



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: April 19, 2022

Agenda Item: Final adoption of motorized boating restrictions on the Boulder River as proposed by the Boulder River Citizens Advisory Committee.

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 Min

Background:

On April 1, 2020, the Fish and Wildlife Commission directed the department to create a citizens advisory committee to evaluate boating use on the Boulder River. The commission created this committee in response to a rulemaking petition to ban motorized use on the river. The department recruited and selected a five-person citizens advisory committee representing diverse interests and backgrounds. The committee evaluated several alternatives including no action, a full motorized ban, allocated days for motorized use, horsepower restrictions, seasonal restrictions, and motorized restrictions on specific reaches of the river.

The committee's final recommendation proposes closing the Boulder River and its tributaries to motorized vessels, with the exception of motorized vessels powered by machinery of 10 horsepower or less being permitted from April 1 through Sept. 30, from the confluence with the Yellowstone River to the Natural Bridge.

On Feb. 4, 2022, the commission voted to initiate rulemaking on the committee's final recommendation.

Public Involvement Process & Results:

The department collected public comment from Jan. 14, 2021, to Feb. 15, 2022, and held a public comment hearing on Feb. 15. The department received four written comments during the comment period and three written comments before the comment period. All four comments received during the comment period were in opposition to the proposal. One comment was opposed to the specific proposal, two comments were opposed to any motorized use on the Boulder River, and one comment was opposed to restricting motorized use on the Boulder River. The three comments received prior to the comment period were in opposition to any motorized use on the Boulder.

On Feb. 14, the department conducted a public comment hearing via zoom. No members of the public commented during the hearing.

Alternatives & Analysis:

The Boulder River currently does not have motorized boating restrictions on its main stem or tributaries outside Park County. Some of its tributaries in Park County are currently limited to 10 horsepower or less. If this proposal is implemented, all tributaries and the main stem above the Natural Bridge would be closed to motorized boating all year, except from April 1 through Sept. 30, motorized vessels of 10 HP or less are permitted from the confluence with the Yellowstone River to the Natural Bridge. The department does not anticipate a reduction in recreational opportunities if this proposal is passed.

The commission can vote to adopt the rule proposal, which would add motorized restrictions on the Boulder as listed in this cover sheet.

The commission may also choose to vote against this proposal, which would leave the regulations as they currently are, with no motorized restrictions.

Potential Motion:

I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the closure of the Boulder River to use of any motorized vessels, except any motorized vessels powered by machinery of 10 horsepower or less are permitted from April 1 through Sept. 30 from the confluence with the Yellowstone River to the Natural Bridge.