



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION FWP PROPOSAL & INFORMATION SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: June 12, 2026

Agenda Item: Upper Thompson Conservation Easement – Phase 1, Region 1

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes.

Background: FWP proposes to purchase a 34,610-acre conservation easement, called the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement – Phase 1 (CE), located in the Cabinet Mountains north of Thompson Falls and Plains in the Thompson River Drainage (see map). The CE has an appraised value of \$20,585,950. This is the first phase of a two-phased project totaling 47,907 acres of important timberland and fish and wildlife habitat owned by Green Diamond Montana Timberlands LLC (Green Diamond). The proposed CE would prevent development, protect important wildlife habitat, maintain key landscape connectivity, and provide permanent free public recreation access to the affected lands while respecting the rights of third-party mineral and easement holders. Forest management and sustainable timber harvest would continue and is a value recognized by the CE. The land supports populations of deer, elk, moose, black bears, mountain lions, and a variety of other wildlife. Hunters and anglers have used these lands for generations, and the property currently provides approximately 10,000 days per year of public hunting and angling use. Bull trout, grizzly bears, Canada lynx, wolverines, and whitebark pine have also been observed on or near the property; all species listed as Threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Secured funding includes: \$13,000,000 from the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Forest Legacy Program, \$225,000 from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, \$200,000 from the Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust, and \$175,000 from private fundraising coordinated by the Trust for Public Lands. Green Diamond has committed to donate approximately 34 percent of the CE value (\$6,985,950).

Public Involvement Process & Results: A Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) was available for public review and comment from March 13 to April 11. A public hearing was held in Thompson Falls on March 24. The Draft EA was posted on FWP's Public Notice webpage: <https://fwp.mt.gov/news/public-notice>. The Draft EA was also available for public review on the Environmental Quality Council (EQC) website: <https://leg.mt.gov/mepa/search>, by individual request, and through notice to identified interested parties. FWP received 17 comments during the public comment period. All substantive issues raised by commenters are addressed in the decision notice. Public comments will be posted online and provided to commissioners no later than two weeks prior to the June commission meeting. The Flathead and Sanders County Commissions have provided letters indicating their support for the CE.



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Alternatives & Analysis: In the EA the Department evaluated two alternatives, which correspond with the alternatives presented below. FWP concluded that if no action were to occur, Green Diamond may, at some future time, change its public access policies or decide to develop or sell some or all of the affected property. Associated wildlife habitats, public recreation, and working timber lands could shift to other land uses, including subdivision development or other forms of land conversion.

- A. The commission may vote to approve purchase of the 34,610-acre CE.
- B. The commission may vote not to approve the purchase of the 34,610-acre CE.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: Based on the results of the EA and record of decision, the department recommends the commission approve the purchase of the 34,610-acre Upper Thompson CE – Phase 1 to ensure conservation values and associated public benefits would be protected.

Proposed Motion: I move that the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the purchase of the Upper Thompson CE – Phase 1 as proposed.

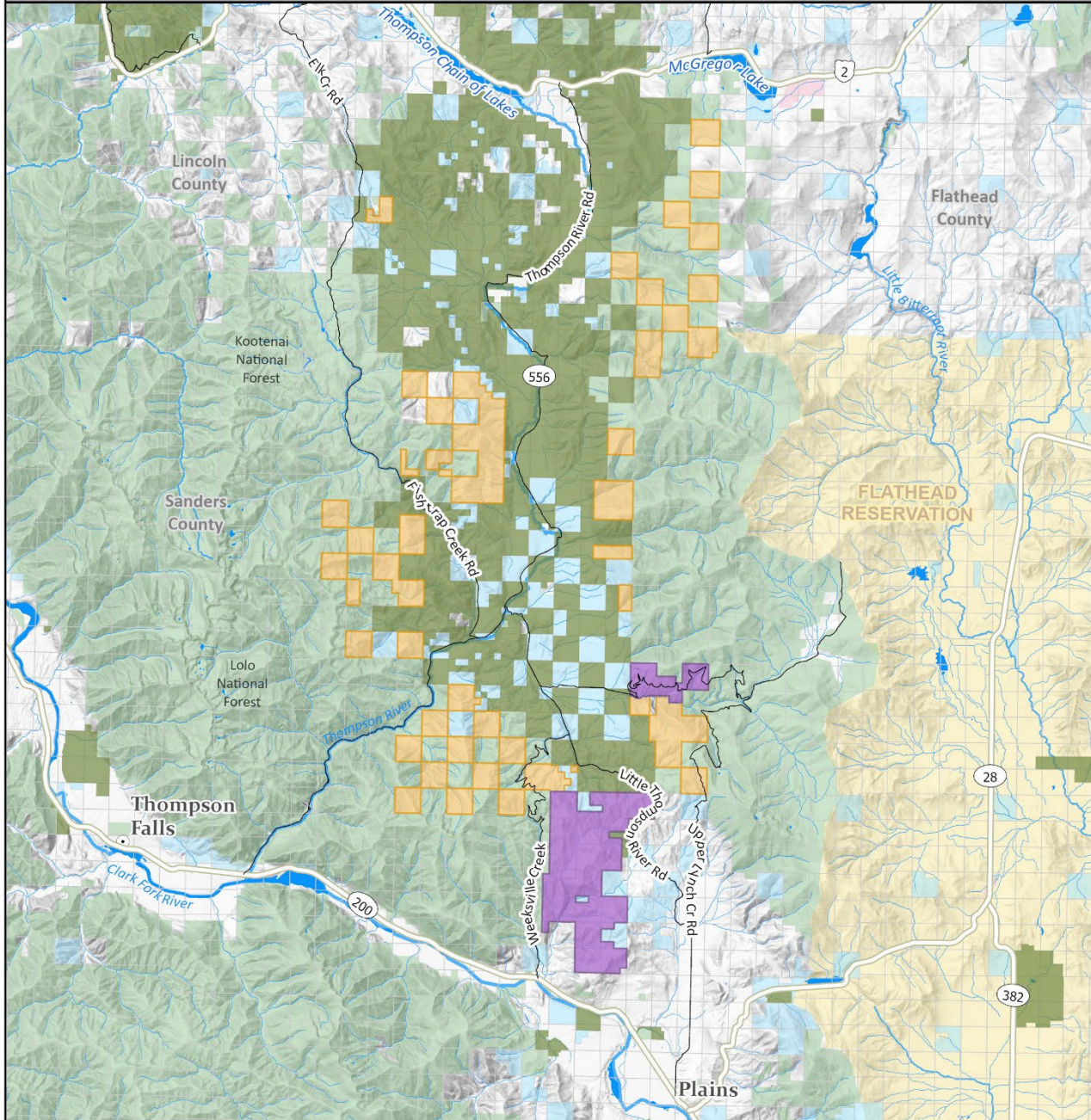


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Upper Thompson Conservation Easement

MONTANA FWP



Upper Thompson Project

- Phase 1 - Current Proposal
- Phase 2 - Future Project
- Existing Conservation Easement
- Section Boundary

Land Ownership

- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- US Forest Service
- State
- Flathead Reservation



Map Produced by:
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10 November 2025

Area of Interest

