



MONTANA **FWP**

MONTANA STATE PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: June 22, 2018

Agenda Item: Flathead Access Recreation Group

Action Needed: Informational

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 minutes

Background:

Demand for recreation opportunities on Flathead Lake continues to grow. Public recreation demand for lake access exceeds capacity during the summer period. In 2017, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) recreation sites alone saw over 490,000 visits, and congestion is growing problem for State Park units as well as Fishing Access Sites (FAS).

Private development around Flathead Lake is increasingly limiting opportunities for public and Tribal access to the Lake. Additional access on the lake shore is needed to meet current and future demand for developed recreation opportunities such as boating, camping, and day use.

Existing facilities at the Big Arm unit of Flathead Lake State Park and Elmo FAS may become inaccessible to the public in the next two years. These heavily used and popular recreation sites are leased by FWP from Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) as recreation sites. In compliance with DNRC's mandate to maximize revenue for the state school trust, DNRC lease costs are increasing along with land values, and FWP's ability to lease these properties for public access and recreation may become cost prohibitive if a financial solution cannot be found for lease renewal in 2020.

FWP, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT), DNRC, Flathead County, and the communities of Lakeside and Polson, own and manage developed and undeveloped public recreation sites along the shores of the Lake. The US Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) provides seasonal walk-in access to the undeveloped north shore Waterfowl Protection Area comprised of about seven miles of shoreline

Regional Parks Division staff are exploring the formation of a partnership of tribal, local, state and federal government agencies, as well as non-governmental entities, to secure and improve the network of public and Tribal recreation sites to meet the demand for access to Flathead Lake, and support local communities.