



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: June 24, 2021

Agenda Item: The Nature Conservancy Recreational Access Biennial Rule, R2

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background: A biennial rule was established through the Fish and Wildlife Commission on 151,000 acres privately held by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in August 2015. Through this biennial rule, TNC is willing to open their lands for year-round public recreational access opportunities. The biennial rule was renewed by the Fish and Wildlife Commission in 2017 and again in 2019. The renewal of this biennial rule would continue the successful partnership and continue to allow for the management of year-round public recreational access on TNC lands for another two years. One change to the 2019 biennial rule is that it would be unlawful for a person to set traps or snares on TNC lands without a Special Use Permit.

Public Involvement Process & Results: The Fish and Wildlife Commission endorsed the tentative TNC biennial rule for public comment at the April 1, 2021, commission meeting. The proposed biennial rule was available for public review and public comment on the FWP website from April 1 through May 3, 2021. FWP issued interested persons letters and emails on April 6. FWP received no public comment for the TNC biennial rule renewal.

Alternatives and Analysis: Managed public access will help reduce the resource damage, vehicular damage to soils and vegetation, and excess disturbance to native wildlife including threatened and endangered species. Without these rules, The Nature Conservancy may be forced to increase restrictions on public use and ultimately close these lands to public access.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends the commission renew the proposed TNC biennial rule for another two years. The biennial rule would allow FWP to work in partnership with The Nature Conservancy and continue to provide opportunities for year-round public recreational access to high-quality, privately owned lands.

Proposed Motion: I move that the commission approve the renewal of The Nature Conservancy Recreation Management Area Biennial Rule for 2021-2023.