

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: December 7, 2017

Agenda Item: Captain Clark Fishing Access Site Access Road Acquisition (R5)

Division: Fisheries

Action Needed: Final

Background:

The Captain Clark Fishing Access Site (FAS) is located on the Yellowstone River approximately 40 miles east of Billings. This 148-acre FAS was acquired in 1965. It has a concrete boat ramp, an accessible fishing pier and allows for overnight camping. This is a popular site, with use estimated to be around 13,000 visitors annually. The access road is approximately a mile long. The last .3 miles of the road borders a backwater slough that became an active channel several years ago, when a gravel bar began forming in the river at the mouth of the slough. Because of the gravel bar, water is being directed down the slough during periods of high flow causing erosion of the river bank resulting in loss of the access road. The road provides the only land access to this site and can't be relocated without encroaching on adjacent private land. The adjacent landowner is agreeable to selling a small parcel of land (less than one-acre) that would allow FWP to relocate approximately 1,000 ft. of the access road safely away from the river. The cost of this parcel is expected to be about \$2,800.

Public Involvement Process & Results:

A draft EA was circulated for public comments from July 27 to August 9, 2017 to interested agencies, groups and persons. The EA was also posted on the FWP website. Because of a request received during the comment period, the public comment period was extended until August 24, 2017. In addition to the request to extend the comment period, three emails and one written comment were received. All comments were in favor of the proposed action.

Alternatives and Analysis:

ARM 12.8.602 requires the Department to consider the wishes of the public, the capacity of the site for development, environmental impacts, long-range maintenance, protection of natural features and impacts on tourism as these elements relate to development or improvements to fishing access sites. The chosen option, of acquiring property to move the impacted section of the road, had the least impact and the highest probability of success. Alternatively, an engineered bank stabilization project that would prevent further erosion of the stream bank was also considered. However, due to a combination of factors including the estimated high-cost of the project (more than \$100,000), the negative impacts of hardening the stream bank and the uncertainties of obtaining the required permits made it a less desirable option.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale:

FWP recommends that Commission approve the department's request to purchase the .8-acres. It is currently the only viable option available that would allow the department to provide continued overland access to the Captain Clark FAS.

Proposed Motion:

I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve FWP's request to purchase the .8-acres of land for realigning a portion of the access road into the Captain Clark Fishing Access Site.