



DECISION NOTICE

Home Run Pond Drawdown and Fish Removal

November 1, 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 10/2/23 to 10/31/23. A legal Notice was published in the Glasgow Courier 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 and Parks (FWP) is proposing to dewater Home Run Pond for approximately 4 months (Dec-Mar) to remove undesirable and illegally introduced fish species. In the spring, the pond will be refilled using the existing well or other sources. Once full, the pond will be restocked with hatchery rainbow trout. Home Run Pond is a small 0.8 acre publicly accessible water body near Glasgow, Montana that was designed and constructed in 2003 for the purpose of providing a safe angling opportunity for area youth. The pond is located on Valley County property; the grounds surrounding the pond are managed by the City of Glasgow and the fisheries resources are managed by FWP.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the project is to improve the quality of the Home Run Pond fishery. Undesirable and illegally introduced species have been competing with rainbow trout for limited food resources resulting in winter kill events combined with poor growth and survival of rainbow trout. Removal of the undesirable and illegally introduced species will improve water quality and remove competition for limited food resources thereby improving survival and growth of hatchery stocked rainbow trout. With improved rainbow trout survival, angler catch rates should improve.

After the pond is refilled in the spring of 2024, FWP will restock the pond with hatchery rainbow trout in spring.

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 quality of the Home Run Pond fishery will continue to be poor despite the stocking of 1,000 trout annually.

Alternative 2: Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, removal of undesirable and illegally introduced fish species will improve water quality and remove competition for limited food resources thereby improving survival and growth of hatchery stocked rainbow trout. With improved rainbow trout survival, angler catch rates should improve.

PUBLIC COMMENT AND FWP RESPONSE

FWP received substantive 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 take my grandchildren to fish in home run pond quit often. They have a lot of fun when we are there. They don't really care what kind of fish they catch, as long as something is biting. I have noticed that as soon as the weather gets hot out, the trout that are stocked will die off. The other fish that are more of the warm water fish seem to survive and still bite when the weather is hot. I don't have a problem with the draw down, but think there is no problem with the other fish in the pound, its nice to teach the kids about all the species that they catch and we practice catch and release so don't eat any."

Response: Thanks for reaching out. I do agree that the purpose of a kids fishing pond is to catch fish, regardless of species. I anticipate this drawdown and subsequent restocking will help rainbow trout survival over the summer months which will ideally increase catch rates without relying on carp and bullheads. Additionally, I am not ruling out the possibility of stocking other warmwater species such as perch, bluegill, or largemouth bass at a later date once we figure out the rainbow trout survival issues.

Thanks again for the comment. Feel free to call, email, or stop in the office if you have additional questions or comments.

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, with modifications, and approves the proposed action.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Drew Henry", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Drew Henry
Regional Supervisor, Region 6
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks