

**FORT PECK RESERVATION SWIFT FOX TRANSLOCATION  
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
DECISION NOTICE**

**Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
Region 6, Glasgow  
August 5, 2009**

**Proposal**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) is proposing to translocate swift fox from within FWP Administrative Region 6 in northeast Montana to suitable habitat on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation (FPIR). Swift fox currently exist on FPIR at very low densities. This translocation is a population augmentation to facilitate establishment of a resident population of swift fox on FPIR. This action will provide additional wildlife viewing, assist Tribal officials to restore a culturally important species to the reservation, increase species diversity on the reservation, and facilitate range expansion of swift fox in the state. A translocation of 10 juvenile swift fox was conducted in 2006. This is an augmentation to that translocation. Up to 30 swift fox, mostly juveniles, 50/50 sex ratio, will be captured by local trappers beginning in September and continuing until completed. Juvenile swift fox will be made available to tribal wildlife officials for soft release to suitable habitat on Fort Peck Indian Reservation. Approximately even numbers of swift fox would come from the Theony, Whitewater, and the Chinook areas. All adult or a combination of adult and juvenile swift fox would be made available if juveniles are unavailable. Fort Peck wildlife officials have agreed to the terms of this translocation.

**Public Comment**

FWP is required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) to assess significant potential impacts of a proposed action to the human and physical environment. In compliance with MEPA, an Environmental Assessment (EA) was completed for the proposed project by FWP and released for public comment on July 13, 2009.

Public comments on the proposed project were taken for more than 20 days, ending August 4, 2009. The EA was available at the FWP Regional Office in Glasgow; legal notices were printed in the *Billings Gazette*, *Great Falls Tribune*, *Glasgow Courier*, *Havre Daily New* and other local newspapers and the EA was posted on the FWP webpage:

**<http://www.fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices>**.

No pertinent issues were raised during the comment period of the EA process. Two comments were received on the proposal. Both comments were in support of the Proposed Action as written in the EA. One comment expressed concerns over the prior translocation efforts and animals dispersing to parts unknown. The best available methods were used to ensure the success of the previous translocation. However, it is not uncommon for approximately 50% of translocated juveniles to disperse from release areas. A portion of the remaining animals, established territories in the release area and successfully reproduced, demonstrating habitat suitability. Translocating 30 animals to multiple release sites on FPIR should establish a self-sustaining, resident population.

## **Decision**

Based on public comments and internal review, the Draft EA will be adopted as the Final EA. This Decision Notice and the Final EA will serve as the final documents pertaining to this action.

FWP recognizes that there will be no significant impacts on the human and physical environments associated with this project. Therefore, I conclude that an Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of analysis and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

FWP and the Fort Peck Tribes have jointly developed this proposal and both desire an expansion of swift fox on FPIR and in Montana. Populations in the trapping area are robust and will not be impacted by the removal of 30 animals. This action serves as an example of cooperative action between the Fort Peck Tribes and FWP.

In consideration of these facts, it is my recommendation that the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission approve the translocation of up to 30 swift fox onto the FPIR, as described in the proposed action.



August 5, 2009

Patrick Gunderson  
Region Six Supervisor

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