



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION FWP PROPOSAL & INFORMATION SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: October 14

Agenda Item: Thompson Island FAS Acquisition Project

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background: FWP is seeking the Commission's approval to accept title to a potential future transfer of an approximately 35-acre island property in the Stillwater River along with an easement for administrative access for the creation of a new FAS. The island is known as Thompson Island and is approximately 5 miles North of Absarokee, 2 miles upstream from Swinging Bridge FAS and approximately 2 miles downstream from Jeffrey's Landing FAS. The island features a rocky shoreline, mature cottonwood forests, and meadows that provide excellent habitat for a variety of wildlife. The island also borders two parcels of BLM land offering 80 acres of similar habitat accessible through Thompson Island and one of which makes up the far northeast end of the island. Another small portion on the east end is owned by another party. Primary access to the island is by floating down the Stillwater River, and FWP will have administrative access from MT-78. FWP would also peruse expanding public access through other access programs.

Montana DES (Disaster and Emergency Services) is investigating acquisition of the property in cooperation with FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) in order to remove a dangerous residential structure that lost access during the 2022 floods and preclude future development. DES will remove an existing residence on the property to prevent potential flood borne debris in the future and prepare the property for transfer to FWP. They are anticipating a 17 month timeline to complete the project. DES and FEMA will handle all the title work involved in this land transfer, as discussed in paragraph 8 of the attached project description from DES, and they will cover all associated costs of land purchase and hazard removal outlined in paragraph 7. DES is preparing to apply for a grant for this project and has reached out to FWP seeking a partner to receive the property and manage the land for public benefit. FWP will not have any acquisition costs associated with this project, our role will be limited to coordination of potential future ownership and long-term stewardship of the parcel as deed-restricted open space.

Public Involvement Process & Results: This project is still in its initial phase, and the regular steps that involve the public have not been taken. Montana DES is currently coordinating with FEMA and project partners to complete the required Environmental and Historic Preservation review. MT DES is providing FEMA with project information and supporting documentation necessary for FEMA to make final compliance determinations and complete any required consultation under NEPA, NHPA, the Endangered Species Act, and other applicable federal laws and executive orders. No construction, demolition, or ground-disturbing activity will begin until FEMA has completed its review and issued any required conditions or approvals.

Alternatives & Analysis:

No action: FWP would not work with DES toward the eventual transfer of the Thompson Island parcel. DES would likely look for another party to hold the property long-term, with no guarantee of public access.

Action: FWP would inform DES that it is authorized to take title to the approximately 35-acre Thompson Island property pending diligence and further process to be completed by DES and FEMA. This alternative would provide public access and recreation on this section of the Stillwater River with few negative impacts to the resource or neighboring landowners, most of which can be mitigated. The acquisition would permanently protect fish and wildlife habitat.

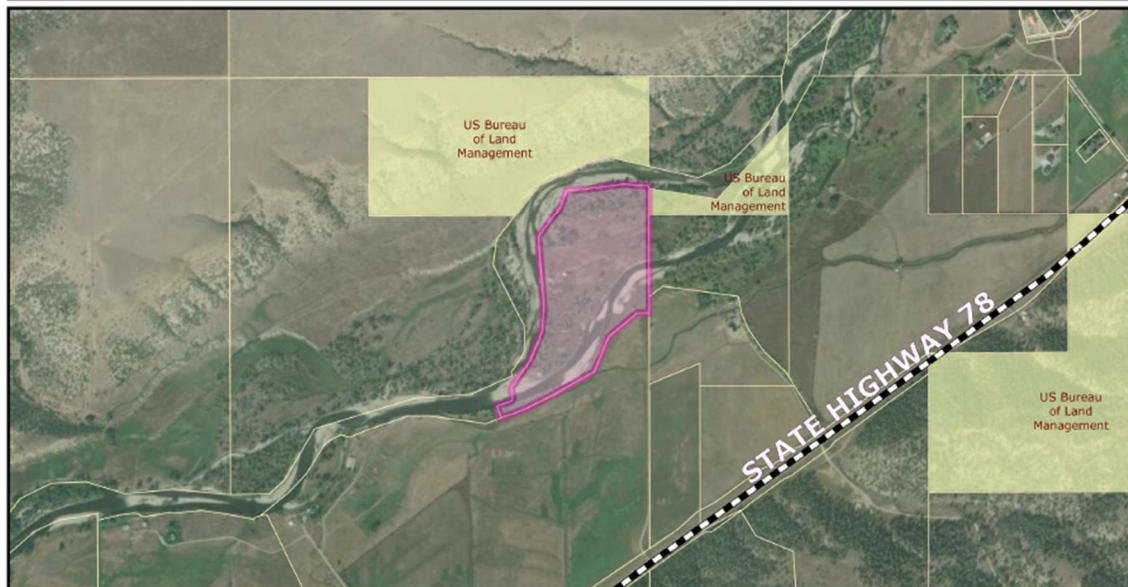
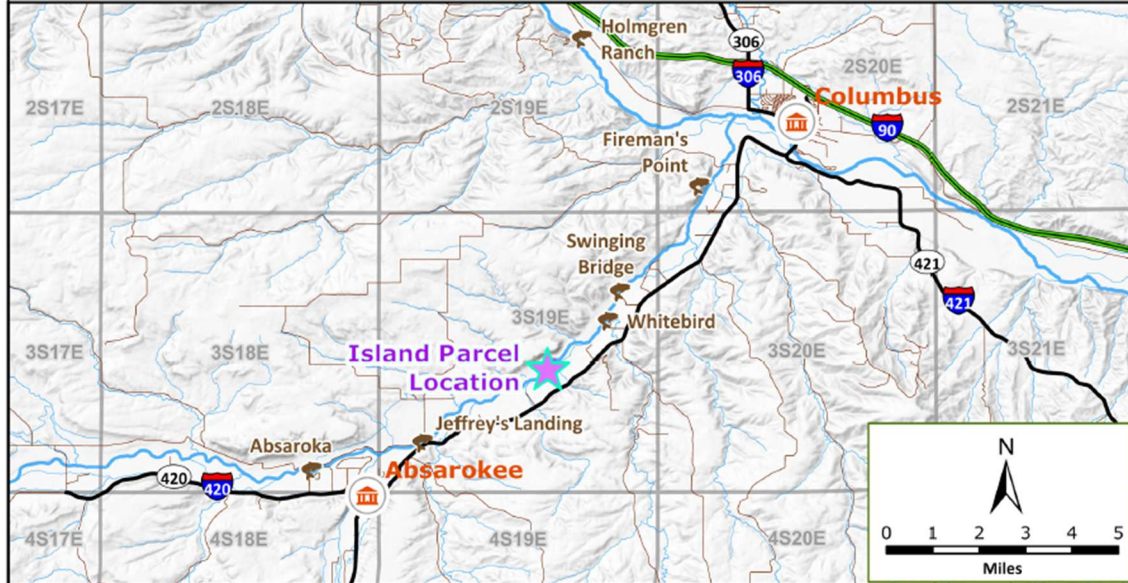
Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends the Commission approve this proposal. Accepting this transfer would allow DES to continue with their acquisition process.

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the proposal to authorize the Department to accept transfer of the approximately 35-acre Thompson Island property on the Stillwater River.

Potential FWP Land Project

MONTANA FWP

Potential FEMA Island Parcel Land Donation to FWP at confluence of Orson Coulee on Stillwater River



Potential Island Parcel FAS 
Highway 

Area of Interest



Map Produced by:
FWP Land & Water Program
James Colegrove - August 25, 2026

Area Map