



NEWS Release

Montana State Parks • 1420 E. 6th Avenue • Helena, MT 59620

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 17, 2015

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Decision Notice Issued for Thompson Falls State Park Pond Improvement Project

(Helena, MT) – Montana State Parks (stateparks.mt.gov) announced today that a decision notice has been issued for improvements to facilities and fish habitat at the Family Fishing Pond at Thompson Falls State Park located near Thompson Falls, MT. The decision is to move forward with improvements to the fish pond. By notification of this Decision Notice the Environmental Assessment (EA) is hereby made the Final EA.

The improvements will be made through collaboration between Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) and Avista Corp to enlarge the size of the existing family fishing pond at Thompson Falls State Park. The project will increase the surface area of the pond to 1.1 acres, and improve the facilities available in the park. Work will include: removing a causeway that currently divides the pond, deepening of the pond to a maximum depth of 20 feet, improving vehicle parking, installing signage, and construction of a trail from the parking area to and around the pond. Re-vegetation of the site will take place as needed once construction is completed. Other improvements include two universally accessible fishing platforms, a picnic shelter, and vault latrine.

This project will increase habitat within the pond, provide improved access, and enhance opportunities for successful fishing by visitors, including families and young anglers. Current access to the pond is a rough footpath that in areas is difficult for people with mobility challenges.

It was determined that the proposed action would have no significant effects on the human or physical environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

To view the Decision Notice and Environmental Assessment (EA) visit:

http://stateparks.mt.gov/news/publicNotices/environmental-assessments/pn_0044.html

A public comment process for the proposed project was open from May 1 through June 4, 2015. Seven public comments were received in support of the project. No comments were received in opposition.

Or go to stateparks.mt.gov and click on 'public notices/submit comments'.

For more information about Thompson Falls State Park visit: <http://stateparks.mt.gov/thompson-falls/>

This decision notice action is subject to appeal, which must be submitted to Fish, Wildlife & Parks

(FWP) Directors Office in writing and postmarked within 30 days (by July 17, 2015) of this decision notice. The appeal must specifically describe the basis for the appeal, how the appellant has previously commented to the Department or participated in the decision-making process, and how FWP might address the concerns of the appeal.

Visit Montana State Parks (stateparks.mt.gov) and enjoy camping, hiking, fishing, swimming, boating and more and discover some of the greatest natural and cultural treasures on earth.



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A division of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
stateparks.mt.gov

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**DECISION NOTICE
THOMPSON FALLS STATE PARK
POND IMPROVEMENT PROJECT**

June 12, 2015

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED PROJECT

The project proposal is a partnership between FWP and Avista Corp. to enlarge the size of the existing family fishing pond at Thompson Falls State Park. The removal of approximately 8,000 cubic yards of material would increase the surface area of the pond by approximately .4 acre to a total size of 1.1 acres. Work would include: removing a causeway (road prism) that currently divides the pond (75' of the road prism on either side of the pond would also be removed to fit within existing topography), deepening the pond to a maximum depth of 20 feet, improving vehicle parking near the pond, installing signage, and constructing a trail from the parking area to and around the enlarged pond. Revegetation of the site would take place as needed once excavation and construction is completed. Other proposed improvements include two universally accessible fishing platforms, a picnic shelter, and vault latrine. This process would increase habitat within the pond, and improve access and recreational opportunities at the site.

Total estimated cost for the project is \$ 230,021. Of that sum, \$208,071 has been committed by Avista Corp. through the Clark Fork Settlement Agreement. An additional \$10,000 has been secured through an FWP Fish Pond Grant. The remaining \$1,950 would be provided by Montana State Parks through in-kind labor and material support.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Alternative A: No Action – The improvements to the Thompson Falls State Park pond would not be accomplished.

If Alternative A is selected, the existing family fishing pond at Thompson Falls State Park would continue to provide some fishing and recreational opportunity. The pond is stocked with approximately 500 trout each spring for park visitors. Present pond size and water depth limits the length of time each year that trout can thrive due to increasing water temperatures in late summer.

Access is presently limited to people with a high degree of mobility due to the nature of the pond's perimeter trail. Furthermore, the lack of developed fishing platforms precludes good access for visitors utilizing wheel chairs. The lack of parking for day-use visitors to the pond is limited, requiring people to either park along the park's campground road or outside of the park on the Blue Slide Road. Neither is optimal.

Alternative B: Proposed Action – Improve the family fishing pond at Thompson Falls State Park.

This alternative would enhance the existing pond by enlarging it by .4 acre and increasing the maximum depth by seven feet. Access would be substantially improved

by providing an ADA-compliant trail around the circumference of the pond, adding two fishing platforms, and improving interior parking. Finally, visitor amenities would be improved to provide a small picnic shelter immediately adjacent to the pond for use by families and organizations. Overall recreational opportunities at Thompson Falls State Park would be significantly enhanced.

PUBLIC PROCESS AND COMMENT

MSP engaged the local community during the development of a Fishing Pond Grant proposal and again with news releases and an additional 30-day comment period lasting the entire month of May 2015.

Comments in support of the proposal or specific elements of the proposal:

Letters of support for Alternative B were received from the following entities:

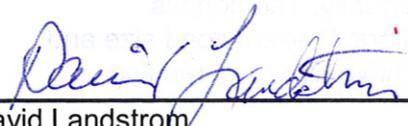
- The City of Thompson Falls
- The Sanders County Board of Commissioners
- The Clark Fork Bass Anglers
- Haas Electric
- Three individual park users

No comments in opposition to the project were received.

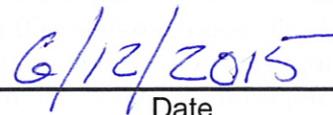
DECISION

Based on the analysis in the draft EA and the applicable laws, regulations, and policies, I have determined that the proposed action will not have significant effects on the human or physical environment. Therefore an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

This action is subject to appeal, which must be submitted to the FWP State Parks Division Administrator in writing and postmarked within 30 days of 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 how FWP might address the concerns of the appeal.



David Landstrom
Region One State Parks Manager



Date