

DECISION NOTICE:
Frenchtown Pond State Park Master Site Plan Improvements

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804
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LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL
POLICY OFFICE

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED PROJECT

Montana FWP proposes to proceed with Phase III of construction which will include an irrigation system with it's own well, top-soil and turf grass in selected areas of high use, and trees and shrubs to landscape around the comfort stations, entrance area, host pad, playground and other selected areas as identified in the Frenchtown Pond State Parks' Management Plan and Master Site Plan. Additional funds will be requested in the next biennial budget to complete the proposed Master Site Plan. Some smaller items may be completed with in-kind services from area communities and groups or with force account projects. This environmental assessment addressed all construction proposed in the Master Site Plan, and on all future phases.

Alternative 1. No Action

The "no action" alternative does not address the problem of growing recreational needs in the Missoula Valley and the ability of Frenchtown Pond State Park to retain the qualities it is known for, such as swimming, fishing, picnicking and canoeing, while protecting the natural resources. Projected increases in recreation popularity will subsequently raise visitation at Frenchtown Pond. The natural resources and existing facilities will not be able to support growth without significant negative impacts. The existing facilities (comfort station and roads) require significant improvements for safe visitor use.

Alternative 2. Preferred Alternative: Develop site according to Master Site Plan in phases and as funding is available.

Visitation approaches 30,000 people annually and is expected to grow with the popularity of outdoor recreation and continued growth in the Missoula Valley. Much of the site had been under-developed, thus this Alternative will help to spread use across the site, provide quality recreation for many visitors, ease the burden on facilities and the natural resources, as well as improve the aesthetic benefits for visitors. The first two Phases have been completed and comments from the public have been very favorable and supportive of the developments. The phased approach allows for funding over several years, the possibility of completing smaller, in-kind projects by community groups or force-account, and a chance for resource managers to evaluate the project and make changes to the Master Site Plan prior to completion, if in the best interest of the resource, FWP, and the public.

Alternative 3. Develop site according to Master Site Plan, including 10 overnight camping sites.

Camping received minor support during the 1994 visitor survey and one negative comment during public meetings held in 1997. Day use visitors indicated that they would continue using the site for day-use activities (92%) even if camping was provided at the Park. Camping (primitive development) would provide added revenue for the Park to help pay for the site operations and maintenance. Camping was discontinued in 1985 due to management problems associated with inappropriate late night behavior in the campground and a lack of law enforcement to correct the problems. FWP now feels that these issues can be addressed appropriately if camping is provided in the future; however, six private campgrounds between Missoula and Alberton provide camping with full hookups (electricity, sewer, and water).

It is not the intent of FWP to compete with local, private business owners; therefore, this alternative will not be considered at the present time, unless significant public support and demonstrated need arises. If this alternative is considered in the future, a separate environmental assessment will be prepared to evaluate potential impacts.

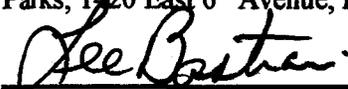
PUBLIC PROCESS AND COMMENT

The EA was sent out and the public comment period began April 4, 2006, and ran through May 8, 2006. Legal notices were published in the Missoulian, the Helena Independent Record and the Seeley Lake Pathfinder. There were 27 full copies, 6 electronic versions, and 18 post cards about the EA sent to interested parties consisting of neighbors, friends, conservation groups, Montana state legislators, Montana congressional members, county & state departments or agencies, and federal agencies. The Frenchtown Pond State Park Master Site Plan Improvements EA was posted on the MFWP web site April 4, 2006. The EA is still available for review at http://fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices/archive_2006,4.aspx. Two comments were received from the public. One email response supported the project. Another person called and supported the project wholeheartedly.

DECISION

Based on the analysis in the Environmental Assessment (EA) and the applicable laws, regulations and policies, I have determined that this action will not have a significant effect on the natural or human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared. It is my decision to implement Alternative 2, the Preferred Alternative and proceed with the improvements of this site. By notification of this Decision Notice, the draft EA is hereby made the final EA with the MFWP responses in this Decision Notice. The final EA with Decision Notice may be viewed at or obtained from Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks at the above address.

In accordance with MFWP policy, an appeal may be made by any person who has either commented in writing to the department on the proposed project, or who has registered or commented orally at a public meeting held by the department on the proposed project, or who can provide new evidence that would otherwise change the proposed plan. An appeal must be submitted to the Director of FWP in writing and must be postmarked or received within 30 days of this decision notice. The appeal must describe the basis for the appeal, how the appellant has previously commented to the department or participated in the decision-making process, and how the department can provide relief. The appeal should be mailed to: Director, Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 1420 East 6th Avenue, Helena, MT 59620.


Mack Long

5/31/06
Date