

## ***FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET***

**Meeting Date:** June 14, 2012

**Agenda Item:** Flathead River Fisheries Conservation Area Additions

**Division:** Fish and Wildlife

**Action Needed:** Endorse Course of Action

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

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### **Background**

FWP is seeking the FWP Commission's endorsement to research and negotiate the acquisition of four land parcels along the mainstem of the Flathead River. The parcels provide important riparian habitat along the river, which serves as a migratory corridor for threatened bull trout moving between Flathead Lake and spawning and rearing tributaries in the North Fork and Middle Fork of the Flathead River. The river also provides year-round habitat for westslope cutthroat trout. The four parcels of land, approximately 260 acres of riparian habitat, are located along the river as follows:

- Parcels 1 and 2 ("upper river parcels"): Adjacent parcels located along the Flathead River between the Conrad Drive Fisheries Conservation Area and the 442-acre Owen Sowerwine Natural Area.
- Parcel 3 (Conrad Drive FCA): Located along the Flathead River between the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area and the Old Steel Bridge FAS. Acquisition of the three upper-river parcels would complete public ownership and protection of 4.5 km of contiguous river habitat for public use.
- Parcel 4 ("lower river parcel"): These 30-acres are located near the mouth of Flathead River and adjoin the Flathead Lake Waterfowl Production Area.

As part of negotiations on a separate land transaction involving the Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes and Bonneville Power Administration, the Tribe would donate the Conrad Drive FCA (Parcel 3) to FWP at no cost. FWP would use BPA fish mitigation funds to purchase 1, 2, and 4. Future BPA funding would be used for operations and management costs associated with all four parcels.

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

Public involvement would occur as part of due diligence. The public supported FWP's acquisition of Osprey View and Foys Bend FCAs and CSKT's acquisition of Conrad Drive FCA in the past.

### **Alternatives and Analysis**

If FWP doesn't purchase these properties, the Conrad Drive FCA would remain in CSKT ownership and FWP would miss the opportunity to consistently manage this portion of the river corridor. The other three parcels would remain in private ownership with the potential for some types of development and no public access. Current habitat values may not be maintained, enhanced, or restored due to potential for incompatible uses. No public recreation opportunities would occur.

### **Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

Because of the importance of conserving native fisheries habitat values along the mainstem of the Flathead River, FWP recommends that the commission endorse the request to research and begin due diligence for these proposed acquisitions.

### **Proposed Motion**

I move that the commission endorse FWP's request to conduct due diligence on the acquisition of four parcels adding to the Flathead River FCA.