



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Helena Area Resource Office
930 Custer Avenue W
Helena, MT 59620

July 21, 1998

TO: Governor's Office, Julie Lapeyre, Room 204, State Capitol, POB 200801, Helena, MT 59620-0801
Environmental Quality Council, Capitol Building, Room 106, POB 201704, Helena, MT 59620
Dept. Environmental Quality, Metcalf Building, POB 200901, Helena, MT 59620-0901
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
 Director's Office
 Fisheries Division
 Wildlife Division
 Parks Division
 Lands Section
 Legal Unit
FWP Commissioners
MT Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, POB 201202 Helena, MT 59620-1202
MT State Parks Association, POB 699, Billings, MT 59103
MT State Library, 1515 E. Sixth Ave., POB 201800, Helena, MT 59620
James Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, POB 1184, Helena, MT 59624
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, POB 595, Helena, MT 59624
George Ochenski, POB 689, Helena, MT 59624
Broadwater County Commissioners, Courthouse, Townsend, MT 59644
Jerry DiMarco, POB 1571, Bozeman, MT 59771
MT Wildlife Federation, POB 1175, Helena, MT 59624
Glen Hockett, 745 Doane Road, Bozeman, MT 59715
Skyline Sportsman's Assoc., Box 173, Butte, MT 59701
Jefferson Valley Sportsman's Assoc., POB 663, Whitehall, MT 59759
Prickly Pear Sportsman's Assoc., 1721 Virginia Dale St., Helena, MT 59601
Senator Dan Hurwitz, PO Box 585, White Sulphur Springs, MT 59645
Representative Gay Ann Masolo, 20 Duck Drive, Townsend, MT 59644

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Enclosed, please find the final decision notice for the expansion of the existing parking lot at the Ray Creek access to the Canyon Ferry Wildlife Management Area (CFWMA) and construction of a new parking lot off Riley Road that would access the WMA. These parking lot projects were being proposed to provide additional parking and improved access to the WMA due to increased use of the area by recreationist, primarily hunters. These projects occur on the Canyon Ferry Wildlife Management Area, which is located approximately 1 mile north of Townsend, MT and is situated along the south end of Canyon Ferry Reservoir. The area is administered by the Bureau of Reclamation and is managed by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks under a special agreement with Reclamation.

Broadwater

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Utilizing the EA and public comment, a decision must be rendered by FWP which addresses the concerns and issues identified for this proposed project. Both FWP's analysis and all public input supported this expansion and construction project. Additional parking would ease access and parking problems associated with the increased use on the WMA, particularly during the hunting. After review of this proposal, an EIS is not required and it is my decision to approve this expansion/construction project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Korn", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael Korn
Helena Area Resource Coordinator

enc.

DECISION NOTICE
Canyon Ferry Wildlife Mangement Area Parking Lot Expansion/Construction
Prepared by Region 3, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
July 21, 1998

PROPOSAL

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to expand the existing parking lot at the Ray Creek access to the Canyon Ferry Wildlife Management Area (CFWMA) and build a new parking lot off Riley Road that would access the WMA. These parking lot projects are being proposed to provide additional parking and improved access to the WMA due to increased use of the area by recreationist, primarily hunters. These projects occur on the Canyon Ferry Wildlife Management Area, which is located approximately 1 mile north of Townsend, MT and is situated along the south end of Canyon Ferry Reservoir. The area is administered by the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) and is managed by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks under a special agreement with BOR.

The Ray Creek access is the main parking area for accessing 2 of the ponds on the WMA. During opening day of waterfowl season 1997 there were over 50 vehicles parked in this one lot. Many hunters use boats to hunt from and because this parking lot is narrow and doesn't have the capacity to handle current use. Parking, especially with a boat trailer, is therefore very difficult. The proposed improvements to this parking area would be widening and lengthening the lot to increase parking capacity and overall accessibility.

The Riley Road parking lot would be a small parking facility with a capacity of 6 vehicles. This parking lot would access one of the agricultural leases on the WMA that receives use primarily by upland bird hunters and field hunting waterfowl hunters. No parking facility currently exists in this vicinity and so hunters park on the county road.

Total estimated cost for the 2 parking lots is \$15,635.

MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT PROCESS

FWP is required to assess impacts of the proposal to the human and physical environment. The CFWMA parking lot expansion/construction proposal and its effects were documented by FWP in an Environmental Assessment (EA) to satisfy the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA).

A 15 day public comment period on the EA ran from July 1, 1998 through July 15, 1998. A legal notice was placed in the Townsend Star detailing how to acquire copies of the EA and providing comment on the proposal.

No significant issues were generated during the public comment period and no revisions were

made to the Draft Environmental Assessment, which will therefore serve as the Final Environmental Assessment.

ISSUES RAISED IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA)

The EA lists the issues in detail. These include soil disturbance and over-covering of soil with fill/surface material on less than one acre of idle land, covering of non-native grasses by fill/surface material, and costs associated with annual maintenance at these sites. All issues were considered to be minor in impact.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

As of July 15, 1998, the Department received one written comment. The person providing this written comment indicated a desire to have boat access to the ponds and river from the parking lots. The Riley Road parking lot does not provide access to the ponds or the river, therefore, no boat ramp could be built. The Ray Creek parking lot already provides access to boat ramps on ponds 2 and 3 during the waterfowl season.

DECISION

Utilizing the EA and public comment, a decision must be rendered by FWP which addresses the concerns and issues identified for this proposed project.

Both FWP's analysis and all public input supported this expansion and construction project. Additional parking would ease access and parking problems associated with the increased use on the WMA, particularly during the hunting season.

After review of this proposal, an EIS is not required and it is my decision to approve this expansion/construction project.



Michael Korn

Helena Area Coordinator

Helena, MT

July 20, 1998