



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: February 4, 2021

Agenda Item: Amendment to Close Moose Season in Hunting District 250 for 2021

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 Minutes

Background: The moose population in hunting district (HD) 250 is not monitored using structured surveys because the population is small and occupies habitats that are difficult to survey. Monitoring hunter experience is key to determining the availability of antlered moose for harvest and overall population trajectory. Based on conversations between Region 2 biologists and the most recent holders of the single HD 250 moose permit, antlered moose have been difficult to locate during the hunting season. The 2018 permit-holder harvested a small bull after hunting most of the season; this permit-holder was familiar with the district and remarked about the scarcity of moose. The 2020 permit holder did not harvest an antlered moose after 48 days of hunting, and the hunter observed only a cow, calf and small bull during his hunt.

Because moose permits are difficult to obtain, and HD 250 may have few antlered moose at this time, the department is recommending a temporary closure to the season.

Public Involvement Process and Results: The department tries to communicate with hunters who obtain this permit to determine the observed availability of antlered moose. Recent communications indicate that permit holders have expressed dissatisfaction with the hunt. The Ravalli County Fish and Wildlife Association has been notified of the proposed season closure for 2021.

Alternatives and Analysis: The department believes that the HD 250 moose season should be closed for the 2021 season due to the apparent limited availability of antlered moose in the unit. The commission may choose to leave the season open without any concern for population level effects on the moose in the area, although hunters often apply for years to get a moose permit. Hunters that obtain this permit have recently expressed frustration over the availability of antlered moose.

Proposed Motion:

I move that the commission vote to adopt as final the closure of moose hunting in HD 250 for 2021 as presented by the department, with all other seasons unchanged except for standard calendar rotations.