



MONTANA STATE PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: May 11, 2020

Agenda Item: Somers Beach Acquisition Proposal

Action Needed: Endorsement

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 30 Minutes

Background: The Flathead Land Trust (FLT) and the Sliter family have proposed the sale of 106 acres of Sliter family property on the Northwest shore of Flathead Lake to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) to become a unit of the State Park System. The property is situated between the Flathead Lake Waterfowl Production Area and the Somers townsite. This property has been used for decades by the public for foot access to Flathead Lake and is locally referred to as the Somers Beach. The North shore of Flathead Lake is a shallow delta which provides swimming opportunity during full-pool and hiking and wildlife viewing opportunities during low pool. The area is a very popular day use site. The property is accessed via North Somers Road where a small gravel parking lot is provided. FLT and the Sliter family have solicited public comment on this proposal and have received a significant amount of positive comment.

The property contains inholding property that is owned by BNSF Railway Company (BNSF), and a portion of this inholding is not available for public because it is part of a larger Superfund site. The BNSF property contains sub-surface contaminants associated with a railroad tie making facility that existed decades ago. FLT and the Sliter family have been in contact with BNSF regarding design features that would accommodate public use while safeguarding the contamination site. The proposed acquisition area has contamination within the groundwater which requires that no soil excavation occur. No vault toilets would be allowed, but Somers does have sewer and water hook-ups. The north shore of Flathead Lake is subject to high levels of erosion and protection of the shoreline may be required to mitigate this phenomenon.

Public Involvement Process & Results: Formal public involvement has not been solicited by FWP to date but has been solicited by FLT.

Alternatives and Analysis: Proposal alternatives and analysis would be developed by FWP. Upon endorsement by the Board, FWP would conduct appropriate due diligence, analysis, and a public review process.

Agency Recommendation and Rationale: FWP recommends endorsement of this proposal, allowing FWP to further pursue and evaluate it and to offer opportunities for public review and comment.

Proposed Motion: I move the Parks and Recreation Board endorse the proposal to initiate due diligence to explore purchase of this property.