



DECISION NOTICE

Lewistown Armory Transfer

(FWP-CEA-ADM-R4-25-013)

3/26/2025

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 3/06/2025 to 3/21/2025. 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 received comments during the public comment period.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed project is the transfer of control over the Lewistown Armory building from the Montana Department of Military Affairs ("DMA") to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks ("FWP"). The building will be transferred from DMA to FWP for the appraised value of the building which was valued at \$450,000.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of this proposed action is to provide FWP with needed office and training space.

FWP has been seeking new office space for staff located in Lewistown since 2019 when an extensive evaluation was done on 11 different site options. That evaluation did not result in a resolution. At present, FWP is entered into 7 different leases to provide space for staff. None of the current occupied space is ideal. Staff are currently challenged by insufficient storage, poor lab space, and structural deficiencies.

Acquisition of the Lewistown Armory building will resolve these issues and result in FWP being able to more efficiently locate staff in the Lewistown area.

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 continue to lack useable office space in central Montana. FWP employees in the region would continue to use piecemeal rental spaces for office needs.

Alternative 2: Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, control over the Lewistown Armory building would be transferred from the Montana Department of Military Affairs ("DMA") to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks ("FWP")

PUBLIC COMMENT AND FWP RESPONSE

FWP received three public comments on the Draft EA. The following provides the verbatim public comments received and FWP responses.

Comment:

For years the Lewistown office of the FWP has been operating out of different venues and at present has a very small mobile home ? for their offices. I feel it is very portent to have a dedicated and visitor friendly

building to house the FWP. The FWP presence is an important part of the community thus having the Armory converted to the FWP offices makes for a more homogenous collaboration between the public and the FWP.

FWP Response: Thanks for providing comment.

Comment:

I strongly support the proposal to purchase this facility to consolidate and improve present inadequate and scattered FWP offices in Lewistown.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and submit my thoughts on this project.

FWP Response: Thanks for providing comment.

Comment:

The following are my comments -

I support the purchase of this building for use by FWP.

It would provide adequate space for local FWP employee needs.

It would consolidate the Lewistown FWP staff into one building which will be a huge benefit to both the employees and the general public.

This is a very cost-efficient way to provide an adequate FWP office in Lewistown.

The funding appropriated for this building should be sufficient for purchase and remodeling to serve the needs of FWP.

The Lewistown staff I've spoken to support this.

Question – will only the building be purchased? Will the land be included? OnXmaps indicates the 5-acre property is owned by the State of Montana. Hopefully, FWP will be able to purchase the land or obtain a lease on it to allow expansion of secure outdoor storage or for other needs including environmental education.

FWP Response: Thanks for providing comment. The land is indeed owned by the State of Montana. FWP will have administrative custody and exclusive use of the land.

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,



Jason Rhoten
Region 4 Supervisor
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks