



Church Slough Boat Ramp EA
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
490 N. Meridian Road
Kalispell, MT 59901

March 24, 2010

Dear Sirs:

Church Slough Proposed Boat Ramp

The Flathead Audubon Society is a local, active group of people interested in sound stewardship and management of natural resources. We have reviewed the EA for a 124 Permit Application from Flathead County for Boat Ramp Construction on Church Slough and wish to provide the following comments.

Church Slough is a valuable area for birds and bird habitat and is a well-known and used bird watching site. In 2008, Dan Casey with American Bird Conservancy documented about 68,000 waterfowl use days on Church Slough between February 29 and April 18. The annual concentrations of waterfowl result in Church Slough being a very popular bird watching site. Church Slough is also considered important nesting and brood rearing habitat for several species. A Conservation Easement is in place for a portion of Church Slough to protect the aquatic, riparian, and wildlife values of that property. Developing a public access with a boat ramp will undoubtedly increase the public use of Church Slough both during the important spring migration period as well as at other seasons with resulting displacement of waterfowl.

Flathead Audubon is also concerned that the funding provided by Walleyes Unlimited will lead to additional efforts to introduce walleyes to the area and Flathead Audubon is adamantly opposed to walleye introductions.

Flathead Audubon's preference would be for you to adopt Alternative A-No Action to protect and maintain the waterfowl use on Church Slough. Public boat access is already available to Church Slough at all times from the Flathead River.

If a boat ramp must be built, include in the approval 1) a seasonal restriction on all boating use in Church Slough from March 1-April 15 to reduce impacts on spring migratory waterfowl use, and 2) assurances that in the future the boat ramp cannot be extended or the site otherwise made usable at low water levels.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Lewis Young
Conservation Chair
Flathead Audubon Society
50 Garrison Drive
Eureka, MT 59917