



DECISION NOTICE
Wayfarers Unit of Flathead Lake State Park Boat Storage
FWP-DN-POR-R1-24-029

10/22/2024

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 Environmental Assessment (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 September 23rd, 2024, to October 7th, 2024. 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 staff conducted preliminary public scoping with potential interested parties. A map and proposed project description was distributed for comment, and FWP staff received 4 responses, all being favorable to the proposal:

"That would open up two more parking spaces in the spring and fall."

"No concerns."

"No concerns, that seems like a major benefit."

A letter from Richard Horn was received in the public scoping period. Mr. Horn's family donated the property on which the structure would be placed, and he has remained engaged with park management since. The letter stated:

"For 25 years. I was a park ranger and I understand that Park projects can be controversial. It was controversial when the state first developed this park after my father donated it to the state of Montana. I am flexible with your decisions on the changes towards the use of Harry Horn Park ref boat house storage building as long as my father's wishes are carried out. In reference to this project, I think this would save the state some money and emergency response time to calls. I approve the boat storage building be done. I am very interested in any way I can help. Keep me updated on this project."

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) proposes the construction of a fully enclosed heated, two-bay boat storage unit at the Wayfarers Unit of Flathead Lake State Park (FHLSP). The proposed project would provide Flathead Lake State Park and the Bigfork Area Game Warden a safe and accessible place to store their boats, instead of renting storage units. The proposed project area is in the Harry Horn Day Use Area at the Wayfarers Unit of FHLSP. This location is visually buffered by vegetation and could take advantage of pre-existing electrical service.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The proposed project is to construct a heated two-bay boat storage facility for use by the Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division and the Enforcement Division duty boats. This storage facility would provide both divisions with a more efficient way to retrieve and store their boats when completing their work duties. This is especially important in the fall through spring months when a heated facility is needed to store the boat to prevent damage from freezing temperatures. The proposed boat storage location is across the parking lot from the Flathead Lake Ranger Station in the Wayfarers Unit of FHLSP. Construction of the heated two-bay boat storage garage will commence in the fall of 2024 with an anticipated 60-day construction contract.

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 develop a heated two-bay boat storage garage. Under this scenario, both the Bigfork Area Game Warden and FHLSP's staff would have reduced response time and higher monthly costs due to the continued rental of a storage unit.

Alternative 2: Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, FWP would develop a heated two-bay boat storage garage at the Wayfarers Unit of Flathead Lake State Park.

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 Alternative 2, the proposed action.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lee Anderson".

Lee Anderson
Regional Supervisor
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks