



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Decision Notice
and
Finding of No Significant Impact
for
Mount Silcox Wildlife Management Area Grazing Lease
Sanders County, Montana
Environmental Assessment

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Region 1
490 N. Meridian Road
Kalispell, MT 59901

March 23, 2007

Project Proposal

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks proposes to allow cattle to graze on the Mount Silcox Wildlife Management Area. A local rancher will provide the 40-50 pairs of cattle. Cattle will graze during the growing season and be allowed to graze the WMA after seed ripe on a rotational basis. Cattle will be rotated between three pastures, two on the WMA and one on the operator's land in accordance with the grazing plan. The duration of the plan will be for six years (two complete grazing cycles). The primary goal is to increase the quality of grass produced on the WMA. The primary grass on the WMA is an introduced species – smooth brome (Bromus inermis). Wintering deer, elk, and bighorn sheep will benefit from the improved quality of vegetation and stimulation of fall regrowth during the critical winter and spring seasons.

Public Comment

FWP accepted public comment on the draft environmental assessment (EA) for a 14-day period from February 23 through March 8, 2007. The EA was advertised through media releases and legal notices. Copies of the EA were available from the Kalispell FWP office, on the FWP web site, and at the Montana State Library and the Thompson Falls City Library. The EA was mailed directly to a number of interested persons.

Four comments were received. One comment was in favor of the proposal while one comment was against the proposal. Two comments were neutral.

Response to Comments

The main objective of the Mount Silcox WMA is to provide crucial winter and spring habitat for primarily elk and bighorn sheep. The designed and proven system of rest-rotation grazing is used as a tool to improve the forage condition for these species during the important winter and spring seasons. Past livestock grazing on this WMA and other WMAs managed by Montana

Fish, Wildlife & Parks has proven to be very effective and compatible with big game and other wildlife species. The number of grazing pairs will be monitored and evaluated to prevent overgrazing on the 250 acres of pasture and can be adjusted as necessary.

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI):

Based on the analysis in the environmental assessment (EA), I find the proposed alternative, to allow cattle grazing on the WMA, to be the preferred alternative. I have evaluated the EA and applicable laws, regulations, and policies, and have determined that this action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

The final EA and/or the decision notice and FONSI may be viewed at or obtained from Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Region One, 490 N. Meridian Road, Kalispell, MT 59901. Please contact FWP Biologist Bruce Sterling, (406) 827-4389 or e-mail to bsterling@mt.gov, with questions or comments.

James Satterfield, Jr., Ph.D.
Regional Supervisor

Date