



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: June 24, 2021

Agenda Item: MRL Clark Fork River Temporary Closure Rule, Region 2

Action Needed: Proposed

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background:

Montana Rail Link notified FWP in 2021 of its intention to replace the footings of the piers on a bridge crossing the Clark Fork River near Bearmouth FAS. This bridge has been in place for many years and significant wear is present on the footings of these piers. The long-term stability of the piers is questionable and require reconstruction. MRL has requested small section of the Clark Fork River be closed during construction to ensure public safety.

To repair the bridge, diversions and cofferdams would be constructed after Labor Day to avoid significant floating pressure. Additionally, a side channel would be created adjacent to the abutment on the east side of the bridge to divert water away from the construction site. The river closure would be required only in proximity of the bridge site (approximately 100' upstream and downstream). The construction work window would be through December 31, but construction is expected to be completed by November 30.

The constructed channel is the primary safety concern on the work site. The entire Clark Fork River will be diverted through this side channel that will be roughly 1/3 the width of the current Clark Fork River channel. Thus, velocities will be much higher through this reach than normal during construction. This may create hydraulic "features" that could be difficult for floaters to navigate. There is also some old concrete present adjacent to the site of the constructed side channel that could also create unsafe hydraulic conditions or floating hazards.

Public Involvement Process & Results:

With commission approval, the department will accept public comment for this proposed river closure. The proposal will be publicized through a statewide press release and on the FWP website. The department will compile and summarize public comments for the commission to adopt or modify the proposed rule at a future meeting.

Alternatives and Analysis:

The commission could choose not to propose a rule that would allow temporary short-term closures of the river during construction. However, without this option, emergency conditions might precipitate adoption of an emergency rule to close the river. FWP would prefer the ability to anticipate such needed actions to enhance public notice and safety.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale:

FWP recommends the commission go forward and take public comment.

Proposed Motion:

I move the commission approve the department to collect public comment on the proposed Clark Fork River temporary closure rule.