



MONTANA STATE PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: February 24, 2016

Agenda Item: Travelers' Rest Proposed Acquisition/Easement

Division: Parks

Action Needed: Tentative Endorsement

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 Minutes

Background: Travelers' Rest State Park is currently a 51 acre site located in Lolo Montana. This National Historic Landmark is a key part of the community that holds Native American significance as well as representing the only campsite on the Lewis and Clark Trail with physical evidence of the expedition. Last fall the family that owns the 20.54 acres immediately adjacent to the park on the Western boundary approached the division with a desire to sell the parcel as part of expanding the park. The family has requested that the department sign an option to purchase agreement to indicate the agency's level of intent. This agreement would not obligate the state but would indicate. It was their desire to give the state park system the first opportunity to purchase the land. Based on challenges financially for the division as well as the boards recently adopted lands policy, the division must consider any expansion of the system thoughtfully including long term funding and priority.

The location of this parcel makes it a highly visible and significant acreage. If the division does not consider this acquisition the land will be sold and because of the lack of zoning, could be used for any array of commercial or industrial activities that may affect the aesthetics of the park or, more directly, the visitor experience.

Easement or fee title acquisition of this land would not only secure the visitor experience by protecting it from the possibility of conflicting uses but may also expand the size of the park with numerous benefits.

Public Involvement Process & Results: No public involvement to date. If endorsed by the board, and upon completion of all due diligence, an Environmental Assessment would be completed and distributed for public comment prior to final approval by the board.

Alternatives and Analysis:

Alternative 1 -No Action: Do not acquire the land. The landowners would pursue other options to sell and develop the land.

Alternative 2- Easement: Acquire a conservation easement to allow the division to protect the land from development while still keeping it open for public access and resource protection.

Alternative 3- Fee Title: Acquiring this land in fee would give the division the best option to protect the site while also providing opportunity for the park long term. This is the agency's preferred alternative.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: The Department recommends approval by the Board to proceed with the formal consideration of this parcel of land.

Proposed Motion: "I move that the Division formally begin consideration of this parcel of land as part of Travelers' Rest State Park."