



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: December 14, 2021

Agenda Item: Presentation of the Boulder River Citizens Advisory Committee's recommendation for administrative rule changes to the boating regulations on the Boulder River

Action Needed: Consideration of work group recommendation

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 Min

Background:

On April 1, 2020, the Fish and Wildlife Commission directed the department to create a citizens advisory committee to evaluate boating use on the Boulder River. The commission created this committee in response to a rulemaking petition to ban motorized use on the Boulder River. The department recruited and selected a five-person citizens advisory committee representing diverse interests and backgrounds. The committee evaluated several alternatives including no action, a full motorized ban, allocated days for motorized use, horsepower restrictions, seasonal restrictions, and motorized restrictions on specific reaches of river.

The committee's final recommendation proposes closing the Boulder River and its tributaries to motorized vessels, except motorized vessels powered by machinery of 10 horsepower or less are permitted from April 1 through Sept. 30 from the confluence with the Yellowstone River to the Natural Bridge.

Public Involvement Process & Results:

The public has not had an opportunity to comment on this recommendation, although public comment was taken on the original petition that resulted in the work group. Public comment should be taken during this meeting before any action by the commission.

Alternatives & Analysis:

The Boulder River currently does not have motorized boating restrictions on its main stem or tributaries outside Park County. Some of its tributaries, in Park County, are currently limited to 10 horsepower or less. If this proposal is implemented, all tributaries and the main stem above the Natural Bridge would be closed to motorized boating all year, except from April 1 through September 30 motorized vessels of 10 HP or less are permitted from the confluence with the Yellowstone River to the Natural Bridge. The department does not anticipate a reduction in recreational opportunities if this proposal is passed.

The commission may initiate administrative rulemaking on the Boulder River Citizens Advisory Committee's recommendation. Once rulemaking is initiated, the department will collect public comment.

The commission may also choose not to initiate rulemaking leaving the regulations as they currently are, with no motorized restrictions.

Potential Motion:

I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission initiate administrative rulemaking on the Boulder River as recommended by the Boulder River Citizens Advisory Committee as follows: The Boulder River is closed to use of any motorized vessels, except any motorized vessels powered by machinery of 10 horsepower or less are permitted from April 1 through Sept. 30 from the confluence with the Yellowstone River to the Natural Bridge.