

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: April 25, 2019

Agenda Item: Seasonal Closure of White Bear Fishing Access Site (R4)

Division: Fisheries

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 min

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Background: White Bear FAS is located on the south edge of Great Falls on the Missouri River. The site promotes unsavory activities from June to September, such as under-age use of alcohol, illegal drug use, violent behavior, public disturbance, vandalism and litter. This activity has caused numerous disturbances with neighbors and other site users and requires a high law enforcement presence and high demand on maintenance resources. Neighbors have expressed concerns about their safety and security because of the unlawful activities at the FAS. The commission closed the site from June to September in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 to eliminate this type of behavior while a long-term solution to trade the site was being explored. Site closures have eliminated unlawful activity at the site. When the closure was not in place in May-June 2016 the previous problems quickly returned, and the problems ceased after adopting a closure in July 2016. Presently the department is continuing to identify options for a possible trade.

Public Involvement Process & Results Both before and after the closures the public made frequent reports and complaints about users at the site. The neighbors approached the commission in September 2014 during the open-microphone session and raised concerns about their safety. The public commented during the 2015, 2016 and 2017 seasonal-closure processes. Previous public comment generally supported closing the site; however, there were a small portion of commenters who supported keeping the site open. FWP staff meets with the homeowner's association frequently to address complaints and concerns for safety. The public continues to contact the department through direct phone calls, TIPMONT and county law enforcement.

Alternatives and Analysis: The commission could institute a seasonal closure or leave the site open. Leaving the site open substantially impacts FWP and county law enforcement resources as well as FAS maintenance resources. Instituting a seasonal closure has proven to inhibit unlawful activities at the site.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends a seasonal closure from May 31, 2019 through Sept. 3, 2019 and from May 29, 2020 to Sept. 7, 2020. The department will continue to search for a long-term solution for trade or disposal of the site.

Proposed Motion: I move that the commission implement a seasonal closure of the White Bear FAS from May 31 through Sept. 3 and from May 29, 2020 to Sept. 7, 2020.