



STATE PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: Feb. 26, 2024

Agenda Item: Missouri Headwaters State Park property acquisition

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 Minutes

Background: FWP proposes to accept in fee title 26.36 acres of privately held property adjacent to Missouri Headwaters State Park (MHSP) by donation from the Montana State Parks Foundation (Foundation). The acquisition would permanently secure and protect important habitat and cultural resources on the property, provide additional interpretive and recreational opportunities, and protect MHSP by securing this important inholding and preventing other types of development on the property that could adversely impact the park. MHSP is a National Historic Landmark due to its association with the Lewis and Clark Expedition and the park serving as one of North America's great crossroads in pre- and post-contact times. National Historic Landmark designations rely on the integrity of characteristics like setting, feeling and association as well as the physical remains of human activity. The property partially bisects the eastern side of the park, sits opposite the park office and campground and adjacent to the Gallatin Hotel, a Gallatin City II site, and includes several historic outbuildings. The area is also designated as an Important Birding Area (IBA). The Foundation has secured a grant from the Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust facilitated by Montana's Outdoor Legacy Foundation to purchase the property and then donate it in fee title to FWP.

Public Involvement Process & Results: The results of two public scoping meetings held in 2023 at MHSP about future management of the park and its amenities indicated a desire for additional trails, interpretation, and spaces for quiet reflection. The proposed acquisition would support those uses. FWP issued a draft environmental assessment of the proposed acquisition on Nov. 17, 2023, and took public comment until Nov. 30. Seventy-five comments were received. FWP issued a decision notice on January 22, 2024, indicating its intent to proceed with the proposed action, pending approval of the State Parks and Recreation Board and the Montana Land Board. Additional public comments will be taken through the Board's website in advance of the February 5, 2024, meeting. The raw comments will be posted online at the end of the comment period.

Analysis & Alternatives:

Alternative A: FWP would acquire in fee title the 26.36-acre property for inclusion in MHSP via donation from the Foundation. The acquisition would permanently secure and protect important habitat and cultural resources on the property, provide additional interpretive and recreational opportunities, and protect MHSP by securing this important inholding and preventing other types of development on the property that could adversely impact the park.

Alternative B: No Action. FWP would not receive the donation. The property may be sold to other interests and could have unforeseen adverse impacts immediately adjacent to, and in the heart of MHSP.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: The owners of the property and FWP have been speaking for several years about their mutual desire for FWP to acquire the property to safeguard the cultural, wildlife, and recreational values of the land but obtaining the funds to do so has been a challenge. The Foundation's efforts to secure a grant from the Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust to purchase and then donate the land to FWP has made this proposed acquisition possible. FWP recommends acquiring the site to permanently secure and protect important habitat and cultural resources, provide additional interpretive and recreational opportunities, and to protect MHSP from adverse impacts of other types of development on the property.

Proposed Motion: I move the Parks and Recreation Board authorize FWP to acquire the 26.36-acre property adjacent to Missouri Headwaters State Park for inclusion in the park.