



## LOWER YELLOWSTONE RIVER CORRIDOR INITIATIVE

### ISSUE

The Yellowstone River is the longest, free-flowing river in the lower 48. Between Hysham and the North Dakota border, much of the river is relatively inaccessible for recreation, with stretches between access points of up to 50 miles. A 12-person committee has been formed to advise Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) on how to prioritize projects in the area by setting broad criteria for evaluating proposals.

Currently, there have been four proposals presented to the Fish and Wildlife Commission or Montana State Parks and Outdoor Recreation Board.

**Fish and Wildlife Commission** (request related to fishing access)

[Lower Yellowstone River Corridor Cracker Box Site Acquisition \(map\)](#)

[Lower Yellowstone River Corridor Wildcat Bend Site Acquisition \(map\)](#)

**Montana State Parks and Outdoor Recreation Board**

[Lower Yellowstone River Corridor Zero Land Site Acquisition Endorsement](#)

[Lower Yellowstone River Corridor Powder River Depot Land Acquisition Endorsement](#)

During the February 4, 2022 Fish and Wildlife Commission and the March 3, 2022 State Parks Board meetings four recommendations have been endorsed. The endorsement means that FWP staff have the approval to move forward to investigate further development of a proposal and for the agency to further work on due diligence.

### BACKGROUND

During the 2021 session, the Legislature pledged \$4 million for river access, habitat, & recreation projects on the lower Yellowstone River between Hysham & the North Dakota border. Building on a local initiative, FWP convened a 12-member citizen-advisory committee, sponsored by Governor Gianforte, during the summer of 2021 to guide use of the \$4 million with an eye toward opportunities & recommendations for improved access, habitat conservation, & sustainable economic development along the corridor. The committee was tasked with developing a scoring matrix for evaluating acquisition opportunities & identifying investments needed to maximize habitat conservation & protection while enhancing sustainable public access & recreational opportunities.



May 2022

The committee submitted its recommendations to FWP in November. Among them was a recommendation to purchase a long-term easement on 10-20 acres of state land in Prairie County, known as the Zero property, to enhance river access between Miles City & Terry. Zero is already accessible from the river but has no amenities. The committee proposed seeking an easement or fee title purchase of an adjacent parcel to provide access from Old Highway 10 West. Development possibilities include a parking area, concrete boat ramp, & latrine. Currently, the only other public access to the river in this area is upstream on the north side of the Yellowstone at Bonfield Fishing Access Site (FAS), which requires travel over 3 miles of minimally maintained road & a bridge that only allows for narrow trailers.

The committee's full recommendations can be [reviewed here](#).

## NEXT STEPS

Additional information, updates and opportunities to comment on this process will occur at either the Montana State Parks and Outdoor Recreation Board or Fish and Wildlife Commission Board meetings.

Throughout the next steps, there will be multiple opportunities for public comment.

Montana State Parks and Outdoor Recreation Board:

- August 11 - 12, 2022 | Miles City
- October 6 - 7, 2022 | TBD
- December 8 - 9, 2022 | Helena

Fish and Wildlife Commission Board meetings:

- August 25, 2022
- October 20, 2022
- December 16, 2022

## LOWER YELLOWSTONE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chair: Angie Grove, Helena  
Ruth Baue, Hysham  
Justin Hoffman, Glendive  
Lance Kalfell, Terry

Joel Krautter, Sidney  
Robert Lee, Forsyth  
Brenda Maas, Billings  
Noah Marion, Bozeman

John Moorhouse, Hysham  
Mike Newton, Glendive  
Mike Penfold, Billings  
Leo Schmaus, Hysham

## MSGA'S POSITION

At this time, MSGA has not taken a position on this issue.

