



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

**Region 1
490 N. Meridian Road
Kalispell, MT 59901**

**Environmental Assessment
and
Decision Notice
for the
McWenneger Slough Proposed Fishing Access Site Acquisition**

April 6, 2009

Project Proposal and Justification

Public access is rapidly diminishing in western Montana. Changes in land ownership can result in a loss of access to previously available sites. As an increasing human population is funneled through a diminishing number of sites, conflicts can increase. It is important to maintain and secure access to water bodies near population centers for a variety of recreational uses.

The Flathead Land Trust (FLT) acquired this site as part of a conservation easement. FLT developed the site for public use, with improved parking, a rerouted drainpipe, and installation of a vault latrine, and then offered to sell it to FWP at a bargain price. The current value of the site is estimated at more than \$47,000; FLT offered it to FWP for \$30,000.

Location of Site

This site is located about 5 miles east of Kalispell, Montana, in Flathead County along Highway 35 at T28N, R21W, SE1/4 NE1/4 Section 1.

Environmental and Social Impacts

This project proposes to acquire 11.94 acres in fee title for an access. A Recreational Use Permit was previously acquired from the Montana Department of Transportation to allow ingress/egress off Highway 35 and parking. The site has long been used informally by the public for fishing, bird watching, and waterfowl hunting. Acquisition would also protect wetlands from development. The site is suitable for shoreline use, carry-on boat launching, and winter ice fishing, and no change is anticipated from current uses. This acquisition would continue those uses and secure public access.

Public Involvement

In compliance with the Montana Environmental Policy Act, a draft environmental assessment (EA) was prepared and released for a 30-day public comment period on March 5, 2009. Notices were placed in three newspapers (Daily Inter Lake, Hungry Horse News, and Helena Independent Record), a news release was done, and notices were mailed to selected persons, legislators, and adjacent landowners. Copies of the EA were made available at the Region One headquarters in Kalispell and on the FWP web site.

Nine comments were received from the general public and one from Flathead Wildlife, Inc. All were in favor of the proposed acquisition.

Revisions to the Draft Environmental Assessment

- There were no substantive changes to the draft EA raised during public comment; therefore, the draft EA becomes the final EA.

Decision

Based on the comments we received during the public comment period for the draft EA, we have prepared the final EA for the project. This site is in a key location to facilitate public use and offered to FWP for a bargain price. I recommend that FWP move to acquire this site through fee title.



4/7/09

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

Date