



Montana State Parks & Recreation Board Agenda Item Cover Sheet

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: March 3, 2022

Agenda Item: First Peoples Buffalo Jump DNRC Lease Renewal

Time Needed on Agenda: 10 minutes

Background:

First Peoples Buffalo Jump State Park (FPBJ) is located approximately 15 miles southwest of Great Falls, in Cascade County. In 2020, Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) assumed the last two years of an existing grazing lease with the Department of Natural Resources & Conservation (DNRC), which expires February 28, 2022. The grazing lease is adjacent to FPBJ and comprises 912 acres. The location is 20N 1E section 24, DNRC reference # 10487 (as shown on attached map).

FWP is seeking to renew this lease for another 10-years, at the cost of approximately \$27,000, with the intention of pursuing a permanent or longer-term lease or fee title interest in order to develop additional amenities at the park. At a minimum, FWP is interested in pursuing additional cultural interpretation opportunities & development of an archery range.

Public Involvement Process:

Public comment on the lease renewal will be taken during the March 3, 2022, Board meeting. Public involvement & environmental & cultural analyses would be incorporated in future planning efforts at First Peoples for any development of additional amenities.

Alternatives & Analysis:

Alternative A: Approve the 10-year grazing lease between FWP & DNRC.

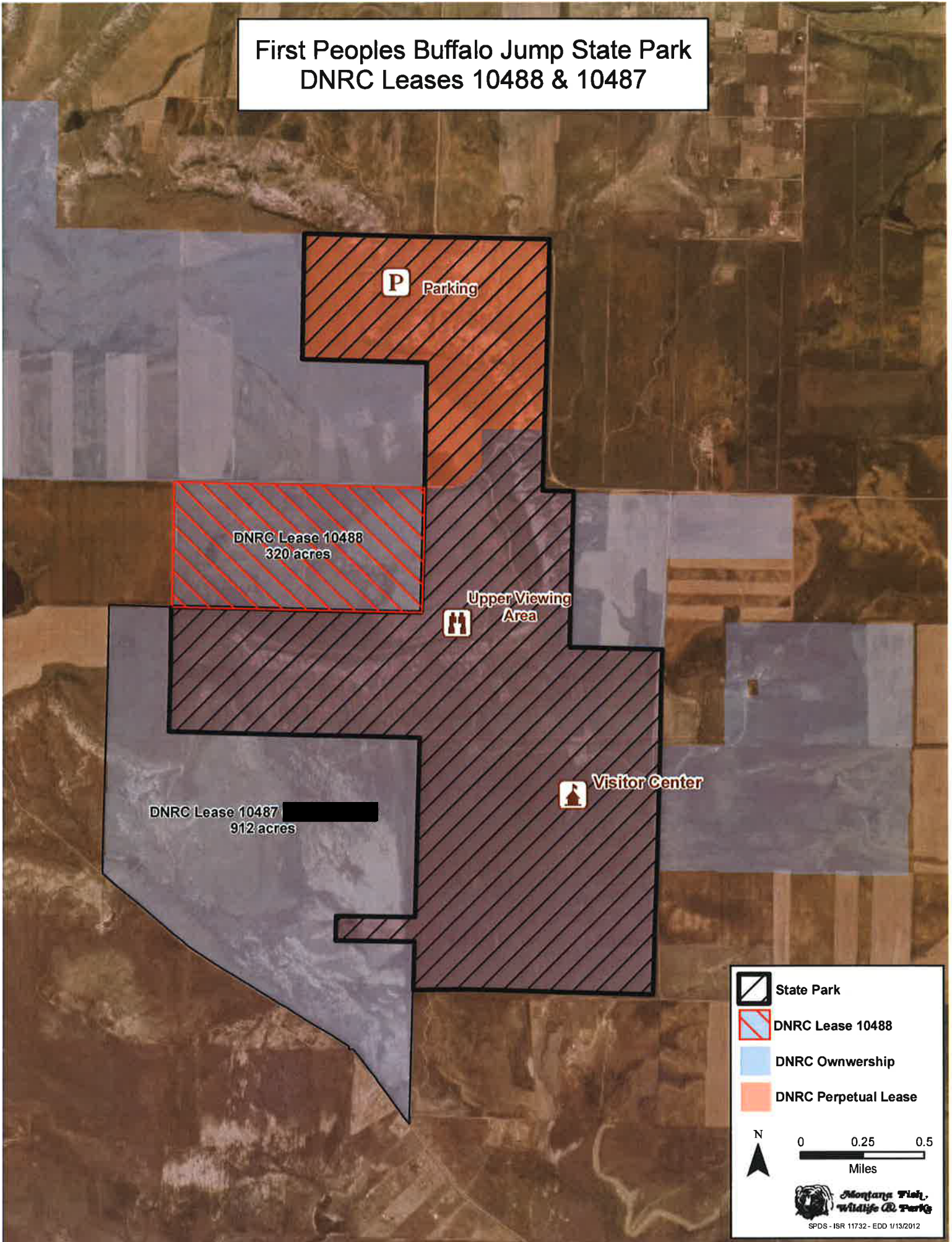
Alternative B: No action. Do not approve the 10-year grazing lease between FWP & DNRC.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale:

FWP recommends the Board Alternative A; approve the 10- year grazing lease. Doing so would allow FWP to explore options for developing additional amenities at First Peoples Buffalo Jump State Park.

Proposed Motion: I move the Parks & Recreation Board approve the 10-year lease between Fish, Wildlife & Parks and Department of Natural Resources & Conservation.

First Peoples Buffalo Jump State Park DNRC Leases 10488 & 10487



P Parking

DNRC Lease 10488
320 acres

U Upper Viewing Area

DNRC Lease 10487
912 acres

V Visitor Center

 State Park

 DNRC Lease 10488

 DNRC Ownership

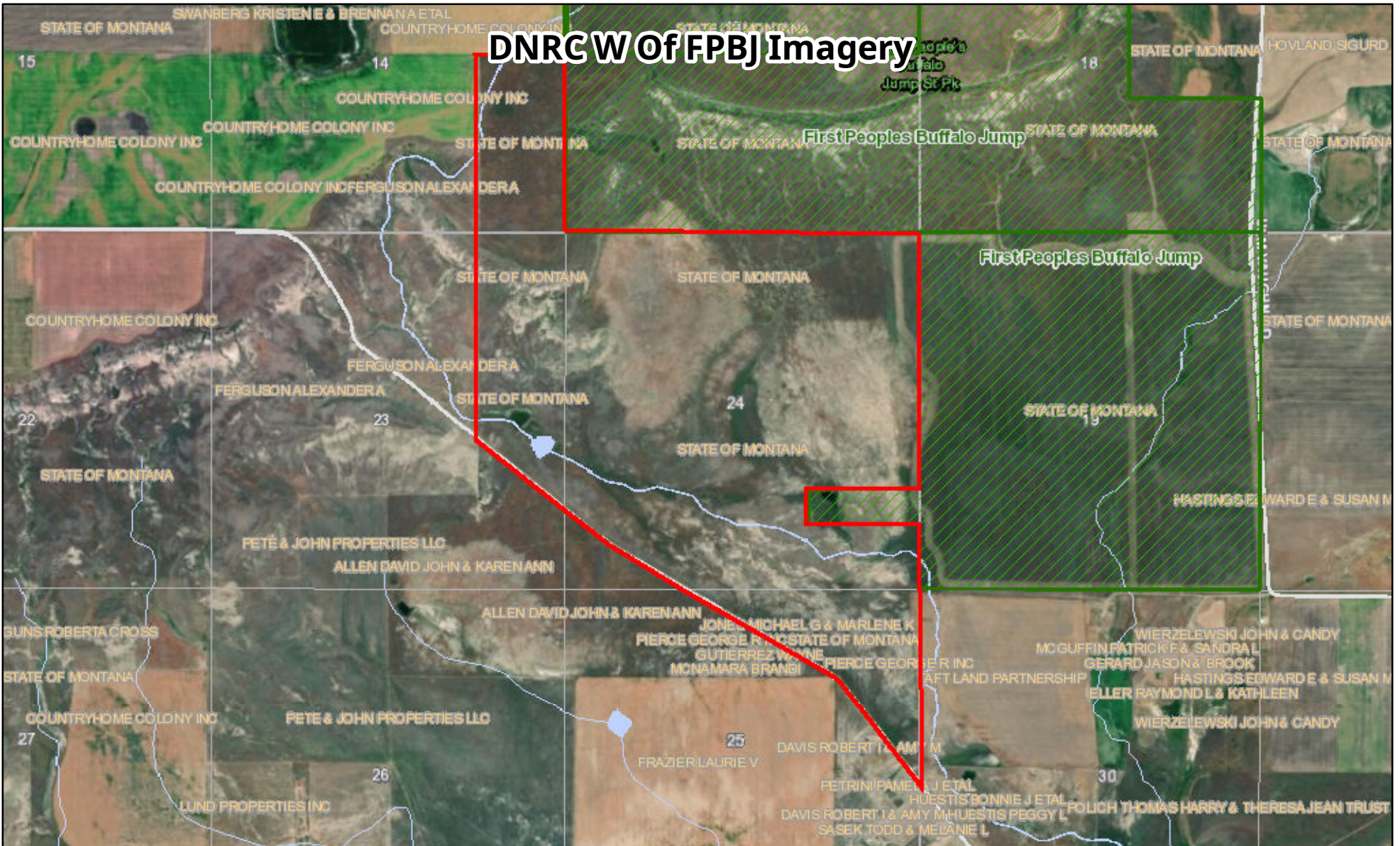
 DNRC Perpetual Lease

 N

0 0.25 0.5
Miles

 **Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

SPDS - ISR 11732 - EDD 1/13/2012



DNRC W Of FPBJ Imagery

State Parks (Parcels)

 State Parks (Parcels)

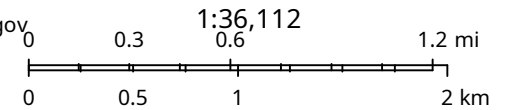
Cadastral Labels

 Cadastral Labels

State Parks (Boundaries)

 State Parks (Boundaries)

Printed from fwp.mt.gov
January 24, 2020



This map was generated from the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) internal FWP Mapper online mapping system. Data layers on this map may depict sensitive species level information. This map is not intended for distribution or use beyond work associated with FWP.



Draft Environmental Assessment Checklist

First Peoples Buffalo Jump Lease Agreement



**4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, MT 59405
(406) 454-5840**

February 18, 2022

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

PART I. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

1. **Project Title:** First Peoples Buffalo Jump Lease Agreement
2. **Type of Proposed Action:**
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) proposes to extend the existing grazing lease agreement with the Montana Department of Natural Resources (DNRC) for a ten-year term which will expire in February of 2032.
3. **Location Affected by Proposed Action:** **First Peoples Buffalo Jump location in red diagonals on the map below (Figure 1). Lease location 20N 1E Section 24 / DNRC Lease # 10487 map on page 3.**

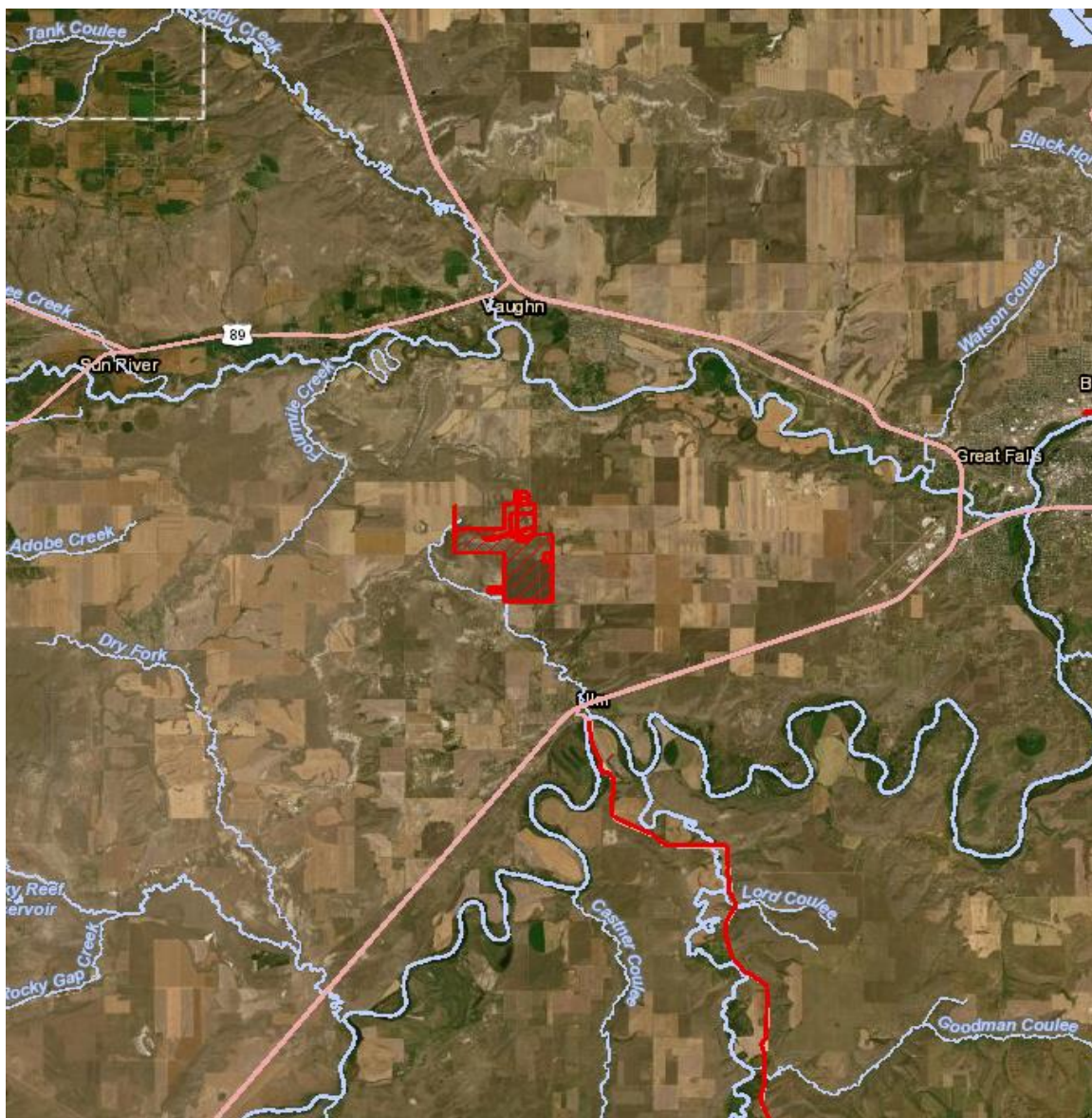
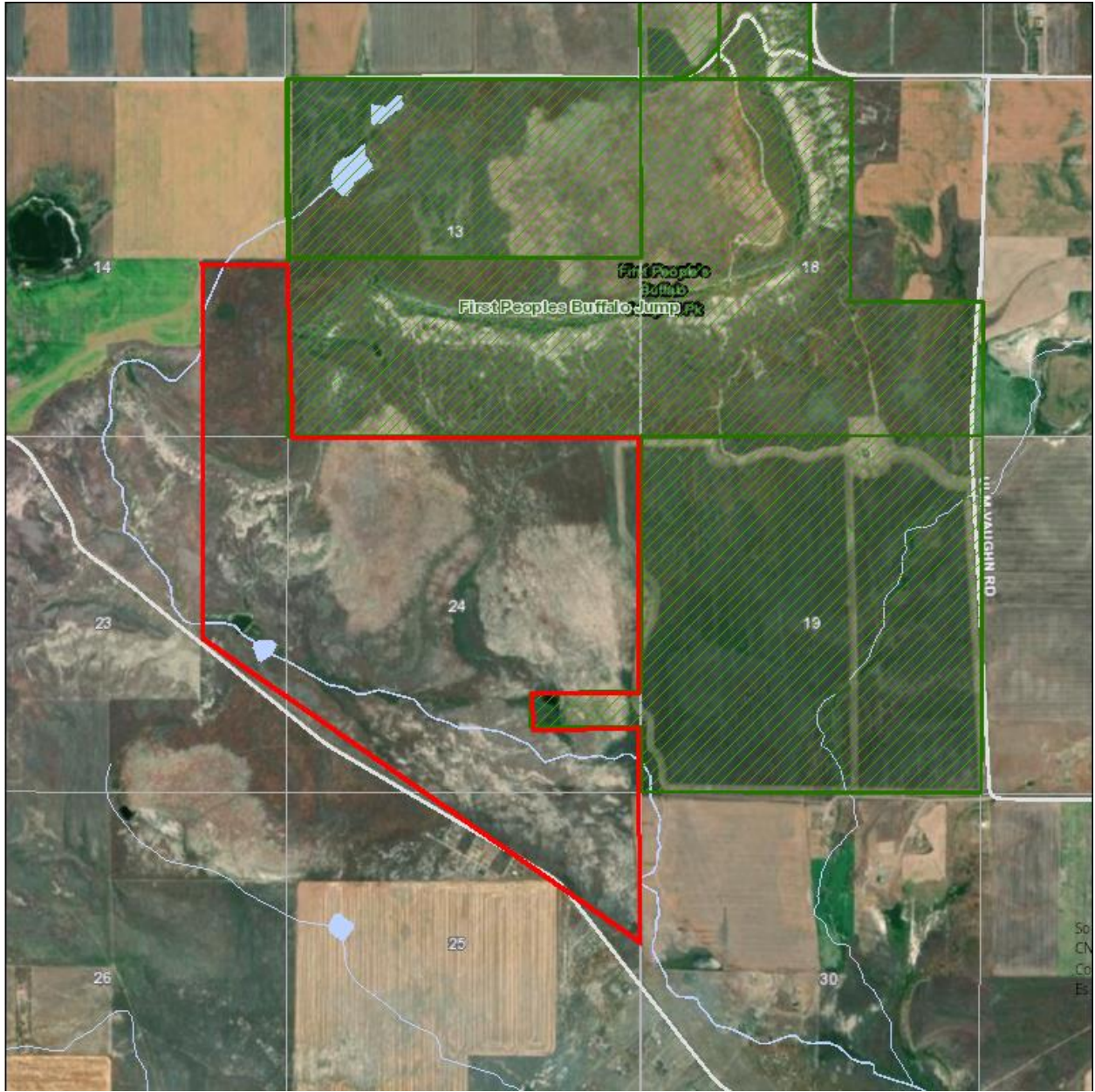


Figure 1FPBJ



DNRC Lease 10487 boundary shown in red. Current park boundaries in green.

4. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action:

23-1-102 (a) by purchase, lease, agreement, or acceptance of donations acquire for the state any areas, sites, or objects that in its opinion should be held, improved, and maintained as state parks, state recreational areas, state monuments, or state historic sites.

5. Need for the Action(s):

The extension of this lease to ten years will provide a long- term commitment to FWP and offer the potential for increased amenities and/or services at the park.

6. Objectives for the Action(s):

The objective of this lease extension is to increase the potential for amenities and services at First Peoples Buffalo Jump State Park while also protecting the viewshed and the qualities of this National Historic Landmark and adjacent lands from encroaching development.

7. Project Size: estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected: **912 Acres**

8. Affected Environment (A brief description of the affected area of the proposed project):

The affected area includes DNRC lease #10487 as noted on the attached map (page 3). This lease is composed of undisturbed grassland and prairie along with some disturbed areas including former irrigation ditches. There are two prairie dog colonies totaling just over 200 acres. It is currently fenced. Noxious weed infestations are minimal.

9. Description of Project: Extend the existing grazing lease with DNRC to manage and maintain recreation at FPBJ State Park and protection of this National Historic Landmark. FWP is seeking to renew this lease for another 10 years at the cost of approximately \$27,000 with the intention of pursuing a permanent or longer-term lease or fee title interest in order to develop additional amenities at the park. At a minimum, FWP is interested in pursuing additional cultural interpretation opportunities and development of an archery range.

10. List any Other Local, State, or Federal Agency that has Overlapping or Additional Jurisdiction:

Montana Department of Natural Resource and Conservation

11. Affiliations, Cooperating Agencies, User Groups and/or Supporting Groups: N/A

12. History of the Planning and Scoping Process, and Any Public Involvement: This park is a designated National Historic Landmark. There has not been any public involvement prior to this EA.

13. List of Agencies Consulted/Contacted During Preparation of the EA:

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation.

14. Names, Address, and Phone Number of Project Sponsor:

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
4600 Giant Spring Rd
Great Fall, MT 59405

15. Other permits and or approvals needed: N/A

PART II. IDENTIFICATION OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVES

The proposed preferred alternative A, and B, the no action alternative was evaluated.

- **Alternative A (Preferred Alternative)** FWP would extend the lease agreement with DNRC for a period of ten years to manage and maintain recreation, historic significance and resource management at First Peoples Buffalo Jump State Park.
- **Alternative B No Action.** FWP would not move forward with the new lease extension.

Describe any Alternatives considered and eliminated from Detailed Study:

N/A

List and explain proposed mitigating measures (stipulations):

N/A

Checklist – The degree and intensity determine extent of Environmental Review. An abbreviated checklist may be used for those projects that are not complex, controversial, or are not in environmental sensitive areas.

Table 1. Potential impact on physical environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				X		
2. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats			X			1
3. Introduction of new species into an area				X		
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality				X		
5. Water quality, quantity & distribution (surface or groundwater)				X		
6. Existing water right or reservation				X		
7. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture				X		
8. Air quality or objectionable odors				X		
9. Historical & archaeological sites			X			2
10. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
11. Aesthetics			X			3

- 1) This lease will enhance the habitat and protection of species associated with prairie dog colonies including the Western Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia hypugaea*).
- 2) This lease will protect historic and cultural resources from disturbance through development without appropriate cultural survey work done before hand.
- 3) This lease will protect and enhance the viewshed.

Table 2. Potential impacts on human environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Social structures and cultural diversity				X		
2. Changes in existing public benefits provided by wildlife populations and/or habitat				X		
3. Local and state tax base and tax revenue				X		
4. Agricultural production				X		
5. Human health				X		
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income				X		
7. Access to & quality of recreational activities			X			4
8. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals (ordinances)				X		
9. Distribution & density of population and housing				X		
10. Demands for government services				X		
11. Industrial and/or commercial activity				X		

- 4) This lease extension will enhance opportunities for increased visitor services and amenities at the park.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

This lease extension to 10 years will benefit First Peoples Buffalo Jump State Park in several ways. It will increase the visitor experience by potentially providing an area for camping, cultural interpretation, hiking, archery range, and other possible improvements while maintaining the value of nationally significant cultural resources. It will also protect the viewshed from future development or disturbance.

PART IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Does the proposed action involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely harmful if they were to occur? No

Does the proposed action have impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant? No

Recommendation and justification concerning preparation of EIS:

There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative; therefore, an EIS is not required.

PART V. EA CONCLUSION SECTION

EA prepared by:

FWP Regional Recreation Manager
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls MT 59405

Date Completed:

PART VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Public involvement:

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on this current EA, the proposed action and alternatives:

- Public comment on the lease renewal will be taken during the March 3, 2022 Parks and Recreation Board meeting. Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: <http://fwp.mt.gov>.

Copies of this environmental assessment will be distributed to the neighboring landowners and interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project.

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having limited impacts, many of which can be mitigated.

2. Duration of comment period:

Public comment on the lease renewal will be taken during the March 3, 2022 Parks and Recreation Board meeting. Public involvement and environmental and cultural analysis would be incorporated in future planning efforts at First People's Buffalo Jump State Park for any development or additional amenities.