

MONTANA STATE PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: August 28, 2013

Agenda Item: Proposed acquisition of a public access easement for Lower Blackfoot River Trail

Division: Montana State Parks

Action Needed: Approval to pursue easement

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background

Montana State Parks proposes to acquire a riverfront trail easement along the lower Blackfoot River to connect two parcels of the new Milltown State Park. The department owns and manages a strip of land along the lower Blackfoot River from the confluence with the Clark Fork River to a point just above the pedestrian bridge, in the area known as the Milltown Gateway.

Upstream, three quarters of a mile from the bridge, is another 47-acre parcel acquired in 2010 for Milltown State Park. The two parcels of public land are separated by privately owned land that was once part of the Bonner mill's industrial complex. A proposed trail easement would cross the property's southern Blackfoot boundary, a sliver along river's edge but well above the 100-year floodplain. The trail would begin at the Milltown Gateway and head upstream toward the Blackfoot park boundary near the site of the old Bonner Dam, approximately 4000 feet. Funding was allocated in the 2013 Natural Resource Damage Program Long-Range Plan to pursue the easement and to develop a trailhead at the Milltown Gateway, near the pedestrian bridge.

Public Involvement Process & Results

If approved by the Board, an Environmental Assessment on the easement acquisition would be written and distributed for public comment.

Alternatives and Analysis Alternative # 1: The department would pursue acquisition of an easement on the subject property.

Alternative # 2: No action. Montana State Parks would not pursue an easement and no trail would be built along the lower Blackfoot River. Milltown State Park parcels at the Gateway and on the Blackfoot would remain separated. Funding earmarked for this easement would be returned to the program.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

Montana State Parks recommends approval by the Board to proceed with the acquisition of a trail easement along the Blackfoot River at Milltown State Park. The easement acquisition would allow a trail to connect two pieces of public land along the Blackfoot River and offer access to public land for hiking, biking, fishing and hunting and other recreation for future generations.

Proposed Motion: I move to direct the Division to initiate negotiations, appraisal and public comment on this proposed easement.