MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

Region 1
490 N. Meridian Road
Kalispell, MT 59901

Single-Year Agricultural Lease
Ray Kuhns Wildlife Management Area
Decision Notice

September 10, 2019

Description of the Proposed Action

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP) proposes to lease, for a period of one-year, approximately 50 acres of the Ray Kuhns Wildlife Management Area (WMA) for wheat production. This action is part of MFWP's ongoing effort to control weeds, improve soil health, and evaluate agricultural suitability of areas previously farmed under a life-tenancy bequest. The proposed lease area was spring tilled and summer fallowed, and prepared for planting. Under the proposed action the lessee would plant winter wheat, control weeds, amend the crop as necessary, and retain the harvest for their personal use and sale. This is a no-cost action that ultimately improves MFWP's management options by demonstrating the agricultural suitability of a historically challenging piece of farm land. By demonstrating the site's agricultural potential, MFWP may better be able to attract interested growers for a multi-year lease and negotiate terms that would benefit wildlife and the long-term management of the property.

Public Involvement

The Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed action was released for a 20-day public comment period on August 15, 2019. MFWP ran legal ads in the Helena Independent Record, Flathead Beacon, and Daily Inter Lake describing the proposed project and the availability of the draft EA. The draft EA was posted on MFWP's official web site. MFWP also issued a press release that described the project, availability of the draft EA, and the public comment timeline.

Summary of Public Comments and MFWP Response

MFWP Received no public comments on the proposed action.

MFWP Final Decision

In review of relevant information and evaluating environmental effects, I hereby approve the single-year agricultural lease at the Ray Kuhns WMA.

Through the public review process described above, MFWP found no significant impacts on the human or physical environments associated with this proposal. Therefore, the EA is the appropriate level of analysis, and an environmental impact statement is not required.

Noting the absence of public response, this decision notice, together with the draft EA will serve as the final document for this proposal. MFWP believes the single-year no-cost agricultural lease is the most cost-effective means for demonstrating the site's agricultural potential, attracting farmers interested in a multi-year farm lease, and ultimately enhancing wildlife habitat within abandoned farm fields at the Ray Kuhns WMA.

Jim Williams
Regional supervisor

9/17/19
Date