



# Montana State Parks & Recreation Board Agenda Item Cover Sheet

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

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**Meeting Date:** March 3, 2022

**Agenda Item:** Lower Yellowstone River Powder River Depot Land Acquisition Endorsement

**Time Needed on Agenda:** 15 Minutes

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**Background:** During the 2021 session, the Legislature pledged \$4 million for river access, habitat, & recreation projects on the lower Yellowstone River between Hysham & the North Dakota border. Building on a local initiative, Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) convened a 12-member citizen-advisory committee, sponsored by Governor Gianforte, during the summer of 2021 to guide use of the \$4 million with an eye toward opportunities & recommendations for improved access, habitat conservation, & sustainable economic development along the corridor. The committee was tasked with developing a scoring matrix for evaluating acquisition opportunities & identifying investments needed to maximize habitat conservation & protection while enhancing sustainable public access & recreational opportunities.

The committee submitted its recommendations to FWP in November. Among them was a recommendation to pursue development of a Lower Yellowstone River State Park that would encourage visitors to explore the entire corridor. Akin to the multi-unit Flathead Lake State Park, the committee suggested three separate units could be identified along the Lower Yellowstone. Powder River Depot is a group of parcels in the middle of the corridor where the Powder River & the Yellowstone meet. This proposed project could include a combination of federal, state, & private lands located on both sides of the Powder & Yellowstone. The project could range from 45 to 700 acres depending on land availability & resource considerations. The Powder River area presents an opportunity for a historical/cultural anchor in a multi-unit state park. Tribal & military activities occurred there leading up to & after the Battle of Little Bighorn & it includes historic stagecoach stops & range rider stations.

Additionally, the Powder River confluence is expected to play a central role in local fisheries recreation & management as pallid sturgeon &, potentially, paddlefish move upstream due to habitat improvements at Intake Fishing Access Site. Other local draws include the Evelyn Cameron heritage center in Terry, the Terry Badlands Wilderness Study Area, & the Calypso Trail where the community of Terry & Prairie County have invested in interpretive signage & trails.

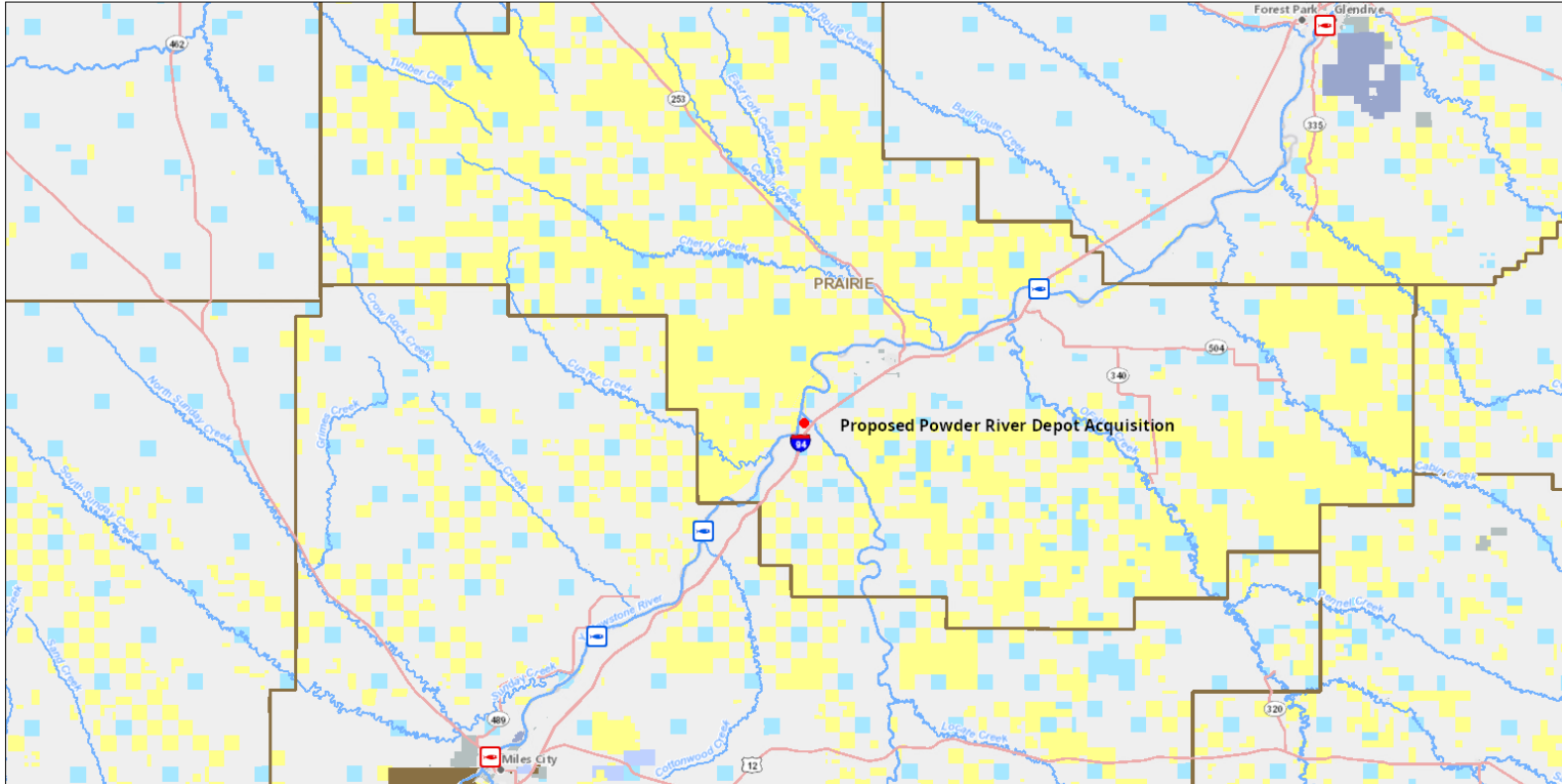
**Public Involvement Process:** The Lower Yellowstone River Coalition held multiple community listening sessions prior to the 2021 legislative session. The Lower Yellowstone River Corridor Advisory Committee held multiple public meetings between August & October 2021 & issued its recommendations in November 2021.

FWP would pursue formal public comment through the due diligence & development process if endorsed.



**Alternatives & Analysis:** Proposal alternatives & analysis would be developed by FWP. Upon endorsement by the board, FWP would conduct appropriate due diligence, analysis, & a public review process.

**Agency Recommendation & Rationale:** FWP recommends endorsement of this proposal, allowing FWP to further pursue & evaluate it & to offer opportunities for public review & comment.



**Proposed Motion:** I move the Parks & Recreation Board endorse efforts by Fish, Wildlife & Parks to pursue acquiring land & access in the Powder River Depot area of the Lower Yellowstone River.



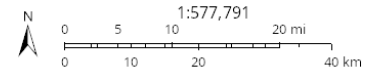
**Fishing Access Site Locations**

-  HUNTING ALLOWED
-  NO HUNTING

**Wildlife Management Area Locations**

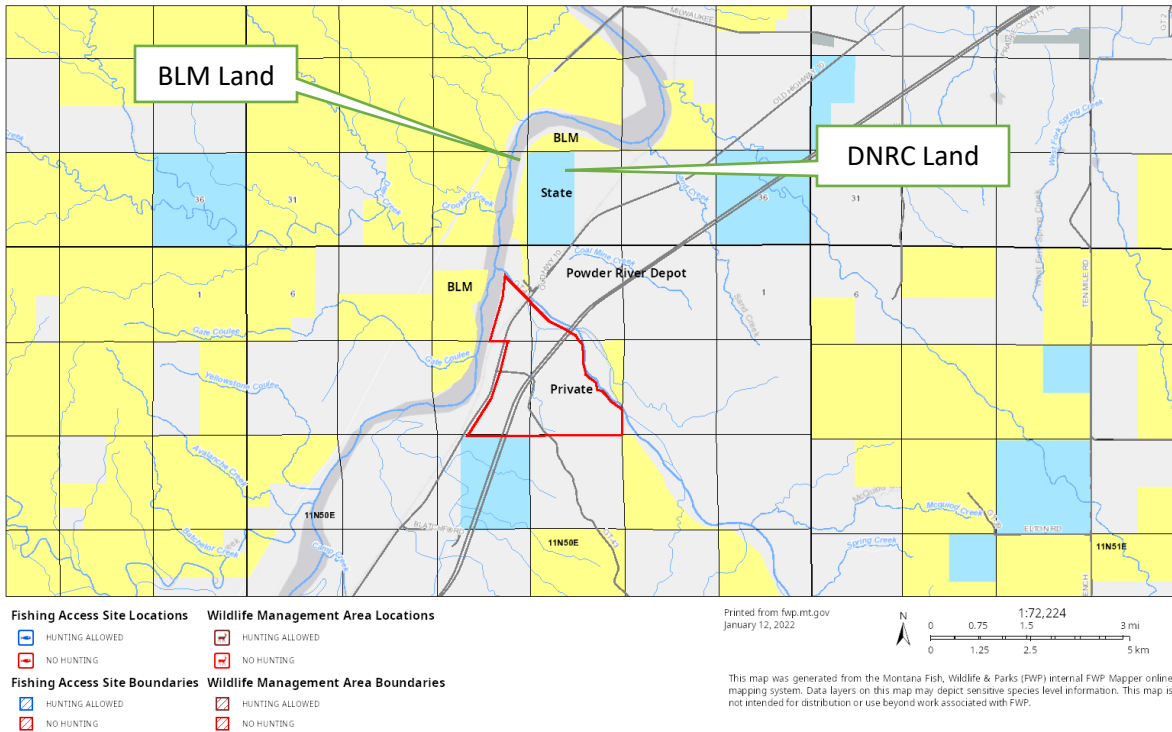
-  HUNTING ALLOWED
-  NO HUNTING

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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.

Some layers may not appear in the legend due to page size limitations.



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Private land indicated above is for sale and has significant frontage along the Yellowstone and Powder Rivers. The property also has cultural / historical value. The DNRC and the surrounding BLM land has important cultural / historic values. The BLM property has significant frontage on the Yellowstone River.