

## **FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET**

**Meeting Date:** May 14, 2015

**Agenda Item:** Isaac Homestead Wildlife Management Area – Addition

**Division:** Wildlife

**Action Needed:** Endorsement

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 10 minutes

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### **Background**

FWP proposes a 527-acre fee title addition to the Isaac Homestead Wildlife Management Area. The WMA comprises two separate units, the east unit (530 acres) and the west unit (745 acres). The west unit is accessible to the public by county road. The only legal public access to the east unit is from the Yellowstone River (or by crossing private land). This proposed acquisition would connect both the east and west parcels, establishing a contiguous WMA.

The proposed addition includes 46 acres of irrigated cropland with associated water rights. The irrigated cropland is currently in good condition and would transition well to be managed for wildlife habitat under the current WMA management plan. The remainder of the property includes native mixed grass prairie, a shallow wetland basin, and brush-filled coulees. In addition to wildlife habitat, the property will provide considerable public recreation (including pheasant, deer and waterfowl hunting, fishing, and other activities).

### **Public Involvement Process & Results**

An environmental assessment and subsequent public involvement would be initiated following Commission endorsement.

### **Alternatives and Analysis**

The parcel is intermingled with Isaac Homestead WMA, including frontage along the Yellowstone River. The addition is therefore a highly desirable recreational property. If FWP does not purchase the property and it's sold privately, FWP would lose the opportunity to tie the WMA together as one unit and would run the risk of conflicts between users of the WMA and future owners of this parcel. FWP's acquisition of the property would expand effective wildlife habitat while substantially enhancing accessibility of the WMA.

### **Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

FWP recommends that the Commission approve the purchase of this land as an addition to the Isaac Homestead WMA, conserving important habitat, providing quality hunting and other recreational opportunities, improving access to the WMA, and expanding FWP's management to benefit wildlife populations.

### **Proposed Motion**

I move the Fish & Wildlife Commission endorse the purchase of this addition to Isaac Homestead WMA, allowing FWP to initiate negotiations and to conduct analysis and associated public review.