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Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission OKs agency land purchase

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Tom Kuglin, Independent Record

Buy I

The view of Elkhorn Creek on the Beartooth Wildlife Management Area. On Thursday, the Fish and Wildlife Commission voted to recommend purchase of the property, which now goes to the State Board of Land Commissioners for a decision.

MORE INFORMATION



HELENA (AP) – The Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission on Thursday approved a proposal for the Department of Fish,



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Wildlife and Parks to purchase nearly 9,500 acres of land from the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation for \$11.1 million.

The land is located within the Sun River, Beartooth and Blackleaf wildlife management areas in Lewis and Clark, Cascade and Teton counties, the Great Falls Tribune reported.

Purchasing the inholdings will allow the land to be managed solely for wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities, said Ken McDonald, administrator of the Wildlife Division. DNRC is required to generate income from its lands and has leased the parcels to FWP for \$41,000 a year.

Shawn Thomas, with the DNRC's Trust Land Management Division, said the sale is a solution to a lot of administrative problems.

The purchase includes 3,410 acres in the Sun River WMA, 5,240 acres in the Beartooth WMA and 639 acres in the Blackleaf WMA.

FWP will use money from hunting license fees and a federal excise tax on firearms and ammunition sales to purchase the land. DNRC will put the sale proceeds into its Land Banking Program. That money is used to purchase other lands with public access that provide equal or greater trust revenue than the lands that were sold.

The state Land Board will vote Monday on whether to move forward with the purchase.