MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

Region 1
490 N. Meridian Road
Kalispell, MT 59901

Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact for Woods Bay and Horseshoe Lake Fishing Access Site Forest Management Projects, Environmental Assessment

October 1st, 2019

Description of the Proposed Action:
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) is proposing to conduct forest management activities at two Fishing Access Sites (FASs) in Region One. FWP proposes to conduct approximately 20 acres of forest management treatments to improve forest conditions at Woods Bay and Horseshoe Lake FASs in the Bigfork and Ferndale areas in Lake County. The treatments would involve the removal of primarily conifer trees (both of merchantable and nonmerchantable value) for the purpose of mitigating hazard trees in developed areas, reducing hazardous fuels in the wildland urban interface (WUI), and increasing resiliency to insects and diseases. Tree removal would be accomplished through a combination of mechanized methods. The treatments would occur in the fall and winter seasons to minimize the impacts to public recreation and minimize ground disturbance. Any revenue generated by the sale of forest products from the project would go to offset the cost of project's design and administration.

Public Comment:
FWP accepted public comment on the draft environmental assessment (EA) for a 30-day period, from September 1st, 2019 through September 30th, 2019. The EA was advertised through media releases and legal notices in the Daily Interlake, Helena Independent Record, and on the FWP web page. Notices were sent to adjacent property owners. Copies of the EA were available from the Kalispell FWP office, and on the FWP website.

FWP received three comments on the draft EA. Two comments supported the proposed project and one comment asked specific questions about the project but did not express support or opposition to the project. No comments opposed the project. We have paraphrased the comments below and provided a brief response to each comment.

Response to Comments:

1. **Comment-** *I support the proposed project. I own land adjacent to Horseshoe Lake, some of which could also benefit from management.*

   Response- Thank you for your comment. If the project moves forward, you may be able to contact the contractor about working on your property while they are nearby.

2. **Comment-** *How will sale price be determined for the timber that is removed and who will be eligible to purchase the wood?*

   Response- Thank you for your comment. FWP will offer the timber be sold based on a dollar per ton stumpage rate. The stumpage rate is the value to FWP which is determined by the log value minus the logging and hauling costs. Log values fluctuate with the market. The actual sale price will be determined by a competitive bid process which will account for log values at the time the timber is offered for sale by FWP. FWP maintains a mailing list of prospective bidders that will be notified of the sale.

3. **Comment-** *Horseshoe Lake FAS has some dense stands that would benefit from thinning. Whitetail deer winter in the area but I don't know if the areas proposed for thinning is particularly important habitat. Some of the trees removed could be sunk in the lake to improve fish habitat. Woods Bay FAS has hazard trees scattered throughout. Some trees in the boat ramp and parking area could be removed to facilitate easier boat launching and parking. FWP should look at changing the parking layout also.*

   Response- Thank you for your comment. FWP's area wildlife biologist consulted in the preparation of the EA was not concerned about impacts to whitetail deer habitat at either site based on the small scale of the project. FWP will consider the idea to sink some trees in Horseshoe Lake to improve fisheries habitat. At Woods Bay, FAS, FWP does plan to remove the trees that impede boat launching and parking. FWP is currently working on a proposal to replace the old boat dock and change the parking layout, which will be addressed in a separate project with appropriate environmental analysis and public involvement.

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI):
Based on the analysis in the environmental assessment (EA), I find Alternative B to be the preferred alternative. I have evaluated the EA and applicable laws, regulations, and policies and have determined that this action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

Alternative B: Proposed Action.

Conduct forested habitat treatments on approximately 20 acres of Horseshoe Lake and Woods Bay FASs near Bigfork, MT. Following this action, FWP anticipates that hazard trees would be mitigated, tree vigor and resilience to insects and diseases would be improved, hazardous fuels in the wildland urban interface would be reduced, aesthetics would be improved, and the sale of timber may off-set the cost of this work.

The final EA may be viewed at or obtained from Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Region One, 490 N. Meridian Road, Kalispell, MT 59901. Please direct requests and questions to:

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Jim Williams
Regional Supervisor

10/08/2019
Date