



# MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

**Meeting Date:** December 14, 2021

**Agenda Item:** 2022–2023 Black Bear Hunting Regulations, Season Structures, and Hunting District Boundaries

**Action Needed:** Proposed

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 15 Minutes

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**Background:** Black bear hunting regulations, season structures, and hunting district boundaries are adopted biennially by the commission for public comment in December with final adoption in February for most game species. The department is proposing several changes to black bear hunting season structure, along with several hunting district boundary changes to combine and simplify districts where possible, facilitate management, and increase opportunity. The proposed changes to black bear seasons are detailed in the attached black bear hunting master lists, and hunting boundary changes are referenced in individual proposals. The proposed changes to boundaries are detailed on the attached black bear boundary change master list. The commission is also considering all regulations and descriptions of boundaries for the 2022-2023 season and will adopt regulations in total in a future meeting, whether a change is proposed or not. These lists are presented for commission action and public review. Proposed spring black bear hound hunting regulations and black bear reporting requirements will be addressed as separate commission actions. All other regulations and descriptions of boundaries will remain unchanged unless addressed by the commission.

**Public Involvement Process and Results:** The department initiated a public scoping process in August 2021, substantially earlier than in prior years, to increase the amount of public dialogue about a substantial number of considerations that the public had shared with the department previously regarding both seasons and hunting district boundaries. The department used the input received at virtual open houses, meetings, and in written material to tailor the proposals before the commission. Additional public comment will be accepted on the proposals adopted for comment by the commission and on those aspects of the regulations that do not change but complete a regulation package for 2022-2023. Public comment will be accepted for all regulations whether a change is proposed or not. Public comment will be accepted through Jan. 14, 2022, at 5:00 p.m.

**Alternatives and Analysis:** The commission may provide the department with additional amendments on any aspect of season structure, quota, or hunting district, and the department will seek additional public comment on all proposals. A final recommendation will be presented to the commission at their February meeting.

**Agency Recommendation and Rationale:** The department recommends the commission approve for public comment the proposed 2022 and 2023 black bear hunting regulations including changes to season structure and district boundaries as presented by the department and as outlined in the attached master lists. Any aspect unchanged from 2021 seasons are proposed to remain in effect for 2022 and 2023, except where affected by routine calendar rotations.

**Proposed Motion:** I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission vote to adopt for public comment: 1) The current black bear season structure with proposed changes identified in the Black Bear Master List and the Black Bear Boundary Changes Master List as presented by the department.