



MONTANA STATE PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD - AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: April 27, 2021

Agenda Item: Hell Creek Recreation Area Lease with the Army Corps of Engineers

Action Needed: Final

Background:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) has had a long relationship with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) at the Hell Creek Site, with a formal relationship dating back to at least the 1960's. The current 30-year lease between the two agencies expires in April 2021. During the previous lease term, significant capital investments were made on the 337-acre site. The greatest investment occurred in the latter half of the previous lease term. The improvements have included: two staff housing units, a maintenance building, comfort station, electrification of the public campground, and significant investments in site infrastructure related to public safety (public water supply and wastewater disposal).

FWP is proposing to enter into a two-year no cost lease agreement with the Army Corps of Engineers for the operation and maintenance of Hell Creek Recreation Area. This action will allow FWP to transition out of managing the Hell Creek Recreation Area. Under this proposed action, FWP would work with the Little Shell Tribe to familiarize them with site management through approximately 2023. In order to ensure a proper transition from FWP to the Tribe, the lease allows for two one-year extensions if necessary. The current proposal is intended to provide a seamless recreational experience for visitors to the Hell Creek Recreation area on Fort Peck Reservoir.

During the two-year period, FWP will prepare to relinquish management of the site at the conclusion of the lease term. This will allow for the least interruption of the services provided to the public and will continue management and operation of the recreational facilities while maintaining a high standard of safety, cleanliness, accessibility and care for the investments made to the recreational amenities at this federally owned site. Minimal new developments are planned over the term of the new lease.

Public Involvement Process & Results:

The public can comment on the EA by emailing board members at parksboard@mt.gov and at the public meeting. To view a draft of the environmental assessment and to provide public comment, please visit fwp.mt.gov and click on "News and Public Notices."

Alternatives and Analysis:

Alternative A: No Action: FWP does not enter into a new a lease agreement with the United States Army Corps of Engineers to operate Hell Creek State Park. Under this alternative, FWP's lease to operate Hell Creek would expire on April 30. This would likely disrupt the public's use and enjoyment of the Fort Peck Hell Creek Recreation Area. It may also limit the ability of the Little Shell Tribe to take over operation of the site.

Alternative B: Proposed Action: FWP enters into a 2-year lease agreement for continued management of the Hell Creek Recreation Area as Hell Creek State Park. FWP will work with the Little Shell Tribe to familiarize them with site management through approximately year 2023. In order to ensure a proper transition from FWP to the Tribe, the lease allows for two one-year extensions, if necessary.

Agency Recommendation and Rationale:

The Department recommends Alternative B. The Board approve the Department entering into a two-year lease agreement with the ACOE which will allow FWP to transition out of managing the Hell Creek Recreation Area.

Proposed Motion:

I move the Parks and Recreation Board approve the two-year lease agreement between the Department and the Army Corps of Engineers for continued management of the Hell Creek Recreation Area and work with the Little Shell Tribe to familiarize them with site management through approximately year 2023.