



# STATE PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD FWP PROPOSAL & INFORMATION SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

**Meeting Date:** Dec. 20, 2024

**Agenda Item:** Acquisition of property – Judith Landing State Park

**Action Needed:** Final

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 15 minutes

---

**Background:** Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to acquire in fee 109.43 acres of land northwest of Winifred, MT at the confluence of the Judith River and Missouri River for the purpose of establishing a new Montana State Park. The property is currently owned by the Montana State Parks Foundation (Foundation) and has an appraised value of \$600,000. If the acquisition is approved, the Foundation would donate the property to FWP. FWP would reimburse the Foundation for its expenses in securing the property and making the donation, which are estimated to be under \$20,000.

The Judith Landing area has a rich history as evidenced by the presence of an early homestead on the property. Should the Board approve the acquisition, FWP would propose to classify the site as a rustic heritage state park, as outlined in the Montana State Parks and Recreation Board Classification and Investment Strategy Policy. The department has created a conceptual development plan for the site.

**Public Involvement Process & Results:** FWP released the EA on the acquisition and development of the property on 11/15/2024. Public comment is accepted until 5 pm on 12/14/2024 (30 days). The public may also provide comment prior to and during the State Parks and Recreation Board meeting on 12/20/2024.

### **Analysis & Alternatives:**

Alternative A: FWP would accept the donation of a 109.43-acre property from the Foundation for inclusion in the Montana State Park system. The acquisition would permanently secure and protect important cultural resources and wildlife habitat as well as provide new interpretive and recreational opportunities in a location with historical significance.

Alternative B: No Action. FWP would not accept the donation and would not acquire the property for use as a State Park. The future of the property would be unknown, but there is the real possibility that if FWP does not acquire the property and preserve the buildings, they would continue to degrade and be forever lost. Additionally, the story of the Judith Landing Historic District would not be highlighted, the public would not realize the recreational opportunities the site could offer, and the Montana State Park system would not expand into a portion of the state that has limited access to state parks.

**Agency Recommendation & Rationale:** The department recommends that the Montana State Parks & Recreation Board approve the acquisition of the 109.43 acres from the Montana State Parks Foundation via donation. FWP believes that there is long term value to the residents of Montana in the preservation of the historically significant buildings and sharing the rich history of the area through a rustic, heritage state park.



## STATE PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD FWP PROPOSAL & INFORMATION SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

The Benefits of the proposed acquisition and development would include the following:

- Ensure perpetual public access to the property.
- Provide interpretive opportunities to the public related to the surrounding historic district.
- Expand the Montana State Park system into a portion of the state with limited access to state parks.
- Provide additional public outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Develop a state park in north central Montana which would have the potential to economically benefit the surrounding small communities due to increased tourism.
- Preserve and protect the historic structures and cultural resources.

**Proposed Motion:** I move the Montana State Parks & Recreation Board authorize FWP to acquire the 109-acre property near the confluence of the Judith and Missouri Rivers.