



Decision Notice
Medicine Rocks State Park
Proposed Camp Host Pad Installation

Description of Proposed Project:

Montana State Parks, a Division of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, proposes to install a campground host pad at Medicine Rocks State Park. The proposed camp host site would be centrally located within the park boundary. This location will be readily recognizable and easy for visitors to find if they need assistance or information. It is also located within close walking proximity to park campsites to provide a heightened level of site security and safety; for example ensuring that campfires are not left unattended.

Campground hosts are typically private citizens who volunteer to serve in private and public campgrounds nationwide. These hosts fulfill a wide range of duties, including helping visitors find suitable campsites; explaining park policies, regulations, and attractions; monitoring the park and its guests, serving as first responders in emergencies and providing routine site cleanup and maintenance and serving as ambassadors for the park system. In exchange for providing these services, campground hosts receive free camping in the park and are provided a rewarding opportunity to serve as ambassadors and stewards of Montana State Parks. With a volunteer campground host on site, Montana State Parks would be better positioned to provide a more satisfying park experience for visitors and campers.

Park managers believe that the addition of a campground host site at Medicine Rocks State Park will greatly increase site protection and stewardship of the park and service to park visitors. Volunteer campground hosts will help monitor visitors, thereby greatly reducing incidents involving vandalism, littering, drug and alcohol abuse, and impacts to natural and cultural resources within the park. Campground hosts will alert Park Managers or public safety and law enforcement authorities to any serious problems, but usually the mere presence of a campground host deters most common park violations. Campground hosts also assist visitors by providing information about the Park, the region, and the state as a whole and serve as ambassadors for the Montana State Park system.

Alternatives Considered:

Alternative A: No Action

Under the no action alternative, Montana State Parks would not install the campground host site or provide a volunteer on-site to provide services to the public or remind visitors of park rules and state regulations. The status quo will continue.

Alternative B: Host Pad, Option 1

Under this alternative and location site a host pad site would be situated just inside the park boundary adjacent to Highway 7 and not near any developed areas of the park. This site would likely be less appealing for a potential camp host, and would be logistically more difficult to manage the public and the parks resources.

Alternative C: Host Pad, Option 2, Preferred Option

Under this alternative, Montana State Parks would install the campground host site at approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ mile within the park adjacent to the park access road and near the park camping area. This option would serve as an appealing location for a host and would support a regular summer season presence at Medicine Rocks State Park, assisting in park rule and regulation compliance, public safety, visitor services, site maintenance, and fire security.

Public Process:

Montana State Parks is required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) to assess the 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 based on this information. In compliance with MEPA, an Environmental Assessment (EA) was completed for the proposed project by Montana State Parks and released for public comment on August 25, 2012.

Legal notice of the Medicine Rocks Camp Host Pad project EA was published in each of the following newspapers: *Ekalaka Eagle* (Ekalaka), *Fallon County Times* (Baker), *Ranger Review* (Glendive), *Billings Gazette* (Billings), *Independent Record* (Helena). Additionally Montana State Parks issued a state-wide news release regarding this proposal, and posted on FWP website (<http://stateparks.mt.gov>).

Summary of Public Comment:

The draft Environmental Assessment received two comments from separate individuals. Both comments supported the proposed project. These comments are summarized below:

1. *If this improvement is successful in the acquisition of a camp host on site; it is important that they are active nightly to ensure that no fires are left unattended and to deter petty criminal activity such as illegal alcohol consumption and vandalism.*

Montana State Parks Response: “Thank you for your support.”

2. *This is a fantastic idea that will bring some positive developments and changes to a Montana State Park that is located in such a remote and beautiful area. I feel that it is important for the campground hosts to establish a “campfire program”, even if it is only a couple every summer, so that park interpretation can grow allowing both neighbors and park visitors can enjoy those types of educational programs.*

Montana State Parks Response: “Thank you for your support.”

Decision

It is my decision to proceed with the installation of a campground host site at Medicine Rocks State Park as described in Alternative C of the draft Environmental Assessment and in this Decision Notice. Based upon the Environmental Assessment (EA) and the applicable laws, regulation and policies, I have determined that the proposed actions will not have significant negative effects on the human and physical environments associated with the proposed improvement. Therefore, I conclude that the EA is the appropriate level of analysis and the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is unnecessary.



John Little,
Montana State Parks Regional Manager

November 13, 2012

Date