



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: February 4, 2022

Agenda Item: Lower Yellowstone River Wildcat Bend Site Acquisition Endorsement

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 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, FWP convened a 12-member citizen advisory committee, sponsored by Gov. 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 acquisition of the Wildcat Bend property in Rosebud County. The property is located approximately 2 miles upstream of the Far West FAS & will provide access to approximately 328 acres of riparian habitat. This property was identified by the committee as a high priority for habitat conservation & protection. It could provide boat-in & walk-in access to anglers, hunters, hikers, & wildlife viewing opportunities. Development possibilities include a parking area & a primitive trail system.

Public Involvement Process & Results:

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:

Potential alternatives will be identified & analyzed during due diligence & environmental review process.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale:

FWP recommends that the commission endorse efforts by the department to pursue acquiring the Wildcat Bend property on the Lower Yellowstone River.

Proposed Motion:

I move the Fish & Wildlife Commission authorize the department to pursue negotiations with the landowners & initiate due diligence required for site acquisition & development of the Wildcat Bend property.