



**DECISION NOTICE**  
**WOLF CREEK CONSERVATION EASEMENT**

Region 4 Headquarters  
4600 Giant Springs Rd.  
Great Falls, MT 59405  
(406) 454-5840

**DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVE CONSIDERED:**

Proposed Action

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP) is proposing to purchase and manage a conservation easement (CE) on Pheasants Forever’s Wolf Creek property outside of Denton. This proposed CE, called the “Wolf Creek Conservation Easement,” will protect and conserve in perpetuity ~1,000 deeded acres mixed sagebrush-grassland habitat adjoining the Beckman Wildlife Management Area.

This CE will also guarantee free public access for hunting and other recreational pursuits on these deeded CE lands, satisfying MFWP’s objectives in providing access and recreational opportunities to the public.

No Action

For the No Action Alternative, MFWP would not purchase a CE on the Wolf Creek property. Pheasants Forever would continue to manage the property for upland game birds in the interim, but there would be no guarantee of permanent conservation and public access on the Land, especially if the property were to be sold. Additionally, the opportunity for Pheasants Forever to leverage funds for other habitat projects in the area to benefit wildlife and the public would have to come by other means.

**MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT PUBLIC PROCESS:**

MFWP 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. MFWP released a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for public review of the proposed action on August 21, 2020 and accepted public comment until 5:00 P. M. on September 20, 2020.

Notice of the proposal and availability of the Draft EA was published in the *Lewistown News Argus* and the *Great Falls Tribune*. Copies of the EA were distributed to Fergus County Commissioners, neighboring landowners, interested individuals, groups, and agencies to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project. The EA was also available for public review on MFWP's web site (<http://fwp.mt.gov/>, "Recent Public Notices" and "Environmental Assessments") for the duration of the comment period. MFWP also issued a News Release.

**SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENT:**

FWP received 10 total written comments via email. A breakdown of the comments is as follows: 10 were in support of the proposed action (purchase of the conservation easement), 0 supported the No Action Alternative, and 0 did not specify.

In their support, comments referenced the benefits of expanded perpetual public access adjacent to the Beckman WMA, the protection of the Land's Conservation Values, and maintaining the lands in private ownership.

**RESPONSE TO COMMENTS:**

No comments received elicited a response; all comments were statements of support

**DECISION:**

In reviewing all the public comment, evaluating the environmental effects, and other relevant information, I recommend that MFWP pursue the completion of the Wolf Creek Conservation Easement Project and recommend that the Fish & Wildlife Commission approve the proposed action as well.

Through the MEPA process, 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.

After review of this proposal, it is my decision to accept the draft EA as supplemented by this Decision Notice and the summary/response to public comment contained herein. In combination, these documents constitute the Final EA. MFWP believes the completion of this project is in the best interests of working agricultural landscapes, fish and wildlife, and public recreation.

  
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Gary Bertellotti  
Region 4 Supervisor

9/28/2020  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Public Comment Received on the Draft Environmental Assessment:**



Protecting Montana's wildlife,  
land, waters and hunting & fishing  
heritage for future generations.

August 20, 2020

Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks, Region 4  
Lewistown Office  
333 Airport Rd  
Lewistown, MT 59457

Attn: Wolf Creek Conservation Easement

Dear Sonja Andersen,

The Montana Wildlife Federation (MWF) is our state's oldest and largest state-based wildlife conservation organization. We were formed in 1936 when hunters joined landowners to restore depleted wildlife in Montana, and for 84 years we have worked on key issues affecting wildlife, habitat and access.

MWF is strongly supportive of the proposed Wolf Creek Conservation Easement (CE) by the Dept. of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). This property is adjacent to the Beckman Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and will protect 1,000 acres of critical native ecosystems including sagebrush steppe and mixed grass prairie. Roughly 33 Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) may occur through the property and several of the ecological communities within this CE are in a low or declining status. Additionally, this property provides year-round habitat for pronghorn as well as being a critical migration route. Under a CE, this property will provide public access to this property as well as many recreation opportunities in a region of the state with fewer public lands.

MWF commends the Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks for working to protect our great outdoors. Thank you for the opportunity to comment and voice support of this project. If you have any questions, or if we can be of any assistance, please contact our Western Montana Field Coordinator, Eric Clewis, at [eclewis@mtwf.org](mailto:eclewis@mtwf.org)

Sincerely,

Eric Clewis  
Western Montana Field Coordinator  
Montana Wildlife Federation

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**From:** Jimmy Lewis <jimmylewismontana@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 27, 2020 3:08 PM  
**To:** Andersen, Sonja  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Attn: Wolf Creek Conservation Easement

I support the creation of this easement.

Thank you,

Jimmy Lewis  
320 Middle Cottonwood Lane  
Bozeman, MT 59715  
406-580-8466

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**From:** don@rich4evr.com <don@rich4evr.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, August 28, 2020 9:20 PM  
**To:** Andersen, Sonja  
**Subject:** Public Comment: Wolf Creek Conservation Easement Draft Environmental Assessment

I support the purchase of a perpetual Conservation Easement as proposed.

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**From:** dpfauski@gmail.com <dpfauski@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, August 31, 2020 4:29 PM  
**To:** Andersen, Sonja  
**Subject:** Public Comment: Wolf Creek Conservation Easement Draft Environmental Assessment

I don't know how many hours are logged by people doing outdoor activities on the Beckman but what an amazing resource. To have the ability to spread the activity area out so that there is more room for secluded enjoyment of the area, just makes good sense, I would encourage you to pursue this. The Beckman has been discovered and through the years you see more and more activity out there. Access like this is priceless.

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**From:** Glenn Elison <glennelison@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 1, 2020 8:12 AM  
**To:** Andersen, Sonja  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Wolf Creek Conservation Easement

I fully support the acquisition of the Wolf Creek conservation easement. I am personally familiar with the area from hunting, hiking and other recreation in the immediate area. This easement will be a boon to wildlife and the public's improved and increased recreational use of the area. With declining public access to private lands, conservation easements that provide public access and use are an important tool to perpetuate our hunting heritage.

Glenn Elison

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**From:** grahamtaylor6139@gmail.com <grahamtaylor6139@gmail.com>

**Sent:** Thursday, September 10, 2020 6:45 AM

**To:** Andersen, Sonja

**Subject:** Public Comment: Wolf Creek Conservation Easement Draft Environmental Assessment

I support pursuit of a conservation easement on the Wolf Creek property in Fergus County. Opportunities to enhance and maintain wildlife habitat, expand and secure long term public recreational opportunity and to encourage further habitat emphasis by private landowners and sporting organizations (PF) is what Habitat Montana is all about. This effort accomplishes all that and more. Future generations of Montanans will thank the Department and the Fish and Wildlife Commission for acting on this tremendous opportunity.

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**From:** mhg4556@gmail.com <mhg4556@gmail.com>

**Sent:** Thursday, September 10, 2020 4:28 PM

**To:** Andersen, Sonja

**Subject:** Public Comment: Wolf Creek Conservation Easement Draft Environmental Assessment

September 10, 2020

Sonya,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Draft EA Wolf Creek Conservation Easement.

I support the proposed action of this EA for FWP to acquire a conservation easement on this property owned by Pheasants Forever. I have helped with habitat projects and recreated on this property. I'm familiar with it.

I support this effort because I agree with the primary objectives to provide perpetual year-round public access to the property, maintain the conservation values of the property, and keep the land in private ownership while maintaining agriculture as the primary land use and in addition the great scenic values.

Sincerely,

Mike Getman

Lewistown, MT 59457

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**From:** henmt1@comcast.net <henmt1@comcast.net>

**Sent:** Friday, September 11, 2020 8:52 AM

**To:** Andersen, Sonja

**Subject:** Public Comment: Wolf Creek Conservation Easement Draft Environmental Assessment

I strongly support the proposed Wolf Creek Conservation Easement. I have hunted both birds and big game on the Wolf Creek PF property since 2013. These lands increase the total amount of public access in the Beckman WMA area and also include more high quality bird hunting habitat than provided on the Beckman. In an area with increasing restrictions on public access to agricultural lands, this access will be increasingly important as time goes by.

thanks for the opportunity to comment.

Harvey Nyberg

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**From:** c\_merker@yahoo.com <c\_merker@yahoo.com>

**Sent:** Thursday, September 17, 2020 8:34 AM

**To:** Andersen, Sonja

**Subject:** Public Comment: Wolf Creek Conservation Easement Draft Environmental Assessment

The combination of the Beckman WMA and Pheasants Forever Wold Creek property is a favorite place of mine. The proposed CE will only enhance such a gem. In these days of declining, even active efforts by some to deny us, public access please do make this happen.

Chris merker

Lewistown

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**From:** rmacgowan@gmail.com <rmacgowan@gmail.com>

**Sent:** Friday, September 18, 2020 11:05 AM

**To:** Andersen, Sonja

**Subject:** Public Comment: Wolf Creek Conservation Easement Draft Environmental Assessment

What a great opportunity - 110% in favor - yes to purchasing and managing and providing more public access!!!