



MONTANA STATE PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: August 16, 2017

Agenda Item: FWP Draft Forest Management Plan **Division:** Parks

Action Needed: Proposed

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 minutes

Background (Brief description of the issue, decision to be made, history, etc.):

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) has prepared a Draft Forest Management Plan (Plan) for forested land administered by its Fisheries, Wildlife, and Parks Divisions. Almost 200,000 acres of forested lands are distributed amongst 170 different sites including Fishing Access Sites (FAS), Fisheries Conservation Areas (FCA), Wildlife Management Areas (WMA), Wildlife Habitat Protection Areas (WHPA), and State Parks (SP). This is a programmatic plan designed to provide consistent management direction and guidance for developing property-specific forest management plans, implementing forest management projects, and identifying forest management priorities. This Plan applies to all forested land under fee-title ownership administered by FWP. In § 87-1-622(1), Montana Code Annotated (MCA), the legislature has directed the Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) and State Parks Board (Board) to adopt forest management plans for lands under their jurisdiction. Accordingly, this Plan will also be submitted to the Commission for endorsement at their August meeting. The Plan was developed through a collaborative process led by FWP's forester, Jason Parke, who worked closely with a team of wildlife biologists and a WMA maintenance supervisor in coordination with the FAS program coordinator and the State Parks chief of operations. The Plan has undergone review by midlevel managers across all three divisions and by the Legal Unit.

Public Involvement Process & Results (Brief description of the type of public involvement and summary of what we heard from the public):

Upon approval of the draft Plan, FWP would release the Plan for public review and comment.

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

There are no alternatives for the Plan, but FWP may make changes based upon comments from the public and interested parties.

Agency Recommendation and Rationale (Brief description of our recommendation to the Board and the reasons for it):

FWP recommends adopting the Draft Forest Management Plan, which will allow FWP to seek public comment. Forest lands under FWP ownership will benefit from a consistent approach to planning, identifying priorities, and managing individual forested properties. The filter approach described in the Plan will help assure forest management decisions are well informed and objective-based.

Proposed Motion (Draft language the Board could use to adopt the agency recommendation):

I move to approve the Draft Forest Management Plan as presented, allowing the Department to proceed with the formal public comment process.