

CLARK'S LOOKOUT STATE PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Efforts began in 1998 to develop a comprehensive Management Plan for Clark's Lookout State Park. A survey was distributed that assessed the public's ideas and concerns for developing this historic site. After completion of the survey, a diverse planning team was assembled with representatives from Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, the local chapter of the Lewis & Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, county commissioners and local citizens. Due to the small size of Clark's Lookout State Park, the plan would include site development and a preliminary interpretive plan.

The purpose of the plan is to ensure that the park resources are protected and enhanced by establishing long-term park goals, objectives, strategies and policies. The plan will ensure that the park's use and management are consistent with what the resource can support.

The decisions made in the planning process were intended to fulfill the established mission of Clark's Lookout State Park:

Clark's Lookout Mission Statement

"The mission of Clark's Lookout State Park is to provide and protect a pleasant, rustic, well-maintained site that accurately interprets the Lewis & Clark Expeditions local landmarks, geography and relevant natural and cultural history of the area. The park will provide an opportunity for both local residents and visitors to retrace the footsteps of William Clark and to see the same landmarks that he saw in 1805."

In order to plan for the present, it was necessary to look to the future and have a vision of what the future should be for the park. The planning team developed the vision statement:

Clark's Lookout Vision Statement

Clark's Lookout State Park will be a safe, clean, well-maintained park, with enhanced access. Through a well-designed system of interpretation, visitors will have an opportunity to learn more about the Lewis and Clark Expedition, as well as local landmarks, history and natural resources. Interpretation will be coordinated with other efforts along the Lewis and Clark Trail. The surrounding vistas will still evoke a powerful sense of what William Clark saw when he stood on the rock. The site will continue to be simple and rustic, while meeting the basic needs of visitors and adjacent landowners. The experience of visiting the site will be rewarding and informational for all visitors.

The end results of the planning efforts are the desired outcomes or results. All goals, alternatives and strategies developed in the plan met at least one of the following outcomes:

MANAGEMENT PLAN OUTCOMES

- 1. Park visitors will have the opportunity to learn more about the Lewis and Clark Expedition, as well as local and natural history, landmarks and geography. Visitors will come away from the site with the sense that they have viewed many of the same landmarks that were observed by William Clark as he stood on this very site.***
- 2. The park is an economic benefit to the town of Dillon and a source of pride to residents; it is a place they want to take their visitors. The park will be a good neighbor to surrounding residents.***
- 3. The resources in the park are protected and the park is safe, clean, accessible and well-maintained.***

MANAGEMENT PLAN ISSUES AND IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES

The issues identified through the public input and the planning process were grouped into four major categories. For each area, an issue statement was written and goals were established.

ISSUE #1. ACCESS, ACQUISITION & SITE DEVELOPMENT

Clark's Lookout needs to be developed and maintained in a manner that maintains the simple, rustic appearance of the site and preserves the historic integrity and landscape while still providing for the needs of its visitors.

APPROACH: The Clark's Lookout State Park Management Plan, beginning on page two was developed by the planning team. Members established guidelines to address visitor needs and protection of the park resources. Members also discussed potential impacts on the community. This plan develops an entrance into the park about 350 feet to the north. Parking will accommodate large tour buses. A second accessible emergency route will be provided through the park, for first response agencies, in the event a train blocks the Lover's Leap Road.

IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES:

1. Work with the Union Pacific Railroad and Beaverhead County to obtain and develop the railroad crossing.
2. Work with the county/railroad to secure easements for the road, railroad crossing, and viewshed protection.
3. Request capital development funding and work on grant applications for site development.
4. Begin work on an environmental assessment.

ISSUE #2. INTERPRETATION, EDUCATION & RECREATION

Clark's Lookout State Park needs to provide for the education of its visitors through high quality, informative interpretation that reflects the significance of the site, is focused on the primary and secondary interpretive themes and fulfills the visitor experience established. Clark's Lookout State Park also needs to provide for appropriate recreational activities.

APPROACH: The planning team determined that comprehensive signing and location information should be developed and put in place, as well as comprehensive site orientation and interpretation. The site will be maintained as it is today, with no additional recreational amenities.

IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES:

1. Complete a Comprehensive Interpretive Plan for the site.
2. Develop orientation and directional signing.

ISSUE #3: OPERATIONS, STAFFING AND FUNDING

Upon the development of the site, people will be attracted to visit this Montana State Park. There will be the need to maintain the facilities and grounds to provide for an informative, safe and enjoyable visit.

APPROACH: The planning team determined that the most effective, efficient and productive method of operating Clark's Lookout would be through additional Fish, Wildlife and Parks staff and budgets. Cooperative agreements, internships and work-study programs could supplement and compliment this option.

IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES:

1. Request operations budget and personnel authority necessary to manage the site.

ISSUE #4. SAFETY, VANDALISM & LIABILITY

Clark's Lookout State Park needs to be designed to provide a safe site for its visitors without compromising the historic integrity of the site. The site also needs to be designed to reduce potential vandalism to the site.

APPROACH: The planning team recommended a moderate level of protection/modification to the site to provide for safety and prevent vandalism. Should safety issues arise or vandalism increase, additional alternatives would need to be explored and implemented.

IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES:

1. Clean-up dry materials and mow grass to reduce fire danger.
2. Remove climbing bolts and prohibit climbing.

The management plan also details many additional actions and goals for the next 10 years. The direction for the future of Clark's Lookout is established. Followed, these actions will ensure the development and preservation of Clark's Lookout State Park through the Lewis & Clark Expedition Bicentennial Commemoration and beyond.