



Region 2  
3201 Spurgin Road  
Missoula, MT 59804

December 24, 2019

Dear Interested Citizen:

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) proposes to construct a 40-foot by 60-foot maintenance and equipment building at its Warm Springs Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The structure would serve as the new work and storage area for the WMA maintenance crews that operate out of the WMA, located at Warm Springs in Deer Lodge County. FWP released a draft environmental assessment (EA) describing and analyzing this proposal, along with opportunity for public review and comment on the project.

Enclosed is a decision document in which FWP explains its rationale for choosing the proposed action (Alternative B) and deciding to build the maintenance and equipment building at Warm Springs WMA as proposed. The decision document also includes comment received during the public review period. Upon completion of the public involvement process, FWP accepts the draft EA as final.

Please feel free to contact me at 406-542-5500 with any questions you may have. Thank you for your interest and participation.

Sincerely,



Randy Arnold  
Regional Supervisor

RA:sr

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## DECISION NOTICE

### Proposed Maintenance and Equipment Building for Warm Springs Wildlife Management Area

*Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks; Region 2  
3201 Spurgin Road, Missoula MT 59804  
Phone 406-542-5500*

December 24, 2019

#### DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP) proposes to construct a new maintenance and equipment building consisting of a metal-frame building and concrete pad. The structure would serve as the new work area and storage area for the Wildlife Management Area (WMA) maintenance crew that operates out of FWP's Warm Springs WMA location.

Currently the shop/work area at Warm Springs WMA is not large enough to sustain the growing maintenance needs of WMA staff. The current workshop is also in need of safety and general work condition upgrades. Maintenance cannot be completed on larger equipment inside the current workshop but is done in a separate dirt-floored lean-to. Constricted driving conditions around the current workshop make it difficult to maneuver trailers, but a breezeway would eliminate this hazard.

FWP proposes to remove two old buildings and to construct a combination workshop and storage building of sufficient size to service and store larger equipment, including a dump truck and backhoe. Major maintenance activities are typically completed in the fall and winter, which is best done indoors. The building would help secure maintenance equipment that would be parked in the storage portion of the building, thereby avoiding unnecessary weathering compared to outdoor storage. A concrete floor (monolithic slab) is needed for the workshop area to reduce dust and to catch and help contain any accidental spills during equipment maintenance. A breezeway in the new building would also reduce potential damage to structures and equipment, and danger to personnel, by avoiding the need for backing trailers and large equipment into the work area.

#### PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

##### **Alternative A: No Action**

If no action is taken, no updated maintenance and equipment building would be constructed, and FWP employees would continue working with structures currently available on location. The current buildings proposed for removal are nearly unusable due to age and deterioration. Safety issues for WMA maintenance staff would continue to exist due to the current deteriorating and outdated workshop environment.

##### **Alternative B: Proposed Action**

The maintenance workshop and storage facility would be constructed at FWP's Warm Springs WMA maintenance work location. The proposed construction site is currently developed and would require

removal of two old buildings. Construction of the new workshop would not impact any Montana species of concern<sup>1</sup>, floodplain, or water table. The proposed building would improve work safety and enable general preventative maintenance on equipment to be easier and more efficient for WMA staff.

**Alternative C: Maintenance workshop constructed on different location**

Constructing the proposed maintenance workshop and storage facility at a different location on the WMA would create various issues. A different construction site would potentially require a new driveway and further extension of existing utilities, at additional cost and ground disturbance. A different location would likely reduce outdoor storage capacity, currently required for maintenance materials and other items stored for FWP’s Enforcement and Fisheries staff. A different location would also be less convenient, impacting productivity of WMA maintenance staff.

**PUBLIC REVIEW PROCESS**

FWP is required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) to assess potential impacts of its proposed actions to the human and physical environments, evaluate those impacts through an interdisciplinary approach, including public input, and make a decision based on this information. FWP released a draft environmental assessment (EA; “Warm Springs Wildlife Management Area Maintenance and Equipment Building”) for public review of this proposal on May 31, 2019 and accepted public comment for 30 days until July 1, 2019.

Legal notices of the proposed construction and its Draft EA availability were published in the following newspapers (dates): *Anaconda Leader* (May 29), *Independent Record* (Helena, May 29), *Missoulian* (May 29), *Montana Standard* (Butte, May 29), and *Silver State Post* (Deer Lodge, May 29). FWP issued a statewide news release regarding this proposal on June 11, 2019.

FWP mailed 12 copies of the EA, and emailed approximately 41 notifications of the EA’s availability, to adjacent landowners and interested individuals, groups and (non-FWP) agencies. The EA was available for public review on FWP’s web site (<http://fwp.mt.gov/>, “News,” then “Recent Public Notices”) from May 31 through July 1, 2019, along with opportunity to comment online.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

FWP received one comment--in support of the proposal--from the President of the Anaconda Sportsman’s Club.

Comment: *The Anaconda Sportsmen's Club is in favor of this action which would greatly help the Department in its endeavor to carry out the operational goals of the surrounding areas. There is a lot of FWP Holdings in a very close radius to Warm Springs and by having a new Facility (as the Draft Assessment describes) will greatly improve the Departments performance to meet the Goals required.*

FWP Response: Thank you for your comment and project support.

**DECISION**

Based upon the Draft Environmental Assessment and the applicable laws, regulations, and policies, I have determined that the proposed action will not have negative effects on the human and physical environments associated with this project. Therefore, I conclude that the EA is the appropriate level of analysis and the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is unnecessary.

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<sup>1</sup> A Species of Concern is a native animal (or plant) breeding in Montana that is considered to be “at risk” due to declining population trends, threats to its habitats, and/or restricted distribution. The purpose of Montana’s SOC listing is to highlight species in decline and encourage conservation efforts to reverse population declines and prevent the need for future listing as Threatened or Endangered Species under the Federal Endangered Species Act.

Based on the analysis in the Draft EA and lack of public comment opposing or suggesting changes to the Proposed Action, I have selected the "Proposed Action" (Alternative B). FWP will construct a new maintenance and equipment building at Warm Springs WMA.

By notification of this Decision Notice, the draft EA is hereby made the final EA. The finding of selection for the "Proposed Action" Alternative B is the product of this Decision Notice.



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Randy Arnold  
Region 2 Supervisor  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

12/24/2019  
Date