



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: June 24, 2021

Agenda Item: Avista Recreational Access Biennial Rule, R1

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background: A biennial rule was established through the Fish and Wildlife Commission for 5,029 acres privately held by Avista in 2014. Through this biennial rule, Avista is willing to open their lands for year-round public recreational access opportunities. These lands are located in Sanders County along the Clark Fork River near Thompson Falls and are heavily used by the public. The Avista biennial rule was renewed by the Fish and Wildlife Commission in 2016 and again 2018. 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 Avista lands for another two years.

Public Involvement Process & Results: The Fish and Wildlife Commission endorsed the tentative Avista 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 one public comment for the Avista Recreation Management Area Biennial Rule. The comment did not indicate a position of support or opposition but was looking for where a map could be located. A response to public comment was provided and is included with the packet.

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, Avista 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 biennial rule for another two years. The biennial rule would allow FWP to work in partnership with Avista to 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 Avista Recreation Management Area Biennial Rule for 2021-2023.