



DECISION NOTICE

Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park Storage Shed FWP-DN-POR-F3-24-005

August 6, 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 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 January 26 – February 11, 2024. A

legal Notice was published on FWP's Public Notice webpage and the Draft EA was posted on FWP's Public Notice webpage: <https://fwp.mt.gov/news/public-notices>. 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

FWP proposes to build a new storage shed at the maintenance yard at Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park. This building would replace the storage availability lost from the removal of an old storage shed in 2021. The previous structure was unsound for vehicle and equipment storage. This storage is needed to house Central District's large miscellaneous maintenance equipment such as the riding lawnmower and snowplow out of the weather and away from rodents. The shed will also provide storage for other equipment and materials.

Project location: gravel parking area of the maintenance shop at Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park in Central Montana.

PURPOSE AND NEED

Equipment items are currently parked and stored in the open in the maintenance yard where they are exposed to the sun and weather, degrading the value and operational ability of the equipment. Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park experiences cold winter days below zero degrees Fahrenheit and heavy snowfall. Spring is frequently wet with showers, and summer is hot and dry with clear sunny days. This weather pattern degrades equipment over time leading to increased need for repairs and replacement of equipment and materials needed for park operation. Outdoor storage of equipment also leaves it susceptible to rodent infestation that could be a total loss of items needed for park maintenance. The equipment and materials in need of storage are currently either parked in the maintenance shop, preventing the intended use of that space, or left outdoors to weather.

The location of the proposed shed would be in the corner of the existing graveled parking area at the maintenance shop. This location is currently used to park vehicles and store left over materials from previous projects. Some items in the current site would be stored in the shed, while a few would be moved farther down the parking lot as they do not have specific storage needs. This site has been evaluated for historical artifacts and FWP has received concurrence from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) that the construction of the new shop will not adversely affect cultural resources.

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, equipment and materials will remain in the maintenance parking lot exposed to the weather. Equipment will age faster and require repairs more frequently. The maintenance

shop will remain a space used as storage, and unusable for its intended purpose of maintenance of vehicles and equipment. Unsecured items are subject to potential theft. This alternative would likely require purchasing equipment replacements more frequently.

Alternative 2: Proposed Action

FWP proposes to build a new storage shed at the maintenance yard at Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park. This building would replace the storage availability lost from the removal of an old storage shed in 2021. The previous structure was unsound for vehicle and equipment storage. This storage is needed to house Central District's large miscellaneous maintenance equipment such as the riding lawnmower and snowplow out of the weather and away from rodents. The shed will also provide storage for other equipment and materials.

PUBLIC COMMENT AND FWP RESPONSE

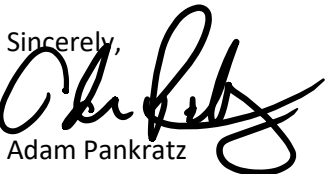
No public comments were received during the public comment period.

DECISION

Adopt the Draft EA as the Final EA.

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,



Adam Pankratz
Acting Region 3 Supervisor