



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

JOINT SCOPING NOTICE

Proposal to Sell and Proposal to Purchase DNRC Trust lands within the Spotted Dog Wildlife Management Area

July 14, 2017

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) is evaluating a proposal to sell state trust lands leased to the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) within FWP's Spotted Dog Wildlife Management Area (WMA) located in Powell County NE of Deer Lodge. The lands would be offered for sale at public auction in Powell County.

And

FWP is evaluating the proposed purchase of state trust lands leased by FWP within the Spotted Dog WMA.

FWP has nominated state trust lands for sale in accordance with DNRC Land Banking procedures. Under this program the state trust lands would be considered for sale at public auction. The two agencies are also developing a road access agreement that would assure DNRC's ability to access trust land retained on or adjacent to the WMA if this proposal is completed. This land banking proposal is similar to prior nominations made by FWP for sale of trust lands within the Sun River, Blackleaf and Beartooth WMAs in 2016. The Fish and Wildlife Commission has endorsed FWP to proceed with due diligence and negotiations. For further information please see "**Frequently Asked Questions.**"

The primary objectives of the proposed project are:

- Remove trust land ownership from within WMA boundaries
- Allow FWP to own and manage properties within WMA boundaries
- Increase Trust revenues
- Allow DNRC to pursue higher revenue generating lands, land consolidation, and increased public access.

A total of approximately 10,100.91 acres is involved in this proposal. Please see the attached table and map of affected lands.

If the lands are sold to FWP, management of the properties is anticipated to continue in a manner consistent with current management of Spotted Dog WMA. DNRC would be positioned to purchase other properties with the sale proceeds, which would generate higher revenues and provide public access and recreational opportunities.

The purposes of the scoping process are to: involve the affected public, identify all potentially significant issues, help identify possible alternatives, and identify potential sources of information that may be referenced in the environmental review. Each agency is in the public scoping phase of this project. However, due to their unique administrative decision-making processes, each agency will be conducting separate analyses with different timelines. We invite written comments and suggestions concerning this proposal and will share comments received between the two agencies.

Comments must be received by DNRC and/or FWP no later than August 14, 2017.

Mailed or emailed comments may be directed to either of the following addresses. All comments received will be shared between the two agencies:

Department of Natural Resources & Conservation
Southwestern Land Office

[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Region 2 Headquarters

[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

This scoping notice (and attachments) will also be posted on:

- DNRC's website at <http://dnrc.mt.gov/public-interest/public-notice>
- FWP's website at <http://fwp.mt.gov/> (under "News," choose "Recent Public Notices"). Comments may be made directly on this proposal's webpage.

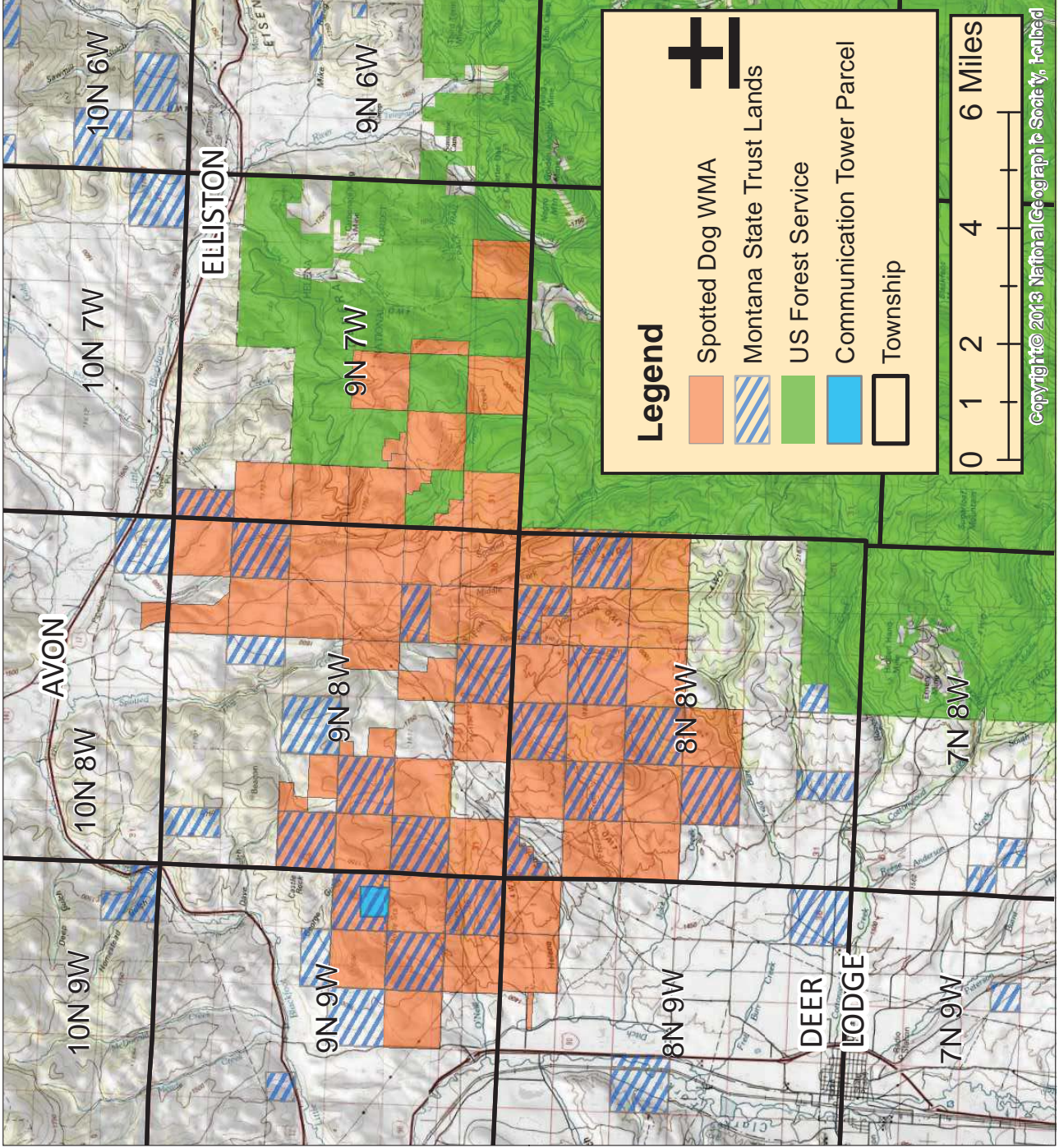
Questions pertaining to the proposal can be directed to either of the following agency staff:

- [Redacted]
[Redacted]

**State Trust Lands Proposed for Sale in the
Spotted Dog Wildlife Management Area
Land Banking Proposal**

Township	Range	Section	Acres
9N	7W	6	317.34
9N	8W	12	640.00
9N	8W	18	640.64
9N	8W	20	640.00
9N	8W	26	320.00
9N	8W	30	641.88
9N	8W	34	640.00
9N	9W	24	480.00
9N	9W	26	640.00
9N	9W	36	640.00
8N	8W	2	436.89
8N	8W	4	599.38
8N	8W	6	264.78
8N	8W	8	640.00
8N	8W	10	640.00
8N	8W	12	640.00
8N	8W	16	640.00
8N	8W	20	640.00
Tract Count	18	Total Acres	10,100.91

Figure 1. Overview of Spotted Dog Wildlife Management Area (WMA). Cross-hatched (DNRC) lands with orange backgrounds are leased by FWP as part of the WMA and are proposed for purchase by FWP. As part of the proposal, the Communications Tower Parcel (160 acres) would be retained by DNRC.



DNRC - FWP

SPOTTED DOG WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

SALE AND ACQUISITION PROJECT



Frequently Asked Questions



Why are DNRC and FWP undertaking the sale of these parcels under Land Banking?

The Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation (DNRC) and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposed to transfer lands through the land exchange process in 2012. In that proposal, FWP would have received DNRC lands in the Spotted Dog, Beartooth, Sun River, and Blackleaf Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), and DNRC would have received FWP lands in the Robb-Ledford WMA. Many public comments were received during scoping that opposed the transfer of WMA lands to DNRC and the proposal was dropped. Comments generally supported the consolidation of FWP ownership in the WMAs, but suggested FWP instead purchase the DNRC inholdings in WMAs.

What are the benefits of the Spotted Dog Land Banking sale?

This Land Banking sale would achieve FWP's goals of consolidating intermingled ownership within the Spotted Dog WMA, improving management effectiveness and efficiency and reducing the prospect of resource management conflicts that can arise from the agencies' differing missions. Specific benefits include:

- FWP would save an estimated \$47,304 per year in grazing lease payments to DNRC.
- FWP would eliminate the potential for escalating DNRC lease costs that could result from a future change in lease classification or competitive bids.
- Provide improved and consistent habitat management, weed control, and road and fence management across the WMA, eliminating the patchwork quilt approach FWP has today because of intermingled landownership. Legal access rights would be perfected for FWP within the WMA, as well as for DNRC to some DNRC lands adjacent to the WMA. The long-term integrity of wildlife habitats within the WMA would be conserved.

