



DECISION NOTICE

Stanley Pond Fish Stocking

FWP-CEA-FSH-R7-23-001

12/20/2023

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 the 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 December 1, 2023 to

December 15, 2023. A press release regarding the Draft EA and link to access it was sent via GovDelivery to local media outlets for publishing. The Draft EA was posted on FWP's Public Notice webpage: <https://fwp.mt.gov/public-notices/news/2023/nov/1128---stanley-pond-fish-stocking-environmental-assessment-checklist>. 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 received one question requesting additional information, but did not receive other comments during the public comment period.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) is proposing to stock fish into a pond located on private land to increase angling opportunities near Volborg, MT. Species considered for stocking include rainbow trout. At full pool the pond is approximately 15 feet deep and capable of supporting fish species targeted by anglers.

FWP would use hatchery reared fish to establish a fish population accessible to anglers at this pond for recreational purposes.

PURPOSE AND NEED

Stanley Pond is appropriately sized and deep enough to overwinter and sustain a fish population most years. Occasional winterkill or partial winterkill is expected in low water years during winters with long duration snow cover. Annual spring stocking of rainbow trout would ensure a fishery is available for anglers most years, despite winterkill occurrences. Rainbow trout provide the additional benefit of winter ice fishing that many warmwater fish species, like largemouth bass, rarely provide. The pond is located adjacent to Volborg Montana and near the towns of Broadus and Miles City Montana which is an area with very limited angler opportunities. The purpose of the project is establishing a trout fishery in hopes of increasing local angler opportunities.

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 FWP would not stock fish into Stanley Pond. Without action, the pond wouldn't contain fish species targeted by anglers and the publicly accessible fishing options in this area would not increase.

Alternative 2: Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, FWP will stock rainbow trout in Stanley Pond.

PUBLIC COMMENT AND FWP RESPONSE

No public comments was 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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Kenneth Backes".

Kenneth Backes
Region 7 – Fisheries Manager
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks