



Region 2 Headquarters  
3201 Spurgin Road  
Missoula, MT 59804  
Phone 406-542-5500

October 5, 2022

Dear Interested Citizen:

Enclosed you will find for your review the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for a Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposal to purchase a conservation easement (CE) on the Hackett Ranch, to be known as the Sweathouse Creek Conservation Easement. The proposed CE is located approximately 3.5 miles west of Victor in Ravalli County in west-central Montana. The Sweathouse Creek CE would protect and enhance critical winter range for elk and deer as well as an important spring calving area for elk. The CE also encompasses portions of Sweathouse Creek and Gash Creek and their associated riparian areas, benefiting native fish and other aquatic resources. The CE would support a diversity of game species and many nongame species, including state-identified Species of Concern, while precluding subdivision and development. The property would be managed for agricultural production as well as fish and wildlife habitat in partnership with the landowners and FWP biologists. The Sweathouse Creek CE would also secure and improve public recreational access and opportunities in the area. The project is proposed to be funded by Pittman-Robertson Act funds, FWP's Habitat Montana Fund, the Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust, Ravalli County Fish and Wildlife Association, landowner donated value, and potentially through the Ravalli County Open Lands Bond (funding request in process).

FWP will hold a public hearing in Stevensville on October 24, 2022 (Monday) at 5:30 p.m. at the North Valley Public Library (208 Main Street) to discuss the proposal, answer questions, and take public comment.

The EA may be obtained by mail from Region 2 FWP, 3201 Spurgin Rd., Missoula 59804; by phoning 406-542-5551; by emailing [torrey.ritter@mt.gov](mailto:torrey.ritter@mt.gov); or by viewing FWP's Internet website <http://fwp.mt.gov> ("News," then "News and Public Notices," then "News Releases").

Comments may be made online on the EA's webpage or may be directed to Torrey Ritter at the mail or email addresses above. Comments must be received by FWP no later than November 4, 2022.

As part of the decision-making process under MEPA, I expect to issue the Decision Notice for this EA very soon after the end of the comment period. The Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission has the final decision-making authority for FWP conservation easement proposals, and the Commission will be asked to render its decision on this proposal at its meeting in February 2023. (Please check the "Commission" link on FWP's webpage for the February 2023 meeting date and location; an agenda will be posted online 1-2 weeks prior to the meeting.)

Sincerely,

/s/ Randy Arnold

Randy Arnold  
Regional Supervisor

RA/sr