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Record of Decision

**Church Universal and Triumphant**

**Park County**

**December 16, 1993**

The Draft Supplement Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) regarding the Church Universal and Triumphant's (the Church) proposed developments in Park County listed three alternatives: denial (Alternative 1), approval (Alternative 2), and approval with a mitigation plan and recommendations (Alternative 3).

Denying the permits would mean the proposed developments would not occur as discussed in the Montana Department of Health and Environmental Sciences' (MDHES) impact statements. Denial does not rule out development of some sort.

The approval alternative refers to the basic criteria applicants must meet to receive authorizations or permits from the department. It would not include any mitigation measures.

The third alternative proposes measures that would mitigate potential impacts and suggests recommendations which would also lessen impacts.

If the proposed actions were approved according to Alternatives 2 or 3, the duration, geographic extent and frequency of proposed development would be similar. The duration of construction is uncertain. It is clear it would take place in stages at Spring Creek and Golden Age Village, and the projects may not be completed for 10 years or more. The geographic extent of the proposed actions is the same for each alternative. The frequency of the occurrences (of the construction-related impacts) has little relevance in relation to the specific proposed actions since once they are completed, development will stay in place. It is possible, based on historical occurrences, the Church may continue to pursue other developments on its property at a rate of frequency that equals or exceeds other growth in the study area. It is also possible the Church may decrease its frequency of development after completion of the proposed projects. Consequently, the rate of impacts may increase or decrease in the future.

The severity of primary and secondary impacts would be mitigated by measures proposed in Alternative 3.

The severity, duration, geographic extent, and frequency of occurrences are difficult to assess for Alternative 1 because the extent of potential development under this alternative is unknown.

Certain assumptions had to be made about what would happen if the proposed permits were denied. It was assumed that denial would not deter the Church from continuing its planned growth. The assumption was based on the Church's public statements regarding its determination to stay on its properties in Park County and the fact that development options exist under state law that are outside the department's permit authority. If approved, construction and development would change existing baseline conditions. Any other future action would be assessed from these changed conditions. As a result of incremental development, it is possible future development could reach a stage that would have been unacceptable in relation to baseline conditions examined in the supplement environmental impact statement.

Based on a definition of cumulative effects, it was determined that environmental impacts would occur under any alternative. Cumulative impacts would be mitigated in Alternative 3. Long-range impacts from possible future development (in addition to what is currently proposed) would be mitigated in Alternative 3 if recommended measures for wildlife, vegetation and archeological resources are actually implemented in the future.

The environmental resources potentially impacted by the proposed actions include wildlife, fisheries, water, botanical, visual quality, air quality, historical, and archaeological resources. Resources that are particularly fragile include wildlife species that are federally listed as threatened or endangered (grizzly bears, bald eagles, peregrine falcons), the Yellowstone cutthroat trout, and cultural and archaeological sites. The quantity of these resources has not been definitely determined, but their presence is certain. In general, primary and secondary impacts to these resources are less potentially significant than cumulative impacts. For fisheries and water resources, the greatest potential impacts are those associated with accidental spills or leaks from fuel tanks, sewage systems, or from transporting hazardous materials. Alternatives 1 and 2 do not have specific identified measures to reduce impacts. Alternative 3 identifies measures to reduce and eliminate potential impacts.

The environmental resources described in the environmental impact statements are important to the State of Montana and society in general. Yellowstone National Park is also important to the state and local economy. Nearly three million people visit the park each year and visitation continues to grow. Although the park's authority ends at its borders, the related economy and wildlife habitat cross far beyond the borders and have been the topic of regional coordination and discussion as part of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. The fact Yellowstone Park borders Church properties heightens the issue awareness at local, state and federal levels.

After considering the information in the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS), final environmental impact statement, DSEIS and the final supplement environmental impact statement (FSEIS), the MDHES' preferred alternative, as stated in the FSEIS, is to approve the Church's proposed projects based on an addendum to the Church and department's Mitigation Plan Agreement (February 16, 1989) and recommendations (Alternative 3).

The department's approval includes:

1. Allowing the Church to increase the permitted use of the septic system at East Gate Work Camp,

2. Developing the Spring Creek site according to the mitigation plan and recommendations,
3. Reinstalling the underground fuel storage tanks at the Mol Heron Shelter Complex according to state regulations,
4. Expanding the Golden Age Village mobile home park according to the mitigation plan and recommendations, and
5. Declaring the water and wastewater systems at the Royal Teton Ranch - North community kitchen as private systems to be reviewed by Park County.

The following is a summary of the mitigation measures proposed or recommended for impacts on various resources. Those mitigation measures that are asterisked (\*) are recommended for consideration because of possible cumulative impacts, not because of identified primary, secondary and reasonably foreseeable cumulative impacts of the proposed development. The potential cumulative impacts of possible future development may never materialize if the Church does not engage in development or expansion above and beyond what it has presently proposed. Therefore, the Church would be allowed to begin construction of the proposed developments contingent upon the Church's agreement to conduct the mitigation measures.

It is recommended the Church consider the asterisked mitigation measures in its future planning, particularly if any large-scale development beyond the current proposals is considered. All applicable provisions of the Mitigation Plan Agreement will continue or be modified in the addendum.

### Identified Mitigation Measures

#### 1. Physical Environment

##### Wildlife

- Powerlines will be constructed according to R.R. Olendorff's, Suggested Practices For Raptor Protection on Power Lines (1981).
- \* ● The Church will be a cooperative member in a Multiple Species Conservation Plan if future conditions warrant the creation of such a plan.

##### Aquatic Life & Habitats

- Sedimentation controls, such as hay bales on construction sites, revegetation and landscaping, will be done where appropriate.
- Develop a spill containment/emergency response plan, if deemed necessary by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MDFWP).
- Develop a sediment control plan in conjunction with tank installation at Mol Heron Shelter.
- \* ● Cooperate in a baseline study of invertebrate communities and use by spawning fish if future conditions warrant such a study.

- Develop, in cooperation with the MDFWP, a catch-and-release program for Yellowstone cutthroat trout during the Church's annual conference (proposed change from existing policy of one fish per fisherman).
- Leave a vegetation buffer zone between Golden Age Village and Fridley Creek.

#### Water

- Develop an Emergency Response Plan for the remediation of potential future fuel spills.
- Use a lagoon or treatment plant for final treatment of wastewater at Golden Age Village.
- Include additional hydrogeological information with plans and specifications for the proposed expansion of the Golden Age Village water and wastewater systems if the MDHES review indicates more data is necessary.
- Replace the Blue House Kitchen drainfield in an area outside the 100-year flood plain of Trail Creek and build a storage pond with land application or total evaporation for disposal of treated effluent, if the drainfield is currently in the floodplain.
- Use the sedimentation control measures described in the Church's preliminary engineer's reports.
- The geothermal well drilled to tap the aquifer serving LaDuke Hot Spring will only be used in accordance with the Certificate of Water Right issued by the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (MDNRC) until a change authorization, permit or other approval is given by the MDNRC under Montana law.
- The Church and the MDHES will jointly develop a water quality monitoring program for Mol Heron Creek. The Church will bear the cost of sampling and reporting, and will cooperate with the MDFWP in monitoring the aquatic environment.

#### Geology

- No mitigation measures were recommended.

#### Soils

- No mitigation measures were recommended.

#### Botanical Resources

- \* ● Cooperatively assist in mapping all plant communities on the ranch - in conjunction with the Multiple Species Conservation Plan listed as a mitigation measure for wildlife - if future conditions warrant the creation of such a plan.
- Consult with the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) for restoration of vegetation in sagebrush steppe communities.
- Stockpile 2-6 inches of topsoil for reclamation of construction projects where excavation will occur.
- Restrict heavy vehicle traffic on construction sites to avoid compaction.
- Use seed mixtures and species in consultation with the SCS.
- Monitor restored sites to determine if irrigation is necessary.
- Mulch, if required, with materials free of weed seed.

- Avoid driving vehicles in weed-infested areas.
- Implement a weed-control program for gravel pits.

#### Aesthetics

- Develop Church guidelines for building heights in conjunction with state building codes; design criteria for building color, roof line and building placement, and use vegetation and landscaping to make development more aesthetically pleasing.
- \* ● Use only those street and yard lights necessary for safety and security reasons.

#### Air Quality

- Apply water to settle the dust at construction sites, as necessary.

#### Historical and Archeological

- \* ● Consider structural rehabilitation of the old plunge at Corwin Springs.
- \* ● Additional subsurface excavation at Site 24PA758, if future construction occurs.
- Fence off, protect and otherwise guarantee the historic features along the Old Yellowstone Park Trail contained within the lagoon project area will not be disturbed, or:
- Small-scale excavation of select localities along the Old Yellowstone Park Trail contained within the lagoon project area and photograph and map the historic advertising boulder, then move the boulder to a museum facility or other appropriate location.
- Inventory Class III cultural resources at the Golden Age Village project site prior to final approval or construction.
- \* ● Inventory Class III cultural resources on appropriate areas of Church property prior to future development.

#### Land Use

- No mitigation measures were recommended.

## 2. Human Environment

Mitigation measures are not recommended except in the following cases:

#### Fire Protection

- \* ● Complete the plans for fire protection at East Gate that were described in the DEIS.

#### Roads and Traffic

- Cooperate with the county in paving and widening the county road from the Ranch Office to Ranch Headquarters.
- Cooperate with the state and county in replacing the Corwin Springs Bridge.

- Participate in a voluntary resolution process with Park County, Gardiner School District, and Yellowstone National Park for designating a safe, practical route for truck traffic through Gardiner.
- Joint Church-county review of road and bridge conditions before and after fuel tank installations in Mol Heron, and cooperate with road reconditioning as necessary after installation.