Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

1400 South 19th Avenue
Bozeman, MT 59718
June 2, 2010

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The enclosed Decision Notice has been prepared for the Powerhouse Fishing Access Site (FAS) Proposed Improvements Project Draft Environmental Assessment. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposed several site improvements for Powerhouse FAS. Four (4) public comments were received during the comment period that began April 27, 2010 and ended May 25, 2010.

The EA and Decision Notice may be obtained from FWP at the address provided above, or viewed on FWP's Internet website: http://www.fwp.mt.gov.

Based on the Environmental Assessment, public comment, and FWP evaluation, it is my decision to proceed with the preferred alternative B, as described in the Powerhouse FAS Proposed Improvements Project Draft Environmental Assessment.

Questions regarding this Decision Notice should be mailed to:

Fish, Wildlife & Parks
C/O Todd Garrett
1400 S 19th Avenue
Bozeman, MT 59718

Or e-mailed to: tgarrett@mt.gov

Sincerely,

Gerald Walker

Gerald Walker
Regional Parks Manager

Region Three Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1400 South 19th Ave
Bozeman, MT 59718
June 2, 2010
Decision Notice for

POWERHOUSE FISHING ACCESS SITE PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

Draft Environmental Assessment

Proposed Action

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposed a project to make improvements at Powerhouse (FAS). Proposed improvements included replacing the gravel boat ramp with a single-wide concrete boat ramp, installing a permanent concrete latrine, and improving the parking lot.

Montana Environmental Policy Act

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks 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 April 27, 2010.

Public comments on the proposed project were taken from April 27, 2010 through May 25, 2010. The EA was mailed to 31 groups and individuals.

Summary of Public Comment

FWP received three (3) comment letters and one (1) verbal comment supporting the proposed action. FWP did not receive comments opposing the project.

Comments supporting the proposed project: four (4) total.

Example of Comment Statements

"I support Alternate B of the Powerhouse Fishing Access Site Improvement Project."

We are "in favor of the improvements project at the Powerhouse Fishing Access Site."

FWP Response: Duly Noted

One comment supported the project while encouraging FWP to further consider parking issues and ensure FWP is being a good neighbor in regards to public parking and respecting private property.

FWP Response: FWP will work with Butte-Silver Bow County to install parking related signage near Powerhouse FAS. In addition, FWP hopes to increase parking at the FAS by allowing rock near the parking area to be removed and used for the Butte-Silver Bow water supply project downstream. Rock will be moved from the FAS resulting in additional parking area.

One comment included feedback on the following EA statements: "Currently, the use consists almost entirely of anglers and floaters taking their boats and rafts out of the river at this site because Powerhouse FAS is the last point with public access to remove boats before the Butte-Silver Bow County pump house diversion dam. After the existing dam is replaced with a rock weir structure with a boat notch in July 2010, the river will be navigable below Powerhouse FAS. As a result, the use of Powerhouse FAS is likely to increase and consist of both launching and removing boats and rafts." These statements imply that the river is not currently navigable around the existing diversion dam, when in fact it is possible, although hazardous, to pass over the dam.
Butte-Silver Bow County is replacing the dam with a rock weir structure that will provide passage for boats. FWP is seeking Commission approval of an administrative rule that calls for temporary closure of a 1.4 mile stretch of the Big Hole River to accommodate the reconstruction of this diversion dam. The proposed closure would occur on the stretch of the Big Hole River from the Silver Bridge (river mile 54.1 and adjacent to Powerhouse FAS) to the Highway Bridge (river mile 52.7) from July 6, 2010 until October 31, 2010. The closure would apply to all floating and would only limit wade angling in the immediate vicinity of the construction, based on signing. The closure could be lifted prior to October 31, 2010 if the construction is completed as indicated by formal notification from Silver Bow County to FWP.

Decision

Based on the Environmental Assessment, public comment, and FWP evaluation, it is my decision to proceed with preferred alternative B, as described in the Powerhouse FAS Proposed Improvements Project Draft Environmental Assessment. In the preferred alternative, FWP would replace the existing steep, gravel boat ramp with a single-wide concrete boat ramp, replace the temporary, seasonal latrine with a permanent concrete latrine, improve the existing gravel parking lot, and install directional and regulatory signs.

Appeal

This project is subject to appeal, which must be submitted to the FWP Director (Mr. Joe Maurier, Director, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, PO Box 200701, Helena, MT 59620-0701) 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 may address the concerns in the appeal. If you have questions regarding this decision notice, please contact Todd Garrett, Fishing Access Site Manager at 406-994-6987.

Gerald Walker

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Gerald Walker
Regional Parks Manager