

Game Farm

GREENWOOD CORPORATION ELK GAME FARM
DECISION DOCUMENT
May 2, 1996

PROPOSED GAME FARM APPLICATION

The Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) received an application for an expansion of an existing game farm from Dennis and Beverly Rasmussen, 210 Rhodes Draw, Kalispell, MT 59901, on December 6, 1995. On January 4, 1995, FWP accepted the original application by letter which initiated a 120 day review and decision period per laws governing game farms. FWP completed the EA process for the application within the 120 day time period from the day we accepted the original application.

Mr. & Mrs. Rasmussen propose to expand an existing game farm by leasing and fencing 40 acres of their neighbor's property. The application involves land located in Section 29, T29N, R22W. Submitted plans include expanding the use of an existing irrigation system and constructing fences meeting Department of Livestock (DoL) and FWP specifications. The application does not include a proposal to increase existing elk numbers. The applicants will sell, dispose, or harvest excess or unwanted elk at their discretion.

Upon approval, the game farm will be constructed in spring, 1996.

THE MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT PROCESS (MEPA)

Pursuant to MEPA, FWP is required to assess the impacts of the proposed action to the human environment. FWP completed a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) of the proposed game farm expansion on February 20, 1996. During this process, it was determined that a full Environmental Impact Statement would not be required. The Draft EA was distributed to the Montana Environmental Quality Council, Montana Department of Health and Environmental Quality Council, Montana Department of Health and Environmental Quality, Montana Historical Society, Montana State Library, Montana Department of Livestock, FWP Regional Offices, state and local libraries, Flathead County Commissioners, and interested individuals. FWP sent cards indicating the availability of the Draft EA to another 18 individuals who have requested to be kept informed of game farm applications in the past or who are adjacent landowners. Another eight EAs were then distributed to individuals who completed these cards. The public comment period began March 21, 1996, and closed April 22, 1996. No public hearing was held.

ISSUES OF CONCERN IN THE EA

The EA process identified no significant environmental impacts that could not be mitigated. Because the expansion will be constructed in year-round habitat for white-tailed deer, they will be excluded from 40 acres of habitat. This impact is considered minor. There is also the

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possibility that other animals such as native elk, black bears, and coyotes could be attracted to the area. Responsible management and adherence to FWP stipulations which include frequent inspections of fences, the feeding of animals away from exterior fences, the keeping of feed and salt within buildings or enclosed containers, and the maintaining of a sanitary operation should reduce the risks of contact between wild game animals and game farm animals to an acceptable level.

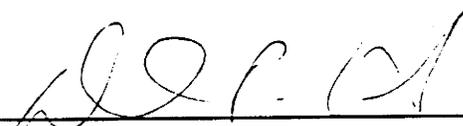
SUMMARY OF PUBLIC RESPONSES

FWP received three responses to the EA. Of these, two were against the proposed expansion and one was in favor. Issues raised by those against the expansion were general in nature and cited concerns such as: the spread of disease to wild animals, pollution of the wild gene pool, and the ethics of confining animals adapted to the wild.

THE DECISION AND STIPULATIONS

The Licensee must be in compliance with all game farm statutes and rules. After reviewing this application, the draft EA, and public comments, I approve issuing a license with the following stipulations:

1. The Licensee or manager must report to FWP the ingress of any game animal or any predators of ungulates (e.g. mountain lion, black bear, or coyote) immediately upon the discovery, and the reason for such ingress.
2. FWP reserves the right to require fence/gate modifications (such as, but not limited to, double fencing, electrical outriggers or solid board panels) to those portions of fence when problems with tree or snag blowdowns occur that compromise fence integrity, or when the previously constructed fence may prove to be inadequate to prevent ingress or egress of game animals or game farm animals.



Daniel P. Vincent
Regional Supervisor

5/2/96
Date