



# MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

**Meeting Date:** June 25, 2020

**Agenda Item:** Implementing the HB 311 Nonresident Hound Handler Permit

**Action Needed:** Final

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 15 min.

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## **Background:**

House Bill 311 was passed by the 2019 Montana State Legislature and created a Nonresident Hound Handler License (Class D-4). The bill was intended to reduce the amount of illegal outfitting that may be occurring, increase resident lion hunting opportunity, and to shift outfitted lion hunting to those properly licensed in Montana.

Statutory limitations of HB311 include that no more than 35 Class D-4 licenses can be issued in any year, and no more than 2 in any district. A Class D-4 license is for personal use only and cannot be used to assist any other person in the pursuit of a lion for harvest. The cost of a Class D-4 license is \$500 and will be adjusted annually. HB311 requires that the license fees be used for mountain lion management, conservation, and monitoring. Montana-licensed outfitters and guides and nonresidents hunting with any Montana-licensed outfitters are not required to have a Class D-4 license.

The Department proposes to implement HB311 according to statute with the first draw for Class D-4 licenses for license year 2020 concurrent with other big game drawings. Thirty-five Class D-4 license applicants would be selected from those that apply. All lion districts would be eligible, but only the first 2 applicants to be drawn for a specific district will receive the license for that district. Any surplus licenses will be offered through surplus sale to eligible applicants.

## **Public Involvement Process and Results:**

HB311 was passed by the Montana Legislature and was supported during legislative testimony by the Montana Outfitters and Guides Association, resident houndsmen, Citizens for Balanced Use, and the Montana Wildlife Federation. A limited number of comments opposed the bill because they believed it empowered Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks too much or that more enforcement of current regulations could address the problem. Proponents of the bill were more numerous and commonly described their experiences encountering illegal outfitting where nonresident houndsmen are seen with multiple groups of "friends" they were helping hunt lions. The Commission has accepted additional feedback since April. Four comments were received from the public during this additional period, and one change was incorporated.

## **Alternatives and Analysis:**

HB311 is state law and must be implemented. While the statute allows for limiting the number of nonresident hunters in lion districts and for the commission to attach certain conditions to the use of a D-4 license, no limits or conditions beyond those clearly stated in the bill are proposed at this time. It should be noted that the commission could choose to provide fewer than 35 Class D-4 licenses. The Department includes a recommendation proposed by the public that surplus Class D-4 licenses, if any, are made available to eligible applicants through surplus sale.

## **Proposed Motion:**

I move that the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the implementation of HB311 by holding the first drawing for 35 Class D-4 licenses with no more than 2 Class D-4 licenses issued in any single district in 2020 concurrent with other big game drawings for which all lion districts can be applied, and surplus Class D-4 licenses are made available to eligible applicants through surplus sale as presented by the Department.