

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: April 25, 2019

Agenda Item: Little Muddy Creek Fishing Access Site Easement

Division: Fisheries

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background:

Little Muddy Creek FAS is a 22-acre site located on the Missouri River a short way downstream from the community of Cascade. The property is owned by the DNRC School Trust Division and has been leased as an FAS since 2007. Topographical features as well as a very shallow shoreline limit angling use primarily to wade fishing. Development consists of a small parking area, vault latrine, signage, and fencing. DNRC recently appraised the property value of the site at \$66,000 or \$3,000-acre. Rather than continue leasing the site FWP proposes to purchase a permanent easement from DNRC. The purchase of an easement will provide FWP a perpetual interest in the property that is no longer subject to market fluctuations and annual escalator increases.

Public Involvement Process & Results:

The EA was advertised for 30 days in the Great Falls Tribune and the Helena Independent Record newspapers as well as on FWP's website in Jan 2019. A total of nine comments were received: three people were opposed to FWP spending money to maintain or manage this site; two comments were neutral; and four were in favor of the proposed action. All three who were opposed to it expressed that the site should be closed to public access and stated they felt the money would be better spent elsewhere. One person simply inquired if the site would include access for boats with trailers and another referred to improved access on the Sun River, not the Missouri River where this site is located. The three proponents supported it as a fiscally responsible action that would secure public access for now and into the future.

Alternatives and Analysis:

Only the Proposed Alternative and the No Action Alternative were considered. There was no other alternative that was deemed reasonably available or prudent. Neither the Proposed Alternative nor the No Action Alternative would have significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale:

FWP recommends that the commission approve the department to acquire a permanent easement as opposed to a lease on the Little Muddy Creek FAS. It offers the advantage of paying a onetime fee based on current market values and would eliminate continuing to pay future lease fees for an indefinite period of time based on market fluctuations and continued reappraisals of the property.

Proposed Motion:

I move to approve FWP's request to acquire a perpetual easement from DNRC in place of a lease on the Little Muddy Creek FAS.