



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: August 25, 2022

Agenda Item: Cornell Park Fishing Access Site Acquisition (Region 3)

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background: On August 13, 2020, the Fish and Wildlife Commission authorized the department to conduct due diligence on acquiring and developing the Cornell Park Fishing Access Site on the Beaverhead River near Dillon. The department has completed that process and recommends that the commission authorize the department to acquire the site. The Beaverhead Trails Coalition (BTC), a non-profit corporation located in Dillon that was instrumental in helping the department secure the Selway FAS, is the current owner of the parcel and is prepared to donate the 3.5-acre site to the department. The parcel is being carved out of an existing larger parcel owned by BTC that was donated to them by a generous private landowner. Closing costs for acquiring the site are estimated at \$6,000. Upon acquisition of the site, FWP would develop it as an FAS. This is expected to include installing a gravel put-in boat ramp, creating walk-in access points along the river, adding new picnic sites with tables and fire rings, replacing the latrine with a modern concrete vault latrine, and moving the parking area and approach to Park Street, a county road. The existing parking area and approach to Park Street will be reclaimed. Because of an upstream irrigation diversion, Cornell Park is the only public access that allows floating to FWP's downstream Selway Park FAS. Development of the site will be paid for with FAS capital improvement funds. The Kiwanis Club of Dillon has historically maintained the property for public use and has agreed to continue providing basic maintenance, to be documented in a formal agreement upon acquisition. The department will be responsible for major maintenance, e.g., latrine pumping, hazard tree mitigation, and road grading, which is estimated to cost about \$2,000 per year. When fully developed, the Cornell Park FAS would facilitate easy access to the river for fishing, floating, boating, swimming, picnicking, and wildlife watching. FWP Enforcement was consulted early on and indicated the added site could be incorporated into existing patrols.

Public Involvement Process & Results: The department issued a draft environmental assessment on March 25, 2022. The department received 11 comments in support and no comments in opposition. A decision notice was issued May 26, 2022, recommending acquisition of the site.

Alternatives & Analysis: Alternative A. No Action. There would be no assurance of perpetual public access at this location.

Alternative B. Acquire the site. The site would enhance access to the Beaverhead River.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: The department recommends that the commission approve acquisition of the Cornell Park FAS (Alternative B). The project has the support of community partners and will provide a variety of recreational opportunities.

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish & Wildlife Commission authorize the department to acquire the Cornell Park FAS on the Beaverhead River.