

**Decision Notice
and
Finding of No Significant Impact
for
Lower Flathead River Proposed Fishing Access Site Improvement
Environmental Assessment**

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

January 29, 2008

Description of Proposed Action

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to develop the Lower Flathead River Fishing Access Site (FAS) using funds from fishing license dollars (\$55,000). Development would include closing the west approach and constructing a paved approach at the east entrance (to comply with MDOT's approach permit). In addition, compliance with the MDOT approach permit requires clearing brush and trees around the proposed approach for a minimum of one thousand feet. Development would also include constructing a gravel parking area with eight truck/trailer parking spots, improving the gravel boat launch, installing a latrine, and installing signs.

Background

The Lower Flathead River FAS is a new acquisition by FWP. It was purchased from a private landowner in the summer of 2005 and has yet to be developed. Prior to 2003, public access to the Flathead River was allowed via a private launch at the current FAS. In 2003, the site was closed to public access. After the site closed, FWP received numerous inquiries about reestablishing access on the Flathead River. These inquiries were the impetus for purchasing the land from the private landowner with the intention of developing a public fishing access site.

Alternatives

Following are brief descriptions of the two alternatives that were developed in the EA:

Alternative A: No Action

Do not develop the Lower Flathead River Fishing Access Site. Due to safety concerns with the site distance, if the proposed improvement could not be made, FWP would have to consider disposal of the property. The FAS would remain in its primitive state, which could create site protection and sanitation issues. No improvement to the entrance to the site would occur, which could cause a traffic safety hazard.

Alternative B: Develop Lower Flathead River Fishing Access Site

The Lower Flathead River Fishing Access Site was purchased to establish access to the lower Flathead River with the intention of developing it into a standard FWP FAS. Development at this site would include closing the west approach, constructing a paved approach at the east approach (to comply with MDOT’s approach permit), constructing a gravel parking area with eight truck/trailer parking spots, improving the gravel boat launch, installing a latrine, and installing traffic and regulation signs. To comply with the MDOT approach permit, brush and trees would be cleared east of the proposed approach for a minimum of one thousand feet. The development is intended to protect the site (i.e., prevent erosion, prevent sanitation problems, prevent off-road use, and control weeds).

Public Involvement

1. Legal notices were published in the Kalispell Daily Inter Lake, the Helena Independent Record, the Missoulian, and the Sanders County Ledger.
2. Legal notice and the draft EA were posted on the Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks web site.
3. Direct notice was given to adjacent landowners.
4. Draft EA was available at the Region 1 headquarters in Kalispell and the state headquarters in Helena.

FWP received one written comment during the 30-day public comment period. The lone respondent was favorable to Alternative B.

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

Based on analysis in the EA, I find Alternative B 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 impact on the human or physical environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

The final EA may be viewed at or obtained from Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Region 1, in Kalispell, Montana. Please direct request to the Region One Parks Division Office at 490 North Meridian Road, Kalispell, MT 59901.

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

Date