

**Draft**  
**Environmental Assessment**  
**Beaver Lake Eurasian Watermilfoil**  
**Management**

**6/13/2012**



# **Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks**

## **Draft Environmental Assessment MEPA CHECKLIST**

### **PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION**

#### **1. Type of proposed state action:**

An interagency working group including three state agencies, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), the Department of Natural Resource Conservation (DNRC) and the Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) propose to manage and if possible eradicate a noxious aquatic weed, Eurasian watermilfoil in Beaver Lake, near Whitefish, Montana. Removal efforts may include use of barrier mats, mechanical removal and herbicide treatments. The proposed action adheres to the state agency response protocol established in Montana's Statewide Strategic Plan for Invasive Aquatic Plant Management and Resource Protection 2011. The purpose of the protocol is to coordinate an effective interagency response and, where feasible, contain and eradicate invasive aquatic plants.

#### **2. Agency authority for the proposed action:**

Senate Bill No. 343 created the **Montana Aquatic Invasive Species Act** in 2009. The Act established an invasive species account and defined responsibilities of Montana Department of Agriculture and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks for managing aquatic invasive species in Montana. When an invasive species is identified as infesting or threatening an area (e.g. Eurasian watermilfoil), the department with jurisdiction over that invasive species may designate and administer an invasive species management area for a specific body of water for a specific or indeterminate amount of time to prevent and control the infestation or spread of that invasive species. In addition, the department shall work cooperatively with any affected land managers and landowners within the boundaries of the designated area to establish prevention, treatment, control, and eradication methods best suited for the invasive species infesting the area.

The **Montana Weed Control Act** (80-7-701 et. seq., MCA) gives the Montana Department of Agriculture authority to provide technical assistance and coordination/ services to local governments, agricultural producers, and the general public on management and control of noxious plants.

The **Montana Statewide Strategic Plan for Invasive Aquatic Plant Management and Resource Protection 2011** provides a framework and strategy to protect aquatic resources, manage invasive aquatic plants, and provide guidance and direction to managers. Management authority for aquatic noxious weeds in Montana is the responsibility of county weed districts with support from MDA. The **County Noxious Weed Control Act** (7-22-2101 et. seq., MCA) provides the county weed districts with the jurisdiction over aquatic noxious weeds.

**3. Name of project:**

Beaver Lake Eurasian Watermilfoil Management

**4. Name, address, and phone number of project sponsor (if other than the agency):**

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

**5. Anticipated schedule:**

Estimated commencement date:

July 15, 2012

Estimated completion date:

November 1, 2012 for initial treatment

Monitoring and additional treatments may occur over a five year period

Current status of project design (% complete):

50% complete. Barrier mats were installed in fall of 2011. SCUBA divers assessed mats in spring 2012.

**6. Location affected by proposed action:**

Beaver Lake near the town of Whitefish, Montana in Flathead County located at T31N R22W S20.



**7. Project size - estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:**

	<u>Acres</u>		<u>Acres</u>
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	_ 0
Residential	_ 0		
Industrial	_ 0	(e) Productive:	
(existing shop area)		Irrigated cropland	_ 0
(b) Open Space/ Woodlands/Recreation	_ 0	Dry cropland	_ 0
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas	_ 1	Forestry	_ 0
		Rangeland	_ 0
		Other	_ 0

**8. Listing of any other local, state or federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction:**

**(a) Permits (Permits will be filed at least 2 weeks prior to project start.):**

Agency Name	Permits
DEQ or FWP	318
DEQ 308	
DEQ MPDES PGP	

(Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Pesticide General Permit)

**(b) Funding:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
DNRC	\$9,000

**(c) Other overlapping or additional jurisdictional responsibilities:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Type of Responsibility</u>
Flathead County Weed District	Noxious Weed Control
Dept. of Agriculture	AIS Management Area

**9. Narrative summary of the proposed action or project, including the benefits and purpose of the proposed action:**

Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM) is a perennial aquatic plant considered an aquatic invasive species, added to the Montana noxious weed list in 2003. EWM spreads by stem fragments and seed. EWM grows as water temperature rises in summer. EWM can negatively impact economies, the environment and recreational opportunities.

The U.S. Geological Service website

(<http://nas.er.usgs.gov/queries/FactSheet.aspx?SpeciesID=237>)

cites numerous scientific sources and describes the impacts of the introduction of Eurasian milfoil as the following:

Eurasian watermilfoil competes aggressively to displace and reduce the diversity of native aquatic plants. Tolerant of low water temperatures, it quickly grows to the surface, forming dense canopies that overtop and shade the surrounding vegetation. Eurasian watermilfoil has less value as a food source for waterfowl than the native plants it replaces. And although fish may initially experience a favorable edge effect, the characteristics of Eurasian watermilfoil's overabundant growth negate any short-term benefits it may provide fish in healthy waters. At high densities, its foliage supports a lower abundance and diversity of invertebrates, organisms that serve as fish food. The growth and senescence of thick vegetation degrades water quality and depletes dissolved oxygen levels. Typical dense beds restrict swimming, fishing and boating, clog water intakes and result in decaying mats that foul lakeside beaches.

In 2011, a roughly 25 by 25 foot patch of EWM was detected in Beaver Lake near the FWP Fishing Access Site on DNRC land. EWM is currently not known to be established in nearby water bodies, including downstream in Whitefish Lake. The presence of EWM in Beaver Lake poses a threat as a source for transport to area waters and to the aquatic biology and ecology of the lake. In 2011, a working group comprised of government agencies and organizations attempted mechanical removal and placed barrier mats on top of the infestation. The immediate response did not completely eradicate EWM as observed by divers in

May of 2012. A comprehensive survey of Beaver Lake will occur in late June/early July of 2012 to determine the distribution of EWM.

Depending on the distribution and abundance of EWM in Beaver Lake, a plan for eradication will be implemented. If EWM is restricted to individual plants, additional barrier mats or mechanical removal may be effective. If EWM is more widely distributed or patches are detected, then herbicide treatment could be used. The proposed project could include a combination of mats, mechanical removal and herbicide treatments to increase the likelihood of a successful effort to eradicate the infestation. For example, additional mats may be deployed to cover newly identified infestations, diver dredges may be used where individual plants are detected and herbicides may be applied to areas surrounding and covered by mats or to newly discovered infestations. The project may span a five year period and multiple treatments may be required.

Barrier mats or sheets of material installed on the bottom of the lake over an infested area prevent light from reaching the plants and can be effective on small areas. Mechanical removal would entail use of diver dredges to suction plants from the sediment and water. A licensed applicator would apply herbicide according to the product label for aquatic use. Likely a systemic herbicide would be used that includes 2,4-D, triclopyr, or fluridone. A contact herbicide such as diquat or endothall may be used to reduce contact time and increase control of EWM. If more effective alternative herbicides are available they may be used. A combination of herbicides and turbidity barriers may be used to increase effectiveness. All herbicides would be used according to label restrictions for application rates. Beaver Lake may be closed to public use during a mechanical or chemical treatment.

Beaver Lake has a surface area of 144 acres and a maximum depth of 111 feet. The lake provides a popular trout and kokanee salmon fishery. The purpose of the proposed project is to eradicate EWM from Beaver Lake to protect the aquatic habitat in Beaver Lake and minimize the opportunity for transfer of EWM to other nearby waters, including Whitefish Lake downstream.

## **10. Alternatives:**

### Alternative A: No-Action

EWM in Beaver Lake would not be managed or eradicated. Beaver Lake may be closed to boating use to minimize further distribution of EWM. The plant would likely spread in Beaver Lake and to other nearby water bodies, causing negative impacts to habitat and human use of these waters. EWM could be transferred to other waters by waterfowl or by downstream movement out of Beaver Lake.

### Alternative B: Proposed Management Action

Depending on the distribution and abundance of EWM in Beaver Lake, a plan for eradication will be implemented using one or a combination of management actions including barrier mats, mechanical removal, and herbicide treatment. Treatment approach will be dependent on the likelihood for successful eradication.

## **PART II. PREDICTED ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES**

### **1. Evaluation of the impacts of the Alternatives, including secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical and human environment.**

#### **A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

<b>1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u></b>  Will the proposed action result in:	<b>IMPACT *</b>					
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
a. **Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?		X				
c. **Destruction, covering, or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition, or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other:		X				

No impacts to Land Resources were identified with either alternative.

2. <u>AIR</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. **Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13c.)		X				
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. ***For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a.)		X				
f. Other:		X				

No impacts to Air were identified with either alternative.

3. <u>WATER</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. *Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality, including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen, or turbidity?			X		X	3.a.
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water-related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?			X		X	3.h.
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				3.i.
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?			X		X	3.j.
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)						NA
m. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)						NA
n. Other:		X				

3.a. The application of an approved aquatic herbicide in compliance with the product label and administered by a licensed applicator would result in no measurable negative direct, indirect or cumulative impacts to water quality. The minor and short duration impact will be mitigated by applying product to only those sites infested with EWM at the appropriate application rate and possibly using a turbidity barrier. A product cannot be labeled for aquatic use if it poses more than one-in-a-million chance of causing significant damage to human health, the environment, or wildlife resources or show evidence of biomagnification, bioavailability or persistence in the environment (Montana's Statewide Strategic Plan for Invasive Aquatic Plant Management and Resource Protection 2011). Mechanical removal including use of dredges will cause localized turbidity that will be minor and short term. Dredging will be isolated to areas containing EWM. Impacts can be mitigated by conducting remediation under calm weather conditions when there is little to no wind disturbance of the lake surface minimizing dispersal of chemicals or turbidity. Beaver Lake can be closed to boating use during the treatment period or for a longer period as required so motor wash will not disperse chemicals and suspended sediments. Impacts will be minor due to the small areas being treated. If larger areas are identified for chemical treatment, treatments can be staggered to avoid oxygen depletion and fish kills.

3.h. A product cannot be labeled for aquatic use if it poses more than one-in-a-million chance of causing significant damage to human health, the environment, or wildlife resources or show evidence of biomagnification, bioavailability or persistence in the environment (Montana's Statewide Strategic Plan for Invasive Aquatic Plant Management and Resource Protection 2011). Impact can be mitigated by a licensed applicator following label specifications and possibly using a turbidity barrier.

3.i. There are no surface water rights on Beaver Lake or Beaver Creek. There are ground water rights on state lease sites. Use of herbicides in accordance to label specifications will not result in negative impacts to stock or wildlife. At locations downstream and away from treated sites dilution of herbicide will minimize any potential impact to plant species.

3.j. Beaver Lake may be closed to boating use during the treatment period or for a longer period as required. The closure would be short term. Other water users would be notified of the treatment and treatment dates. During the treatment period, cabin leases and lake users would be made aware of herbicide application through postings and news releases. Public notices would be posted at the Fishing Access Site. Notices would inform the public about chemical use and any restrictions to swimming, fishing, boating, stock use or irrigating. Also, marker buoys would be placed around the treatment areas to keep recreationalists away from the sites as directed by product labels.

No cumulative or secondary impacts were identified since chemical treatment would occur as specified by labels, over a relatively small portion of the lake and the chemicals have been extensively studied and approved for the proposed use by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency. The herbicides to be used in the proposed action have also been approved by MDA.

4. <u>VEGETATION</u> Will the proposed action result in?	IMPACT *					Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity, or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X		X	4.a.
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				4.b.
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?		X				4.e.
f. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands or prime and unique farmland?						NA
g. Other:		X				

4.a. There would be a direct negative impact to EWM, the target noxious weed species. Barrier mats, chemical and mechanical removal will result in fewer individual EWM plants. Barrier mats will prohibit all plant growth where positioned. Once EWM is eradicated, the mats would be removed and native plants would colonize impacted area. Herbicide use will be specific to infested sites and not impact other areas. The area treated will be limited to areas with infestations and a curtain or turbidity barrier may be used to isolate the treated area, if deemed necessary. Triclopyr and 2, 4-D are specific to broadleaf plants and will not target some pondweeds (Montana's Statewide Strategic Plan for Invasive Aquatic Plant Management and Resource Protection 2011). Herbicides may impact some native plants at infested sites. With time and eradication of EWM, native aquatic plants will benefit from removal of EWM and will colonize treated sites.

4.b. Potential significant secondary effects to the aquatic plant community could result if the No-Action Alternative is selected. EWM could expand in Beaver Lake further suppressing native plants. EWM could move to other water bodies changing aquatic plant communities. The proposed management action would minimize the potential for long term changes to plant communities. No negative alterations to the plant community would occur with the proposed management action.

4.e. Selection of the No-Action Alternative could result in EWM expansion and establishment in other water bodies. Animals, including humans, can transport and spread EWM, which could become established in other water bodies. Beaver Lake discharges directly into Whitefish Lake. EWM could move downstream through the stream connection. The proposed management action would minimize the potential EWM spreading and for long term changes to plant communities.

<b>** 5. FISH/WILDLIFE</b>  Will the proposed action result in:	<b>IMPACT *</b>					
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				5.a.
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest, or other human activity)?		X				
h. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)						NA
i. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)						NA
j. Other:						

5.a. The No-Action Alternative could result in significant negative impacts to fish and wildlife habitats if EWM expands and suppresses native plant communities. The No-Action Alternative could result in expansion of EWM into other water bodies. EWM from Beaver Lake could be transported to other waters by animals or float downstream in Beaver Creek.

No negative long term impacts to fish or wildlife habitat are associated with the proposed management action. Short-term disturbances to the aquatic habitat is anticipated if mechanical removal of EWM is implemented due to increased turbidity in a small area, but will not result in effects to fish or wildlife.

## B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	
a. Increases in existing noise levels?		X				
b. Exposure of people to severe or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other:		X				

No Noise/Electrical Effects were identified with alternatives.

7. <u>LAND USE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				7.a.
b. Conflict with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?			X			7.d.
e. Other:		X				

7.a. The No-Action Alternative could result in an expansion of EWM in Beaver Lake or to other water bodies. Expansion of EWM could lead to closures on boating and human use of water bodies reducing value of lakeshore properties. The No-Action Alternative could result in a long term boating closure on Beaver Lake, which would adversely affect current residences on the lake. The proposed management action would not result in negative impacts to productivity or profitability of existing land use in the area.

7.d. The proposed management action could impact local residents by impairing their recreational opportunities for a short period during chemical or mechanical removal treatments if a boating closure were implemented.

8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?			X		X	8.a.
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?			X		X	8.c.
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a.)						NA
e. Other:		X				

8.a. There is a minor risk for impact with an herbicide treatment in the event of an accident, mostly for the applicator, which will be mitigated by chemical handling by a licensed applicator, treating small areas, and by applying products as specified on labels.

8.c. There is a minor risk for creation of a potential human health hazard. Herbicides would be applied by licensed applicators according to label specifications. A product cannot be labeled for aquatic use if it poses more than one-in-a-million chance of causing significant damage to human health, the environment, or wildlife resources or show evidence of biomagnification, bioavailability or persistence in the environment (Montana's Statewide Strategic Plan for Invasive Aquatic Plant Management and Resource Protection 2011). During the treatment period, cabin leases and lake users would be made aware of herbicide application through postings and news releases. Public notices would be posted at the Beaver Lake Fishing Access Site. Notices would inform the public about chemical use and any restrictions to swimming, fishing, boating, stock use or irrigating. Also, marker buoys would be placed around the treatment areas to keep recreationalists away from the sites as directed by product labels. The area treated will be limited to areas with infestations and a curtain or turbidity screen may be used to isolate the treated area, if deemed necessary.

No cumulative or secondary effects on Risk/Health Hazards were identified. No cumulative or secondary impacts were identified since chemical treatment would occur as specified by labels, over a relatively small portion of the lake and the chemicals have been extensively studied and approved for the proposed use by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency. The herbicides in the proposed action have also been approved by MDA.

9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				9.d.
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				
f. Other:		X				

9.d. The No-Action Alternative could negatively impact state lease opportunities and values on Beaver Lake if EWM expansion limits boating and other recreation opportunities on the lake. If EWM were to spread to other local bodies of water, additional effects to recreation-based businesses may occur in the future. No cumulative or secondary effects on Community Impact were identified with the proposed management action.

10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. An effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				10.a.
b. An effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. A need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. An increased use of any energy source?		X				
e. **Define projected revenue sources		X				
f. **Define projected maintenance costs.		X				
g. Other:		X				

10.a. If the No-Action Alternative is selected, there could be increased need for governmental services to contain EWM expansion in other water bodies. The potential expansion of EWM could lead to greater financial costs to cooperating state agencies because of the need for additional suppression/removal activities in connected streams, rivers, and lakes. There are potential impacts to water supply and parks and recreational facilities. No cumulative or secondary effects to Public Services/Taxes/Utilities were identified with the proposed management action.

<b>** 11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION</b> <b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>					
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. **Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.)			X			11.c.
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails, or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)						NA
e. Other:		X				

11.c. Potential minor impacts to recreation were identified with the proposed management action if Beaver Lake is closed to human uses during the treatment period. This closure would be short term. No cumulative or secondary effects on Aesthetics/Recreation were identified for the proposed management action.

11.c. There is the potential for significant impacts to recreation if the No-Action Alternative is selected. EWM expansion could result in long term boating closures limiting recreational opportunities in Beaver Lake and other water bodies.

12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. **Destruction or alteration of any site, structure, or object of prehistoric, historic, or paleontological importance?		X				
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12a.)						NA
e. Other:		X				

No impacts were identified to Cultural/Historical Resources with the alternatives.

## SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. <u>SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE</u>  Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				13.a.
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard, or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				13.d.
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				13.e.
f. ***For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)						NA
g. ****For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.						NA

13.a. The No-Action Alternative poses potential negative impacts to Vegetation, Fish and Wildlife, Land Use, Community Impact, Public Services/Taxes/Utilities and Recreation. These pose a significant cumulative impact largely due to the currently limited known distribution of EWM and the potential for expansion from Beaver Lake into other water bodies. The proposed management action has minor impacts that are largely mitigated and do not create a significant cumulative or secondary effect.

13.d. The No-Action Alternative could result in future proposals for noxious weed removal projects if EWM were to spread to Whitefish Lake or other water bodies. If EWM expanded to large areas or large water bodies, large herbicide treatments may result in significant environmental impacts.

13.e. The No-Action Alternative could result in future proposals for noxious weed removal projects if EWM were to spread to Whitefish Lake or other water bodies. With larger waters that have more populated shorelines, more people would be impacted by proposed plant removal projects leading to increased controversy and debate regarding impacts.

**2. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:**

Opportunities for mitigation with the proposed management action include employing a licensed pesticide applicator, use of turbidity barriers, closing the treatment area to human use for the duration of the chemical treatment, and notifying the public of herbicide use.

**PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT**

No-Action Alternative: No impacts were identified to Land Resources, Air, Water, Noise/Electrical Effects, Risk/Health Hazards, and Cultural/Historical Resources with the No-Action Alternative. Minor impacts were identified as an increased need for public services from government if EWM spread in Beaver Lake or to other water bodies. Potentially significant impacts were identified with the No-Action Alternative to Vegetation, Fish and Wildlife Habitat, Land Use, Community Impact, and Recreation if the No-Action Alternative resulted in expansion of EWM in Beaver Lake or to other water bodies resulting in loss of native plant species and recreational opportunities. Cumulatively these impacts could be significant due to the current limited known distribution of EWM in northwestern Montana.

Proposed Management Action Alternative: No impacts were identified to Land Resources, Air, Fish and Wildlife, Noise/Electrical Effects, Community Impact, Public Services/Taxes/Utilities, and Cultural/Historical Resources with the proposed management action. Minor impacts to water surface quality were identified with herbicide treatment and mechanical removal. These impacts could be mitigated by following label specifications for product application rates, using a licensed applicator and turbidity barriers, noticing water users and closing treated waters to human and stock use for short time periods. Minor impacts were identified to aquatic vegetation with use of barrier mats and herbicides. The area treated will be limited to areas with infestations and a curtain or turbidity screen may be used to isolate the treated area. Impacts could be mitigated by allowing native plants to colonize affected areas following eradication of EWM. Native plants would benefit over the long term from eradication of EWM. A minor impact to Land Use and Recreation was identified if the lake was closed to boating use during the treatment period, which would be short term. Minor risks to human health were identified with herbicide treatments. These impacts could be mitigated by following label specifications for product application rates, using a licensed applicator, isolating the treated areas, noticing water users and closing treated waters to human use for short time periods. No potentially significant direct, secondary or cumulative impacts were identified for the proposed management action. The Proposed Management Action Alternative adheres to the state agency response protocol established in Montana's Statewide Strategic Plan for Invasive Aquatic Plant Management and Resource Protection 2011. The purpose of the protocol is to coordinate an effective interagency response and where feasible contain and eradicate invasive aquatic plants.

## **PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

### **1. Public Involvement:**

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on this draft EA, the proposed action, and the alternatives:

- Public notices in each of these papers: Daily InterLake, Whitefish Pilot and Flathead Beacon
- One statewide press release;
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web site: <http://fwp.mt.gov>.

Copies of this environmental assessment will be distributed to neighbors and interested parties upon request to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project and it will be posted on the FWP regional web site: <http://fwp.mt.gov/regions/r1/>.

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having limited impacts.

### **2. Duration of comment period, if any.**

The public comment period will extend for (15) fifteen days following the publication of a legal notice in area newspapers. **Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., July 3, 2012, and can be mailed to the address below:**

Beaver Lake EWM Management  
Attn: Nancy Ivy  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
490 N. Meridian Rd  
Kalispell, MT 59901

email comments to: [nivy@mt.gov](mailto:nivy@mt.gov)

## **PART V. EA PREPARATION**

### **1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? (YES/NO)?**

No.

**If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action:**

An EIS is not required since significant impacts were not identified with the proposed management action and the minor impacts identified can largely be mitigated. Controversy and debate of impacts is not anticipated. The proposed action conforms to Montana's Statewide Strategic Plan for Invasive Aquatic Plant Management and Resource Protection 2011.

**2. Person responsible for preparing the EA:**

Mark Deleray  
Fisheries Biologist  
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
490 N. Meridian Rd.  
Kalispell, MT 59901  
(406) 751-4543  
[mdeleray@mt.gov](mailto:mdeleray@mt.gov)

**3. List of agencies consulted during preparation of the EA:**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
    Fisheries Division  
    Legal Bureau  
Montana Department of Natural Resource Conservation  
    Stillwater Unit  
    Water Resources Regional Office  
Montana Department of Agriculture  
Flathead Basin Commission  
Flathead County Weed District