

# Canyon Ferry Reservoir

Lands and Recreation News



— BUREAU OF —  
RECLAMATION

July 2023



## Silos Recreation Area

In March of 2022, Reclamation was notified by our managing partner, Broadwater County, of their intentions not to renew the Management Agreement for Silos Recreation Area (SRA) upon its expiration in February 2023. The Canyon Ferry Field Office has initiated the planning requirements of Reclamation's Standards and Directives of LND 04-01 and LND 04-02 for a new long-term concessionaire at the SRA. During the planning process a one-year Interim Concessionaire Contract has been issued to Canyon Enterprises, Inc. Canyon Enterprises will manage the SRA until a long-term concession opportunity can be awarded, occurring within the next year. Canyon Enterprises will continue to provide the same services that have been previously provided at the SRA. Please call the Canyon Ferry Field Office at (406) 475-3310 with any questions

## Private Exclusive Use

Reclamation policy prohibits exclusive use unless directed otherwise in the Canyon Ferry Act or 43 CFR Part 429.31 and 429.32. Private exclusive recreational or residential use means any use that involves structures, lands, or other improvements on Reclamation administered Federal land that is used for recreational or residential purposes to the exclusion of public uses and is not associated with the official management of a Reclamation project/lands. Exclusive use includes, but is not limited to; boat docks, boat ramps, cabins,

trailers, manufactured or mobile homes, structures, roads, or other amenities determined by Reclamation to be exclusive use.

Cabin sites at Canyon Ferry are exempt from this policy due to the passing of the Canyon Ferry Act of 1998. Each cabin site has perpetual easements for vehicular access to each property, access to and use of one dock per property, access to and use of all existing boathouses, ramps, retaining walls, and other improvements for which access is provided in the leases as of the date of enactment of the Canyon Ferry Act. Other improvements and repairs are not allowed if they are determined to be private exclusive use. However, if work on Federal land is needed, a Special Use/Right of Use Permit request is required to be submitted and approved prior to work beginning.

## Special Use Permits

The Bureau of Reclamation provides Special Use permits for any activity that goes beyond typical recreation activities. All ground-disturbing activities must be permitted by Reclamation. It is the public's responsibility to request and or ask about the permitting process.

The public may request to use Reclamation land, facilities, and waterbodies, and may engage in the use only after proper authorization is received from Reclamation.

Some examples of Special Use Permits include but are not limited to events such as private events and use, public events, Military Use, Fish Wildlife & Parks (FWP) events and search and rescue training. Other types of permits may be issued for shoreline stabilization, storage of construction equipment and supplies, road repair and use, etc. Reclamation needs to be contacted well in advance of any such permit required activities.

Submission of an application for use does not constitute authority to use Reclamation land, facilities, or waterbodies. Consideration of applications to use Reclamation land, facilities, or waterbodies is completely discretionary and Reclamation reserves the right to refuse to authorize any use which may be incompatible with Reclamation authority and/or interferes with Reclamation's rights and/or operations.

To apply for a use permit, contact Reclamation's Canyon Ferry Field Office. Permit application information can be found online at [www.usbr.gov/gp/mtao/canyonferry/](http://www.usbr.gov/gp/mtao/canyonferry/). Complete form 7-254 and submit it to the Canyon Ferry Field Office, along with a \$100 non-refundable application fee. Include all necessary details, photos, maps, drawings, dimensions, types of equipment, etc. After an initial review of your application, Reclamation will provide an initial estimate of administrative costs to be paid by the applicant. Fees are dependent on the size and complexity of the project and how much time staff must put into the permit. Reclamation is also required under Federal law to collect, in advance, adequate funds to cover all administrative costs associated with the use application, including, but not limited to, environmental compliance, contract negotiation, processing, cultural surveys, management review, waiver valuation, employee time, construction oversight, etc. Receiving a permit may take up to 6 months and can be longer depending on project complexity and current workloads.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Lewis and Clark Conservation District also require permits for projects below the high-water mark. Please check with them directly regarding permit requests. Be aware the permits issued by Reclamation and the Army Corps do have expiration dates, usually 5 years. Because you were given a permit to do a project, does not mean you can continue to indefinitely do work, store equipment, make repairs, etc.

## Cabin Sites

Cabin site owners must get authorization or permits from Reclamation prior to doing any new construction

or repair work to existing structures or land on Reclamation lands, including access across Reclamation lands. The Canyon Ferry Act allows cabin site owners to have one dock. All docks must meet the guidelines found in the Canyon Ferry Shoreline Management Plan of 2012. The storing of personal property on Reclamation managed lands is not allowed. This includes, but is not limited to, vehicles, trailers, watercraft, and construction materials.

New cabin site owners are encouraged to contact the Canyon Ferry Field Office to learn more about what is allowed and not allowed on Reclamation property.

If you plan to do any type of work on Reclamation property, contact the Canyon Ferry Field Office at (406) 475-3310 well in advance of your need to construct the project or complete a task that requires a special use permit.

In order to reduce road maintenance, new weight limit signs have been posted on East and West Shore Drives. The weight limits are 7 tons for a single-axle and 14 tons for a double-axle. The restrictions are in place from March 1<sup>st</sup> to May 1<sup>st</sup> of each year to allow the roads to dry out.

## Natural Resource Management

### Off-Highway Vehicles

Any off-highway vehicles such as All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs), Utility Terrain Vehicles (UTVs), cars, trucks, and motorcycles are not allowed to drive off road at Canyon Ferry. The vehicles are only allowed on public roads, must be licensed, and street legal. Only licensed drivers may operate these vehicles.



Canyon Ferry has been restoring off-highway vehicle trail since the spring of 2020.

## Noxious Weed Management

The land surrounding Canyon Ferry Reservoir is known to have noxious weeds like spotted knapweed, Canada thistle, Dalmatian toadflax, Leafy spurge and Whitetop.



The Bureau of Reclamation's Canyon Ferry Field Office has an ongoing weed management plan that includes both Lewis & Clark and Broadwater Counties, a private contractor, and Canyon Ferry personnel spraying weeds annually.

For more information, Lewis and Clark County and Broadwater County have a list of species to be controlled. Visit their web pages for more information at: <https://www.lccountymt.gov/noxious-weed-control-division.html> or <https://www.broadwatercountymt.com/noxious-weed-board>.

Infestations of these non-native plant species not only reduce the productivity of cropland and rangeland, but infestations of noxious weeds also diminish the productivity and biological diversity of ecosystems by negatively impacting wildlife habitat and by affecting the vitality and survival of native species due to competition for space, nutrients and water. You can learn to identify noxious weeds by visiting <https://www.mtweed.org/weeds/weed-id/>.

## Bat Boxes

This winter, Canyon Ferry personnel built 20 bat boxes. The boxes will be mounted on 20-foot poles and installed around Canyon Ferry Reservoir, mostly in and around recreation areas.

Many bats found in Montana are considered to be a species of concern due to habitat loss and wind farm mortality. Although white-nose syndrome has not been found in Montana yet, it poses a substantial threat to bat populations if it becomes established.

You may see bats fly around at dusk as they forage for insects. Bats can consume their body weight in insects every night, helping keep mosquito populations in check (which may carry West Nile disease) and reducing the need for pesticide use.



While many bats spend the winter months in caves, most seek out trees, bridges, and buildings during summer. It's in these places, small spaces located high off the ground, where they give birth and rear their young. Bats always try to avoid contact with humans and other animals but like any other wild animal, if a bat feels threatened, they will defend themselves and may bite. For this reason, you should never harass or handle bats or bat boxes.

## Recreation Management

### Campground Improvements

Reclamation continues to make enhancements to recreation areas, providing a safe and enjoyable experience for everyone at the Canyon Ferry Reservoir.

On June 8, 2022, the Bureau of Reclamation's Canyon Ferry Field Office officially became a part of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA). This act allows federal agencies to collect and retain recreation user fees from overnight camping, group use shelters, and special use permits. Fees collected from Canyon Ferry's recreation facilities will stay at Canyon Ferry and will be used exclusively for recreational improvements. Projects that are currently in the planning process for this year include

the Riverside Campground resurfacing project and a water distribution system at Hellgate Campground.

### **Riverside Campground Resurfacing**



The Bureau of Reclamation's Canyon Ferry Field Office applied for and received a grant from Northwestern Energy and the Missouri-Madison River Fund program to resurface all public access areas within Riverside Campground with asphalt or concrete to ensure the recreation facilities and amenities meet ADA requirements.

The current walking surfaces are decomposing, creating a gravel-like surface and slip hazard. As a result, the current walking and access surfaces do not meet ADA standards.

Facilities to be resurfaced will include accessible access to three pairs of vault toilets, the fishing dock, boat dock, river trail, upper access trail, four water hydrants, one tri-panel kiosk, and five ADA campsite bump outs.

The timeframe for this project is Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 (if needed).

### **Hellgate Campground – New Water System**

The current well and water distribution system at Hellgate Campground only provides water to the group use shelter area and to the boat ramp. This causes campers to haul water from the boat ramp area to their campsites. The new water distribution system will provide water to each of the loops and to the volunteer camp host sites. The water system will be designed for

seasonal use during the months of May through September.

The timeframe for this project is Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 (if needed).



### **Campground and Group Shelter Reservations**



Reclamation will continue to use same-day online reservations through Recreation.gov for the 2023 season. The 2023 recreation season will collect user fees from May 6<sup>th</sup> to September 10<sup>th</sup>. Reservations can be made up to six months prior to the date of use. All fees at all the recreation sites are by reservation only through Recreation.gov, no cash or check payments are accepted at the campgrounds. By using Recreation.gov, we have reduced user conflicts and noticed an increase in fees collected.

Finding a campsite to reserve or reserving a group shelter can easily be done using a computer, mobile phone or other device. Be sure to download and use the

Recreation.gov website or mobile app as follows:

1. Log in to your **recreation.gov** account.
2. In the search bar, search the recreation site you want (i.e., Canyon Ferry).
3. Review the campground information provided
4. Sort by availability and select your dates
5. Select “Add to Cart” – and follow the prompts to check out.
6. You will receive an email confirmation receipt. This receipt is used to confirm your reserved site and date of use.

## Know the Rules

While visiting the recreation facilities at Canyon Ferry Reservoir, Reclamation wants to remind everyone that campground and day-use area rules and regulations have been established under 43 CFR Part 423. These rules are to ensure everyone visiting Canyon Ferry Reservoir will have a safe and enjoyable experience.

Abandoned property left unattended for more than 24 hours continues to be an issue. Reclamation has been working to address the 14 day stay limit and abandoned RVs, boats and other personal property. Lewis & Clark and Broadwater County Sheriff's departments have issued citations. In addition, numerous vehicles have been towed at the owner's expense. Another continual enforcement issue deals with dogs off leash. This sounds like a minor issue until a dog is hit by a vehicle or bites someone or another animal. Please keep pets on leashes at all times within the campgrounds and day use areas. Rules and regulations can be located on kiosks throughout the Canyon Ferry facilities or online by looking up 43 CFR Part 423. Please call the Canyon Ferry Field Office at (406) 475-3310 with any questions.

Due to inclement weather in the winter and spring, campgrounds may be closed to vehicular access, but foot traffic will still be allowed.

## Water Levels and Courtesy Docks

Courtesy docks will be installed and taken out at the following reservoir elevations:

- Hellgate 3787 feet
- Shannon 3788 feet
- White Earth 3789 feet
- Jo Bonner 3791 feet



To find current reservoir elevations please visit [Boat Ramp Information \(usbr.gov\)](http://usbr.gov)

## Canyon Ferry Dam & Powerplant Canyon Ferry Visitor Center – Turbine Display

Last year, Canyon Ferry powerplant personnel began refurbishing the first of three generators. As part of the process the turbine and wicket gates were removed and replaced with new equipment. The old turbine and wicket gates have been kept and repurposed to be used as an interpretive display. Currently they have been painted

with an industrial coating and relocated to the parking area of the Canyon Ferry Visitor Center.

The interpretive display will have three panels illustrating the benefits of Canyon Ferry Dam and how the powerplant works.

The Canyon Ferry Dam and Powerplant continues to work on a

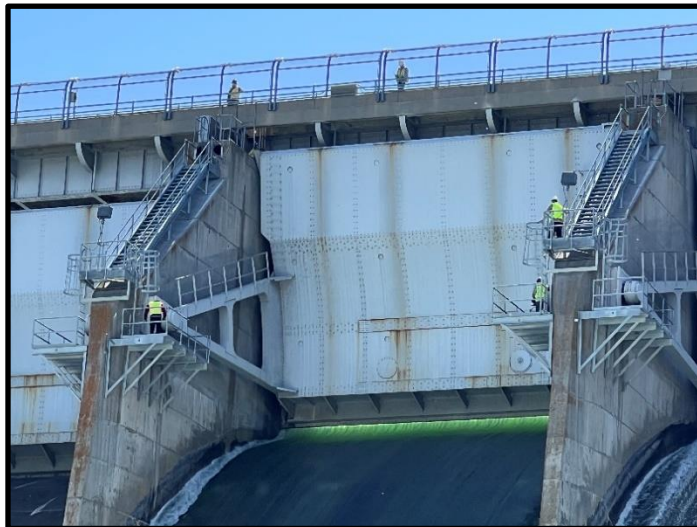


major rehab and rewind of unit one. The project entails the complete removal and replacement of the turbine. The work is being completed by Canyon Ferry powerplant personnel and contractors from the Tennessee Valley Authority and Andritz. The work on unit one is scheduled to be completed in July or early August.



## Inspection and Testing of the spillway gates.

On May 2<sup>nd</sup> the Canyon Ferry Powerplant personnel inspected the spillway gates by fully opening and closing the gates. The inspection was successful and but showed the need for some upgrades.



Recent projects and future projects include:

- HVPP Pre-check start up
- Crow Creek annual maintenance
- Fabricate new brackets for 116 CT upgrade
- Spillway gate testing
- Penstock lighting replacement with LED
- Review of the Powerplant's standard operating procures

Normal operations, preventive maintenance and corrective maintenance will be conducted throughout the year. This may result in seeing activities in and around the dam road, spillway and penstock gates, gantry crane and the buoy line upstream of the dam as well as work upstream of the cable below the dam.

There are no expected impacts on operations, but there may be closures crossing the dam intermittently throughout the year for annual maintenance on the exterior of Canyon Ferry Dam and gantry crane. Prior to any closure, information releases will take place to notify the public and sign will be place at the main office and at the corner of Spokane Creek Road and Canyon ferry Road. If you see anything suspicious in or around the dam, powerplant or any Canyon Ferry facility, please contact Reclamation's Canyon Ferry Field Office at (406) 475-3310.

## Special Thanks

Canyon Ferry couldn't accomplish our goals without the help of our partners and contractors, as well as Reclamation employees and management. We would especially like to thank:

US Army Corps of Engineers  
Broadwater County Commissioners  
Broadwater County Trust Fund  
Broadwater County Sheriff's Office  
Townsend Chamber of Commerce  
Townsend Hardware  
Volunteer Campground Hosts  
Canyon Ferry Homeowners Association  
Goose Bay Marina and Campground  
Helena Valley and Toston Irrigation Districts  
Kim's Marina and Campground  
Lewis & Clark Conservation District  
Lewis & Clark Sheriff's Office  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
Silos Citizens Action Group  
Walleyes Unlimited  
Yacht Basin Marina  
Northwestern Energy  
Missouri-Madison River Fund Program  
Other State and Local Agencies



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Please contact the Canyon Ferry Field office if you need additional information.

Canyon Ferry Field Office	(406) 475-3310
Facility Manager	(406) 475-3923
Assistant Facility Manager	(406) 475-3922
Recreation Clerk	(406) 465-3920
Outdoor Recreation Planner	(406) 475-3925
Recreation Shop	(406) 475-3927

