



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: August 15, 2019

Agenda Item: Lost in Time CE, Region 7

Action Needed: Endorsement

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background: The proposed Lost in Time Conservation Easement (CE) is located in Wibaux and Prairie counties, southeast of Glendive. The property consists of 45,400 deeded acres of a unique combination and juxtaposition of intact native grassland habitats bisected by hardwood draws in the east; sagebrush grasslands, badlands in the middle; and plains forest habitats dominated by juniper and ponderosa pine in the west. The ranch also includes 10,250 acres of BLM lease and 2,560 acres of DNRC-state lands lease. The proposed easement would offer a similar diversity of outdoor recreational opportunities for Montanans and their guests. The ranch provides year-round habitat and hunting opportunity for mule deer, antelope, sage-grouse, sharp-tails, and occasionally elk. Roughly 85% of the property is mule deer winter range; there are 5 confirmed active sage grouse leks on the property with another 6 active leks within 2 miles of the property. Additionally, 7 active sharp-tailed grouse leks are located on the property with an additional 3 known leks within 2 miles. The property is within the range of an array of State Wildlife Action Plan Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), including 24 of 66 bird, 11 of 26 mammal, 3 of 6 amphibian and 4 of 8 reptile Species of Greatest Conservation Need. This is a rare opportunity to place a conservation easement on a large, contiguous, valuable property for wildlife and sportsmen. The large contiguous size and quality of habitat make the property a high priority for conservation.

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 and 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 the Lost in Time Conservation Easement and complete associated analysis.