



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Region 4
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls MT 59405-0901

Environmental Assessment Decision Notice: Proposed Acquisition of the Lower Big Springs Creek FAS (also known as the Carroll Trail Addition Fishing Access Site)

September 25, 2013

Proposal

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) proposes to acquire approximately 20.72-acres of land in Fergus County, Montana for \$188,000. The purpose is to provide additional public angler access, allow the department to complete Phase 2 of the stream restoration project and provide an opportunity for expansion of the Lewistown City Trail network. The proposed FAS is located immediately to the south and east of the Carroll Trail FAS, and NW of the Lewistown Waste Water Treatment Plant. It encompasses approximately one mile of creek frontage. This document serves as the Decision Notice for the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed acquisition. A subsequent EA will be written when plans are being formulated for the proposed stream restoration and/or the trail development projects.

Montana Environmental Policy Act Process (MEPA) and Public Involvement

On August 16, 2013, FWP released a draft EA for the Lower Big Spring Creek Fishing Access Site Parcel Proposed Acquisition. The EA evaluated the potential impacts of the following alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action

If no action were taken the land would likely remain in private ownership and the opportunity to provide public access to this reach of Big Spring Creek may be lost. The Lewistown City Trail network would not be expanded through this site and Phase 2 of the stream channel restoration would likely not be implemented.

Preferred Alternative B: Proposed Action

The preferred alternative is to purchase the 20.72 acres of property. This alternative would satisfy objectives of FWP to provide public access and recreational opportunities to Big Spring Creek. Following the acquisition FWP would pursue the stream channel restoration effort in a separate process as well as provide the City of Lewistown an

opportunity to expand the trail network. It would also provide 2.5 miles of continuous public access to Big Spring Creek when joined with current easements and FAS's above and below this property.

Summary of Public Comment

FWP received a total of 18 comments. Sixteen were in agreement with the proposed action and two were opposed. The two opposing comments were directly related to the cost of the property. Because this property is being sold to FWP substantially below the fair market value of \$250,000, and the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust has agreed to grant \$60,000 towards the cost of the property, FWP feels the costs to the department are in line with the public benefits that will be gained in perpetuity by acquiring the property.

Decision

Based on the Environmental Assessment, public comment, and FWP evaluation, it is my decision to proceed with Alternative B, the proposed action of acquiring approximately 20.7-acres of land as for the purposes described in the EA.

I find there to be 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.


Gary Bertellotti
FWP Region Four Supervisor