



Region 2 Headquarters

3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804
Phone 406-542-5500

December 19, 2018

Dear Interested Citizen:

Enclosed you will find for your review, a proposal for Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) to accept assignment (delegation) of the "right of public hunting access" component of a conservation easement (CE) to be held by the Five Valleys Land Trust (FVLT) on the Buxbaum-Boulder Creek Ranch (hereafter, Ranch) in Granite County. The 1,193-acre Ranch is located NW of Maxville (about halfway between Drummond and Philipsburg) and includes native grasslands, forested draws, pocket wetlands and aspen stands. FVLT would purchase a CE on the Ranch to permanently protect the property's wildlife habitat and conservation values by preventing subdivision while keeping the land in private ownership and management. FVLT would then assign to FWP the CE rights portion that provides for public hunting access on the Ranch. The Upper Clark Fork River Basin Remediation and Restoration Advisory Council voted to recommend partial funding from the Montana Department of Justice Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP) to complete this proposed CE project. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service is providing additional funding to purchase this CE through its Agricultural Conservation Easement Program. No FWP funds would be involved in acquiring the proposed CE; therefore, the proposed action in the draft environmental assessment (EA) is for FWP to accept assignment of the right of public hunting access in perpetuity, as set forth in the CE to be held by FVLT.

A draft environmental assessment (EA) for this proposal is available for review and comment. The EA may also be obtained by mail from Region 2 FWP, 3201 Spurgin Rd., Missoula 59804; phoning 406-542-5500; emailing shrose@mt.gov; or viewing FWP's Internet website <http://fwp.mt.gov> ("News," then "Public Notices"). Comments may be made online on the EA webpage or may be directed by mail or email to the addresses above. Comments must be received by FWP no later than January 17, 2019.

FWP will hold a public hearing in Drummond on January 8, 2019 (Tuesday) at 6:30 p.m. at the Drummond Community Center (54 East Broad Street) to discuss the proposed public hunting access for the conservation easement, answer questions and take public comment.

As part of the decision-making process under the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), I plan to issue the Decision Notice for this EA soon after the end of the public comment period. The Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission has the decision-making authority for FWP acquisition of interests in land, and the Commission will be asked to render its decision on this proposal at its February 13, 2019 meeting in Helena.

Sincerely,

Randy Arnold
Regional Supervisor

RA/sr