

**Meeting Date:** November 17, 2016

**Agenda Item No. 5C**

**Agenda Item:** Region 1 – Black Lake Ranch  
Acquisition, Coeur d’Alene River WMA  
(Action)

**Bureau Chief Approval:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Prepared by:** Katherine Cousins and Gregg Servheen

**Background:**

This fee title acquisition will add 1,012.72 acres to the Coeur d’Alene River Wildlife Management Area (WMA) for the appraised value of \$2,600,000. The proposed acquisition, known as the Black Lake Ranch (BLR), fronts over five miles of the Coeur d’Alene River and 3,800 feet of Black Lake shoreline in Kootenai County, Idaho. It is approximately 18 miles east from the town of Harrison.

The BLR is a key property within the clean-up and restoration planning area within the lower Coeur d’Alene Basin due to its size and location. The ranch includes approximately 675 acres of floodplain on the south side of the Trail of the Coeur d’Alenes to the east and west of Black Lake, 45 acres of riparian habitats composed of riverine shrub and black cottonwood, and about 292 acres of winter range shrub and forested uplands. Current uses of the floodplain portion include haying and cattle and horse ranching. This property has been extensively fenced, ditched and diked and continues to be pumped in an effort to control surface water. Several ponds exist on the property, and portions of several of the pastures become saturated during parts of the year. Prior to converting the floodplain habitats to agricultural production, the eastern and western portions of the property were seasonal wetlands used heavily by waterfowl.

Acquisition of the property by IDFG would facilitate short- and long-term remediation and restoration efforts of the ranch's contaminated lowlands, with potential conversion of agricultural areas back to historic wetlands, wetland habitat improvements, and improvements to water quality issues of Black Lake. Acquisition of the property would allow for improved connectivity of WMA lands and wetland habitats across the lower Coeur d’Alene Basin, as well as provide improved public access to the Chain Lake Area (i.e., Blue Lake, Swan Lake, and Black Lake). The current wildlife species diversity, habitat values, and potential for improvement are extremely high.

IDFG pays a fee in lieu of taxes (FILT) for all fee-title properties. The FILT for properties in Kootenai County is estimated at \$2.24 per acre, for a total annual FILT payment of \$2,268.49 for the property.

Acquisition of this property was presented to the Commission during Executive Session on November 12, 2014 and again on September 23, 2016. All due diligence required by Federal Aid monies has been completed.

**Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:**

Land acquisition in accordance with Commission and Department land acquisition policy.

**Public Involvement Process:**

County commissioners have been notified and support the acquisition. The public will be informed and contacted for their input regarding management of the property.

**Staff Recommendation:**

The Lands Committee recommends proceeding with the acquisition.

**Action Requested:**

Recommend to complete fee title acquisition as an addition to the Coeur d'Alene River WMA.

Suggested Motion: Commission approves the Department to complete acquisition of Black Lake Ranch using the proceeds of the sale of St. Maries surplus property.