



DECISION NOTICE

Makoshika State Park Campground Expansion FWP-DN-POR-R7-25-002

5/19/2025

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 standard 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 02/25/2025 to 03/26/2025. A Legal Notice of 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 received substantive comments during the public comment period.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

FWP is proposing to expand existing camping and recreational opportunities at the state park by adding up to 16 RV sites with electric hookups, 4 primitive hike / bike campsites and day-use facilities in the Gunner's Ridge area (0.5 miles southeast of the visitor center) with a playground nearby. The campground would include a dedicated camp host site and public access to Gunners Ridge Trailhead. Hiking and bike trails would connect the new campground to other amenities such as the park's visitor center, a separate primitive campground loop, picnic shelter, frisbee golf course and trailheads leading to backcountry hiking opportunities. Access road improvements to the new and existing campground loops would also be completed.

The proposed new campground loop would be located at the site of a former shooting range; therefore, FWP, in consultation with Montana's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), determined site sampling for lead (Pb) was necessary to ensure a safe environment for camping and related recreational uses. As a result of this sampling and based on EPA's 200 milligram per kilogram (mg/kg; or parts per million [ppm]) Regional Screening Level (RSL) for lead in residential soil, approximately 1,750 bank cubic yards of lead hazard soil will need to be removed as part of this project.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The proposed project is a major upgrade to the existing state park facilities and includes improvements for overnight and day-use visitors. The new campsites would increase camper comfort and provide new access to individuals that require electricity for air conditioning or medical equipment. Currently, Makoshika State Park does not have electrified campsites. This project would improve access for day visitors by creating a new trailhead and a day use area with new dinosaur-themed play equipment. Other important amenities to improve visitor comfort include primitive hike/bike campsites, potable water availability, and vault restrooms.

Because the proposed project would occur within the footprint of a former shooting range, FWP, in consultation with DEQ and/or industry experts, would mitigate, as necessary, any potential lead hazards prior to project implementation and public use. All information regarding the lead investigation, any necessary mitigation activities, and resulting compliance status with public health and safety standards will be documented and made available to the public upon request.

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, the proposed campground loop, playground and other amenities would not be constructed. The No Action alternative forms the baseline from which the potential impacts of the proposed action may be measured.

Alternative 2: Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, Makoshika State Park would have a new campground loop and new day use facilities including 16 electrified RV sites, 4 primitive hike / bike sites, a new trailhead, a day use area with a new playground, and new vault restrooms.

PUBLIC COMMENT AND FWP RESPONSE

FWP received substantive public comments on the Draft EA. A substantive public comment is defined as the identification of a specific issue or impact. In some cases, multiple individuals provided the same or similar comment; these comments were summarized, categorized, listed once, and a single FWP response is provided below. The following constitutes a synopsis of public input received and FWP's response to those comments.

Comment #1:

Makoshika is valuable to the community and region and these improvements will boost economic activity and further establish Makoshika as a destination park.

Response to Comment #1: Thank you for your comments, FWP concurs.

Comment #2:

Originally the campground was discussed to have 30+ sites, full hook ups, and a comfort station. The current design is smaller with just 16 sites and no water / sewer at the site and no comfort station. The current design is too small and does not include needed amenities.

Response to Comment #2: Thank you for your interest in this project. The current campsite count is a result of limitations related to vehicle access and required roadway geometry. Expanding beyond the proposed number would require significant alterations to the topography. The past conceptual designs and graphics suggested a higher number of campsites, but did not account for topography, the existing creek bed and known cultural resources. Full hook ups including water and sewer are not typically offered in Montana State Parks. The project focus remains on providing high-quality campsites and a positive visitor experience consistent with Montana State Parks Classification and Investment Strategy Policy rather than maximizing density. Overcrowding would diminish the overall appeal and functionality of the campground.

The required size of the drain field to service the comfort station, dump station, host site, etc., is large at ~1.75 acres (of 7 acres available for the campground) due to the clay soil type and slow percolation rate. It is not feasible to fit that drain field alongside the number of campsites currently designed. The spatial problem is exacerbated by known cultural resources, topography and needed safety setbacks at the

coulees in the project area. Connecting to the City of Glendive sewer system (if permitted by the City and MTDEQ) could be an option when affordable. The construction costs of a gravity and pressure sewer main extension to serve the campground is significant and not included in the current project budget. Additionally, a pressurized sewer main has a higher annual maintenance costs and RV waste typically requires pretreatment, both of which would add significantly to ongoing operational cost.

Comment #3:

North Dakota broke ground on a similar campground with 35 RV sites with full hookups, cabins and a dump station. Why is this such a better value than the Makoshika project?

Response to Comment #3: Thank you for your interest in this project. It is not within the scope of this Environmental Assessment to evaluate projects in other states. Projects in different regions are typically not comparable due to many factors including location, soil type, construction timing, design standards, etc. The State of Montana public bidding process utilizes a competitive sealed bid approach to ensure transparency and fair competition for contracts as well as cost-effective results for the state. The process includes public posting of invitations for bids (IFBs) with the lowest responsible bidder being awarded the contract.

Comment #4

We are supportive of the campground expansion project and believe the dino themed playground will be popular with locals and visitors.

Response to Comment #4: Thank you for your comment. FWP concurs.

Comment #5

Please consider making part of the playground equipment ADA compliant. Currently there is no ADA compliant playground equipment in this area, and we do have children who need this accommodation now. This could help underserved children who currently do not have an opportunity to enjoy the fun and excitement of a playground.

Response to Comment #5: Thank you for your comment. FWP concurs that making the playground ADA compliant is a priority. The playground is currently designed to be ADA compliant, however universal accessibility could be enhanced with the addition of one or more items, such as a lifting device to assist physically impaired children to access play structures. FWP will explore funding options and partnerships to pursue enhanced universal accessibility.

Comment #6

Please consider adding a comfort station (bath house) and expanding the bathrooms at the Visitor Center. The comfort station does not necessarily have to be at the campground, and it could be more cost-effective to construct it by the Visitor Center.

Response to Comment #6: Thank you for your comment. A comfort station with the required parking could potentially be located near the Visitor Center if a city sewer line was extended to the park. While this would be expensive, it would be more cost-effective than constructing a comfort station within the campground. A city sewer line to the park would also benefit the Visitor Center and staff housing. FWP will continue to discuss this option with the City of Glendive and consider this possibility if / when funding becomes available.

Comment #7

An ideal campsite for Class A motorhomes pulling a trailer is a long pull-through site. Big rig friendly directions from the interstate to the park need to be available on the internet.

Response to Comment #7: Thank you for your comment. The current campground plans include eight pull-through sites, eight back-in sites, and four hike-in / bike-in sites. FWP will provide updated directions to the park on the FWP Makoshika State Park webpage. The directions will describe a route from Interstate 94 to Makoshika State Park that is the most 'big rig friendly' and avoids low bridges and minimizes use of narrow city streets. FWP would like to remind visitors that some internet sites can offer inaccurate directions to Makoshika State Park or incorrect / outdated information about park facilities.

Comment #8

All the campgrounds we typically use have electricity with 30- & 50-amp service and water hookups at each site. Without water at the site, you are using your reserves for showers and cooking which will limit the length of your stay. Please consider having water available at every site.

Response to Comment #8: Thank you for your comment. Sixteen RV campsites are designed to include 30- & 50-amp service, and four hike-in / bike-in sites will have access to standard 120-volt outlets. Water hookups for individual campsites are typically not available in Montana State Parks. Potable water hydrants are planned in multiple locations within the campground, including a water fill station near the campground entrance. The hydrants would be available to all campers as a source of water; however, campers cannot stay connected to the hydrant during their stay. There are private campgrounds in Glendive and eastern Montana that offer full hook-ups, including water and electricity.

Comment #9

An RV dump station is needed. Please consider a dump station at Makoshika with storage tanks for septic and have them pumped out as needed or put a dump station at another location that can connect to the City of Glendive sewer system.

Response to Comment #9: Thank you for your comment. City sewer service is not available at the campground project site, and it is not within the current project budget to extend a sewer line from town to the campground. A drain field for a dump station at this location would be too large at well over an acre due to the clay soil type and slow percolation rate. A dump station at Makoshika State Park with in-ground storage tanks for RV black and grey water is not practical due to logistics and the ongoing high cost to operate. It is not within the scope of this Environmental Assessment to evaluate various public and/or private opportunities to provide an RV dump station in Glendive or southeast Montana.

Comment #10

Campsites should be priced appropriately for the amenities offered and not discounted or subsidized.

Response to Comment #10: Thank you for your comments. FWP concurs and will charge standard state park camping rates.

Comment #11

Avoid surface disturbance during songbird nesting and breeding season to limit fledgling fatality. Monitor bat activity and limit surface disturbance/construction when occupied or active. Limit above ground electric lines to reduce avian and bat mortality due to collision.

Response to Comment #11: Project construction will be planned to avoid songbird nesting and breeding seasons. FWP Wildlife staff will monitor bat activity in the area prior to construction occurring. Current project designs include below-ground electrical lines.

Comment #12

Limit noxious weed spread during construction.

Response to Comment #12: Contactors will be required to follow best practices and clean construction equipment to remove noxious weeds and seeds prior to arriving at the project site. Disturbed soil will be replanted with native species after construction. FWP will complete annual noxious weed control efforts at the site.

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 black ink, appearing to read 'Brad Schmitz', with a stylized, cursive script.

Brad Schmitz
Region 7 Supervisor
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks