



Montana State Parks & Recreation Board

Agenda Item Cover Sheet

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: March 3, 2022

Agenda Item: Lower Yellowstone River Powder River Depot Land Acquisition Endorsement

Time Needed on Agenda: 15 Minutes

Background: During the 2021 session, the Legislature pledged \$4 million for river access, habitat, & recreation projects on the lower Yellowstone River between Hysham & the North Dakota border. Building on a local initiative, Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) convened a 12-member citizen-advisory committee, sponsored by Governor Gianforte, during the summer of 2021 to guide use of the \$4 million with an eye toward opportunities & recommendations for improved access, habitat conservation, & sustainable economic development along the corridor. The committee was tasked with developing a scoring matrix for evaluating acquisition opportunities & identifying investments needed to maximize habitat conservation & protection while enhancing sustainable public access & recreational opportunities.

The committee submitted its recommendations to FWP in November. Among them was a recommendation to pursue development of a Lower Yellowstone River State Park that would encourage visitors to explore the entire corridor. Akin to the multi-unit Flathead Lake State Park, the committee suggested three separate units could be identified along the Lower Yellowstone. Powder River Depot is a group of parcels in the middle of the corridor where the Powder River & the Yellowstone meet. This proposed project could include a combination of federal, state, & private lands located on both sides of the Powder & Yellowstone. The project could range from 45 to 700 acres depending on land availability & resource considerations. The Powder River area presents an opportunity for a historical/cultural anchor in a multi-unit state park. Tribal & military activities occurred there leading up to & after the Battle of Little Bighorn & it includes historic stagecoach stops & range rider stations.

Additionally, the Powder River confluence is expected to play a central role in local fisheries recreation & management as pallid sturgeon &, potentially, paddlefish move upstream due to habitat improvements at Intake Fishing Access Site. Other local draws include the Evelyn Cameron heritage center in Terry, the Terry Badlands Wilderness Study Area, & the Calypso Trail where the community of Terry & Prairie County have invested in interpretive signage & trails.

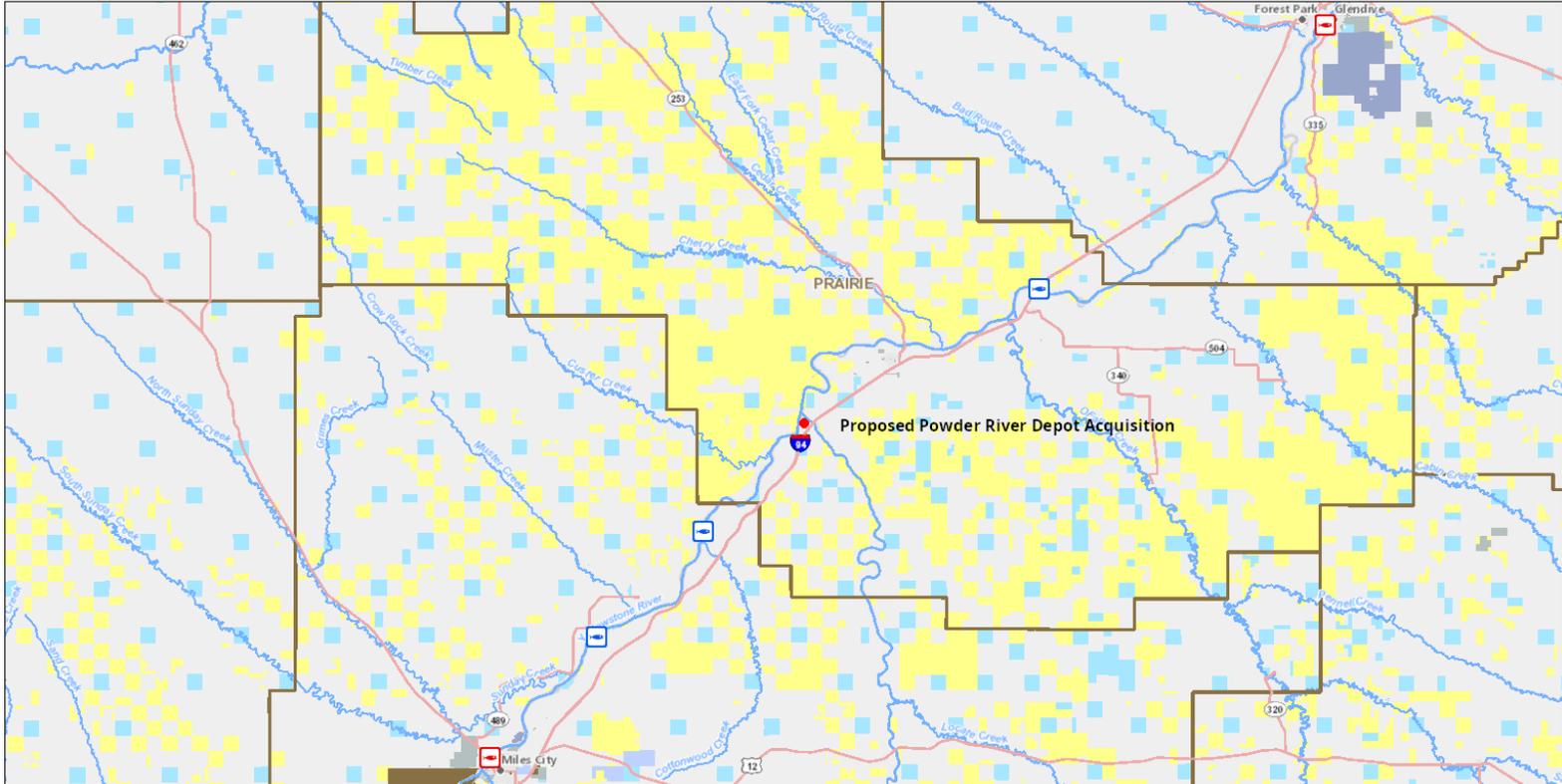
Public Involvement Process: The Lower Yellowstone River Coalition held multiple community listening sessions prior to the 2021 legislative session. The Lower Yellowstone River Corridor Advisory Committee held multiple public meetings between August & October 2021 & issued its recommendations in November 2021.

FWP would pursue formal public comment through the due diligence & development process if endorsed.

Alternatives & Analysis: Proposal alternatives & analysis would be developed by FWP. Upon endorsement by the board, FWP would conduct appropriate due diligence, analysis, & a public review process.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends endorsement of this proposal, allowing FWP to further pursue & evaluate it & to offer opportunities for public review & comment.

Proposed Motion: I move the Parks & Recreation Board endorse efforts by Fish, Wildlife & Parks to pursue acquiring land & access in the Powder River Depot area of the Lower Yellowstone River.



Fishing Access Site Locations

-  HUNTING ALLOWED
-  NO HUNTING

Wildlife Management Area Locations

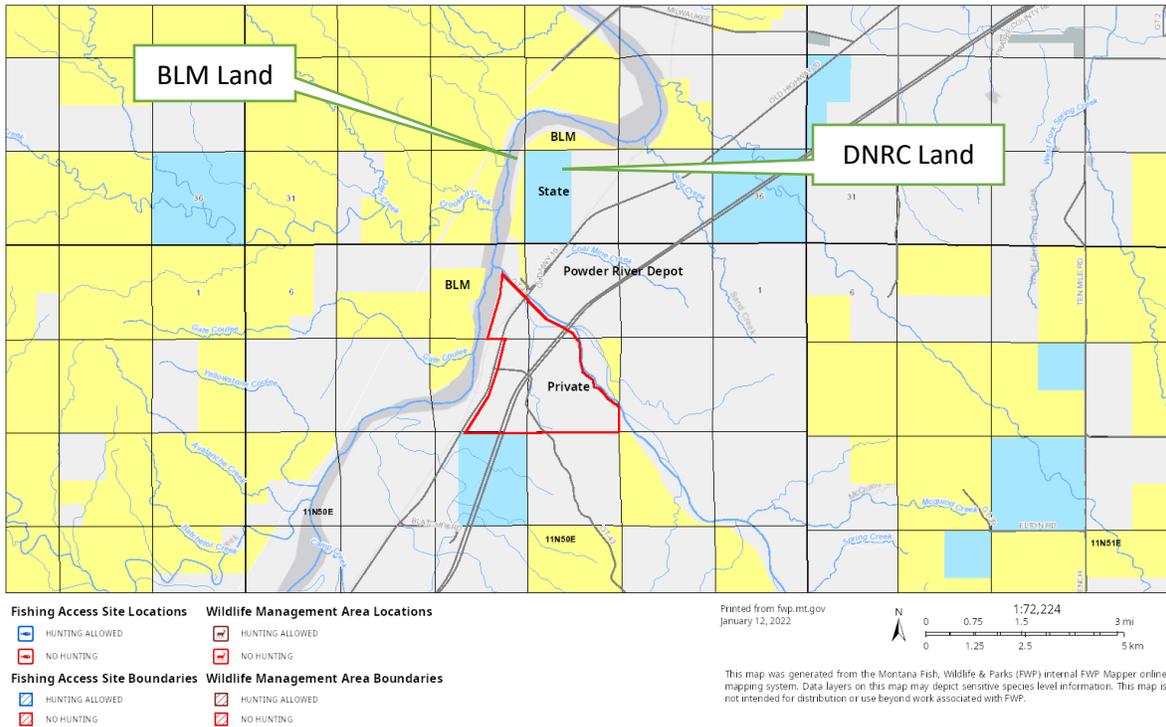
-  HUNTING ALLOWED
-  NO HUNTING

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Private land indicated above is for sale and has significant frontage along the Yellowstone and Powder Rivers. The property also has cultural / historical value. The DNRC and the surrounding BLM land has important cultural / historic values. The BLM property has significant frontage on the Yellowstone River.