



## DECISION NOTICE

### Smith River State Park Forestry Projects – Trout Creek and Ridgetop Boat Camps

05/31/2023

#### **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, without modification, 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 EA (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 05/03/2023 to 05/17/2023. A legal Notice was published in the Helena Independent Record and the Draft EA was posted on FWP's Public

Notice webpage: <https://fwp.mt.gov/news/public-notice>. 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 did not receive comments during the public comment period.

### **DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes the implementation of forestry projects at two Smith River State Park boat camps where the presence of dead and dying trees pose a threat to public safety. These projects would remove dead and dying trees at the Ridgetop and Trout Creek camps and include reforestation efforts. The trees within these boat camps have been compromised by biotic, abiotic and anthropogenic stressors and therefore are at risk of falling over, which is a concern due to potential for a tree to fall on someone in the boat camp.

### **PURPOSE AND NEED**

The proposed project would mitigate the safety concerns of dead trees in Trout Creek and Ridgetop boat camps in the Smith River State Park and prevent the spread of disease/insects to adjacent healthy trees. To accomplish these objectives the following strategies will be employed:

- Trees would be cut down with chainsaws and burnable wood would be bucked and split for floater use. Wet and green logs would be limbed and left on the ground until dry enough to buck and split.
- In anticipation of Douglas-fir beetle attacking and reproducing in green logs, the biological pesticide methyl-cyclo-hexanone (MCH) would be applied on all remaining Douglas-fir trees within the camps and within one chain or 66 feet of recreational use areas.
- Site-appropriate native vegetation including trees, shrubs, forbs, and grasses would be introduced to help direct and accelerate plant community succession to desired conditions.

The benefits of the proposed project would include the following:

- Removal of dead trees from boat camps that pose safety concerns to floaters.
- Prevention of the spread of biotic, abiotic and anthropogenic stressors to healthy trees in these boat camps.
- Revegetation of habitat and vegetation traditionally valued by floaters in these camps.
- Reduction of fuels, mitigation of the fire surplus fuel source.

### **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, the Trout Creek and Ridgetop boat camps would be closed due to the danger to users from hazard trees in the area. Closing the camps, particularly Ridgetop, might create a hardship for some floaters as they would need to float at least twenty miles to reach the take-out at Eden Bridge. Further, FWP would not proactively prevent the spread of disease/insects to adjacent healthy trees within the affected campsites thereby potentially exacerbating existing safety and forest health concerns in the affected area.

#### **Alternative 2: Proposed Action**

Under the Proposed Action, FWP would mitigate the safety concerns of dead trees in Trout Creek and Ridgetop boat camps in the Smith River State Park and prevent the spread of disease/insects to adjacent healthy trees. To accomplish these objectives the following strategies will be employed:

- Trees would be cut down with chainsaws and burnable wood would be bucked and split for floater use. Wet and green logs would be limbed and left on the ground until dry enough to buck and split.
- In anticipation of Douglas-fir beetle attacking and reproducing in green logs, the biological pesticide methyl-cyclo-hexanone (MCH) would be applied on all remaining Douglas-fir trees within the camps and within one chain or 66 feet of recreational use areas.
- Site-appropriate native vegetation including trees, shrubs, forbs, and grasses would be introduced to help direct and accelerate plant community succession to desired conditions.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT AND FWP RESPONSE**

No public comments were received during the public comment period.

#### **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,



Jason Rhoten  
R4 Fisheries Manager/Acting R4 Supervisor  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks