

DECISION NOTICE:
**Lost Creek State Park Volunteer Campground Host Site
Development Project**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Region 2, 3201 Spurgin Road, Missoula, MT 59804
(406) 542-5500

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED PROJECT

Lost Creek State Park is one of Montana's "hidden gems". It does not get the tourism pressure that some of Montana's better-known state parks receive, but it is well-loved by locals and does receive a fair number of out-of the region and state visitors who value the primitive status of the park and its quiet beauty. While the vast majority of visitors to the park follow park rules, a small minority do cause problems at the park, including littering, vandalism, excessive noise, drug and alcohol use, and staying past the posted 7-day limit. Region 2 park managers have been having an increasingly difficult time monitoring these visitors and enforcing park rules. Budget constraints do not allow for Lost Creek State Park to be staffed 24-hours a day 7 days a week during the open season (May 1-Nov 30). Park managers believe that the solution is to install a volunteer campground host site in the park and advertise for volunteer campground hosts to come and stay at the park and help monitor visitors. Volunteer campground hosts provide their valuable services for free, requiring only that their camping fees be paid for. However, it is extremely difficult to persuade competent volunteer hosts to stay in "primitive" host sites for long periods of time, if at all. In light of this, FWP has proposed providing a gravel pad, electricity, water, and a septic tank and drain field for hosts. Park managers feel they will be more successful at attracting good volunteer campground hosts if they have these services to offer.

Alternative 1. No Action

If no action is taken, a volunteer campground host site would not be added to Lost Creek State Park, and the Park would continue to have problems monitoring and dealing with inappropriate or illegal behavior by park visitors. It is unlikely that monies would be found in the Parks budget for a permanent FWP staff member at the park, and it has been shown that it is very difficult to get competent volunteer hosts to stay at primitive, undeveloped host sites.

Alternative 2. Preferred Alternative:

In the preferred Alternative, FWP would place a volunteer campground host site in Lost Creek State Park opposite the lower campground on the north side of the main park road. The volunteer campground host site would include electricity and water hookups, a well that would supply the host site and the lower campground with water, a septic tank and drain field, a gravel parking area and vehicle pull-out, and a storage shed. The total estimated cost of this project is \$62,000. Electricity for RV use and well requirements would be supplied by a propane generator, which would be installed in the storage shed. FWP managers feel confident that this investment would enable them to regularly attract competent private citizens to act as volunteer campground hosts for Lost Creek State Park. The presence of a volunteer campground host can effectively deter vandalism and inappropriate behavior in the park, such as excessive noise after-hours and public consumption of drugs and alcohol. The reduction of such incidents improves the experience for the public and encourages return visits.

Alternative 3.

Alternative C is essentially the same as Alternative B, except that electrical power lines would be run to the volunteer campground host site instead of using a propane generator. This is not the preferred alternative because the estimated cost (\$70,000) of running electrical lines to the volunteer campground host site is prohibitively high. That amount of money is almost equal to the entire budget for this project, and therefore would leave no money left for the construction and installation of the other amenities, such as a well, septic drain field, host pad, and storage shed.

PUBLIC PROCESS AND COMMENT

The EA was sent out and the public comment period began April 6, 2006, and ran through May 8, 2006. Legal notices were published in the Missoulian, the Helena Independent Record and the Silver State Post (Deer Lodge), and a statewide news release was sent out. There were 30 full copies and 6 electronic versions of the EA, as well as postcards about the EA sent to interested parties consisting of neighbors, friends, conservation groups, Montana state legislators, Montana congressional members, county and state departments or agencies, and federal agencies. The Lost Creek State Park Volunteer Campground Host Site Development Project EA was posted on the MFWP web site April 6, 2006. The EA is still available for review at http://fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices/notice_1063.aspx. Three comments were received. One was an email response supporting the project. Another person called and supported the project wholeheartedly. A mailed comment was received from the Deer Lodge, Powell and Granite Counties Environmental Health Department to remind MFWP about the need to acquire a permit for the septic system. *FWP Response: MFWP engineers will apply for the appropriate permits prior to any construction.*

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 development of the host 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. Please address questions about this project to Lee Bastian, Regional Parks Manager (542-5517; lbastian@mt.gov).

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, PO Box 200701, Helena, MT 59620-0701.

/s/ Lee Bastian for
Mack Long
Regional Supervisor

6-2-06
Date