



MONTANA **FWP**

## MONTANA STATE PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

**Meeting Date:** September 17, 2020

**Agenda Item:** Fort Owen State Park Development

**Action Needed:** Proposed

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

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### **Background:**

In the continuing quest to improve public access and landowner relations at Fort Owen State Park, the Department has developed a strategy to address these needs. Through a cost share arrangement with the MGY Ranch, we will address needed upgrades to the shared entry road and associated fencing which will improve the visitor experience as well as safety for visitors, the ranch operations and livestock.

With the acquisition of additional lands, the Department also seeks Board approval to move forward with plans to conduct a heritage resources inventory and work with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to develop an appropriate parking area that will accommodate passenger vehicles, tour busses and school busses. This development would greatly improve public access, which has been both limited and confusing for decades.

### **Public Involvement Process & Results:**

The public and the neighboring landowner have requested improved and more clearly defined public access. An Environmental Assessment and subsequent public involvement process will be implemented, pending Parks and Recreation Board endorsement.

### **Alternatives and Analysis:**

It is nearly impossible for a member of the public to park at Fort Owen State Park without trespassing on private land. While other alternatives have been considered (small parking lot for 3-4 passenger vehicles, closing the site to public access), the willingness of the landowner to work collaboratively and cost share some of the improvements have been the best alternative for the Department

### **Agency Recommendation and Rationale:**

The Department recommends that the Board approve expending funds to improve public access at Fort Owen State Park.

### **Proposed Motion:**

I move that the Parks and Recreation Board authorize Fish, Wildlife and Parks proceed with further analysis and conduct an Environmental Assessment to improve roads, parking and fencing at Fort Owen State Park.