



# MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

**Meeting Date:** October 17, 2019

**Agenda Item:** Gallatin County Bridge Realignment onto Gallatin Forks FAS (R3)

**Action Needed:** Final

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 5 Minutes

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**Background:** Gallatin Forks FAS is located along the Gallatin River north of Manhattan. The Gallatin County Commission voted to realign and construct a new bridge across the Gallatin River at Nixon Gulch. This realignment will encroach upon the Gallatin Forks FAS at its most northwest corner. The purpose of the realignment is to meet the public needs for increased safety and bridge capacity. The proposed project shifts the roadway and bridge alignment slightly east approximately 60 feet, resulting in impacts to the FAS of 0.05 acre. On February 10, 2019, the Fish and Wildlife Commission unanimously approved a plan for FWP to exchange the 0.05 acre needed for the new alignment for 0.1 acre located on the west side of the road. Subsequent to this action, Gallatin County has learned that the land they proposed to grant as an easement to FWP is not actually owned by the county.

**Public Involvement Process & Results:** Gallatin County received a grant from the Treasure State Endowment Fund and has received strong public support for the replacement of the Nixon Bridge, as demonstrated by letters of support. FWP published notice of the environmental assessment on Dec. 21, 2018, making the EA available for public comment for 30 days. The EA described the proposed project and impacts related to the Gallatin Forks FAS. FWP received two comments, one proponent and one opposed.

**Alternatives and Analysis:** Because Gallatin County does not own the 0.1-acre parcel on the west side of the bridge, an easement exchange is no longer possible. A new approach is complicated by the fact that FWP purchased this FAS in part with federal LWCF money, which imposes certain restrictions on exchange and disposal of any portion of the FAS. Therefore, the new approach will include an exchange of easements in two stages: 1) FWP will grant a 0.05-acre easement to the county in exchange for several mitigative measures that will result in significant net improvement to the FAS and net benefit to FWP: expanding the gravel parking area, adding new marked parking spaces, and relocating and installing a new gravel boat ramp; 2) After the bridge and FAS upgrading is completed, the county will negotiate with the private landowner to grant it an assignable easement for 0.1 acre, which will then be transferred to FWP. The county then will also add a pedestrian crosswalk.

**Agency Recommendation and Rationale:** The department recommends that the commission amend its approval to grant an easement to Gallatin County of 0.05 acres over the Gallatin Forks FAS, in exchange for the several improvements and benefits proposed by Gallatin County, as well as the grant to FWP of a 0.1-acre riverfront easement adjacent to or near the current FAS.

**Proposed Motion:**

I move that FWP approve the grant of an easement to Gallatin County of 0.05 acre over the Gallatin Forks FAS, in exchange for the several improvements and benefits proposed by Gallatin County.