that are not at or moving towards desired condition as indicated by RMOs or other measures must include a restoration component as part of the project if determined to be necessary/beneficial by a fisheries biologist, hydrologist or other aquatic specialist.

c. Activities in RCAs must not result in long-term degradation to aquatic conditions. Limited short-term adverse/negative effects from activities in the RCA may be acceptable when outweighed by the long-term benefits to the RCA and aquatic resources.

The impact on fish and aquatic habitat from the proposed development fall into three categories: movement of sediment into the Spokane River that could impact water quality and aquatic habitat, removal of riparian vegetation that could reduce shade and increase water temperature, and disturbance of fish through construction and use of the site.

The actual construction and installation of the various components of the development under the Proposed Action could result in a temporary increase of sediment input to the Spokane River. Additionally, development of the site may increase use at this site which may increase erosion and sediment input to the river, however many aspects of the development would reduce erosion in the long term. The retaining wall/shoreline stabilization construction and the installation of the fishing and swimming docks is likely to result in short term sediment input to the river, however there would likely be a reduction in sediment in the long term. People would use the docks instead of the shoreline, reducing the erosion along the shoreline, and the retaining wall will reduce a chronic source of sediment input to the river. In addition, much of the construction of the retaining wall would occur during low water when the areas to be worked on are out of the water, which would minimize short term impacts. The dock may also help reduce the wave action impacts to the shoreline. The rest of the proposed development is not likely to result in any sediment movement into the Spokane River and may help reduce long term erosion by concentrating use on concrete walkways and designated picnic sites.

Native vegetation, including trees will be mostly maintained. No vegetation that provides shade to the Spokane River would be removed. In addition, there would be trees and shrubs planted throughout the site, and native riparian trees and shrubs would

be planted in the retaining wall area where possible to improve bank stabilization and riparian area function.

The installation of the dock could disturb fish that are in the area; however the installation would is not expected to take more than one or two days and fish could simply avoid the area where the work is taking place. The development could have the indirect effect of attracting more people to the area to recreate which may lead to increased fishing pressure and increased disturbance to fish from people swimming. The area is already being used by the public for fishing and swimming and the size of the area utilized for fish and swimming is small and fish would be able to easily move away.

Additional benefits from the proposed development would be installation of a toilet and trash receptacles, and regular maintenance would reduce the amount of garbage and human waste that gets into the Spokane River.

In this case the RCA is not at or moving towards desired condition, mainly due to the erosion into the Spokane River from boat wakes and water level fluctuation from dam operation and lack of riparian vegetation. The proposed project is expected to have an overall positive impact on fish and aquatic habitat due to reduced sediment input to the Spokane River.

**Threatened and Endangered Species**: The proposed project "May Affect but is Not Likely to Adversely Affect" bull trout, and would have "No Effect" on bull trout designated critical habitat. Bull trout may use the Spokane River adjacent to the project area for adult rearing and migration, though it is very unlikely since the majority of the bull trout found within the Coeur d'Alene Basin are in the upper St Joe River. Thus there is a negligible possibility of disturbance of bull trout during construction of the proposed development or use of the site thereafter. There is no bull trout spawning habitat or designated critical habitat adjacent to or downstream of the project site.

**BLM Sensitive Species**: Westslope cutthroat trout likely use the Spokane River adjacent to the project area for adult rearing and migration; there is no spawning habitat adjacent to or downstream of the project site. Little increase in sediment input to the river is expected, therefore any negative impacts from sediment would be negligible and the likelihood of some long term reduction in sediment would be beneficial. Disturbance during dock installation would be limited to a short period of time and fish could simply avoid the area. Increase in swimming and fishing may disturb fish, but this impacts a relatively small area of the river. Additionally, the Spokane River is managed as a quality westslope cutthroat trout fishery by Idaho Department of Fish and Game, so proving fishing opportunities is compatible with that management. Cedar sculpin may be found in the area; effects would be similar to those described for cutthroat trout except they are not a game species so would not receive any fishing pressure.

Impacts to other fish species occupying the Spokane River would be similar to that described for sensitive species.

Cumulative Effects

The cumulative effects analysis area is the Spokane River from its origin at Lake Coeur d'Alene downstream to the Post Falls Dam. Bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout stocks in the Coeur d'Alene Basin exist at a fraction of historic levels due to habitat degradation from activities such as mining, logging, development, recreation, highway construction and the construction and continued operation of Post Falls Dam. Fishing pressure and introduction of non-native fish species has also contributed to reducing native trout numbers (DuPont and Horner 2003). These activities have also impacted other native fish species, including the cedar sculpin, to some extent. Development and recreational activities, especially boating, are prevalent in and adjacent to the Spokane River. All these activities are expected to continue in the future. Mining, which probably has had the greatest past impact on westslope cutthroat trout and other native fish species, will likely have less of an impact in the future due to stronger regulations and increased restoration occurring in the basin. Fishing pressure on westslope cutthroat trout and bull trout has been reduced due to catch and release regulations set by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, so effects from fishing also have and should decrease in the future. In the analysis area recreation and development will likely increase in the future, which will likely increase erosion and sediment movement into the river. The operation of Post Falls Dam, especially the yearly raising and lowering of the water elevation in the Spokane River, will continue to impact the riverbanks and cause erosion.

Very little increase in sediment input to the Spokane River is anticipated during implementation of the proposed project; therefore there would be little contribution to the cumulative adverse effects for any aquatic species. The proposed project is expected to have an overall positive impact on fish and aquatic habitat due to reduced sediment input to the Spokane River.

### 7.3.2 Alternative B

Under Alternative B, not installing the dock would avoid the impacts from installation and use and may result in a "No Effect" call for bull trout. However the potential long term effect of reducing erosion along the bank from people fishing and swimming would also not be realized. Overall the contribution to cumulative effects to fish and aquatic habitat would be even less than under Alternative A.

### 7.3.3 No Action Alternative

Under the no action alternative, the site would remain as is. There would be continuing erosion into the Spokane River from the area where the proposed retaining wall would be installed. The sediment input would have the potential to negatively impact a variety of aquatic species, including westslope cutthroat trout and bull trout that might use the area. There would still be continued use of the site with little maintenance and management occurring which may also negatively impact fish and aquatic habitat. No action would result in these continued contributions to long-term adverse cumulative effects.

## 7.4 Recreation and Public Safety

### 7.4.1 Affected Environment

The Ross Point site is located within the Coeur d' Alene Lake Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA), which means it's an area managed for recreation within the field office's Resource Management Plan (RMP). More specifically, the primary objective for the Coeur d'Alene Lake SRMA is to manage the area for land- and water-based leisure activities for outdoor sport, relaxation, social group or family affiliation, and personal enrichment or learning through environmental study within accessible natural forested lakeshore settings. This area is managed to produce opportunities for visitors to meet this objective. The Proposed Action would comply with this objective and allow visitors better access to enjoy the outdoor setting within the SRMA. With Ross Point close to the city, and within a short commuting distance, opportunities to visit the site for river front recreation are high. The area receives visitors all year with visitation heavier in late spring, summer, and fall when conditions are relatively dry and outside temperatures are warmer.

The current parking area is located on Maple Avenue which is a paved road connecting the neighborhood with Seltice Way. The parking area is currently delineated with cement barriers and offers room for approximately 10 cars. When the current parking area is filled up, visitors tend to park on the shoulder of the road. The uses in the area consist mainly of walking, fishing, sightseeing, and swimming.

There is currently a portable restroom facility and a trash receptacle near the parking area. Because of the amount of visitors using the site there has become a problem with overusing the restroom and trash receptacle, thus trash and other wastes overflow onto the site.

The site has potential to provide for non-motorized water front activities as well as providing an area to relax along the Spokane River. There are also opportunities to elaborate on the site's history through interpretive panels and kiosks.

Currently, the Ross Point site does not provide accessible paths or facilities on the property. The water front portion of the property is accessed by foot with no hardened paths.

### 7.4.2 Environmental Effects from Alternative A (Proposed Action)

The Ross Point recreation site is popular especially during the warm summer days. The location is within close proximity to Coeur d'Alene and Post Falls, ID thus offering a park setting close to major residential areas.

Recreational uses of the site would be better managed under this alternative, which would reduce the occurrence of vandalism, litter, and illegal OHV use, and would increase public safety by delineating a swim area and reducing the steep slopes near the waterfront. Through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City of Post

Falls, site maintenance, cleanliness, and law enforcement presence would be increased.

Access would be improved with hardened trails throughout the site. Picnic tables, waterfront beach and dock, restroom facilities, and trails would be accessible for visitors with mobility impairments and allow for more of the public to enjoy the recreation site.

The recreation site would be fenced off and used for non-motorized activities. The park would be walk-in access only from the parking area. Maintenance vehicles could be seen on site while conducting on-site work and improvements.

The waterfront access would be able to accommodate more users with a larger, improved beach area. With a dock and buoys delineating the swim area, recreationalists would have a safer area to swim and a place to dock their small water craft.

A pavilion would allow for groups to get together at an area that provides views of the Spokane River. A reservation system would be in place for groups looking to utilize the water front pavilion. Large group events would still need to adhere to site rules and apply for appropriate permits.

The playground area would see use especially from the families using the nearby pavilion. Having the playground area near the pavilion allows for families to use the pavilion and have the ability to attend to their children at the playground.

The parking area currently allows for roughly ten vehicles, however with the improved parking area there would be room for fourteen vehicles. The entrance to the parking area could be in a different location other than what is illustrated in the conceptual plan. The parking entrance/exit could be adjusted to the location that gives drivers the best available sight lines when entering and exiting the parking area.

Visitor count data was collected along the Spokane River at the Blackwell Island Boat Launch where the average group size visiting the Spokane River was three people. With an average group size of three people the Ross Point site could expect to have on average 42 visitors when the parking area is full. With the improved picnic areas, pavilion, beach, dock, and trails visitors would be able to be more dispersed throughout the site.

### 7.4.3 Environmental Effects from Alternative B

Recreationalists would not have a dock to tie up their small watercraft or platform to fish or swim from. The swim area would be delineated solely with buoys, thus decreasing the size of the swim area.

### 7.4.4 Environmental Effects from Alternative C (No Action)

Visitors would continue to visit the site in its current undeveloped condition. The No Action Alternative would leave the one trash receptacle and portable restroom at the

northern end of the property. Therefore, the property would continue to have problems with litter and waste on site.

### 7.4.5 Cumulative Effects

A newly developed recreation site with: improved amenities, delineated parking, informative kiosks, hardened trails, picnic areas, etc. would likely attract recreationalists to the area increasing the use.

Recreation activities occurring in the area are normal to what is expected within a small site with a waterfront setting. This type of recreation is also typically seen in the local area at private parks, on private land, or at the city managed Johnson/Mill River and Kiwanis Parks.

## 7.5 Soil and Water Resources

### 7.5.1 Affected Environment

The site is located on the outside of a meander bend of the Spokane River, approximately 4.5 miles downstream of Lake Coeur d'Alene. The parcel is the former site of a Bureau of Reclamation pumping station, which was removed years ago. River frontage is about 300 linear feet. Contributing drainage area to the river adjacent to the site is approximately 3800 square miles. Remnant features from the former pumping facility partially define the topography and associated drainage patterns on the parcel. A steep, man-made ridge constructed from broken concrete mixed with dirt roughly bisects the lower (streamside) portion of the site. A concrete pad and power pole still remain on the top of the ridge. The existing swimming area is located within a small circular area framed by broken concrete and boulders on two sides, with a sandy beach area in the center.

### Soils

Soils on the site are dominantly classified as gravelly coarse sand and sandy loam located on outwash terraces (USDA-NRCS, 2014). Soils on steep, poorly vegetated banks are easily eroded by high flows and by wave action from boat wakes.

### Water Resources

Originating as rainfall and snowmelt on the western flank of the Rocky Mountains, the headwaters of the Spokane River flow into Lake Coeur d'Alene in Idaho. The outlet to Lake Coeur d'Alene is partially controlled by a dam operated by Avista Utilities and water is stored in the lake on a seasonal basis. On average, water levels fluctuate approximately 7 feet between summer pool (elevation 2128) and winter pool (elevation 2121) in Lake Coeur d'Alene.

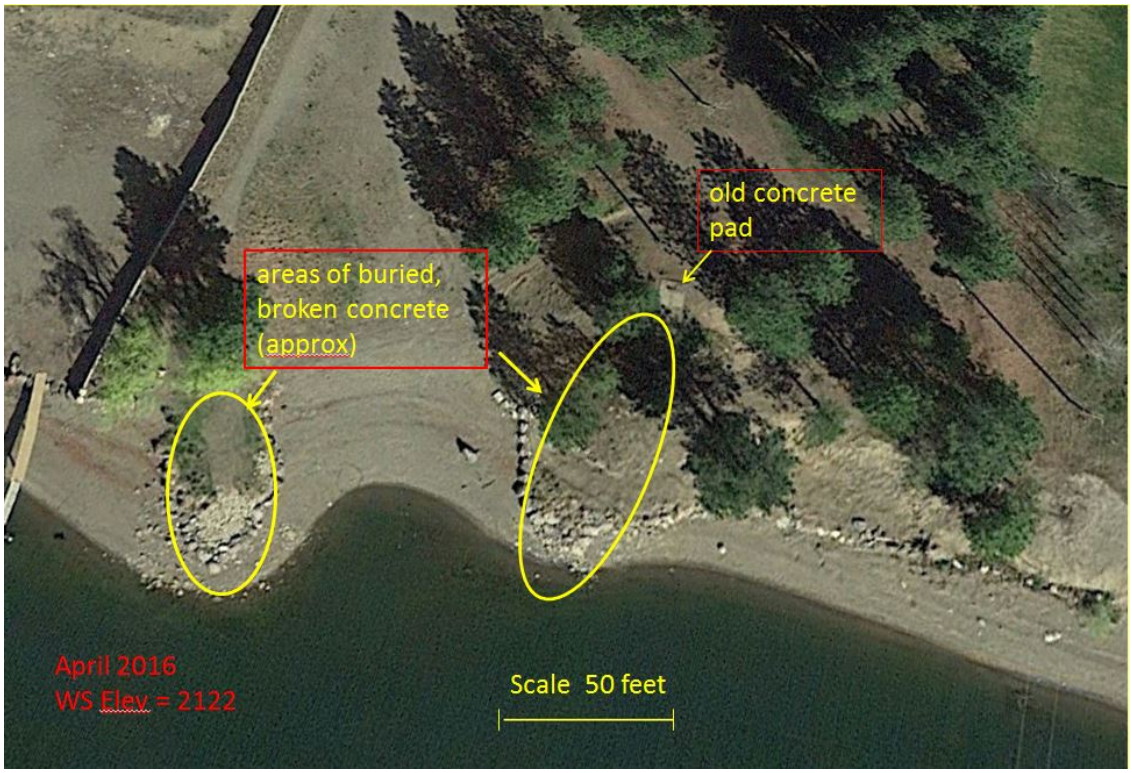


**Figure1:** Aerial view of beach area at low water (April, 2016)

7.5.2 Environmental Effects from Alternative A (Proposed Action)

Implementation of Alternative A would reduce an existing chronic sediment source from actively eroding streambanks at the site. Excavation associated with placement of boulders and riparian plants would result in a short-term and minor increase in soil disturbance. Sediment loading into the river would be minimized by use of best management practices (BMPs), including: supervision of shoreline work by a hydrologist or fisheries biologist; working at low water; use of a temporary silt fence; and requiring the excavator to work from dry land where practical. Beginning in the first post-construction boating season (generally following Memorial Day) an overall decrease in sediment loading would result from the stabilization of the banks. As riparian vegetation becomes established over several years this reduction in sediment loading would be expected to increase.

The Proposed Action would stabilize the shoreline and reduce a source of sediment input to the Spokane River. In the short term, there is a chance of sediment getting into the Spokane River during project implementation or after the water level is raised to summer pool.

7.5.3 Environmental Effects from Alternative B

Overall effects to soil and water resources from Alternative B would be similar to Alternative A. Under Alternative B, there would be slightly less soil disturbance since the children's playground area would not be constructed.

### 7.5.4 Environmental Effects from Alternative C (No Action)

Under the no action alternative, the site would remain as is. There would be continuing sediment delivery into the Spokane River as the banks continue to retreat from high flows and increasing boat wake impacts.

### 7.5.5 Cumulative Effects

The cumulative effects analysis area is the Spokane River from its origin at Lake Coeur d'Alene downstream to the Post Falls Dam. Home development and recreational activities, especially boating, are prevalent in and adjacent to the Spokane River. All these activities are expected to continue in the future. In the analysis area, recreation and development will likely increase in the future, which will likely increase erosion and sediment movement into the river. Very little, if any, increase in sediment input to the Spokane River is anticipated during implementation of the proposed project; therefore there would be very little contribution to cumulative adverse effects expected for soil or water resources. Since one purpose of the project is to reduce bank erosion into the Spokane River, minor long term beneficial effects to water quality are anticipated.

## 7.6 Visual Resources

### 7.6.1 Affected Environment

The Coeur d'Alene RMP designated the landscape in and around the project area as Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class II. The objective for this management class is to retain the existing characteristic landscape. The level of change to any of the basic landscape elements due to management activities should be low and not evident. Management activities may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. Any changes must repeat the basic elements of form, line, color, and texture found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

The locations from which the highest number of people are likely to observe the project area and surrounding landscape (the key observation points or KOPs) would be the residential areas on the opposite side of the Spokane River or on the river near the project site in a boat. The view would be very similar from these locations. So the BLM chose to observe from the river and use this as the KOP for the analysis of visual resources. Figure 2 is a photo taken in August 2016 of the northward view of the project site from the KOP.

From the KOP, the project site dominates the fore ground. The site is mostly in a natural state covered by ponderosa pines with some grass and shrubs. This differs from the adjacent properties where there are houses with manicured lawns and boat docks. The shoreline of the site rises gradually away from the river and there is a sandy beach on the west side (left side of Figure 2). The terrain rises more steeply along eroded banks to two small hills on the east side. The eroded banks on the east side of the site contrast sharply with the darker green of the ponderosa pines that cover most of the site, and the green manicured lawns and landscaping of adjacent properties. A single vertical transmission line pole is visible on the far eastern side of the site, which supports a line that runs across the river and the site from south to north.

**Figure 2:** View of the project site from the key observation point.

7.6.2 Environmental Effects from Alternative A (Proposed Action)

The site will meet VRM II objectives after the implementation of the project. There will be a moderate contrast with the adjacent properties and landscape, but the project will result in a reduction from the existing contrast.

Only the features near the shore (south end of the site) from the Proposed Action would be would be visible from the KOP. Slight re-contouring of the hills, and adding green vegetation and gray rock to the eroded banks on the eastern side of the site will reduce the contrast of the tan soil of the existing eroded banks with the vegetation and manicured landscapes of adjacent properties. The angular and curved lines, brown and gray colors, and smooth textures of the dock, picnic pavilion, and trails will make the appearance of the site more similar to the adjacent properties with their docks, houses, walkways and drives. Improvement of the sandy beach will make its color and outline slightly more noticeable, but this will only weakly contrast with developments on adjacent properties. The irrigated grassy areas would appear brighter green than the natural vegetation, but would be similar to lawns on adjacent properties.

7.6.3 Environmental Effects from Alternative B

The effects would be the same as Alternative A. Although there would be no dock, this would have little effect on the visual appearance and contrast with adjacent properties and the landscape.

7.6.4 Environmental Effects from Alternative C (No Action)

With no developments, the eroded banks and undeveloped appearance of the site would continue to contrast strongly with adjacent residents which have houses, docks, and manicured lawns and landscaping.

### 7.6.5 Cumulative Effects

Section 7.1.3 above outlines past and recent actions that have resulted in the current conditions of the site and surrounding area. Since the adjacent and nearby properties now have homes on them, it is unlikely that there will be major changes to lands outside the project area for many years. Hence there would also be no changes to the viewshed from the KOP, except for those resulting from the Proposed Action or Alternative B, and little else will contribute to cumulative effects for visual resources.

## 7.7 Invasive, Non-native Species

### 7.7.1 Affected Environment

Invasive weeds threaten our public lands by outcompeting native vegetation and adversely affecting wildland plant and animal communities, damaging watersheds, and increasing soil erosion (Asher, J. and C. Spurrier. 1998). Weeds can negatively alter ecosystem processes and impact forest health, sustainability and productivity (Levine et al. 2003, Moser et al. 2009). Historic activities in the project area (industrial uses and recreation) created disturbances allowing the invasion of noxious weeds. Despite these activities, the majority of the project area is weed free or has only minor weed infestations. Existing weed populations have been treated regularly for the past decade using both herbicide and biological controls under the 2008 Coeur d'Alene Field Office Programmatic Environmental Analysis for Vegetation Treatments (BLM 2008). Observation by BLM staff indicates that these efforts have resulted in an overall reduction in noxious weeds in the area. Listed noxious weeds identified in the project area are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1**: List of noxious weeds

| **Common Name** | **Scientific Name** |
|---|---|
| Spotted knapweed | *Centaurea maculosa* |
| Common tansy | *Tanacetum vulgare* |
| Dalmatian toadflax | *Linaria dalmatica ssp. dalmatica* |
| Sulfur cinquefoil | *Potentilla recta* |
| Oxeye daisy | *Chrysanthemum leucanthemum* |
| Rush skeletonweed | *Chodrilla juncea* |

### 7.7.2 Environmental Effects from Alternative A (Proposed Action)

The proposed recreation facilities and parking area would likely have a direct effect by increasing the localized invasive plant invasion into the immediate area. Construction activities disturb the soil creating available sites for invasive plant establishment.

Parking area construction will likely result in increased invasive species localized to the disturbed construction site. Minor populations of invasive plants exist in the project area. Minimizing the removal of trees and native vegetation during design and construction will reduce the likelihood of weed invasion and/or establishment. Short-term results

would likely be an increase in invasive plants following construction of recreational facilities and parking area.

Indirect effects would be caused by increased trail traffic and possible ongoing ground disturbance and possible introduction of new invasive species into the area. Once established, trails also provide a conduit for invasive species spread. Weed seeds or other reproductive plant parts maybe inadvertently carried into new areas by recreational use. Installation of a boat dock will increase the likelihood of infestation by aquatic invasive species such as Eurasian watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*). Transportation of plant parts on boats or associated equipment is the main cause of new infestations. Motorized watercraft, jet-intakes, props, and trailers are thought to be the most common carriers of milfoil plant parts.

Monitoring of the area will identify areas to be treated. Long-term results due to proposed recreation activities will likely be no net increase or a decrease in invasive species due to increased monitoring, treatments and minimization of unregulated ground disturbing activities.

### 7.7.3 Environmental Effects from Alternative B

No boat dock installation would reduce to likelihood of aquatic invasive species introduction into the project area. The remaining environmental effects would remain the same as in Alternative A.

### 7.7.4 Environmental Effects from Alternative C (No Action)

No action would result in current population of weeds continuing to persist. In dry conifer forests weeds can expand from existing populations into forested areas often spread by wildlife and/or human activity such as recreational use.

Noxious weed populations exist on BLM lands as well as on private lands adjacent to the project area. These populations of noxious weeds would likely provide a weed seed source and increase the likelihood of weed establishment following a disturbance. The existing recreational use of the area, unstable soils, and existing weed populations combine to create a potential for continued weed infestation.

### 7.7.5 Cumulative Effects

Factors in the analysis area that contribute to the spread of noxious weeds include residential use, wildlife, recreation and other uses.

Noxious weed control efforts in the project area would be conducted as part of the Inland Empire Cooperative Weed Management Area (IECWMA). These cooperators have noxious weed control responsibilities and interests on adjacent and co-mingled lands in the area. Uncontrolled weed populations in one jurisdiction greatly affect the ability of other land managers to control weeds on lands they administer. The IECWMA promotes an integrated weed management program throughout the area that includes public relations, education and training in the noxious weed arena, along with coordination of weed control efforts and methods, and sharing of resources.

Past events such as industrial use, residential uses, and recreational activity have contributed to ground disturbance and weed invasion on BLM and non-BLM lands. Where effective treatment has occurred, weeds have been either eradicated or their spread into native vegetation was curtailed. Ongoing and reasonably foreseeable actions on non-BLM land which would increase the threat of weed invasion into native plant communities include recreational activity, wildfire, and wildlife.

The short term effects of the Proposed Action may result in increased weed establishment and spread in areas of ground disturbance. Over the long term increased recreational use would increase opportunities to introduce weed seed into the project area. Alternatively, developing the project would provide increased access for weed control activities such as monitoring and treatment. These efforts undertaken by BLM on public lands would contribute positive cumulative effects on noxious weeds through participation in the IECWMA and implementation of the Proposed Action.

## 7.8 Wildlife

### 7.8.1 Affected Environment

*Current Habitat Conditions*
Portions of the site consist of ponderosa pine forest with smaller amounts of young Douglas fir in the middle canopy. The understory is composed of native shrubs, nonnative grasses, some native forbes, and nonnative weeds. The site is bordered to the east, west, and north by residential development. To the south lies the Spokane River. This area functions as a very small island of forested, undeveloped habitat amidst a sea of urban development. Vegetation provides a secure area for some smaller wildlife species. The trees, understory grasses and forbs, as well as the shrubs, provide forage for birds and deer, as well as small mammals such as squirrels, voles and mice. Mature trees provide perching sites and potential nesting sites for raptors such as bald eagle, osprey, and red-tailed hawk. The Spokane River shoreline provides a loafing area for waterfowl such as Canada geese and mallards.

Non-forested areas on the site are dominated by nonnative grasses and weeds. This area does not provide much habitat value, but may be used by small mammals and some birds such as song sparrows.

*Threatened, Endangered, and Candidate Species*
Federally protected wildlife species in the Idaho Panhandle include woodland caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*), grizzly bear (*Ursos arctos horribilis*), and Canada lynx (*Lynx Canadensis*). None of these species are found in the project area and there is no potential for the project area to provide habitat for any of these species. The project site contains no lynx critical habitat, is not within a grizzly bear management unit, and does not contain grizzly bear core habitat.

Because there are no known Federally listed species in the project area, this analysis will focus on impacts to BLM Type 2 Special Status Species, Migratory Birds, and Birds

of Conservation Concern which are a Trust Responsibility of all Federal Agencies. There will also be some discussion of other wildlife species that utilize the site but do not have any Special Status.

*BLM Type 2 and other Special Status Species*
There are no formal inventory data for this project area. Two field site visits in the fall of 2014 did not result in documentation of any BLM Special Status Species. The Idaho Conservation Data Center database was searched for known occurrences of rare animals (Federally listed, BLM Type 1 or 2, Species of Greatest Conservation Need) and none were documented in the project area. However, the site does have suitable habitat for both Bald Eagle and Cassin's Finch which are both BLM Type 2 Special Status Species.

*Cassin's finch* are associated with mature ponderosa pine stands and feed on the buds of pines in spring and the seeds of pines in the winter. Most nests are built on a lateral branch or near the top of a pine tree (Rodewald 2016).

*Bald Eagles* are fish eating raptors that will also consume waterfowl and carrion. The project area provides good perching habitat along the Spokane River where use by Bald Eagles would be expected. No nests were found on the site and the primary use by eagles would be as a foraging or roosting location.

*Migratory Birds*
Migratory birds are present year round and would be expected to use the project area for nesting in the spring and summer months. The table below lists bird species that were encountered on the site or are likely to use the site. There are two Birds of Conservation Concern that may use the project area, Calliope Hummingbird (*Selasphorus calliope*) and Cassin's Finch (*Haemorhous cassinii*) (see above). While these species were not encountered on the site, the habitat in the project area may be suitable for use by these species.

*Calliope hummingbirds* are associated with ponderosa pine forests during the breeding season where they build their nests on overhanging branches or on the base of a pine cone. Like all hummingbirds, their main diet consists of insects and nectar (Rodewald 2016). The proximity of landscaped gardens and ornamental plants in residential neighborhoods may make the project site suitable habitat for nesting for this species.

The site provides forested habitat adjacent to the Spokane River. Thus, it is particularly valuable to fish eating raptors, such as bald eagle and osprey. While no raptor nests were found, the site currently provides good habitat for raptors that are tolerant of more urban and disturbed conditions. Examples of other raptors that may use the site include red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), and great-horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*).

Table 2 provides a list of migratory birds that would be expected to use the project area, or were encountered during site visits.

**Table 2:** Migratory bird species that may use the project area, or were encountered during site visits.

| Species | Encountered on site | May be found on site | Uncommon may be found on site |
|---|---|---|---|
| American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) | | X | |
| Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) | X | X | |
| Spotted Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*) | | X | |
| Black-capped Chickadee (*Poecile atricapillus)* | X | X | |
| Mountain Chickadee (*Poecile gambeli*) | | X | |
| Downy Woodpecker (*Picoides pubescens*) | | X | |
| Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) | | X | |
| American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) | | X | |
| Black-billed Magpie (*Pica hudsonia*) | | X | |
| Red-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta canadensis*) | | X | |
| Pine siskin (*Carduelis pinus*) | | X | |
| Red Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*) | | X | |
| Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*) | | X | |
| Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*) | | X | |
| House Finch (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) | | X | |
| Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) | | X | |
| Great Horned Owl (**Bubo** *virginianus*) | | X | |
| Western Flycatcher | | X | |

| Species | Encountered on site | May be found on site | Uncommon may be found on site |
|---|---|---|---|
| (*Empidonax difficilis*) | | | |
| Cassin's Finch (*Haemorhous cassinii*) | | | X |
| Calliope Hummingbird (*Selasphorus calliope*) | | | X |
| California Quail (*Callipepla californica*) | | X | |

*Other Wildlife*
Bats, particularly those that roost in structures, may use the site for foraging or day roosting. Examples include little brown bat (*Myotis lucifigus*) , big brown bat (*Eptesticus fuscus*), and Yuma bat (*Myotis yumanensis*). Small mammals such as deer mouse (*Peromyscus spp*.), meadow vole (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*), and red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) are also likely to use the area, though no formal mammal inventory has been conducted. White-tail deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), and bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) may also use the site though none were encountered during site visits.

7.8.2 Environmental Effects from Alternative A (Proposed Action)

*Impacts to Habitat*
Over all, there would be a net loss of 1.25 acre of habitat. While the habitat is currently marginal and not suitable for many wildlife species because of its location and the small size of the site, the project area does provide habitat for some species as mentioned above.

Reducing the density of trees and shrubs will be a negative impact to wildlife that currently use the site. In addition, developments will likely attract larger numbers of users than currently exist, which will increase disturbance to wildlife that continue to use the site after construction of the developments proposed. This will further decrease the suitability of wildlife habitat on the site.

*BLM Type 2 Special Status Species*
*Direct Effects*
Two Type 2 Species may occur on the site, Cassin's Finch and Bald Eagle. Therefore direct impacts to these species may occur. Any Special Status Species present on site during implementation could be directly affected by land clearing and construction of the proposed trails, bathroom facilities, picnic shelter, dock and other developments. Removal of vegetation would disturb birds that currently use the site causing displacement. However, if suitable habitat still remains, and after the disturbance has finished, some birds would return to the site. If vegetation is removed and ground

disturbance occurs during the nesting season for birds, mortality of eggs and nestlings due to nest destruction or nest abandonment would be expected for nests that are in the project area. While it is less likely, there could be mortality to adult birds as well.

*Indirect Effects*
Overall, suitable habitat for Bald Eagles and Cassin's finches will be reduced. Removal of vegetation will reduce hiding, foraging, and nesting cover. In addition, increased use by the public will increase the level of disturbance to wildlife further reducing the suitability of what habitat remains. Because many large ponderosa pine will remain on the site after developments, perching habitat for Bald Eagles will still be available. However, increased levels of human use may make the site less desirable, particularly in the spring, summer, and fall months.

This site would primarily be used by Cassin's finches for winter habitat and migration habitat. Loss of any pines that are removed for construction of developments would decrease food availability for this species, however, many pines would remain on site and these would continue to provide a food source for any birds using the site.

*Birds of Conservation Concern and other Migratory Birds*
*Direct Effects*
All migratory bird species present and breeding on site during implementation could be directly affected by land clearing and construction of the proposed trails, bathroom facilities, picnic shelter, dock and other developments. Removal of vegetation would disturb birds that currently use the site causing displacement. However, if suitable habitat still remains, and after the disturbance has finished, some birds would return to the site. If vegetation is removed and ground disturbance occurs during the nesting season for birds, mortality of eggs and nestlings due to nest destruction or nest abandonment would be expected for nests that are in the project area. While it is less likely, there could be mortality to adult birds as well.

It is not known whether Calliope Hummingbirds (a Bird of Conservation Concern) currently use the site. But similar direct effects would be expected if they were present in the project area during implementation.

If possible, vegetation would be removed in the non-breeding months to reduce impacts to migratory and resident bird species. In this location, the ideal time period for vegetation removal would be between July 15th and April 1st. If vegetation were removed during these months, impacts to nesting migratory birds would be vastly reduced. If this is not possible, then measures would be taken to survey the area for active nests and then buffer nests until the nest attempt is complete.

*Indirect Effects*
Nesting and foraging habitat for species that nest on the ground or in shrubs would be removed from 50 percent of the site to develop trails, picnic sites, restrooms and parking. Planting or preserving native shrubs in undeveloped areas would reduce impacts or possibly benefit some migratory birds during the breeding and non-breeding

season. Typically, replacing habitat with turf grass is a negative impact on wildlife species. However, non-forested habitat is currently dominated by weeds and nonnative grasses, as well as some native shrubs and forbes. Thus the negative impact of replacing a small area of this degraded habitat with turf grass would be minimal.

The reduction in available habitat would be detrimental to any current or future use by Calliope Hummingbirds. Other bird species that are associated with or utilize mature ponderosa pine stands, and can be found in urban areas, would be negatively affected by the reduction in ponderosa pine habitat. Examples include pygmy nuthatch, downy woodpecker, hairy woodpecker, and northern flicker.

Developing the site will attract greater amounts of human disturbance to the area. Most wildlife species respond negatively to disturbance and nesting success for migratory birds on the site may diminish as more people use the site. The shoreline area, while currently accessible, does not have as much human disturbance as it would once the proposed developments are in place. Disturbance to waterfowl and raptors using nearby trees for perching would increase but would also be seasonal in nature.

The effects of this project, though potentially negative for some species, are not expected to rise to the level of significance or move any migratory bird species towards a future need for protection under the Endangered Species Act for the following reasons:

- The number of individuals affected by this project would be small compared to the population size for the species in the larger analysis area
- The area of habitat to be affected is small compared to the available habitat within the larger analysis area.

*Other Wildlife*
*Direct Effects*
Other wildlife species using the site would likely be permanently or temporarily displaced, depending on their habitat needs and their tolerance of disturbance. Grading, removing, and placing soil would likely destroy habitat for and cause mortality to subterranean rodents. Any larger animals that might use the site, such as white-tailed deer or coyote, would respond to the disturbance by leaving the area during the period of construction. Displaced wildlife would likely move to other sites that provide similar habitat characteristics.

*Indirect Effects*
If Alternative A is implemented, there would be fewer habitats available to wildlife. There would be less vegetation overall throughout the project area. Animals that require cover to hide from human disturbance or predators, such as raccoons, white-tailed deer, or bobcat, would likely be displaced from the site. Forage would be lost once shrubs are removed. In addition, once in use, the area would have high levels of human activity, particularly during the late spring, summer and early fall months. The level of activity would likely be significant enough that larger animals would not return to

the site with any regularity. However, some animals such as birds and rodents, would likely return or recolonize to use what habitat remains, once construction is complete. Though some species would be negatively affected by the implementation of Alternative A, none of the impacts are expected to rise to level of significance because:

- The number of individuals affected by this project would be small compared to the population size for the species in the larger analysis area
- The area of habitat to be affected is small compared to the available habitat within the larger analysis area.
- The current population information for the species discussed does not indicate a downward trend or any vulnerability to extinction.

### 7.8.3 Environmental Effects of Alternative B

Impacts to terrestrial wildlife from Alternative B would be the same as those described for Alternative A.

### 7.8.4 Environmental Effects of Alternative C (No Action)

There would be no impacts to any Federally protected species, BLM Type 2 Species, Migratory Birds, or other wildlife.

No direct impacts to habitat would occur and there would be no loss of active bird nests or disturbance or mortality to small mammals that may use the forest floor or subterranean habitats on the site. In addition, there would be no disturbance or displacement to deer and there would be no reduction in the foraging or cover habitat that deer may use intermittently on the site.

The project area would remain an island of low suitability habitat for native and non-native wildlife species, mostly birds and small mammals. The vegetation there would continue to provide nesting and hiding cover, as well as a food source for birds and small mammals. Weeds would continue to reduce habitat value in some portions of the project area. Understory shade tolerant trees would eventually become dominant on the site, creating a denser stand of mixed conifers.

### 7.8.5 Cumulative Impacts- Alternative A

The analysis area for cumulative effects to wildlife is a four mile radius circle around the project area. This area represents the distance that some animals would have to travel to find similar habitat nearby. There are still small forested parcels within the City of Post Falls, though it is likely that many of them will become developed within the temporal scope of the analysis.

The reasonably foreseeable actions that would impact wildlife include continuing urban development, continuing residential and commercial human activity, ongoing maintenance nearby roads, utility lines, and floating docks. Recreation by boater, swimmers, and anglers along the Spokane River would be expected in to increase as the population of Post Falls and surrounding areas continues to grow.

*Special Status Species*
Alternative A would have no effects on Federally listed species. Thus, there would be no contribution to cumulative impacts for these species.

*BLM Type 2 Species, Migratory Birds and Other Wildlife*
1.25 acre of habitat would be developed. While this area is high in habitat value relative to the urban development surrounding it, the project site represents a very small proportion of habitat available to populations of the species, including BLM Type 2 and Birds of Conservation Concern, in the analysis area. For example, the destroyed habitat could potentially sustain 2 breeding pairs of black-capped chickadees (Rodewald 2016). If one assumed that both pairs perished as a result of the project (which is unlikely) this, combined with reasonably foreseeable actions, and would not reach the level of significance for the population of black-capped chickadees within the analysis area. Therefore impacts to species populations, even under the assumption that all individuals within the project area would perish (or not successfully disperse upon implementation) would still not reach the level of significance. The impacts of Alternative B, combined with reasonably foreseeable actions, as well as proposed improvements to the remaining habitat would not result in significant impacts to any wildlife population that could result in downward trending populations' numbers or move any populations within the analysis area towards a need for Federal protection.

## 8.0 Tribes, Individuals, Organizations, or Agencies Consulted

**Tribal Consultation**
- Coeur d'Alene Tribe

**Persons and Agencies Consulted**
- City of Post Falls
- Avista Corporation
- Kootenai County
- Adjacent Neighbors/Residents
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

## 9.0 List of Preparers

| Name | Title | Resource |
|---|---|---|
| Mitch Owens | Outdoor Recreation Planner | Project lead, Recreation |
| LeAnn Abell | Botanist | Vegetative Communities: Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Plants |
| Doug Evans | Natural Resource Specialist | Invasive, Non-native Plant Species |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Carrie Hugo | Wildlife Biologist | Wildlife<br>Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Animals<br>Migratory Birds |
| Scott Pavey | Planning and Environmental Coordinator | Visual Resources |
| David Sisson | Archaeologist | Cultural |
| Mike Stevenson | Physical Scientist | Hydrology/Soils |
| Cindy Weston | Resource Coordinator/Fisheries Biologist | Fisheries |

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## Appendix A: Conceptual Plan


ROSS POINT RECREATION AREA
CONCEPT PLAN - C

## Appendix B: Map

## Appendix C: Conceptual Design Elements