



# MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

**Meeting Date:** April 1, 2021

**Agenda Item:** Lake Elmo Fishing Bag Limit Waiver

**Action Needed:** Final

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 5 minutes

---

**Background:**

Lake Elmo in Billings is in Lake Elmo State Park and is scheduled for draining September 1 to November 1 with refill in April of 2022. This action is intended to eradicate invasive Asian clams from the lake and allow FWP to implement other fish habitat and park improvements. This action will result in the loss of the existing fishery. The public has requested the ability to harvest as many fish as possible before the reservoir is drained. FWP proposes to remove all harvest regulations for Lake Elmo fish which would include all trout, smallmouth and largemouth bass, channel catfish, crappie, and Tiger muskie. Other fish in the reservoir currently don't have harvest regulations those species include perch, carp, and several sucker species. FWP proposes that all other standard regulations for the fishery, such as gear and line restrictions, and park use rules be followed.

**Public Involvement Process & Results:**

During the spring of 2020 a scoping process was conducted to evaluate the removal of invasive clams and improve park amenities, fisheries access, and habitat. The public was supportive of the proposal during scoping. Public comment was accepted on an EA in October and November, with comments generally supporting the drawdown and improvements. A desire to remove bag limits prior to the lake drawdown was voiced during both the public scoping period and in comments on the EA.

**Alternatives & Analysis:**

The commission could: 1) approve lifting all bag limits in Lake Elmo as proposed by the department, which would provide the public the opportunity to harvest fish for consumption prior to draining the lake; 2) not approve the proposal and leave current limits in place, which would not allow opportunity to harvest additional fish from the lake prior to draining the lake; or 3) propose another alternative or direct the department to explore other alternatives.

**Agency Recommendation & Rationale:**

The department recommends approving the proposal to remove bag limits on Lake Elmo prior to draining the lake. Removing bag limits provides the opportunity to harvest fish from the lake prior to removing all water from the lake. Maintaining restrictions to the types of gear used for fishing will reduce conflict with other users using the waterbody and the State Park.

**Proposed Motion:**

I move the commission approve lifting fish harvest regulations at Lake Elmo from May 1, 2020 to November 1, 2020.