

South Fork Teton River

Proposal for fishing/boating access site



Why provide access, and why here?

Policy-Level Direction:

Mission of the Boating Access Program:

To acquire, develop and maintain fishing and motorboat access sites that will provide adequate and safe access to Idaho waters for all members of the angling public.



Why provide access, and why here?

Policy-Level Direction:

IDFG Fisheries Management Plan Direction:

IDFG will actively pursue acquiring easements, leases or purchases and development of key areas to provide access for anglers and other recreationists. Priority will be given to easements collaboratively developed with landowners.



Why provide access, and why here?

Policy-Level Direction:

IDFG Strategic Plan:

- *Protect the public's right to use public lands and waters for hunting, fishing, trapping and wildlife viewing.*
- *Work with landowners to obtain public access across private lands to public lands.*



Why provide access, and why here?

Economic impacts of fishing:

Statewide, angling generates in excess of \$400 million in economic revenue

Fisheries in Madison County generated over \$11 million in 2011

This revenue is spent in many places, including food (30%), equipment (27%), transportation (20%), Lodging (9%) and Guides and Outfitters (7%)

As such, fishing is an important component of our statewide and local economies

Why provide access, and why here?

IDFG maintains over 50 boat ramps/angler access sites in the Upper Snake Region

Intent is to connect the public to the public resources of Idaho

State law is clear about river/stream ownership in Idaho – they are owned by the state, and held in trust for the public

Idaho Code, 36-1601:

Navigable Streams Defined - ... is capable of being navigated by oar or motor propelled small craft for pleasure or commercial purposes is navigable.

Recreational use authorized. Navigable rivers...shall be open to public use... for business or pleasure including boating, swimming, fishing, hunting and all recreational purposes.

Why provide access, and why here?

Public Trust Doctrine

A body of law (Court Cases) that states that natural resources (air, water, submerged lands, fish, wildlife) are too valuable to be privately owned.

As such, they are owned by the State, and held in Trust for the benefit of its people.

This concept serves as the cornerstone of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation

It's a framework that safeguards our wildlife and our hunting/fishing heritage today and for the future.

Why provide access, and why here?

The South Fork Teton boat ramp/fishing access would provide formal access to the river in an area that is currently used by anglers even though no formal launch is present

IDFG prioritizes access to waters that do not have protected access, such as on the South Fork Teton

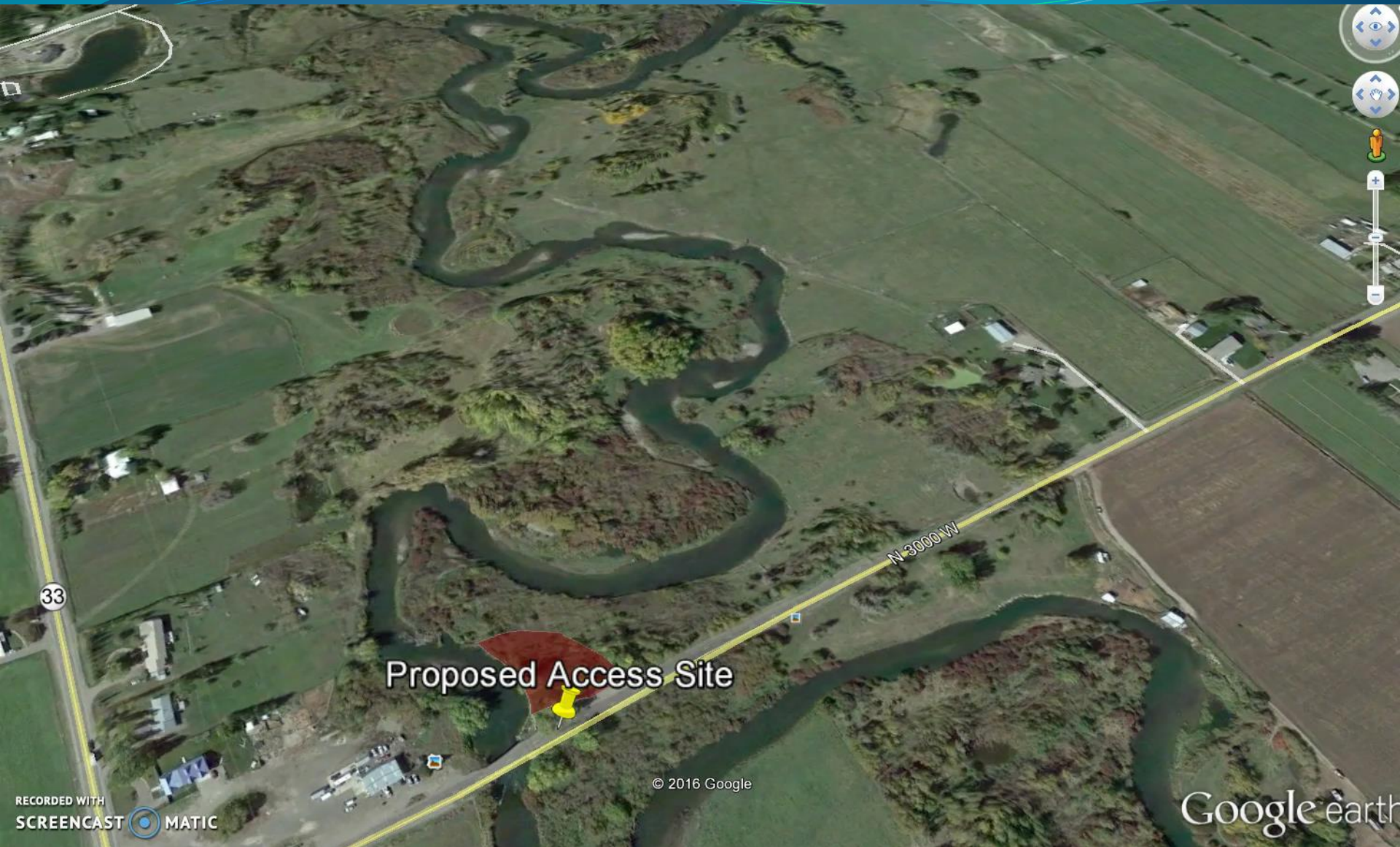
- Population growth results in changes to assumed access
- Posting of property results in loss to the public

If created, this access would provide safe, dedicated angler access to a quality Yellowstone cutthroat trout fishery

Would allow boaters to float the lower 5 miles of the SF Teton and an additional 2 miles of the Henrys Fork to an existing boat ramp at Beaver Dick Park

Why provide access, and why here?

- Quality Fishery
- Existing takeout at end of the float
- Willing landowner
- Site appropriate from engineering standpoint
- Existing base of river users
- Can help alleviate existing issues



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Proposed Access Site

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What's Proposed:

Our standard boat ramp:

- Concrete ramp

- Gravel Parking lot

- Access road

- Restroom

- Appropriate fencing

- Signage

What's not proposed:

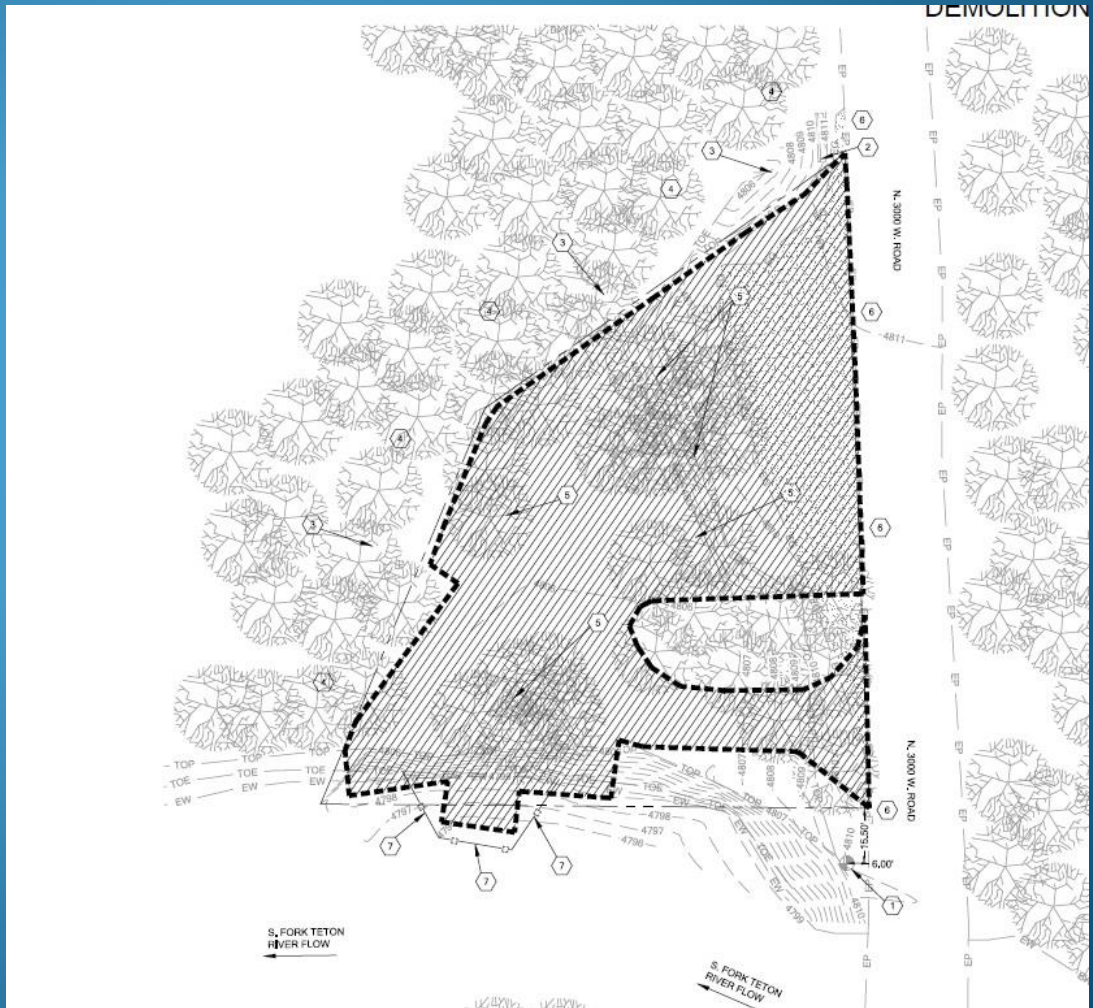
- Camping

- Night use (day use only)



What's Proposed:

- 0.34 acres disturbed
- Preserve existing habitat
- Minimize impact



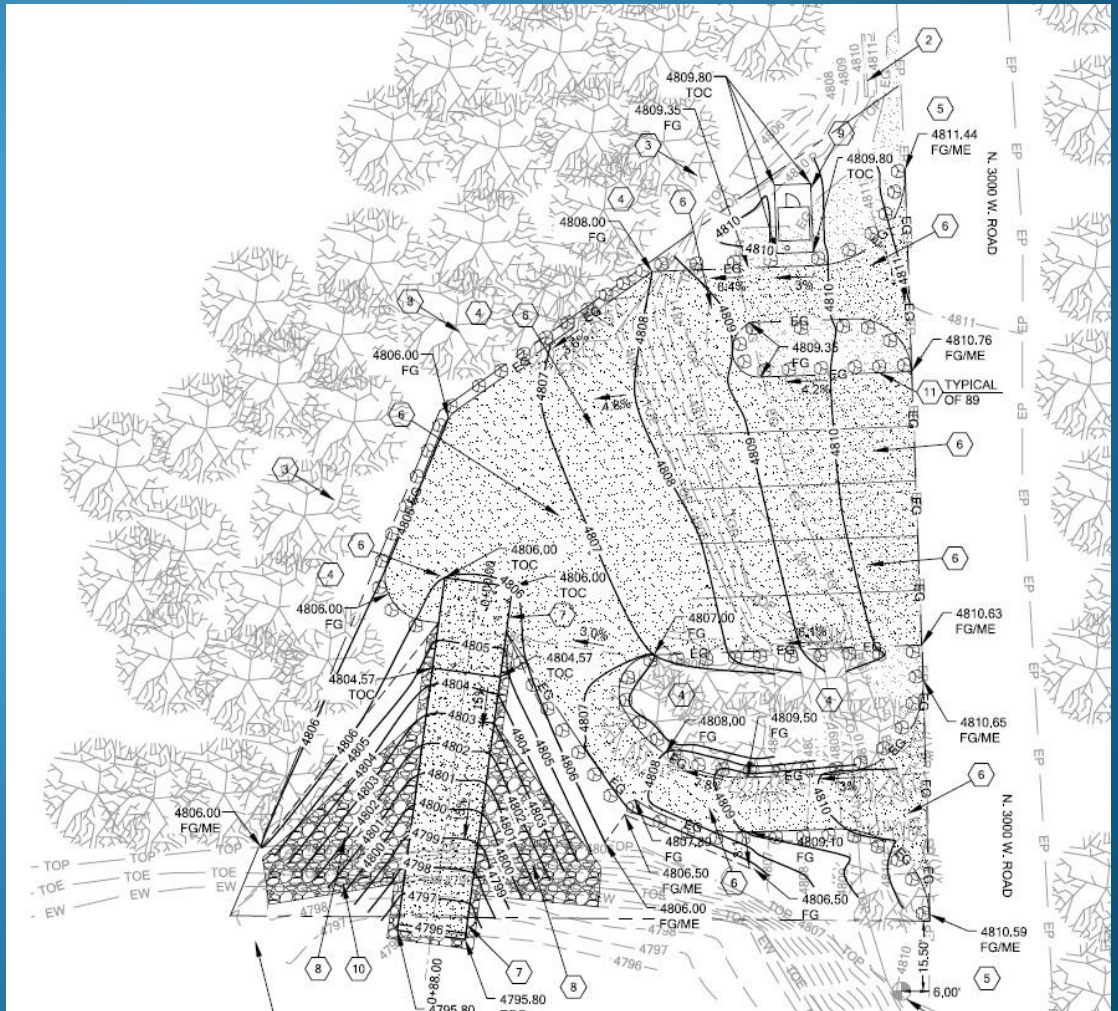
What's Proposed:

Small size

Commensurate with
the resource

Meet the basic needs
of boaters

Open for suggestions
on how to do it
differently



Concerns we've heard:

Asked for public comment during December/January

Useful for determining if support exists

Useful for identifying issues that can be addressed early

NOT useful as a “vote”

We've tried to capture and address all the concerns we heard

Concerns we've heard:

The Project will destroy wildlife habitat.

Project disturbs less than ½ acre of ground

Designed to minimize impact to habitat

Existing impacts of road and bridge

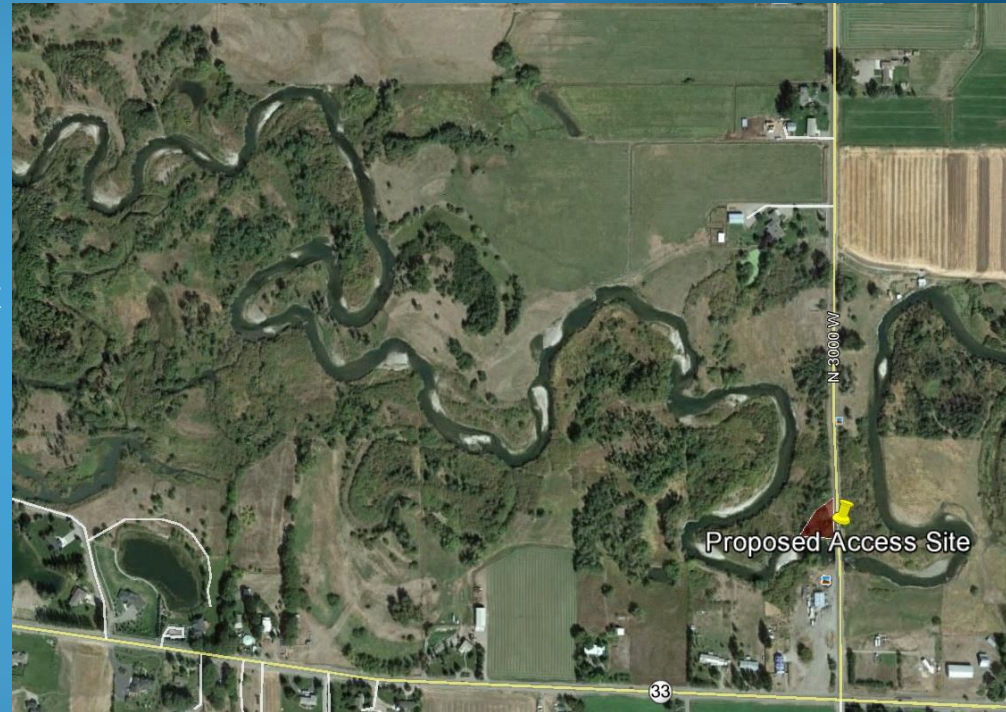
Migration corridor unlikely

Impacts from boaters are expected to be minimal

Season of use projected to be slight in spring, more summer/fall

Boaters currently using the river

Habitat on other nearby rivers have not been impacted by boaters



Concerns we've heard:

The quality of the waterway is not good enough for all watercraft at all times

Boaters would not likely access this reach during winter, during high flows in the spring, or during extreme low flows.

This reach would likely be used mainly in the summer and fall, and less frequently in the spring

Suitable craft are likely to be rafts, pontoon boats, canoes, drift boats and some small motorized craft.

Signs can be posted to help river users make good decisions on when to float and what craft are appropriate.

Concerns we've heard:

The waterway is not safe for inexperienced users

IDFG is concerned with safety.

However, its not the only factor used in decisions to provide access

All outdoor activities have inherent risk

Incumbent on participants to know the risk and mitigate those risks

Current use is dispersed

This site would corral that use, and allow educational signs to be posted

It also provides the opportunity for Search and Rescue to launch safely and quickly if needed

Risks on this specific waterway are similar to other nearby river reaches

Removing cars from the roadside/adding a parking lot aids in safety of the site

Although use would likely increase, we see the educational opportunities for signs as a net gain to user safety

Concerns we've heard:

My tax dollars should not be spent on this project

Funding is provided by the Federal Sport Fish Restoration Act, which is an excise tax on motor boat fuel and sporting goods

The funds allocated to this project are specifically identified to be used on boating and fishing access projects, and cannot be used for other purposes

Additional funds are coming from IDFG license sales (not taxes), and are consistent with the direction provided by our management documents

Other funds have been applied for through grants (Idaho Dept of Parks and Rec, Waterways Improvement Grant) and through donations

Madison County had agreed to provide in-kind assistance, but has since tabled that decision. They may or may not revisit that decision in the future

Concerns we've heard:

This project conflicts with the Sensitive Lands Overlay

IDFG agrees that additional compliance would likely be needed to address conflicts with the Sensitive Lands Overlay

We would also need to gain compliance with NEPA, Cultural Resource Compliance, Corps of Engineers and Department of Health

There are still many steps that must occur before this project can move forward.



Concerns we've heard:

The new ramp will destroy the fishery

The fishery currently is comprised primarily of Yellowstone cutthroat trout, which are protected from harvest via catch and release rules

Rainbow trout and brown trout are also present, and are harvestable. However, harvest is low on trout in nearby rivers

IDFG will continue to monitor the fishery for impacts, and will adjust regulations as needed to preserve the character and quality of the current fishery

Additional fishermen create support in negotiations for flow management and protection from new, unforeseen threats to the river.



Concerns we've heard:

Increased boater use will increase trash in the river.

IDFG performs weekly maintenance on fishing access sites during high-use periods, and less frequently during the off season

IDFG has been approached by a local fishing club who volunteered to assist with trash pickup in and around the ramp

We have also reached out to BYU-I volunteer program to develop an “Adopt a River” group that would pick up trash along the river corridor

End result should be a river that's cleaner than current conditions, not worse off.

Concerns we've heard:

This project will increase trespass/illegal hunting issues;
Stranded boaters will enter my property;
Lack of enforcement of regulations;
Increased Human Waste;
Lower Property Values;
Project will cause flooding;

The ability to corral use to one location and then educate boaters on the features of this river should help address issues
The creation of a boat ramp provides law enforcement staff safe access to the river for compliance checks, and to address trespass issues
Vault toilet
No-rise certificate on project

What does success look like?

IDFG has been charged with providing public access to public resources

We have a responsibility to do so, its an established goal in our department plans, and we have an expectation from the public that we provide access

We are open to suggestions on how to meet our obligations while addressing the concerns of landowners and the public

Ultimate outcome: An access site that meets the needs of anglers and outdoor recreationists as well as local landowners and concerned citizens

What does success look like?

Ultimately, this discussion is not about if the river is wide enough, or deep enough, or safe enough. The discussion is about providing access to a public resource, while respecting private property.

IDFG believes we can be successful at meeting our responsibilities and respecting private property

We are open to suggestions on how to re-design this project to meet the needs of the local community while still meeting the expectations of the public at large

We will use information from today's meeting to figure out our path forward