

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
AND CONSERVATION

Water Resources Division

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SEP 23 2021

September 17, 2021

Ravalli County Commissioners

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Dear Interested Party:

Thank you for your input and feedback on the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Project Lands Recreation Development - Painted Rocks Reservoir project.

Enclosed is a Decision Notice in which Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation (DNRC) explains its rationale for implementation of the no action alternative and responds to public comments received during the comment period. The Decision Notice can be viewed on the DNRC's webpage at [www.dnrc.mt.gov](http://www.dnrc.mt.gov). A Decision Notice distribution list is found on the following page.

We appreciate your interest and participation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anna Pakenham Stevenson".

Anna Pakenham Stevenson  
Water Resources Division Administrator

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## Decision Notice Distribution List

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Ravalli County Commissioners, 215 S 4th St Suite A, Hamilton, MT 59840  
Representative David Bedey HD86, P.O. Box 692, Hamilton, MT 59840-0692  
Representative Michele Binkley HD85, 436 Blue Jay Ln, Hamilton, MT 59840  
Senator Jason Ellsworth SD43, 1073 Golf Course Rd., Hamilton, MT 59840-9230  
J.R. Iman, President, Painted Rocks Water Users Association, 774 Hwy 93 N. Hamilton, MT 59840  
Kim McCampbell & Sylvia Edgell, Cabin Site Lessee, 9605 Nevada Trail, Missoula, MT 59808  
Del & Susan Reynolds, Cabin Site Lessee, PO Box 163 Hamilton, MT 59840  
Tim Hill, Cabin Site Lessee, 1468 Tammany Ln Hamilton, MT 59840  
Diane Popiel Worrest, Cabin Site Lessee, 925 Dixon Ave. Missoula, MT 59801  
Roylene & Bruce Gaul, Cabin Site Lessee, 2807 Whites Lane Victor, MT 59875  
Timothy & Anne Graham, Cabin Site Lessee, 2690 Two Rivers Lane Missoula, MT 59804  
Bill & Mary Sparling, Cabin Site Lessee, 1661 Sutherland Lane Corvallis, MT 59828

## **DECISION NOTICE**

### **PROJECT LANDS RECREATION DEVELOPMENT PAINTED ROCKS RESERVOIR, RAVALLI COUNTY, MT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation  
Water Resources Division  
Helena, MT  
SEPTEMBER 2021**

#### **Proposed Action**

The State Water Projects Bureau (SWPB) of Montana Department of Natural Resources (DNRC) Water Resources Division administers public lands adjacent to Painted Rocks Reservoir in Ravalli County, MT. These public lands are part of the Painted Rocks Water Project which includes a storage reservoir and dam. Painted Rocks Dam and Reservoir is owned by Montana DNRC and is administered by the SWPB. Operation and maintenance of the Water Project is delegated to the Painted Rocks Water Users Association through a Water Marketing Contract. The dam was constructed in 1939 by the State Water Conservation Board with funds from the Public Works Administration to provide additional storage for agricultural irrigation water for use in the Bitterroot Valley. Currently, the reservoir is used for irrigation, recreation, and downstream fisheries releases.

Management of these public lands include a recreational Lease with Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (DFWP) for the operation of Painted Rocks State Park, as well as sixteen cabin site Leases to private individuals. All Project lands, with the exception of the cabin site leased areas and secured dam facilities are accessible to the public with no restrictions. The remainder of these public lands adjacent to Painted Rocks Reservoir are non-developed by DNRC or are managed by the Bitterroot National Forest Service under federal land ownership.

A non-developed area under SWPB ownership has been identified to remedy property management issues including conflict of use and uncontrolled infrastructure development. This parcel is situated on the east side of Painted Rocks Reservoir, more specifically located in the SE of Section 3, Township 2 South, Range 22 West. A vehicle approach from MT Highway 473 provides access to the site, as well as 4 cabin leased sites managed by the SWPB.

Several alternatives were considered in evaluating the physical and human environmental impacts associated with the Projects Lands Recreation Development at Painted Rocks Reservoir. Along with the No Action alternative, others considered include the Vehicle Site Closure Alternative, Day-Use Recreation Development Alternative, and the Leased Site Recreation Development Alternative.

## **Montana Environmental Policy Act**

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation is required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) to assess potential impacts of its proposed actions to the human and physical environments, evaluate those impacts through an interdisciplinary approach, including public input, and make a decision whether or not to proceed with the project.

In compliance with DNRC's Environmental Document Reporting Policy, an Environmental Assessment (EA) was completed on the proposed action by DNRC and released for a 30-day public comment period commencing on May 18, 2021. The official comment period closed on June 18, 2021.

An EA notification was mailed to interested groups and adjacent cabin site lessees in addition to State agency distribution. The EA was also made available on DNRC's website.

## **Summary of Public Comments**

Five written comments were received from individuals and one from a State Agency via email and/or regular mail during the comment period on the proposed action. One supported the no action alternative, three supported the Vehicle Site Closure Alternative, one supported the proposed action Day-Use Recreation Development Alternative and one provided general alternative comments. Some responses provided general statements and comments not associated with this Environmental Assessment of the proposed action.

After the public comment period, DNRC met with cabin site Lessees adjacent to the project lands recreational development area. Lessees voiced their concern that the proposal action alternative would relocate issues identified in the environmental analysis closer to their leased sites. Lessees generally disagreed with the proposed action alternative for not including sanitation infrastructure and lack of DNRC's enforcement capability for site monitoring. A consensus from the cabin site Lessees urged the DNRC to postpone development of the site and to consider pursuing the no action alternative.

## **Comments In Support of the No Action Alternative:**

I was born and raised in Darby never thought ever thought I would have a place like this but I did buy it to be used by my family. We do make sure the grounds looks as good or better after we use and we police for what others may leave.

Thank you Tim

To whom it may concern :

My name is Tim Hill cabin #13 co owner of the dock.

In reference to your letter I would like to see the pictures of the human waste and the garbage left on the grounds. There is one camp fire ring that was there before we purchased, the other remains of fire are from Del and Susan burning pine needles in the spring. The wooden outhouse

looks just like the one by my cabin other than it is green there is a date in mine in concrete of 1941 so my guess is that one has been there since then also. I am enclosing a video in Sept 2018 of the grounds in question then one May 2020 to compare what the grounds looked like then and now.

I forgot I don't know if I have a say in this or not but if I do please leave it alone Thank you Tim

*DNRC Response: Thank you for your comments. The No Action Alternative does not resolve the specific property management issues of concern DNRC has addressed in the Draft Environmental Assessment. However, after reviewing public comments received and meeting with neighboring Lessees, DNRC has decided to re-evaluate the proposed action and to issue the No Action Alternative at this time.*

*DNRC and the Lessees recognize that similar issues identified in the Environmental Analysis may persist in the future and eventually will have to be addressed. In the interim, DNRC will communicate with DFWP for potential agreements in site management and enforcement from the nearby Painted Rocks State Park.*

**Comments In Support of Vehicle Site Closure Alternative:**

In response to your request for comments on the proposed project options for the parcel involving our leased site (22) of Painted Rocks Reservoir, these are our thoughts and preference.

Our choice would be the "Vehicle Site Closure Alternative".

As lessees, we manage the property & adjacent areas to the cabin to minimize potential fire hazard and other issues, such as soil erosion & weed removal on our site. All of the lessees are well mannered, quiet, respectful of others, and responsible tenants.

The primary area of current misuse seems to be the "public" area where trash, human waste, and random parking (which greatly increases the erosion problem) occur. Closing the area to additional traffic under this proposal would alleviate these problems to a large extent. In addition, this solution would decrease the potential for personal property theft and unruly behavior. (We had to remove our dock as it was constantly being used by others and became a liability issue.) Another factor would be no need for personnel to monitor the site for fee payment, proper parking, no long term camping, etc.

We respectfully request you select the "Vehicle Site Closure Alternative". Thank you for considering our input.

Sincerely,  
William & Mary Sparling

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I am writing in response to the Draft Environmental Assessment prepared for the Project Lands Recreation Development Painted Rocks Reservoir. First of all my family and I appreciate your attention to this matter, your detailed analysis is commendable.

Of the three alternatives we feel The Vehicle Site Closure most closely addresses our concerns.

The popularity of Montana's Lakes and recreation possibilities make this small area prone to overuse in a very short period of time.

Sanitation concerns Garbage

Pets

Dock congestion, deterioration and

Increased fire danger are just a few concerns of making this area more accessible to the public.

Again, thank you for this thorough analysis.

Respectfully,

Sylvia Edgell

\*\*\*\*\*

MY WIFE AND I ARE THE LEASE HOLDERS FOR CABIN #12. OUR FAMILY HAS RENEWED THAT LEASE SINCE 1977. OUR FAMILY JOINTLY OWN AND HELPED BUILD THE DOCKS AND BOAT SHED WITH THE CABIN #13 LEASEHOLDERS, THE GRANT FAMILY.

WE HAVE ENJOYED THE ACCESS ACROSS DNRC PROPERTY TO THE LAKE AND OUR DOCKS AND BOAT HOUSE FOR OVER FORTY YEARS. WE ADHERED TO A GENTLEMAN'S AGREEMENT BETWEEN CABIN OWNER'S TO USE THE DNRC PROPERTY TO ACCESS THE LAKE WITH OUR BOATS AND WATERCRAFT BY VEHICLE, BUT NOT PARKING OR LEAVING FAMILY MEMBERS OR GUESTS VEHICLES OR CAMPERS ANYWHERE ON THE SITE. THEY WERE TAKEN BACK TO THE RESPECTIVE CABIN OWNERS LEASE PROPERTY AND PARKED UNTIL NECESSARY REMOVAL.

PRIOR, TO 1970, AND I AM NOT SURE OF THE EXACT YEAR, THE LAKE WAS NOT LOWERED AS IT IS PRESENTLY. THE POINT, NO ONE CARES AS MUCH ABOUT TIDS ACCESS AFTER THE DOCKS ARE GROUNDED FROM LOWERING THE LAKE TO MEET THE OBLIGATION OF THE DNRC. WHY? ANYBODY CAN ACCESS THE LAKE FROM A MULTITUDE OF POINTS AROUND THE LAKE.

WHEN THE WATER HAS RECEDED ENOUGH TO EXPOSE JUST A SINGLE FLOW FROM THE WEST FORK RIVER ON THE WEST SIDE, THE ANNUAL MUDDERS POPULACE BEGINS TO APPEAR. THESE INDIVIDUALS AND PARTIES BRING THEIR

SPECIAL CARS AND TRUCKS TO PLAY IN THE MUD LEFT BY THE RECEDING LAKE WATER.

THE WEST FORK AREA HAS BECOME A VERY BUSY RECREATIONAL AREA. THERE IS STRONG COMPETITION TO FIND IDEAL CAMPING SPOTS AND NEWCOMERS AND EXPERIENCED CAMPERS ARE UTILIZING VARIOUS TECHNIQUES TO GARNER A LOCATION. THEY LEAVE THEIR CAMPERS AS EVIDENCE OF SITE OWNERSHIP OVER THE WEEK UNTIL THE NEXT WEEKEND. SOME LEAVE THEIR VEIDCLE ATTACHED AND RETURN BY A SECOND VEHICLE, AVOIDING REGULATIONS AND PREVENTING TOWING. THIS ACTIVITY HAS ANGERED MANY LOCALS BUT HAS YET TO BE REGULATED OR POLICED ADDING TO THE IRE OF MANY LOCALS.

ALL THE ABOVE COMMENTS INFLUENCE OUR DECISION TO SUPPORT THE VEHICLE SITE CLOSURE ALTERNATIVE. MY WIFE AND I ARE USED TO WALKING TO THE LAKE FROM OUR CABIN. IF WE BRING OUR BOAT WE CAN PUT IN AT THE STATE CAMPGROUND OR NEAR THE DAM, NO BIG INCONVENIENCE. WE CAN OBSERVE ANY VISUAL CHANGES WALKING RATHER THAN USING TRANSPORTATION. BESIDES, SOMETIMES, IT IS RATHER DANGEROUS TO CROSS THE ROAD OR EXIT ONTO THE WEST FORK ROAD. SPEEDING CARS FROM THE NORTH WITH A NEARLY BLIND CORNER AND TO THE SOUTH A SMALL RISE IN THE ROAD BLOCKS EYESIGHT OF ONCOMING TRAFFIC. BY ALLOWING VEHICLES TO PARK THERE WILL ENEVITABLY LEAD TO A BAD VEHICULAR OR PEDISTRRAIN OUTCOME. TO EXIT THE SITE ALSO PUTS THE VEHICLE WELL OUT INTO THE ROAD IN ORDER TO DETERMINE SAFETY OF EXIT.

YOUR TEAM HAS OBSERVED LITTER AND EVIDENCE OF HUMAN WASTE. ALSO, A FIRE PIT HAS EVOLVED CLOSE TO THE LAKES'S EDGE. THE ROCKS TO FORM IT CAME FROM THE NEARBY CULVERT THAT CROSSES UNDER THE WEST FORK ROAD, PUT THERE TO STOP EROSION.

NO CABIN MEMBERS BUILT THAT, IT APPEARED ONE SPRING FROM PREVIOUS SUMMER I SUSPECT. I KNOW I WOULDNT PACK A ROCK THAT FAR TO BUILD A FIRE PIT! THIS CREATION PUTS A BLACK EYE ON NEARBY CABIN OWNERS BECAUSE THE DNRC MAY ASSUME CABIN OWNERS WERE THE BUILDERS. WE CAN ONLY DO SO MUCH POLICING WHEN WE ARE THERE !

POLICING-- WHO ARE WE GOING TO CALL FOR AN IMMEDIATE PROBLEM? IF PARKING IS DEVELOPED, IT WILL NOT STOP THE LITTERING OR HUMAN WASTE, EVEN IF THERE ARE SIGNS INDICATING WHERE TO DUMP REFUSE OR TOLIET AVAILABILITY. PRESENTLY, CABIN OWNERS PICKUP TRASH AND BURY WASTE. INCIDENTLY, THE OUTHOUSE LOCATED SOUTH OF THIS AREA HAS BEEN THERE SINCE 1940 ACCORDING TO THE HAND IMPRINTED CONCRETE BASE.

EROSION-THIS SITE HAS HARDLY CHANGED SINCE 1977. A GOOD RAIN MAY CARRY PINE NEEDLES AND SURFACE FILM. NO PARKING WILL PREVENT NEW

DECOMPOSITION AND GRASS TRAMPLING FROM NEW PIONEERS. PARKERS WILL WANT TO EXPLORE ESPECIALLY FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN AND PETS. THERE IS MORE EROSION ON THE LAKEBED IN THE FALL WITH THE MUDDERS RUNNING THROUGH THE WEST FORK OF THE BITTERROOT, SLATE CREEK, LITTLE BOULDER AND BLUE JOINT CREEK. THE OUTFLOW BELOW THE DAM IS EVIDENCE OF THIS OCCURENCE. ALSO, THE AMOUNT OF GARBAGE, MUFFLERS, TAILPIPES, AND HUMAN GARBAGE LEFT AFTER THE MUDDERS' SEASON IS OVER IS SOMETIMES STAGGERING. THEY OFTEN DO NOT PICKUP AFTER THEMSELVES. WHY SHOULD THEY?

DOCK AND STRUCTURE - THE DOCK (FIXED) WAS ERECTED SOMETIME AROUND 65-66. DON GRANT WAS WORKING FOR THE RAVALLI RURAL COOPERATIVE AND WAS ABLE TO BRING TREATED POWER POLES AND EQUIPMENT TO DRIVE THEM DEEP INTO THE LAKE BED. THEIR CERTIFICATION TABS ARE STILL ATTACHED NOTING THE YEAR THEY WERE PRODUCED. THYE ARE STILL SOLID AND SHOULD LAST MANY MORE YEARS. HOWEVER, THE DECKING NOW COVERED IN PLYWOOD SHEETS COULD BE REPLACED. THE FLOATING DOCKS WERE ADDED AFTER THE LAKE BEGAN TO BE DRAWN DOWN FOR THE IRRIGATORS AND TROUT UNLIMITED. THE GENRAL PUBLIC, WITH INCREASED UNSUPERVISED VISITS (CABIN OWNERS ABSCEENCE) COULD VANDALIZE THE STRUCTURE, DESTROY PORTIONS OR CAUSE FUTURE SAFETY PROBLEMS FROM THEIR ACTIVITY. ALSO, THE DOCK AND BOATHOUSE ARE PRIVATE PROPERTY, COVERED BY OUR INSURANCE POLICY, FOR PROPERTY OFF PREMISES AND OUR LIABILITY COVERAGE EXTENDS TO THESE ITEMS OF PERSONAL PROPERTY. WE CANNOT BE THERE 24/7 TO PROTECT THEM.

IN SUMMARY, AS A PROPONENT OF THE VEHICLE SITE CLOSURE ALTERNATIVE I WOULD SITE THESE ADVANTAGES.

- 1) COST FAVORABLE VERSUS PARKING AND EROSION CONSIDERATION
- 2) EROSION OR SITE ECOLOGY WOULD BE SELF-REPAIRING TO A POINT
- 3) SAFER FOR NEIGHBORING CABINS- NO UNANNOUNCED BAD VISITORS
- 4) NO INCREASED TRAFFIC CONFLICTS
- 5) NO PROPERTY DAMAGE TO EXISTING DOCKS AND BOAT HOUSE
- 6) NO SITE DAMAGE, I.E. CHOPPED TREES, LITTER, HUMAN WASTE
- 7) EQUAL USE BY NEARBY CABIN OWNERS
- 8) VIRTUALLY NO POLICING

SINCERELY,

A.E. (DEL) REYNOLDS, JR.  
SUSAN M REYNOLDS  
CABIN #12

*DNRC Response: Thank you for your comments. The Vehicle Site Closure Alternative resolves some of the property management issues as detailed in the Draft Environmental Assessment. However, after reviewing public comments received and meeting with neighboring Lessees, DNRC has decided to re-evaluate the proposed action and to issue the No Action Alternative at this time.*

*DNRC and the Lessees recognize that similar issues identified in the Environmental Analysis may persist in the future and eventually will have to be addressed. In the interim, DNRC will communicate with DFWP for potential agreements in site management and enforcement from the nearby Painted Rocks State Park.*

**Comments In Support of Day-Use Recreation Development Alternative (proposed action):**

First of all thank you for mailing me the copy of the recent EA that you completed for the Painted Rocks Recreation Development Project dated May 2021. I know from reviewing the document that you spent a considerable amount of time on the development of the alternatives.

Some comments on the preferred alternative, Day Use Parking Area. As you know and actually state on page 4 one of the key items that needs to be addressed is the sanitation issue. I am one of the adjoining cabin lessee's in fact I use that highway access to access our cabin, which is one lot to the south of the proposed area. I have children and grandchildren that play in that area and the amount of human waste is awful and horrible; having a child come back to the cabin when they have stepped in human "poop" is unacceptable for our State Land Recreation Areas. I am a firm believer that the public needs and should be allowed access but I also am a firm believer that the State has the responsibility to provide the necessary facilities to take care of the recreating public. It has already been proven by your visual inspection and documentation in the EA that this is an issue that needs to be addressed.

I would like to see the area remain open to DAY USE with additional signs that allow day use. The State Campground for overnight camping is less than ¼ mile on down the road. Individuals are camping overnight there simply to avoid paying the camping fee. There are also four additional Forest Service Campgrounds in the direct area. Slate Creek, Alta, Rombo, and Little Blue Joint. So overnight camping is provided and available. Along with the DAY USE signage I think it is important that the State provides a toilet for use at the area for the recreating publics.

My cabin lease agreement with the State of Montana has very strict sanitation and garbage guidelines. I think it is only reasonable and fair that the State DNRC when promoting State Lands for Recreation Areas also has to follow the same guidelines.

Again thank you for the opportunity to comment. Recreating in the area is extremely important to my family and we want to assure that the opportunity remains for our children and grandchildren; but in a safe healthy manner. Please add sanitation/toilet facilities to your Day Use proposal with signage to refer all overnight camping on to the Developed State Painted Rocks Campground.

Roylene Gaul  
Painted Rocks Cabin Site #15 8805 West Fork Road

*DNRC Response: Thank you for your comments and supporting the proposed action alternative. The Day-Use Recreation Development Alternative resolves many of the property management issues as detailed in the Draft Environmental Assessment. However, after reviewing public comments received and meeting with neighboring Lessees, DNRC has decided to re-evaluate the proposed action and to issue the No Action Alternative at this time.*

*DNRC and the Lessees recognize that similar issues identified in the Environmental Analysis may persist in the future and eventually will have to be addressed. In the interim, DNRC will communicate with DFWP for potential agreements in site management and enforcement from the nearby Painted Rocks State Park.*

**General Comments On Alternative(s) Presented in the Environmental Assessment:**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) appreciates the opportunity to comment on DNRC's proposal for a recreation development site (RDS) at Painted Rocks Reservoir. We have reviewed the environmental assessment (MEPA Environmental Assessment Project Lands Recreation Development Painted Rocks Reservoir, Ravalli County MT) describing the RDS proposal.

FWP is supportive of increasing recreational access and infrastructure. At the same time, we have some concerns about which we would ask for continued discussion regarding two of the alternatives—the day-use and the leased-site alternatives—for the proposed RDS. (It is our understanding that the State Water Projects Bureau prefers the day-use alternative.) Our considerations and concerns follow.

1. "Day-use vehicle footprint would include a short section of one-lane roadway, parking area for 3-5 single vehicle stalls and a backout/turnaround stall" (Sec I.G. Day-Use Recreation Development Alternative, para. 1).
  - a. Our experience leads us to believe that once the established parking sites are occupied, additional users would park outside hardened surfaces and along the roadway, creating possible hazards or other problems.
2. "No sanitation infrastructure or services would be included under this alternative. Informational signage would direct the public to Painted Rocks State Park, located ¼ mile to the south west" (Sec I.G. Day-Use Recreation Development Alternative, para. 3).

FWP anticipates challenges as DNRC's partner in providing safe quality experiences on several fronts:

- a. **Human Waste and Public Safety:** It seems unlikely that users would drive from this RDS to Painted Rocks State Park (SP)—while potentially giving up their parking spot—to use the SP vault toilets located 1/4 mile away. Instead, it seems that the lack of sanitation infrastructure would continue to be a problem at the RDS and could even lead to public safety and resource degradation.
  - b. **Visitor Dispersion and Spillover Impacts:** If RDS users do follow these directions and use Painted Rocks SP, this could represent increased strain on an already understaffed FWP site. Currently, the SP is only staffed with a part-time employee during the late-May to mid-August (3-month) period. With increasing visitation to the site and a jump in visitors new to camping and to the area, staff members are already having difficulty keeping up with needs throughout the year.
  - c. **Increasing Visitor Use:** Recreation has increased at the SP in the shoulder seasons due to heightened camping interest, more mild temperatures, as well as seasonal “mudders” using the Painted Rocks Reservoir bottom for off-road driving (ATV, UHV, 4WD, etc.) in the spring and fall. Between 2019 and 2020, visitation increased by 46.4%. (Please see the Attachment for further information summarizing Painted Rocks SP use.) Additional demands from off-site users are likely to further strain the limited capacity of FWP’s SP staff and resources and could negatively impact the management and protection of important natural resources and infrastructure in the area.
  - d. If the Day-Use Recreation Alternative were to be the selected alternative, FWP would strongly encourage DNRC to consider the installation of a vault latrine at the DNRC site. Installation of a vault latrine may also be advisable under the Leased-Site Recreation Development Alternative, as lessees may be expected to also use their leased site as day-use and not always as a camping site.
3. “Management of the preferred alternative will be conducted by DNRC personnel, or through Agreement with Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks recreational Lease at Painted Rocks State Park. Informational signage for sanitation facilities would direct the public to Painted Rocks State Park, located ¼ mile to the south west” (Sec I.H Narrative Summary of Proposed Action, para 3).
- a. FWP is supportive of an agreement to coordinate recreational management at this location. At the same time, we believe in order to provide a safe, quality recreational opportunity, any agreement would need to increase the staff capacity and resources allocated for Painted Rocks SP to manage this detached (DNRC site) location (cleaning, signage, enforcement, etc.).
  - b. As stated above, we strongly encourage installation of a vault latrine at this location, irrespective of the existence of a recreational management agreement, particularly as use of the site continues to grow.

4. Leased Site Recreational Development Alternative (Sec I.G, page 8).

- a. Given the growth in visitor interests in camping, FWP finds this Alternative as an option that could provide increased access to camping, while relieving pressure on both developed and dispersed campsites in the West Fork of the Bitterroot River area, and we understand that it comes with additional management responsibility.

As two of the Alternatives will potentially increase demands beyond the capacity of currently strained FWP resources, and one of the Alternatives may require FWP to seek Parks and Recreation Board approval, FWP aims to be a cooperative partner through the development of next steps in this project. We look forward to continued discussions with DNRC and would like to designate our regional parks manager Loren Flynn (406-542-5517, [lflynn2@mt.gov](mailto:lflynn2@mt.gov)) as our contact for further consultation related to this proposal.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposed DNRC recreation development on its Painted Rocks Reservoir lands.

Sincerely,

Randy Arnold  
Regional Supervisor

*DNRC Response: Thank you for your comments and your agency's continued support of recreation access and associated infrastructure. After reviewing public comments received and meeting with neighboring Lessees, DNRC has decided to re-evaluate the proposed action alternative and to issue the No Action Alternative at this time.*

*DNRC and the Lessees recognize that similar issues identified in the Environmental Analysis may persist in the future and eventually will have to be addressed. In the interim, DNRC will communicate with DFWP for potential agreements in site management and enforcement from the nearby Painted Rocks State Park.*

## Environmental Assessment Summary

After reviewing public comments received and meeting with neighboring Lessees, DNRC has decided to re-evaluate the proposed action alternative and to issue the No Action Alternative at this time. DNRC recognizes that similar issues identified in the Environmental Analysis may persist in the future and eventually will have to be addressed. DNCR is committed to addressing these issues and will continue to work with cabin site Lessees, public agencies, and the general public to find acceptable solutions for all stakeholders.

This environmental assessment is therefore the appropriate level of analysis and an environmental impact statement is not required.

## Decision

In consideration of the comments received and their value to improve and clarify the assessment for this project, DNRC has provided responses to each as presented in this Decision Notice. Based on the Environmental Assessment, public comments and associated responses, DNRC considers the Draft Environmental Assessment to be the Final Environmental Assessment and will issue this Decision.

It is my decision to approve the Projects Lands Recreation Development, Painted Rocks Reservoir No Action Alternative.



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Anna Pakenham Stevenson  
Water Resources Division Administrator

The Decision Notice can be viewed on the DNRC website at [www.dnrc.mt.gov](http://www.dnrc.mt.gov) in the Environmental Documents section. Please direct questions to:

Mark McNearney, P.E.  
MT DNRC, State Water Projects Bureau  
1424 9<sup>th</sup> Ave., P.O. Box 201601  
Helena, MT 59620-1601  
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