Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

1400 South 19th Avenue, Bozeman, MT 59718
July 15, 2014

FWP Region 3 EA Standard Distribution List
Phil and Sonny Ralston, 54289 Highway 43, Wise River, MT 59762
Clyde Thompson, 170 Meadow Road, Divide, MT 59727
Dennis Bacon, 64 Barney Lane, Twin Bridges, MT 59754
Hank Peterson, 1055 Durant Canyon Road, Opportunity, MT 59711
Jean and Keith Rankin, PO Box 28, Anaconda, MT 59711

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The enclosed Decision Notice has been prepared for the land exchange between Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks (FWP) and Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) on the Mount Haggin Wildlife Management Area (WMA). FWP proposes to exchange approximately 36 acres of the Mount Haggin Wildlife Management Area (MHWMA) along Secondary Route 569 (S-569) to MDT for approximately 20 acres of the existing right-of-way of the S-569 that will be abandoned by MDT, and payment of $12,500 for the remaining value of the exchanged FWP property.

MDT's project would reconstruct approximately 3.7 miles of roadway. The roadway would be offset approximately 30 feet from the present traveled way for the first mile, shifting to a new alignment for 2.7 miles, and then returning to existing alignment for the remaining 0.7 miles.

The proposed design relocates the roadway southeasterly and slightly upslope, out of the French Creek floodplain and wetland/riparian area. The road width would be increased to 26 feet to accommodate future overlays. There would be one new bridge crossing of French Creek and three new large culvert crossings at Lincoln Gulch, Moose Creek and an upper reach of French Creek, as well as nine additional smaller culvert crossings.

This exchange is necessary for MDT's project to correct substandard elements of the roadway, such as poor vertical alignment, unstable and saturated subgrades, and deteriorating pavement, in order to create a safer travel surface. S-569 was constructed in 1941 and, with the exception of routine maintenance and a seal and cover project has not been reconstructed since. The current roadway within the project area is in rolling terrain and much of it bisects a 200-acre wetland complex associated with French Creek.

One party submitted a comment during the 14-day comment period ending at 5:00 p.m. on July 11, 2014. The party was in support of the land exchange.

The Decision Notice may also be obtained from FWP at the address provided above, or viewed on FWP's Internet website: http://www.fwp.mt.gov.

It is my decision to proceed with the proposed land exchange between FWP and MDT on Mount Haggin WMA, pending FWP Commission approval.

Questions regarding this Decision Notice should be mailed to:

Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Vanna Boccadori
1820 Meadowlark Lane
Butte, MT 59701
Or e-mailed to: vboccadori@mt.gov.

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Flowers
Region Three Supervisor

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT DECISION NOTICE
For the
SECONDARY ROUTE 569 REALIGNMENT PROPERTY EXCAHNGE
BETWEEN
MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE, & PARKS AND
MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Region 3, Bozeman
July 15, 2014

Proposed Action and Preface

Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP) proposes to exchange approximately 36 acres of the Mount Haggin Wildlife Management Area (MHWMA) along Secondary Route 569 (S-569) to Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) for approximately 20 acres of the existing right-of-way of the S-569, that will be abandoned by MDT, and payment of $12,500 for the remaining value of the exchanged FWP property.

MDT's project would reconstruct approximately 3.7 miles of roadway. The roadway would be offset approximately 30 feet from the present traveled way for the first mile, shifting to a new alignment for 2.7 miles, and then returning to existing alignment for the remaining 0.7 miles.
The proposed design relocates the roadway southeasterly and slightly upslope, out of the French Creek floodplain and wetland/riparian area. The road width would be increased to 26 feet to accommodate future overlays. There would be one new bridge crossing of French Creek and three new large culvert crossings at Lincoln Gulch, Moose Creek, and an upper reach of French Creek as well as nine additional smaller culvert crossings.

This exchange is necessary for MDT's project to correct substandard elements of the roadway, such as poor vertical alignment, unstable and saturated subgrades, and deteriorating pavement, in order to create a safer travel surface. S-569 was constructed in 1941 and, with the exception of routine maintenance and a seal and cover project, has not been reconstructed since. The road within the project area is in rolling terrain, and much of it bisects a 200-acre wetland complex associated with French Creek.

Public Process and Comments

FWP is required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) to assess potential impacts of a proposed action to the human and physical environment. In compliance with MEPA, an Environmental Assessment (EA) was completed for the proposed project by FWP and released for public comment on June 27, 2014.

Public comments on the proposed action were taken for 14 days (through July 11, 2014). Legal notices were printed in the *Montana Standard* (Butte) and the *Anaconda Leader.* The EA was also posted on the FWP webpage: http://fwp.mt.gov//publicnotices/.

One party submitted a comment in support of the proposed action.

Final Environmental Assessment

The Draft Environmental Assessment, together with this Decision Notice, will serve as the final document for this proposal.

Decision

Based on the Environmental Assessment and public comment, it is my decision to approve the proposed action for the land exchange between FWP and MDT on Mount Haggin WMA, pending FWP Commission approval.

I find there to be no significant impacts on the human and physical environments associated with this project. Therefore, I conclude that the Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of analysis, and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

Patrick J. Flowers
Region 3 Supervisor
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

7/16/14
Date