



## **DECISION NOTICE**

### **Goldfish Removal near Big Sandy**

7/10/2023

#### **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 6/7/2023 to 7/7/2023. A legal Notice was published 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/>, Havre Daily and Mountaineer newspapers, radio notice, by individual request, and through notice to identified interested parties. FWP received five comments during the public comment period.

## **DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION**

(FWP) proposes to remove an illegally introduced goldfish population from a pond near the town of Big Sandy. FWP would use the piscicide rotenone to eliminate distribution of the invasive goldfish population to downstream locations.

## **PURPOSE AND NEED**

The proposed project would eliminate non-native, invasive goldfish from the affected pond and thereby eliminate the risk of competition with native fish and the expansion of goldfish in the nearby and connected Big Sandy and Milk River watersheds. Rotenone is an effective piscicide at very low concentrations and mammals, birds, and other non-gill breathing organisms are not affected by consuming treated water or dead fish at concentrations used for fisheries management.

## **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 invasive goldfish population living and reproducing in the pond would not be eliminated. The risk of expansion of the goldfish population and associated risk of goldfish competing with native fish species in the Big Sandy and Milk River watersheds would continue and potentially increase.

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

Under the Proposed Action, FWP would remove an illegally introduced goldfish population from a pond near the town of Big Sandy. FWP would apply the piscicide rotenone as per labeling guidelines and abide by the criteria laid out in the FWP piscicide treatment policy.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT AND FWP RESPONSE**

**Five public comments were received during the public comment period.** Four comments supported alternative 2 (proposed action) and one comment requested additional details on the location of the pond.

## **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.

With this DN, FWP hereby adopts the Final EA and approves the proposed action.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Drew Henry", is positioned above the typed name.

Drew Henry  
Regional Supervisor  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks