



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: August 15, 2019

Agenda Item: Sleeping Giant Fee Title Acquisition, R3

Action Needed: Endorsement

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background: FWP is proposing an acquisition of the Sleeping Giant Ranch, totaling approximately 1,967 acres. The primary goals of the project would be to retain and enhance the ecological integrity of the property and to conserve wildlife habitats that extend beyond the bounds of the project. This property provides winter range and spring calving/fawning areas for elk, pronghorn, white-tailed and mule deer, and 5.6 miles of streams and associated riparian habitats. In addition, this property supports a wildlife movement corridor between the Continental Divide and the Big Belt Mountains. From a public recreation standpoint, the property lies in a strategic location for increasing public access, both on the proposed acquisition and the adjacent block of Sleeping Giant BLM lands, for hunting, hiking, and other forms of outdoor recreation (see maps). Lying within HD 339, hunters would be able to pursue older-age class bulls with the either-sex permit both on the property and into the rugged BLM backcountry. Under FWP stewardship as a WMA, the property would remain undeveloped and would be managed to ensure productive wildlife habitats while maintaining the scenic qualities of the lower portion of the Sleeping Giant, an iconic landmark of the Helena area.

The property is located within the focus area of the Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust (MFWCT), which applies investment interest gained from the original sale of US Bureau of Reclamation Canyon Ferry cabin-site leases to land conservation, with an emphasis on projects in the upper Missouri River drainage. MFWCT could serve as the primary funding source for this proposal.

Public Involvement Process & Results: Formal public involvement has not been solicited by FWP to date. Upon endorsement by the commission, FWP would conduct appropriate due diligence, analysis, and public review processes.

Alternatives & Analysis: Proposal alternatives and analysis would be developed by FWP (upon endorsement by the commission) and released in a draft EA for public review/comment opportunity.

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

Proposed Motion: I move the commission endorse the proposal to negotiate acquisition of the Sleeping Giant Ranch and complete associated analysis.