



MONTANA STATE PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: February 24, 2016

Agenda Item: Big Arm Lease Extension

Division: Parks

Action Needed: Approval

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 Minutes

Background: The Big Arm unit of Flathead Lake State Park is a 217 acre unit located on the southwestern shores of the largest natural fresh water lake in the western US. During the recent park classification process, Flathead Lake State Park was ranked as a 1A class park.

Big Arm provides 48 tenting and RV campsites, a group campsite, 3 yurts, group day use facilities and a year-round boat launch. Big Arm provides critical public access to the south half of Flathead Lake and is also the primary departure point for Wild Horse Island.

Montana State Parks (MSP) has invested heavily in the site, with the most recent capital project being completed in 2008 which included the development of four full service host pads, the installation of two yurts, a new maintenance building, construction of a fully ADA campsite and latrine and a new boat trailer parking lot. Recent major maintenance projects have included significant RV campsite stabilization, a new pump house and chlorination system and forest management projects.

This site is a leased Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) Trust land parcel, and has been operated by MSP since 1966. The current annual lease expires on February 28, 2016. A long term solution such as a permanent easement or fee title acquisition is optimal for keeping this site in Montana's State Park System. With that in mind, DNRC has proposed a four year extension of the annual lease to provide an opportunity for the two agencies to pursue a permanent easement or some other alternative to continue to provide public access at this important site.

Public Involvement Process & Results (Brief description of the type of public involvement and summary of what we heard from the public): None at this time.

Alternatives and Analysis (Brief description of alternative solutions with analysis of the pros and cons of each):

There are two alternatives to this agenda item: 1) Do not pass the lease extension. This alternative would force the division to divest from Big Arm. 2) Pass the lease extension. This allows the state of Montana to work to secure a long term easement while continuing to allow public service and recreational access at current levels.

Agency Recommendation and Rationale: The agency recommendation is to keep this important unit of Flathead Lake State Park in the system under the terms of the proposed lease agreement while actively pursuing a long term solution during the interim.

Proposed Motion: I move to approve a lease extension with DNRC for Big Arm State Park.