



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION FWP PROPOSAL AND INFORMATION SHEET

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Meeting Date: February 13, 2025

Agenda Item: Vandalia WMA Management Agreement

Action Needed: Final approval

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background: The Vandalia Wildlife Management Area (WMA) encompasses approximately 387 acres of U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) lands under Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP) management from 1994-2024. A 30-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the BOR, Glasgow Irrigation District, and FWP granted FWP the management authority over the public recreation, wildlife, and other resource values associated with this land. This MOU expired in June 2024. FWP and BOR intend to enter into a new 20-year Management Agreement that allows FWP to continue management of the Vandalia WMA.

Public Involvement Process & Results: A Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) was made available for public review and comment from November 14th to November 29th. The Draft EA was posted on FWP's Public Notice webpage, made available for public review on the Environmental Quality Council website, by individual request, and through notice to identified interested parties including neighboring property owners. FWP did not receive comments during the public comment period. A Decision Notice was published by the department and determined the proposed action 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.

Analysis & Alternatives: The Department manages Vandalia WMA for the benefit of public recreation, wildlife, and other resource uses. The WMA currently provides recreational opportunities in the form of hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing, along with habitat management that incorporates livestock grazing. Habitat conditions are monitored by FWP biologists to track whether habitat objectives are being met. By continuing FWP's management of this site, public recreation will be prioritized, and wildlife habitat values will continue to be improved upon, with any livestock grazing being managed in such a way as to improve habitat conditions.

Alternative A: Under the Proposed Action, the public recreation, wildlife, and other resource uses on the Vandalia WMA would continue to be managed by FWP for an additional 20 years.

Alternative B: The commission could choose not to approve and FWP would not continue management of the Vandalia WMA. Management of the public recreation, wildlife, and other resource uses would revert to the BOR.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: The department recommends the commission approve of the department entering into a 20-year management agreement with BOR for management of Vandalia WMA. A new management agreement between BOR and FWP has been drafted with the intended purpose that the land is to continue to be managed for public recreation, wildlife, and other resource uses by FWP.

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission authorize FWP to enter into a 20-year management agreement with BOR for management of Vandalia Wildlife Management Area.