

**Meeting Date:** July 24, 2024

**Agenda Item No.** 5J

**Agenda Item:** Crystal Summit Conservation Easement **Bureau Chief Approval:** SR  
**(Action)**

**Prepared by** Casey Pozzanghera, Natural Resources Program Coordinator

**Background:**

The Department is proposing to purchase a conservation easement on approximately 1,252 acres of working land in Power County. The property is located on the north side of Mink Creek Rd, 12 miles south of Pocatello, and acts as important big game transitional and winter range.

Mule deer and elk use the property as transitional range while traveling between summer and winter range on surrounding public and private lands and the nearby Fort Hall Reservation. In addition to heavy migratory use, the property also supports year-round resident deer, elk, and moose. The high-quality aspen forest and sagebrush-steppe habitats on the property provide remote and secure fawning and calving grounds for all 3 species. This property falls within GMU 70 and the Bannock DAU. The Mule Deer Management Plan identifies “improving and protecting key winter, summer, and transitional habitats on public and private lands” as the first Management Direction for this DAU. In addition to big game, the habitat supports a number of upland game birds, including forest and sharp-tailed grouse. IDFG is aware of multiple sharp-tailed grouse leks within 2 miles of the property. High quality aspen and riparian habitats throughout the property support a variety of other species throughout the year.

There is a significant threat of residential development in this area and the completion of this conservation easement will ensure that the important habitat characteristics and transitional space are protected. The easement will grant the Commission development rights to the property, ensuring that it will remain in its current undeveloped state in perpetuity, while continuing to allow the landowner to work the land. While public access is not something the landowner is interested in granting at this time, the terms of the easement do allow for public access at the landowner’s discretion, leaving the door open for potential future opportunities.

The appraised value of the easement is \$730,000. IDFG lands acquisition funds (commonly referred to as HB 530 funds) would be used for the purchase.

This easement was previously presented to the Commission during Executive Session in July 2017 and January 2024.

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

The Idaho Fish and Game Commission has the authority to acquire land (Idaho Code 36-104(b)(7)). Land acquisition is in accordance with Commission land acquisition policy.

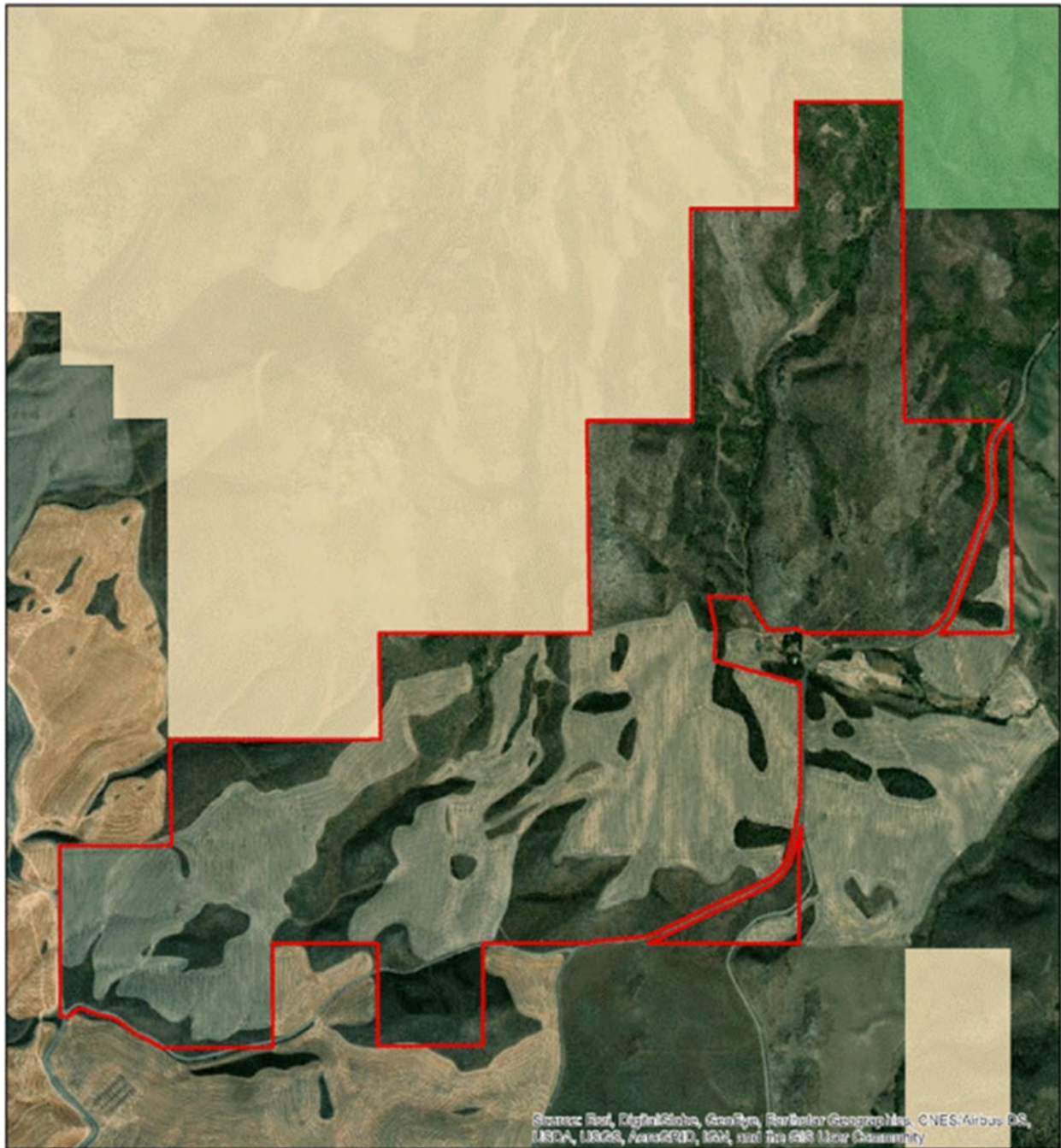
**Public Involvement Process:**

Power County commissioners have been notified.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Staff recommend acquiring the 1,252-acre Crystal Summit Conservation Easement in Power County.

Suggested Motion: I move to acquire the 1,252-acre Crystal Summit Conservation Easement in Power County.



**Fig 2 Property Map**

0 0.5 1 Miles



- Thomas - Crystal Summit
- BLM
- IR
- STATE
- USFS

**Notes:**

1. Map created by Heidi Albano May 2020
2. US Bureau of Land Management 2018 data
3. Boundaries created for display purposes only and should not be substituted for a legal survey