Proposed 2019 Renewal of the Biennial Rule for The Nature Conservancy Recreation Management Area in Region 2

PUBLIC REVIEW PROCESS AND COMMENTS
May 2019

Public Review Process

The proposed biennial rule and a cover letter outlining the review process were posted on FWP's website (http://fwp.mt.gov, under "Recent Public Notices") for a 30-day public comment period from April 11 through May 10, 2019. Region 2 FWP issued a statewide news release on April 30. Comments could be made directly on the proposal's webpage or submitted to R2 via mail or email. FWP sent 52 emails of its availability to interested individuals, groups, and agencies, and mailed 2 printed copies.

Summary of Public Comment

FWP received 5 comments (see Appendix) during the 30-day public comment period (April 11 through May 10, 2019) regarding the proposed 2019 renewal of the biennial rule for The Nature Conservancy Recreation Management Area in Region 2. The commenters included 5 people (2 commented together and were counted as one comment) and 1 group (Anaconda Sportsman's Club). Commenters were 3 from Seeley Lake, and 1 each from Anaconda, Bozeman, and Missoula, Montana. Four comments (including ASC) supported the biennial rule renewal, and one comment (Seeley Lake) did not indicate specific support or opposition.

Comments in Support of the Proposed Acquisition Included:

- I believe continuing the access to The Nature Conservancy Recreation Management Area is a great opportunity for the people of Montana.
- The Nature Conservancy land has allowed me to get out for hunting trips and many hiking trips where I can enjoy nature as it is meant to be witnessed.
- Thank you, TNC for making this access possible for sportsmen/women and other appreciators of wild places.

Response to Public Comment

The following comments encompass specific comments received during the public review period that warranted a direct response from FWP. (The "Commenter #" is the Commenter # in the Appendix.)

Commenter 4.1: As you develop regulations for public use please consider the forty percent of the public that are no longer able to walk the distances behind closed gates to appreciate our beautiful scenic areas. . . .. We are not interested in doing any damage to flora or fauna in this environment, we merely wish to enjoy the reason we love living here. ATVs and UTVs are the only way public access is really available to us.

FWP Response: This proposal is an agreement that would help The Nature Conservancy, a private landowner, continue providing free year-round access on its lands to the public. The proposed rules and regulations reflect the private landowner's conditions for allowing ongoing public recreational access. FWP is proposing to accept the landowner's conditions and suggests that this project provides a generous public benefit.

Commenter 4.1: The elderly and handicapped have contributed as much to the taxes to purchase these lands as any one else. . . . When we come to a closed gate we see land that has been removed from our ability to access.

FWP Response: FWP is not purchasing these lands. The lands included in this project are private property and will remain in private landownership. The proposed rules and regulations reflect the private landowner's need to balance private-property land management while also allowing ongoing and free public recreational access.

APPENDIX. Comments on the proposed 2019 renewal of the biennial rule for The Nature Conservancy Recreation Management Area in Region 2, received by FWP during the public comment period April 11 through May 10, 2019. (Comments received via: E = email, Ph = phone.)

Com-men-ter#	Via	Para-graph	Comment
1	E		I believe continuing the access to The Nature Conservancy Recreation Management Area is a great opportunity for the people of Montana. I moved here last year and enjoy the surrounding trails and hikes but so does everyone else. My biggest reason to get outdoors is to enjoy nature and that can be very hard to do at many of these busy trailheads. The Nature Conservancy land has allowed me to get out for hunting trips and many hiking trips where I can enjoy nature as it is meant to be witnessed.
2	E		The Anaconda Sportsmen's Club supports this 2 year extension. The ASC has always advocated Access.
3	E		Thank you, TNC for making this access possible for sportsmen/women and other appreciators of wild places.
4	E	1	As you develop regulations for public use please consider the forty percent of the public that are no longer able to walk the distances behind closed gates to appreciate our beautiful scenic areas. The elderly and handicapped have contributed as much to the taxes to purchase these lands as any one else. When we come to a closed gate we see land that has been removed from our ability to access. We are not interested in doing any damage to flora or fauna in this environment, we merely wish to enjoy the reason we love living here. ATVs and UTVs are the only way public access is really available to us.
		2	Thank you for anything you can do.
5	Ph	1	[represents 2 people] They're glad that the proposal does not include closing additional roads on the TNC land, compared to what roads have been open for motorized travel by TNC the past few years.
		2	They support the TNC rule renewal.