

Glenda Wiles

From: Yost, Sanna <SYost@mt.gov>
Sent: Friday, September 7, 2018 3:45 PM
To: Ray Hawk; Greg Chilcott; Chris A. Hoffman; Jeff Burrows; Doug Schallenberger
Cc: Glenda Wiles
Subject: Painted Rocks Dam - Access Bridge and Road

Good Afternoon Commissioners-

As you may be aware, the Montana DNRC's State Water Projects Bureau (SWPB) is in the process of conducting a Feasibility Study at Painted Rocks Dam. I am the Project Manager for that project. In October 2017, DNRC contracted with AECOM Technical Services, Inc. of Greenwood Village, CO to perform the feasibility study. The feasibility study will evaluate what improvements are necessary and desirable for continued safe operations of the dam and will present developed alternatives for viable improvements.

One of the project tasks will be to provide access to the downstream toe of the dam. Access is needed for ongoing operations and maintenance of the dam as well as future rehabilitation efforts. This task will include construction of a bridge over the West Fork of the Bitterroot River approximately one-quarter mile downstream of the dam. It will also include improvements to an existing access road from West Fork Road (Highway 473) to the bridge and improvements to an existing 2-track road on the west side of the river from the bridge to the downstream toe of the dam.

AECOM will be preparing final designs, drawings and specifications for the toe access bridge as part of the feasibility study project. A final construction package for the bridge, including plans, construction specifications and permitting, is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2018. We intend to host a public meeting in Hamilton in mid-October 2018 to inform the public of the access improvements and to solicit comments and concerns.

We will be hosting an introductory meeting about the access bridge and associated road improvements for primary stakeholders prior to public meeting. The primary stakeholders include: representatives from DNRC (Helena SWPB and Missoula Regional Office), Painted Rocks Water Users Association, USFS and Montana DFWP. We are extending the invitation to the Ravalli County Commissioners if you want to learn more about the bridge project prior to the public meeting. **The introductory informational meeting will be held at 3:00 PM on Tuesday, October 2, 2018 at the USFS Bitterroot National Forest Supervisor's Office (1801 North 1st Street) in Hamilton, MT.**

A brief project background and goal summary follows:

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Painted Rocks Dam is located on the West Fork of the Bitterroot River approximately 22 miles southwest of Darby, in Ravalli County, Montana. The dam is owned by the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) and is managed by the State Water Projects Bureau (SWPB) of the DNRC. The dam is classified as high hazard under the Montana Dam Safety Act guidelines. (Please note that the term "high hazard" reflects what can happen downstream if something happens to the dam, not of the dam's condition.) Water from the reservoir is marketed for irrigation and in-stream flows. In addition, the Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks manages a recreational lease on the reservoir. The West Fork of the Bitterroot River is also extremely popular with local recreationalists and outfitters and is habitat for Bull Trout, a threatened species.

Constructed in 1939, Painted Rocks dam is 143 feet high, 800 feet in length, impounds approximately 32,360 acre-feet at the concrete spillway crest and covers 655 surface acres. The goal of this project is to evaluate potential improvements that will allow the dam to be operated safely for the foreseeable future. Potential improvements may involve alterations to the outlet works, spillway, stilling basin, dam crest, and gate house. The possibility of adding hydropower or increasing storage will also be evaluated. The project also includes design services to develop vehicular access to the toe of the dam for ongoing operations and maintenance as well as for implementing future improvements.

PROJECT GOALS

The goal of this project is to evaluate potential improvements that will allow Painted Rocks Dam to be operated safely for the foreseeable future. The project involves conducting a feasibility study to determine what improvements are necessary, desirable and viable for continued safe operations of Painted Rocks Dam.

Potential improvements may involve alterations to the outlet works, spillway, stilling basin, dam crest, and gate house. The possibility of adding hydropower or increasing storage will also be evaluated. *The project also includes design services to develop vehicular access to the toe of the dam for ongoing operations and maintenance as well as for implementing future improvements.*

Please note that public meetings associated with the Feasibility Study itself will take place in the latter half of 2019, after the study is completed and preferred rehabilitation alternatives have been developed. Public meetings at this time will address the access bridge and road only.

If you have any questions about the meeting or project, please don't hesitate to contact me. My intent is to send you quarterly reports beginning in October 2018 to keep you apprised about the project's progress.

Thank you,

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