

## APPENDIX A

### *Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)*

In accordance with CFR 1508.13 and direction provided in the Forest Service Handbook (FSH 1909.15, Chapter 40, Section 43.1), I have determined that the management actions included in the decision for the Sekokini Springs Isolation Facility do not constitute a major federal action, and that the implementation of the decision will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Accordingly, I have determined that an Environmental Impact Statement does not need to be prepared for this project. I have followed the implementing regulation for NEPA (40 CFR 1508.27) and other criteria for determining the significance of effects.

Before making my determination, I carefully reviewed and considered the following information:

- The direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of these actions as documented in the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Sekokini Springs Isolation Facility.
- The analysis documentation in the Project File of the Sekokini Springs Isolation Facility.
- Comments received during scoping, and the fact that no comments were received after the EA was published for this project.
- Current operations of the Sekokini Springs Isolation Facility by MFWP under Flathead National Forest SUP.

The Interdisciplinary (ID) Team and I have screened the management actions included in the Sekokini Springs Isolation Facility for significant impact. The results of this screen are summarized on the following pages.

**Significant**, as used in NEPA, requires consideration of both **context** and **intensity**.

**Context** means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. For instance, in the case of a site-specific action, significance would usually depend upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Both short and long-term effects are relevant (40 CFR 1508.27).

The effects of the proposed actions are limited in context. The project includes about 21 acres of land managed under an existing special use permit (SUP). Improvements to and expansion of the site are minimal. These activities occur within a 21-acre project area and are limited in duration. Effects are local in nature and are not likely to significantly affect regional or national resources.

**Intensity** refers to the severity of impact. Responsible Officials must bear in mind that more than one agency may make decisions about partial aspects of a major action. The following ten aspects are considered in the evaluation of intensity (40 CFR 1508.27):

1. *Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the balance of effects will be beneficial.*

This project would have both beneficial and adverse effects and both have been taken into consideration when making a determination of significance. While there will be beneficial effects, in the short and the long term, this action does not rely on those effects to balance adverse environmental impacts. Detailed specialist reports included in the EA and Project File contain comprehensive effects analyses and the findings from these resource specific reports form the basis for my decision.

The project is limited in activity. These activities have varying effects on the physical, biological, or social components of the affected environment. Some of these effects are more favorable to a particular resource component than to another resource component. Below is a synopsis of the more notable effects of the activities and their references in the EA; however, none of the effects, whether favorable or unfavorable, beneficial or adverse, are significant.

The main features of the project include expansion of the SUP area from 10.5 acres to 21 acres, improvements to the existing hatchery building, and reconstruction of ponds and stream channels.

It is my determination, based on review of these analyses and consultation with specialists, that the decision activities would not have a significant impact on the environment. All effects would be small or short-lived. None are deemed irreversible or irretrievable and do not set in motion further effects. All potential direct, indirect, and cumulative effects are evaluated in the EA, specialist reports, and Biological Assessments and Biological Evaluations.

2. *The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.*

Herbicide treatments of weeds would comply with label directions and in accordance with and under decision authority of the Flathead National Forest Noxious and Invasive Weed Control EA and Decision Notice (USDA May 2001), to which the Sekokini Springs Isolation Facility EA references.

I believe that the selected action is not likely to have any significant impact to public health or safety.

3. *Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.*

This decision would not adversely affect historic or cultural resources or wild and scenic rivers and would not affect parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, or ecologically critical areas.

Heritage surveys have been completed and no new historic or prehistoric properties within the proposed treatment units were found.

The project area is within the Middle Fork Flathead wild and scenic river corridor (recreation section) and improvements are designed to address the values of wildlife, water quality, visuals, recreation, fisheries and history (outstanding remarkable values) through SUP administration. The roof of the building is green and trees along the river provide an adequate visual screen. The two-way fish barrier near the river will also be screened from natural vegetation and should not be visible from the river.

Wildlife impacts were identified, but these were not identified as significant. An electric fence will be installed around the ponds to prevent access to bears and all fish food will be stored in the building.

The project area includes wetlands and riparian areas, but impacts to wetlands and riparian areas will be avoided during project layout and under contract provisions for vegetation treatments (protected through resource protection measures, BMPs and adherence to Forest Plan requirements for Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (RHCA's)).

I have deemed that with the above measures the intent of the Wild and Scenic River Plan (Wild and Scenic River Act) and subsequent Forest Plan management area direction is met with the actions involved in my decision.

Based on this information, I conclude that the decision would have minimal effects on unique resources.

4. *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

Based on the limited context of the project, my review of comments received during the scoping of this project, and the analysis documented in the EA and Project File, I do not find any highly controversial effects to the human environment. No comments were received during the 30-day comment period of the EA.

I conclude that professionals, specialists, and scientists from associated fields of forestry, wildlife biology, soils, fisheries, and hydrology do not consider the effects of the decision highly controversial.

5. *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*

Based on my review of comments received during the scoping of this project, the lack of comments received after the publication of the EA, and the analysis documented in the EA and Project File, I find the possible effects on the human environment that are uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks are minimal or non-existent.

This project has been under SUP by the Flathead National Forest for a decade. Analysis of this project considered the effects of these past projects as a frame of reference in conjunction with scientifically accepted analytical techniques, available information, and best professional experience and judgment to estimate effects to the human environment. It is my conclusion that

there are no uncertain or unique characteristics in the project area that have not been previously encountered or that will constitute an unknown risk to the human environment.

6. *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.*

The Sekokini Springs Isolation Facility represents a site-specific project that does not set precedence for future actions or present a decision in principle about future considerations. Any proposed future project must be evaluated on its own merits and effects. The selected actions are compatible with the Forest Plan and the capabilities of the land.

I believe that this action does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.

7. *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. Significance exists if it is reasonable to anticipate a cumulatively significant impact on the environment. Significance cannot be avoided by terming an action temporary or by breaking it down into small component parts.*

Connected, cumulative, and similar actions have been considered and included in the scope of the analysis. The analysis accounts for past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions.

Based on my review of the analysis and disclosure of effects in the EA, specialist reports, Biological Assessments/Evaluations, and other analyses in the Project File, I conclude that the Sekokini Springs Isolation Facility does not represent potential cumulative adverse impacts (Project File).

8. *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.*

My decision to approve this project will not have adverse effects on, nor cause the loss or destruction of, significant scientific, cultural or historic resources.

Heritage surveys have been completed in the Sekokini Springs Isolation Facility Area and no new historic or prehistoric properties are within the proposed treatment units (Project File). The potential for influencing undiscovered sites is mitigated by compliance with Forest Plan standards and guidelines. In the event such resources are discovered during project implementation, they will be evaluated and protected.

I believe that this action will not have a significant effect on scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

9. *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.*

This project will not significantly adversely affect threatened or endangered species or their habitat (see Project File, Wildlife Section). Biological Assessments (BA) were completed which

assess potential impacts to threatened, endangered and proposed species and their habitat. These BAs and supporting documentation led to the following determinations for listed species.

**Table 1. Threatened & Endangered Species Determinations**

Species	Determination
<b>Grizzly Bear</b>	May effect – not likely to adversely affect grizzly bears or their habitat.
<b>Gray Wolf</b>	May effect – not likely to adversely affect gray wolf or their habitat.
<b>Canada Lynx</b>	No effect on Canada Lynx and Canada lynx critical habitat.
<b>Bull Trout</b>	No effect on Bull trout and critical bull trout habitat
<b>Spalding’s Catchfly</b>	No effect
<b>Water Howellia</b>	No effect

For the grizzly bear, a determination of a “may affect, not likely to adversely affect” was made. This determination was made because bears are known to frequent the area. Prior to MFWP taking over operation of the site, a sub-adult grizzly bear was observed eating fish food and was also observed in the fishpond catching fish. A trap was set for the bear, but it was not captured and it moved on (T. Manley, MFWP, personal communication 2010). Since site operation was taken over by MFWP, at least one bear has been directly observed by the facility staff (B. Marotz, MFWP, personal communication 2010), and several radio-collared grizzly bears have moved through the area over the years (T. Manley, MFWP, personal communication 2010). Grizzly bears are also reported on a regular basis in the Blankenship, Lake Five, Coram, and Teakettle areas. The Apgar Range, to the north of Sekokini Springs, has high concentrations of grizzly bears during the summer, as it is an area bears are known to routinely travel to feed on huckleberries (T. Manley, MFWP, personal communication 2010). Clusters of radio collar relocations occur in the Apgar range to the north, Teakettle Mountain to the northwest, and Desert Mountain to the east of Sekokini Springs (R. Mace, MFWP, personal communication 2009).

From 1993-2010, there were 30 captures of 19 individual grizzly bears (some bears were captured more than once) due to conflicts within 3 miles of Sekokini Springs (T. Manley, MFWP, personal communication 2010). The captures included all age and sex classes (females with cubs, subadult females, solitary adult males and females, and subadult males). Conflicts were primarily bears getting into unsecured attractants including garbage, bird feeders, fruit trees, pet food, and trout feed. Some of the bears also killed poultry and goats. All of the captures occurred on private lands. An electric fence will be installed around the ponds to keep bears away from fish in the ponds.

A determination of “no effect” on Canada lynx was made since the project is not within FNF mapped lynx habitat or designated critical habitat. A determination of “may affect, not likely to adversely affect” gray wolf was made because disturbance could temporarily alter normal wolf behavior in the immediate vicinity during the construction period. A determination of “no effect” on bull trout was made because they are not present on site and would not be affected by the project during their use of the Middle Fork Flathead River as a migration corridor.

*10. Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

As described in the EA, the selected action is consistent with all applicable federal, state, or local laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment, including:

- The National Forest Management Act (NFMA)
- The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
- The Endangered Species Act
- The Clean Water Act and Montana State Water Quality Standards
- The Clean Air Act
- The Migratory Bird Treaty Act
- The National Historic Preservation Act
- The American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act
- American Indian Religious Freedom Act
- Wild and Scenic Rivers Act
- The Environmental Justice Act

The decision is consistent with Forest Plan direction.

I have concluded that the selected action does not violate any federal, state, or local laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

*Chip Weber*

*4/6/11*

**Chip Weber**  
Forest Supervisor

**Date**