

# Fernan Lake Road

Vol. 8: August 2005

PROJECT UPDATE

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## Record of Decision Issued

Western Federal Lands Highway Division of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has completed the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Fernan Lake Road safety improvement project. The ROD describes the alternative selected for implementation and the reasons for its selection.

The final decision was made after careful consideration of all comments received on the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), which was distributed in April. Responses to these comments are provided with the ROD.

Also included with the ROD are the signed Memorandum of Agreement on cultural resources, and a letter of concurrence from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that documents consultation under the Endangered Species Act.

FHWA mailed the ROD to everyone that commented on the FEIS and to all agencies, organizations, and companies that were sent the complete FEIS. The ROD is available on the Internet at <http://www.wfl.fhwa.dot.gov/projects/fernan/>.

You can also read the ROD at the East Side Highway District, Forest Service offices in Coeur d'Alene, and public libraries in Coeur d'Alene and Spokane. You can request a copy from FHWA.

## Project Team

The project team reviewed the ROD before it was signed by FHWA. The project team consists of the East Side Highway District, Idaho Transportation Department, Idaho Panhandle National Forests, and FHWA. David Evans and Associates, Inc. is the

lead consultant for the planning and environmental evaluation phase of the project.

## Alternative G Selected

FHWA selects Alternative G for implementation because it is the alternative that best, among relative equals, meets the safety needs of the project, while meeting the remaining project purposes and objectives. Alternative G also is the environmentally preferred alternative that meets the project purpose and objectives. Reasons why Alternative G is environmentally preferred include, but are not limited to:

- It most closely follows the existing road, thus avoiding the extensive in-water construction of Alternative E, and avoiding over one mile of new hillside disturbance in Alternative Fm.
- Construction of the new curved bridge across the upper end of Lilypad Bay will occur behind the existing causeway, thus protecting the lake from short-term impacts to water quality.
- Alternative G has fewer visual impacts than the other two build alternatives, an important consideration given the scenic setting.
- Alternative G provides all of the improvements in stormwater treatment, hydrologic connectivity, wildlife movements, traffic safety, roadway maintenance, and parking along Fernan Lake found in other build alternatives.
- Along Fernan Creek, Alternative G provides the same opportunities as other build alternatives to avoid and minimize wetland impacts, restore creek segments and enhance riparian zones near the new road, remove existing barriers to fish passage, and restore flow to the creek channel on the east side of the valley.

Other factors also support Alternative G for implementation. It has the best rating for all non-environmental factors considered in selecting the preferred alternative in the FEIS. Alternative G has

the least degree of risk or uncertainty that could delay or complicate final design, permitting, and construction. Alternative G also remains the unanimous choice of the partner agencies.

### Modified Alternative E Considered

The ROD also considered two modifications of Alternative E that were requested in comments on the DEIS and FEIS. One would eliminate or modify proposed parking along Lilypad Bay. This change would not cause Alternative E to be environmentally preferred, because a bridge would still be constructed in open water across the mouth of Lilypad Bay.

The other modification of Alternative E would construct a floating bridge instead of one on pilings. FHWA engineers determined that a floating bridge at this location is not reasonable or practical for the combination of heavy design loads (logging trucks), relatively short bridge length, and the recorded magnitude of water level fluctuations in Fernan Lake. Also floating bridge approaches would still require pilings and substantial in-water construction.

### What's Next?

FHWA will choose an engineering firm to prepare final designs of the road improvements and mitigation.

This fall the design team and real estate specialists will meet with each landowner to learn specifics about utilities or other features on the property. The right-of-way acquisition process and landowner rights will be described fully.

Final design will take 18 to 24 months, so construction is expected to start in 2008.

### Public Interest and Support

Thank you for your continuing support and interest in the Fernan Lake Road safety improvement project. FHWA's project website and future updates like this one will provide information on the status of design and construction. Your comments on the project are always welcome:

- by sending a comment on the project website,
- by email to [fernanlake@wfl.fha.dot.gov](mailto:fernanlake@wfl.fha.dot.gov)
- by phone to Sajid Aftab, Project Manager, at 360-619-7700, or
- by mail to Mr. Aftab at FHWA's return address.



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