

Nov. 9, 2000

CASCADE, FERGUS  
JUDITH BASIN, MEAGHER

Ladies and Gentlemen:

You recently received documents relating to the Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks (FWP) proposal to receive a gift of land from the LeRoy Beckman Estate. This gift of land (fee title) constitutes 2128 acres formerly known as the Fertterer Property in Fergus County, Montana. The land is located approximately 9 miles ENE of Denton and is adjacent to the Beckman Wildlife Management Area.

No modifications were made in the documents you received after the public review period. Please consider your previous copies of the Environmental Assessment and Management Plan along with the stipulations of the Decision Notice as final.

Comments received regarding the Beckman Wildlife Management Area Proposal – Fertterer Addition are summarized in the enclosed Decision Notice. No changes have been made to the draft Environmental Analysis considering public input. It is my recommendation to receive this gift from the Beckman Estate and include the property in FWP's region 4 Wildlife Management Area program, subject to approval by the FWP Commission. The FWP Commission will be asked to approve the purchase of this easement at their meeting on December 14, 2000.

Thank you very much for your interest and involvement.

Sincerely,



Mike Aderhold,  
Regional Supervisor

**OTHER INTERESTED GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS**

Tony Jewett, Montana Wildlife Federation, P.O. Box 1175, Helena, MT 59624  
John Gatchell, Montana Wilderness Assn, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624  
Rich Day, National Wildlife Federation, 240 North Higgins, Missoula, MT 59802  
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624  
Jim Richard, Montana Wildlife Federation, P.O. Box 508, White Sulphur Springs, MT 59645  
Alan Rollo, Montana Wildlife Federation, 808 52nd Street South, Great Falls, MT 59405  
Medicine River Canoe Club, 3805 4<sup>th</sup> Ave N, Great Falls, MT 59405  
Russell Country Sportsmen's Association, P.O. Box 282, Great Falls, MT 59403

## DECISION NOTICE

### BECKMAN WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA GIFT / ACQUISITION

#### Fertterer Addition

Prepared by Region 4, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
November 9, 2000

#### **PROPOSAL**

Mr. LeRoy Byron Beckman's Last Will and Testament established the RBB Deer Lands Trust Fund to acquire lands for deer and public hunting. Mr. Beckman's Will instructed Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) to assist in locating these lands, and that the lands should be within Fergus, Judith Basin, Cascade, or Meagher Counties; mountain or valley lands; that are partly timbered; that has a stream running through it; and that the lands be comparable in cost to other lands in the area. Mr. Beckman further instructed that after the land was acquired the title and management be transferred to MFWP.

Within the 4 identified counties, MFWP personnel originally completed a thorough examination of numerous properties that were known to be for sale and that might meet Mr. Beckman's conditions. Of them, the Steiners' Trail's End Ranch was the best match. It's purchase was recommended by MFWP. The RBB Deer Lands Trust Fund purchased the property June 7, 1999. That property was then accepted by the Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks Commission as a gift and added to the State's system of Wildlife Management Areas.

Additional property lying adjacent to the Steiners' Trail's End Ranch became available following the original purchase. This property, the Fertterer Property, complements the original intent and purpose of the Beckman Will by providing additional deer habitat in a manner similar to the Steiner Property. It features juniper-pine and sagebrush-grassland communities and functionally complements the original acquisition.

Since the Fertterer Property includes juniper-pine and sagebrush-grassland plant communities, as well as meets the terms of Mr. Beckman's Last Will and Testament, and further builds upon the ability to produce and harvest deer, the MFWP Region 4 Supervisor recommends that the Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission accept transfer of fee title and management of the Property from the RBB Deer Lands Trust Fund, and that the property be added to the Beckman Wildlife Management Area (WMA).

#### **MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT PROCESS**

FWP is required to assess impacts to the human and physical environment under the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). The Beckman Wildlife Management Area Proposal – Fertterer Addition and its effects were documented by FWP in an Environmental Assessment.

A 30-day public comment period ran from October 1, 2000 through October 31, 2000. Public

notices of the proposed action were placed in area newspapers (Great Falls and Lewistown) and a public hearing was held at the Denton Community Hall on October 11, 2000. Approximately 50 copies of the Environmental Assessment were distributed to adjacent landowners, sportsmen groups, County Commissioners, and other interested parties. In addition, representatives of FWP met with the Fergus County Commission to explain the proposal and answer questions. Adjacent landowners were also contacted and given a copy of the documents (EA and Management Plan).

## **SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

### Public Hearing

A public hearing was held in the Denton Community hall on October 11, 2000 at 7:00 P.M. Seven people other than department personnel attended. Those in attendance are neighbors to the property in question, area sportsmen or were friends of Mr. Beckman whose estate made the project possible.

Hearing officer Graham Taylor explained the format and purpose of the meeting. Copies of the EA and Management Plan were made available to all attendees. Following the information presentation by wildlife biologist Tom Stivers, an informative question and answer session ensued. Following is a summary of comments and questions:

1. How can the public find this land; is it signed?  
*Entrance signs and road/travel management signs have been posted on the Steiner acquisition (now Beckman WMA). Property boundary signs have been placed on exterior boundary fences. Signage was kept to a minimum with the knowledge that the potential addition of adjacent property would require starting all over again to post proper boundaries and travel corridors. A map is available from FWP.*
2. How does FWP go about maintaining and constructing property boundary fences?  
*FWP hires a summer fencing crew (also responsible for weed control) that annually maintains boundary and/or interior fences. They participate in new construction efforts only minimally. Most new construction and replacement is contracted to the private sector. Case in point is the current active contract to replace approximately 3.5 miles of exterior boundary fence on the north and south ends of the Beckman WMA.*
3. Does FWP ever cooperatively develop water delivery projects with adjacent landowners?  
*Cooperative water development projects are a possibility. Demands for water and the needs of a prescribed grazing system will dictate if, when and where such a system would be developed. A benefit to wildlife must be established.*
4. How many cows will Fertterer's be allowed to graze as part of the agreed to 2 year buy-sell arrangement? How does that use compare with their present livestock use?  
*Present livestock grazing by the Fertterer's constitutes approximately 150 calf-cow pairs (plus attendant bulls, N~6) from June 1 to December 1, annually. Agreed to grazing rates for the next two years will not exceed 125 pairs with attendant bulls. All livestock will be required to be moved into the 'windmill' pasture prior to October 15.*
5. Has FWP considered developing handicapped access to the property? Focal point of comment was the difficulty of getting directly to the river's edge by vehicle.  
*Handicapped access has not been a focus of the Beckman Estate acquisition to this point in time. FWP will invite interested parties to provide input to the future management planning on the property, including handicapped access to the river.*

6. Foot or horseback access off of the existing county road was endorsed, in lieu of adding more road access to the properties.

*The Management Plan calls for no new or additional developed access points. Hunters and recreationists will be invited to park along the existing county road at their convenience and access the property by foot or horseback. Existing logging roads/trails are not constructed to accommodate the public and will not be opened for public motorized use. Public use off of the county road is allowed April 1 to December 15, annually.*

No opposition to the Beckman Project – Fertterer Addition was voiced. Some spoke in favor of the action and all eulogized Mr. Beckman for his foresight.

#### Additional Comments

Written comments were received from 2 additional parties. Both wrote in favor of receiving the gift. No additional questions or issues were raised. Support was registered for the naming of the Wildlife Management Area as the 'Beckman'.

#### **STIPULATION OF THIS RECORD OF DECISION DOCUMENT**

It is imperative that FWP work closely with the Fergus County Commission to satisfy any concerns over status of the county owned road leading into and terminating on the property. This may include the option(s) of seasonally closing the road, abandoning County ownership of a portion of the road, or leaving the road in County ownership on a yearlong basis with no seasonal road closure (present status).

#### **MODIFICATIONS TO ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS AND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

No modifications to the EA or the Management Plan are recommended.

#### **DECISION**

Utilizing the Environmental Analysis, Management Plan, and public comment, a decision must be rendered by MFWP that addresses the interests and issues identified for this proposed project. Given results of FWP's analysis coupled with public comment, acceptance of this gift of land from the Beckman Estate is warranted.

After review of this proposal and the corresponding public support and comment, it is my recommendation that FWP receive in fee title the Beckman Estate property subject to approval by the FWP Commission.

Signed,



Mike Aderhold,  
Regional Supervisor