



MONTANA STATE PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: February 20, 2018

Agenda Item: Forest Management Plan

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 Minutes

Background: Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) has prepared a Forest Management Plan (Plan) for forested land administered by its Fisheries, Wildlife, and Parks Divisions. Nearly 200,000 acres of forested lands are distributed amongst 157 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 directed the Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) and State Parks and Recreation Board (Board) to adopt forest management plans for lands under their jurisdiction. Accordingly, this Plan will also be submitted to the Commission for final approval at their April 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 mid-level managers across all three divisions and by the Legal Unit.

Public Involvement Process & Results: Public comment on the Draft Plan was accepted from August 17, 2017 through September 18, 2017. The Plan was available on the FWP website, a press release was issued, and a letter was sent to interested parties. FWP received a total of five comments including three from individuals, one from a sportsman group, and one from another state agency. Two comments directly supported the Plan and the remaining comments offered suggestions.

Alternatives and Analysis: There are no alternatives for the Plan. FWP made minor changes resulting from internal and external comments.

Agency Recommendation and Rationale: FWP recommends adopting the Plan. Forest lands under FWP ownership would benefit from a consistent approach to planning, identifying priorities, and managing individual forested properties. The filter approach described in the Plan would help assure forest management decisions are well informed and objective-based.

Proposed Motion: I move the Board adopt the Forest Management Plan as presented, allowing Fish, Wildlife and Parks to proceed with implementation of the Plan.