

## REGULATIONS

Welcome to Painted Rocks State Park. Please respect and leave your state park the way you found it. You can do this by observing the following regulations.

- Pets are allowed through the park; however, they must be leashed at all times.
- Motorized vehicles are restricted to roadways and parking areas; please do not drive on vegetation.
- For your own safety and the safety of others, please observe the speed limit.
- All group activities of 30 or more persons must obtain a special recreation permit, available at the region two park office.
- Please observe the 14-day camping limit.
- Campfires are permitted only in established fire grates. Please do not leave fires unattended.
- Quiet hours are 10P.M. to 6A.M. Please respect your fellow campers.
- Discharge of weapons (*firearms, bow and arrow, etc.*) is prohibited from April 1 to the first day of archery season.

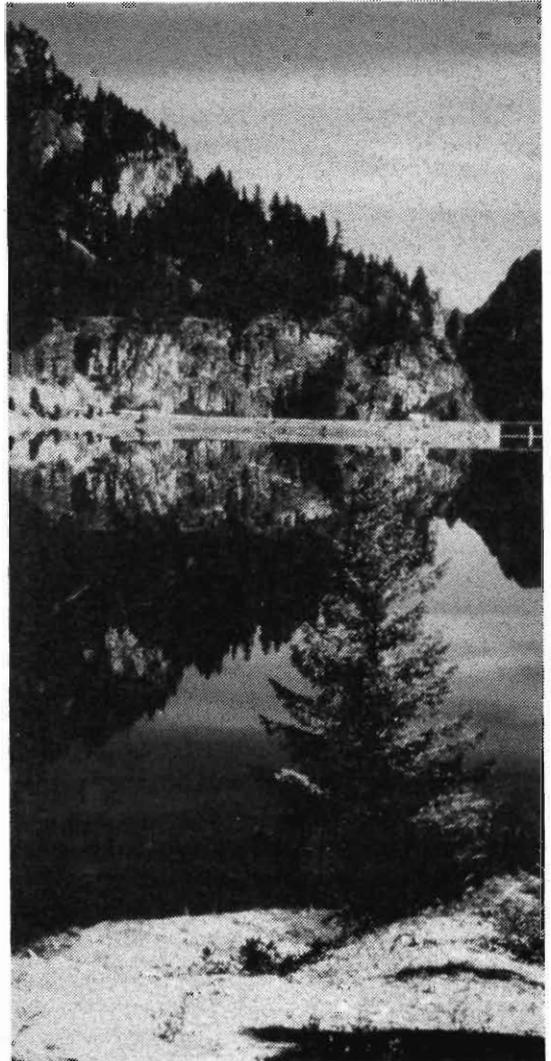
### TO REPORT ANY PARK VANDALISM OR PARK VIOLATIONS, CALL 1-800-TIP-MONT.

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks receives federal funds and prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, age, national origin, or handicap. For information or concerns regarding discrimination, contact the Personnel Office, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, 1420 E. Sixth Ave, P.O. Box 200701, Helena, MT 59620-0701, (406) 444-2535, or The Montana Human Rights Commission, 1236 Sixth Ave., Helena, MT 59620, 1 (800) 542-0807.



**Montana Fish,  
Wildlife & Parks**

## PAINTED ROCKS STATE PARK



# **WELCOME TO PAINTED ROCKS STATE PARK**

Administered by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Painted Rocks State Park is located 17 miles south of Hamilton on U.S. 93, then 23 miles southwest on Secondary 473. Contained within the Bitterroot Valley, this park is surrounded by history. Open year-round as a "primitive" park, Painted Rocks offers a multitude of recreational opportunities. Certain regulations accompany the "primitive" designation as found on the back of this brochure. Winter opportunities include snowshoeing, cross-country skiing and wildlife viewing. Summer opportunities include camping, fishing, boating, hiking, and water skiing. All this within a scenic, western pine-forest setting!

## **ARE THE ROCKS REALLY PAINTED?**

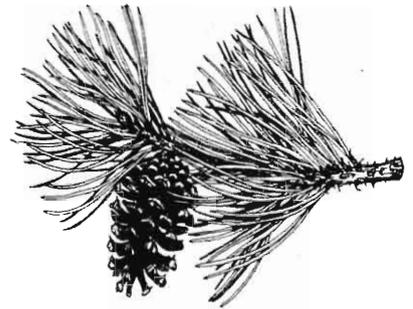
Painted Rocks received its name from the green, yellow and orange lichens which cover the grey and black rock walls of the granitic and rhyolite cliffs. The lichen forms out of the symbiotic relationship between the algae growing on the cliffs and fungi. Different combinations of each plant forms various colored lichen.

## **GEOLOGY OF PAINTED ROCKS**

Painted Rocks State park is located in the valley of the West Fork of the Bitterroot River. The Bitterroot Mountains that surround the park rise to an elevation of 10,700 feet. The Bitterroot Range is formed of granitic rock from approximately 70 to 90 million years ago.

## **VEGETATION OF PAINTED ROCKS AREA**

A typical western pine-forest setting, the Painted Rocks State Park is composed of Ponderosa and Lodge Pole pines, Douglas Fir, as well as Engleman Spruce. On site are also several species of grasses, shrubs, and forbs including bluebunch wheatgrass, huckleberry, mountain mahogany, snowberry and beargrass.



## **HISTORICAL USE OF THE PAINTED ROCKS AREA**

The Lewis and Clark Expedition passed through the forks of the Bitterroot River on September 7, 1805. Fifteen years later, the valley had become an important corridor for American and English fur companies as well as the "mountain men" of the era. The Bitterroot provided the only safe passage for trappers from raiding Blackfeet Indians, between the Snake, Columbia and Flathead Rivers. The main trapping era lasted approximately 25 years from 1820 to 1845. At that time Christian missionaries began to arrive in the area and permanent European American settlement followed.

Homesteaders, believing that the railroad would follow up the Bitterroot Valley into Idaho, began settling the West Fork Valley. They hoped that when the railroad came they could sell their land and make a profit. Unfortunately, the railroad never made it past Darby, (22 miles to the north).

## Historical Use of the Painted Rocks Area Continued

On February 22, 1897, President Theodore Roosevelt established the Bitterroot Forest Reserve, now the Bitterroot National Forest. Just south of Painted Rocks State Park lies one of the first ranger stations in the United States. Erected in 1899 at Alta, Montana, by two local rangers, this was also one of the first Forest Service buildings to fly the American flag.

### The Salish People - Original Inhabitants of the West Fork

The West Fork of the Bitterroot, like the rest of the Bitterroot Valley and much of western Montana, has been part of the homeland of the Salish people for countless millennia - since the very beginning of human history. To this day, tribal elders know the traditional Salish place-names and cultural sites scattered throughout the area. Many of them refer to the deeds of Coyote when he created the world we know today. These stories reach back to the time of the last ice age and beyond.

The West Fork, in particular, was one of the connecting routes between the Salish and the Nez Perce in Idaho, and it was always a place of great importance to the Salish as a particularly good hunting area, as well as a place rich in other important traditional foods, including huckleberries, serviceberries, bitterroot, trout and other fish, and mountain tea. Tribal oral histories contain references to many Salish place-names in the West Fork area, beginning with the Conner area, known as *Ep MsaWiy* (Place of the Wild Violets).

### PAINTED ROCKS RESERVOIR

In 1939, the Montana Water Conservation Board began construction on Painted Rocks Dam. Originally constructed for agricultural use, the Painted Rocks Reservoir now provides water for irrigation, stockwater, domestic use, in-stream flows and for fish.

The 143 foot high and 800 foot long dam receives its water from the West Fork of the Bitterroot watershed (316 square miles). At full capacity, the reservoir stores over 45,000 acre-feet of water.

## RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AT PAINTED ROCKS STATE PARK



All Montana state boating regulations apply to Painted Rocks Reservoir. There is a boat ramp and dock available for access to the reservoir. After August 1, water levels can be poor due to irrigation usage.



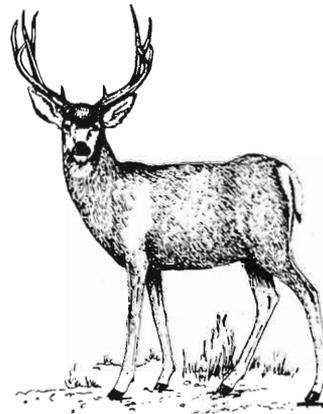
There are 25 sites available for camping, with vault toilets available on site. This area limits RV/trailer size to 25' in length. There is a 14 day limit for camping within a 30 day period.



Swimming is available at Painted Rocks State Park; however, there is no life-guard on duty. Swim at your own risk!



Wildlife abounds in the area around Painted Rocks. Elk, mule deer, white-tailed deer, black bear, and moose can be found in the area. In the 1980s, bighorn



mountain sheep as well as peregrine falcons were re-introduced to the area. The reservoir is used as a stopping ground for waterfowl during spring and autumn migrations. Don't be surprised if you see osprey, great blue heron, water ouzels, spotted sandpiper or kill-deer.



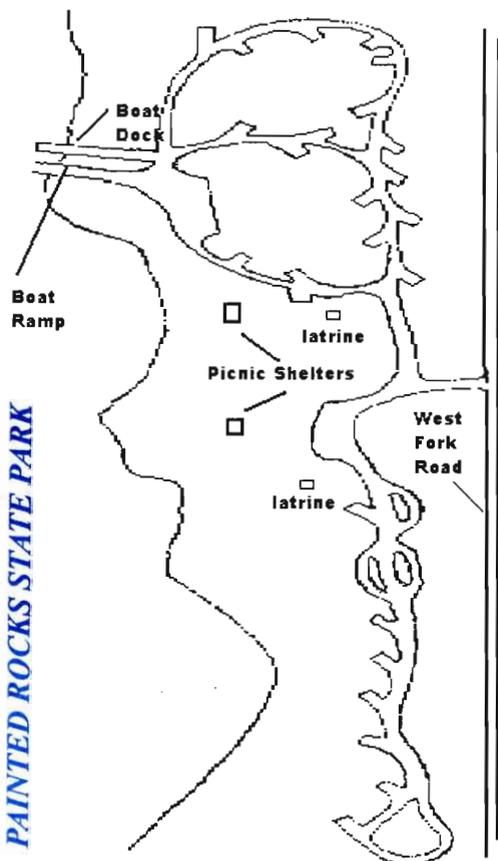
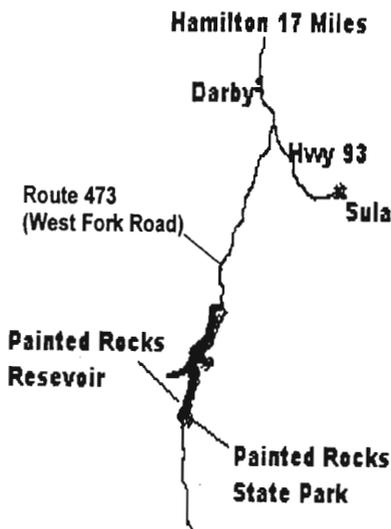
Six species of game fish call Painted Rocks Reservoir home; mountain whitefish, westslope cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, brown trout, brook trout and dolly varden. Please observe the Montana state fishing regulations.



There are two shelters available for picnics. For groups of 30 and over, please call the regional parks office at (406) 542-5531 for a special recreation permit. Since this is a primitive park, please follow the pack-it-in/pack-it-out policy.

## HOW TO GET THERE

17 miles south of Hamilton on Highway 93, then 23 miles southwest on Route 473 (West Fork Road).



## OTHER RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Bitterroot National Forest is adjacent to Painted Rocks Reservoir. Just west out of Darby are entrances to the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area where hiking, fishing, camping and wildlife viewing are available.

