

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

**CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW AND APPROVAL
DOI-BLM-MT-L070-2015-0008-CX**

Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument
920 NE Main
Lewistown, MT 59547

Project Title: Wild and Scenic River Temporary Designation of Level Three
Primitive Boat Camps

Location: BLM Administered Lands
Fergus County, Montana

Project Contact: Michael Kania
Monument Manager
Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument
(406) 538-1950



CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW AND APPROVAL

A. Background

There are only two boat camps identified in the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument Boater's Guide between Judith Landing (river mile 88.5) and Gist Bottom (river mile 122.6). The two boat camps, McGarry Bar and Greasewood Bottom, are the primary destination campsites for most boaters that float this wild section of the Missouri River. Both of these sites now have active Bald Eagle nests, and thus are closed to all public use from early spring until August 1st. This has created a risk to public health and safety, particularly to those recreationists that are unfamiliar with the potential hazards associated with river travel in primitive areas. The thirty-four mile distance between readily identified boat camps is simply too far for single day travel by canoe or other non-motorized craft. While it is permissible to camp on any of the 90,000 acres of BLM land adjacent to the river, many first time recreationists lack the experience necessary to identify safe camping sites in this difficult, steep, canyon and badland topography.

Description of Proposed Action: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument (UMRBNM) is proposing to designate two additional level three boat camps in this stretch of the Wild and Scenic Missouri River on a temporary basis only. Site improvements will be limited. A wood post identification sign placed so as to orient visitors to the boat camp from the river will be allowed, as well as the temporary placement of a metal fire ring if the potential risk of wildlife fire warrants its use.

The two proposed temporary camps are identified as:
Bighorn Camp, River Mile 108, south bank of the Missouri River, and
Two Trees Camp, River Mile 111.5, south bank of the Missouri River.

As Bald Eagles have a long lifespan and commonly return to the same nest year after year, it is anticipated that both McGarry Bar and Greasewood Bottom boat camps will remain closed for much of the boating season for many years to come. An Environmental Assessment will be prepared to study in detail a proposal to make these temporary level three boat camp designations permanent. It is the intention of this action that both Bighorn Camp and Two Trees Camp will retain temporary designation status as level 3 boat camps until sufficient field data is collected and studied and an Environmental Analysis is completed.

Purpose and Need: The purpose of the proposed action is to protect public health and safety in a primitive section of the Wild and Scenic Missouri River. The established need is to provide refuge and camping opportunities at two temporary boats camps to replace two camps closed to protect bald eagle nesting.

