



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

**Decision Notice
and
Finding of No Significant Impact
for
Crystal Lake South Forest Restoration and Fire Hazard Reduction**

**Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Region One
490 N. Meridian Road
Kalispell, MT 59901**

September 14, 2009

Proposed Action

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes fuels reduction and forest restoration on 112 acres of forested FWP land within a 160-acre parcel located on the southwest side of Crystal Lake. This parcel is part of the 3,000-acre Thompson Chain of Lakes Fishing Access Site (TCL FAS). The site is managed as recreational land by FWP.

Public Process

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 August 20, 2009.

The public was notified in the following manners to comment on the draft EA, the proposed action, and alternatives:

- Two public notices in each of these newspapers: Helena Independent Record, Daily Inter Lake, Missoulian, and The Western News.
- One statewide press release.
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web site: <http://fwp.mt.gov>.
- 21-day public comment period following publication of second legal notice.

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope.

Summary of Public Comment

Six people responded with written comments. All of the comments were either supportive or neutral regarding this proposal.

Comment Summary: Six total

- ❑ “I feel that the project on the northeast side of Crystal Lake and the area along the Thompson Lakes should be completed before you start anymore fuel reduction projects.”
- ❑ “I am all for the logging around Turtle Cove. However I hope that the new roads and the slash gets cleaned up allot better than the projects done last year on the other side of the lake. The slash left has created a far worst chance for fire. Plus the roads have created new trails thru wet lands and they have not been returned to previous conditions.”
- ❑ “Howabout cleaning up all the dry piles of wood on Lakeshore Dr. going into Crystal Lake from the last fuel reduction. Ideal time would be Sept.-October. This is a fire waiting to happen. East side of Crystal Lake. On right as you drive from Hwy 2 down Lakeshore Dr. to Crystal Lake.”
- ❑ “I am in favor of your proposal to thin and clear fire fuel on the backside of Crystal Lake. I would like to suggest that before this project is started that the clearing be completed on the north side of Crystal adjacent to my property on Happy’s Border Lane.”

FWP Response: Much of the slash remaining from the previous winter’s forestry work has been piled and will be burned during the 2009/2010 fall and winter. The proposed project will provide additional slash treatment in previously thinned units through mastication and/or chipping. FWP staff will continue obliteration of user-caused roads that have resulted from previous forestry work. This is being accomplished through distribution of large slash onto vehicle tracks and through signage and law enforcement efforts.

- ❑ “Do you think that all of that mastication is necessary? Is the biggest driver for it soil nitrates? Aesthetics? Air Quality? Or is it that there's virtually no saw logs in it and this is pretty much a mastication show? Stone couldn't take any of the whips? How much of the \$625 is mastication?”

The 61st legislature passed a bill, HB 42, that required FWP to create a Forest Management Plan for fuel reduction, wildlife habitat enhancement, etc. The bill also created a revolving fund and seed money to get it started. Was this project already in the pipe before it could be applicable to the new RLF?”

FWP Response:

Aesthetics and the avoidance of slash burning is the primary reason for mastication. FWP will be investigating other options such as pulpwood or hog fuel outlets as well. There will be some sawlog production, and this is intended to offset the per-acre cost of thinning and removing the dense ladder fuels that currently exist.

It is correct that this project was in the pipeline before HB 42. FWP looks forward to utilizing this valuable tool in future forest management projects.

- "The proposed Crystal Lake Project sounds very good to me. With very few minor impacts, "most of them positive" and a few negatives that can be mitigated, this project sounds like the right thing to do. I know "as a land owner of timber" it's always a balancing act of when to cut and improve the rest of the timber, and when to wait. It looks like this is the time to move forward on this parcel."

FWP Response:

So noted.

Decision

Based on the analysis in the environmental assessment and public comment, I have selected Alternative B as the preferred alternative. Under this alternative FWP will treat 112 acres of forested land within the 160-acre FWP-owned parcel located on the southwest side of Crystal Lake for the purpose of fuels reduction and forest restoration. There were no changes to the draft EA; therefore the draft becomes the final EA. The final EA may be viewed at or obtained from Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Region One, Kalispell, Montana. 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.

In accordance with FWP 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, Helena, MT 59620.



Dave Landstrom, Regional Parks Manager
Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks

9/14/09

Date