



# MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

**Meeting Date:** August 15, 2019

**Agenda Item:** Madison River Recreation Rules (R3)

**Action Needed:** Informational

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 60 minutes

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**Background:** There have been many efforts over the past 60 years to reduce angler conflicts and crowding on the Upper Madison River. More recently, between 1984 and 2017, angler usage has increased by over 300%. The increase in use has correlated with an increase in angler dissatisfaction with river crowding, and with traffic at access sites. The increased use has also led to conflicts between types of anglers (bank, wade or float), conflicts between commercial/non-commercial and residents/non-residents users, and conflicts between trespassers and private property owners. The most recent assessment of these conflicts is a 2016 FWP mail survey which found that the two situations that anglers found most unacceptable were the crowding at access sites and the number of float anglers in the Lyons Bridge FAS to Ennis FAS section of the river.

**Public Involvement Process & Results:** A Madison River Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) was chartered by FWP in 2012 to make recommendations on recreational use of the river. Their final report set thresholds for changes in usage and satisfaction that would trigger management actions, but this approach was deemed too expensive by FWP to implement. FWP responded with its own draft Recreation Management Plan in April 2018, which would have capped the number of commercial outfitters and trips per day and establish measures to redistribute anglers to reduce crowding. The commission did not release the plan for public comment and instead directed FWP to establish a Negotiated Rulemaking Committee (NRC) of stakeholders to seek areas of consensus for managing recreation on the river. The NRC met for several months, but never reached consensus, and instead each committee member submitted their own recommendations to the commission in advance of the June 2019 meeting. Although none of the efforts described above were ever released for public review, they were effective at framing potential solutions to crowding at access points and on the river.

**Alternatives and Analysis:**

The department will embark on a public scoping effort to solicit feedback on addressing the problem of crowding and conflicts between user groups on the Madison River.

**Agency Recommendations and Rationale:** None, this is an informational item only.

**Proposed Motion:** None requested.