



MONTANA STATE PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: October 15, 2014
Agenda Item: Smith River State Park & River Corridor Biennial Fee Rule
Division: Parks
Action Needed: Proposed
Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 minutes

Background: The Smith River Management Act, 23-2-401 through 23-2-410, MCA, authorizes the Board to provide for the administration of the Smith River waterway and adopt rules for this purpose. The Smith River State Park and River Corridor Biennial Rule establishes fees and rules for private, commercial and landowner float trips in Smith River State Park. The current rule was last adopted by the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission in December 2012 and is scheduled to expire in December 2014. The last increase in user fees occurred in 2010 as follows:

- \$5 increase in nonrefundable permit application fee (to \$10)
- \$10 increase for private nonresident floats (age 13 and above)
- \$5 Super Permit lottery fee

During the 2013 and 2014 float seasons, a series of human/black bear conflicts were documented that resulted in numerous boat camp closures and the removal of no less than eight black bears. In response to significant public safety concerns, the department chartered an inter-divisional committee that has recommended establishment of food storage regulations on the Smith River. This recommendation is consistent with the following desired condition stated in the 2009 Smith River State Park and River Corridor Management Plan: *“River recreation on the Smith River will not adversely impact wildlife or result in human injury or property damage resulting from conflicts between humans and wildlife.”*

Public Involvement Process & Results: Upon authorization by the Board, the Parks Division will solicit public comment for a 30 day period and report on those comments at the December 2014 Board meeting.

Alternatives and Analysis: The Parks Division has identified the following alternatives regarding the Smith River Biennial Rule:

Alternative 1: Adopt an updated Smith River State Park and River Corridor Biennial Rule with no changes to current user fees and adopts the following new public use regulations:

- Eliminate human waste pack out requirement at the Deep Creek (Park staff will install a pit toilet at the site).
- Establish food storage rules to minimize human/black bear conflicts

Alternative 2: Adopt a Smith River State Park and River Corridor Biennial Rule with no changes.

Agency Recommendation and Rationale: The Parks Division would like the new Smith River Advisory Council to become better established before proposing Smith River user fee increases. The proposed food storage rules reflect recommendations by department’s inter-divisional committee and are intended to address significant concerns for public safety, liability and wildlife protection.

Proposed Motion: I move that the Board authorize the Parks Division to seek public comment on the proposed 2014 Smith River Biennial Rule as described in Alternative 1.