



DECISION NOTICE

Wadsworth Pond ADA Dock

[FWP-DN-FSH-R8-2025-006]

4/25/2025

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 March 31 through April 15, 2025.

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 no comments during the public comment period.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

Wadsworth Pond is a 42.7-acre pond in the Great Falls area. It is frequented by residents of Great Falls and surrounding areas for fishing and is the site of an annual Kids' Fishing Day event. This site is the project of several restoration goals, including a 2022 Community Pond Grant to improve the control structure and increase capacity of the pond and a 2024 grant to improve degraded banks and improve access. This project would purchase and install an EZ dock system to create a safe, accessible fishing and recreation area, given changing water levels at Wadsworth Pond. If successful, the FWP action would be funding the project through the Community Pond Program. The project sponsor is the Peoples Park and Recreation Foundation. The project is planned to begin in 2025.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of this project is to develop angler amenities at Wadsworth Pond in Great Falls, which will benefit all anglers, including those disabilities. The improvements proposed are expected to improve access to the waterbody through the installation of an EZ Dock. The pond provides a location for family-friendly fishing and ADA-accessible angling. Providing quality fishing opportunities and amenities for resident and non-resident anglers is a priority for FWP. In support of the mission and core values of the agency, the FWP Fisheries Division preserves, maintains, and enhances aquatic species and their ecosystems to meet the public's demand for recreational opportunities and stewardship of aquatic wildlife.

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.

Wadsworth Pond is an important fishery in Great Falls. ADA-accessible angler amenities are needed. If the No Action alternative is selected, the installation of an EZ Dock would require alternative funding. The absence of this improvement would affect the fishing experience and reduce ADA-accessible opportunities. The benefits of proposed action would not be realized.

Alternative 2: Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, a dock would be installed at Wadsworth Pond.

PUBLIC COMMENT AND FWP RESPONSE

FWP received no public comments on the Draft EA.

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.

With this DN, FWP hereby adopts the Draft EA, without modification, and approves the proposed action.

Sincerely,

Peter Brown
Acting Habitat Bureau Chief
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks