



# MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

**Meeting Date:** August 13, 2020

**Agenda Item:** Yellowstone Islands FAS (R5)

**Action Needed:** Endorsement

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

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**Background:**

The department has an opportunity to acquire an island complex in the Yellowstone River downstream of Reed Point. The approximately 45-acre two island complex would be acquired with mitigation funds administered by the Department of Justice Natural Damage Resource Program as a result of the 2011 Silvertip Oil Spill. This site is six river miles below Indian Fort FAS, one river mile above the proposed Two Bridges site, seven river miles above Holmgren FAS, and 35 river miles above Homestead Isle FAS. The islands are in a high priority reach of the Yellowstone for additional public access. The NRD program has provisions to provide for unprotected cottonwood riparian areas to allow for natural function of river processes and recruitment of large woody debris (typically cottonwoods) to the river during floods. This natural function builds islands and provides habitat for terrestrial and aquatic organisms. Montana Department of Transportation recently purchased the islands and adjacent ranch land as a part of a project to decommission a bridge that served the ranch. The DOJ proposes to purchase the lands from MDT and turn the title over to FWP. Currently FWP's management and DOJ needs align well for this project, as the islands would remain undeveloped and management costs would be limited but would still provide a primitive area for angling, hunting, and camping.

**Public Involvement Process & Results:**

DOJ held public meetings and completed a programmatic EA for this type of project. The public indicated strong support for these projects. FWP receives regular public support to secure additional Yellowstone River access. All steps of due diligence will be administered throughout the acquisition process.

**Alternatives & Analysis:**

No action: MDT auctions land to private party or other entity, jeopardizing public access.

Preferred Action: The commission endorses the proposed project and the property is acquired as an FAS.

**Agency Recommendation & Rationale:**

FWP recommends endorsement of the proposed FAS acquisition which protects habitat and adds access opportunity.

**Proposed Motion:**

I move to endorse FWP to pursue acquisition of this Yellowstone River island complex from Montana Department of Transportation through the Natural Resource Damage Program.