



SCOPING NOTICE
PROPOSED SMITH LAKE REHAB TRAIL PROJECT
November 10, 2022

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), Stillwater Unit, is soliciting comments on a DNRC proposal for a reconstruction and reclamation trail project immediately adjacent to Smith Lake located near the head of Whitefish Lake off East Lakeshore Drive. See Exhibit A – Smith Lake Vicinity Map for details.

Smith Lake Dam was originally constructed as a fish rearing pond in the 1930s and was used as such until 1960 when the project was abandoned. In 2000, DNRC Dam Safety classified the dam as 'high hazard' due to its location above a paved county road, East Lake Shore Road. In 2001, DNRC completed, as feasible, the recommended immediate actions to reduce the risk of dam failure by removing flashboards to lower the level of the lake considerably. In 2012, DNRC received grant funding and constructed an earthen dam that restored the lake to its previous level; however, the dam is still classified as 'high hazard' because of the paved county road downstream of the dam. The dam is inspected annually to ensure that the integrity of the dam is not compromised.

Currently, there is an existing user trail which leads from the Smith Lake parking area down to the engineered earthen dam. Portions of the trail are steep which has led to erosion issues and sediment runoff into the lake. The current trail provides access to the crest of the dam where the public is inadvertently causing several detrimental effects to the stability of the dam. Large angular rocks placed specifically to protect the embankment from erosion are being redistributed by members of the public. In addition, this large angular rock is used to protect the impermeable liner under the spillway is also being redistributed by the public. This can expose the impermeable liner and risk possible failure of the earthen dam.

Whitefish Legacy Partners (WLP) has received a grant from the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) and has offered to assist DNRC with reclamation of the user trail in an effort to protect the integrity of the dam and shift access to the lake away from the dam. The project would include crib steps on steep portions of the trail, a viewing platform and bench with rock retaining wall, additional crib stepping and steel steps that direct users away from the dam, and a dock which would provide direct access to the water. The remaining portion of trail leading to the dam would be decommissioned and a fence would be installed on either side of the dam restricting public access to the crest and spillway of the dam. See Exhibit B for a conceptual site plan. Further consideration will include planning for design, engineering, and cost estimates.

This notice has been sent to you because you are a neighboring landowner or may have interest in the proposed project. In accordance with the Montana Environmental Policy Act, public concerns about the project and potential environmental impacts must be considered and analyzed prior to a decision on this proposal to reconstruct and reclaim portions of the existing user-built trail.

You have until November 28, 2022, to submit your concerns or comments relating to this project by mailing or e-mailing written comments to Nicole Stickney, MT DNRC Stillwater Unit, P.O. Box 164, Olney, MT 59927 or nstickney@mt.gov. If you have no comments but would like to be kept on the mailing list for this project, call 406-881-2666 or e-mail that request during this same period. If no response is received, you will no longer remain on the mailing list.

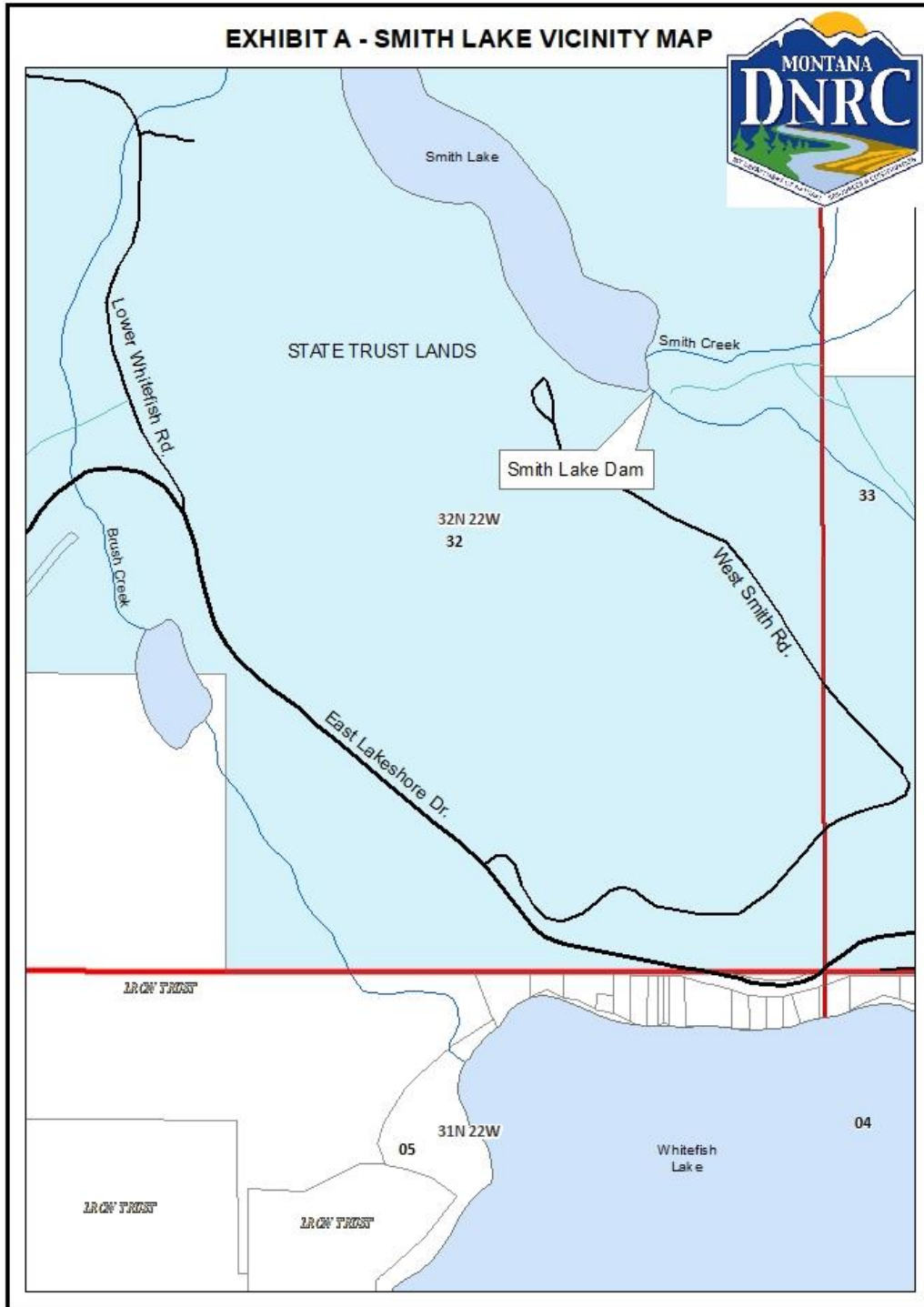


EXHIBIT B

