



Protecting Montana's wildlife,
land, waters and hunting & fishing
heritage for future generations.

April 2, 2018

C/O Sharon Rose
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Region 2
3201 Spurgin Rd.
Missoula, MT 59804

RE: Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area Inholding Acquisition

Dear Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks,

Since 1936, the Montana Wildlife Federation has worked to protect fish and wildlife and their habitat in Montana. Our members strongly supported the department's acquisition of the Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area and we support acquisition of the Koch inholdings, which consists of two parcels of private land integral to the overall WMA. Their acquisition assures their management will be compatible with the remaining 35,041 acres of Fish Creek WMA.

Fish Creek and its tributaries represent some of the most important spawning habitat for west slope cutthroat trout and bull trout in the middle portion of the Clark Fork River. These two species spawn in the tributaries, where the young begin their growth. Once the fish are larger, they migrate downstream to the Clark Fork, returning to the tributaries to spawn after they reach maturity.

The riparian area in the main stem parcel along Fish Creek (160 acres) also provides habitat for song birds, small mammals and wintering habitat for elk, mule deer, white-tailed deer and moose.

The proposed acquisition also includes the 116-acre Whitehorse parcel that lies between Fish Creek and the Great Burn Recommended Wilderness Area in the Lolo National Forest. This parcel provides wintering habitat for elk, mule deer, white-tailed deer, and moose and ensures connectivity between Fish Creek and the Great Burn for other wildlife, including wolverine and Canada lynx. A radio-collared grizzly bear moved through the Fish Creek drainage in recent years. In the future, grizzlies may reoccupy this portion of their habitat in western Montana.

Public access is an important priority for MWF and its members. These acquisitions would assure public access to these parcels in perpetuity.

Hunter dollars are largely funding this purchase: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (\$622,500, Pittman-Robertson), Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (\$207,500, Habitat Montana), Northwestern Energy (\$60,000), and Montana Trout Unlimited (\$10,000). These important contributions show the commitment of Montana hunters to protect important habitat to

ensure wildlife abundance as well as protect key areas to prevent fracturing of habitat.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on this acquisition that will benefit Montana's wildlife and Montana's resident and nonresident hunters and anglers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William Geer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "W".

Bill Geer
President