



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: February 22, 2023

Agenda Item: 501 Pemberton Lane Acquisition

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background: FWP proposes to purchase a 2.442-acre lot at 501 Pemberton Lane in Billings for administrative use. The lot would support FWP and Region 5 operations. The Pemberton Lane lot provides an opportunity to meet many of the current administrative needs in a location that is very close to existing FWP facilities. It would initially be used for storage of equipment and materials, though there is future potential for an indoor shop or administrative facility, and housing for seasonal staff and RV pads and hookups is possible. It may also be possible to utilize the space for Hunter and Bowhunter Education field courses.

If the purchase is approved, FWP would install sidewalks, lighting, and security fencing at the site. FWP would also install sidewalks along 2300 Lake Elmo Drive, the Region 5 administrative office, and a loading zone within the office driveway. During project development, FWP received public requests to install a sidewalk along Lake Elmo Drive for park visitors. This would increase safety for pedestrians as they access the recently improved trail at Lake Elmo State Park. The appraised value (and purchase price) of the Pemberton Lane lot is \$290,000. Due diligence and closing costs are estimated at \$5,200. The cost of improvements for the new lot is estimated at \$177,000. Improvements at the existing office are estimated at \$43,000. Estimated total project cost for the purchase and both areas of improvement are \$515,200.

Public Involvement Process & Results: An environmental assessment (EA) was available for public comment from Oct. 7, 2022, to Nov. 7, 2022. Legal notices were published twice in the *Billings Gazette* and *Helena Independent Record* and posted on the FWP website. Notices were sent to adjoining landowners. FWP received limited but supportive comments for the proposed purchase.

Analysis & Alternatives: Three alternatives were analyzed and considered in the EA:

1. Preferred Alternative: FWP purchases the 2.442-acre property at 501 Pemberton Lane and develops perimeter fencing and required sidewalk and lighting at the lot. FWP completes improvements to include sidewalk, loading/unloading zone and area lighting at the 2300 Lake Elmo administration building.
2. Alternative B: FWP would move forward with improvements at FWP R5 HQ to include sidewalk, lighting, and a loading/unloading zone for recreationalists utilizing Lake Elmo State Park but not purchase 501 Pemberton Lane. FWP Region 5 would revisit the need for additional space and consider new alternatives.
3. No Action. Under this alternative, the lot at 501 Pemberton Lane near Lake Elmo and FWP Region 5 offices would not be purchased. Development of sidewalks and lighting would not be completed at either site. Under this action, review of existing spaces would be forthcoming to resolve space issues facing Region 5. Developments to improve public access along Lake Elmo Drive would be reconsidered.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends the commission approve purchase of the 2.442-acre lot at 501 Pemberton Lane. FWP would then pursue the proposed improvements at 501 Pemberton Lane and at 2300 Lake Elmo Drive. The property would improve crowded conditions at FWP R5 HQ and provide opportunity to address other space needs. Improvements would secure property and improve pedestrian safety at both sites.

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve FWP's acquisition of 501 Pemberton Lane.