



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Region One
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Ref: JS079-05
September 9, 2005

RECEIVED

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LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL
POLICY OFFICE

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*Les Evarts, CSKT, PO Box 278, Pablo, 59855
Mike Brown, CSKT, PO Box 278, Pablo, 59855
Environmental Quality Council, Capitol Building, Helena, 59620-1704
*Dept. of Environmental Quality, Planning, Prevention & Assistance, PO Box 200901, Helena, 59620-0901
*Dept. of Environmental Quality, Permitting Compliance, PO Box 200901, Helena, 59620-0901
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks: Director's Office, Legal Unit, Lands, & Wildlife
*Mt Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, 225 North Roberts, Veteran's Memorial Bldg., Helena 59620
*Montana State Library, 1515 East Sixth Ave., Helena, 59620-1800
DNRC, PO Box 201601, Helena, 59620-1601
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Jim Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, PO Box 1184, Helena, 59624
George Ochenski, PO Box 689, Helena, 59624
Joe Gutkoski, Montana River Action Network, 304 N 18th, Bozeman, 59715
Sen. Jerry O'Neil, 985 Walsh Road, Columbia Falls, 59912
Rep. Verdell Jackson, 555 Wagner Lane, Kalispell, 59901

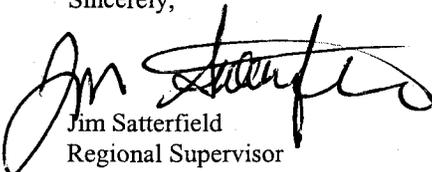
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), Region One, has completed an environmental assessment (EA) for the purpose of improving angling quality of Martin Lakes in Flathead County through removal of northern pike, and pumpkinseed sunfish and yellow perch, by means of rotenone piscicide and restocking with westslope cutthroat trout.

Based on the public comment, the agreement for the need to improve the Martin Lakes fishery, and cooperation from the private landowner, it is recommended that the proposed project be implemented. Therefore, the draft EA becomes the final EA, with one edit as set forth in the record of decision (ROD). A copy of the ROD is enclosed for your information.

Please direct questions or comments to Brian Marotz, 490 N. Meridian Road, Kalispell 59901, (406) 751-4546, or e-mail to bmarotz@mt.gov.

Sincerely,



Jim Satterfield
Regional Supervisor

/mi

Enclosure

c: Thad Briggs, Thad's Tackle, PO Box 42, Olney, 59927
Paul Jeremiassen, PO Box 173, Olney, 59927

*E-mailed



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Region One
490 N. Meridian Road
Kalispell, MT 59901

**Record of Decision
and
Finding of No Significant Impact
for**

**Proposed Rotenone Treatment of Martin Lakes and Outlet Stream for the Purpose of
Removing Northern Pike and Restocking with Westslope Cutthroat Trout
to Improve Angling Quality**

September 9, 2005

Project proposal:

The project is designed to improve angling quality of Martin Lakes through removal of northern pike, pumpkinseed sunfish, and yellow perch by applying rotenone piscicide (fish pesticide) and restocking with westslope cutthroat trout.

Site location and characteristics:

Martin Lakes are located in Flathead County on the Flathead National Forest approximately three miles west of the town site of Olney. Approximately 0.5 mile of stream associated with this proposal is located on private land. The landowner has been involved with the planning and surveying aspects of this proposal. The legal description is T32N, R24W, Sections 10, 11, 13, and 14. The upper lake is 14.1 surface acres and has a maximum depth of 62 feet, and the lower lake is 6.1 surface acres and has a maximum depth of 34 feet. The section of stream that will be treated is approximately 1.3 miles long.

Project justification:

Historical information about Martin Lakes suggests the fishery has been poor to marginal for quite a few years. File data from 1984 indicate that the lakes exhibited similar population status with northern pike at that time. That report also cited information from 1969 that indicated the fishery was comprised predominantly of northern pike. In 1998 the lakes were evaluated once again and were under consideration for chemical rehabilitation to improve angling quality. Surveys in 2003 and 2005 confirmed that the status of this fishery had not changed much since the 1969 report, and thus became the impetus for our proposal to rehabilitate the lakes to improve the fishery.

Environmental impacts of project:

No adverse effects are expected for plants, adult amphibians, reptiles, birds, wild mammals, or humans. Impacts to the resource categories are identified in the draft EA and range from

nonexistent to short-term and minor. Some crustaceans are likely to be affected, but will repopulate the lake to near normal levels generally within one calendar year. Martin Lakes may provide a source of food for bald eagles that nest in the area simply because they contain fish, but northern pike are not a typical food item for raptors, are in relatively low abundance in the lakes, and alternative sources of food are available in the vicinity of these nests.

Social impacts:

There are no statewide angler pressure estimates available to indicate angler use of Martin Lakes; however, reports from local anglers and results of several surveys over the past 20 years indicate the fishery is characterized as low quality. There would be little to no impacts to anglers as a result of the rotenone application. Although MFWP survey data indicate the maximum length of northern pike is near 25 inches, MFWP expects that some larger pike are present in Martin Lakes, and they would be killed during treatment. However, the purpose of this project is to improve angling by providing a species of fish more suited for this type of habitat. Removal of the northern pike and associated fish species, coupled with the stocking of westslope cutthroat trout, would have a positive social impact by improving angling quality.

Public involvement:

In compliance with ARM 12.2.432 through 12.2.433 (inclusive) and the Montana Environmental Policy Act (Mitchell 2002), an environmental assessment was prepared and circulated for public comment from August 8, 2005, through September 7, 2005. The draft EA was sent to the following people, organizations, agencies, and officials, or was posted in the listed manner for public review:

- Available at FWP regional offices statewide.
- Posted on the MFWP website.
- Legal notices in The Daily Interlake, Whitefish Pilot, and Tobacco Valley News.
- Sent to libraries in Libby, Eureka, and Troy.
- Sent to Flathead County Commissioners.
- Sent to fifteen individuals, officials, entities, and agencies listed on the cover sheet of the draft EA.
- Notification cards were sent to nine individuals and organizations.
- Five copies were mailed to Thad's Tackle Shop in Olney, Montana.
- One copy was mailed to the private landowner on whose property the project is proposed.
- MFWP issued a press release on August 8, 2005, listing the proposed action, comment period, and contact information.

MFWP received one comment by phone on September 7, 2005 in favor of the project. This commenter offered empirical information about the sentiments of people in the Olney area and did not provide other information relative to the project or comment on specific information about the draft EA. Public scoping did not identify any issues that were not covered in the draft EA.

Additional information:

After reviewing the draft EA, the private landowner corrected an error in the EA. Section 5d of the draft EA erroneously indicated that the private pond located downstream of the project site contains westslope cutthroat trout. In fact, the pond contains brook trout that pioneered the pond during construction. There are no other species of fish in the pond.

Surveys in August 2005 found crayfish in the lake. This nontarget organism would likely be impacted during the treatment. Post treatment evaluations of other lakes in the area (Rogers Lake and Hubbart Reservoir) indicate that crayfish naturally repopulated those lakes after the application of rotenone. We expect that crayfish would similarly repopulate in Martin Lakes.

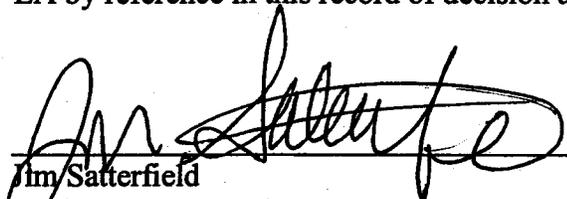
Electrofishing surveys were conducted on the outlet stream in August 2005. Approximately 0.9 mile of stream was electrofished starting at the Martin Lakes road crossing and continuing upstream into the small outlet channel of the lower lake. There were 144 brook trout and two northern pike (122 mm and 96 mm) captured. The pike were captured just downstream of an old bridge crossing on the private land, and they were captured only inches apart. This survey indicated that the threat of reinvasion by pike or other nontrout species is low, assuming a complete kill can be achieved in the lakes and stream.

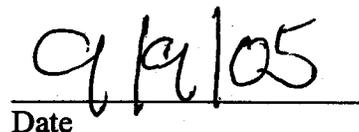
The amphibians and reptiles observed at the site include the Columbia spotted frog, pacific chorus frog, and western terrestrial garter snake. Large tadpoles were observed in the pelagic zone of the private pond and are believed to be those of the western toad or Columbia spotted frog. Plankton samples were collected from the lakes during June, July, and August 2005, but have not been analyzed. These data will be used to compare pre- and posttreatment conditions.

Section D of the Draft EA identified the project location as sections 10, 11, and 14 of T32N, R24W. The EA did not reflect that portions of the project actually lie within section 13 also.

Record of decision:

Based on the public comment from scoping, the agreement for the need to improve the fishery at Martin Lakes, and cooperation from the private landowner, I recommend that the proposed project be implemented to fulfill the desired outcome. The draft EA therefore becomes the final EA by reference in this record of decision and is effective upon this date.


Jim Satterfield
Region One Supervisor
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks


Date