



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION FWP PROPOSAL & INFORMATION SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: June 12, 2026

Agenda Item: Siskin Island FAS Acquisition Project

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background:

FWP proposes accepting the donation of an 82-acre island complex on the upper Yellowstone River for the creation of a new FAS. The islands are approximately 13 miles south of Livingston. The island features a rocky shoreline, mature cottonwood forests, willow thickets, marsh wetlands and open meadows that provide excellent habitat for a variety of wildlife. Mule deer, bear and elk also occasionally pass through the property. The island complex and associated side channels support high-quality spawning and rearing habitat for trout. The name of the proposed new FAS refers to Pine Siskin, a native finch that can be found in Paradise Valley year-round.

The island is currently held in fee title by the Trust for Public Land (TPL), and they would transfer ownership to FWP as a donated property. FWP would pay closing costs for the transaction, estimated to be around \$2,000. If approved, FWP would accept and hold title and administer the property as an FAS.

Primary access to the island is by floating down the Yellowstone River, with walk-in access from Pine Creek FAS possible during periods of low water. This acquisition will directly increase opportunities for Montanans and visitors to enjoy wildlife viewing, angling, and other recreational opportunities to enhance both habitat protection and public access on the upper Yellowstone River. Acquisition of the property by FWP would allow for legal managed year-round access and recreation for the public, along with habitat conservation.

Proposed rules for the new FAS include allowing float-in camping at two designated camp sites, mandatory human waste pack-out, mandatory fire pans and ash pack-out for fires, no glass, mandatory bear proof food storage system, and a maximum limit of 10 people per camp site. Reserve America will manage camping reservations, and camping fees would apply. Hunting with weapons restrictions (no rifles) would be allowed on areas west of the main river channel, see attached map.

Public Involvement Process & Results:

An EA describing the project was published on March 13, 2026, and FWP received 25 comments. Comments were mostly supportive of the project, with some expressing concern over impacts to the resource and neighbors from camping and hunting on the property. After several internal discussions and additional meetings with neighboring landowners, changes were made that reduced the level of camping pressure and tightened camping rules. A further adjustment to the proposed rules is to only allow hunting (with weapons restrictions) on the west side of the main channel. This change will allow hunting on the majority of the property but will reduce impacts to residents in the neighborhood to the east. FWP will employ adaptive management to the site moving forward and periodically re-evaluate management of the site.



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Alternatives & Analysis:

No action: FWP would not accept the donation of the Siskin Island complex from TPL. It is unclear how TPL would dispose of the property in this scenario.

Action: FWP would accept the donation of the 82-acre Siskin Island complex for the creation of a new FAS. This alternative would provide public access and recreation on a popular stretch of the Yellowstone River with few negative impacts to the resource or neighboring landowners, most of which can be mitigated. The acquisition would also protect fish and wildlife habitat for perpetuity.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends the Commission approve this proposal. Accepting this property for the creation of a new FAS provides excellent recreational opportunities for the public and conserves valuable fish and wildlife habitat at little cost to the department.

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the proposal to accept the donation of the 82-acre Siskin Island complex on the upper Yellowstone River for the creation of a new FAS.