



## DECISION NOTICE

### Smallmouth Bass Introduction at East Fork Reservoir (Hill County)

Date: July 28, 2022

#### **DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED PROJECT**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) is proposing to trap and transfer approximately 100-200 smallmouth bass from Beaver Creek Reservoir and Bearpaw Lake and stock them into East Fork Reservoir. East Fork Reservoir is located within the Beaver Creek drainage upstream of both Bearpaw Lake and Beaver Creek Reservoir. Smallmouth bass would provide additional angling opportunities on this popular tribal fishery.

Prior to any movement and stocking, FWP will conduct fish health assessments to ensure any smallmouth bass being stocked are disease free and carry no pathogens. Furthermore, FWP will conduct Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) testing to ensure no AIS are present within the donor waters to reduce any risks of AIS transport during stocking. It's expected that the smallmouth bass will be able to naturally reproduce in East Fork Reservoir and a long-term stocking plan will not be required.

#### **MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA) PUBLIC PROCESS AND COMMENT**

The Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) requires FWP to assess impacts to the human and natural environment. The draft EA was released on June 16, 2022, with a 31-day comment period ending July 17, 2022. Legal Notice of the EA release and comment period was published in the Havre Daily News and the Helena Independent Record. Public Notice was placed on the FWP Website and direct mailing and/or email notification was provided to Rocky Boy Indian Community, interested parties, Hill County Commissioners, DNRC, DEQ and NRCS. The Draft EA was available to interested parties by downloading from the FWP Website. Hard copies were available at the FWP Region 6 office in Havre.

#### **SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENT**

No comments were received through the public comment period.

#### **DECISION NOTICE**

Utilizing the EA and public comment, a decision must be rendered by FWP which addresses the concerns and issues identified in the proposed action.

FWP's analysis supports the introduction of smallmouth bass into East Fork Reservoir (Hill County).

I find there to be no significant impacts on the human and physical environments associated with this introduction. Therefore, I conclude that the Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of analysis, and that an Environment 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 as final, and to recommend proceeding with the proposed introduction of smallmouth bass into East Fork Reservoir (Hill County).**

The Final EA may be viewed on FWP's website: <http://www.fwp.mt.gov> or be obtained upon request from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Region 6 Headquarters, 1 Airport Rd., Glasgow, MT 59230 or (406) 228-3700.

Drew Henry

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Drew Henry". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with a large initial 'D' and 'H'.

FWP Region 6 Supervisor