Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

1400 South 19th Avenue
Bozeman, MT 59718
May 16, 2011

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The enclosed Decision Notice has been prepared for the Damselfly Fishing Access Site Proposed Development Draft Environmental Assessment. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposed developing a fishing access site (FAS) along the Madison River adjacent to the mouth of Cherry Creek. Four (7) public comments were received during the comment period that began April 1, 2011 and ended April 30, 2011.

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 proposed action, Alternative C, as described in the Damselfly Fishing Access Site Proposed Development Draft Environmental Assessment, and develop a FAS to continue to provide public access to this stretch of the Madison River.

Questions regarding this Decision Notice should be mailed to:

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

Or e-mailed to: cmcgrath@mt.gov

Sincerely,

Gerald Walker

Gerald Walker
Regional Parks Manager

Region Three Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1400 South 19th Ave
Bozeman, MT 59718

May 16, 2011
Decision Notice for:

Damselfly Fishing Access Site
Proposed Development
Draft Environmental Assessment

Proposed Action

In December 2010, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) acquired 2.25 acres of land along the Madison River for the purpose of establishing a fishing access site (FAS). FWP proposed development of this site including a gravel access road, parking area to accommodate twenty-four vehicles, a singlewide concrete boat ramp, a precast-concrete vault latrine with an ADA accessible concrete parking pad, a boat launch staging area, regulatory and informational signs, and boundary fencing.

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 1, 2011.

Public comments on the proposed project were taken from April 1, 2011 through April 30, 2011. The EA was mailed to over 226 groups and individuals.

Summary of Public Comment

FWP received seven (7) comments regarding the proposed action; five (5) comments supported the proposal, one (1) comment opposed the proposed action, and one (1) comment that raised questions but did not oppose or support the proposed action. Some of the comments supporting and opposing the proposed action raised several questions.

Comments supporting the proposed project: five (5) total.

Examples of Comment Statements Supporting the Proposal

> "We believe the improvements as detailed in the EA will benefit the recreational users of the river and are in keeping with the current uses of the site. The proposed improvements, moreover, will mitigate damage at the site as it currently exists."

"We feel that giving river users an alternate for taking out besides the sometimes overcrowded Blacks Ford access site will improve recreators experience's on the Lower Madison, and hopefully alleviate some of the pressure at Blacks Ford."

"I have reviewed the proposal, and I support the implementation of Alternative C."

"I believe the size and scope of the proposed development is appropriate for the traffic I have observed over the years while utilizing this access."

"I write you in support of the proposed Damselfly Fishing Access Site development."

"…the Madison Gallatin Trout Unlimited Board of Directors, representing 650 + members, approves of the Proposed Alternative C as stated in the proposed action…"

FWP Response: Duly Noted

Comment opposing the proposed project: one (1) total.

Example of Comment Statements Opposing the Proposal

"Granted, a boat ramp might me nice but this sounds like a lot more asphalt and a lot less flora!!!!!!"

FWP Response: The proposed development does not include any asphalt, and will not negatively impact the flora.

Comment not supporting or opposing the proposed project: one (1) total.

Example of Comment Statements raising questions

"…in the introduction it states that the proposal is to develop a 2.25 acre tract of land. Yet on pg 6, item 7, Project size, the total acreage is only .55 acres. What is the classification of the rest of the tract?"

FWP Response: The total amount of land acquired is 2.25 acres, of which only .55 acres is proposed to be developed.

"I am wondering if the improved FAS will attract floaters. If so, do you think the design of the FAS will be able to contain that kind of attention?"

FWP Response: We do not believe the proposed development of the Damselfly FAS will attract significantly more recreators than what it presently receives. The proposed development will be able to contain the amount of use it will receive, and there are several large access sites nearby to prevent this site from seeing large amounts of use.

Questions or concerns that were raised by comments supporting the proposed project: one (1) total

Example of Comment Statements raising questions

"Why Damselfly for the name? ...Cherry Creek is better known by a majority of the guide/outfitters, shuttle drivers and recreational floaters/fishers."

FWP Response: FWP tries to use creative and unique names when naming FAS. Several FAS's and other access sites within the region and statewide already have names that include Cherry.

"EA states gravel roads but is the parking area gravel as well or will it be concrete / asphalt…?"

FWP Response: The road and the parking area will be gravel. There will be one ADA accessible parking pad; one concrete slab surrounding the vault latrine; and a concrete boat ramp, other than that there will be no concrete or asphalt.

Example of Comment Statements raising concerns

"Further spreading of noxious weeds during construction."

FWP Response: FWP will ensure that measures are taken during the construction period to prevent the spread of noxious weeds. Additionally, the FAS will be managed in a manner to try to prevent the further spreading of noxious weeds.

"Time period of construction. With what seems to be a heavy snow load for the year (i.e. increased run-off), the Lower Madison will most likely have an increase of "fishing days" by both guides/outfitters and recreation fishers searching for clear fish-able waters. Would it be an option to push back the start date of the project to have less of an impact on those increased fish days to late spring while still maintaining the proposed completion in the Fall."

FWP Response: The project start date will be in the early fall, and the project will still be completed in the fall.

"Signage not only to explain rules for the fishing access, no camping, etc. but to include information about Whirling Disease, ANS, etc."

FWP Response: FWP will install regulation signs as well informational signs.

Decision

Based on the Environmental Assessment, public comment, and FWP evaluation, it is my decision to proceed with the proposed action, Alternative C, as described in the Damselfly Fishing Access Site Proposed Development Draft Environmental Assessment. This alternative develops a new FAS on 2.25 acres of land on a parcel of State School

Trust Land on the Madison River adjacent to the mouth of Cherry Creek. FWP acquired a perpetual easement on this parcel of land from the DNRC in December 2010.

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 Chris McGrath, River Recreation Manager at 406-994-6359.

Gerald Walker

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Gerald Walker
Regional Parks Manager