

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: April 14, 2016

Agenda Item: Threemile Wildlife Management Area Antrim Donation/Addition

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 Min

Background

FWP proposes to accept a donation in fee-title ownership of approximately 214.8 acres adjoining Threemile Wildlife Management Area (WMA), northeast of Stevensville in Ravalli County, Region 2 (see map). The acreage was bequeathed to Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks in the last will and testament of Ms. Priscilla Antrim. This property shares approximately 1.5 miles of common boundary with the WMA, and 0.90 miles of boundary with a National Forest parcel between the Antrim property and the WMA (see map). It contains open grassland, timber, and riparian habitat, including a small unnamed drainage and a portion of Threemile Creek. There are no developments on the property except for a segment of Forest Road 640, which is maintained by Ravalli County and the US Forest Service.

The primary benefit of acquiring this property would be the preservation of elk and mule deer winter range habitat that is contiguous with the WMA, and the ability to avoid subdivision and development in a location where impacts from development would be significant. The property would be managed as part of the WMA for wildlife habitat and compatible public recreation.

Public Involvement Process & Results

A draft environmental assessment (EA) was prepared for this proposal. The EA was posted on FWP's Internet website on February 5 and public notices were published in local newspapers along with a statewide news release. The public comment period closed on March 8, 2016.

FWP held a public hearing to discuss the proposal and take public comment in Corvallis on February 18 (Thursday) at 6:30 p.m. at the Teller Wildlife Refuge. Three people attended the public meeting, and FWP received 12 comments in total, all in support of the proposed acquisition. Hellgate Hunters and Anglers, Bitterrooters For Planning, and the Ravalli County Fish & Wildlife Association were represented in support of the proposal.

Alternatives and Analysis

No-action is the only practical alternative to this proposed action. If FWP did not accept ownership of this parcel, it is likely the land would eventually be under new private ownership. Under the no action alternative, the land could be vulnerable to subdivision and development and public accessibility would be in jeopardy.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends that the Commission approve this proposal and add the Antrim donation to the Threemile WMA. This acquisition would expand the footprint of the WMA to include more of the elk winter range.

Proposed Motion

I move the Fish & Wildlife Commission approve the Antrim donated addition to Threemile WMA.