

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

**Meeting Date:** May 12, 2016

**Agenda Item:** Racetrack Pond Acquisition (R2)

**Division:** Fisheries

**Action Needed:** Endorsement

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 5 Min

### **Background**

In 2012, FWP was allocated \$1,000,000 through the Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP) to acquire and develop fishing access sites on the upper Clark Fork River. About \$850,000 of this funding has been designated for site development; the remaining \$150,000 is intended for acquisitions. Starting in 2016, FWP Region 2 plans to acquire and develop the first sites with this money, with a short-term objective to develop two existing sites and to acquire one new site each year. The goal is to add between 6-10 FASs to the Region 2 program over the next several years. Site acquisition will involve fee title purchases, or cooperative agreements with other agencies such as DNRC, BLM, and local county governments. One site, Racetrack Pond (near Deer Lodge), will be acquired by means of a transfer/donation from the DEQ to FWP upon completion of site cleanup by the DEQ and the NRDP. The property is approximately 272 acres. Within its boundaries is a fishable pond and significant Clark Fork River frontage. At this point, in addition to donating the land, the DEQ and the NRDP are also willing to collaborate on FAS design details, and to cost share some of the FAS construction costs; they need to receive direction from FWP concerning infrastructure design and to receive a commitment from FWP to accept the property once cleanup efforts are complete.

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

FWP is seeking endorsement by the Commission to pursue acquiring the property once cleanup is complete and to commit to spending some of the NRDP funds to develop its FAS infrastructure. With Commission approval, public involvement will occur during normal due diligence associated with all FWP site acquisitions, including Environmental Assessment of the proposal. Since site development is shared with the DEQ and the NRDP, additional public processes may be administratively invoked for those portions of the project that the DEQ and NRDP are responsible for as well.

### **Alternatives & Analysis**

The Commission could choose not to endorse pursuing the Racetrack Pond FAS site acquisition. The choice not to pursue its acquisition would slow implementation of the Region 2 access site development program for the upper Clark Fork River, and would forgo an opportunity to receive a transferred/donated property including cost-shared contributions to its infrastructure development. Pursuing the acquisition would preserve these benefits at a strategically valuable location for angler access to the river.

### **Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

FWP recommends that the Commission endorse further due diligence towards acquiring the Racetrack Pond property as a Fishing Access Site. The property is located on a river reach that currently lacks any developed access site. Endorsement will trigger further acquisition activities, including public involvement processes.

### **Proposed Motion**

I move that the Commission endorse further due diligence towards acquisition of the Racetrack Pond property when cleanup is complete, with the goal of eventually establishing a fully developed FAS.