

**Montana Department  
of  
Fish, Wildlife & Parks**



1400 So. 19th  
Bozeman, MT 5971  
April 1, 1996

TO: Governor's Office, Glenn Marx, Room 204, State Capitol, POB 200801, Helena, MT 59620-0801  
Environmental Quality Council, Capitol Building, Room 106, POB 201704, Helena, MT 59620-1704  
Dept. of Environmental Quality, Metcalf Building, POB 200901, Helena, MT 59620-0901  
Dept. of Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Director's Office  
Parks Division  
Fisheries Division  
Wildlife Division  
Regional Supervisor  
Lands Section  
Design and Construction  
Legal Unit

Montana Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, POB 201202, Helena, MT 59620-1202  
Montana State Library, 1515 E. Sixth Ave., POB 201800, Helena, MT 59620-1800  
Jim Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, POB 1184, Helena, MT 59624  
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, P. O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624  
George Ochenski, P.O. Box 689, Helena, MT 59624  
Jerry DiMarco, POB 1571, Bozeman, MT 59771  
Wayne Hurst, PO Box 728, Libby, MT 59923  
Glen Hockett, 745 Doane Rd, Bozeman, MT 59715  
Madison County Commissioners

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Please find enclosed an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed purchase by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) of a year round administrative easement encompassing approximately 30 acres of private land adjacent to the mouth of Willow Creek, Madison County. This proposed acquisition would allow FWP continued access to the Willow Creek fish trap site for a period of 30 years.

Comments on this proposal will be accepted from April 2, 1996 through April 26, 1996 at 5:00 P.M., Comments should be mailed to E. Richard Vincent, Regional Fisheries Manager, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, 1400 So. 19th Avenue, Bozeman, MT 59715.

Sincerely,

*Stephen L. Lewis*

Stephen L. Lewis  
Regional Supervisor

**MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS  
FISHERIES DIVISION**

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**EASEMENT PURCHASE FOR YEAR ROUND ADMINISTRATIVE ACCESS  
TO WILLOW CREEK, MADISON COUNTY**

General Purpose: This proposed purchase of an easement encompassing approximately 30 acres by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) would provide year round administrative access for the purpose of construction, operation and maintenance of a fish trap and as a field laboratory for research on "Whirling Disease". FWP has used this site with verbal permission of the private landowner since 1981 for egg taking operations and fisheries studies.

I. The proposed easement is located near the town of Harrison in Madison County (Figure 1). The easement encompasses approximately 30 acres of private land. The legal description is Township 1 South, Range 1 West, Section 28: S1/2SW1/4NW1/4, S1/2N1/2SW1/4NW1/4 excepting those portions described in Book 129, page 143 and Book 129, pages 128 records of Madison County, Montana. The most common travel route to reach this site is on a county road for approximately 2.0 miles northeast of the town of Harrison and then 0.5 miles on a private road traveling in a northeasterly direction.

II. Need For the Project

This proposed easement would provide FWP year round access to the mouth of Willow Creek, a tributary to Harrison Reservoir, for thirty years for the purpose of continuing fish trapping, egg taking and a field laboratory for whirling disease research. This site has been used by FWP since 1981 for egg taking and fisheries research. Past access was gained through verbal permission from a previous landowner and lessee. The property recently changed ownership and the new landowner is willing to enter into a long term agreement with FWP for an administrative easement to the trap site. This trap site provides the FWP statewide hatchery system the only source of Desmet strain rainbow trout eggs. The Desmet strain of rainbow trout is used extensively by FWP in managing recreational fisheries in many Montana reservoirs. The site also provides important opportunities for "whirling disease" research. An outdoor laboratory was placed on this site in 1995 for the purpose of obtaining a better understanding of "whirling disease". This proposed easement purchase would insure FWP continued access to this trap site and research facility.

### III. Scope of the Project

This proposed year round easement for administrative access would be obtained by FWP in order to:

- 1). Construct, use, repair, replace, inspect, remove, enlarge, and maintain fish traps, monitoring areas, biological study areas and laboratories along Willow Creek;
- 2). Construct, use, repair, replace, and remove portable or semi-permanent structures necessary to FWP's personnel to accomplish stated purpose;
- 3). Grade or maintain the access road to the trap site within the easement area;
- 4). Provide for public utilities to the easement area, including power and telephone.

The total cost to FWP for this proposed 30 year administrative easement on approximately 30 acres would be \$30,000.00.

IV. Environmental Impact Checklist

**POTENTIAL IMPACT ON PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

	Major	Moderate	Minor	None	Unknown	Comments On Attached Pages
1. Terrestrial & aquatic life and habitats				X		
2. Water quality, quantity and distribution				X		
3. Geology & soil quality, stability and moisture				X		
4. Vegetation cover, quantity and quality				X		
5. Aesthetics				X		
6. Air quality				X		
7. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				X		
8. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air and energy				X		
9. Historical and archaeological sites				X		

**POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

	Major	Moderate	Minor	None	Unknown	Comments On Attached Pages
1. Social structures & mores				X		
2. Cultural uniqueness & diversity				X		
3. Local & state tax base & tax revenue				X		
4. Agricultural or industrial production				X		
5. Human health				X		
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income				X		
7. Access to & quality of recreational and wilderness activities				X		
8. Quantity & distribution of employment				X		
9. Distribution & density of population & housing				X		
10. Demands for government services				X		
11. Industrial & commercial activity				X		
12. Demands for energy				X		
13. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals				X		
14. Transportation networks & traffic flows				X		
15. Site Specific Modification System wide				X		

Other groups or agencies contacted or which may have overlapping jurisdiction Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

Individuals or groups contributing to this EA None

Recommendation concerning preparation of EIS No EIS required

EA prepared by: E. Richard Vincent

Date: April 1, 1996

## V. Discussion and Evaluation of Reasonable Alternatives

### 1). "No Action" Alternative.

If no action is taken then the following will continue to occur:

- FWP would continue to attempt to obtain access to the Willow Creek trap site through verbal permission of the landowner. The landowner could, at any time, refuse FWP permission for future access.
- If access was denied FWP by the private landowner, Desmet strain rainbow trout eggs would become unavailable to the state's hatchery system and fisheries management on lakes and reservoirs around the state would be adversely impacted.
- If access was denied FWP by the private landowner, fisheries research (including research on "whirling disease") would become stalled until a new site was established.

### 2). The Proposed Alternative.

The proposed purchase of an easement encompassing approximately 30 acres adjacent to Willow Creek would provide for the following:

- Insured year round administrative access to FWP for thirty years for the purpose of continued fish trapping, egg taking and a field "whirling disease laboratory.

## VI. Environmental Assessment Conclusion Section

### 1). Is an EIS required? No

This environmental review demonstrates that the impacts of this proposed purchase of an easement by FWP are not significant.

### 2). Describe the level of public involvement.

Legal notices soliciting interest in public meetings and request for public comment (will be) published in the Helena Independent Record and the Bozeman Daily Chronicle.

### 3). Duration of the comment period?

Public comment will be accepted through April 26, 1996.

- 4). Name, title, address and telephone number of the person responsible for preparing the EA document.

E. Richard Vincent  
Region 3 Fisheries Manager  
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
1400 So. 19th  
Bozeman, MT 59715

(406) 994-3551

