



DECISION NOTICE

TEAKETTLE FISHING ACCESS SITE LATRINE REPLACEMENT

JULY 3, 2023

ACTION

Decision Notice (DN). Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) shall prepare a DN for the proposed action. The DN must identify the agency decision, the reasons for the decision, and any special conditions surrounding the decision or its implementation.

With this action, FWP hereby adopts the Draft Environmental Assessment or Draft EA as final, and approves Alternative 2, the proposed action.

AUTHORITY: MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

According to the applicable requirements of the Montana Environmental Policy Act or MEPA and its implementing rules and regulations, before a proposed action may be approved, environmental review must be conducted to identify, consider, and disclose any potential impacts of the proposed action on the affected human environment. The level of environmental review will vary with the complexity and seriousness of environmental issues associated with a proposed action. The level of public interest will also vary. The agency is responsible for adjusting public review to match these factors. *Title 75, Chapter 1, Parts 1 through 3, Montana Code Annotated (MCA)*.

Based on these factors, FWP determined a Checklist (Draft EA) constitutes the appropriate level of review for the proposed action. Therefore, to assess and disclose potential impacts of the proposed action, FWP prepared a Draft EA for public review and comment. See *Public Participation Process* below.

Further, FWP must consider any substantive comments received in response to an EA and proceed in accordance with one of the following steps: determine the EA did not adequately reflect the issues raised by the proposed action and issue an Environmental Impact Statement or EIS; determine the EA did not adequately reflect the issues raised by the proposed action and issue a supplemental EA; or determine the Draft EA adequately addressed the issues raised by the proposed action and make a final decision, with appropriate modification resulting from the analysis provided in the Draft EA and the analysis of any substantive public comments received. See *Public Comment and FWP Response* below.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

The Draft EA was made available for public review and comment from June 16th 2023 to June 30th. A legal Notice was published in the Daily Inter Lake and Helena Independent Record and the Draft EA was posted on FWP's Public Notice webpage: <https://fwp.mt.gov/news/public-notices>. The Draft EA was also made available for public review on the Environmental Quality Council or EQC website: <https://leg.mt.gov/mepa/search/>, by individual request, and through notice to identified interested parties. FWP received three comments during the public comment period.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

FWP is proposing to replace and relocate the latrine at Teakettle Fishing Access Site (FAS) near Columbia Falls on the Flathead River. The popular 3-acre site provides recreational access to the Flathead River for floating, hunting and other water-based recreation. The site features a parking area for approximately 50 vehicles, a boat ramp, and latrine. The site is a popular launch and end point for float trips on the Flathead River with 37,926 vehicles counted at the entrance in 2022. The existing single-vault latrine at the site is approximately 30 years old and in need of replacement.

The existing latrine has a leaky roof and no exterior pump out access hatch. The older design does not provide adequate airflow to reduce unpleasant scents. To comply with updated sanitation regulations, the new latrine would need to be installed in a new location further from the Flathead River as indicated in figure 2. The new latrine would be a double vault unit built to modern standards for ADA access, airflow regulation, and would include an exterior pump-out hatch. The new latrine would have approximately 2,000-gallon capacity compared to the approximately 500-gallon capacity of the existing single-vault latrine.

The area currently occupied by the old latrine would be available for picnicking and staging for float parties waiting for their shuttle vehicle. The project would occur during the summer or fall of 2023 depending on material and contractor availability. The project is expected to cost approximately \$25,000.00.

PURPOSE AND NEED

FWP is proposing to replace and relocate the latrine at Teakettle FAS. A new latrine would be installed at location further away from the Flathead River. The benefits of the proposed project include:

- Improving visitor experience by providing a modern double-vault latrine with improved air flow functionality and ADA compatible design.
- Expanding latrine capacity from approximately 500 gallons to approximately 2,000 gallons requiring less frequent pumping.
- Improving sanitation by providing an exterior pumping hatch.
- Decreasing maintenance costs associated with the old latrine.
- Compliance with updated sanitation and floodplain regulations to reduce the risk of surface and ground water contamination.

ALTERNATIVES ANALYZED

Alternative 1: No Action

In addition to the proposed action, and as required by MEPA, FWP analyzes the "No-Action" alternative in the EA. Under the No-Action alternative, the proposed action would not occur. Therefore, no additional impacts to the human environment would occur. The No Action alternative forms the baseline from which the potential impacts of the proposed action may be measured.

Under the No Action alternative FWP would not replace the latrine and the existing latrine would continue to function poorly and would continue to negatively affect visitor experience through objectionable odors. The old latrine would continue to present a sanitation issue due to its interior pump out access and would continue to require more frequent pumping. The old latrine would not comply with updated ADA accessibility requirements or updated septic regulations. There would continue to be the potential for sewage to enter the waterway.

Alternative 2: Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, FWP would replace and relocate the latrine to improve visitor experience and reduce the risk of sewage leaking into the waterway. To comply with updated sanitation regulations, the new latrine would need to be installed in a new location further from the Flathead River. The new latrine would be a double vault unit built to modern standards for ADA access, airflow regulation, and would include an exterior pump-out hatch. The new latrine would have approximately 2,000-gallon capacity compared to the approximately 500-gallon capacity of the existing single-vault latrine.

PUBLIC COMMENT AND FWP RESPONSE

FWP received three public comments on the Draft EA. A substantive public comment was defined as the identification of a specific issue or impact. The following provides the public comments received and FWP response(s).

Comment: *I support the Teakettle Fishing Access Site Latrine Replacement. I would hope you can get it done sooner than later, as it's clear the need is great.*

Response: Construction would occur in the fall of 2023 to avoid peak summer use.

Comment: *I am in FAVOR of the proposed latrine at Teakettle FAS. In environmental terms, I'm reasonable assured that a regularly maintained modern vault, in a new location, is preferable to the existing antique.*

Response: Thank you for the comment.

Comment: *Flathead Wildlife, Inc. strongly endorses Alternative 2 in this Draft EA to replace the existing latrine with an upgraded structure and to relocate the structure farther back from the Flathead River at the Teakettle Fishing Access Site. As noted, Teakettle FAS is an extremely popular access site to launch or take out from float trips. The EA notes nearly 38,000 vehicle trips recorded in 2022 with parking often spilling out on Highway 2 during heavy use periods. With an average of 2-3 people per vehicle, that is a heavy use for this small site. An adequate latrine is necessary for visitor comfort and for basic sanitation to protect the river and human users. An upgraded latrine will have increased capacity for both users and human waste. The exterior pump out hatch will greatly facilitate waste removal. We suspect a new latrine will also be easier to clean and be kept sanitary. We are pleased to see FWP proposing this project and support upgrading and relocating the latrine to accommodate the increased recreational use of the site.*

Response: Thank you for the comment.

DECISION

Based on the environmental review provided in the Draft EA, and in accordance with all applicable laws, rules, regulations, and policies, FWP determined the proposed action (Alternative 2), will not have significant adverse impacts on the human environment associated with the proposed action and constitutes a reasonable and appropriate strategy to achieve identified objectives. Therefore, preparation of an EIS is unnecessary. FWP hereby adopts the Draft EA as final and approves the Alternative 2, the proposed action.

Sincerely,

Lee Anderson

Lee Anderson
Region 1 Supervisor
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks