



## DECISION NOTICE

### Kuester Reservoir Walleye Transfer

7/3/2023

#### **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, 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 6/19/2023 to 7/3/2023. A legal Notice was published in the Glasgow Courier and Circle Banner newspapers, 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 transfer approximately 100 male walleye from the Missouri River, downstream of Fort Peck dam into Kuester Reservoir near Richey, MT. FWP fisheries staff recently began managing Kuester Reservoir and after discussion with the landowner, a yellow perch and walleye fishery was preferred. Kuester Reservoir was sampled by FWP fisheries staff in 2021 and only fathead minnows were present. Yellow perch were transferred into Kuester Reservoir in 2022 to provide an initial recreational fishery and are expected to be self-sustaining. The proposed walleye transfer would add an additional species for anglers to target as well as provide predatory control of yellow perch. The proposed project would take place in spring of 2024.

### **PURPOSE AND NEED**

Kuester Reservoir is one of the only fishing opportunities in the greater Circle, MT area. It currently supports a Yellow Perch population resulting from wild fish transfers in 2022. The purpose of this project is to increase recreational angling opportunity by adding another species, Walleye, to the reservoir.

### **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, a recreationally sought-after species (Walleye) will not be available to anglers at Kuester Reservoir.

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

Under the Proposed Action, Kuester Reservoir will support Walleye transferred from the Missouri River allowing recreation anglers additional opportunity.

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

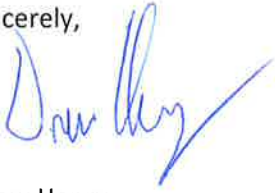
No public comments were received during the public comment period.

### **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.

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

Sincerely,

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

Drew Henry  
Regional Supervisor  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks