



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

2300 Lake Elmo Drive
Billings MT 59105

May 3, 2011

DECISION NOTICE
Chief Plenty Coups State Park:
Agricultural Lease-Out Environmental Assessment

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)
Richard Moore, DNRC Area Manager, Southern Land Office
County Commissioners
Other Local Interested People or Groups
* (Sent electronically)

Ladies and gentlemen:

Proposed Action

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to renew an existing agricultural lease at Chief Plenty Coups State Park for an additional 10 years.

Alternative Considered

Under no action, the lease expires and the agricultural plots would no longer be actively managed. Discontinuation could also lead to spread of noxious weeds in these previously farmed areas as FWP does not have the staff resources to undertake or manage farming activity on this property. In addition there would be a loss of revenue to the department. A request for bids would have to be put out and the current lease holder has met the requirements of the current lease as well as provided good resource management on the leased property.

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 March 30, 2011.

Public comments on the proposed project were taken for 30 days (through April 30, 2011). The EA was mailed to adjacent landowners and other interested parties; legal notices were printed in the Billings Gazette and the Helena Independent Record; and the Draft EA was posted on the FWP webpage: <http://fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices/>.

Summary of Public Comment

No written comments have been received during the public comment period.

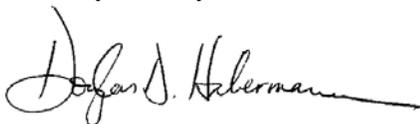
Final Environmental Assessment for the Chief Plenty Coups State Park Agricultural Lease-Out

There are no modifications necessary to the Draft Environmental Assessment based on public comment. The Draft Environmental Assessment, together with this Decision Notice, will serve as the final document for this proposal. I have decided to extend the lease period to ten years rather than the 5 years proposed in the Environmental Assessment. This is based on the lack of public comment, the positive benefits of this activity as outlined in the Environmental Assessment, the past performance of the current lease holder, and to be consistent with other FWP agricultural leases.

Based on the Environmental Assessment, public comment, and the need to continue the sharecrop agricultural use in the Chief Plenty Coups State Park to maintain the historic aesthetics of the park, to provide effective and economic method for vegetation management, and to reduce potential fire fuel, it is my decision to proceed with the proposed action, described in the EA.

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

Thank you for your interest,



Douglas Habermann
Regional Parks Manager
Enclosure