United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

GRIZZLY BEAR RECOVERY COORDINATOR
UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA
UNIVERSITY HALL, ROOM 309
MISSOULA, MT 59812
PHONE (406) 243-4903, FAX (406) 329-3212

February 2, 2010

Fish Creek Project
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Region 2 Headquarters
3201 Spurgin Rd.
Missoula MT 59804

Dear FWP,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposal to acquire lands in the Fish Creek drainage for wildlife management and for state parks lands. The reason for the Fish and Wildlife Service commenting on this acquisition is that portions of this area are within identified linkage areas across the I-90 corridor. We went through several processes to identify linkage areas between Ninemile and Lookout Pass along I-90. One of these processes involved scoring the habitat in terms of levels of development, road density and the contiguous nature of state and federal lands. Using this process, the lands on the northwestern edge of the Fish Creek area, including parts of the Fish Creek acquisition area, were identified as linkage areas for wildlife. The other process we used was to go to local residents and ask them where they see wildlife crossing the I-90 corridor and where they see seasonal concentrations of wildlife. Using this process the northeastern edge of the Fish Creek area, including parts of the Fish Creek acquisition area, was identified by community members as a wildlife linkage area. I have identified these two areas on the attached map.

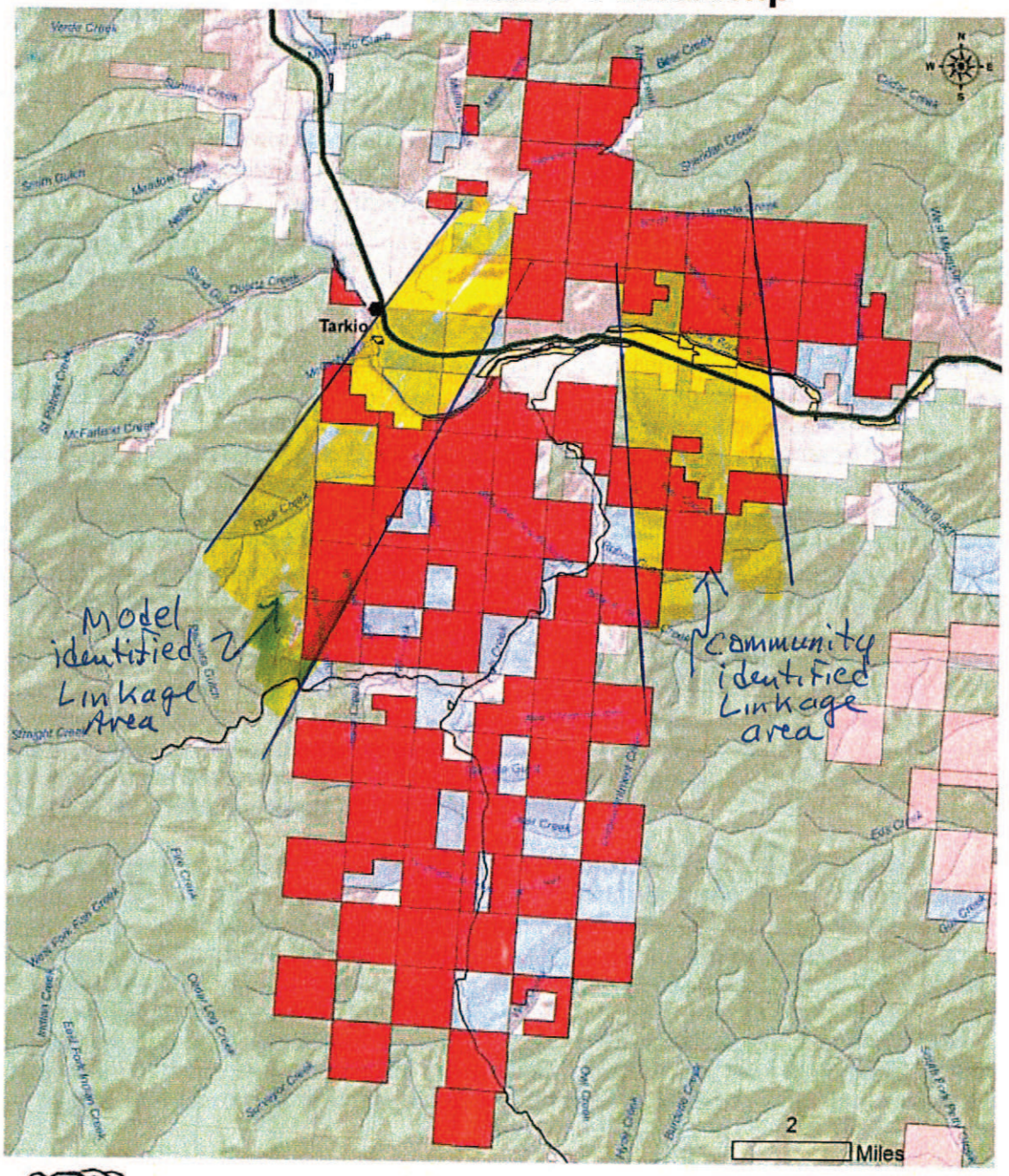
The management of linkage areas requires several considerations if these lands are to remain effective movement areas for wildlife including: 1) no additional site developments such as campgrounds, boat ramps or trailheads where human activity and human-related attractants like garbage and foods are concentrated; 2) no increase in motorized access routes or motorized use areas; and 3) maintenance or enhancement of visual cover in these areas so as to make wildlife more secure when they move through such areas. Looking at the management approaches outlined in your management plan document, it appears that management of these areas as wildlife management areas rather than state parks would be most appropriate for maintaining these areas as effective wildlife movement and linkage areas.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this most important issue.

Sincerely,

Christopher Servheen
Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator

Fish Creek Land Ownership



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

December 23, 2009
Data from: MFWP, TNC

Legend

- Main Fish Creek Roads
- The Nature Conservancy - Fish Creek
- The Nature Conservancy
- Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks
- Montana State Trust Lands
- US Forest Service
- Other Private

- To designate a large acreage state park in western Montana. State Park.
- Creates a natural recreation linkage with the Alberton Gorge.
- To provide enhanced access and recreation opportunities for hunting, hiking, angling, sightseeing, wildlife viewing, floating, trail use, and camping

1.3. Location

Located approximately 41 miles west of Missoula, Montana near the town of Tarkio along Interstate 90. Portions of the property lay both north and south of the interstate. The property FWP is considering purchasing is marked in red on the following map.

Township & Range of the Property in general terms:

12N, 25W:	All of Section 1.
13N, 24W:	Portions of Sections 6, 18, and 29.
	All of Sections 5, 7, 9, 17, 19, 21, and 31.
13N, 25W:	Portions of 1, 12 and 14.
	All of Sections 2, 3, 11, 13, 15, 23, 24, 25, 27, and 35
14N, 24W:	Portions of Section 3, 6, 8, 10, 11, 17, 20, and 31.
	All of Sections 5, 7, 9, 15, 18, 19, 21, 29, 32, and 33.
14N, 25W:	Portions of Sections 1, 2, 3, 14, 24, 26, and 35.
	All of Sections 11, 12, 13, 15, 22, 23, 25, and 27.
15N, 23W:	Portions of Sections 30 and 31.
15N, 24W:	Portions of 5, 8, 17, 18, 19, 28, 29, and 35.
	All of Sections 7, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 30.
15N, 25W:	Portions of Sections 1, 12, 13, 23, and 27.