Region 1
490 N. Meridian Road
Kalispell, MT 59901

Decision Notice
and
Finding of No Significant Impact
for
2010 McGregor Lake Fishing Access Fuels Reduction Project

May 12, 2010

Description of the Proposed Action:
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to conduct fuels reduction work on four timbered parcels of department-owned lands on McGregor Lake in Flathead County. These parcels are contained within the Thompson Chain of Lakes Fishing Access Site, which is managed by FWP for recreational use. These sites are utilized year-round for angling, day use, and camping in designated campsites. The proposed project area is within the urban wildland interface, and residential development borders all of the individual parcels. This project would be conducted in cooperation with Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) and private contractors. The federal Jump Start II grant program would be the primary funding source.

Public Involvement:
Scoping was conducted in 2007 with neighbors who border the project area to the evaluate opinions or concerns regarding fuels reduction forestry projects. Following the successful completion of a 2007 fuels mitigation project on McGregor Lake, FWP did extensive scoping of landowners and of visitors to the TCL area to discuss large-scale forest management projects throughout the chain. Public scoping continued to show strong support for forest management projects aimed at fuels reduction, insect and disease mitigation, and forest restoration. These scoping efforts resulted in several large parcels being treated throughout the complex in the following three years, including the recently completed Crystal Lake/Upper Thompson Lake fuels reduction project.

Following the release of this draft environmental assessment (EA) for public review, a 14-day comment period ensued from April 26 through May 10, 2010. Two written responses were received during the public comment period.

Response to Comments:

General Support of Project Proposal
Two comments were received that were supportive of the project proposal in general. One respondent was supportive of doing large-scale fuel reduction projects and was pleased that grant dollars were available. One respondent supported the ability to contain wildfire and reiterated the need to abide by county lake setback guidelines and Streamside Management Zones (SMZ).

FWP Response: The department duly notes this support. The project prescription exceeds lake setback and SMZ guidelines on all parcels.

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI):
Based on the analysis in the EA and comments received, I find Alternative B to be the preferred alternative. Therefore, FWP will proceed with fuels reduction forestry work on four FWP-owned parcels within the Thompson Chain of Lakes Fishing Access Site. A 30-day appeal period through June 11, 2010, will be observed prior to any action being taken. 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.

The final EA may be viewed at or obtained from Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Region One, 490 N. Meridian Road, Kalispell, MT 59901, or the FWP web site at fwp.mt.gov under Recent Public Notices. Please direct requests and questions to Dave Bennetts, FWP Parks Management Specialist, 406-751-4590 or at dbennetts@mt.gov.

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 the date 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 Ave.; Helena, MT 59620.

David Landstrom
Regional Parks Manager

Date: May 12, 2010