



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

2300 Lake Elmo Drive
Billings, MT 59105

NOTICE OF DECISION

for
Holmgren State Park
February 16, 2010

TO: Environmental Quality Council
Director's Office, Dept. of Environmental Quality
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks*

Director's Office	Lands Section
Parks Division	Design & Construction
Fisheries Division	Legal Unit
Wildlife Division	Regional Supervisors

Mike Volesky, Governor's Office *
Sarah Elliott, Press Agent, Governor's Office*
Montana Historical Society, State Preservation Office
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council
Montana Wildlife Federation
Montana State Library
George Ochenski
Montana Environmental Information Center
Wayne Hirst, Montana State Parks Foundation
FWP Commissioner Shane Colton*
Montana Parks Association/Our Montana (land acquisition projects)
David Moore, DNRC Area Manager, Southern Land Office
County Commissioners
Other Local Interested People or Groups
* (Sent electronically)

Ladies and Gentlemen:

A Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared for development of the Holmgren Fishing Access Site, a 72-acre property on the Yellowstone River. The property is located approximately 6 miles upstream from Columbus, Montana, and includes approximately 1 mile of the Yellowstone River.

The draft EA was circulated for public comment for 30 days, beginning on December 29, 2009 and ending on February 5, 2010. Legal and/or public notices were published in the Billings Gazette, the Helena Independent Record, the Stillwater County News, the Yellowstone County News, as well as on the MFWP Website.

After review of the public comments this proposal has generated, as well as considering the significant public support and local government support for this project, it is my recommendation to accept Alternative 'B', the preferred alternative, which is to develop the Holmgren FAS. This development will include necessary boundary fencing, site signage, construction of a public crossing of the railroad tracks, a new access road, as well as a latrine and a temporary designated parking area. A summary of public comment and our response is attached. The development component of this project is subject to appeal, which must be submitted to the FWP Director in writing, and postmarked within 30 days of the date on this decision notice.

The appeal must specifically describe the basis for the appeal, explain how the appellant has previously commented to the department or participated in the decision-making process, and lay out how FWP might address the concerns in the appeal.

The next phase of development will include a gravel boat launch and a formal designated parking area for 10–20 vehicles. An additional funding request will be submitted to the 2011 legislature for this phase of development. The site development for phase I will be scheduled for the summer of 2010.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doug Habermann", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Doug Habermann
Regional Parks Manager

Enclosure

EA PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY

- **Public comment period:** 12/29/09 – 2/5/10
- **Public notices** placed on the state website (1/29/09), published in Helena Independent Record (1/15/10 & 1/12/10), Billings Gazette (1/3/10 & 1/10/10) and Stillwater County News (1/7/10 & 1/14/10)
- **A total of 8 comments** were received in writing, via email or by telephone. Six were in support of the proposal. Three comments were received from outdoor recreation organizations; five comments were received from individuals.

Comment Summaries

- 1/5/10 Carol Holmgren telephoned. Stated she was very pleased with the project and was happy to have received the EA. She requested an EA be sent to her sister, Pat Appleby 5312 Leanin Tree Rd., Florence MT 59833. She also requested another sent to Jeanine Holmgren, Director of State Lands. The only other item of interest was a request to post the park boundary signs to the east of the property, so that the family property is acknowledged.
- 12/30/09 Bert Otis supports Alternative B, feels that the development has very few minor impacts.
- 1/17/10 Dennis Hardin supports effort.
- 1/20/10 Dorothy Olson concerns in regards to safety with vehicles entering on and off Highway 10.
- 1/21/10 John Gibson speaking for Billings Rod and Gun Club and The Public Land and Water Association fully supports development of the property as a fishing access site.
- 1/22/10 Harold Roth, is opposed to the development due to the potential for vandalism at the site.
- 1/25/10 Tim Aldrich, President Montana Wildlife Federation supports the development. Reservations regarding the document include (1) A boat launch is not being developed (2) Use is inconsistently described as being heavily and moderately used (3) Mountain whitefish are incorrectly described, and are in fact a game fish according to MCA 87-2-101(7). (4) Believe that no camping should be permitted due to the impact on wildlife (5) Agree to using sheep to manage weeds, need to document length of use (6) Boat ramp should not be referred to as it is not part of this development
- 2/1/09 Chris Fleck, President, Magic City Fly Fishers supports the development. Reservations regarding the document include (1) It is not understood why a boat ramp is not being included in the development (2) Mountain whitefish are incorrectly described, and are a game fish (3) Permitting primitive camping and hunting on such a small site is a safety issue, camping should not be permitted (4) Firearm use should be restricted to hunting

Response to Public Comment

- **Will property boundaries be posted?**
Property boundaries are currently posted. FWP will periodically survey and maintain property boundaries signage and fencing.
- **How will safety issues be addressed for vehicles entering Highway 10?**
FWP is currently working with Department of Transportation and Burlington Northern Railroad to assure that safety issues are properly addressed. This includes signage and crossing signals.
- **How will vandalism issues be addressed at this site?**
Fish, Wildlife and Parks enforcement staff and Stillwater County Sheriffs will patrol this site on a regular basis. Vandalism issues will be addressed promptly, so as to deter future vandalism.
- **Why is a boat launch not being developed?**
Currently there is not enough funding available to develop a boat ramp. Although this is important, FWP found it necessary to prioritize developments. The boat launch is scheduled for Phase II of the development.
- **What is the status of Mountain whitefish?**
Mountain whitefish are classified as a game fish according to MCA 87-2-101(7). The EA referenced that some sportsmen fish specifically for this species.
- **What is the frequency and duration that sheep will be used to manage weeds?**
In 2009 sheep were used for a period of two weeks to a month for weed management. The length of time that they are used is determined by the absence of Leafy Spurge, Spotted Knapweed and Mullen and in consultation with the Stillwater County Weed Supervisor.
- **How can camping and hunting co-exist safely?**
This 72acre site will be relatively undeveloped. The site will be open to hunting during established seasons with no restrictions. Regulation signage will be posted.
- **Why is firearm use not being restricted to hunting only?**
Firearm use is restricted to hunting. Regulation signage will be posted. No discharge of firearms would be allowed except during established hunting seasons.