



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

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Meeting Date: December 14, 2021

Agenda Item: 2022 Fish Removal Projects

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background: Fish removals are a common fisheries management tool to reduce competition between species, remove undesirable or invasive species, protect species with elevated conservation risk, or to improve the quality of a sport fishery. Most removal projects conducted by FWP aspire to improve fishing opportunity by reintroducing species better suited for available habitats or by reducing competition with other species. In order to ensure the department is authorized to conduct fish removal projects, the department adjusted policy to seek approval through the commission for removal of fish in restoration projects. For 2022 there are 13 fish removal projects planned, with one project already receiving commission approval through the Future Fisheries Improvement Program. In June the commission reviewed 22 removal projects and approved 14 projects that had not been previously reviewed by the commission. The status of projects reviewed in June is provided under separate cover.

Of the 12 projects proposed for 2022, nine are intended to improve or conserve native species populations and three are intended to remove illegal introductions. Use of chemical for removal is proposed for five projects, mechanical removal in 5 projects, and both chemical and mechanical removal in two projects.

Public Involvement Process & Results: The 13 projects proposed for 2022 have received different levels of public review. Three projects have completed environmental assessments and public review and nine projects have EAs pending. One project has already been reviewed by the commission through the Future Fisheries Improvement Program.

After 2022 the department plans to rely on the Statewide Fisheries Management Plan for commission review of fish removal projects. The management plan will be reviewed and updated next year with commission action planned in late 2022 or early 2023. As required through Senate Bill 360, the management plan will include extensive public meetings. If the management plan is approved and adopted by the commission, the department intends to review and update the management plan every four years.

Alternatives and Analysis: The commission could choose to approve all or a portion of the proposed projects or choose to not approve the projects. One of the proposed projects has already been acted on by the commission through the Future Fisheries Improvement Program. The remaining 12 projects have not been considered by the commission.

Proposed Motion: I move the commission approve the fish removal projects proposed for 2022.