

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

**Meeting Date:** April 14, 2017

**Agenda Item:** Musselshell River Fishing Access Site Lease (R5)

**Division:** Fisheries

**Action Needed:** Endorsement

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

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### **Background**

This property is west of and adjacent to Highway 87 immediately north of the bridge over the Musselshell River and is approximately 10 acres. Musselshell County approached FWP offering a low cost lease for development of this site as a Fishing Access Site (FAS). Musselshell County is purchasing this area through a grant program to create a green zone. The county plans on creating a trail system from the proposed FAS site to an existing trail system in the city of Roundup and the county fairgrounds. This is a small portion of a larger County-lead program to reduce potential flood damage near Roundup.

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

There has been no formal public involvement specifically on leasing this parcel. The larger project has had significant local public input. Musselshell County Commissioners proposed this site as part of a large grant opportunity, which has many cost share partners and FEMA approval. This plan incorporated the potential FAS, riparian green space, and potential urban pond as part of larger project. Community residents contacted by the local county Commissioners and their disaster and emergency coordinator were in favor of the lease by the Department. Upon gaining the Commission's endorsement to proceed with developing a lease agreement and lease, the Department would conduct an environmental review and solicit public comments.

### **Alternatives and Analysis:**

The Commission's endorsement would enable the Department to pursue the lease and lease agreement of this parcel in partnership with Musselshell County. This site would provide much needed river access for anglers and recreational floaters. Currently, it is 70 miles in the upstream direction to the nearest FAS at Harlowton. Downstream, it is 3 miles to the Musselshell County Fairground which provides public access. The next public access area beyond that is Asparagus Point a BLM managed area 14 miles downstream. There are no other formal fishing access sites downstream. A smallmouth bass and channel catfish fishery currently exists in this reach. Endorsing the acceptance of this potential lease from Musselshell County could be very important in providing recreational opportunity for anglers and floaters, and economic benefits for businesses in Roundup.

### **Agency Recommendation & Rationale:**

FWP recommends the Commission endorse the Department's request to pursue leasing this parcel through a cooperative effort with Musselshell County. This lease would help meet access needs identified for the Musselshell River in the Statewide Fisheries Management Plan. This additional access will also complement current efforts to enhance native game fish populations in the Musselshell through improved fish passage at irrigation diversion structures. Development at the proposed site may include a gravel boat ramp, latrine, picnic, and camping area.

### **Proposed Motion:**

I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission endorse FWP's request to pursue Musselshell County's offer to lease a parcel of land along the Musselshell River near Roundup, MT for a new fishing access site.