



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: October 17, 2019

Agenda Item: 2020 Fishing Regulations

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 1 Hour

Background: The fish regulation-setting process is conducted on a four-year cycle with the last four-year review occurring in 2015. During the regulation-setting process FWP seeks input from staff and the general public for ideas and concerns that might be addressed through regulation changes. Regulation changes made the other three years (or “off cycle” changes) must meet one or more of the following criteria to be considered: 1) Clarifications: regulation change is needed to clarify intent of regulation or to correct typos or other errors that led to erroneous information in regulations; 2) Enforcement: regulation change is needed to improve enforcement efforts, to prevent illegal take, or to clarify intent to reduce innocent violations; 3) Conservation: regulation change is needed to conserve or protect the population of any species; 4) Relevancy: regulation no longer has a real management purpose or value and there is little public following, constituency or controversy; 5) Management Plans: FWP has committed to implementing regulation changes if certain events transpire (e.g., changes in fish populations, angling pressure, catch rates, etc.), typically based upon goals or management objectives defined through a publicly vetted process. Since the last four-year review, 21 regulation changes have been adopted that meet one or more of the above criteria. At the August meeting, the commission approved the tentative fishing regulation package that contained 44 proposals to modify, change, or remove fishing regulations.

Public Involvement Process & Results: Tentative fishing regulation proposals were developed last spring through public and sporting group meetings, an online survey, and comments submitted via email. After commission approval of the tentative proposals, the department accepted additional public comment from August 19 through September 15. During the comment period, the department hosted 12 open houses with at least one open house in each region, hosted an online survey containing department proposals, and accepted written and email comments. Open houses were generally poorly attended, with number of participants ranging from 0 to 20. The online survey had 245 respondents who provided 417 individual comments. There were 41 emails or letters sent with comments and four written comments provided at open houses.

Alternatives and Analysis: Based on public input on the tentative fishing regulations, the department is proposing to keep 41 proposals as presented at the August meeting, modify 1 proposal, and remove 2 proposals from consideration. The commission can approve the regulations as presented, modify proposals within the package, or deny the fishing regulations.

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the 2020 fishing regulation package as presented.