DECISION NOTICE

ROSEBUD BATTLEFIELD STATE PARK
FINAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1420 East 6th Ave South
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701

PROPOSAL

The proposal is to adopt the Rosebud Battlefield State Park Final Management Plan and implement the outlined actions over the next ten years.

PUBLIC PROCESS

The Rosebud Battlefield State Park management planning process was undertaken in 2006 beginning with selecting a facilitating consultant, followed by town hall meetings, focus group meetings, an internet survey and ongoing input from a volunteer advisory committee. The advisory committee developed, reviewed and commented on the draft plan before it was released for public comment on October 11, 2007. The public was alerted about the draft plan and the opportunity to comment through direct mailing of over 200 draft plans, news releases sent to newspapers, radio and television stations across southeastern Montana and northern Wyoming, and Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) web page announcements (http://fwp.mt.gov/parks/rosebudBattlefield/default.html). The 30-day comment period was extended another 49 days to January 4, 2008 to allow sufficient opportunity for public review. During the process, FWP met directly with the Governor's Office, Northern Cheyenne and Crow Tribal Governments, representatives from many Sioux tribes and the Eastern Shoshone Tribe. FWP also met with neighboring landowners, historians and tourism affiliates, mineral owners and developers, Big Horn County (Montana) Commissioners, Bureau of Land Management, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation and the National Park Service.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Thirty-nine comments were submitted during the formal comment period. A summary of topics raised and resulting planning approach is listed below.

- Additional emphasis was added to collaborate with tribes throughout plan implementation, including cultural and archeological related surveys, efforts in interpretation, education, research, staffing, funding, determining resource impacts, site development and use.

- Additional maps were added to show current neighboring land and mineral ownership.
- FWP will make a concerted effort with mineral owners, developers, and other agencies to find a mutually agreeable means to eliminate or minimize mineral development under the park.
- National Historic Landmark status will be pursued in cooperation with the National Park Service and participating landowners; historic buildings will be maintained to reasonable levels, and the agency will work to locate appropriate archives for park related cultural and archeological resources.
- Permanent public access to the park, public orientation area and trails will be thoroughly investigated, impacts analyzed, and if new site access seems feasible, the proposal(s) will be presented to the public for input prior to developing.
- A permanent visitor center and staff office is desired when considered warranted and feasible. This will depend on many things, including access mentioned above, suitable location, environmental and cultural impacts, funding, and staffing.
- Interpretation is key to the visitor experience and will be developed in ways sensitive to the aesthetics and environment, and inclusive of the various cultures engaged with the area through history.
- The agency will work collaboratively with area interest groups to promote regional tourism, yet retain a quality visitor experience with a sense of solitude.
- FWP will collaborate with area landowners to protect important cultural sites and consider acquiring additional lands as opportunities arise with willing sellers.
- Visitor and staff safety and resource protection will be promoted through collaboration with area law enforcement and neighbors, and implementing strategies; hunting will be allowed in the park and managed with safety in mind.
- Grazing will be continued in the short term to reduce wildfire fuels, but the cost/benefits monetarily and to resources will be critically considered in a holistic vegetative plan.
- FWP will continue to monitor and control noxious weeds, working collaboratively with neighbors and the County.
- Additional staff allocations will be pursued while also coordinating volunteers when appropriate.
- Historical clarifications and typographical corrections to the draft plan were completed.
- This management plan serves as an overarching document that includes the applicable goals and objectives adopted by the agency. This planning process considered the recommendations and research completed by the Montana Preservation Alliance (2007), which should continue to be used as an in-depth compilation of historical background, resources and methods considered to preserve the cultural resources of Rosebud Battlefield, including lands outside the park boundary.
- Specific timelines are not included in this plan to allow flexibility as funding and opportunities arise. The advisory committee helped establish implementation priorities at this time, but these will change over time. Some prerequisite actions are influenced by outside parties, which will determine the feasibility of proposed actions.

DECISION

It is my decision to implement the plan as proposed having considered all comments from the volunteer advisory committee, neighboring landowners, tribal governments and representatives, the Governor's Office and the public. In accordance with state policy, environmental analyses will evaluate the impacts of the individual actions when more information is gained. The public will be asked to provide additional input to specific projects in the future.

This plan is subject to appeal, which must be submitted to the FWP Director 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 might address the concerns in the appeal. The appeal should be mailed to Director, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, PO Box 200701, 1420 East 6th Avenue, Helena, MT 59620. If you have questions regarding this decision notice, please contact the Parks Division at (406) 444-3750.

M. Jeff Hagener 5/7/08

M. Jeff Hagener, Director
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Date