



July 28, 2022

RE: Decision Notice for Fence Replacement Project

Background

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) distributed a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) detailing proposed management actions to target fencing that impedes wildlife movements for removal and replacement with wildlife friendly fencing in **Rosebud County**.

Description of the Proposed Action

The purpose of the proposed action is to remove up to 45 miles of fencing in Rosebud County that is acting as a barrier to wildlife movement and replace it with wildlife friendly fence. This will be accomplished by working with landowners, utilizing recent telemetry data from collared pronghorn, and funds obtained through a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) grant. By using GPS locations from the ongoing Pronghorn Movement and Population Ecology Study and local knowledge, FWP will be able to identify and target specific locations of fences that are impeding pronghorn and other wildlife movements to have the greatest impact possible. NFWF and FWP funds will be used to purchase fencing materials to provide to landowners to replace fences that have been identified as barriers to local wildlife movement. FWP will also provide the landowner with wildlife friendly specifications that the new fence will be built to in order to improve the ability for wildlife to move more freely across the landscape and access critical habitats. If FWP can help landowners improve up to 45 miles of fence, FWP anticipates improving wildlife movement on at least 57,600 acres of rangeland (one square section [640 acres] on each side of one mile of fence).

Public Process and Comments

Montana FWP is required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) to assess potential impacts of a proposed action to the human environment. In compliance with MEPA, an EA was completed for the proposed project by FWP and released for public comment on July 8, 2022.

Public comments on the proposed action were taken for 15 days (through July 22, 2022). The public was notified through the following actions:

- One statewide press release
- One public notice in the *Miles City Star* and the *Forsyth Independent Press*
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: <http://fwp.mt.gov>.

One public comment was received during the comment period. The comment was in support of the proposed work.

Final Environmental Assessment

After a final internal review, the EA was finalized as originally written with the inclusion of the public comment and will serve as the final documents pertaining to this action.

Decision

In consideration of the above facts and the public support received, it is my decision to approve the proposed action to work with landowners and current GPS data from collared pronghorn to identify and remove up to 45 miles of fence and replace it with wildlife friendly fencing in Rosebud County through the proposed actions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brad Schmitz', with a stylized, cursive script.

Brad Schmitz
Region 7 Supervisor