



MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

Decision Notice

Lost River Wildlife Management Area Grazing Lease
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Region 6
1 Airport Road
Glasgow, MT 59804
406-228-3700

January 17, 2023

Proposed Action (*Alternative 2*)

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) proposes to initiate a livestock grazing lease on the Lost River Wildlife Management Area (WMA) for 8 years starting in May 2023 and continuing until October 15th, 2030. The grazing system, as implemented, would include both FWP-owned property on the Lost River WMA and associated School Trust Land managed by the Department of Natural Resources. The grazing system would provide periods of deferment and rest to native pastures. Grazing on pastures composed primarily of FWP land would allow grazing between May 15th and October 15th. Grazing of native pastures would be managed through a rest-rotation grazing system. This grazing system would consist of approximately 2857 acres of FWP-owned property. Grazing would also occur on 3571 acres of adjacent DNRC-owned property. The lessee would be permitted to graze 190-220 Animal Units annually.

Alternatives to the Proposed Action

Alternative 1

Under the no action alternative, there would be no grazing lease on the Lost River WMA. The proposed grazing system that includes FWP and DNRC owned land would not be implemented. Grazing could still continue on adjacent School Trust land, although periods of year-long rest would not be required. Additional fencing may be needed in order for some DNRC parcels to be grazed separately from FWP owned land. The absence of grazing would increase residual grass cover and vegetation heights, which would provide additional nesting cover for upland nesting birds, but would reduce the heterogeneity in vegetation heights preferred by other wildlife species. The long-term absence of grazing could result in an increase in fire fuels and wildfire risk. FWP would continue to manage the WMA to benefit wildlife and provide recreational opportunity. There would likely be reduced fencing costs for FWP.

Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) Process

FWP prepared a draft environmental assessment (EA) pursuant to MEPA and is required to assess the potential impacts of the alternatives to the human and physical environment. FWP mailed notices of the EA to surrounding landowners. Electronic notifications of the EA's availability were also made to other individuals, agencies, and interested parties. The EA was open for a 15-day public comment period that ran from December 23rd to January 6th. The EA was also available for public review on the FWP website and at the Havre Area Resource office and the FWP Regional office in Glasgow.

There were public notices posted in the both the Great Falls Tribune and Havre Daily News on 12/23/2022 informing the public of the draft environmental assessment and opportunity for comment.

Summary of Public Comment

There were no public comments received during the public comment period.

Decision

Based on the Environmental Assessment it has been determined that the proposed action will not have significant effects on the human and physical environment associated with this action. Therefore, an environmental assessment (EA) is the appropriate level of analysis for this project.

After review of this proposal and the public comments submitted, it is my decision to accept the Decision Notice and Draft Environmental Assessment as final and proceed with Alternative 2, the proposed action, implementing a livestock grazing lease on the Lost River Wildlife Management Area until October 15th, 2030.

The proposed grazing system includes adjacent School Trust lease parcels. If the leases on these parcels were awarded to another lessee, the grazing system for the WMA may need to be modified if the new lessee is not interested in participating in the planned grazing system.

The Record of Decision will be available for public viewing on the Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks website at: <http://fwp.mt.gov/news/publicNotices>. Copies may also be obtained from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Havre Area Office, 2165 Hwy 2 East, Havre, MT 59501, (406) 265-6177 or by e-mailing shemmer@mt.gov.



Drew Henry
FWP Region 6 Supervisor