

Decision Notice
Nilan East Dam Guard Gate Seal Investigation and Repair
Prepared by DNRC State Water Projects Bureau

Proposed Action

In 2020, SWPB worked on a project to replace the guard gate stem at the Nilan North Dam, the stem was bent and prevented operation of the gate. Nilan East Dam stem guides were also replaced as preventative maintenance. Water is delivered through the dam by the operation of two gates, a guard gate and an operating gate. The guard gate is upstream of the operating gate and is typically kept open while the operating gate is used to regulate flow out of the reservoir. The guard gate is typically only closed to allow for inspection of the outlet conduit and the operating gate. Since the gate stem guide replacement in 2020, the Nilan East Dam guard gate hasn't properly sealed, we are proposing to place a small temporary coffer dam upstream of the Nilan East Dam and dewater the area to facilitate safe entry into the outlet conduit to diagnose and fix the ongoing guard gate sealing issue.

Action Alternative: The proposed action is to place a small temporary cofferdam above the Nilan East Dam outlet to facilitate safe conduit entrance to explore solutions and conduct repairs for ongoing gate sealing issues.

No Action Alternative: Under the No Action Alternative, no work would happen, and the guard gate will continue to seal improperly which will hinder inspection of the outlet conduit and gate structures. This goes against dam safety standard practices across the industry. Therefore, the No Action Alternative is not preferable.

Montana Environmental Policy Act

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation is required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) to assess 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 whether or not to proceed with the project.

In compliance with DNRC's Environmental Document Reporting Policy, an Environmental Assessment (EA) was completed on the proposed action by DNRC and released for a 30-day public comment period commencing on November 25, 2025. The official comment period closed on December 31, 2025.

Summary of Public Comments

No public comments were received.

Decision

Based on the environmental review conducted in the Draft EA, DNRC has determined that the proposed action will not have significant or long term adverse impacts. The proposed action is reasonable and a suitable means to accomplish the project goals and therefore, this environmental assessment is the appropriate level of analysis, and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required.

DNRC SWPB adopts the Draft EA as Final and approves the Action Alternative.



Trevor Watson
For Water Resources Division Administrator

The Decision Notice can be viewed on the DNRC website at [Environmental Documents](#) in.

Please direct questions to:

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