



Region One 490 North Meridian Road Kalispell, MT 59901

DECISION NOTICE

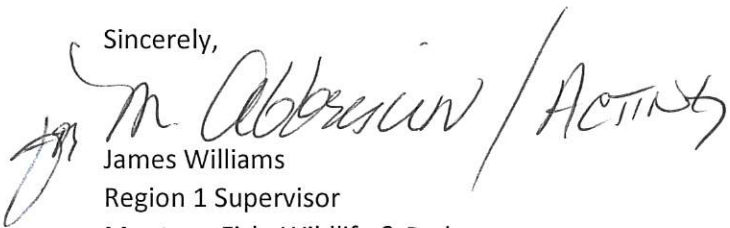
And

Finding of No Significant Impact
for the

Lone Pine State Park Archery Range Land Acquisition & Archery Range Expansion

Thank you for your review and comments regarding the Draft Lone Pine State Park Land Acquisition & Archery Range Expansion Environmental Assessment (EA). This project is intended to increase the capacity at the existing Lone Pine archery range. Enclosed is a decision notice (DN) in which FWP responds to comments within the scope of this proposal. Upon completion of the public involvement process and by including this DN, FWP accepts the draft EA as final.

Sincerely,

 *James Williams*

James Williams
Region 1 Supervisor

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Description of Proposed Project

FWP proposes the purchase of 9.3 acres of property that would add capacity to the existing Lone Pine State Park archery range. A trail addition through the new property would add 500 yards of new trail to the current archery target route. This proposal would take advantage of a Pittman Robertson Act grant, administered by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, that is aimed at increasing public shooting sport opportunities. The current range at Lone Pine offers six shooting stations and has seen a significant increase in use. Self-registration at the Lone Pine range indicates a 30% increase in use in the past few years (578 archers in 2010 to 1929 archers in 2020).

The subject property is located adjacent to the existing archery range and would provide additional target locations. The topography of this undeveloped property would provide safe and diverse target locations, while adding an additional safety buffer from adjoining private properties.

The Lone Pine State Park archery range is the only developed, outdoor public archery range in the Flathead Valley. It has become increasingly popular as a location to learn and hone archery skills. Montana has a growing number of schools participating in the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP). More than 70 schools are enrolled in the program, and northwest Montana is rapidly growing enrollment with 18 schools/programs enrolled. Since 2019, 5 new schools in northwest Montana have enrolled in the program due to resources and opportunities provided by FWP and its sites, such as the archery range at Lone Pine State Park. The NASP program can be taught indoors using the gymnasium or outdoors. Ranges such as the one at Lone Pine State Park provide opportunities for NASP programs, trainings, and public education events that promote NASP and bowhunter education.

Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) Process and Public Involvement

FWP released a draft environmental assessment (EA) for public review on November 10th, 2021 and asked for public comment through 5:00 p.m. on December 10th, 2021. FWP held a virtual public informational meeting on November 30, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. FWP ran legal ads describing the proposed project, the availability of the draft EA, and the public informational meeting in the Flathead Beacon, Daily Inter Lake, and Helena Independent Record. FWP also mailed postcards to neighboring landowners. The draft EA was posted on FWP's official website and was also available at the Region One headquarters in Kalispell and online for people with internet access or through internet service at public libraries.

The EA evaluated the potential impacts of the following alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action

Under this alternative, FWP would not acquire 9.3 acres and the Lone Pine State Park public archery range would remain at its current size and configuration. FWP anticipates that demand for the range will continue to increase, creating congestion and heavy use of the current facility.

Alternative B: Proposed Action

Under the proposed action, FWP would acquire an adjoining 9.3-acre parcel and increase opportunity at the Lone Pine State Park public archery range. The existing trail would be lengthened, and up to six new shooting stations and targets would be incorporated into the existing range, providing safe shooting lanes with increased visibility. Lone Pine State Park staff would continue to provide maintenance, ensure safety, and provide archery programming for park visitors.

Other Alternatives:

FWP considered redesigning and adding capacity to the existing range but determined that to do so would encroach on other regions of the park that are experiencing heavy use for hiking and bicycling.

Summary of Public Comment

FWP received 13 comments via email, and FWP staff reviewed the submissions to identify comments. A comment was defined as a specific issue or impact. In many cases, multiple people listed the same or similar comments; these comments are summarized and listed once, and one response is provided.

The following is a synopsis of public input received during the comment period and FWP's response to those comments organized by subject matter:

I. Support voiced for specific alternatives listed within the Environmental Assessment

Alternative A (No Action): no comments received in support of Alternative A (No Action)

Preferred Alternative B (Proposed Action):

- The Traditional Bowhunters of Montana fully supports **Alternative B**, the proposal to purchase 9.3 acres adjacent to the existing Lone Pine State Park archery range and use this land to increase capacity and facilities. Montana has seen an incredible response to the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP), and we support expanding regional opportunities for archers to practice and hone their skills. Increasing available target ranges and access to public education events are critical to creating new, ethical bowhunters and retaining hunters in the long term. Novice archers and seasoned hunters alike will benefit from increased opportunities to learn, practice, and improve their archery skills, especially with traditional tackle.
- The Montana Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers fully supports Alternative B, the proposal to purchase 9.3 acres adjacent to the existing Lone Pine State Park archery range and to use this land to increase capacity and facilities at the range. Montana has seen an incredible response to the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) and we support expanding regional opportunities for archers to practice and hone their skills. Increasing available target ranges and access to public education events are critical to creating new, ethical hunters and to retaining hunters in the long term. Young or novice archers and seasoned hunters alike will all benefit from increased opportunities to learn, practice and improve their archery skills.
- Flathead Wildlife, Inc. strongly endorses Alternative B in the Lone Pine Archery Range Draft EA to acquire additional acreage and expand the archery range at Lone Pine State Park. One of the main tenets in the FWP Bowhunter Education Program is to practice frequently under natural conditions to learn your personal range and to become proficient in making humane kills. Archery can also be a sport in itself, teaching concentration, relaxation and providing outdoor exercise.

Unfortunately, many people do not have a safe and suitable location for archery practice. The proposed archery range would be a great expansion of the existing range which offers

a variety of stations with challenging and realistic shots. Interestingly, several of our members were part of constructing the original range many years ago so we are delighted to see the range expanding and use increasing. Flathead Wildlife thanks FWP for taking the initiative to provide a needed safe archery range and for expanding public recreation opportunities at Lone Pine State Park.

- I am an archery enthusiast in the Flathead and surrounding area. I belong to a few state archery organizations, and use Lone Pine range quite often. I am certain that expanding Lone pine and adding a new facility in Big Arm would give NW Montana recreational archers much needed opportunity. The new and improved facilities would increase the ability to introduce new people (especially kids) to the sport. I believe that archery is a very good hobby/sport for all ages that promotes skills and disciplines that carry over to all parts of life. In short, please proceed with all proposed projects.
- The existing archery range at Lone Pine is increasingly popular and is currently the only public archery range in the Flathead Valley. The addition of the new archery range would create increased availability to learn and enjoy the sport of archery.
- I wanted to send a quick email in favor of both expanding the Lone Pine Range and creating one in Big Arm. Its seems the sport of archery is growing and having more places/space to shoot would be very helpful for the community.
- Myself and others have always wanted course expansion, creative target set ups, longer shot options, 3-D targets and maybe an elevated platform to shoot from.
- The existing archery facility at Lone Pine is a really nice resource for the community and I think the plan to expand the range is excellent.
- I fully support the expansion of the Lone Pine Archery range with land acquisition. Now is the time to purchase the 9.3 acres needed for the proposed expansion before it is developed and no longer affordable or desirable for public use.
- On review of subject environmental assessment all seems to be accurate and well presented. This is a project that needs to have a green light as the local community will benefit greatly. Additionally, children in the NASP program need something beyond this in-school program. That is, after NASP then what? This park extension in the answer to that question. Get the kids outside to continue the archery skills they learned via the NASP program. I can see nothing but positive results from this expansion.
- I have used the current archery range and it is great benefit to our community based on the number of families I have seen on the range. I believe as the surrounding areas populations continue to grow this range expansion will allow for a safe area to practice archery rather than our back yards in the more developed neighborhoods. Please expand now to meet the current and growing use of the archery range.

Alternative C (no acquisition, redesign existing range):

- no comments received in support of Alternative C

II. The following are design suggestions which followed statements supporting the range expansion:

- Additionally, if needed for planning the range the Archery Trade Association has an excellent booklet on range development and range expansion. The website is: <https://archerytrade.org/staff/archery-range-guide-community-park/archerytrade.org>
- Would it be possible to create a target/area where a person could stay at the target and/or shooting lane for an extended period of time for the purpose of sighting in their bow sights and adjusting them.
- We also hope that in the planning of the archery range that you consider elements of design that will enable the activity to be accessible to individuals with disabilities.

FWP Response: These are all excellent suggestions and will be considered during the range upgrades.

- If possible I think having one segregated area where folks can bring their own targets and shoot broadheads in preparation for hunting season would be a good addition.
- Could an area be created where a person could bring and set up their own target to sight in their bow and/or to shoot broadheads at?
- Would it be possible to create a target that is capable of accepting broadheads so the one can make sure their broadheads match their field points to gear up for hunting season.

FWP Response: FWP will research option for providing a location to practice with broadheads. Broadhead use on the current targets decreases their life expectancy and increases replacement costs, but we understand the need to practice with a broadhead or replica broadhead.

III. Opposition voiced against specific alternatives listed within the Environmental Assessment

Alternative A, B, and Other Alternatives (No Action): no comments in opposition of the proposed options were received.

IV. Positive and Negative Impacts to Birds and other Wildlife from the Proposed Action

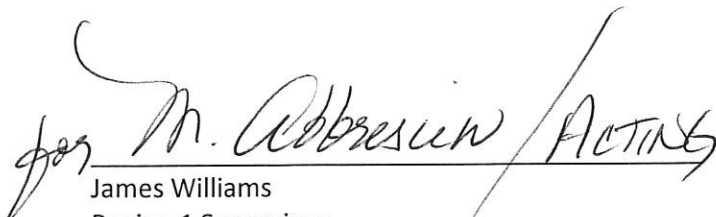
- Additionally, the proposed 9.3-acre acquisition will also help preserve habitat used by the native species of the area. The day use of the current archery range course with the trails and targets appears to have a minor impact on the forest and have seen many species continue to use this area. If this expansion does not happen now, I am certain the 9.3 acres will end up as another home site that will not benefit our community and wildlife for generations.

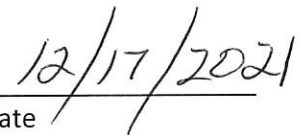
DECISION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based upon the Draft EA 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.

By notification of this Decision Notice (DN), the draft EA is hereby made the final EA. FWP will proceed with the acquisition and expansion of the archery range, with work expected to begin in fall 2022.

In accordance with FWP policy, an appeal may be made by any person who has either commented in writing to the department on the proposed project, or who has registered or commented orally at a public meeting held by the department on the proposed project, or who can provide new evidence that would otherwise change the proposed plan. An appeal must be submitted to the Director of FWP in writing and must be postmarked or received within 30 days of this decision notice. The appeal must describe the basis for the appeal, how the appellant has previously commented to the department or participated in the decision-making process, and how the department can provide relief. The appeal should be mailed to: Director, MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks, PO Box 200701, (1420 East 6th Avenue,) Helena, MT 59620-0701.


James Williams
Region 1 Supervisor
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks


Date