

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

**Meeting Date:** June 7, 2017

**Agenda Item:** Blackfoot Clearwater Wildlife Management Area Addition (Willard) (R2)

**Division:** Wildlife

**Action Needed:** Final

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

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**Background**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to purchase approximately 23 acres (hereafter, Willard Addition) from the private Willard and Shoquist Family Trust for the appraised value of \$200,000. Funding for the proposed Willard Addition would come from Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration to be matched with FWP's Habitat Montana program dollars.

The Willard Addition would become part of the Blackfoot Clearwater Wildlife Management Area (BCWMA) and would block up the north boundary of the WMA along Woodworth Road. The location of the private property, surrounded by BCWMA, Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation (DNRC), and U.S. Forest Service land gives the parcel high value for wildlife habitat and connectivity. Wildlife management goals on the surrounding land are primarily for elk and deer winter range, and for grizzly bear, Canada lynx, and other forest carnivores.

**Public Involvement Process & Results**

FWP released a draft Environmental Assessment for public review on March 4, 2017 and accepted public comment until 5 p.m. on April 4, 2017. One public meeting was held on March 15, 2017 in the Seeley Lake, Montana where no members of the public participated. FWP received 1 comment supporting the proposed acquisition during this period.

**Alternatives and Analysis**

Under the "No Action" Alternative, being located along a public road, the property is a prime candidate for subdivision and/or development as residential and recreational properties. Under that scenario, the habitat functions would be compromised and impacts would likely radiate onto the WMA. Trespass through this parcel has also been an issue in the past because of the proximity of the public road. Consolidation of the Willard Addition with the BCWMA would eliminate that problem.

**Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

Based on the connectivity value of the parcel to the BCWMA, the ability to block up ownership that extends to a public road, and the strategic nature of this parcel for maintaining the integrity of the north end of the Blackfoot Clearwater WMA, FWP recommends the Commission approve this purchase.

**Proposed Motion**

I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the purchase of the Willard Addition to Blackfoot Clearwater Wildlife Management Area.