

River Access From Bridges

An Assessment of the Bridges of Madison County

Compiled By The Lewis & Clark Chapter of Montana Trout Unlimited

Created: Spring 2009

Purpose: This document was created at a time when a recent Court decision made it known that Montanans have access to their rivers from the rights of way provided by public roads even where they intersect with private land near bridges.

It may be necessary for the County or FWP or some other entity to ensure the safety of individuals who access rivers from these intersections. Whether crossing a fence, parking along the road, or simply walking to the river itself, an assessment of a particular bridge's accessibility seems to be in order.

The decision of whether accessibility to the water at a particular bridge is safe enough for the public may prove contentious at particular bridges. The Lewis & Clark Chapter of Trout Unlimited (LCTU) has taken it upon itself to visit each bridge-site in this document and provide an assessment of the current state of the location. Each site was viewed with an eye toward access to the river and an assessment of parking spaced within walking distance of the bridge. The document also identifies each bridge location and provides photos of the bridge from and of the four bridge corners. As this document represents just LCTU's opinion, it is our recommendation that each of these sites be similarly reviewed by the other entities.

Also, it should be noted that the perspective LCTU took was to examine accessibility for the average angler who is capable of hopping over a fence, stepping and balancing across stones, and is able to walk down a slope to the water. No consideration was given for whether the bridges would be accessible to a physically challenged person in, for example, a wheelchair. It is our belief that such access should be considered for anglers—not necessarily at each bridge, but perhaps at one or two.

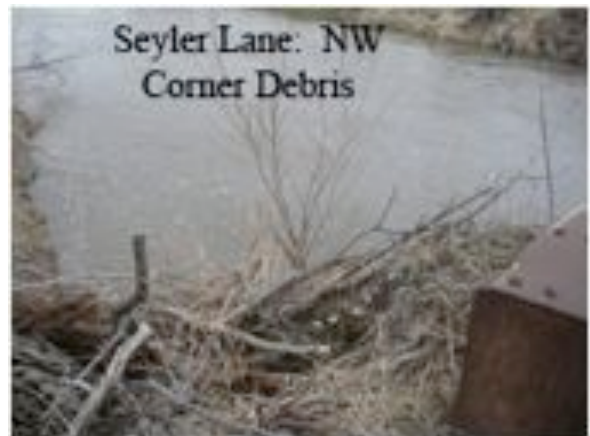
It is this TU Chapter's sincere hope that this document will provide a third-party's voice to the discussion and, as such, will facilitate constructive interface between the fishing public, private landowners, and government entities beholden to the taxpayers of Montana.

Bridge Assessment Number 1

Bridge Name	Seyler Lane
River	Ruby (Note that throughout this document, the convention regarding directions has been that the Ruby River runs generally South to North, so the corners of the bridges are noted according to that convention).
Bridge Location Description	Seyler Lane—Note that this particular bridge's status as being on a public or a prescriptive road is still not determined; we have included it in this document even though it may end up falling outside the bounds of the recent legislative ruling.
Bridge Coordinates (Lat., Longitude)	N 45 deg. 30.451 min. W 112 deg. 19.931 min.
Accessibility Assessment (safe as is, safe with work, not safe)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking is available, but should be reviewed • NE Corner access is ok, but obstructions in way of access to water • NW Corner access is ok, but obstructions in way of access to water • SW corner access is difficult/unsafe because of steep drop, but could go over fence • SE Access is ok, but river at this point is very deep, making wading in here difficult
Notes: (What would make it safe, why is it not safe as is, etc.)	Remove obstructions in way of access to water at NE and NW corners
Name(s) of person conducting review	Dave Delisi, Jerry Kustich, John Eisenbarth
Date of review	4/17/09

Photos:





Bridge Assessment Number 2

Bridge Name	Lewis Lane
River	Ruby
Bridge Location Description	Lewis Lane
Bridge Coordinates (Lat., Longitude)	N 45 deg. 28.128 min. W 112 deg. 18.139min.
Accessibility Assessment (safe as is, safe with work, not safe)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking may be adequate for 1 car at position SE of bridge; large area near bridge that looks like pullout, but is actually a water hydrant and is clearly labeled “No Parking”—this is potential area for conflict if people park there anyway. Should be reviewed. • River access difficult at three of four corners, although stile at SE corner might make access possible there. However, a gate has recently been added at SW corner which provides easy access to that corner. • Curiously, dead animals (cat, raccoon, and skunks) had been placed at each corner so one accessing river from bridge would have to walk over or around these carcasses. • Gunshots heard while we inspected bridge.
Notes: (What would make it safe, why is it not safe as is, etc.)	Clean up the area.
Name(s) of person conducting review	Dave Delisi, Jerry Kustich, John Eisenbarth
Date of review	4/17/09

Photos:

