

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: April 19, 2018

Agenda Item: Dry Cottonwood Creek Access Project (R2)

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Endorsement

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 Minutes

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Background:

The Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP) and the Clark Fork Coalition (CFC) are pursuing the development and funding of a conservation easement on the 2,363-acre Dry Cottonwood Creek Ranch and the 1,051-acre Deer Lodge River Ranch properties along the Clark Fork River west of the Boulder Range at Galen. The conservation easement on these two properties would include both perpetual public hunting access for a minimum of 800 hunter days annually and year-round recreational public access to the Clark Fork River Corridor. NRDP proposes to assign the management of public hunting access for this easement to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. FWP Region 2 would like to pursue management of recreational public access on the Dry Cottonwood Creek and Deer Lodge River Ranch properties in perpetuity.

Public Involvement Process & Results:

Since this is a new proposal before the Commission, no public comment or involvement has been solicited to date. Requisite public involvement through a draft Environmental Assessment will be sought, pending approval to proceed.

Alternatives and Analysis:

Proposed Action: FWP proposes to work with the NRDP and CFC to secure a conservation outcome for the subject properties, including perpetual public hunting access and year-round recreational public access to the Clark Fork River Corridor.

No-Action Alternative: FWP would forgo the opportunity to pursue this access opportunity.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale:

FWP recommends that it be allowed to pursue and evaluate this opportunity to receive the assignment of the recreational public access to these properties.

Proposed Motion:

I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission endorse FWP's proposal to pursue and evaluate this opportunity to secure public hunting and recreational access rights as part of the proposed Dry Cottonwood Creek Ranch and Deer Lodge River Ranch conservation easement.

Figure 1. Dry Cottonwood Creek Ranch and Deer Lodge River Ranch properties.

