



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

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Meeting Date: April 1, 2021

Agenda Item: Mt Haggin WMA-South Grazing Lease – Lessee Transfer

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

Background: At the May 2020 Fish & Wildlife Commission meeting, the commission gave final approval for renewal of the South Grazing Lease on Mt. Haggin Wildlife Management Area (WMA) for a 5-year term, 2021 – 2025. This cooperative grazing system involves WMA (12,091 acres), private (2,600 acres), BLM (3,073 acres), and USFS (6,847 acres) lands, totaling 24,611 acres. The cooperative grazing system provides a variety of wildlife habitat benefits on the WMA and adjacent lands.

The lease arrangement was approved for three local livestock producers (Thompson, Bacon, and Ralston). Recently, the Bacon Ranch has sold. FWP is proposing to issue the 5-year Mt Haggin grazing lease to the new owner of that ranch, Fishtrap Cattle Company, LLC, in lieu of the Bacons. All other terms of the lease would remain the same. The ranch includes a U.S. Forest Service grazing allotment that is adjacent to the WMA, sharing about 4 miles of boundary that is not fenced, but is part of the cooperative grazing system.

Public Involvement Process & Results: The transfer of the lease to the new owners of the ranch does not involve an environmental assessment or public review.

Alternatives and Analysis: If this lease were not transferred to the new ranch owner, FWP would either have trespass cattle on the WMA or would need to construct 4 miles of boundary fence to separate the WMA from the U.S. Forest Service grazing allotment.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends the Mt. Haggin WMA-South Grazing Lease that had been approved for issue to the Bacon Ranch be issued instead to the Fishtrap Cattle Company, LLC, the new owners of the Bacon Ranch.

Proposed Motion: I move the commission approve transfer of the Mt Haggin-South Grazing Lease to Fishtrap Cattle Company as proposed.