

Wickman, Erik

From: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, March 19, 2024 8:34 AM
To: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] Information on Yellowstone River Closure

Steve's work cell is 853-1324, office is 234-0942.

Respectfully,

~E

Erik Wickman | *Executive Office Manager*
Headquarters | Director's Office
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Office: (406) 444-7826 | Cell: (406) 594-8921



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From: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org <commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org>
Sent: Tuesday, March 19, 2024 8:27 AM
To: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] Information on Yellowstone River Closure

Erik,

Can you please get me Steve Atwood's department cell phone number? I'd like to visit with him directly. Thank you, Brian

Brian Cebull
Region 5 Commissioner
Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
Ph: (406) 438-2551 | commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org

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From: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Sent: Thursday, March 7, 2024 2:47 PM
To: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] Information on Yellowstone River Closure

Sir,

An interesting turn of events involving the information you submitted...

~E

Erik Wickman | *Executive Office Manager*
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From: Gude, Justin <Jgude@mt.gov>
Sent: Thursday, March 7, 2024 2:42 PM
To: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>; McDonald, Ken <kmcdonald@mt.gov>; Wakeling, Brian <Brian.Wakeling@mt.gov>; Kujala, Quentin <gkujala@mt.gov>
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] Information on Yellowstone River Closure

Thank you, Erik. Yes, this study was included and authorized in the first round of wildlife research prioritization (in its current form) that we ran through, in December 2009. This became Steve Atwood's MS thesis project, and he is now the area wildlife biologist covering this area.

Justin

From: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Sent: Thursday, March 7, 2024 2:11 PM
To: McDonald, Ken <kmcdonald@mt.gov>; Wakeling, Brian <Brian.Wakeling@mt.gov>; Kujala, Quentin <gkujala@mt.gov>; Gude, Justin <Jgude@mt.gov>
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] Information on Yellowstone River Closure

Gentlemen,

This information was sent to me by Commissioner Cebull with a request to distribute it to the commissioners and staff.

Respectfully,

~E

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From: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org <commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org>

Sent: Thursday, March 7, 2024 1:59 PM

To: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Information on Yellowstone River Closure

Erik,

I was sent this 2013 NDSU master's thesis which has interesting information and background on the Yellowstone River waterfowl hunting closure that the Department is proposing to reverse in the migratory bird recommendations. Can you please send this out to the other Commissioners and the Department for their information?

Thank you,

Brian

Brian Cebull

Region 5 Commissioner

Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission

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Wickman, Erik

From: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org
Sent: Wednesday, March 13, 2024 3:45 PM
To: Wickman, Erik
Subject: RE: Legal Update with Sarah Clerget

Erik,

I can make session 1 work. Thanks, Brian

Brian Cebull

Region 5 Commissioner

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Helena, MT 59620-0701

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From: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, March 13, 2024 7:10 AM
To: FWP COMMISSIONERS <FWP_COMMISSIONERS@mt.gov>
Subject: Legal Update with Sarah Clerget

Good morning, commissioners,

I have two sessions available with Sarah Clerget, Chief Legal Counsel, for the next legal update for commissioners:

Session 1 - Monday, April 8th 10:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Session 2 - Wednesday, April 10th 10:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Both sessions will be via Zoom and I will get you the Zoom link as soon as I know which session you are able to attend.

These legal updates are necessary during the interim period between meetings, so please let me know which session you can make it to.

Respectfully,

~E

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Wickman, Erik

From: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Sent: Thursday, March 21, 2024 5:08 PM
To: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] RE: Minutes and Mig Bird Docs

Yessir, that is when I will be posting the comments.

~E

Erik Wickman | *Executive Office Manager*
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From: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org <commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org>
Sent: Thursday, March 21, 2024 1:28 PM
To: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] RE: Minutes and Mig Bird Docs

No worries- it just seemed most of those pages were not relevant to the topic at hand. I am interested in the public comment on a couple issues in the Migratory Bird proposals but I am assuming we'll see that summary after the public comment window closes on 3/29?

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From: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Sent: Thursday, March 21, 2024 1:26 PM
To: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] RE: Minutes and Mig Bird Docs

I did confirm that those are the comments that the Wildlife Division requested by posted with the Mig Bird documents. After scanning the public comment, it appears that most of it is for all biennial season setting topics and not just Mig Bird.

If you'd like, I can pull it down and go through the comments and vette out only those comments pertaining to the bird seasons...?

~E

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From: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org <commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org>
Sent: Thursday, March 21, 2024 1:14 PM
To: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: Minutes and Mig Bird Docs

Erik,

The "Public Comment.PDF" file that is in the 2024 Migratory Bird Season folder seems to be from 2023 season setting and is not related to the waterfowl topic?

Thanks,

Brian

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From: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Sent: Thursday, March 21, 2024 12:14 PM
To: FWP COMMISSIONERS <FWP_COMMISSIONERS@mt.gov>
Subject: Minutes and Mig Bird Docs

Good afternoon, commissioners,

I have just uploaded the Minutes from the 02.09.2024 Special Meeting and the 02.16.2024 Regular Meeting to the Google Drive for your review.

There are also some newly-added documents in the Migratory Bird topic for your consideration.

Respectfully,

~E

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Wickman, Erik

From: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org
Sent: Wednesday, March 27, 2024 8:59 AM
To: Wickman, Erik
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] One more Black Bear regulation check

Thank you Erik. That was my recollection as well, but I wanted to be 100% sure.

Thanks, Brian

Brian Cebull

Region 5 Commissioner

Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission

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From: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, March 26, 2024 3:49 PM
To: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] One more Black Bear regulation check

Commissioner Cebull,

I researched this extensively, sir. During the discussion, you stated that you were going to hold off on Amendment 3 because if Amendment 4 passed (splitting 520 and creating 530) then Amendment 3 would be moot. The statement is made on the YouTube recording beginning at **4:16:05** on the time index. Amendment 4 (the split) did pass, so Amendment 3 (the proposed change from April 15th to May 1st) was not addressed.

Please follow this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hFn4Jlkyyrc> [\[youtube.com\]](#) If you don't see it as I do, please reach out to me and I will revisit this with Brian and Quentin.

Hope this helps, sir...

~E

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From: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org <commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org>

Sent: Tuesday, March 26, 2024 2:34 PM

To: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] One more Black Bear regulation check

Erik,

I had another item in the black bear regulations that was brought to my attention. Can you please check the record from the 2/16/24 Commission meeting to confirm that we passed my amendment to change the season start date in BMU 520 from April 15th to May 1st? The regulations currently show a start date of April 15th. Can you verify whether I submitted that amendment as part of my motions during the meeting? I may have decided to forego that change since we created the new BMU530 with its May 25 start date...

Thanks,

Brian

Brian Cebull

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Wickman, Erik

From: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, March 13, 2024 4:28 PM
To: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org
Cc: Cooper, Emily
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] FW: 900 Archery Antelope Quota
Attachments: Antelope 12-14-2023.JPG

Good afternoon, sir,

I took Mr. Ellis' concerns to our Licensing Bureau Chief, Emily Cooper, to review. Ms. Cooper reviewed the current regulations and the motion language that was voted in by the Commission in its December 14, 2023 meeting.

Ms. Cooper verified and confirmed that all current 2024 FWP regulation information directly matches the Antelope season setting motions and amendments that were voted in by the Commission, verbatim.

For additional reference, I have attached the motion language that was entered by Chief Legal Counsel, Sarah Clerget, and approved and passed by the Commission.

Respectfully,

~E

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From: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org <commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org>
Sent: Wednesday, March 13, 2024 3:45 PM
To: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] FW: 900 Archery Antelope Quota

Erik,

Please see the note from Paul Ellis below. Can you please go back and confirm that we approved the higher quota on the 900 series archery antelope tags during our December meeting? Do the regulations accurately reflect what

was approved by the Commission? In addition, please make sure the quotas for the 2 new 700 series antelope districts are consistent with the amendment that the Commission passed at that same meeting.

Thank you,

Brian

Brian Cebull

Region 5 Commissioner

Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission

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From: Paul Ellis <ellispaul4@aol.com>

Sent: Tuesday, March 12, 2024 3:39 PM

To: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org

Cc: ellispaul4@aol.com

Subject: 900 Archery Antelope Quota

Commissioner Cebull,

I wanted to point out that the Department left the 900 Archery Antelope quota at the 5,600 level, even after you amended the quota range to 7,500. FYI there were 470 residents hunters and 772 NR hunters that didn't draw the 900 Archery Antelope License in 2023.

On another note Region 7 set the quota for the 2 new split antelope districts at 300 less than the old quota for the entire Region. 7,500 2023 entire region compared to 7,200 2024 (3,000 + 4,200).

Just thought you'd like to know. Give me a call with questions.

Region 7

Portions of HDs 700, 701, and 703 North of the Yellowstone River

Antelope License: 900-20	Either-sex	June 1	5,600	1-7,500	-	A
Antelope License: 007-21	Either-sex	June 1	3,000	1,000-4,000	Sept. 07-Oct. 11	C
Antelope B License: 007-31	Doe/Fawn	June 1	60	1-3,000	Sept. 07-Oct. 11	C

Portions of HDs 701, 702, 703, 704, and 705 South of the Yellowstone River

Antelope License: 900-20	Either-sex	June 1	5,600	1-7,500	-	A
Antelope License: 007-20	Either-sex	June 1	4,250	2,000-8,000	Sept. 07-Oct. 11	C
Antelope B License: 007-30	Doe/Fawn	June 1	80	1-5,000	Sept. 07-Oct. 11	C

Paul Ellis

71 Spain Bridge Circle Drive
Belgrade, MT 59714
406-581-2717

Wickman, Erik

From: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, April 9, 2024 3:57 PM
To: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] RE: Amendment with Dept Response

Done, sir! THANKS!

Erik Wickman | *Executive Office Manager*
Headquarters | Director's Office
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Office: (406) 444-7826 | Cell: (406) 594-8921



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From: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org <commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org>
Sent: Tuesday, April 9, 2024 3:54 PM
To: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: Amendment with Dept Response

Erik,

This looks good to put out for public comment. Thanks, Brian

Brian Cebull
Region 5 Commissioner
Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
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From: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, April 9, 2024 3:08 PM
To: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org
Subject: Amendment with Dept Response

Good afternoon, sir,

Attached please find the amendment you proposed with the Department response included.

If this is acceptable, please advise ASAP and I will post it to the website for public comment.

Respectfully,

~E

Erik Wickman | *Executive Office Manager*
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Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Office: (406) 444-7826 | Cell: (406) 594-8921



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Wickman, Erik

From: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Sent: Thursday, March 14, 2024 3:13 PM
To: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] Black Bear Regulation Check

Good afternoon, Mr. Cebull,

As I have come to expect with your concerns, you are quite correct. That notation should be in the comments section for BMU 580. I have confirmed this with both WL and Licensing and we are currently reaching out to our regs specialist to see where we are with printing the regs to see if we can get this changed prior to going to press.

THANK YOU for making sure that we have the opportunity to fix this. If we're too late for printing, we will change it in the PDF online Black Bear regs and then put a press release to notify the public.

Again, sir.....THANK YOU for making sure we are accurate!

~E

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From: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org <commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org>
Sent: Thursday, March 14, 2024 9:10 AM
To: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Black Bear Regulation Check

Erik,

In reviewing the Black Bear hunting regulations, I noticed a very important omission. On page 7, under the "Spring Season Closure" section, BMU 580 should be including in the first paragraph as an BMU that would close with public notice after May 31st if the harvest exceeded 37% sows at that time.

Thank you,

Brian

Brian Cebull

Region 5 Commissioner

Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission

P.O. Box 200701

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Wickman, Erik

From: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, April 10, 2024 9:51 AM
To: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] Black Bear Regulation Corrections

Received, sir. I will get this to the proper unit for review.

Thank you!

~E

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From: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org <commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org>
Sent: Wednesday, April 10, 2024 9:50 AM
To: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Black Bear Regulation Corrections

Erik,

It was brought to my attention that the current online 2024 black bear regulations do NOT include any verbal descriptions of the BMU boundaries? I want to make sure there is no confusion with the new BMU 530 that we created at the last Commission meeting. Also, under the "Hunt by Species" there are several places like the "Map: Black Bear Management Units" that are connected to an older version of the map that is outdated. And, if you hit the "Regulations & Maps" drop down list on the bottom of the page, it shows the 2023 regulations and also has a link to the outdated maps.

Sorry to be a pain but wanted to make sure we avoid confusion when the season starts in 5 days!

Thanks,

Brian

Brian Cebull

Region 5 Commissioner

Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission

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Helena, MT 59620-0701

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Wickman, Erik

From: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Sent: Thursday, February 29, 2024 3:59 PM
To: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] BMU 520 & 530

Thank you, sir! I will pass this along to our Regs Group.

~E

Erik Wickman | *Executive Office Manager*
Headquarters | Director's Office
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From: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org <commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org>
Sent: Thursday, February 29, 2024 3:50 PM
To: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] BMU 520 & 530

Erik,

I reviewed the BMU descriptions, and they both look accurate to me.

Thank you for your help on this.

Brian

Brian Cebull

Region 5 Commissioner

Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission

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From: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, February 28, 2024 12:18 PM
To: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org
Subject: Fwd: [EXTERNAL] BMU 520 & 530

~Erik Wickman
Commission Coordinator



Sent from my iPhone

From: Ard, Jennifer <JArd@mt.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, February 28, 2024 8:47:09 AM
To: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] BMU 520 & 530

Erik,

The black bear legal descriptions have already been printed. The new legal descriptions will be added to a corrections to the legal descriptions document which will be posted on the FWP website. I will also add the new 520 and 530 legal descriptions to the existing digital legal description document on our website in the very near future. Brian from wildlife sent me the legal descriptions so that I can make those adjustments. I have attached the word doc for Commissioner Cebull's review.

Thank you,

Jenn

From: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, February 27, 2024 1:19 PM
To: Ard, Jennifer <JArd@mt.gov>
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] BMU 520 & 530

Can we get an update for Commissioner Cebull on this change of boundaries?

~E

Erik Wickman | *Executive Office Manager*
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From: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org <commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org>

Sent: Tuesday, February 27, 2024 1:18 PM

To: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] BMU 520 & 530

Erik,

After the Commission meeting on 2/16, I think it would be good to review the proposed boundaries and regulations for the existing BMU 520 and the new BMU 530 before the regulations go out to the public.

Can you get me that information to review when it becomes available?

Thanks,

Brian

Brian Cebull

Region 5 Commissioner

Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission

P.O. Box 200701

Helena, MT 59620-0701

Ph: (406) 438-2551 | commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org

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Wickman, Erik

From: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, April 9, 2024 4:34 PM
To: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] RE: Work Session - Commission and FWP

Understood, sir...

Thanks!

Erik Wickman | *Executive Office Manager*
Headquarters | Director's Office
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Office: (406) 444-7826 | Cell: (406) 594-8921



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From: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org <commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org>
Sent: Tuesday, April 9, 2024 4:23 PM
To: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] RE: Work Session - Commission and FWP

Unfortunately, that will not work for me.

Brian Cebull
Region 5 Commissioner
Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission
P.O. Box 200701
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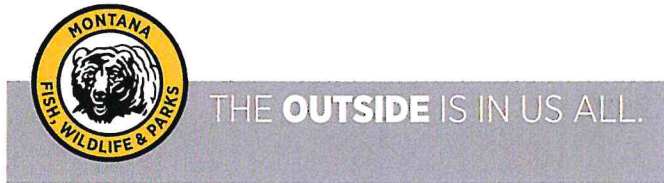


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From: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, April 9, 2024 3:59 PM
To: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] RE: Work Session - Commission and FWP

Would you be able to attend part or all via Zoom, sir?

Erik Wickman | *Executive Office Manager*
Headquarters | Director's Office
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Office: (406) 444-7826 | Cell: (406) 594-8921



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From: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org <commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org>
Sent: Tuesday, April 9, 2024 3:58 PM
To: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: Work Session - Commission and FWP

Erik,

I will be in Texas on a work trip on 5/16. Thanks, Brian

Brian Cebull
Region 5 Commissioner
Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
Ph: (406) 438-2551 | commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org

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From: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, April 9, 2024 3:48 PM
To: FWP COMMISSIONERS <FWP_COMMISSIONERS@mt.gov>
Subject: Work Session - Commission and FWP

Good afternoon, commissioners,

You will see a calendar invite dated May 16, 2024 from 1pm to 5pm. This work session, involving department staff and commissioners, is to be focused on fishing regulations on the Missouri River between Toston and Canyon Ferry Reservoir.

This date is the first time that I could find that fit current schedules and also fit within the public comment period for the June 2024 FW Commission Meeting so that we weren't interfering with other deadlines/actions.

Please advise of your availability for this work session. The work session is blocked out for four hours, but not locked into that amount of time.

Respectfully request that you advise,

~E

Erik Wickman | *Executive Office Manager*
Headquarters | Director's Office
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Office: (406) 444-7826 | Cell: (406) 594-8921



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Wickman, Erik

From: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Sent: Thursday, March 28, 2024 1:46 PM
To: FWP COMMISSIONERS
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] FW: Yellowstone River Closure

From: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org <commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org>
Sent: Thursday, March 28, 2024 11:22 AM
To: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] FW: Yellowstone River Closure

Erik,

I'm not sure if Mr. Archer already sent these to everyone else, so please forward the comments on the Yellowstone River closure to the rest of the Commission.

Thank you,

Brian

Brian Cebull
Region 5 Commissioner
Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
Ph: (406) 438-2551 | commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org

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From: eric archer <earcher1001@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 28, 2024 10:32 AM
To: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org
Subject: Yellowstone River Closure

Dear Commission Cebull:

I am writing to express my viewpoint on removing the Yellowstone River hunting closure.

My first comment is that FWP needs to do a better job of informing the stakeholders about this proposal. I, like many others, found out about it only because of an Outdoor Life article. I have contacted many others, including dozens of

landowners, but no one knew of this proposal. In 2013, Steven Atwood (now an FWP biologist in Region 7) completed a Master of Science evaluating landowner attitudes on lifting the closure. Quoting Atwood- "Engaging Inside landowners and other key stakeholders, such as sportsmen, in the decision-making process regarding the direction of the Yellowstone River Closure policy will be essential in minimizing conflict." Unfortunately, FWP has not followed this recommendation. Atwood also found that *77% of landowners within the closure area did not favor its removal*. It is misleading that the supporting documentation provided to the commission and the public by FWP on this issue reports viewpoints of both landowners outside of the closure area and within, indicating that most landowners supported the removal of the closure. The Thesis can be viewed [HERE \[library.ndsu.edu\]](https://library.ndsu.edu) and contains valuable insights for the commission on this decision.

In addition, I do not think that the hunter survey information is representative of hunters' views on this issue. It would have been easy for the FWP to survey waterfowl hunters within the counties adjacent to the closure, and that would have been much more representative of the public that will be affected by this change.

Another noteworthy piece of history in this discussion was when FWP removed the closure in 1975 and lost a lawsuit in the 16th Judicial District in Forsyth, Montana. "*The district court judge concluded that the Fish and Game Commission did not go through an adequate public process and was negligent in notifying the public of the proposed abandonment.*" Why are they repeating those mistakes? I reviewed all of the news releases and public notices on the FWP site, and this proposal was not posted.

The use of closures as a waterfowl management tool to retain waterfowl in an area and provide better hunting is widespread and effective across Montana and the country. Nearly all State and Federal Wildlife refuges have closed portions, and areas like the Missouri River in Cascade County and Nelson Reservoir in Region 6 are examples of such closures. According to the US Fish and Wildlife Service Waterfowl Handbook, "Food availability, habitat diversity, and *sanctuary* are keys to retaining waterfowl in an area during winter". Not only do these closed areas provide hunters with better opportunities, but they also serve a vital biological purpose by providing secure roosting areas, thereby retaining more birds in an area. For FWP biologists to suggest that removing this closure will not change hunter success is not based on data. There are hundreds of miles of river open to boat hunting on the Yellowstone and Big Horn, but only one section is closed. In addition, for FWP to infer that only hunters with access to private lands can hunt in the Yellowstone Valley is just not factual. There are numerous parcels of school trust land and hundreds of Block Management properties throughout the closure area. These areas provide thousands of hunter days yearly, and jeopardizing field hunting for a handful of river hunters who think there is inadequate opportunity is somewhat ridiculous.

I have hunted around Hysham, MT, for over 20 years. I understand the R7 wildlife manager's assessment that removing the closure would increase hunting opportunities. However, I firmly believe that this change will reduce the quality of the opportunities for much of the population that hunts in this area by pushing geese either out of the area or into areas where they are not accessible to the majority of the hunting public.

I will use one area to illustrate my point. Just upstream of Hysham, near Myers Bridge, is the Isack Homestead WMA (1,168 acres) and Howrey Island (592 acres). Presently, thousands of geese roost in this section of the river. The WMA is all accessible by road, and there is a boat ramp at the bridge. If the closure is removed, jump shooters and boats will likely blow the geese out of this section of the river quickly because of how accessible it is. Presently, many block management properties adjacent to the WMA provide hundreds of hunters access to good opportunities to harvest geese in the fields. Under this scenario, you will also push the geese into a smaller roosting area (increasing crowding and possible Avian flu outbreaks) and make many of them inaccessible to most public hunters who can't afford to lease ground or pay a guide. The second possibility is that, given the lack of safe roost spots or crowding, the geese will leave the area entirely.

I think it is essential that the commission also consider the economic impact of this change on the rural economy around this area, which is already suppressed by the downturn in sugar beet prices. If overall hunter success is reduced, it will undoubtedly reduce the number of hunters coming to the area and spending money there. Over the last twenty years,

the hunting environment has changed dramatically, and the BMAs provide most of the hunting opportunities for hunters new to the area.

Thank you for reviewing my comment on this proposed change. It is hard for me to believe this change is being proposed because it will not benefit ordinary hunters or the local economy; however, it will likely benefit a few boat hunters and the small group of leases and guides with secure roosting areas under their control.

Thank you, Eric Archer Belt, MT, 435-760-3549

Wickman, Erik

From: Brett French <Brett.French@lee.net>
Sent: Tuesday, March 12, 2024 10:29 AM
To: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org
Subject: RE: Yellowstone River waterfowl hunting closure

Thank you Brian.

From: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org <commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org>
Sent: Tuesday, March 12, 2024 9:37 AM
To: Brett French <Brett.French@lee.net>
Subject: RE: Yellowstone River waterfowl hunting closure

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender

You have not previously corresponded with this sender.

Brett,

Thank you for reaching out. The public comment period on the FWP Website is still open until March 28th, so I have not seen any of the comments that have been submitted thru that process. From the few calls I have received, the Department's proposal is certainly controversial since it impacts a closure that has been in place since the 1950's. As such, I am gathering information on the history, purpose, and impacts of the closure and the potential reopening and trying to build a better understanding of the whole situation.

Please feel free to reach out to me in early April as I should have more feedback for you regarding public comments.

Regards,

Brian

Brian Cebull

Region 5 Commissioner

Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission

P.O. Box 200701

Helena, MT 59620-0701

Ph: (406) 438-2551 | commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org

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From: Brett French <Brett.French@lee.net>
Sent: Monday, March 11, 2024 4:31 PM
To: CommissionerRegion5@mtfwp.org
Subject: Yellowstone River waterfowl hunting closure

Hi Brian, have you received many comments on the proposed lifting of the waterfowl hunting closure on the Yellowstone River? If so, what direction are they running – in favor or against? Do you have any thoughts on the proposal? Thanks.

Brett French
Outdoors editor

Billings Gazette Communications
401 N. Broadway
Billings, MT 59101

P: (406) 657-1387
F: (406) 657-1208
french@billingsgazette.com

Wickman, Erik

From: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org
Sent: Tuesday, April 9, 2024 12:08 PM
To: Wickman, Erik
Subject: Zone 2 Central Flyway Season Dates Amendment
Attachments: MIGRATORY BIRDS ZONE 2 SEASON DATES PROPOSED AMENDMENT- CEBULL 4-9-24.pdf

Erik,

Please see the attached updated proposed amendment for Zone 2 of the Central Flyway. This proposal moves the second part of the split season 1 week later for ducks and dark geese.

Please have this reviewed and put it out for public comment ASAP.

Thank you,

Brian

Brian Cebull

Region 5 Commissioner

Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission

P.O. Box 200701

Helena, MT 59620-0701

Ph: (406) 438-2551 | commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org

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Wickman, Erik

From: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org
Sent: Friday, April 5, 2024 5:54 PM
To: Wickman, Erik
Subject: Please hold my amendment

Erik,

I am rethinking my proposed amendment to change the season dates in Zone 2. Please hold off on putting this amendment out for public comment until I have more time to consider the possible dates. You can proceed with posting my amendment to retain the closure on the Yellowstone River.

Thanks,

Brian

Brian Cebull
Region 5 Commissioner
Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
Ph: (406) 438-2551 | commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org

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Wickman, Erik

From: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org
Sent: Friday, April 5, 2024 1:33 PM
To: Wickman, Erik
Subject: Proposed amendments
Attachments: MIGRATORY BIRDS ZONE 2 SEASON DATES PROPOSED AMENDMENT- CEBULL.pdf;
MIGRATORY BIRDS RETAIN YELLOWSTONE CLOSURE AMENDMENT 4-5-24-
CEBULL.pdf

Please see the attached 2 proposed amendments that I'd like to get out for public comment. Please let me know if you have any questions. Thanks, Brian

Brian Cebull

Region 5 Commissioner

Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission

P.O. Box 200701

Helena, MT 59620-0701

Ph: (406) 438-2551 | commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org

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Wickman, Erik

From: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, March 27, 2024 12:52 PM
To: FWP COMMISSIONERS
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] FW: Removal of Yellowstone River waterfowl closure

Good afternoon, commissioners,

At the request of Commissioner Cebull, please find the attached email for your review and consideration.

~E

Erik Wickman | *Executive Office Manager*
Headquarters | Director's Office
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Office: (406) 444-7826 | Cell: (406) 594-8921



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From: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org <commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org>
Sent: Wednesday, March 27, 2024 12:46 PM
To: Wickman, Erik <Erik.Wickman@mt.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] FW: Removal of Yellowstone River waterfowl closure

Erik,

I'm not sure if the rest of the Commission received this email, so please forward it to them.

Thanks,

Brian

Brian Cebull

Region 5 Commissioner

Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission

P.O. Box 200701

Helena, MT 59620-0701

Ph: (406) 438-2551 | commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org

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From: Doug Bell <dbellbillings@gmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, March 26, 2024 9:20 PM

To: CommissionerRegion5@mtfwp.org

Subject: Removal of Yellowstone River waterfowl closure

MT Fish and Wildlife Commission,

**A 140 km stretch of the
Yellowstone River, traversing
Treasure and Rosebud
counties from Hathaway to
the confluence with the
Bighorn River, was closed to
waterfowl hunting in 1959 by
the state of Montana. This was
done to provide sanctuary for
a then-struggling Canada
goose population. Waterfowl**

hunting was, and still is, prohibited on the river, islands and adjacent backwaters.

There is a current proposal to abolish this waterfowl hunting closure. I am bewildered that such a short-sighted proposal would gain any traction. Why would MT FWP ever want to destroy this world-class goose hunting opportunity they have so successfully fostered over the last 60 years?

A few reasons not to change the current system include:

1) If it ain't broke don't fix it! The Yellowstone River waterfowl closure currently provides some of the best

field hunting for Canada geese in the lower 48 states with ample opportunity for public participation via state owned property, block management and other means of private land access. The proposed dissolution of such a successful experiment is counterintuitive.

2) Opening the river to waterfowl hunting, like that already available on the rest of the Yellowstone River and entire Bighorn River, will surely diminish the overall goose harvest in the area at a time when the North American Canada goose population is at

an all-time high and in need of higher harvest rates.

3) Disturbing the currently protected roosting sites on the river will force the geese further south into Wyoming and Colorado, significantly reducing hunting and harvest opportunity for MT residents.

4) The duck population on this stretch of the river is very low compared to the Bighorn and upper Yellowstone Rivers, presumably due to habitat differences and lack of preferred feed. Jeopardizing the proven goose hunting potential to allow for some unproductive duck hunting

**would be an unbelievably poor
trade-off!**

**Respectfully, Douglas G.
Bell**

Sent from my iPhone

Wickman, Erik

From: Sweet Grass Conservation District SGCD <sweetgrasscd@macdnet.org>
Sent: Thursday, March 21, 2024 7:57 AM
To: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org
Subject: Re: Waterfowl season changes proposal

Thank you for your response.

Sandi LaVoy
(406) 932-5160 ext 101
sweetgrasscd@macdnet.org

On Wed, Mar 20, 2024 at 4:00 PM <commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org> wrote:

Thank you for your submission.

I appreciate the working group's suggestions for changes to Zone 2 seasons and will consider them as we move towards our April Commission meeting.

Regards,

Brian

Brian Cebull

Region 5 Commissioner

Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission

P.O. Box 200701

Helena, MT 59620-0701

Ph: (406) 438-2551 | commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org

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From: Sweet Grass Conservation District SGCD <sweetgrasscd@macdnet.org>

Sent: Wednesday, March 20, 2024 9:48 AM

To: commissionerregion5@mtfwp.org; brian.wakeling@mt.gov; fmcnew@mt.gov

Subject: Waterfowl season changes proposal

I have been asked to forward this proposal to you on behalf of the Wildlife Working Group in Sweet Grass County.

We appreciate your time to review this proposal from the group. Reach out with any questions you may have.

Thank you!

Sandi LaVoy

(406) 932-5160 ext 101

sweetgrasscd@macdnet.org